

The PEACEFUL WAY

A Children's Guide
to the
Traditions of the
Martial Arts



Claudio A. Iedwab & Roxanne L. Standefer



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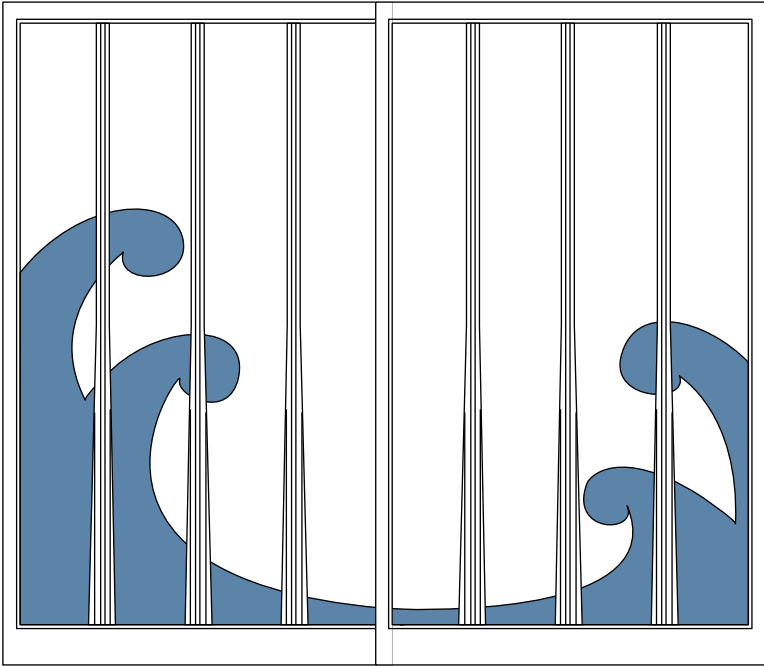
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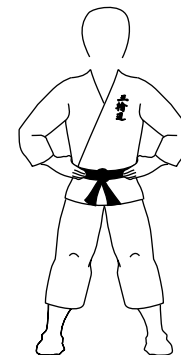


*To all those who participate in the global
dojo of askSensei.com*



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Introduction

WELCOME to the world of the martial arts. You are entering a special tradition that has a long history. Here you will find mysteries, feats of human strength, wise teachers, and energetic students like yourself.

Discover the many stories and paths to follow through the forest. If you are lucky enough to have a teacher in the martial arts, he or she will share new and exciting knowledge with you. You are going to have a lot of fun if you listen carefully and are ready to train with all your energy.

This book will help you understand many of the things you will be learning. At first, it will all be new to you. New people, strange language, unusual customs, and plenty of new movements to practice. Doesn't this sound like what you would expect if you traveled to an unknown land as an explorer? If we imagine ourselves on a mission to learn and investigate, then we won't worry if we don't understand everything at first or if we don't always know what to do and how to do it. In the martial arts, that is what your teacher and friends are for to help you on your way.

Together, in this book, we will learn the meaning behind the traditions of the martial arts.

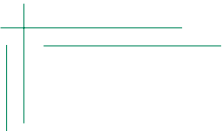
Let the adventure begin!

Chapter One

Why We Practice the Martial Arts







THE most important thing to know about the martial arts is that they are healthy and peaceful activities. As you learn about their history, you will see that true martial artists do not want to hurt anyone or have violence in their lives. They work very hard to not have conflict in their lives. They practice so that they will not have to fight, and instead can show the strength and beauty of their technique in an artistic way. This is why it is called martial ART, not fighting.

If you play around at punching and kicking, you are not doing Martial Art. Its only pretend. To be a real martial artist means that you must pay attention to certain ideas. Learning them depends on you. What goes on inside your head is more valuable than what you can do with your body. How you think and the honesty of the smile on your face is as important as how fast your muscles work and how big a breath you can take. Experienced martial artists know this.

What Is a Dojo?

Many of you are already practicing martial arts, some of you perhaps for a couple of years. Most people go to a martial



arts school or take classes at a community center. Some people practice in the park, and quite a few train in their own backyard or living room. Wherever you are when you study a martial art can be made a special place.

A *dojo* is a place where you decide to learn and practice rather than just play. In Japanese *dojo* means “a place to learn and do.” Korean martial artists call this a *dojang*, and those who study the Chinese traditions train in a *kwon*. You might call it a recreation center or a gym, which is short for the Greek word *gymnasium*.

