

Choosing A Martial Arts School



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Congratulations! If you are reading through this material, you have already begun the mental process of choosing a martial arts school. One of the most frequently asked questions is “How do I pick the right one?”

This is an important decision and the amount of upfront time you spend thinking about this will place you in a good position to choose wisely. The first step is to ask yourself a series of questions about what you want from the training experience:

- Why do you want to train? Are you interested in getting in shape, learning a little basic self defense, competing, exploring a whole system of personal development, becoming part of a community?
- Are you interested in a short-term program or do you envision at least the possibility of making the martial arts an integral part of your life?
- What kind of school do you want to train in (encouraging, supportive, authoritative)? Do you want to push your limits, grow as a person, or just get a good workout?
- For adults, do you want to train with men and women or in a single sex environment?
- What kind of teacher do you want? One who is a coach? A taskmaster? Both?
- How important to you are martial arts traditions and cultures? Do you want a school that observes them strictly, or do you prefer a more informal atmosphere?
- Do you want to be at a large training facility, moderate size or small and intimate?

Consider also any limitations that might narrow the range of possible schools. Can you only train in the evenings? Do you need on-site day care? Do you want to be able to train in the same classes as your children? How far can you realistically travel? Can you commit to a minimum of two days a week to training? How much can you afford to spend on training per month?

Once you’ve gotten those answers nailed down, it is time to focus on your goals. Goal-setting is far more important than what style you are going to study, since most can be met by many different styles. Make a list of those goals and then prepare to spend time investigating them with the schools you choose to visit or call.

Ask questions like:

1. What style do you teach? **Ask for a description. Any good instructor should be able to tell you something about the style they teach; its history.**
2. How long have you been training and teaching?
3. What is the structure of the curriculum? Are there set testing cycles? **Remember, any school that will guarantee you or your child will test regularly, should be looked at skeptically. Moving through the belt ranks should be looked at individually and consist of more than just whether a student knows all of their requirements for moving onto the next belt. Attitude, adherence to school rules, consistent training time, etc., are also important factors.**
4. What are the costs for lessons? Is there a long-term agreement required? **Most schools will have more than one agreement option, as in yearly or month to month.**
5. Are there testing fees and what do they include? Do you receive a uniform, patches etc.? Are there any additional fees, such as equipment?
6. What is the experience of the instructors? Are they all adults or do children teach as well?

Do not be put off by being asked to come in for a free trial class before getting all your answers over the phone. Seeing is believing and most of these questions are better asked after you have seen the instructors, their students, parents and their school. Any instructor with a good program will want you to see their facility and them.

Finally, ask yourself these questions before you make your final decision:

1. Are those you spoke with knowledgeable, courteous and professional? Do they answer your questions with ease?
2. Are tuition and associated fees clearly explained? Are there increases, if so how long into the program?
3. Are there any subtle signs of abuse (mental or physical, masquerading as discipline).
4. Is the school clean and is the training environment safe?

5. Watch out for schools in which the primary instructors are junior students. Even though that is a requirement of their rank progression, they should not represent the **dominant** instructor presence in any class.

6. Is everyone receiving the same quality of training, boys, girls, men, women?

7. Is the school capable of accommodating all types of students to include those with learning challenges?

You will find that asking a few thoughtful questions early in the process will save you a lot of time and money in the long run.

Remember, martial arts training is not the same as self defense or fitness training. Know what you want so that you can determine if the school you are looking into is truly a good fit.

Good Luck!