

THE SPORT OF TAEKWONDO

Modern Taekwondo is a descendant of traditional Korean Martial Arts. It was founded by General Choi-Hong-Hi in 1955 and has since spread to most major countries and become an Olympic sport. Viet Nam adapted it in 1962. Master Duc Huy Dang won the first Vietnamese Taekwondo Gold Medal in Hong Kong in 1969. Taekwondo was considered a “tough-style” martial art, opposing an attacker with punishing kicks, blocks, and punches supported by agile footwork. The student learns how to deliver maximum power with minimum effort and time. Taekwondo constitutes direct, no-nonsense self defense. General Choi, in his books and lectures, promotes Taekwondo as a way of life incorporating self-reliance, moral development, and service to others.

Who Should Learn Taekwondo?

Taekwondo training is for anyone who wants to reach his/her maximum physical and mental potential. It is for children, men, and women who are interested in weight control, body conditioning to avoid heart disease at the same time learn the art of self-defense. People do not have to be superstar athletes but do need to maintain and attend the training regularly. Children would benefit from Taekwondo as it helps them stay focused in school, think quickly, get better grades and develop self-discipline and self-control. The results may far exceed people’s expectation!

Self-Defense, Self-Confidence, Self-Discipline, Physical Fitness, And Good Health

The utmost purpose of Taekwondo is to eliminate fighting by discouraging the oppression of the stronger over the weaker with a power that must be based on humanity, justice, morality, wisdom, and faith, thus helping to build a better and more peaceful world.

The following guidelines and philosophy are the cornerstone of Taekwondo that all serious students of this art are encouraged to live by.

1. Be willing to go where the going may be tough and do the things that are worth doing even though they are difficult.
2. Be gentle to the weak and tough to the strong.
3. Be content with what you have in money and position but never in skills.
4. Always finish what you begin, be it large or small.
5. Be a willing teacher to anyone regardless of religion, race or ideology.
6. Never yield to repression or threat in the pursuit of a noble cause.
7. Teach attitude and skill with action rather than words.
8. Always be yourself even though your circumstances may change.
9. Be the eternal teacher who teaches with the body when young, with words when old, and by moral precept even after death.

Meaning of Taekwondo

Tae..... kick or smash with foot

Kwon.... smash with fist or hand

Do..... the way or method, and it implies a philosophical means of discipline.

Thus, Taekwondo is a way of disciplining the mind and the body through fighting methods.

Theory of power in Taekwondo

The power behind focused punches and kicks are generated from the following principles:

1. Concentration
2. Proper breathing
3. Good balance
4. Speed

Moral Culture of Taekwondo

The mental education of Taekwondo is aimed at enriching the noble character of each student and at promoting good and healthy sportsmanship.

The “Yin and Yang” theory of Taekwondo

At the center of this philosophy is the concept of interaction between opposing forces in nature (Yin versus Yang). Equilibrium is only achieved when opposing forces are distributed in equal amounts, resulting in balance and harmony. When only one force dominates, however, the result is imbalance, which could mean discord or failure. Under this concept, health is one consequence of the balance between the “Yin” and “Yang,” energy forces that rule the world. An imbalance between these two forces can result in illness. According to Taoism, the force of Yin and Yang is the harmony between heaven and earth. The day (Yang) is followed by night (Yin) in perpetuity. Similarly, a person has a body (Yang) and a mind (Yin). The front side of the body is Yin whereas the backside is Yang. Yin and Yang represent the dualism of the universe and can be seen as opposite ends of mutually complementary and interacting systems. Yin represents the passive or negative female force (i.e., moon, earth, water, poverty, sadness) that produces cold, darkness, and emptiness. Yang is the active male force (i.e., sun, heaven, fire, goodness, wealth) and is reflected in warmth, light, and fullness. To be healthy, the individual must seek to balance the force of Yin and Yang.

Taekwondo builds on this “Yin and Yang” philosophy. Taekwondo training concentrates on physical, mental, and spiritual balancing of left and right, hardness and softness, strength and weakness.

