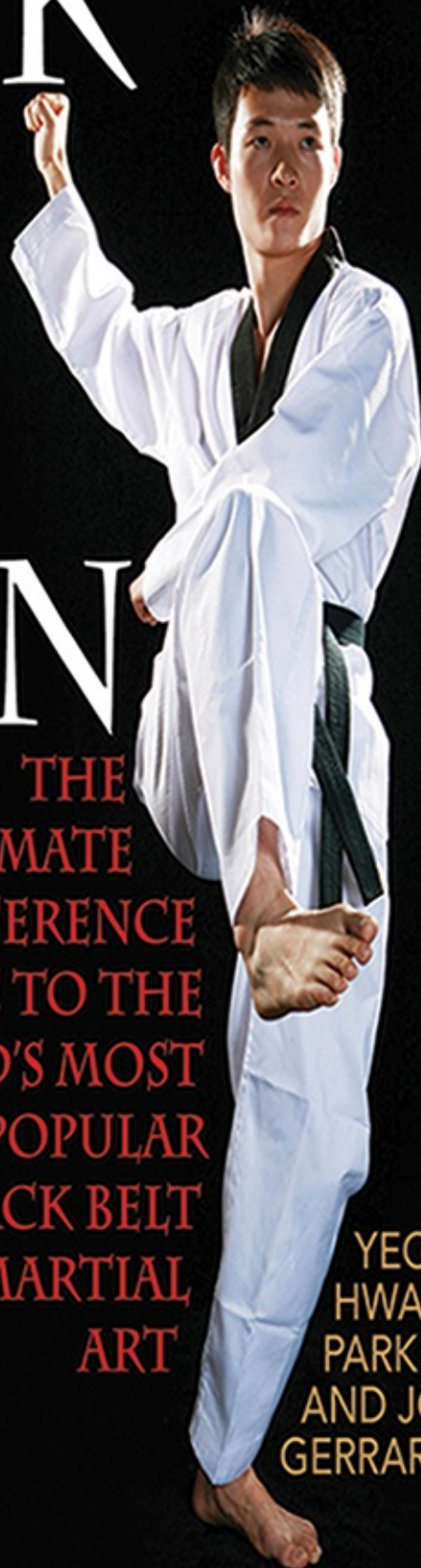


# BLACK BELT TAE KWON DO



THE  
ULTIMATE  
REFERENCE  
GUIDE TO THE  
WORLD'S MOST  
POPULAR  
BLACK BELT  
MARTIAL  
ART

YEON  
HWAN  
PARK  
AND JON  
GERRARD



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**BLACK BELT**  
**TAE KWON DO**

**The Ultimate Reference Guide to the  
World's Most Popular Black Belt Martial Art**

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**BLACK BELT  
TAE KWON DO**

**Yeon Hwan Park**

**Jon Gerrard**



Skyhorse Publishing

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In the years since we wrote our first book, *Tae Kwon Do: The Ultimate Reference Guide to the World's Most Popular Martial Art*, many people have expressed their pleasure with the book as a reference guide and teaching aid. The one thing that each of them has commented on, however, is the lack of information on black belt techniques. When we wrote that first book, it was our intention to encompass only the color belt/student level techniques to provide beginning Tae Kwon Do students with a means to allow them to study and practice more effectively on their own. To our delight, that book has achieved that and more. Across the United States, and in other countries as well, many Tae Kwon Do masters use the book as a primer for their students. At all Y. H. Park Taekwondo Centers, students are encouraged to obtain a copy of the book to help them when practicing on their own—and the results are impressive. Students find ready answers by referring to the book, allowing them to work through forms or techniques on their own. Time and again we have seen students accelerate in mastering the various techniques by using that book.

Now we have written this companion book for black belt-level practitioners. As with the first book, we have included clear photographic representations of each technique and form to allow practitioners to work more effectively on their own. We want to emphasize, however, that no book can take the place of actual instruction. These books are intended to serve as study aids and sources of information. Pictures cannot replace the knowing eye of an experienced instructor. Written explanations cannot convey the same understanding of timing and focus imparted by a qualified master. In other words, you cannot become an instant black belt by reading this, or any other, book. However, students of the art will find these books to be valuable references on every aspect of the art.

Black belts are the leaders of the Tae Kwon Do community. Lower level practitioners look to them for guidance. It is expected that once a student reaches the level of black belt he or she will assist with the training of the lower belts. Traditionally, the rank of black belt has been understood to mean “advanced student,” or one who has mastered all of the basic techniques. In fact, first to third degree black belts are addressed by the title *chokyonim*, which means “instructor.” Understanding this, we have also included in this book sections on how to effectively teach Tae Kwon Do. Although a person may be an impressive martial artist, it doesn't automatically mean that teaching will come naturally to him or her. We have drawn upon our years of teaching experience to put together what we feel is a solid core of instructional approaches. As with the art itself, however, teaching is not something learned without proper training. Some students feel that merely achieving the level of black belt qualifies them to be teachers. A few even attempt to open their own schools. This is a mistake. Although they have earned the title of *chokyonim*, it is only under the watchful tutelage of a seasoned master that a person can learn to be an effective teacher. Even those gifted with natural teaching ability can benefit from apprenticing themselves to an experienced master. After all, it is your students who will suffer if you are not properly prepared to teach them.

