

Safeguarding in Martial Arts: Safe Practice

Martial Arts are activities where safe practice is essential to help prevent injury. Children* are particularly vulnerable as they are still developing mentally and physically, so training methods need to be modified as described below. (*also includes Adults at Risk)

Please consider the following in designing your own safe practice policy:

1. Warm Ups

All activities should first include a thorough warm up which is appropriate for the activity taking place. To help reduce the risk of injury, specific attention should be paid to those muscle groups that will be used during later activity.

2. Martial Arts involving throwing, grappling and strangling

The risks include but are not limited to: falling on unsuitable surfaces; landing on the head; damage to the joints from locks; strangulation.

Safe practice should include, but is not limited to:

- (a) Checking the matted area for suitability, particularly where the mats have been joined.
- (b) Checking that there are no hard surfaces or sharp/hard objects around the matted area.
- (c) Having an experience instructor who will ensure that children are not taught to use locks, throws or strangles which will cause injury.

3. Martial Arts involving strikes, punches and kicks

The risks include but are not limited to: concussion (brain injury) from heavy blows to the head; damage to internal organs and joints from heavy blows; injury from inappropriate stretching and other exercises.

- (a) There are some key points to consider in this section, particularly around head contact for under 16s.
 - Is age a consideration in regard to head contact? Yes
 - To what degree is head contact allowed? Only controlled light contact.
 - Is equipment a consideration when sparring? Yes
 - Is the age of the participants/athletes a consideration when sparring? Yes
 - Is height or weight of the participants/athletes a consideration when sparring? Yes
 - What considerations are taken with mixed gender sparring and competition? We don't do competitions for mix genders

- Is supervision of the athletes considered when sparring? Yes
 - What floor covering (e.g. mats) is considered when sparring? We use mats
 - What are the steps taken if head injury occurs? We file it in accident book and report it.
 - Is appropriate medical supervision considered when sparring? Yes
- (b) Avoiding excessive stretching and exercises such as press-ups on the knuckles or hitting heavy bags, the joints of children are still developing and can be damaged by these exercises.

4. Martial Arts involving weapons

Safe practice should include but is not limited to:

- (a) No live blades (sharp or otherwise) in the training hall when children are present.
- (b) Safe protocols for the use of training weapons by children.
- (c) Good supervision at all times by Instructors.

Above all, safe practice means having a suitably qualified and experienced instructor who will ensure that children are not exposed to the above risks and who can make a training session enjoyable whilst maintaining the discipline essential to learning a Martial Art.

PLEASE NOTE:

This document provides indicative/generic examples of some of the safety issues that should be individually considered by clubs when they are formulating or reviewing their own specific safe practice guides and processes.

This document is not advice and should not be adopted in whole or in part without careful and informed consideration being given to the specific needs and requirements of any given club and its particular characteristics.

Therefore, while the document may be used to inform the development and assessment of safe practices at clubs, it is essential that clubs and organisations take a broad evaluative approach in considering the relevance of each aspect of the document, and also endeavour to give detailed consideration to any conceivable safety concerns that are not covered by the document. Safe practice in all clubs should also be kept under ongoing review.

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