Taekwondo is a complete sport that trains an individual to be physically, mentally, and spiritually fit.

Dan-Jun Breathing

Breathing is an essential and fundamental factor in Martial Arts. It has been used to develop internal power (Ki), self-confidence, concentration, and good health, which in itself lead to a fruitful longevity. Dan-Jun in Korean means “Red Field,” “Hot Point,” or “Center of Energy.” In Japanese, it is pronounced “Tandem;” in Vietnamese, “Dan Dien;” and in Chinese, “Tantien.” It refers to an area

located two inches below the navel. This area is the center of gravity of the human body and, at the same time, the seat of “Ki” (internal power of vital energy). Dan-Jun breathing is an important martial arts exercise for the development of “Ki” that is used primarily with: (1) Meditation and (2) Execution of Martial Arts techniques.

Breathing Method

Most people only use the top portion of their lung while breathing. They fail to fill the bottom as well as the top portion of their lung. When you inhale, imagine the air fills your entire abdomen with energy while concentrating on your Dan-Jun. When you exhale, imagine this energy travels through your body while the air is being released through your nose.

Dan-Jun Breathing and Meditation

There are many different breathing formulas while meditating. In all the formulas, Inhaling and exhaling should be executed slowly. Some of the breathing formulas are shown below:

1. Inhale for 5 seconds and exhale for 5 seconds
2. Inhale for 5 seconds, hold 5 seconds, and exhale for 5 seconds
3. Inhale for 5 seconds, hold 5 seconds, exhale for 5 seconds, and hold 5 seconds
4. Inhale for 5 seconds, hold 10 seconds, exhale for 5 seconds, and hold 5 seconds
5. Inhale for 10 seconds, hold 15 seconds, exhale for 10 seconds, etc.

The length of time you inhale, hold, and exhale can be gradually increased to the point that you can remain idle for one minute or even longer. Choose one of the above breathing formulas and practice it while meditating or performing Tai-Chi Chuan. As a result, you will increase your “Ki” and attain spiritual unification.

Dan-Jun Breathing and Martial Arts Techniques

Another method of practicing Dan-Jun breathing consists of inhaling and, while holding the air in, forces it down to your Dan-Jun. Now, feel the energy stored in your Dan-Jun travelling to your muscles, giving you a significant and intrinsic power. While you force the air down to your Dan-Jun, you may exhale very slowly (tongue touches your upper teeth slightly). Do not tighten your face as this might cause dizziness. This method allows you to concentrate or focus your “Ki” on the part of the body that is used in the breathing technique.

Similarly, Dan-Jun breathing can be used while practicing Taekwondo forms. When a block or a strike is executed, it should be done while the air inhaled is forced down instantly to the Dan-Jun. Now, imagine the power generated in the Dan-Jun and transferred to your hands or feet. After the technique has been executed with real power, exhale while relaxing your body. You can feel rhythmical movement at the very moment you execute the technique.

Kihap is another kind of Dan-Jun breathing. Kihap is a scream you make without tightening your Dan-Jun. You should feel the air coming out slowly from your abdomen when you make Kihap.

As mentioned above, Dan-Jun is the center of gravity of a human body. Concentrating on the Dan-Jun after inhaling means adding weight to the center of gravity of your body. The heavier this center of

gravity is, the more stable your body is. Therefore, you can perform Taekwondo, kicking, punching, or any kind of physical activity.

Dan-Jun Breathing and Breaking

Before executing any type of breaking technique, you should concentrate on Dan-Jun breathing. If executed correctly, you should be able to visualize the power generated at the Dan-Jun and transfer this power to your hand or foot, whichever you use in your breaking. This is a critical moment, the moment of visualization that the breaking technique is successfully executed. Your hand or foot should be very tight only at the moment your hand or foot makes contact with the target. If your arm and hand is tight at the beginning of the execution or before you make contact with the target, you will not be able to obtain maximum speed because your muscle is too tense. When a muscle is too tense, there is no fluid motion.

