

# Competency and Learning in Taekwon-Do

Mr James Rimmer

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Teaching is perhaps one of the most difficult careers to undertake. It usually takes three years of intensive training to become a qualified teacher and it is only after many years of practical experience and continual learning that the teacher develops and improves on that which they have been taught.

Every teacher has a different way of teaching just as every student has a different way of learning. Because we are all so different, some of the most important attributes for a teacher to have is patience, understanding and mental flexibility.

I feel that in order to teach a class of varying ages, sex and race a teacher must approach every students needs individually and realize that sometimes a different method may help a students learning ability.

Every student that I teach, can in turn become a teacher to me and that if I listen with my ears, look with my eyes and sense with my spirit I can give to them my experience and knowledge and they in turn can give to me a continuing fund of inspiration.

In order to instruct a class I believe that you must have a clear and precise idea of what you are aiming for, for both your students and yourself. As part of your overall aim you should consider firstly your relationship with your class and their requirements .This I term as the "Human Factor".

## The Human Factor

The success of a club depends a lot on the relationship between the class and the instructor. An instructor must be approachable not only to students but also to visiting friends and parents.

Take time out, or ask the assistance of a senior member and chat to parents and visitors. Most people do not turn up to a class unless they are interested in some way in the proceedings.

Many parents have concerns about their children learning Martial Arts, since many clubs have had reputations of harsh teaching methods and the such like. It is important to clear these misconceptions up and to reassure people of your aims and teaching methods.

The make-up of each class is different and each individual in that class has different learning stages and abilities. Treat all your members with respect and treat them equally.

Refrain from favouritism as this will only succeed in exiling your members and cause jealousy.

Bad lip service, bullying or boasting is a NO NO!. It can be detrimental to a students confidence or faith and could turn them away from their instructor overnight. It also creates a very unpleasant atmosphere and does damage to the name of the martial art you are following.

As an Instructor, under the banner of I T F N Z , I must adhere to the teachings laid down and follow the Art of Tae Kwon Do as devised by General Choi Hong-Hi. I also feel that it is important to teach the students that they must do the same so that they understand why and what they are being taught.

This in itself helps to bond students together and create a respect for the art they are learning.

The class must be a unit, it is up to the Instructor to create this and ensure that all grades and ages mix freely and as higher grades mixing with lower and older with younger.

The layout if the club is important when considering the "Human Factor". It is important to ensure class comfort by having adequate lighting and ventilation. Many injuries can also be caused by frequent temperature changes or cold and damp training facilities.

Aim to use your time efficiently so that it benefits everybody including yourself.

Time should be given not only to the practical and theoretical but also to the discussion of various ideas and ways to improve on class togetherness and relationships. Take time out to hear opinions and concerns of your members, this will make your club stronger and again create that bond that is so important.

Many students will take up a martial art to gain more spiritual insight into their lives, so let discussions on this run freely and try to create interest and a quest for knowledge in this area that is so often forgotten.

Finally in summing up the Human Factor, I would say that it is the responsibility of an Instructor to set an example for everybody and this can be done quite simply by following the Tenets of Tae Kwon Do.

After all the teachings of the Tenets are the anchor on which our Martial Art is based and if we could all follow these to the best of our ability we would be a far more humane world to live in.

## PLANNING AND PREPARATION

The next step, once a teacher has established their aim is the efficient planning and preparation of a class.

It takes time and practice to do this and is not an easy task. You can have a clear idea of what your plan will be for a certain training night and this can be altered completely on the night due to such things as student absences or injuries.

Allowing yourself an option is important, do not be frightened to try out a new idea and always try to assess the feedback you get.

A well planned class helps the instructor as well as the student, it should follow some sort of pattern, where one part leads onto the next perhaps explaining the previous technique learnt.

Most clubs have a variety of ranks from white to black and in order to give the individual ranks the special attention required especially when teaching patterns and techniques particular to each rank, it is easier to divide the class up into groups.

An instructor should feel confident in delegating a senior member to help out teaching when necessary.

I will quite often start off by teaching a new technique by doing basics and then continue on by showing the application of the technique in both a pattern and sparring situation.

The theory behind the technique is also important and I always try to give a good and sound explanation for its uses.

Allotting my time to talk to my students about their techniques or various needs is something that I try to do during the class, so that it gives them the opportunity to practice while I am at hand.

We usually have further discussions after class and that helps to cement ideas and techniques.

In summary, try to plan a class with variety, be open to suggestions from the students and be flexible in your teaching methods.

Make the learning process fun and it helps to keep the attention span of the pupils.

