

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)

1. Warm Ups

All activities should first include a thorough warm up, and head to toe stretching and gradual cardiovascular activity. To help reduce 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 falling on unsuitable surfaces: landing on the head: damage to the joints from locks: strangulation.

Safe practice must include:

- a. Checking the floor area for suitability.
- b. Checking that there are no hard objects around the area.
- c. Having an experienced instructor who will ensure that children are not taught to use locks, throws or strangles which will injure their training partner.

3. Martial Arts involving strikes, punches and kicks

The risks are 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.

Safe practice must include:

- a. Light contact only, especially to the head. (Light contact means the technique is targeted but controlled so that whilst the opponent is touched the technique is not followed through).
- b. When sparring adults (16+) are separated from those below the age. On the odd occasion when appropriate a child may partner an adult e.g. an evenly matched 15 and 16-year-old, this would be to the discretion of the instructor. During in-house competitions categories will be split by age, level and sometimes gender. Decisions on a split will depend on the entries and will be decided prior to the competition.

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.