Finally, we want to repeat the invitation we extended in our first book. To truly understand and appreciate Tae Kwon Do, one must experience it. Come, study and experience with us.

Grandmaster Yeon Hwan Park  
Jon Gerra



**Grandmaster Park (center) and Mr. Gerrard (second from right) with the Y.H. Park instructor staff**



# ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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We want to thank the following people for graciously donating their time and efforts to help us make this book possible:

Master Ha Young Cho  
Master Young S. Kim  
Master Brian C. Jang  
Master Keun H. Lee  
Instructor Seung M. Kim  
Earl Anderson

We would also like to extend a special thanks to Peter Kohn, who took all of the photographs that appear in the book.

Finally, we want to acknowledge the special assistance of Team-USA for their invaluable contribution to the sections on managing and marketing a Tae Kwon Do school.



## THE WORLD TAEKWONDO FEDERATION

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I am pleased to give my enthusiastic endorsement to this book. I was immensely pleased when I learned that Master Park and Mr. Gerrard were working on a sister book to their original work, *Tae Kwon Do*. Their first book has become the definitive reference guide for Taekwondo practitioners around the world. And with good reason, Master Park and Mr. Gerrard have succeeded in concisely organizing the elements of our art into a single, easy-to-understand volume. Now they have done the same for black belt students.

This book is a worthy companion to their earlier work. Not only does it clearly illustrate the advanced level techniques, it also goes beyond a mere explanation of the physical techniques to include essential information on effective teaching and training practices. This will benefit both instructors and student alike. For anyone interested in running a school, the information they have put together on managing and marketing is invaluable. Anyone who considers himself a serious student of our art should make these books an essential part of his library.



Un Yong KIM  
President

**Official Sport in Sydney 2000 Olympic Games**

# United States Taekwondo Union

One Olympic Plaza, Suite 405  
Colorado Springs, CO 80909  
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FAX: (719) 578-4642



It is with great pleasure that I give my strong endorsement to this book on the art of Tae Kwon Do. Like everyone else in the Tae Kwon Do community, I am very familiar with the first book written by Master Park and Mr. Gerrard. Its clear explanations of the basic techniques of our art have made it the instructional manual and reference guide of choice for a great many practitioners. Now they are bringing us this excellent book on Black Belt level techniques. This sequel has been long awaited by students and instructors alike.

Continuing where the original book left off, *Black Belt Tae Kwon Do* gives a comprehensive treatment of the advanced techniques of the art. I can think of no better books to recommend to anyone who wants to have a complete reference source for Tae Kwon Do. I give this book my highest recommendation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sang Chul Lee", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sang Chul Lee  
President, US Taekwondo Union



An Olympic/Pan American Sports Organization  
Member of the World Taekwondo Federation

Tae Kwon Do, the Korean art of unarmed fighting, has a long and proud history. Its earliest roots have been traced back more than 2,000 years to 50 B.C. when artists of the time incorporated images of fighters using classic Tae Kwon Do techniques in their work. Known in its earliest form as Taek Kyon, this fighting art has developed over the centuries since its creation into the deadly self-defense system and immensely popular international sport that it is today. But what is Tae Kwon Do? How is it different from other martial art systems? And why has it become such a renowned popular sport?



*Tae Kwon Do* literally means the art (*do*) of kicking (*tae*) and punching (*kwon*). But this is only the barest, most superficial definition of an intricate and complex art. Certainly, Tae Kwon Do is a system of unarmed self-defense, in which the practitioner uses parts of his or her body as weapons. Advanced level practitioners have the ability to shatter bone with a single kick or hand strike. But self-defense is only one aspect of our art. During the Silla dynasty in Korea (A.D. 668-A.D. 935), a group of traveling warriors known as the Hwarang were responsible for the spread of the system throughout the country. These nomadic warriors were not mere soldiers however. These were well-educated nobles dedicated to the highest of moral ideals. While Taek Kyon was incorporated into their basic education, the core of their learning was centered on Confucian philosophy and Buddhist morality. In all things, their actions were guided by a set of principles known as the Five Codes of Human Conduct that stressed loyalty and justice as the central tenets of a moral life. While very effective as a system of self-defense, this early form of Tae Kwon Do served mainly as a sport and recreational activity designed to improve the character of its practitioners. Since that time, Tae Kwon Do has remained an art centered on personal growth and moral improvement.

Although Tae Kwon Do shares some superficial traits in common with other martial arts, it can be differentiated from these other systems by certain very specific characteristics. To begin with, Tae Kwon Do relies predominantly on kicking techniques. As much as 70 percent of the techniques in our art are kicks. The added reach and strength of the legs make them superior at delivering powerful blows. Tae Kwon Do takes advantage of this by centering the majority of its techniques on leg attacks. Secondly, the kicking techniques of Tae Kwon Do are performed in a uniquely quick, snapping manner. Beginning by bending the leg into a tightly coiled position, the kicks of Tae Kwon Do snap out and back with a quickness not found in other systems. In addition to this, Tae Kwon Do makes use of a very mobile, upright fighting stance that allows for quick action on the part of the fighter. Unlike other systems that make use of deeper, more formal stances, Tae Kwon Do practitioners start

virtually upright. Although the lower, rigid stances of other systems do provide their practitioners with a high degree of stability, the philosophy of Tae Kwon Do is that it is better to be able to move quickly on your feet rather than to be firmly rooted in one place.