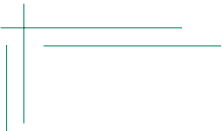
Some people like to practice their martial art outdoors. In the forest or at the seashore, in a grassy field or on a rocky ledge you can create a *dojo*. Places where there is clean air and enough quiet to feel comfortable are especially good for learning. You may climb to a third floor of a building or down to its basement. It can be very plain and simple, and sometimes you may even have to imagine its boundaries.

The most important attitude in a *dojo* is respect. It is this respect that makes any *dojo* a special place. You must have respect for the space itself by deciding to make it important to you. If your *dojo* is indoors, it is important to keep it clean and neat. If your *dojo* is outdoors, you will be careful to not damage it or leave



Gymnasium

In early Greece a gymnasium was a group of closed and open spaces for students to practice swimming, boxing, and wrestling. Students also practiced other athletics and studied math, poetry, history, and important ideas in these gymnasiums.



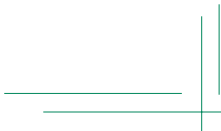
anything behind to mark it. You should respect the other people with you in the dojo.

Remember that your teachers work hard to teach you what they know and to keep you safe. Respect them because they are looking out for you and wish you well. Have respect for what you are learning because many smart and talented people have learned from good teachers and then passed it around the circle to you. Say thanks to those who have gone down the path before you, those who travel with you, and, of course, the students who come after you.

Don't be confused if you meet other people who have different customs, uniforms, and names for things. It may be that their school has a slightly different history than yours. There is a lot of variety in the martial arts and that is part of what makes them so interesting. All martial arts have something to offer. Don't worry about which might be better, they are just different. Make sure that you are a good representative of your school or style so that others will respect you as you, in turn, respect what they are doing.

Why Do So Many People Study Martial Arts?

People train in martial arts for a lot of different reasons. Many do it for fitness and fun. Others say that learning to focus has made a huge difference in their lives.



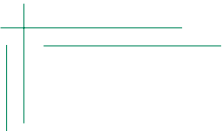
Fitness for Everyone

Martial art is good exercise. It helps to make us healthy and fit. We feel better, happier, and don't get sick if we practice regularly. It is important to attend your classes every week at a regular time, even if sometimes it seems easier to play with friends or watch TV.

Everybody knows that martial artists are strong and fast. Some of them can jump and spin in the air, do splits with ease, and break boards and bricks with their bare hands. They have practiced hard to be able to demonstrate these skills in front of an audience or in the movies. Of course, this is only a small part of what they learn to do, but it makes a great show for people. It is a quick and easy way to make people aware of how they have been able, through practice, to train their bodies to do amazing things.

Martial artists don't have magical powers. They have learned how to apply the laws of weight and motion and knowledge of how the body works and how it can be improved over time by training.

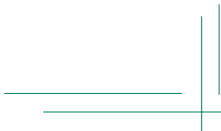
Performing these skills is fun, and having an audience appreciate their hard work is exciting. Most people, when they see a martial artist give a demonstration, wish that they could do it too. You may have seen a demonstration yourself or perhaps a friend has told you about someone at their martial art school who was able to do some pretty fancy stuff.



Everyone who studies martial arts learns to do things that they have not been able to do before. Even if your school doesn't do demonstrations of jumping kicks or board breaking (many don't), you will definitely become stronger and your body will become more flexible. In time you will feel more coordinated than you did when you began. You will also find that other sports and games become easier.

Focus on Excellence

If you have ever looked through a camera, telescope, or microscope that had an adjustable lens, then you probably already know what focus means. At first your vision is blurry, but when you turn a knob or ring the right way, at a certain point everything becomes clear, sharp in focus. In the martial arts we focus our minds to do something well. If you practice a certain way, concentrate on what you are doing, and feel good about the moment you are in, then you can bring your mind and body together to take a focused picture. It doesn't matter if what you are practicing is simple or appears impossible at first. If you think about a task in the same way as a technique and are careful to focus all your energy on it, then some day sooner or later you will be able to do almost anything you want. By learning to do something that seemed tricky at first in the martial arts, you can apply the same method to learning other things.

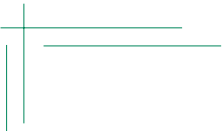


Fun to Learn

The ability to do martial arts well doesn't come all at once, and you were not born with it. Some people take longer than others to learn, and everyone is different. For example, spelling words may be difficult for one person, while addition of numbers is harder for another. Some people can draw a tree on paper. Others can only dance like a tree waving in the wind. In martial arts it is the same. People learn at their own speed. There will be days when your practice seems easy, and days when you have to practice over and over before you can get it right. You will feel great when you are able to do a technique well, and if you learn to smile gently at yourself when it's not quite working out, then even that can be fun too.

