

# **SPECIAL REPORT**

from the

**ILYOKWAN  
BLACK BELT ACADEMY**

## **Ten Things You Should Look For Before Choosing A Martial Arts School**

by

Master Richard Olpin

6th Degree Black Belt

# Part 1 - Who is doing the teaching?

## #1 - It's not about the style, it's about the instructor

The style of martial arts practiced is really much less important than the quality of the instruction and the rapport between the instructors and the students. Before making any commitment to train you should first watch a whole class from beginning to end:

- ❖ Does it seem well organised?
- ❖ How does the instructor teach, are they upbeat and positive?
- ❖ Are they showing equal attention to all their students and not just a few favourite 'superstars'.
- ❖ Are they encouraging their students and rewarding their efforts, or berating them for trivial mistakes?
- ❖ Do they speak in terms which are appropriate to the age and experience of the students?
- ❖ If they are not showing respect for their students, they do not deserve respect from you.

## #2 - Are they professional, or part-time?

Who do you want looking after your children's character development, a full-time professional with specialist training in children's development, or a plumber/salesman/office worker that does a bit of teaching part-time?

Remember we are talking about introducing an adult into your children's life that can potentially have a massive influence on their future.

**Don't leave it to the amateurs** – look for those instructors who are professional, and who offer a professional service, after all, we are talking about making an investment in your future.

### **#3 - Check their credentials**

You should note that just because someone is a 'black belt' that does not necessarily mean they are qualified to teach.

The rank of first degree black belt is the martial arts equivalent of passing your driving test. It's really just the beginning, it represents a student with a reasonable command of the basics who is ready to take on some personal responsibility for their training, it does not qualify them to teach!

A properly qualified instructor will have as a minimum the following qualifications:

- ❖ A high ranking black belt from a recognised organisation.
  - e.g. in ITF Taekwondo a Instructor/Examiner must be at least a 4<sup>th</sup> Degree Black Belt
- ❖ A coaching qualification from a recognised organisation
  - NVQ Level 3 or equiv. Usually separate courses for coaching children.
- ❖ A current DBS check (formerly known as a CRB)
  - This should be less than 3 years old
- ❖ A current first aid certificate (EFAW or equivalent)
- ❖ Appropriate training in safeguarding & protecting children
- ❖ Professional liability insurance with a specialist martial arts insurer

### **#4 - Do they 'walk their talk'**

If an instructor is promoting the ideals of discipline, integrity and respect, this should be very apparent in the manner in which they interact with other people.

Martial Artists should hold themselves to a higher level of respect. If the instructor of the school speaks badly of other schools in your area then you know you are in the wrong place for you or your family. There will always be good and bad in every industry, the good ones know who they are and they do not need to try and help their cause by tearing down other school owners. The bad ones, well, enough said.

## Part 2 - What they teach

### **#5 - Age-Appropriate Classes**

Children and adults have very different training needs and really shouldn't be mixed in the same class. Even at best it's always a compromise: Either the children can't keep up with the complex training, the adults get bored, usually a combination of both.

At the very least the school should have separate classes for adults and children. Better still, separate classes for younger and older children, then a class for teenagers and older.

### **#6 Is there a big emphasis placed on competition?**

If you walk into an academy with a bunch of trophies on display, turn around and leave!

You see the martial arts should be about creating a win-win relationship, developing the student's character and confidence. There is a big difference between a little healthy competition to improve your own efforts than focusing on beating someone else's.

If you walk into an academy that talks about developing physical champions who win tournaments run for the hills because they are clearly focused on physical accomplishment and not the expansion of emotional or intellectual improvement and maturity for all ages. Try somewhere else.

### **#7 Properly structured programmes**

Training in the martial arts rewards the student with a wide range of benefits, but they don't all happen overnight! A reputable school will offer a range of programmes which are structured to introduce the student to training at a pace appropriate to their age and experience level.

At the very least there should be totally separate classes for adults and children, and classes specifically for beginner members. Ideally the school will have a options to allow students to get some extra training in if they want to, without feeling obliged to do so if they're not ready for that.

When you enrol you should have a clear membership agreement that details exactly what you are signing up for, the length of the programme and what you can expect to achieve in the time frame. A typical beginner level training programme will take around 12 months.

A good school should have a series of programmes offering a clear path to black belt level, and then a structure to support the experienced students for many years beyond that point.

## **#7 Do they offer a range of payment options?**

A professional instructors would rather focus on your training than waste time on paperwork and admin, so they will usually employ the services of a membership billing company to handle membership payments for your programme.

The most common arrangement is to budget your membership via monthly direct payments in the same way you might pay for a gym membership. Some schools may offer a discount or additional benefits if you choose to pre-pay for your programme in advance so it's always worth asking if this is an option.

Steer clear of those 'clubs' that charge for your Martial Arts on a 'per session basis'. If they have such a casual approach to their membership it generally means one of two things: firstly this is just a 'hobby' for them and they're probably just pocketing the money rather than investing in the school, and secondly they aren't thinking long-term about their programmes and you have no guarantee they'll even show up next week!