Tae Kwon Do's immense popularity as a sport is due to the unique and dynamic nature of its sparring competitions. By using lightweight padding that protects the wearer from serious injury yet still allows for virtually unrestricted movement, Tae Kwon Do fighters are free to throw virtually any technique with full power. This not only enables the competitors to move freely and use their techniques safely, but it affords spectators the opportunity to witness dazzling displays of acrobatic skill. The numerous high, jumping and spinning kicking techniques of Tae Kwon Do would quickly lead to serious injury without the protective gear now in use. With it, however, practitioners can give and receive numerous blows throughout the course of a match and continue to compete. This aspect of the art ultimately earned it a spot on the roster of international sports, including the Olympic Games. Today, Tae Kwon Do is practiced in 167 countries by an estimated 40 million people and is recognized as the most popular martial art system in the world.

Over the years, a number of different governing bodies have arisen with the aim of unifying Tae Kwon Do practitioners. For many years different styles of the art were practiced, each of which called itself Tae Kwon Do. Each of these different schools, or *kwans*, were based on the teachings of different masters who emphasized slightly different aspects of the art. Although a few of these *kwans* remain independent to this day, the vast majority of Tae Kwon Do schools have allied themselves under the jurisdiction of the World Taekwondo Federation (WTF), which is the only organization recognized by the Korean government as the international regulating body for Tae Kwon Do. Within each country outside of Korea, various governing bodies have been established under the auspices of the WTF (see appendix D). In the United States of America, all official Tae Kwon Do activities are governed by the United States Taekwondo Union (USTU). All of the information and techniques in this book refer to Tae Kwon Do as it is taught by the WTF/USTU.

This book has been written to provide information on the advanced techniques of the modern art of Tae Kwon Do. As such, we have assumed that the reader has a certain basic understanding of the art and we have not taken the space to explain many of the more elementary principles and concepts. Our companion book to this work, *Tae Kwon Do*, covers all of the basic information and techniques that beginning students (below the level of black belt) need to know. We encourage you to refer to this companion book if you are not already familiar with Tae Kwon Do so that you can gain the full benefits of this book.

# 1 Philosophy of Tae Kwon Do

---

Two thousand years ago, Korea was divided into three kingdoms: Silla, founded in 57 B.C.; Koguryo, founded in 37 B.C.; and Baekche, founded in 18 B.C. Of the three kingdoms, Silla was the smallest and had the least developed civilization. Established near the coast of the Korean peninsula, the smallest kingdom was constantly under attack by Japanese pirates. In desperation, Silla eventually asked for help from King Gwanggaeto in the neighboring kingdom of Koguryo, the largest and most powerful of the three kingdoms. King Gwanggaeto, the 19th of the Koguryo monarchs, knew that if the pirates were allowed to establish a foothold in Silla, they would pose a threat to the entire Korean peninsula. In response, the king sent a force of 50,000 soldiers to help its smaller neighbor drive out the pirates. It was during this joint campaign that the Koguryo soldiers were first exposed to a system of unarmed fighting known in Silla as Taek Kyon, the early precursor of modern Tae Kwon Do. Passed in strict secrecy to a few select Koguryo warriors by early masters of the art, Taek Kyon was eventually brought back to the court of King Gwanggaeto. The king was so impressed with what he saw that he ordered training in Taek Kyon to be incorporated into the formal education of the young nobility.

The warrior nobility of Koguryo were a very special elite group of men known as the society of the Hwarang-do (“the way of flowering manhood”). Selected between the ages of 16 and 20 for inclusion in this prestigious group, the members of the Hwarang-do were chosen from among the sons of the royal family, who served as the leaders, and the rest of the noble families who formed the main body of the order. As the leader class within their society these young men were gifted with the finest education. The value of a well-rounded education was appreciated by generations of the Koguryo monarchy, who understood that the welfare of their society depended on the wisdom of its leaders. Aside from such practical disciplines as history, swordsmanship, riding, archery and military tactics, the Hwarang-do were also instructed in ethics, Buddhist morality and Confucian philosophy. In particular, they had adopted the teachings of the Buddhist scholar Wonkang as the guiding principle for their way of life. Their life philosophy was centered on a set of principles known as the Five Codes of Human Conduct:

- Be loyal to your country
- Be obedient to your parents
- Be trustworthy to your friends
- Never retreat in battle
- Never make an unjust kill

To break any of these codes was unthinkable, because it was these codes that defined the essence of who and what the Hwarang-do were. When Taek Kyon was incorporated into their curriculum, it too became subject to the moral and philosophical principles that guided their lives. As such, while Taek Kyon remained an effective fighting system, its main purpose was to help perfect the character of its practitioners. From that time until today, although the physical techniques and even the name of the art have undergone change, its core purpose has remained the same.

