

Unit 12 Martial Arts karate syllabus

Purpose of the syllabus

This syllabus sets out the core technical, practical, and developmental requirements for each grade. It is published to ensure that students and instructors share a clear understanding of what is taught, how progress is assessed, and what is expected at each level.

Publishing the syllabus supports consistent teaching and assessment and ensures that training and gradings are delivered in a transparent, structured, and nationally recognised manner.

Training approach

Unit 12 Martial Arts' karate syllabus follows a traditional approach rather than a competition-led model. Instruction prioritises principles, technique, and application. Methods designed primarily for competitive rule sets are not a focus.

Safety

Safety is a priority in all classes and gradings. The syllabus is structured to ensure all training is instructor supervised and conducted in a controlled and appropriate manner. Where training aids are used, such as pads and mittens, students are instructed in their safe use and handling. Techniques are taught with control, and levels of contact are appropriate to the student's age, experience, and ability.

Teaching and grading standards

Karate teaching and grading standards are overseen by Karate Tōushi. Teaching and gradings are conducted fairly and respectfully, with assessment based on the individual student's quality of technique, effort, and understanding.

As students progress, they are required to demonstrate both the requirements of their current grade and those from earlier levels. This approach supports steady progression and ensures genuine understanding rather than short-term performance.

Students who have trained in karate elsewhere are not disadvantaged, provided their technique conforms to the kata being performed, is based on sound principles, and demonstrates practical application.

To help training, links are provided to videos for the kata in the syllabus. There are some details in the videos that differ from the way we do the katas but the general concepts are the same.

Inclusivity and reasonable adjustment

Unit 12 Martial Arts' karate training is progressive and accessible. Reasonable adjustments may be made during classes and gradings to enable students to perform to the best of their ability, taking account of age, experience, and individual needs. Development and effort are recognised fairly, and any adaptations are recorded clearly.

Up to 4th Kyu, younger or older students or those requiring additional support may be awarded a junior or adapted pass. As students approach higher grades, expectations become increasingly consistent, while individual circumstances continue to be considered.

Progression

Indicative minimum training timeframes are provided to support consistent progression. These assume regular attendance and commitment to training. Advancement is not automatic and remains at the discretion of the lead instructor. Readiness for each grade is determined by technical competence, understanding, consistency, and maturity. The indicative minimum training periods are as follows:

- Novice to 9th Kyu (White to Orange): 3 months / 12 sessions
- 9th Kyu to 8th Kyu (Orange to Red): 3 months / 12 sessions
- 8th Kyu to 7th Kyu (Red to Yellow): 4 months / 16 sessions
- 7th Kyu to 6th Kyu (Yellow to Green): 5–6 months / 22 sessions
- 6th Kyu to 5th Kyu (Green to Purple): 5–6 months / 36 sessions
- 5th Kyu to 4th Kyu (Purple to Purple with white stripe):
6 months / 48 sessions (minimum of 2 sessions per week)
- 4th Kyu to 3rd Kyu (Purple with white stripe to Brown):
6 months / 48 sessions (minimum of 2 sessions per week)
- 3rd Kyu to 2nd Kyu (Brown to Brown with one white stripe):
6 months / 72 sessions (minimum of 3 sessions per week)
- 2nd Kyu to 1st Kyu (Brown with one white stripe to Brown with two white stripes):
6 months / 72 sessions (minimum of 3 sessions per week)
- 1st Kyu to 1st Dan (Brown with two white stripes to Black Belt):
1 year / 192 sessions (minimum of 4 sessions per week)

Records and transparency

Training attendance is recorded at each class. Grading outcomes are documented in students' personal logbooks and in nationally recognised records. This ensures that training history and achieved grades can be clearly evidenced and verified.

Novice (White) to 9th Kyu (Orange)

Kion

- Zenkutzu Dachi.
- Lunge punch to the face and the stomach (Oi Tsuki Chudan and Jodan).
- Front kick (Mae Geri Chudan).
- Basic Hand Moves: Static in horse riding stance (Kiba Dachi):
 - Rising 'block' (Age Uke).
 - Outer 'block' (Chudan Soto Uke).
 - Lower sweeping 'block' (Gedan Barai).
 - Inner 'block' (Chudan Uchi-Uke).
 - Punch to the head (Jodan Oi Tsuki).
 - Punch to the solar plexus (Chudan Oi Tsuki).

