



Definitions

Taekwondo is a martial art and sport that, without the use of weapons, teaches the practitioner techniques for defense and offense. Regardless of age or sex, Taekwondo teaches the practitioner to use his or her hands and feet in any defensive situation.

1) As a form of **physical exercise**, Taekwondo has a great effect on children's growth and development as well as youths' and elders' physical fitness. The technique and form of Taekwondo are designed to develop control of all parts of the body. In addition, Taekwondo demonstrates poise, allows flexibility in all joints of the body, and helps relieve fatigue and stress.

2) As a **martial art**, Taekwondo involves attacking opponents with bare hands and feet. The one distinguishing factor that Taekwondo has from other martial arts is its powerful and diverse foot techniques, which make this martial art one of the world's most powerful sports. Even though Taekwondo involves no use of weapons, it has the ability to knock down an opponent in one single blow. But, Taekwondo emphasizes mastering defense techniques which come from the Taekwondo thinking of respecting peace and justice. Taekwondo teaches practitioners to practice the attitude of self-discipline to defend oneself and never attack or defeat others.

3) As a **modern sport**, Taekwondo has new merit. Spectators have created quite a following in places such as Olympic Games and Pan American Games. One would have a difficult time finding another sport that could compare to the gracefulness, accuracy, and power that is seen when thousands of practitioners perform, as was done in the opening ceremonies of the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games. Taekwondo has also grown into a popular international sport due to increase development of rules and protective gear that reduces injuries.

4) As an **educational tool**, Taekwondo not only improves a person's physical well-being, but his mental state as well. Through Taekwondo a practitioner practices the art of self perfection and understands the techniques in pursuit of the virtue of human life. In the school (Dojang) the student not only develops his body, but his mind as well. With the physical exercise of stretching, strengthening, drilling and sparring, the Taekwondo student learns respect for their instructors senior students, classmates and themselves. The development and cultivation of good character and a correct attitude is the central theme in the teaching of Taekwondo.

TECHNIQUES

Poomse

Poomse is a pattern of a systematic series of techniques that allows the practitioners to practice defense and offense techniques by themselves against an imaginary opponent. The Line of Movement in Taekwondo Poomse is based upon the traditional ideology of ancient Korean people. The entire outward figure of each Poomse is composed to match the ideological figure of what each name of Poomse means. Practitioners learn the Poomse system step by step from simple and easy ones to complex and difficult ones.

Gyoroogi

Gyoroogi is the actual sparring against an opponent applying offense and defense techniques that one has learned through Poomse. Within Gyoroogi there is one step sparring where two people practice in a predetermined systematic form. Also, there is free sparring where they practice without any predetermined form.

Competition

Taekwondo competition is conducted by two players, Chung (blue) and Hung (red). Only punching and kicking techniques are allowed during competition, and one can only attack the front part of the body. Only kicks are allowed to the face. Hits below the belt line are forbidden. All the vulnerable spots are covered with protective gear. Head gear, trunk protector, groin guard, forearm and shin guards help prevent injuries during competition.

Kyukpa

Kyukpa is the self-measuring technique that measures one's precision of Taekwondo training. Because offense techniques can be fatal to the human body, practitioners can experience the accuracy of these offense techniques, and have the concentration of power and strength of will power by breaking solid objects such as boards and bricks. Kyukpa is not taught to beginners, but only to high Gup or Dan (or Poom) holders.

BELT STATUS

Unique to the practice of Taekwondo is the system of ranking and promotions. Each student begins training as a white belt and is promoted to yellow, green, blue, red, and then finally black belt. These ranks under black belt are called Gup (or class) and range from 9th Gup (lowest) to 1st Gup (highest). In contrast, black belt is divided into 1st Dan (degree) to 9th Dan (from lowest to highest). It will take a diligent student from 2 in years - 5 years to attain 1st Dan - black belt. Students under 15 years old reaching the degree level receive Poom (children's degree). After completing 15-20 years of practice and specialized training, the 4th Dan is awarded and signifies instructor ranking. Testing is done in accordance with Kukkiwon standards.

TRAINING

In the training school, the dojang, there is no age, sex, or racial barriers; everyone begins their training with a white belt. The instructor (Master) allows each practitioner to progress at his or her own rate in accordance to his or her ability. During this learning the student can expect to develop strength, stamina, quickness, flexibility, coordination and balance. But to fully master the sport, one must also develop the important mental characteristics: patience, humility, self control, perseverance, concentration, and respect. It generally takes years of studying and practicing to reach the black belt level. As students develop skill, they are awarded colored belts which signify class rank.