Today, modern Tae Kwon Do has expanded on the original Five Codes of the Hwarang-do

modifying them into what is now known as the Eleven Commandments of Tae Kwon Do:

---

Loyalty to your country  
Respect your parents  
Faithfulness to your spouse  
Respect your brothers and sisters  
Loyalty to your friends  
Respect your elders  
Respect your teachers  
Never take life unjustly  
Indomitable spirit  
Loyalty to your school  
Finish what you begin

Along with mastering the physical techniques of our art, all Tae Kwon Do practitioners are expected to abide by these axioms. It is not unheard of for masters to withhold promotion from or even to demote a student who breaks one of the commandments. Like the original Hwarang-do, it is these principles that serve to identify all Tae Kwon Do practitioners as members of a unified group.

## **THE FIVE AIMS OF TAE KWON DO**

The Eleven Commandments of Tae Kwon Do provide students with clearly defined, specific behaviors that every practitioner is expected to follow. In the real world, however, we understand that every possible situation cannot be anticipated and planned for with a list of set rules. Therefore, along with the 11 commandments, Tae Kwon Do includes in its teachings a set of behavior goals known as the Five Aims of Tae Kwon Do:

Respect (of oneself and others)  
Humility  
Perseverance  
Self-control  
Honesty

Unlike the 11 commandments, which are specific rules, the five aims are purposefully general because they are intended as idealized behavior traits. Practitioners who take these guidelines to heart and earnestly practice them in their lives cannot help but follow the eleven commandments as well because the commandments were devised as specific expressions of these general principles.

## **PHILOSOPHY OF THE BELT SYSTEM**

The first practitioners of Tae Kwon Do did not use a series of colored belts to indicate their progress. They did not have formal uniforms like the *dobok* worn by today's practitioners either. The clothing they wore were simple, loose-fitting garments that absorbed sweat and allowed them to move and kick freely, something like the warm-up sweats people wear today. In fact, the clothing they practiced in were actually the undergarments they wore beneath the outer clothes they would normally wear in public. Likewise, the belts they wore were simply there to keep their clothing in place and had no other significance. Over time as they practiced, however, their belts became dirtier and darker. Eventually, a dark belt came to symbolize someone who had been practicing the art for a long time.

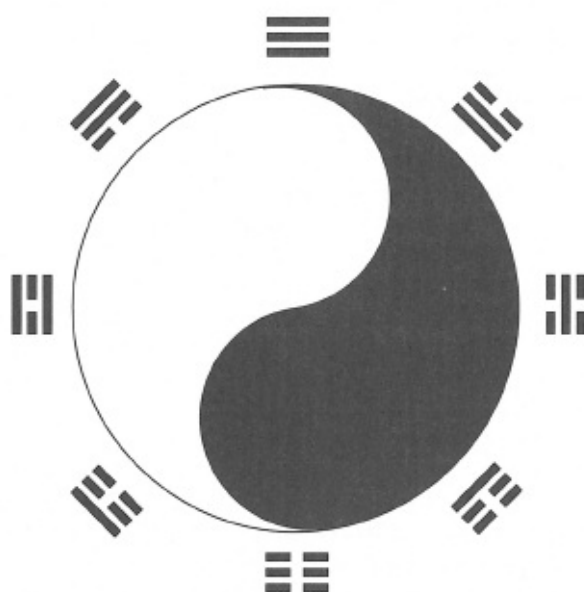
and was therefore a person of advanced skill.

Today, a black belt still indicates a Tae Kwon Do practitioner with a high degree of skill. Below the level of black belt, the various belt colors not only serve as an outward indicator of a student's level of proficiency, but also serve to reflect the philosophical growth the student is undergoing. Tae Kwon Do seeks to attune its practitioners with the natural flow of the universe. One of the most fundamental expressions of this flow is the life cycle. All living things are born, go through a stage of growth until they achieve maturity, pass on the seeds of life for the next generation and then move on to the next plane of existence. The practice of Tae Kwon Do also follows this type of cycle. Students begin with no knowledge of the art, learn and develop their skills until they have mastered the art, and then pass on what they know to students who come behind them. It is this cycle of growth, development and passing of knowledge that the color of the students' belts reflects.

Although individual schools may still employ variations of belt colors, the World Taekwondo Federation has standardized the progression of belts and now recognizes five colors below black belt: white, yellow, green, blue and red. Beginning students wear a white belt. The lack of color symbolizes purity and innocence as reflected by their lack of knowledge of Tae Kwon Do. The next belt is yellow, symbolizing the rising sun, which is the source of all life. At this level, students are beginning to learn some of the basics of the art. The next belt is green, the color of growing things well rooted and reaching upward toward the sky. At this level students are beginning to develop power. Next is blue, the color of the sky, open and boundless, toward which growing things are reaching. At this level students begin to stabilize their power and develop a focus to their studies as they reach out to achieve their potential. The last color before black is red, the color of blood, the vital essence of life. Students at this level are deepening their power and control. Finally, there is black belt. Black represents all the colors combined. At this highest stage the mastery of techniques is reflected by calm dignity and sincerity.

## THE PHILOSOPHICAL GOAL OF TAE KWON DO

Up to this point we have discussed various philosophical aspects of our art as expressed by such things as the Eleven Commandments, the Five Aims and the Belt System. But what is the common element among these things? From our examination of the historical roots of the art we know that the aim of Tae Kwon Do is to improve the character of its practitioners. But what measure are we using to judge how a student is improving?





