

Choosing a Martial Arts School



People often wonder what to look for in a martial arts school. Each person is looking to gain something different from their martial arts training so there is no one school that is best for everyone. The following are some things to consider when researching schools:

Quality of Instruction - This is the single most important factor in choosing a school. A good instructor must be an expert on their subject material and must have a love and talent for teaching. I would ask how much experience the instructors have (not in rank but in years). This will give you some gauge as to their level of experience. It is best to ask if you and/or your child can attend a few classes before making a longer term commitment so you can see how classes are run and decide if you like the teaching style. A good rule of thumb is to avoid schools that have instructors under the age of 18 or with less than 10 years of experience. In addition, many instructors have taken personal training classes to insure that stretching and conditioning exercises are being done properly based on current knowledge. Everything evolves as new knowledge is gained and the martial arts are no different.

Style - There are many styles of martial art taught in this country. All styles have their strengths and weaknesses. You can also find both quality and poor instruction in every style. A teacher that tries to convince you that their style is superior to others or that does not have an open mind toward all styles probably does not have knowledge of other styles. A good martial artist always keeps an open mind.

Emphasis - Each school emphasizes different aspects of the martial arts such as tournament fighting, self-defense, the "art" of karate, conditioning, etc. You first need to ask yourself what it is that you would like to accomplish through your training. As you visit schools try to gain an understanding of the aspects that are emphasized by each school and determine which are most closely aligned with your goals.

Fees - The fee structure differs greatly from school to school. Some schools include all instruction in a single monthly fee (usually between \$65-\$100). Others require long-term contracts or have many hidden costs including fees for testing and belts, black belt clubs, etc. At the Califon Karate Academy you pay one monthly fee. The only other costs are for uniforms and sparring equipment. There are no hidden fees for testing or rank promotions.

Location / Class Schedule - Clearly location is a key consideration in that you will want to select a school that offers multiple classes each week and is in a conveniently located.

Time to Attain a Black Belt - Many people like to know how many years of training are required to attain a black belt. Students should not focus on rank and belts although they are an important way to recognize progress. It takes many years to reach a level of proficiency in the martial arts. Always remember that attaining a black belt in karate is not an ending but a new beginning as the student has reached a reasonable level of proficiency in the basics and is now ready to take their training to the next level.