

# Without order there is only chaos and nothing constructive can evolve from chaos except order

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Like any learning environment, TKD must maintain a minimum level of discipline in order for the right learning environment to be established. Included in this need for creating an atmosphere where practitioners can further their art is the need to impart the philosophies and social protocols that the Chang Hong style of Taekwon Do subscribes to.

Society dictates by its laws and customs what is acceptable as a form of discipline, whether it be a parent chastising a child, the State punishing a citizen or an instructor disciplining a student. As society evolves, peoples' attitudes and beliefs change and what may once be considered appropriate no longer will be tolerated. As a living art, TKD is not bound to custom but is free to develop as society and science moves further forward.

## Discipline and the Student

Despite all the advancements in technology, in today's consumer driven society people have less free time. The time that they do have is at a premium and using an economic term, they will only conduct activities that maximise their total utility. To become proficient in TKD takes a considerable investment of time, both training and participating in non training related aspects. When a person decides if TKD is for them, the paramount question will be "is it fun". A combination of subjective reasoning will go into answering this question but for the purpose of this essay I have focused on only one. Discipline, which I will define as the rules governing the interaction of members within TKD and the penalties imposed to ensure those rules are adhered to and respected.

If the discipline is overwhelming the student may decide that this overrides other benefits of training and opt out. Alternatively if the discipline is too lax the class may be unruly and the students who want to learn will find it hard in such an environment. In this situation the student may look elsewhere to find a class that is not so chaotic where they can learn at a steady pace.

Finding the balance is difficult and will depend on the make up of the class. Generally it is apparent what level of discipline a student expects and is willing to be subject to. Each club will have its own unique style, but should have as a foundation the standards as set out in the ITFNZ Standards and Discipline manual. What needs to be recognised, however, is that students will not tolerate what they perceive as excessive punishment or draconian attitudes. The rules as defined by our organisation must be applied with a degree of common sense. The senior or instructor should not focus too heavily on the letter of the "law" and should take into consideration the intent of the rules. Namely, to promote the five tenants of Taekwon Do into every aspect of a students life and to never "bring discredit upon... (ITFNZ) either by words, conduct or demeanour."[1]

TKD not only provides a place to learn a modern martial art, but as a club should provide social interaction amongst members in a positive friendly environment. If the instructor and seniors of a

club subject students to a too militarised regime then the social aspect will be lost. The military and its protocols are there to ensure that a job gets done in the most efficient way with the minimum number of casualties. It is not designed to ensure the soldiers learn whilst having fun. Despite TKD's military origins, most practitioners are not soldiers and should therefore not be subjected to the same expectations that they are.

### “Traditional” Martial Arts Discipline – An example

As an example of how excessive discipline can shape a student's attitude I have recounted my experiences as a pre-teen learning Sedio karate.

In 1985 I started Seido Karate which I continued for two years. As a 12 year old my perception may be somewhat different from today but I vividly remember the classes and trainings.

At the start of class we entered the dojo adhering to the same eastern customs that TKD follows. We removed footwear before entering and would bow as we crossed the threshold. When class started we formed up from right to left in rank and seniority. From a discipline perspective these classes were much more formal than any TKD classes I have attended (even black belt gradings). The philosophy of courtesy was definitely prevalent but it seemed to only extend one way. The sensei or instructor held a dictatorial role which he seemed to cherish with much delight.

Discipline in the dojo was kept with an iron rod, or in the case of my Sensei a bamboo Kendo sword. As we engaged in line work, Sensei would correct our techniques verbally. If we failed to meet the expected standard he would strike us across the shoulders with the sword and demand perfection. As a junior I was fortunate as we were only struck lightly. The blow didn't leave any lasting pain but you always put in one hundred percent whenever you saw Sensei pick up his trusty partner and disappear through the ranks.

The seniors were not as fortunate. Although I never experienced the hit, the sound the sword made as a senior was “corrected” for one made me glad I was one under sixteen and two glad I could disappear after junior class before Sensei pulled any other sadistic implements of torture for the senior training.

### My Experience Examined

My experience as a youngster in martial arts has enabled me to have a unique perspective of the teaching methods employed on juniors. I was not the most attentive or studious of pupils and I had difficulty learning my Japanese (I had enough trouble completing my own spelling assignments at that stage) but I had a genuine desire to learn the physical aspects and like to believe that my parents had brought me up to behave in a courteous manner.

One of the main reasons I left Sedio karate was because of the way I was taught. Even at an early age I was a consumer baby. My time and my parents money was a limited resource. If I wasn't having fun with something why continue to do it? Discipline is fine but when it impinges on your own sense of freedoms are you really going to voluntarily stay? After all, if it was the choice between getting yelled at and the continual threat of being corrected by a Kendo stick or going up

the road and playing Time Pilot on my friend's C64 then the choice was not difficult. Even those not familiar with the graphical attributes of Time Pilot would most probably pick that option because as humans we don't like pain or discomfort, especially in our free time. The answer came quickly for me, but not as fast for my parents who had seen karate as important skill both physically and socially that they would like me to have.

## Summary

The discipline we maintain in the dojang is necessary if we are going to learn in an organised manner. People can respect being punished for something they have done. What they don't want is to pay for the privilege of being punished all the time, especially when they are trying. The rules we have need to not only ensure that the most efficient learning environment for what we do is maintained, but also that students are educated in a fun yet challenging environment to the physical and moral culture aspects of the art without being over regimented.

The rules as defined by the ITFNZ Standards and Discipline manual need to be followed if we are to continue teaching true Chang Hong style TKD. However, as with any document there is the possibility of misinterpretation or taking a hard line literal approach. Instructors and seniors need to be vigilant that adherence to the "rules" does not mean an over regimented and formal system eliminates the social interaction and fun aspect of our clubs.

From my perspective the instructor is not only imparting their knowledge of the art but also installing a sense of pride, justice and community in the student. This moral aspect of our art is what distinguishes it from other martial arts. For an instructor, teaching the physical part is easy, it is changing attitudes in an increasingly selfish and individualised world that is the hard part.

**International Taekwon-Do Foundation of New Zealand Inc Standards and Discipline manual, Rules of Conduct p5**