

LEVELED BOOK • L

Karate



**Multi
level
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Karate



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Focus Question

What is karate, and what does it teach people who practice it?



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What Is Karate?

Karate is a **martial art** in which people don't use weapons. The word *karate* means "empty hand."



People who practice karate gain amazing strength and lightning-quick speed.



Men practice karate in 1938 on the island where it may have begun. Today, the island is a part of Japan.

Many people believe that karate began in the 1600s on an island between China and Japan. The people who lived on the island could not have weapons. They came up with karate as a way to **defend** themselves. Now, karate is popular all around the world.



A sensei helps students practice their moves in a dojo.

The Gym

Karate students train at a **dojo**, or gym. When they enter a dojo, they bow their heads to show good manners. The karate teacher is called a **sensei**. The sensei has many lessons to pass on. Students learn to listen to their sensei and follow the rules of the dojo.

Belts

Students have to wear the right clothes before they start to train. In the dojo, they wear a special robe, or *gi*, with a colored belt around the waist. Students move on to different colored belts as they train and gain new skills. However, getting a new belt isn't just about learning new moves.



Students earn new belts when their sensei thinks they are ready.

While students earn belts, they learn many good habits, such as self-control and **patience**. They can use these skills in other areas of their lives. The good habits students learn are just as important as the moves they practice.



Karate is more than a physical activity. Students learn to work on their minds and spirits as well as their bodies.

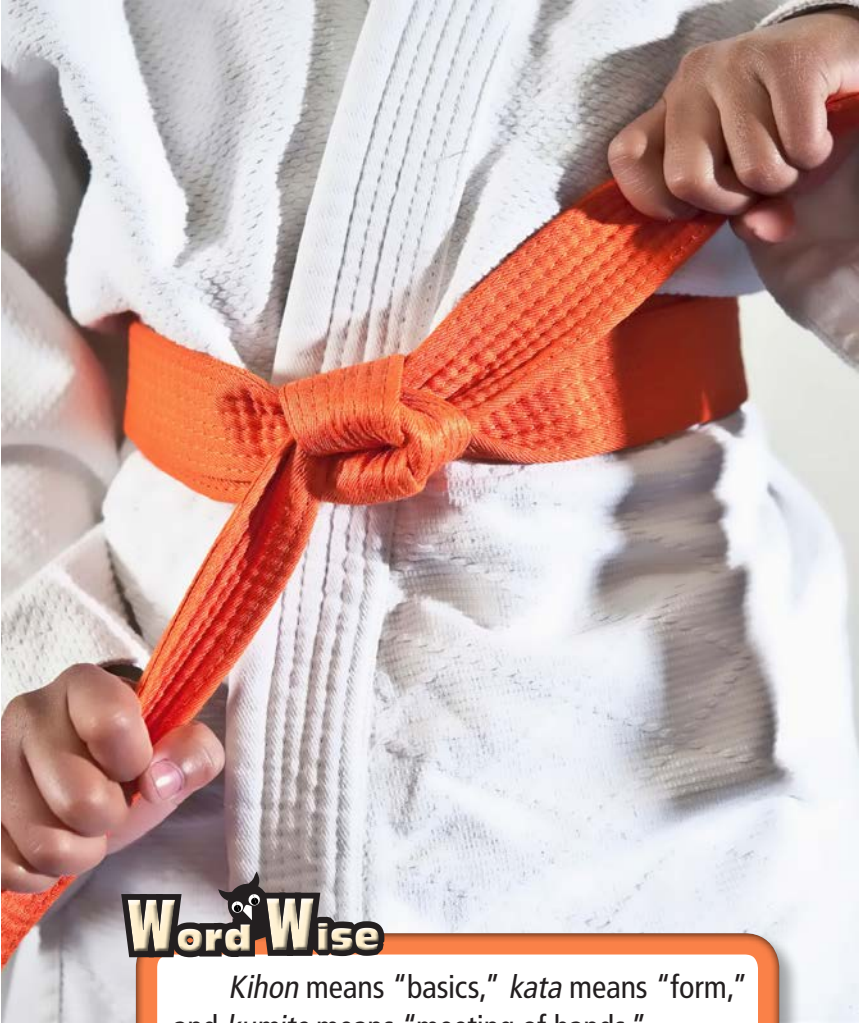


Beginners start with a white belt. Next they earn yellow, then orange. They move through each color until they earn the black belt.

Students earn new colored belts in a certain order. One story tells the meaning of each color through the growth of a plant. The different colors of the belts stand for the colors of the Sun, plant, and sky. A student grows much like a young plant. They grow as time passes and gain more skills.

Learning Karate

Students learn karate in three main steps: *kihon*, *kata*, and *kumite*.



Word Wise

Kihon means "basics," *kata* means "form," and *kumite* means "meeting of hands."

Kihon

Kihon is the set of moves for beginners. In kihon, students learn to breathe correctly and stand in the right position. They also learn how to do kicks, punches, blocks, and other moves. It is important for them to learn patience. Students practice until they are perfect.



In kihon, students learn one move at a time.

There Is a Proper Way to Breathe?

In karate, there is a special way to breathe so that students can do their best. Breathe from your stomach, not your chest. Your body is not very strong when you breathe in. Make sure to breathe out and let out a big shout when you do a move. Shouting makes you breathe out very hard. This makes your body stronger!





Katas are often a routine of punches, kicks, blocks, turns, and other moves.

Kata

Kata is putting the moves from kihon into a routine. Students pretend to fight off attackers and learn to defend themselves. They also practice their flow from one move to the next. There are many different katas to learn.

We're Just Dancing!

Doing a kata looks a lot like dancing. For this reason, the people who came up with karate were able to practice it without anyone knowing. They said that their karate routines were not for defending themselves. Instead, they said they were just doing some harmless dancing!



Bunkai teaches students to be focused.

Many students also practice *bunkai* while learning kata. In bunkai, students learn why the moves from kata are useful. They learn to slow down and think about each move before they do it.



Students pretend they are in a real fight. This is the last step on the path to the black belt.

Kumite

After a lot of hard work, karate students reach the last step. In kumite, they use everything they have learned by practicing moves on one another.

Conclusion

For many years, people around the world have learned good habits through karate. They have also worked hard to become stronger and faster, and to earn new belts. Some students hope to become karate masters, and everyone has a lot of fun trying to get there.



Anyone who practices karate knows that there is always something new to learn.

Glossary

defend (<i>v.</i>)	to keep oneself safe from harm or attack (p. 5)
dojo (<i>n.</i>)	a school for practicing Japanese martial arts (p. 6)
karate (<i>n.</i>)	a method of self-defense in which people use their hands and feet instead of weapons (p. 4)
martial art (<i>n.</i>)	one of several sports in which students practice fighting and self-defense (p. 4)
patience (<i>n.</i>)	the ability to wait or to deal with problems without getting upset (p. 8)
sensei (<i>n.</i>)	a teacher or leader, often of Japanese martial arts (p. 6)

Words to Know

defend

dojo

karate

martial art

patience

sensei

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Connections

Writing and Art

What do you think is the most important thing people learn from practicing karate? Draw a picture and write about it.

Social Studies

How is karate the same as dancing?
How is it different? Make a Venn diagram with a partner to show your ideas.

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