

# What makes an outstanding Instructor?

By Greg Dyson

---

“Soldiers are as strong as the general who leads them, and in a like manner, students can only excel under an excellent instructor. We cannot expect a bamboo to grow in a field of reeds, nor can we expect to find an outstanding pupil under an unqualified teacher. It is of particular importance that the two aspects of Taekwon-Do, the spirit and the technique, must be taught together. Therefore a qualified instructor must combine the qualities of a scholar and a soldier if he or she is to produce pupils of noble character and outstanding skills.” (Gen. Choi Hong Hi )

Over the years I have had the privilege to train with some of the greatest instructors, none more greater than my instructor of 15years Master Evan Davidson. I have learnt so much in the way of a student, instructor and as a person, this is why I have a great deal of respect and loyalty for him. His skills, knowledge, achievements and leadership qualities are outstanding. These are all great attributes of a general who has led his soldiers to many victories over the years and still continues to do so.

This brings me to the question of “**what makes an outstanding instructor?**”

Well I believe a good instructor / coach of any sport or recreation has only one thing in mind which is to pass on his or her knowledge so that the enjoyment of the activity is experienced by others. Nothing is better than seeing your own students succeed and achieve their goals and knowing you played a part in their success.

Throughout this thesis I would like to share some methods of instruction which are more focused on the beginners more so than the higher ranks. I strongly believe that all beginners must have a good foundation of fundamental movements. This is up to the instructor to take responsibility of his or her beginners and not let them fall through the cracks; This I see happen to a lot of beginners, they just blend in down the back of the class and sometimes forgotten about. Let’s face it a poorly developed beginner ends up struggling and doesn’t see progress in themselves which leads to them not enjoying Taekwon-Do and in most cases quitting which is not good for your club.

So here are some methods to stop those beginners falling through the cracks and help them to progress and enjoy Taekwon-Do not only as a sport but an art.

## **BEGINNERS RULES OF THUMB.**

1# “It starts with you” as the instructor you must combine the qualities of :

A **Scholar**, this is a person which has a great knowledge in a particular subject e.g. Taekwon-Do. It is very important to know what you are teaching and how to teach it, so that you are able to answer questions from your students. It is your responsibility to know all the theory for the grades you are teaching. By having this knowledge to share you will create a more interested and willing to learn kind of student.

### Qualities of a **General**.

As you are the general of your army you must treat your students like soldiers with clear commands, discipline and respect. A general is a leader, someone that your students can look up to and take guidance from.

### **Passion and Enthusiasm.**

It is all very well having the qualities of a scholar and a general but in my opinion these two qualities don't work unless you have passion and enthusiasm in what you are teaching. This is what lifts the spirits of the class and believe it or not, it is very contagious. The students will give back more effort and commitment as soon as they see this passion and enthusiasm coming from their instructor.

I believe that these qualities of a **scholar, general** and a person with **passion** and **enthusiasm** for Taekwon – do is the start of an outstanding instructor to be

### For the new student.

**2# Stances** are the first thing you teach a new student rather than punching, blocking, striking or kicking. "Why you may ask?" well it's simple, the stronger the foundation the stronger the object. The forceful and finer techniques of attack and defence are largely dependent on correct stance, since the stance is the starting point of every Taekwon-do movement. This also suggests that if the bottom half of the student is correct (good stance) then naturally the top half falls into correct alignment to produce good precise technique, stability, agility, balance and flexibility. Remember to explain what the use of a stance is, this lets the student understand that what they are learning is important and helps them to focus on what they are trying to achieve.

Start off with attention stance, parallel stance, walking stance, sitting stance and then L stance. You must keep to this order and teach each stance thoroughly as the first three are required for 10<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> gup and the last two are required for 9<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> gup.

Incorrect stance: Throws the top half out producing

Correct stance: Leads to correct shape and

Wrong shape and poor technique.

Good technique.



**3#** Always teach the hand movements of saju makgi and saju jirugi in a parallel stance to start with. This method breaks down the technique so that the student can refine the start, finish and crossings of each technique. Once the student has learnt these techniques in a stationary state and you are confident that the student is correct then it is time to engage the stances e.g. walking stance. To start with, begin in a parallel stance and get the student to step forward once and perform the stance and technique as one motion. Then get them to return parallel stance and perform opposite side. This allows the student to feel the shape of the stance in relation to the technique. Remember this must be taught thoroughly which takes time so don't cut corners.