It doesn't matter if it takes you a little longer than other students in the class. They will have different successes and challenges to work on. Martial artists try to concentrate on their own progress and improvement without comparing themselves to how their friends are doing. Many things can affect how quickly or easily you will learn something new. For example, how often a student can come to class and time spent participating in other sports and activities outside the martial arts, can affect what happens in the dojo. Don't worry, you will walk your own path in your own time.

In a good martial arts class others will help you on your way. Although everyone should be friendly and helpful, it is



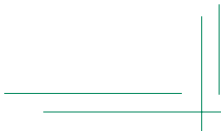
important to pay attention to what the most senior students and your teacher have to say.

What Is a Sensei?

The teacher in a martial arts school is often called *sensei*. This is a Japanese word that means “one who has gone before.” A sensei is like the leader of an expedition through a jungle or up a mountain who says, “Follow me, walk here, I know the way.”

As a student, especially someone new to the martial arts, you have to trust this person and listen carefully to his or her directions. It can be easy to lose your way at the beginning if you don't pay attention. Much later in your training, when you can see the path clearly for yourself, you may turn around to help others find the way by becoming a teacher. Some people even go off on their own and make new paths. It is in this way that new styles and schools of martial art are born.

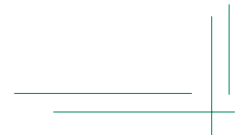
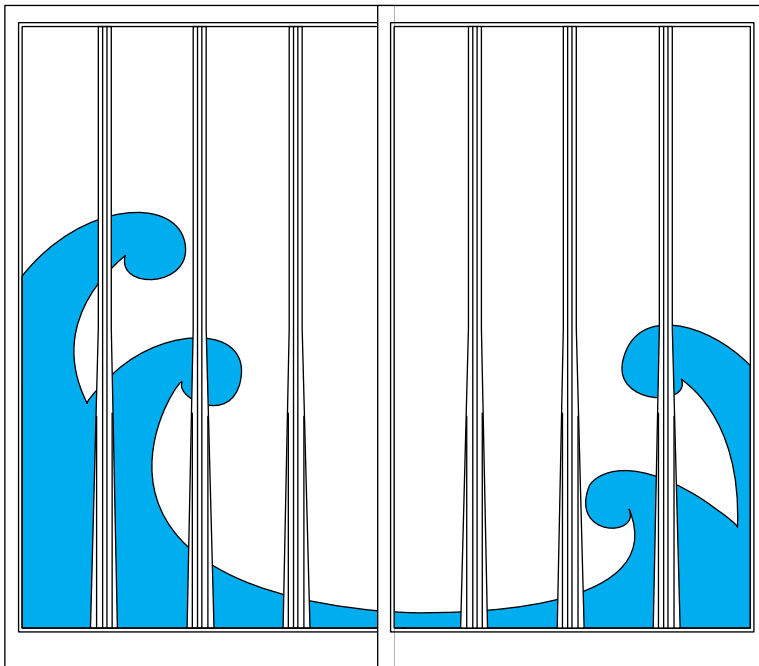
A sensei is someone who has practiced for a long time, studied martial art seriously, and decided to carry on the tradition by teaching new students. In the Korean language sensei is called *sabonim*, and in Chinese, martial arts students may call their teacher *sifu*. Teachers have different names depending on their experience and the school that they teach



in. We call them by these special titles to show respect for what they have learned and the hard work they do in teaching their martial art to others like yourself.

When you meet a sensei for the first time it is important to smile, look him or her in the eye, and bow or shake hands if a hand is extended to you. Be friendly and polite as you would when you meet any new person and you will usually find that they will welcome you and be friendly right back.

This is especially true when you enter a dojo for the first time. Lets see what else you will want to know.



About the Authors

Claudio Iedwab is a 6th dan Black Belt in Gorindo, a 5th dan in Taekwondo and Jujutsu, a 3rd dan in Karate-do, and a Yoga instructor. He was the 1982 South American Taekwondo Champion, the 1985 National Chinese Martial Arts Champion in Argentina, and has 25 years experience teaching young people.

Roxanne Standefer is a 3rd dan Black Belt in Gorindo as well as a photographer, wilderness guide, and martial arts instructor.

Together they established Gorindo, “the Friendly Martial Art,” which integrates the principles and techniques of Taekwondo, Karate-do, Savate, Jujutsu, and Yoga.

They are also the authors of *The Secret Art of Health & Fitness* and *Martial Arts Mind & Body*, askSensei.com and kidsaskSensei.com.

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