

SAFEGUARDING IN MARTIAL ARTS

SAFE PRACTICE POLICY

Kojin-Kai Karate Club

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).

Risk assessments are carried out where appropriate and reviewed regularly to ensure a safe training environment.

Kojin-Kai Karate Club does not train or compete using weapons, for any age.

1. Warm-Ups

All activities must include a thorough warm-up appropriate for the session. To reduce the risk of injury, particular attention should be given to the muscle groups involved in the planned activities. All students wishing to participate must take part in the full warm-up.

2. Throwing and Sweeping

Risks include but are not limited to: Falling on unsuitable surfaces; landing on the head; damage to joints.

Safe practice should include:

- (a) Training areas are checked prior to sessions to ensure they are safe, clean and free from hazards.
- (b) Ensuring no hard surfaces or sharp/hard objects are around the matted area.
- (c) Having an experienced instructor who ensures that children are not taught to use throws or sweeps likely to cause injury.
- (d) Sweeps will not be allowed in intra-club kumite (fighting) competitions to under 10 year olds. However, they will be taught safely to 5-9 year olds in supervised classes.

3. Strikes, Punches, and Kicks

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 exercises; bruising from impact.

4. Head Contact for Under 16s

- (a) No head contact is permitted for under 16s. Helmets, gloves, leg guards, Taekwondo-style body protectors, and gum shields are required when training Knockdown in class.
- (b) No punches to the face are permitted in training or competition.
- (c) Tournament safety equipment must comply with specific competition rules and requirements.

5. Head Contact for 16-18 Years

- (a) Light touch contact to the head is permitted, but kicks must not be carried through.
- (b) Kicks and punches must be controlled.
- (c) Light bodyguards, gloves, leg guards, and mouthguards must be worn during sparring in training and competition. Chest guards and groin guards are optional.

6. Head Contact for Over 18s

- (a) Full contact is permitted to the head and body for over 18s.
- (b) Chest guards for women, groin guards for men, and mouthguards are required during training and competition.
- (c) Shin guards and gloves are optional but recommended.

7. Considerations for Head Contact for All Ages

- Students may only spar in class (Clicker and Knockdown) once they have attended sufficient training or when the head instructor deems them ready.
- All students must fully understand the rules of each kumite (fighting) discipline, as Clicker and Knockdown differ.
- Students must be fully in control when sparring; uncontrolled techniques will not be tolerated.
- Students must adhere to required safety equipment and rules related to their age and grade.
- Failure to comply with dojo etiquette may result in exclusion from sparring.
- All instructors hold appropriate qualifications, are first aid trained, and are familiar with safeguarding and concussion protocols
- Sparring in class/training will take place on clean karate mats with appropriate space for safe practice.
- Efforts will be made to match students by age/height in training, though this cannot be guaranteed.
- In competitions, students will be matched based on age, gender/sex, grade, and/or height as per competition-specific rules.
- No student will be left unattended or unsupervised during sparring training.
- In competition, where mats may not be present, the flooring must be safe for barefoot combat. If no mats are used, sweeping will not be allowed.

8. Procedure if a Head Injury Occurs

In Training:

1. **Immediate Assessment** – Training will be paused, and a first-aid trained instructor will assess the student for concussion or injury symptoms.
2. **Removal from Activity** – If symptoms such as dizziness, headache, confusion, nausea, or vision issues are present, the student will not continue training.
3. **Parental/Guardian Notification** – If the student is under 18 or an adult at risk, their parent/guardian will be informed immediately.
4. **Emergency Action** – If the injury is severe (loss of consciousness, worsening symptoms), emergency services will be called. The student will not be moved unless necessary.
5. **Return to Training** – Students diagnosed with a concussion must follow a structured

return-to-training protocol based on medical advice and may only resume sparring after medical clearance.

6. Incident Reporting – All head injuries will be documented, including details of how the injury occurred and actions taken.

7. Participants are encouraged to inform instructors of any injuries or medical conditions prior to training.

In Competition:

1. On-Site First Aid – Qualified first aiders will assess the injury.

2. Removal from Competition – If concussion symptoms or serious injury are present, the competitor will not continue.

3. Follow-Up Care – Competitors will be advised to seek medical attention if necessary, and competition officials will be informed.

4. Incident Reporting – The injury will be documented and reported to the competition organiser.

5. Return to Training/Competition – If a concussion is diagnosed, the student must receive medical clearance before resuming training or competing.

9. Mixed-Gender Sparring and Competition Considerations

- Mixed-gender sparring is permitted in training with age-appropriate restrictions.
- Only light contact is allowed for mixed-gender adult sparring.
- Mixed-gender sparring is unlikely in external competition.
- Mixed-gender sparring is likely in internal (intra-club) competitions for Under 14's.

10. Supervision of Participants

- No student will be left unattended during sparring.
- Competitions will have designated supervisors, referees, and safety regulations in place.
- All sparring and competition activities will adhere to safeguarding principles, ensuring the well-being of all participants.
- Parents/guardians are welcome to remain present during sessions, particularly for younger participants, to support a safe and open training environment.

11. Considerations for Younger Children

- Excessive stretching and exercises such as knuckle press-ups or striking heavy bags will be avoided, as children's joints are still developing and may be damaged by these activities.
- Board breaking for children under the age of 8 will not require full breaks; pre-broken boards will be used to prevent injury to growing bones.

12. Kumite (fighting)

- Kumite is delivered progressively, beginning with non-contact (clicker) sparring to

develop control, timing and decision-making before any introduction of controlled contact.

- Participation in full-contact sparring is never compulsory.
- Protective equipment (e.g. helmets, gloves, shin guards, body protectors and mouthguards) is used in line with age, experience and activity.

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 Kyokushin Karate.

13. Class Structure and Participant Grouping

Kojin-Kai Karate Club delivers sessions structured by both age and ability to ensure safe and appropriate progression for all participants.

Regular weekly classes are organised as follows:

- Juniors: Ages 5–9
- Cadets: Ages 10–16
- Adults: Ages 16+

Additional sessions (e.g. Sunday classes) may be structured by ability level:

- Foundation: Typically ages 5–15
- Advanced: Typically ages 10–18
- Adults: 16+

While these groupings provide a general framework, instructors may use professional judgement to place students in the most appropriate class based on factors such as physical maturity, experience, size, behaviour and readiness.

In some cases, older or more experienced cadet students (e.g. aged 14–15) may be invited to train within adult sessions where it is considered safe and appropriate to do so. This is always:

- carefully supervised
- risk assessed
- based on individual suitability
- aligned with safeguarding principles

All training environments are structured to prioritise safety, appropriate supervision and participant wellbeing at all times.

This policy is reviewed regularly to ensure the highest standards of safety and safeguarding within our club.

Reviewed March 2026

Next review: March 2027

