



# MARTIAL ARTS

## for beginners !



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### Introduction

Hi, my name is Robert and I am 34; I've practised martial arts from Shotokan Karate to Koga and Togakure Ryu Ninjutsu since 1987 and am looking forward to sharing some of my insider knowledge right here in this great eBook.

Throughout my martial arts career many people have asked me which martial art I think they should 'do', the answer varies according to the secrets laid out here in this eBook. I hope you enjoy this eBook and thank you all for your interest in what is a fantastic 'hobby' and probably the least boring way to get fit ! If you would like to know more about the martial arts, why not visit me at... <http://www.wayofthesamurai.info/>

### Why Practise A Martial Art ?

Why indeed ? There are many reasons why people take to - and stay with - the martial arts including :

- A great way of getting fit
- A great way to gain confidence
- A relatively inexpensive hobby
- To learn self-control
- A fighting chance in today's violent society

31,330 reported violent offences in 2006 in Devon, UK - that's where I live and it is a relatively 'rural' area !

## How To Choose A Martial Art

There is no perfect martial art for any one type of person, all of us have different natural ways of moving which may mean we are physically pre-disposed to a certain art..for example, a graceful person may be better to look at arts such as Aikido or Taijutsu which rely on body movement more than strength. As a guide only I have attempted to pigeon hole the most popular martial arts.

Aikido Developed in the 20th Century, Aikido 'The way of harmonious spirit' is a gentle martial art which uses an aggressor's force against himself. By moving in a certain way, the Aikido artist can flow with the power of the attack and then quickly turn against that flow - leading in a very painful arm lock, wrist lock or similar.

Aikido does not use weapons

To watch an Aikido artist you would notice a sense of calm and a seemingly lack of effort.

Judo 'The gentle way' developed in Japan in the 19th century as a means of winning back some of the reputation of Jujutsu - the original Japanese martial art used by Samurai for hundreds of years. Jujutsu had gained a bad reputation thanks to the Ninja who had torn Jujutsu apart to create 'Taijutsu' - a very violent but highly effective method of combat.

Judo concentrates on the grappling side of fighting and appears similar to Sumo wrestling and is accepted enough to even feature in the Olympics.

Judo does not involve the use of weapons

To watch a Judo artist you would notice the strength used and similarity to Sumo Wrestling

Karate Probably the most famous martial art, Karate's roots lie in Okinawa in Japan where (it is said) the Japanese farmers invented the art to protect themselves against the bullying Samurai and Bandits who would often take their crops. Karate is amazingly popular and thus is the easiest art to find a dojo (School) and buy equipment. Great for all ages and builds, Karate is the art of the empty hand and uses strong stances and speed to defeat the opponent. Karate is at least the best martial art for a beginner to learn - it's simple 'copy-the-teacher' way of learning teaches the many moves speedily and instills huge amounts of discipline. Karate is highly accepted and features in the Olympics.

Most styles of Karate do not use weapons

To watch a Karate artist you would notice the self-discipline, high kicks and strong stances

Kendo 'The Way of the Sword' is another Japanese martial art and concerns itself with spiritual refinement through the Way of the Samurai sword. A popular art that is very ceremonial but rated highly in international competitions. Practitioners battle in (expensive) leather armour with bamboo swords in an attempt to achieve the psychological benefits that Kendo offers. As it is a 'Do' ('Way'..ie..the spiritual side) and not a 'Jutsu' ('Skill'..ie..the fighting art), Kendo is not exactly the same as what the Samurai would do. Modern Kendo uses movements that would not kill in reality but are good enough to win a point in a competition.

Kendo is very strict and involves a fair amount of ceremony.

Kendo uses the Shinai (bamboo sword) and Bokken (wooden sword); master practitioners practise with the Katana (Japanese Samurai sword)

To watch a Kendo artist you would notice the amazing amount of discipline and focus

Kick Boxing Kickboxing is a martial art which was made for beating Muay Thai by Japanese boxing promoter Osamu Noguchi in 1950. Today the term 'Kick Boxing' is used to describe what are actually several different styles of martial art including Muay Thai and Thai Boxing.

Kick boxing is a hugely recognised sport which can lead to a career fighting around the world and is best for 'born street-fighters' who are not particularly interested in the arm-locks, throws and other 'Kung Fu stuff' that most martial arts use.

Kick boxing is probably one of the cheapest martial arts to learn since there is no real uniform outside of a pair of Boxing-style shorts and gloves.

