
KATA



kata

Kata is one of the fundamental building blocks of traditional Japanese Karate. It is the encyclopedia of the system and through it the knowledge of the art form is passed down from generation to generation. Kata teaches the body stances, dynamic movements, and the principles of generating power from the hips and body. Also, kata teaches proper use of breath, timing, distancing, rhythm and coordination, and the fighting spirit and mindset of the art. Three essential elements should always be considered in each movement of any kata. These three elements are: application of power (i.e. strength or gentleness of power), speed of technique (i.e. slowness or quickness of technique), and extension and contraction of body (i.e. compression of body or expansion of body).

Also important in the study of kata is 1) executing exactly the correct number and type of techniques 2) executing the techniques in the correct order 3) executing the techniques with the correct timing in relationship to one another 4) adhering to the correct direction/position and kata pattern (i.e. *enbusen*).

The Kihon Kata

Kihon means basics, or fundamentals. If kata is the heart of the Shotokan karate system, then the kihon is the blood and the foundation of the kata. These kata are designed to build strong basics and prepare students for the more advanced Heian kata series.

Kihon Kata Ichi (basic kata number 1) also called *Taikyoku Shodan*

Emphasis on basic low blocks/strikes and stepping punch, moving through the center and building strong and low front stances, proper basic breathing and application of kiai. Hip rotation, vibration.

Kihon Kata Ni (basic kata number 2)

Emphasis on basic face blocks/strikes and stepping punch, moving through the center and building strong and low front stances, proper basic breathing and application of kiai, hip rotation, vibration.

Kihon Kata San (basic kata number 3)

Emphasis on basic outer blocks/strikes and stepping punch, moving through the center and building strong and low front stances, proper basic breathing and application of kiai, hip rotation, vibration.

Kihon Kata Yon (basic kata number 4)

Emphasis on basic combination blocks/strikes and stepping punch, moving through the center and building strong and low front stances, proper basic breathing and application of kiai, hip rotation, vibration.

Kihon Kata Go (basic kata number 5)

Emphasis on basic face blocks/strikes, front snap kicks, timing of lunging punch after kick, kicks exploding from the center, proper kicking chamber and snap back, control of arms and upper body during kick, building strong and low front stances, proper basic breathing and application of kiai, hip rotation, vibration, and reconnection.

The Five Heian Kata

Said to have been created by Gichen Funakoshi's teacher Itosu Yatsume, these kata were developed to further help in teaching basic techniques and to help in conditioning the body, and learning proper hip usage. The name Heian comes from the contraction of the characters for heiwa and antei, meaning peace and stability.

Heian Shodan (Peaceful Mind First or #1)

Emphasis on basic low blocks/strikes and stepping punch, moving through the center and building strong and low front stances, hammer fist technique and face blocks/strikes, including transitionally timed blocks and strikes, back stance knife hand block/strike, proper basic breathing and application of kiai. Hip rotation, vibration, shifting/thrusting, reconnection.

Heian Nidan (Peaceful Mind Second or #2)

Emphasis on multiple blocks, trapping/breaking techniques, back stance knife hand block/strike, reverse stance blocks and counters, transitional blocks and counters, proper basic breathing and application of kiai. Hip rotation, vibration, shifting/thrusting, pendulum (side snap kick), and reconnection.

Heian Sandan (Peaceful Mind Third or #3)

Emphasis on multiple blocks, trapping/breaking techniques, release from wrist locks and grabs, forearm deflection and back fist strikes, defense from various grabs and holds, proper basic breathing and application of kiai. Hip rotation, vibration, shifting/thrusting, reconnection.

Heian Yondan (Peaceful Mind Fourth or #4)

Emphasis on multiple blocks, trapping/breaking techniques, kicking and countering, double arm block/break/release, devastating counter attacks with elbow and knees, front kick defense, defense from various grabs and holds, proper basic breathing and application of kiai. Hip rotation, vibration, shifting/thrusting, pendulum (side snap kick and front kick), reconnection.

Heian Godan (Peaceful Mind Fifth or #5)

Emphasis on multiple blocks, trapping/breaking techniques, defense from various grabs and holds, Leg blocks and strikes, continuous changing of focus and direction of attacker, take downs, proper breathing and application of kiai. Hip rotation, vibration, shifting/thrusting, pendulum (side snap kick and front kick), reconnection, up and down energy.

Bassai Dai (To Penetrate a Fortress - Big or Greater)

This is one of the oldest kata in the system and is common, in many variations of both technique and name, to different styles of Japanese karate. This kata is known for its application of power and strength and changing disadvantage to advantage by the use of switching strikes to blocks and blocks to strikes. Extreme use of hip rotation is a hallmark of this kata, although all of the major hip actions can be found throughout it. This is a Shuri-te school kata of Itosu. There are two forms of Bassai taught in the Shotokan syllabus: Bassai-Dai, and Bassai-Sho. Bassai-Dai is considered one of the most important kata for shodan black belt level, along with Jion, Tekki and Kanku-Dai.

Jion (Jion Temple in China, a Buddhist term meaning love and/or goodness)

One unique feature of this kata is the hand position that both starts and ends the kata. This position is a slight variation on a Chinese hand salutation or greeting. This basic, but powerful kata is considered one of the best representative kata of the Shotokan system. Although the kata is composed of primarily basic stances and techniques, it is quite difficult to perform properly and there is little room for error, or variation.