Remember we are talking about introducing an adult into your family's life that can potentially have a massive influence on their future. Don't leave it to the amateurs - look for those who are true professionals. They will charge a professional fee for their service, but it's worth it as after all, we are talking about making an priceless investment in your future.

## **#8 - Do they offer you a proper chance to try their programmes before you enrol?**

If you are in a good school that prides itself on its reputation and its service they will happily give you a guarantee on their service and products.

Don't be fooled by schools that offer your 'first lesson free'. That's not enough time to really experience a martial arts programme. You really want to experience a number of different classes and a reputable school should allow you to train for at least a minimum of two weeks, preferably more before making a commitment to enrol.

## **#9 - Where do they train?**

Do they use a proper facility for fitness type training? Many small 'clubs' use a village hall or similar mixed use facility. This is far from ideal due to the lack of proper floor and appropriate facilities.

Try to avoid those clubs which are in a mixed-use facility with other activities going on. In martial arts training it's important to have a private training environment where the students can focus on their training without unnecessary, or unwanted distractions.

The ideal environment for martial arts is a traditional gymnasium with a proper sprung wooden and appropriate safety equipment such as gym mats etc.

## **#10 - Is there a high emphasis on safety?**

I'm sure the safety of your child is important to you, do they place a high emphasis on safety? Do they have safety mats for practicing jumping drills etc? Do they wear full safety equipment when sparing, for example head guards, gloves, shin pads etc. Martial arts training is really very safe, but of course in any physical activity accidents can happen, however every precaution must be taken to ensure your child's safety.

They should take the time to find out if there are any medical conditions that might effect their training. If they don't care about your child's safety this can not be the best place for them!

## #12 - Don't be afraid to ask questions

If you are looking at investing in a long term investment in your health & fitness or your children's character development you have every right to be fully informed before you make a decision to enrol.

**There is no such thing as a silly question.**

Any reputable instructor will be only too happy to answer any questions you have about any aspect of their school, and will understand that as a beginner you don't know much, if anything about the martial arts.

Everyone has their own reason for training, perhaps some you've not even considered before..

- ❖ **Health**- Fitness, stress reduction, relaxation.
- ❖ **Fitness**-Strength, flexibility, coordination, balance, agility
- ❖ **Self Confidence**- Self-esteem, assertiveness, pride
- ❖ **Self Discipline**- concentration, self-control, respect
- ❖ **Study Skills** - Focus and clarity, better school grades,
- ❖ **Appearance** - Weight control, fat loss, muscle tone, and posture.
- ❖ **Performance**- Endurance, flexibility, mental focus.
- ❖ **Motivation** - achieve your goals, have things to look forward to
- ❖ **Self Defence**- Safety, confidence, awareness
- ❖ **Social** - meet new friends, confident social interactions

There are many, many more!

## Here's What You Need To Do Next..

Clearly if you've you've read this far you're already interested in the martial arts - that's a great start! The hardest part is usually just getting started, but as Confucius once said:

*"A journey of a thousand miles, begins with a single step"*

### **That first step is simple:**

**Call us today** and let's discuss your needs and arrange a time for you to visit the school. You can speak directly with our Instructor **Richard Olpin**, on either **01453 549460** or **07973 368304**. You can also send an email to [rolpin@blackbeltacademy.info](mailto:rolpin@blackbeltacademy.info)

## Don't just take our word for it!

When you visit the school we invite you to speak with any of our existing members, or the parents of our junior students. Ask them any questions you like, we're very confident you'll hear some very positive answers!

You might aksi like to read some of their very kind comments on our website too, at [www.blackbeltacademy.info/testimonials](http://www.blackbeltacademy.info/testimonials)

These are all 100% genuine comments from current members who you can meet and speak with them yourselves at the school. Many of these were submitted independently by the students when they nominated Master Olpin as **Instructor of the Year** at the GIMA national awards last christmas.



# Our Offer To You

*To get you started you'll begin with*

## **A FREE Private Introductory Lesson**

with our Master Instructor or an experienced leadership team member.  
If you'd prefer an intro with a female instructor we can arrange that too.

*To ensure you feel the part, you'll receive a*

## **A FREE Beginner's Uniform**

*And then, to give you the opportunity to really get a feel for  
the martial arts you'll receive as our special VIP guest:*

## **30-days FREE Membership**

You can experience all the classes appropriate to your age group with no restrictions and no obligation to join. We'll even give you the assistance of your own black belt coach to mentor you personally during this time.

Remember, all the above is absolutely FREE of charge, with no obligation for you to enrol. We believe very strongly in the benefits of the martial arts and the quality of our programmes and we feel honoured to share them with you.

**Don't delay. Give us a chance to personally help you  
and your family overcome any challenges that are  
keeping you from true success in all areas of life.**

Call Today: 01453 549460

**[www.BlackBeltAcademy.info/30-days-free](http://www.BlackBeltAcademy.info/30-days-free)**