

Practice Makes Perfect

"I fear not the man who has practiced 10,000 kicks once, but I fear the man who has practiced one kick 10,000 times."

Bruce Lee

- *How should I allocate my time to learn and practice all the Uechi-Ryu material?*
- *What additional exercises should I do to enhance my karate and health?*
- *I finished the assignments in the course. What should I do now?*

These are three questions that we often receive from our members. This article provides guidance on addressing these questions.

1. How should I allocate my time to learn and practice all the Uechi-Ryu material?

Whether you are part of an online program like the Mattson Academy, a physical dojo, or both, practicing Uechi-Ryu karate on your own can be challenging. Balancing time with the various demands of family, work, friends, activities, and personal downtime can be tricky. Furthermore, the challenges you encounter depend on what phase you are in regarding your Uechi-Ryu journey. A student new to Uechi-Ryu will need to learn new material while practicing recently acquired skills. In contrast, a senior student who has mastered all the techniques of the Uechi-Ryu system trains to understand the movements more deeply and to perform them at the highest level. Therefore, practice sessions will vary as the journey progresses. However, the following four steps of planning and execution remain consistent.

Step 1: Schedule time for your workouts:

A successful training program is most effective when it becomes a part of your routine. This may require some adjustments and sacrifices, such as waking up 30 minutes earlier on certain mornings or giving up a lunch break for a practice session and eating at your desk. I recommend planning to practice Uechi-Ryu for, on average, three hours each week. Practice sessions don't need to last a full hour. 20 to 30-minute practice sessions spread throughout the week may work well for you. If you work from home, consider taking three 10-minute "practice breaks" to focus on movements, kata, kumite, or bunkai. The overall effect is cumulative.

Step 2: Set goals to guide your practice.

No matter your current level of Uechi-ryu study, use the goal sheet in your Bublup personal folder to record your workout objectives. Each day, week, or month, set short-term goals for what you aim to achieve, and then align your practice sessions to meet those goals. The focus of your workouts should be to complete a part of your overall

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goal in each session. Strive to establish a reasonable and manageable schedule that you will adhere to each week. Your current level will impact your goals and workout plan in Uechi-ryu study.

Step 3: Mix up your training sessions.

Be careful not to “burn out” by repeating the same things in every practice session. You don’t need to practice everything you know in each session. I suggest varying your practice sessions. One approach is to have a theme for each day, week, or month. Examples of themes include:

- Kata: Complete kata, chunk up movements, slow practice.
- Basics: Sanchin stepping, turning, arm thrusts, wauke, 8-form, hojo undo.
- Kumite: Complete kumite, breaking it down, practice visualization, use the kumite simulation videos, and shadow spar.
- Bunkai: Complete bunkai practice (Kanshiwa and Seisan), work on specific bunkai techniques and principles, bag and/or dummy work, flinch action practice, and target practice.

The challenge for those new to Uechi-ryu is finding time to learn new material, complete assignments, and review previous material. We suggest focusing on new material during alternate practice sessions; although this might spread your “themed” practice over a longer period, your overall improvements will develop more rapidly.

Step 4: Take at least one class per week.

I recommend attending at least one class each week, whether live or recorded. Mattson Academy offers nine live classes per week, as well as a variety of recorded classes accessible through links in Bublu. These classes reinforce and refine what you already know, expand your understanding of the material, and introduce you to new methodologies for practicing and improving your Uechi-Ryu.

2. What additional exercises should I do to enhance my karate and health?

Embracing supplemental exercise enhances physical capabilities, resulting in the development of a well-rounded and resilient martial artist who can continue practicing karate well into their senior years. The key exercises that best complement Uechi-Ryu and yield excellent results for overall health include breathing, core development, flexibility training, resistance training, and cardiovascular exercises.

Finding the right exercise routine to complement your Uechi-Ryu practice can be challenging, especially when balancing family, work, and practice sessions. However, with effective time management and creativity, you can discover exercises that fit

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seamlessly into your busy schedule. Here are suggestions for adding supplemental exercises to your daily routine.

- Park your car further away from your workplace or the grocery store entrance and walk the extra distance.
- Whenever possible, opt for the stairs instead of the elevator.
- When working from home, be sure to take breaks to stretch or engage in short exercise routines, such as planks or push-ups, several times throughout your workday.
- Avoiding the need to travel to the gym or studio can save valuable time. Many high-quality online programs offer comprehensive instruction in Pilates and yoga for individuals at all levels.
- You don't need to spend money on a fancy home gym when your body is a versatile tool for workouts. All you need is a good exercise mat and a few basic training props to create a comprehensive and cost-effective fitness regimen.
- One efficient way to maximize your workout when time is limited is by including time-efficient exercises. For example, you can perform hojo undo arm sequences or a kata while in a horse stance to work your lower body, or use resistance bands while practicing your kata to add resistance training to your karate practice.

It is also important to move away from the "no pain, no gain" philosophy and prioritize moderation and perseverance. Therefore, it is advisable to transition to sustainable, low-impact exercises that support your Uechi-Ryu practice, can be easily incorporated into your routine, and can be maintained as you age. The "Big Five" that I have found to provide the highest return for your overall health and complement your Uechi-Ryu include box breathing, pushups, planks, sumo squats, and dead hanging (refer to "Insights Into Uechi-ryu Karate", 2024, for more details).

3. I finished the assignments in the course, what should I do now?

In the early Kyu rank phase of Uechi-ryu study (Jukyu–Rokkyu), a significant amount of new material is presented. The focus of study lies in learning this new material, practicing the sequences and mechanics of the movements, and demonstrating your capabilities. Promotions are not automatic but typically occur upon completion of the assignments.

At the mid-to-upper Kyu ranks (Gokyu – Ikkyu), there is less new material to learn. At these ranks, it's essential to get repetitions to develop muscle memory, flow, and realism in your movements. Each course includes a recording of a presentation, with the first page consisting of new material assignments and review content. The second

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page contains the material that will be tested for promotion to the next rank. After completing the new material, review and practice are crucial. Use OnForm to receive feedback on your work, enabling continuous improvement. In these ranks, you are invited to formally test either through live demonstrations of the test material or using OnForm.

Our members join the Mattson Academy to study Uechi-ryu for various reasons, including self-defense and overall wellness. The program is designed to guide students from the fundamentals of Uechi-ryu to complex movement sequences. You'll also develop physiological and biomechanical skills to optimize movement and power delivery. Initially, new students seek to learn as much as they can. However, as practice continues, you'll realize that the emphasis should be on mastering the fundamental principles of the system rather than on the number of techniques. The Uechi-Ryu journey offers a lifetime of learning and enjoyment. Embrace it—keep practicing and refining your skills!