



# AAU Competition Guide



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How long will we be there?

How do we sign up?

**What do we need to bring?**

Will there be someone there to help my child?

What should we expect?

**Do I need special stuff?**

WHO WILL MY CHILD COMPETE AGAINST?

Girls compete separately from boys. Then athletes are grouped first by event, age and finally belt level.

POSSIBLE EVENTS

Kata  
Kobudo (weapons)  
Kumite (sparring)  
Team: kata, kobudo, kumite (Nationals only)

CURRENT AAU AGE BRACKETS

6 and under  
7 year olds  
8 year olds  
9 year olds  
10 year olds  
11 year olds  
12 year olds  
13-15 year olds  
15-18 year olds  
Team events: 5-8 year olds, 9-12 year olds

CATEGORY LEVELS

Your child should register based on his/her competition experience. This means your child will often compete with a belt color that does not reflect their current rank. Check with your Sensei before sending in your registration form!

**Beginner** (1st year competing): wear white belt  
**Novice** (2nd year competing): wear green belt  
**Intermediate** (3-4th year competing): wear brown belt  
**Advanced** (5th year and over): wear black belt

**Competition season** generally starts in late January with its State competition and ends mid-summer with Nationals. They typically hold 3-4 competitions a year. See the Fonseca Martial Arts website for tournament schedules, and check the AAU Karate website (aaukarate.org) for entry forms and competition guidelines.

In advance of the tournament:

Team members are asked to **wear the red Fonseca team shirt** (parents, too, if possible—this helps build team presence onsite). Repeat competitors are asked to purchase and wear their red Fonseca warmup jacket and pants. Shirts and warm-ups can be purchased from the Booster Club. The team jacket is embroidered with each student’s name and so takes several weeks to arrive.

An **AAU patch** is mandatory! Attach it to the left side of the gi jacket with a few stitches (AAU patches are available for sale at the dojo and are often also sold at the tournaments).

**Clean and press your child’s gi (do not crease sleeves or pants!).** The youngest competitors can wear whatever dojo gi they have. Repeat competitors should invest in a good kata gi. Repeat competitors ages 9 and over also benefit from having a separate sparring gi, and the scheduling generally provides time to change between events.

**Pack the right competition belt** and, if sparring, pack all requisite sparring gear. If your child is a boy, a protective cup is mandatory!

There is food sold onsite, and there are a few fast food restaurants in the area. That said, many parents prefer to pack a small cooler with water, snacks and sandwiches.

What to expect that day:

Tournaments start early—typically 8:30am—and the youngest competitors go first. Although you can leave as soon as your events are over (typically around noon for younger competitors), **please try to stay until all Fonseca students have competed**—typically in the mid-afternoon—as a show of team spirit.

As a spectator, **expect to pay an admission fee.** Fees start at \$5 and increase as the significance of the tournament increases (admission to Nationals can run as high as \$15 a person).

On arrival, **register with AAU personnel** and then find a spot in the bleachers with the rest of the team.

Younger athletes should **change immediately, and check in with the Fonseca coaches.** The coaches will warm up the team in the staging area.

**Listen for event calls to ‘staging area.’** The staging area is where kids line up and AAU staffers inventory who’s actually there for each event. Kids can get called to staging a full half hour before their event. There is an established schedule, but events can start early or late depending on the number of competitors in the events before your child’s.

After your child’s events, please **check in with your child’s results.** One team parent is tasked with tracking kids and event outcomes at each tournament.

**Equipment checklist** If you purchased your equipment through the dojo, it will meet AAU guidelines. All equipment below is mandantory for AAU competitions.

For kata + weapons

☐ CLEAN + PRESSED (NO CREASES) NO EXTRA PATCHES OR ADORNMENTS

☐ AAU KARATE PATCH

☐ APPROPRIATE COLOR COMPETITION BELT

☐ ARM LENGTH HEMMED TO SHOW WRIST BONE

☐ LEG LENGTH HEMMED TO SHOW ANKLE BONE



For sparring, add these:

☐ AAU APPROVED HEAD GEAR + FACE SHIELD



☐ FITTED MOUTH GUARD



☐ PROTECTIVE CUP (FOR BOYS—REFEREES WILL CHECK!)

☐ AAU APPROVED FIST GUARDS



☐ AAU APPROVED SHIN + INSTEP GUARDS



# Frequently asked questions

**How do I know my child is ready?**

The only way to find out is to try it. Start with a dojo tournament and see how they respond. Many children discover that being an active part of a team is exciting and fun—there are no benchwarmers in karate!

**Is my child too young or too inexperienced?**

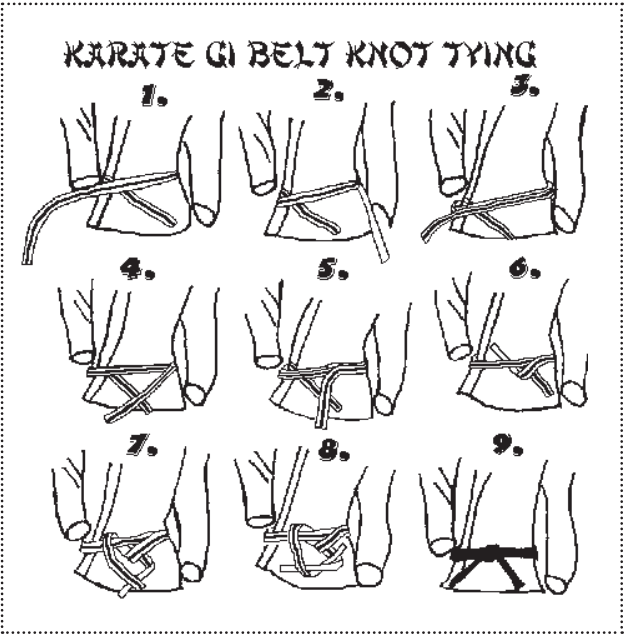
Students of any age or belt level can compete. The youngest division is for ages 6 and under, and the oldest division is for adults 35 and up.

**Does my child need to be invited to join?**

No. The only requirement for participating is the desire to do so.

**How can I help prepare my child?**

More than anything, competing should be fun and its own reward. Encourage them to both try their best and have a good time.



**Is it a big commitment?**

We have team members who travel internationally, some travel nationally, and some do only local tournaments. We are fortunate that our AAU chapter is located in Grayslake, so most competitions are 45 minutes away. All events require an AAU patch, and there is specific equipment for kumite—ask Sensei John or Elisa for guidance.

**It’s hard to think about them losing—what do I say?**

Children need help thinking beyond winning or losing. Every athlete at the competition wants to win, and only a few will do so. No child should judge themselves by the outcome of one competition. Everyone has better days and worse days, and the only way for a competitor to understand their skill is to compete a lot. Help your child focus on the fun and what they learned from the day.



If you would like more information, or just to talk to a parent of a currently competing child, contact Jenny Segal at [jdsegal@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jdsegal@sbcglobal.net).