Kata: [Kihon](#) (here called Taikyoku Shodan but the same kata).

Kumite

- Sanbon.
- Pad work:
 - Hands: Jodan Oi Tsuki and Chudan Oi Tsuki. On soft hand pads/Bob.
 - Feet: Mae Geri Chudan: On large pads.

Bunkai: Adults to demonstrate two basic techniques with partner under instructor control.

9th Kyu (Orange) to progress to 8th Kyu (Red)

Kion:

- Opposite Punch (Gyaku Tsuki).
- Side snap kick (Yoko Geri Keage).
- Side thrust kick (Yoko Geri Kekomi).
- Back stance (Kokutsu Dachi) with knife hand (Shuto Uke).
- Inner 'block' (Chudan Uchi-Uke).
- Outer 'block' (Chudan Soto Uke).

Kata: Kihon and [Heian Shodan](#).

Kumite:

- Sanbon.
- Uchi Uke.
- Shuto Uke.
- Pad work:
 - Hands: Jodan Oi Tsuki and Chudan Oi Tsuki, Kizami Tsuki and Gyaku Tsuki on soft pads/Bob.
 - Feet: Mae Geri, Yoko Geri Keage and Yoko Geri Kikomi to large pad/Bob.

Bunkai: Adults to demonstrate two basic applications from Heian Shodan under instructor control.

8th Kyu (Red) to progress to 7th Kyu (Yellow)

Kion:

- Snap kick and lunge punch (Kette Oi Zuki).
- Roundhouse Punch (Mawashi Tsuki).
- Round Kick (Mawashi Geri). Wado Style at this level.
- Rising block, opposite punch (Age Uke, Gyaku Tsuki).
- Outer block, opposite punch (Soto Uke, Gyaku Tsuki).
- Inner block, opposite punch (Uchi Uki, Gyaku Tsuki).

Kata: Heian Shodan and [Heian Nidan](#).

Kumite:

- Rising block, opposite punch (Age Uke, Gyaku Tsuki).
- Outer block, opposite punch (Soto Uke, Gyaku Tsuki).
- Inner block, opposite punch (Uchi Uke, Gyaku Tsuki).
- Pad work:
 - Hands: Oi Tsuki, Kizami Tsuki, Gyaku Tsuki and Mawashi Tzuki on soft pads/Bob.
 - Feet: Mae Geri, Yoko Geri Keage, Yoko Geri Kikomi and Mawashi Geri to large pad/Bob.

Bunkai: Adults demonstrate two basic applications from Heian Nidan under instructor control.

7th Kyu (Yellow) to progress to 6th Kyu (Green)

Kion

- One step three punches (Sanbon Tsuki).
- Outer block, elbow strike, (Soto Uke, Empi Uchi).
- Snap Kick Opposite Punch (Kette, Gyaku Tsuki).
- One Step Front Kick (Surikomi Mae Geri).
- One Step Round Kick (Surikomi Mawashi Geri).

Kata: Heian Nidan and [Heian Sandan](#).

Kumite:

- One step combination. (Kihon Ippon Kumite). Attacking with one step punch to the head and the stomach (Jodan and Chudan Oi Tsuki) from both sides.
- Pad work:
 - Hands: Empi Uchi, Oi Tsuki, Kizami Tsuki, Gyaku Tsuki and Mawashi Tzuki on soft pads/Bob.
 - Feet: Mae Geri, Yoko Geri Keage and Yoko Geri Kikomi, Mawashi Geri, Surikomi Mae Geri, Surikomi Mawashi Geri to large pad/Bob.

Bunkai: Adults to demonstrate four basic applications (two from each kata).

6th Kyu (Green) to progress to 5th Kyu (Purple)

Kion:

- Rising block, opposite punch, lower block (Age Uke, Gyaku Tsuki, Gedan Barai).
- Outer block, elbow strike, backfist. (Soto Uke, Empi Uchi, Uraken).
- Inner block, punch, opposite punch. (Uchi Uke, Kizami Tsuki, Gyaku Tsuki).
- Knife hand block, knife hand strike (Shuto Uke Nukite).
- Crescent Kick (Mikazuki Geri).
- Jumping Front Kick (Tobi Mae Geri).