Feel confident in the ability of all your students and delegate responsibility especially to the senior members who can assist in the planning, preparation and teaching.

## CREATING AND MAINTAINING INTEREST

It can often be difficult to create new ideas and teaching methods but without variation in day to day training many students may get bored with the same old routine so it is important to stimulate both their bodies and minds.

There are several ways in which I try to do this :

### Variety

This can take many forms such as games, co-ordination skills, three step sparring, self defence, interclub training, question and answer sessions and of course there is always the opportunity to arrange a different training venue, perhaps in a park or reserve.

There is an old saying "Variety is the spice of life".

I believe that my students perform with more zest and spirit if I inject variety into their training lessons.

I find that it is beneficial to the individual to sometimes let them experiment on their own and even try to invent their own patterns and defence techniques, not only does this give them encouragement but it also enables them to put their skills to the test.

### Incentive

People need an aim and they need incentive to achieve that aim. Each individual in my club is striving for their own goal and I try to encourage them to give their best to their training.

While it is important to correct common faults and point out areas of possible improvement it is also important to give praise where deserved, it goes a long way to instilling a sense of achievement and the student will generally try harder.

The thought of a fail or recommended pass in gradings is sometimes so daunting that it inhibits the growth of a student and they give up.

The essence of a grading is a self test and I try to explain to my students that they must only strive to better their own record and not get worried or despondent if they are not keeping up with their peers.

I encourage my students to better themselves and their training by having a club trophy that is presented at the end of each year. Perhaps a plaque or flag could also be introduced to promote incentive.

## REALISM

Creating a realistic situation in class will also create and maintain interest.

The use of boards, focus pads, and hand to hand combat eg: semi contact or no contact free sparring will enable the students to test their skills and realize their potential. It gives them an opportunity to see how effective their martial art can be.

### Competition

Competition can be healthy provided it is done with the kindred spirit and is not over emphasized. I point out to my students that it is not the be all and end all if you do not come out the winner!

Our club has the occasional friendly game or competition but it is usually at the Regionals or Nationals that most of my students experience the world of competition.

Here they can test what they have learnt and for some it is exhilarating.

However not everyone is a born competitor and although I encourage students to enter I do not force the issue where I can see that it would not be beneficial.

### Demonstrations

The use of club demonstrations will encourage and promote both growth and pride in the club.

I usually aim at having at least two or three demonstrations a year.

They consist of an introduction to the club and the martial art and are usually held at local halls or gala days.

A demonstration day is a good confidence booster, it enables my students to show friends, family and strangers everything they have learnt.

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We try to get the crowd involved in what we are doing by asking members of the audience to participate wherever possible.

In the past we have found that demonstration days have proved very successful in signing on new members and promoting our club.

## USING THE SENSES

We are gifted with six senses which right from childhood help us to learn and experience the world.

As an Instructor I find that I must combine all of these senses in order to give each and every one of my students maximum learning power.

It is sometimes only through the lack of one sense that we truly know and develop the uses of the others.

Most people have the full use of all their senses and are basically unaware of the potential that can be achieved.

It is well known that if a person is stripped of their sight, they will develop their sense of touch and hearing far beyond that of their neighbours that are endowed with all their senses.

As a martial artist it to their maximum power; and is a challenge to any is important to develop the senses this takes a lifetime of experience student.

### Sight

An Instructor has the ability to show his/her students how techniques etc can be done. It is one of the most useful and beneficial learning tools as up to 75% of what we learn is learnt through the use of sight.

Many students will copy their Instructor and form very similar body movements and techniques.

Use the art of demonstration to its fullest and try to make your students aware of the next move by doing eye exercises to strengthen the muscles and improve the alertness.

## Hearing

Making your instructions clear and precise is important.

Explain the purpose of your teaching and invent ways to capture their attention. The odd joke can do wonders for morale as well as make an attentive student.

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An other idea on which I may expand will be to blind fold my students and get them to try and do slow motion defences against my slow motion attacks. This of course would have to be done very carefully and with instruction.

## Touch

6% of what we learn is through touch, it becomes predominantly apparent during free sparring and helps the student become aware of distances.

It also has its uses in one step sparring and self defence where it will show the effectiveness of a technique.

I always say "Respect each others' bodies and be mindful of the power of touch."

## Taste and Smell

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## The Sixth Sense

Some of us are more aware of our six sense and use it more frequently. However it can be developed in all of us but it is the willingness to do so that will give us results.

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## Summary

In summary, try to keep explanations as clear as possible, encourage students to always better themselves and always confirm your lesson by checking with the students to make sure that everything has been understood.

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