Dan-Jun Breathing and Free Sparring

Any attack you try to execute must take place while you inhale, concentrate the air in your Dan-Jun, and have the maximum amount of “Ki” ready for use. If possible, attack your opponent while he/she is exhaling, when his/her “Ki” is temporarily drained out. It is at this point that your opponent is more vulnerable.

Conclusion

In general, Dan-Jun breathing can be used in many situations. For example, when you are nervous or under stress, Dan-Jun breathing can help you remain calm; therefore, you can recover your serenity and think more clearly. Practice of Dan-Jun breathing daily will result in better confidence, better concentration, and better health.

The importance of Dan-Jun breathing cannot be over emphasized in the training program of a martial artist. It takes constant practice to be able to do it automatically. It unlocks a tremendous potential by the release of the internal force or vital energy centered on the Dan-Jun. Through proper breathing, one attains self-confidence, good health, and spiritual unification, which is the ultimate goal of a true martial artist and the universal desire of all human beings.

Tips on Jumping Kicks

First of all, jumping kicks should NOT be attempted while sparring because it is dangerous to both you and your opponent, difficult to perform, and not always beneficial. Extreme caution and perfect timing is required to successfully perform jumping kicks. Jumping kicks look aesthetic in practice, but when sparring there are few circumstances where jumping kicks would be useful (e.g., your skill is much higher than your opponents; use jumping kicks as defensive move; you are faster than your opponent; your opponent is much taller than you; or you just want to show off).

- Defensive Jumping Kicks
- Jumping Spin kick
- Jumping Back kick
- Offensive Jumping Kicks
- Jumping Front Snap kick
- Jumping Sidekick (Flying Sidekick)
- Exercises to improve jumping height, speed, endurance

Defensive Jumping Spin Kicks

Jump first and then spin... This does not sound too difficult; yet, most people try to spin first and then their non-kicking foot never leaves the ground. If you are kicking with your left, try to lift your right as high as possible (to your butt, if you can) and then the spin will come naturally. Just make sure you tuck your non-kicking leg in.

This kick is useful when you know you are much better than your opponent. When your opponent walks in with his/her hands down, then, without stepping back, you should perform a jumping spin kick to your head level. NEVER USE THIS KICK AS AN OFFENSIVE MOVE.

Defensive Jumping Back Kick

This kick can be used as both an offensive and a defensive move. On the offense, you might want to take a step forward and then throw the kick. As a defensive technique, it is most effective against opposite leg mid-section roundhouses.

Wait until he/she starts the kick and then turn with his/her kick to perform a jumping back kick to his/her mid-section. One thing to bear in mind is Keep Your Guard Up.

Offensive Jumping Front Snap Kick

NEVER DO THIS IN A TOURNAMENT!! It does not work nearly as well in reality as in movies, although this would be a good board breaking technique.

Board Breaking Technique: Tuck in your non-kicking leg as high as possible. Make sure you are kicking with the ball of your foot (bent your toes). A running start generally will help but just a few steps will do, you do not need a 100-meter dash.

Offensive Jumping Sidekick (Flying Sidekick)

This kick is also great for breaking boards, or, when you're acting in a movie and are about to finish somebody off. The key is to tuck in the non-kicking leg. It's less important for a jumping side kick than a jumping spin kick, but it looks a lot better if your leg is tucked in.

Exercises

There are a lot of different exercises that you can do to improve your control, speed, and height. The following exercises are recommended:

- Jumping up and pulling your knees all the way to your chest. A lot of people kick their feet back to touch their butt, but that reduces your jumping distance by about half.
- A set of four different jumps consecutively.
 1. Jump and pull your knees to your chest
 2. Jump and legs shoot straight out in front of you and try to touch your toes with your hands
 3. Jump and do a split then touch your toes

Stretches

Tips for Stretching

The first thing to remember is that there are two basic types of stretching theories:

1. Regular stretches to loosen-up muscles before doing other exercises
 2. Excessive stretches to improve flexibility
- Regular Stretches: When stretching to loosen up muscles, proceed slowly and gently to stretch muscles.
 - Excessive Stretches: When trying to stretch to improve flexibility and limberness, the most important thing is to have the muscles thoroughly warmed-up. The best time to do this is after a good workout.
 - For those who have difficulty stretching and whose legs and or hips are especially tight, it is best if they can stretch as often as possible. For example, try to do stretching exercises and splits after jumping rope, jumping jacks, running in place, or anytime the muscles are warmed up. Stretching after aerobic activity will be easier and less likely to strain any muscles.
 - Stretching should be a supplement, NOT a replacement for proper aerobic warm up exercises!

