

Class Management for Student Safety

ITFNZ Technical Advisor Group – October 2023

Introduction

International Taekwon-Do is an activity that involves physical contact and therefore a risk of injury (potentially serious injury).

As instructors and assistant instructors, it is our responsibility to minimise the risk of injury. However, whatever risk mitigation we undertake, some risk will remain.

Instructors and assistant instructors should consider:

- General risks that exist in the dojang, and
- Specific risks that exist for each activity students undertake.

General Risks in the Dojang

Permanent Risks

Take a few minutes in your dojang to consider risks that will impact all activities. For example, many schools hire community venues and school halls.

- Are there tables, chairs or other venue equipment that must be avoided?
- Is there a stage, or stairs, that could pose injury risk?
- Is the floor hard, or are there trip hazards?
- Where do students store their shoes, bags, and other belongings?

Before each class, ensure these risks are minimised. For example, venue equipment can be moved to the back of the venue or separated from the training area in some way. Some schools have martial arts mats that can be laid (note the trip hazard posed by the edges of the matted area).

Daily Checks

Check for new risks before each class. For example, there may be water spilled on the floor, or something loose in the ceiling. What can you do to reduce these risks?

Sweep the floor before classes begin each day.

Check that you have an appropriately stocked first aid kit available, and some form of ice or ice pack, for every class.

Always ensure that all students have the skills required to participate in an exercise safely or modify the exercise for less skilled students to give them a safe alternative. Ensure all students know how to raise an issue of risk or injury so their training partner and other students stop immediately to address the issue or injury.

Specific Risks from Taekwon-Do Activities

All activities we ask students to perform contain risk of injury. Consider these risks before each activity and prepare students to reduce the risk of injury.

Ensure you always have at least one first aid qualified person present in the dojang. (This is why instructors are required to have first aid certificates).

Free Sparring

Free sparring risks include contact injuries (fractures, blood noses, bruising), concussion (opponent hitting the head, or head hitting the floor), twisted ankles, etc.

Remind students of hazards before sparring begins. Ensure students know how to raise an issue so that their opponent will immediately stop sparring and check their opponent.

Ensure students have the skills required to perform the exercise safely. Free sparring drills to develop skills, slow motion sparring to explore skills, light contact, and other exercises can be used to develop students for free sparring.

Ensure there is enough space for students to free spar safely. Consider the risks of students clashing with other free sparring pairs. If necessary, use exercises where some students rest while others free spar. You may be able to section off free sparring areas (practising area control as well as free sparring).

Self-defence

Ensure all students are aware of the risks involved in the activity space or the activity. Remind students how to tap out if they risk injury.

- You can tap loudly on your own body or on your partner's body.
- If your arms are locked and you are unable to tap, then stamp your foot or use the word "BREAK".
- Partners should release any grip immediately, ensuring the student is in a safe position before releasing all physical contact.

Some self-defence grabs come with greater risk of injury, so ensure all students are adequately briefed. Teach students to grab realistically, but safely, and practise grabbing before practising defence against the grab. Take specific care supervising children.

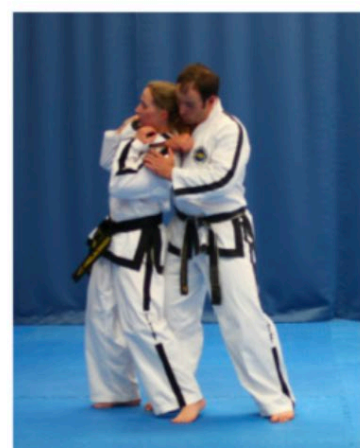
For example, throat and neck grabs. Remind students of the danger of grabbing tightly when practising. It only takes a few seconds to cut off the blood supply or airway. For the strangle hold from the rear, practise the sleeper hold (carefully squeezing the carotid arteries) rather than a choke hold (squeezing the Adam's apple and throat). The latter risks injury to the throat, and the defence against both is the same.



In the case of a throat grab, there is no **A** option.



Opponent grabs you in a headlock.



Opponent grabs you from behind.

Excessive pressure put on joints, wrists, fingers etc, although not life threatening, can result in strains or dislocation. Take care when practising these techniques as well.

Flying Kicks

Check for slip hazards. Ensure there is adequate space to land safely after flying.

Teach students to land safely before practising flying kicks, to reduce risk of injury to knees and ankles. The knee should usually point towards or away from the direction of momentum, not sideways, because knees don't bend sideways. (For example, for flying side kick, land with the toes pointed back towards the direction whence they ran.)

Ensure students wait their turn to kick, so they don't clash with another student.

Breaking

Ensure you have ice and other first aid available if necessary. Ensure the breaking area is clear of hazards, and other students maintain awareness and are positioned safely.

If people are holding boards for breaking, ensure they are well trained to position themselves correctly and safely. Ensure their heads are turned away from the break. Holders should be positioned so they have an arm between the board and their heads so that a broken board will be deflected by the arm rather than fly into the holder's head. Ensure a small amount of the fingers is holding the front of the board, and this portion is kept flat. Avoid having the corners of the boards held in the palm of the hand.

For suspended breaks, ensure the broken board will fly into an empty, safe area, without the risk of hitting someone or breaking something.

Ensure students can execute a technique accurately and correctly before they attempt to break. Start with considerable training on pads.

Consider using shoes, or other protective equipment as students develop confidence and technique. Start with many breaks of low difficulty (e.g., white boards) before moving on to more difficult breaks.

Padwork

Ensure pads are in good repair. Worn pads, or pads with worn and weak padding, can cause injury to students.

Ensure students can perform the techniques safely, with the correct tool at the correct angle. Ensure there is space enough so that pairs of students do not clash with others.

Check that there are no slip hazards (e.g., student sweat patches).

Patterns

Ensure there is sufficient space for students to perform patterns without clashing. Remind students of how to react if a clash is possible.

If there is limited space, consider dividing the class into two groups – one resting, and one performing.

Check for slip hazards and other surface hazards.

Fundamental Movements

Ensure there is sufficient space for students to perform the movements without clashing. Watch for the risk of students in front leaning backwards into a kick from behind.

If there is limited space, consider dividing the class into two groups – one resting, and one performing.

Check for slip hazards and other surface hazards.

Warmups

There are many varieties of warmup, and the hazards will vary according to the nature of the exercise. Think broadly about what these hazards may be. Which risks are most likely? Can you reduce these risks? What can you tell students before the exercise to reduce these risks?

Ensure the muscles and joints of all students are suitably warm before progressing to the next exercise.

Exercise specific warm-ups may be appropriate during class.