Parallel stationary:

Step forward one pace and return:



**4#** Always teach saju makgi first and then saju jirugi, the reason behind this method is that saju makgi is technically more difficult therefore creating a challenge which is beneficial for the new student. When the new student progresses onto saju jirugi he or she finds it easier, this makes the student feel like they are progressing and doing well which leads to the enjoyment of Taekwon-Do. To start teaching these fundamental movements to the new beginner you must always start with the stances. This is done by only focusing on the feet movement, get the student to put their hands on their hips and go through the movements with them by numbers. Once the student knows how to move the feet then it is time to incorporate the hands which they have learnt previously in rule 3#.

Focus on feet movement:

Combining the hands & feet:



**5#** Teaching the four main kicks is simple, just remember to start off with front kick, side kick, back kick and then turning kick as it must be taught in this order. The reason behind this method is that the new student has to learn the concept of the foot sword /heel going in a straight line to the target for the side and back kick. If the turning kick is introduced before the side and back kick, you run the risk of the student reverting to the turning kick when he or

she is asked to do a side kick. This is not the student's fault it's just easier to do a turning kick rather than a side kick that is why the new student needs to learn the side and back kick before the turning kick. To teach these four kicks explain to the student the face of a clock and how the kicks are related to each number on the clock. E.g. If the clock is on the floor the front kick goes to 12 o'clock, the back kick goes to 6 o'clock, the sidekicks go to 3 & 9 o'clock and the turning kicks go to 2 & 10 o'clock. This gets the student thinking about what direction the kicks should be executed at.

Direction of the sidekick:



Direction of the turning kick:



For the class.

## Warm up #

**1#** It is important at the beginning of each class that you warm up your students so that they can perform techniques to the best of their ability without becoming injured. Every warm up should contain a General warm up and a Specific warm up.

**A# General warm up :** The General warm up consists of joint rotations, a cardiovascular warm up and dynamic stretching.

**A 1#** Joint rotations = Helps the joints to be limbered up for quick movements without injury.

**A 2#** Cardiovascular warm up = Should consist of jogging, (forward and backwards), star jumps, light arm and leg movements and just getting the heart pumping.

**A 3#** Dynamic stretching = Should consist of leg raises to the front, sides and back; Arm swings.

**B# Specific warm up :** The specific warm up consists of exercises that more resemble Taekwon-Do movements such as:

Basic hand and foot movements e.g. patterns, shadow sparring and higher intensity leg raises. The warm up should leave most students sweating mildly so that they are prepared for the tasks ahead.

For the class.

### Line work / Fundamentals

2# When taking the class through line work start off with the whole class doing basic beginners movements. This helps the beginners with their confidence and learning by mimicking the more senior students. “It’s a bit like monkey see monkey do”. This also helps the more senior students refresh those basic techniques which are essential building blocks for any Taekwon-Do practitioner.

Also get different grades doing their own line work in relation to their rank. E.g. out of their patterns. Do this method as one class and by count.

Example : “ Blue belts and above step forward, left fix stance, U shape block”

“ Green belts step forward, right L stance, right knife hand inward strike”

“ Yellow belts step forward, right L stance, twin forearm block”

“ White belts step forward, left walking stance, low outer forearm block”

“All together by count hana, dool, set, net” etc.

Remember as instructor emphasis is always placed on the repetition of each fundamental movement to gain perfection.

Fundamentals movements taken out of each grades pattern for line work:



For the class.

## Patterns

3# Patterns or (forms) are various fundamental movements, most of which represent either attack or defence techniques, set to a fixed and logical sequence. In my opinion patterns are the most essential component to a martial art. As a student cannot excel in Taekwon-Do if he or she does not grasp the concepts and meanings of each movement throughout his or her patterns. As an Instructor you must teach your students each pattern of their grade and below with correct terminology e.g. heights, facings, stances, angles, correct tools and correct procedure of executing the technique. This is so important to pass down to your students as patterns are designed to be precise as of that in a military way. If your students are competent in their patterns everything else just falls into line as their step sparring, free sparring and self defence all comes from out of these patterns and into reality.

Remember instructors DO NOT teach patterns outside of your student's grade, as the student should perfect the current and all previous patterns. This will encourage better technique, perseverance and create a sense of determination to achieve the next grade.

Working with the student to gain correct technique:



For the class.

## Step sparring

4# Step sparring is practiced by all grades it is designed to help the student become familiar with his or her techniques which are used against an opponent for attack and defence. It also teaches the student correct angles, distances, timing and control which are essential for that one technique blow. The movements for step sparring should be obtained out of the students patterns (the syllabus is just a guideline.) I believe that the student learns more if he or she can apply the techniques that their constantly practicing throughout their patterns and fundamental movements.

Remember step sparring is like a pattern, timing and perfection is essential to be able to move into free sparring and self defence, so teach it thoroughly.