Various Stretches

HEAD STRETCHES: Turn head left then right (5 counts), up and down (5 counts), circle left and right (5 counts).

KNEE STRETCHES: Hands on knees, bend them (10 counts) then straighten (10 counts). Legs at shoulder length apart, hands on ground (10 seconds), hands on hips lean back (10 counts).

HIP ROLLS: Hands on hips, roll left then right (10 counts each).

LEG STRETCHES: Turn left, front stance bend left knee (hands on knee), do opposite for right (10 counts each).

MORE LEG STRETCHES: Sit on left heel, knee on the ground, right leg open as far as possible, straight to the side, bend down to the right, left hand reaches over the head; then change to the opposite (10 counts each).

SPLITS: Legs as wide as you can, turn left face down, right face down, middle far down (10 counts each).

FINGER STRETCHES: Open and close hands (30 counts).

PUSHUPS AND SITUPS: Knuckle pushups recommended (10-20 counts each).

FLOOR LEG STRETCHES: Sit on floor, legs wide open, bend body over left leg, then right, then middle (10 counts each).

HURLER STRETCHES: Sit on floor, left leg out, right leg bent behind, bend body over left leg. Do opposite side (10 counts each).

HAMSTRING STRETCH: Sit on floor, legs together; try to touch your toes (10 counts).

BALANCING STRETCH: Try to jump 360 degrees both ways (3 or 4 counts each).

SKIING STRETCHES: Left leg out, right hand up, move each back at same time (20 counts), legs together, jump side to side (count of twenty).

AXE KICK STRETCHES: Try in-out, out-in, straight axe kicks (5 counts each leg).

THE ART OF TAEKWONDO

Learning how to defend yourself can be both very beneficial and fun through Taekwondo (TKD). TKD is a Korean martial art that literally means "the art of kicking and punching."

TKD, the most popular martial arts, had been around for much longer than many people think. The first appearance of TKD was around the year 3 A.D.

Even though the literal meaning implies that the martial art is nothing but hitting other people, it consists of much more. One of the most important concepts in TKD is respect to elders and higher-ranking students. When one enters the do-jang, one must greet the instructor with, "good morning/evening, sir"

"Sir" is always used when speaking to instructors and higher-ranking students. At the beginning of classes, students bow to their teachers and address them according to their rank. TKD takes respect, discipline, and manners very seriously.

What most students of the art find most enjoyable is the sparring, or fighting practices during classes. This is probably the essence of TKD; in that, students implement all the techniques and everything they learn and execute against their opponents. Practice fighting in class help students learn from their mistakes and improve their techniques so they can apply them in real life if they ever have to use them.

Taekwondo students also learn various Taekwondo forms. Forms are specific moves that are put together in sets of orderly steps. For example, in the first form, students start out turning to their left and block a low kick. The proceeding step is a counterattack: Students step forward and throw a punch. Then different moves go on for another 20 steps or so. One of the requirements to pass a belt test is the memorization of the forms.

During the classes, students are taught a variety of different techniques, ranging from normal punches to jumping, spinning crescent kicks. It is a lot of fun to learn these fancy moves, even though it takes a lot of practice. TKD helps stretch and work the muscles of the body. No matter how fit and flexible people are, they can always improve their flexibility level by practicing TKD.

In conclusion, there is so much to gain from practicing TKD. Not only does TKD incorporate the self-defense techniques, but it also teaches discipline and respect. It is a joy to participate in this sport, and TKD is very helpful in life.