Some masters use weapons

To watch a Kick Boxer you would notice the 'no BS' style

Kung Fu (aka 'Gung Fu') Made famous by Bruce Lee, there are many styles of Kung Fu including Jeet Kune Do and Lau Gar. Kung Fu is a very fast martial art from China which employs many throws, kicks and methods of dodging attacks. Whilst hand-springs, tumbles and leaps are present in most styles of Kung Fu, there is no basis to believe you will be able to fly or jump high buildings like you see in the movies!

Most styles of Kung Fu use weapons including the Staff, Nunchakus (rice flails) and sword

To watch a Kung Fu artist you would notice super-fast speed and strange stances (originating from mimicking animals)

Ninjutsu 'Stealth skills', made famous by Masaaki Hatsumi and Stephen K. Hayes, there are in fact many different styles of Ninjutsu. The 34 styles of Ninjutsu which make up the 'Togakure Ryu' of which Masaaki Hatsumi claims to be Grandmaster all originate from Iga Mountain in feudal Japan. Actual Ninjutsu is almost dead, the skills of camouflage and espionage once of vital importance to the Ninja have been all-but dropped today in favour of the westerner-friendly 'Nin Po Taijutsu' (NIN PO = the WAY of the stealth man and Taijutsu = Body skills).

There are thousands of myths surrounding Ninjutsu (see <http://www.wayofthesamurai.info/>) but if you are looking for a highly effective martial art that is tricky but fun to learn then Ninjutsu is for you but be warned - belts are awarded only when your teacher feels you are worth them and you will have to spar against other pupils in order to win your new belt.

Serious martial artists may be put off by the fact that there are actually 16th Dan Black Belts out there (!)

Ninjutsu uses many weapons and is not invited in martial art competitions

To watch a Ninjutsu artist you would notice the acrobatic qualities and violence

Tai Chi Chuan It is said that Tai Chi Chuan (also known as Taijiquan) is the best art for those who want to fight only themselves - it is probably the best art for the older generation as it's slow and graceful movements are more suited to relaxation than actual combat.

A slow, meditative art, Tai Chi is very beautiful to watch and originates in China.

Tai Chi may sometimes use a Chinese Sword

To watch Tai Chi you would notice how slow it is

## Now Find A School !

Okay, now you know a little about each martial art the next thing to do is go try it out.

I advise you go see the Doctor first and check your body is up to the challenge !

Firstly, do not buy any special kit just yet, 99% of martial arts schools will let you train for the first few weeks with just your tracksuit as your uniform - warning : in this period it is imperative that although not exactly 'committed' to your new art, you will still need some type of insurance (see 'What You Will Need' below).

Visit your local Library and Council or Sports Associations to find out which martial arts are available in your area; you may find it tough to find a Ninjutsu or Kendo dojo (school) in your area so be ready for a bit of hunting. I would personally advise you visit your local martial arts supplies store (shop) as the owners work every day with the martial art teachers in your area and can steer you in the right direction.

Before you go to the School you should have a little bit of a think about what you want to get out of it - are you in it just for fitness, discipline or fun? As we have already covered, some arts are more traditional (ceremonious) than others and that may be either a turn-on or a turn-off for you at this early stage. You should also consider the reputation of the school and whether they have any allegiance to a society which you can check (for example, here in the UK most Shotokan Karate Schools are members of the KUGB )

Be sure to arrive nice and early for your first training session and take some fluids for after - this could be a bit tiring ! Use this spare time to talk to your teacher and gauge the general feel of the school - in my experience schools that let their pupils shout and mess about before the session begins are generally a waste of time - all martial arts need discipline.

Don't join up straight after your first session - you will be high from nature's drug 'endorphins' and it's not the best time to evaluate how you feel. Go home and write down what you feel you learnt on this first outing and what you think of the school, be cruel as this is a place you could well be spending up to 5 hours per week in for many years to come. Visit other schools in your area and do the same with them, eventually (no need to rush) you will find the perfect school for you.