If we were to express the philosophical goal of our art in a single statement, it would be that Tae Kwon Do training is meant to bring its practitioners into harmony with the universe. Rooted in Buddhist teachings, the core philosophy of Tae Kwon Do is based on a view of the universe as a dynamic environment in a perpetual state of change in which opposite forces are constantly adjusting themselves to maintain the harmonious balance of the cosmos. There are eight of these opposing forces that represent the cyclical flow of the universe. Collectively these are known as the eight *kwae* or signs of divination. Each sign is represented by a symbol consisting of three parallel lines drawn one on top of the other, with some symbols having one or more lines cut in two. Each of the lines represents the three aspects of reality: the surface level, the middle level and the deep level. The surface level is the appearance, that which is most readily seen. The middle level represents the functional aspect of the object or substance. The bottom level represents the spiritual aspect. A solid line stands for perfection of that aspect, while a broken line represents imperfections in that aspect. Thus, heaven (*keon*) is represented by three unbroken lines, while its opposite, earth (*kon*) is represented by three broken lines.

By examining the above illustration, you will find each of these symbols placed around the circular *um* and *yang* sign. (Note that each symbol is oriented so that its top is away from the center of the *um* and *yang*, while the bottom is nearest to the circle.) *Um* and *yang* represent the fundamental opposing forces of the universe. There is no single way to interpret or define the concepts of *um* and *yang*. They stand for polar opposites and the specifics of their meaning can vary depending on the context. Traditionally, they have been applied to such paired opposites as light and dark, hard and soft, good and evil, and male and female. The symbol for heaven is positioned at the top of the diagram with the other signs being read in order as you follow them counterclockwise around the circle. Notice that each symbol is the exact opposite of the one directly across from it, with their meanings being opposite as well. Thus, heaven (*keon*) at the top is opposed by earth (*kon*) at the bottom, while fire (*ri*) on the left is opposed by water (*kam*) on the right. Taken as a whole this symbol is known as Tae Geuk, or Boundless Eternity, which symbolizes the universe.

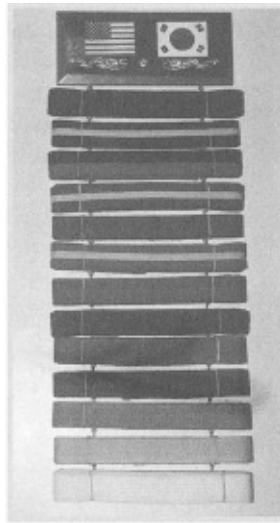
The ultimate aim of Tae Kwon Do is to bring its practitioners into harmony with the universe. This harmony can only be achieved when opposite forces are distributed equally, resulting in balance. However, if one force dominates, the result is discord. Therefore, for Tae Kwon Do practitioners to live this harmony they must tailor their actions to their environment. For example, if an adversary directs aggressive energy toward one, the practitioner should respond by using passive or yielding energy and allow the adversary's energy to flow harmlessly past. The blocking motions of Tae Kwon Do are designed to follow this very principle. Instead of meeting an attack head on, the blocking techniques redirect an opponent's power to allow it to flow past.

To function on this level, however, it is necessary to rid oneself of the ego, or what is known as the "discriminating mind" in Zen Buddhism. It is the discriminating mind that constantly seeks to judge and evaluate, a process that removes the person from living in "present time." In that state a person operates without conscious thought, responding immediately and correctly to whatever situation he or she is presented with. Most people have had brief experiences when they operated in present time. Twisting the steering wheel of a car to avoid an accident at the last second, reaching out to grab or block something tossed in one's direction, or some other event in which a person reacts without thinking are all examples of this principle. Tae Kwon Do practitioners train themselves to be able to slip into this state of mind at will. People who live in present time are at peace with themselves and the world around them, regardless of the setting. Such people cannot be upset by anything they encounter in life. It is the ultimate aim of Tae Kwon Do for students to reach a point where they live their lives in a state of present mind.

# 2 Practicing Tae Kwon Do

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Anyone who begins training in Tae Kwon Do does so with the same objective in mind—one day achieving the rank of black belt. Although the black belt does signify a person of advanced skill, the attainment of a black belt is not the end of training but rather the beginning of serious study. In the lower color belt ranks, students are learning the basic techniques of Tae Kwon Do. Even so, it can take several years of dedicated work before a person reaches first degree black belt. To achieve this level, students will develop mental and physical abilities that will enable them to break pine boards with a single blow or leap high in the air to kick a target many feet above the floor and land again under complete control. These are impressive feats to be sure, but for those students who continue their study of the art, even greater abilities are yet to be discovered.



In Tae Kwon Do, there are ten levels of black belt. Each level, known as a *dan*, represents not only the attainment of new skills, but the continuing perfection of the basic skills one has already learned. The study of Tae Kwon Do is a lifelong effort, based on the understanding that knowledge of the art is never truly complete. No matter how well one can do a technique, there is always a higher level of perfection that can be achieved. Each kick can be more powerful, each punch more precise. Through continual practice, students of the art strive to refine what they know, seeking to bring themselves ever closer to the unattainable but always sought after ideal of ultimate perfection. Based on this philosophy, even grand masters can be said to be students of Tae Kwon Do.