Kata: Heian Sandan and [Heian Yondan](#).

Kumite:

- Mid-level front kick attack and defence (Chudan Mae Geri).
- Rising block, opposite punch, lower block application (Age Uke, Gyaku Tsuki, Gedan Barai).
- Pad work:
 - Hands: Shuto Uke Nukite, Uraken, Empi Uchi, Oi Tsuki, Kizami Tsuki, Gyaku Tsuki and Mawashi Tzuki on soft pads/Bob.
 - Feet: Mae Geri, Yoko Geri Keage and Yoko Geri Kikomi, Mawashi Geri, Surikomi Mae Geri, Surikomi Mawashi Geri, Tobi Mae Geri to large pad/Bob.
 - Mikasuki Geri on hand pads. For adults application.

Bunkai: Adults to demonstrate four basic applications (two from each kata).

5th Kyu (Purple) to 4th Kyu (Purple and White)

Kion:

- Outer block, elbow strike, back fist opposite punch (Soto Uke, Empi Uchi, Uraken, Gyaku Tsuki).
- Knife hand block, front kick, knife hand strike (Shuto Uke, Mae Geri, Nukite).
- One step side thrust kick from horse riding stance stance (Yoko Geri Kekomi from Kiba Dachi).
- Reverse Crescent Kick (Ura Mikazuki Geri).
- Jumping Round Kick (Tobi Mawashi Geri).

Kata: Heian Yondan and [Heian Godan](#).

Kumite:

- Attack and defence - Chudan Yoko Geri Kekomi, Mae Geri and Mawashi Geri.
- Pad work:
 - Hands: Shuto Uke Nukite, Uraken, Empi Uchi, Oi Tsuki, Kizami Tsuki, Gyaku Tsuki and Mawashi Tzuki on soft pads/Bob.
 - Feet: Mae Geri, Yoko Geri Keage and Yoko Geri Kikomi, Mawashi Geri, Surikomi Mae Geri, Surikomi Mawashi Geri, Tobi Mae Geri, Tobi Mawashi Geri to large pad/Bob.
 - Mikasuki Geri and Ura Mikasuki Geri on hand pads. For adults application.

Kumite: Adults to demonstrate four basic applications (two from each kata).

4th Kyu (Purple and White) to 3rd Kyu (Brown)

Kion:

- Outer block, elbow strike, back fist, opposite punch, lower block (Soto Uke, Empi Uchi, Uraken, Gyaku Tsuki, Gedan Barai).
- Inner block, snap punch, opposite punch, lower block (Uchi Uke, Kizami Tsuki, Gyaku Tsuki, Gedan Barai).
- Open hand strike (Taisho).
- Double round kick (Mawashi Geri Gedan, Chudan).
- One step hook kick (Surikomi Ura Mawashi Geri).

Kata: Heian Godan and [Tekki Shodan](#).

Kumite:

- Semi-free one step sparring attacking with punch to the head and stomach, front kick, side kick, round kick and back kick. (Jiyu Ippon Kumite attacking with Jodan and Chudan Oi Tsuki, Chudan Mae Geri and Yoko Geri, Jodan, Mawashi Geri and Chudan Ushiro Geri).
- Pad work:
 - Hands: Taisho, Shuto Uke Nukite, Uraken, Empi Uchi, Oi Tsuki, Kizami Tsuki, Gyaku Tsuki and Mawashi Tzuki on soft pads/Bob.
 - Feet: Mae Geri, Yoko Geri Keage and Yoko Geri Kikomi, Mawashi Geri, Surikomi Mae Geri, Surikomi Mawashi Geri, Tobi Mae Geri, Tobi Mawashi Geri, Mawashi Geri Gedan-Chudan, to large pad/Bob.
 - Mikasuki Geri and Ura Mikasuki Geri on hand pads. For adults application.
 - Surikomi Ura Mawashi Geri on hand pads/Bob.

Bunkai: Demonstrate five basic applications (minimum of two from each kata).

