

## **Safeguarding in the 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**

Judo, Ju Jitsu and Aikido etc all involve throwing and grappling.

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

It is Safe practice to include checking of the following:

- (a) The matted area for suitability, particularly where the mats have been joined.
- (b) There are no hard surfaces or sharp/hard objects around the matted area.
- (c) An experienced instructor(s) 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**

Some examples are: Karate, Taekwondo, Thai Boxing and Kickboxing

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.
  - No head contact should be permitted to under 5's
  - Controlled head contact to under 16s (light and controlled only) No full contact to the head.
  - There has been much debate as to whether head protection should be worn. Arguments have arisen that head guards only allow for heavier contact. It is the policy of ASMAA-SDF that NO under 16 be allowed to spar without sufficient head protection (as laid down by the requirements of the insurance company)
  - It is down to individual event and competition organisers to decide on

weight/height/experience categories.

- All club heads and individuals should familiarize themselves with the event/competition rules especially with regards to contact, age/height/weight categories and protective equipment to be used.
  - When club sparring the height/weight and ability of students should be taken into account when sparring or competing.
  - Mixed gender sparring may be permitted. It is the responsibility of the Club Head to restrict any sparring or to modify any contact as deemed necessary. It should be noted that developing girls may require chest guards when sparring. (this should be included in your risk assessment).
  - It is the responsibility of the event/competition organiser to have adequate supervision/referees/officials.
  - It is recommended that jigsaw/judo type mats be used when sparring or in competition. Whilst there are no direct throws in standup striking sparring and competitions.....accidents including trips, falls and accidental knock downs can occur.
  - If a head injury does occur, first aid must be given straight away. ALL head injuries should be seen by a Doctor or medically trained professional. All head injuries to be recorded in the accident book as soon as possible following the injury.
  - All organised events and competitions should have appropriate medical supervision (as per the risk assessment)
  - A suitably qualified First Aider should be in attendance at every class (or in the case of leisure Centre's etc., a member of staff on hand should first aid be needed)
  - It is a requirement of the Risk assessment to provide adequate First Aid cover for classes.
- (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.
- (c) All equipment used for sparring and/or competition must come from a reputable store and be fit for purpose.

#### **4. Martial Arts involving weapons**

Some martial arts include weapon training (examples are Kendo, Kobudo, Laido and Freestyle Forms Karate etc)

It is Safe practice to have:

- (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 trained Instructors

## Safe Practice



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.

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