When students reach the level of first degree black belt, or first *dan*, they are given the title *chokyonim*, which means instructor. At this stage, a person is considered to have reached the minimum level of competence necessary to teach what he or she knows. In fact, it is expected that black belts will assist the master instructor with running classes. More than merely serving as an extra pair of eyes and hands to help with classes, however, the main reason that black belts teach is to further consolidate what they have already learned. There is no better way to develop a deep understanding of anything than to teach it. By having to demonstrate and explain the same techniques over and over again, black belts ultimately achieve a more profound knowledge of their art than they could ever gain otherwise. This is because in order to teach something an instructor must constantly be coming up with new ways to get ideas across to different students, each of whom learns in a different way. Teaching requires constant thinking about not only how the various techniques are done, but *why* they work. Once this is understood, that knowledge is then truly owned by the instructor.

In addition to seeking this deeper understanding of their art, new black belts are also working to improve their physical abilities as well. Through continual practice and drilling, reflexes are honed, speed is increased, strength and flexibility are improved. Although there are new techniques to be learned at each black belt level, greater mastery of the basic techniques is just as important. Physical training for black belts is aimed at developing refined control over the body. Black belts focus on combination techniques and multiple kicks in particular. The idea is for the body to become totally compliant to the will. Black belts strive to deliver attacking and defending techniques in any direction and combination. Tae Kwon Do practitioners are renowned for their ability to launch a flurry of kicks to targets at all different heights. If during a sparring or self-defense situation an opening to land a blow appears at a low target that is immediately followed by an opportunity to score against a high level target, a Tae Kwon Do practitioner should be able to launch successful attacks to both targets using the same foot without returning the foot to the floor between techniques.

The other thing that black belts train for is to refine their focus—the ability to concentrate all the power in their body to a single point in space. It is through the use of focus that Tae Kwon Do practitioners are able to perform breaking techniques. Whereas below the level of black belt, students develop the ability to break a few boards at a time, through ever-increasing control of focus black belts are able to smash through large piles of boards and even such things as concrete and brick. This enables one not only to throw multiple kicks with the same foot, but to do so with devastating results.

To develop this level of skill takes time. But for students who truly understand the commitment of their training, that time seems to pass quickly. Such people are not concerned with how long it takes for them to get there. They understand it is the process itself that is important. For students who continue to apply themselves to the study of their art, it will take a minimum of six years to rise from first *dan* to fourth *dan*, when they will earn the respected title of *sabomnim*, or master. By this time their knowledge of the techniques is deeply ingrained and instinctive. Fourth-degree black belts no longer require the supervision of higher ranking *dans* in order to teach. Their understanding of the basics of Tae Kwon Do is now considered complete. It is at the level of fourth *dan* that a black belt may open his or her own school. Yet one's own training continues.

Having achieved a deep and abiding understanding of the basic techniques of Tae Kwon Do, black belts from fourth *dan* and up are working toward the perfection of their technique and power. Pinpoint control of each technique is strived for and focus is refined even further. A master of Tae Kwon Do is capable of feats of agility and power that few others in the world can match. More than this, after years of observing students, dedicated training and self-study, a Tae Kwon Do *sabomnim* has achieved a level of perception that allows one to move with incredible ease against an opponent. From the barest hint of a movement, a *sabomnim* will know what an opponent is going to do and can react accordingly. It is this highly refined ability to “read” others that gives a *sabomnim* the seeming clairvoyant ability to react almost before his or her opponent does.

It is said that you can tell the skill level of a Tae Kwon Do practitioner by the way the individual reacts in a fighting situation:

A beginning student will block an attack.

An advanced student will counterattack after blocking.

A *sabomnim* does not need to block.

Promotion above the rank of sixth *dan* is a very special event. Black belts who hold a rank of seventh *dan* or higher are known as *kwanjangnim*, or grand master. To test for any rank above sixth degree, the practitioner must travel to the Kukkiwon itself, the headquarters of the World Taekwondo Federation in Seoul, Korea. There, the candidate will be judged by a panel of grand masters who

comprise the Kukkiwon Promotion Test Commission. In order to earn promotion at this level, the candidate must not only demonstrate technical skill, but also show some significant contribution to the art itself.

Finally, the highest level it is possible to achieve, that of tenth *dan*, is an honor bestowed upon a select few. Unlike other promotions, there is no mandatory waiting period or demonstration of skill required. Such an award is made by a decision of the Promotion Test Commission and is reserved only for those most dedicated practitioners who have devoted their lives to the furtherance of their art.

## THE TRAINING HALL

The training hall, or *dojang*, is where the learning of Tae Kwon Do takes place. In the *dojang* students work as members of a community to constantly improve themselves. As such it is deserving of serious respect by the students and any guests to the school. Demonstrating this respect is the reason that we bow whenever entering or leaving the training area. Some people have misconceptions about this however. They often mistake respect for the place where we train with some form of religious reverence. While many students do ultimately come to experience a sense of spiritual growth through their study, Tae Kwon Do is *not* a form of religious worship. Through rigorous training students in Tae Kwon Do strive to improve themselves physically, mentally and spiritually.