3step sparring do-san is used for techniques.

1step sparring won-hyo is used for techniques.





2step sparring choong-moo is used for techniques.



For the class.

## Free sparring

5# Free sparring is essentially open combat with controlled attacking. In free sparring there is no pre- arranged mode between the students and both participants are completely free to attack and defend with all available means and methods with one exception: The attacker must stop the attacking tool just before hitting a vital spot. Because Taekwon-Do is a lethal form of self defence, extreme control must be shown. When teaching free sparring get your students using the techniques that they have learnt from out of their patterns and step sparring. This is done by simplifying the free sparring to what I call “semi free sparring” which is done by the junior side executing three attacks hand or foot and the senior side defending those attacks in a free style mode. This teaches your students to use speed, power, strong and accurate blocking, skilful dodging and balance in a controlled manner. Once the student’s are familiar with the semi free sparring then it’s time to introduce them to free sparring.

For the class.

## Self defence

6# Self defence is widely misunderstood as a lot of instructors / students refer to self defence as releases, locks and throwing techniques, this is not true. Those techniques are just other aspects of Taekwon-Do like patterns and step sparring. You must teach your students that Taekwon-Do as a whole is self defence and it's just broken down to help each grade to understand it more clearly. What I mean by this is that even beginners are learning self defence by learning how to move into stances, throw a punch, use a block or execute a front kick, these are all methods of self defence which work in reality. For example someone grabs your wrist, assess the situation and react by using a front kick to the groin, release and run, it's that simple as basic techniques work for gup grades. I believe that locks and throwing techniques should not be introduced until 1<sup>st</sup> dan and above because by then the student knows how to move into stances, move the hips and has an arsenal of techniques that he or she can perform well. But as the syllabus is written to this day we must teach our gup students locks as well so to do this keep it simple. It will be hard to teach as the student will have not grasped all the concepts of fundamental movements, patterns, step sparring and free sparring yet. This is what makes it hard for you as an instructor, but if you keep it simple and basic which works in reality your students won't be misled that they can do locks and throwing techniques well in a real situation.

Basic release from wrist grab using a front kick.



For the class.

## Flexibility & strength

7# Flexibility and strength come hand and hand when studying any martial art especially in Taekwon-Do as we use our legs somewhat more than other arts. Flexibility is essential for the Taekwon-Do practitioners it can produce fast and dynamic kicking, more relaxed movement of the body and also helps prevent injuries. To gain this sort of flexibility you must constantly stretch your muscles in such a way that the flexibility produced compliments your Taekwon-Do techniques e.g. kicking stretches front, side and turning etc. Also general all over stretching for injury prevention. To make stretching more interesting pair up your students and do partner stretching exercises, This makes the student compare themselves against each other, and gives the student an indication of where he or she is in relation to their peers

Partner stretching for correct technique.

Partner strength training.





Only do strength exercises that compliment Taekwon-Do such as:

Press ups = for wrist, arms and shoulder strength.

Leg raises = for abdominal strength.

Prone holds = for muscle endurance.

Knocking = for bone conditioning.

Slow motion kicking = for leg strength.

As a rule of thumb, instructors when it comes to strength training only do body weight training. This way the student has their own limits which mean that they won't get injured by doing the exercise.

### For the class.

#### Other key points

#Challenge your students = This is done by advancing on the techniques they already know e.g. the front kick can also be done as double, flying, dodging and on the ground. By challenging your students in this way you will create a hunger for more which is the attitude they need to perfect these techniques.

#Pad work = Always use small pads for beginners so that they can develop focus and speed prior to developing power on the bigger pads.

#Partner exercises = This is a great way to get your students interacting with other students which helps them become familiar with their training peers. Do fundamental movements with partners e.g. both step back guarding block L stance front kick off the rear leg alternating between the two by count.

#Fun games = use your imagination and make your classes fun and enjoyable for your students but remember to relate the activities to Taekwon-Do.

#Home work = Set home work for your students so that they can practice techniques that they struggle with at home, this will encourage progress.

#### Conclusion

Ask yourself “What are the reasons that make Taekwon-do a regular routine of my life?”

For me it's about the mental and physical challenges, confidence, discipline, achievement, pride, learning, making friends, fun, stress-relief, keeping fit and healthy, sharing knowledge, progress, a sense of belonging and a way of life. These are the sorts of reasons that make an outstanding instructor who will develop students to exceed expectations and will become great assets to the future of Taekwon-Do in New Zealand.

References:

# Taekwon-Do Encyclopaedia.

# For the most part this thesis was constructed from my own knowledge and experience.