## What You Will Need

After training in your new school in your tracksuit for a few weeks, you will need to pay for these things:

- Training insurance (usually provided by your club) Average = £30 / year
- A uniform (called 'Gi' for Japanese arts) Average = £25
- Membership to any related board (example, British Shotokan Karate schools are members of the KUGB) Average = £30 / year
- Money for your subs (weekly fees to the club) Average = £4 per session
- (optional) Money to enter martial arts competitions Average = £20 plus travel
- Money to pay for gradings (a test to get your next belt) - usually once per 3 months Average = £20
- Any style related kit (example in Kendo you will need a bamboo sword) Average = £17

These prices are in British Pounds since I do not know the average prices of these items in other countries.

## What To Expect

I have trained at many martial arts schools since my apprenticeship began in 1987 and am happy to say that they have all been very welcoming and readily forgive us for not knowing the ceremonies (when to bow, take off your shoes etcetera). A good martial arts school will not treat you favourably over the other students but will, of course, correct your mistakes. At this point it is worth mentioning that many people drop out at this early stage because they find it difficult to learn; I advise that you try a few more sessions and if you still find you have learnt nothing then have a word with the teacher - it could be that this is simply not the school for you or it could just be that you are trying too hard !..relax, enjoy yourself, forget black belts, be positive.

What you will actually be doing depends on the art and the school, Ninjutsu for instance do not always separate their belts since they believe all students should be able to do all of the skills (the only difference in the belts is how good that student is at doing those things!), however, most schools will put you in with the other beginners where you will warm-up then learn a few basic elements of your art such as stances, simple punches and simple blocks. Nobody expects you to do these things perfectly but you are expected to practise at home too.

## Common Misconceptions

Phew ! Where do I begin ?

The beliefs of those who have never actually practised a martial art range from Ninja Invisibility skills to Karate Kids who can knock down walls !

It is true to say that many of the misconceptions regarding the martial arts were actually invented by that art itself - from Karate chops to Ninja leaping walls, we've all seen it and we all know it's not true.

In the most part, the misconceptions do have a basis in reality all be it a bit blurred - Ninja did disappear but not by magic - they would simply move out of the field of vision or drop and roll to a hiding place; Karate masters can break roof tiles all be it that the tiles are strategically placed so that smashing through one tile is enough to weaken the tiles below....but isn't that part of the charm of the martial arts? They have a story, a history and a bit of fun!

The most common misconception is that martial arts don't work, in fact this misconception is strong enough that many 'Sport martial Arts' have sprung from X-Bouncers and Bodyguards and are known as 'Reality Training'; I call it thuggery!

Since a 'Martial Art' is 'An Art of War or Military Skill', it could be said that most martial arts today are actually sports. Arts such as Aikido and Judo never originated on the field of battle.

In fact most of today's so-called 'Martial Arts' have never been used in war! But does that mean they do not work?

Of course, one can only judge a skill by it's greatest exponent and so if we see someone who is rubbish at Shotokan Karate we might guess that Shotokan Karate is useless, however, if we turned our attention to Sensei Dave Hazard 7Th Dan instead, we would see that Shotokan is a formidable art! Whether a martial art will save you from every attack is doubtful but surely to have an extra trick up your sleeve is worth something?

## Be A Black Belt In Half The Time !

If you are looking to be a black belt in any martial art you will need to lose the cut-to-the-chase attitude that lead you to read this paragraph. To attain Black Belt in any martial art is an honour and a mark of dedication, that dedication and skill is learnt with blood, sweat and tears. Unfortunately there are schools that seem to throw the belts at you but I would advise you avoid them - if every student passes every grading it's probably a bad school that just wants your money.

Whilst there is no short-cut to Black Belt there are a few tips I would like to share with you before I end this book:

1 Learn to meditate: the focus it brings will ensure you have a clear head and learn quickly, it will also speed up your reactions and generally make you a more calm individual.  
You can learn how to meditate at <http://www.wayofthesamurai.info/>

2 Train even when you don't want to: after all, a mugger doesn't always attack when it suits you or when you feel 100% alert and fit.

3 Train at home: 'Perfect practise makes perfect' - most martial art schools train two to three times a week, you should train yourself at home as your 'homework'; practise those moves but be sure to only practise the ones you feel you are doing correctly..if you keep practising a move that you are doing wrong then it will be harder to learn how to do it right!

Enjoy it: I love martial arts and always have, from my first Karate punch to writing this eBook I have enjoyed every part of my martial arts career and wish you the very best luck in yours !

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## Thank You For Reading

Thank you for reading this great little eBook, I trust you found it helpful and wish you the very best in your martial arts career.

If I could leave you with one final thought it would be to remember that a good martial art teaches you how to not have to fight....