



Safeguarding in the Martial Arts: Safe Practice

Karate is an activity 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 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.

All activities should include a thorough warm up, and head to toe stretching and vascular activity with press ups, sit-ups, squats and burpees. To help reduce injury, specific attention is paid to those muscle groups that will be used during later activity.

- Press-ups, warm up the upper body, chest, shoulders and arms.
- Sit-ups, warm-up the core muscles in the hips, abdomen and lower back.
- Squats (own body weight) engage the leg muscles and joints for kicking
- Burpees are an overall body warm-up that engages all muscle groups and gets the heart & lungs ready for training.

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.

2. Karate Martial Arts involving strikes, punches, kicks and throws

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; falling on unsuitable surfaces; landing on the head; damage to the joints.

- Sparring is practiced and only for advance students and is light contact only, BPK/SJK do not allow head contact at any time and is totally forbidden.
- (Light contact means the technique is targeted but controlled so that whilst the opponent is touched the technique is not followed through).
- Padded gloves and head protection are to be worn when sparring at all times. (Expert advice from a neurosurgeon is that the use of helmets, mitts or foot pads does not eliminate the risk of brain injury from full contact strikes.)
- Drills in all other children's classes are light contact only and contact to the head is strictly forbidden.

3. Karate involving weapons

The children's training syllabus does not extend to the use of karate weapons system.

- Safe practice includes:
- No live blades (sharp or otherwise) in the training hall when children are present
- Safe protocols for the use of training weapons by children
- 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.