For Tae Kwon Do training to be effective, however, there are certain things that a *dojang* needs to have. Most important is adequate space. Although any open space can serve as a training area, there are some basic amenities that will enhance practice sessions. To begin with, the space must be large enough to allow the students to move freely without being squeezed in on top of one another. For an average class of fifty students we recommend a rectangular area no less than 25 feet wide and 70 feet long (1,750 square feet). The rectangular shape of the *dojang* is not only traditional but practical as well. When students are lined up formally, they are arranged side by side in rows facing one of the long walls. The highest ranking students are in the front rows arranged in descending order of seniority from left to right (right to left from the students' perspective). This gives each student enough personal space to punch and kick without worrying about hitting another student and allows the instructor to see each student easily. This arrangement also allows the less advanced students to watch the higher belts when they are doing basic drills. If it is later necessary to divide the class for certain activities, the *dojang's* length can be cut in half to allow for different types of training to take place at each end of the room without disturbing the other half of the class.

Next is the proper floor. It should of course be level and flat, without any unexpected bulges or depressions that can result in stubbed toes or twisted ankles. Since numerous Tae Kwon Do techniques involve spinning and jumping, most schools cover their floors with some type of padding to help protect students if they fall. If the floor is covered, the padding must not have a spongy feel or be covered with soft plastic (such as a wrestling mat). This kind of padding can cause feet to get stuck in place. If students try a spinning technique on such a surface, they can easily catch toes and dislocate

them, twist an ankle or even injure a knee.

Mirrors are a necessity. Students can learn a great deal by watching themselves in a mirror as they perform a technique. Having an instructor comment on technique is essential for any student's progress. But when students can watch themselves in a mirror and check what they are doing, their understanding of the use of the body will be greatly enhanced. People often have difficulty telling how they are actually performing a technique by "feel" alone. When they see what the body is doing, however, and connect that to the way it feels, the sense of one's own body mechanics increases dramatically. To get the greatest benefit possible from the mirrors, they should be as large as possible. Many schools have entire walls covered with mirrors. Aside from enabling students to watch their own progress, mirrors also help make the practice area appear larger and brighter. One thing you should avoid is placing mirrors directly opposite each other. If the practice hall is especially narrow and the mirrors are close together, it can cause an infinite reflection effect that can be distracting and unsettling to some people.

Another thing that is very important is sufficient lighting. The entire *dojang* should be clearly and evenly lit. This is especially important during sparring sessions in which a student must react in a split second to what an opponent is doing. If one can't see what is coming, the individual can't react properly and someone could be hurt. Lights should be spaced so that they evenly illuminate the practice area without being blindingly bright. Fluorescent lights provide a soft, even light without generating excess heat. In addition to sufficient overhead lighting, many schools also have large windows on one side. This lends the space a wide open feel as opposed to the claustrophobic atmosphere of a completely enclosed space. Even if the practice area is large, lack of windows can give the school a closed-in, cavelike feeling.

Numerous pieces of training equipment are available to help martial artists develop and enhance their skills. Some equipment is very flashy and impressive-looking, but often without any serious value. The best way to judge a piece of equipment is to ask yourself how it can be used to help develop skills. Since Tae Kwon Do is primarily concerned with striking techniques, all that is truly needed are different types of striking targets. In general, two types of training aids are useful to Tae Kwon Do students. The first is fixed striking pads. These usually take the form of small pads that can be mounted on a pole or wall, which students use to practice their punching and kicking. Since the pads are attached to an immovable surface, they are useful to help students develop not only power but also a sense of spatial relations as well. Because these pads are small, usually no larger than a foot high and four to six inches wide, students must aim their blows carefully. Landing a jumping, spinning back kick squarely on such a pad requires a high degree of precision. Another type of fixed pad is a heavy bag. Usually hung from a chain, heavy bags offer students a person-sized target they can strike from 360°. Because it is so big, students do not have to be as precise with their techniques as they do with the smaller, mounted pads. However, the slight mobility it has because it is suspended gives students the chance to judge how powerful their techniques really are. A quickly snapped kick may look impressive, but only a truly powerful technique will make the heavy bag move.

Portable striking pads are the other type of training aid needed. Unlike fixed pads, portable pads are held by a partner to provide a moving target. Some of the most common are focus mitts and kicking pads. Focus mitts are thick pads worn glove-like on the hands by a partner while the student practices punching and/or kicking at them. These are extremely versatile pads that can be moved rapidly from one place to another. A quick twist of the partner's wrist will also change the angle of the striking surface, thereby forcing the student to change the angle of attack. Because they are worn on the hands, focus mitts do offer a degree of resistance to a strike. The one drawback to these pads is that powerful kicking techniques can severely shock the holder's arm, especially the elbow. Kicking pads are also handheld, but are more flexible than focus mitts. Consisting of little more than a double-

sided pad with a projecting handle, they allow students to throw full power kicks with no shock to the holder's arm. Although they offer little resistance to a kick, they serve nicely as targets that can be individually adjusted to the reach of each student.