3rd Kyu (Brown) to 2nd Kyu (Brown and one white stripe)

Kion:

- Front kick, lunge punch, opposite punch (Mae Geri, Oi Tsuki, Gyaku Tsuki).
- Side kick, back fist, opposite punch (Yoko Geri, Uraken, Gyaku Tsuki).
- Round kick, back fist, opposite punch (Mawashi Geri, Uraken, Gyaku Tsuki).
- Back kick, back fist, opposite punch (Ushiro Geri, Uraken, Gyaku Tsuki).
- 3 kicks (Mae Geri, Mawashi Geri, Yoko Geri, Ushiro Geri, Uraken, Gyaku Tsuki).

Kata: [Bassai Dai](#) plus a Heian Kata of examiners' choice.

Kumite:

- Semi-free one step sparring attacking with punch to the head and stomach, front kick, side kick, round kick and back kick. (Jiyu Ippon Kumite attacking with Jodan and Chudan Oi Tsuki, Chudan Mae Geri and Yoko Geri, Jodan, Mawashi Geri and Chudan Ushiro Geri).
- Pad work:
 - Hands: Taisho, Shuto Uke Nukite, Uraken, Empi Uchi, Oi Tsuki, Kizami Tsuki, Gyaku Tsuki and Mawashi Tzuki on soft pads/Bob.

- Feet: Mae Geri, Yoko Geri Keage and Yoko Geri Kikomi, Mawashi Geri, Surikomi Mae Geri, Surikomi Mawashi Geri, Tobi Mae Geri, Tobi Mawashi Geri, Mawashi Geri Gedan-Chudan, to large pad/Bob.
- Mikasuki Geri and Ura Mikasuki Geri on hand pads. For adults application.
- 3 kicks and Surikomi Ura Mawashi Geri on hand pads/Bob.

Bunkai: Demonstrate five basic applications (minimum of two from each kata).

2nd Kyu (Brown one white stripe) to 1st Kyu (Brown and two white stripes)

Kion:

- Punch, step and punch, opposite punch (Kizami Tsuki, Oi Tsuki, Gyaku Tsuki).
- 4 kicks. Front kick, side kick, round kick, back kick, back fist, opposite punch (Mae Geri, Yoko Geri, Mawashi Geri, Ushiro Geri, Uraken, Gyaku Tsuki).
- Double jumping front kick and elbow strike (Nidan Geri, Notsukomi Empi).
- One step spinning hook kick (Surikomi Ushero Mawashi Geri).

Kata: Bassai Dai, Tekki Shodan and Heian of examiners' choice.

Kumite:

- Semi-free one step sparring attacking with punch to the head and stomach, front kick, side kick, round kick and back kick. (Jiyu Ippon Kumite attacking with Jodan and Chudan Oi Tsuki, Chudan Mae Geri and Yoko Geri, Jodan, Mawashi Geri and Chudan Ushiro Geri).
- Pad work:
 - Hands: Taisho, Shuto Uke Nukite, Uraken, Empi Uchi, Oi Tsuki, Kizami Tsuki, Gyaku Tsuki and Mawashi Tzuki on soft pads/Bob.
 - Feet: Mae Geri, Yoko Geri Keage and Yoko Geri Kikomi, Mawashi Geri, Surikomi Mae Geri, Surikomi Mawashi Geri, Tobi Mae Geri, Tobi Mawashi Geri, Mawashi Geri Gedan-Chudan, Nidan Geri to large pad/Bob.
 - Mikasuki Geri and Ura Mikasuki Geri on hand pads. For adults application.
 - 4 kicks, Surikomi Ura Mawashi Geri and Surikomi Ushero Mawashi Geri on hand pads/Bob.

Bunkai: Demonstrate seven basic applications (minimum of two from each kata).

1st Kyu (Brown and two white stripes) to 1st dan (Black belt)

Kion: Called by examiners. Based on full understanding of 9th to 1st Kyu techniques.

Kata: All.

Pad work: Called by examiners.

Kumite:

- Techniques with a partner called by examiners.
- 3 x 2 minutes sparring with black belt: 1st session hands only: 2nd session hands and feet, 3rd session hands and feet (change of partner).

Bunkai: Demonstrate ten applications (minimum of two from each kata),