## **PRACTICE ROUTINES**

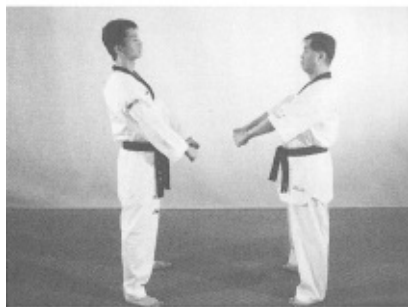
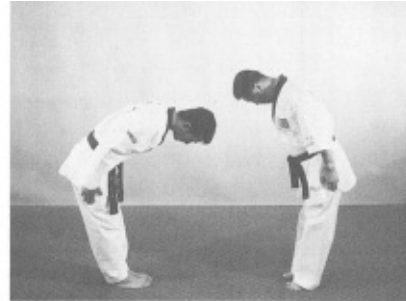
Properly structured Tae Kwon Do classes all have the same basic structure. Once the students have been lined up according to rank, bows are exchanged between the students and the instructor(s). This establishes the tone of the class and serves as an indicator that the instruction is beginning. Next should follow a short period of meditation. When done properly, meditation clears the mind of distractions and relaxes students so that they can focus all their attention on the class. After meditation, the first activity should always be some form of warm-up and stretching exercises to prepare the body and help prevent injury, with special emphasis on stretching the legs and groin. Next the class should practice basic blocking, punching and kicking as a group. No matter how high in rank a student rises, practicing basics is essential. Although advanced-level techniques seem far more sophisticated than the basic ones, these basics form the foundation of all the other techniques. Incorporated into even the most advanced techniques are movements taken from the most fundamental ones. Through repeated practice of these basic motions, students develop the instinctive reflexes enabling them to use all of their techniques effectively.



After basics, the main body of the class begins. At this point the instructor devotes the remainder of the practice time to either one-steps (see below), self-defense techniques, forms or sparring. Many schools hold several different specialty classes each day to allow students to choose the type of workout they are most interested in. While it is possible to focus on more than one specialty in a class, to do more than two in the same session may not allow enough time to adequately train and condition the students. When the class is finished, students should once again line up according to rank and exchange bows with the instructor(s).

### **One-Steps**

One-steps are formal drills in which a pair of students train together to develop effective fighting combinations. One student takes the role of the attacker and initiates a confrontation, while the other student takes the role of the defender and counters the attack with a prearranged response. While self-defense tactics in real-life situations should be spontaneous reactions to the specifics of the actual attack, one-steps represent proven, practical ways to deal with many common attacks. Because both students know what the attack and counter will be, their focus is not on speed or power but rather on making the series of movements smooth and automatic. Then, should the student ever be faced with an attack like the one practiced, the reaction will be automatic and effective.



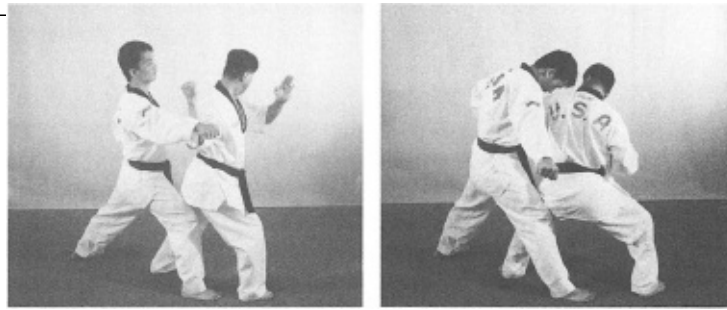
Each drill begins in the same way. The students start by facing one another and bowing. Next, they each adopt a ready stance. The person in the role of the attacker will then step *back* into a front stance and give a *ki-hop* to let the partner know it is time to begin. The defender gives a *ki-hop*, telling the attacker that he or she is ready. The attacker can then either throw the attacking technique immediately, or may wait several seconds before beginning to move. Although the exact attack and counter are known ahead of time, by having the attacker wait adds an element of uncertainty to the drill. When the attacker does eventually move, the defender's response will be a bit more realistic.

Due to their practical value, many Tae Kwon Do schools incorporate a set series of one-steps into their curriculum and require students to learn several of them for each promotion test. When doing one-steps, the attacks and responses should vary, with the techniques geared to the appropriate skill level of the students. We have included a sample of twelve advanced-level one-steps to illustrate a diverse range of effective counters. For the purposes of illustrating these techniques, the attacker will always appear on the left and attack with a right hand punch to either the high section (head) or middle section (body).

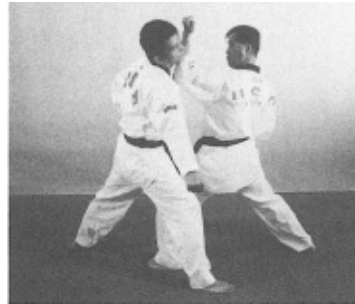
### **Technique #1: high section punch**



**a) right inner arm block,**



**b) & c) left spinning elbow strike to the solar plexus,**



**d) left back-fist strike to the face,**



**e) right reverse punch to the face.**

**Technique #2: middle section punch**



**a) simultaneous left palm block and wrist capture with right knife-hand strike to the neck,**



**b) right knife-hand strike to the forearm,**



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