

# Taekwon-Do and why we enjoy training

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I first was introduced to Taekwon-Do when looking for a self-defence course with having two teenage daughters and as a dad wanting to know my girls could keep themselves safe.

I have been training for 20 years now and sometimes I ask myself why I am still doing it?

When I get home from a busy work day my job being in the trade and quite physically demanding, to a warm home and then leave to go to the Do Jang.

Why does one keep going, year after year after year?

Why do we start our journey in Taekwon-Do? The reasons are many e.g. learn how to defend one self, desire to learn a martial art, a friend has invited you to give it a try, your parents enlist you, etc...

Taekwon-Do helps you to recognize how to handle situations that arise which may require you to defend yourself. It is an effective weapon less martial art of self-defence but it also has a competitive sport side.

When you begin as a white belt there is so much to learn and everything is new, even how to walk is new not so different, but we analyse the whole movement focusing on body weight shifting to give ourselves good body balance and this follows with learning control and power with defence. It may seem a bit overwhelming at times trying to keep up with the rest of the class but before long with the help of other members you start to understand the principles of the movements. Following through with walking stance we then learn upper body defence and then attack. As you progress you will learn a comprehensive system of blocks punches kicks open hand strikes with various take downs and throws. Controlled sparring will allow you to practice your learned techniques preparing you to be able to handle yourself in a given difficult situation. Free Sparring is similar however you will learn how to react in any given uncontrolled confrontational situation. We then have tournament sparring which is governed by rules as this is the sport side to Taekwon-Do. All sparring sessions is touch contact within reasonable boundaries so that we learn to understand distance to be able to deliver a technique without hurting your competitor but having the skill to use it if needed for self-defence.

On a club training night, we begin with a warm up session to prepare our body ready for the nights activities and this will help to get you in the mindset of the martial arts workout. As I mentioned earlier in Taekwon-do there is always something to learn, how to stretch different muscles to make us more flexible, different exercises to strengthen our body, some exercises for speed some for balance and also for strength. These exercises can be standalone exercises e.g. (press-ups or planks) or fundamental movements such as turning kick or side kick, sometimes having a different person taking the warm ups is quite nice as different instructors focus on different exercises which is quite nice and sometimes challenging.

Then we move in to the main part of the class which will focus you on skills base. This is where we learn the finer aspects of different techniques, we do this by breaking down the full movement into technical parts. We start with flying side kick, first we start by practising balance, bending stance balancing on one leg then practice chambering for sidekick going into extending in slow motion and retrack to a balance position then we do the movement at full speed. Next, we work on jumping i.e. flying, we have two foot take off or one-foot scissor action take off, once we have worked on jumping and step jumping, we will start putting these practice movements all together, step, jump, chamber, kick and land. A club member will hold a focus pad and we practise the movement to a target. Finally to check that we have learnt the techniques correctly we'll setup boards on the braking machine to see if we have power, focus and confidence in the techniques.

Other club nights we might work on patterns, in a similar way, or step sparring by performing them move by move which gives you more time to focus on each movement individually. Line work is fundamental movements where as a group we go up and down the dojang executing techniques call by call then with combinations with other techniques focusing on correct placement of hands legs feet etc, balance and fluid motion, we practice some combination drills and try to use these skills in different sparring scenarios with partners. By the time you finish the class your body will be tired but you have enjoyed the session and your mind should be relaxed and you will have achieved a sense of accomplishment. Hopefully you feel great (smile).

**Self-defence** you would think it's all about beating up your attacker but it's not, it's about keeping yourself safe and controlling the situation you find yourself in and not letting things get out of control. Lessons include non-aggressive and passive techniques. Sometimes you just need to calm someone down, or show that you are not an easy target. The lessons start with taking a passive stance with your hands up and open in front of your body ready to defend yourself, and not looking like an aggressor, then you start on releasing techniques from grabs, to restrict how much contact the aggressor has on you, then move on to counter attacks to disable them i.e. someone grabbing your arm and starts pulling you. It could be a drunken friend being silly where you just need him to let you go without hurting him, or it could be a bit more sinister and you are generally concerned for your wellbeing.

As we do have a curriculum to achieve both individually and collectively it makes each training session different, and to that end we have three gradings a year for colour belts (gup is your coloured belt grade until you reach black belt status then you become a Dan). Training will help keep you motivated always forging ahead learning and refreshing our techniques as there is a lot to master between gradings. Leading up to a grading one can be overwhelmed especially if you haven't put the training in. There is always plenty of support if you ask for help.

Grading is a huge learning component that makes you stop and relook at the theoretical part of the art and correcting techniques. Preparing for gradings helps you learn how to set goals. I think as you get closer to your first two or three gradings you probably haven't made any goals except to be a black belt one day. But as you move in to green and on wards you will start working on setting yourself goals.

One way to start is to write down your goals. To pass the next grading (which is very general) then the things you need to work on: Theory, Step sparring, Patterns etc. Then make it a bit more specific Theory terminology; make it measurable select 6 words write them down and put a time line on them i.e.: Week 1 copy and recite out loud week. Week 2 write the words without copying. Week 3 get someone to quiz you so every week you can measure your progress.

## Two step sparring

Week 1 practice at club with partner

Week 2 practice at home alone every day.

Week 3 practice with a partner at club and get a senior to observe, take on board their comments.

Week 4 re-show your twostep to your instructor or senior.

As you start making new goals and breaking them down you need to ask yourself: What, do I need to learn, set a time line to complete your goal, at club at home or both. Do I need a support partner if so, set a time line for your partner, As you answer these questions be realistic with the time line and the number of goals you select, the path becomes a bit more achievable and less stressful. Then set a time line so you can measure your progress. Writing in a journal or recording on your tablet is a great way to keep track of your progress so you are not overwhelmed prior to the grading and to motivate you later on if needed!

Similar with Tournaments set a goal; When are the tournaments write the dates on calendar. Where are you going to train? What are you going to enter in. Who is helping and follow through your preparations?

Being a part of a club with a diverse range of ages and people to train with and talk to in itself is very motivating. Watching young ones grow and mature in skill and confidence and older ones grow fitter and more flexible is a great thing. The club, being part of a bigger organisation that actively works and trains together is very cool too.

Some of the ways we get together is Tournaments, Seminars and Camps

Ah yes Tournaments, as you progress you will be encouraged to participate in tournaments, either as a competitor or an umpire. There are two main tournaments each year for all members and three under 18 tournaments around the country. Regional tournaments are open to all members in that region i.e. Auckland North, Counties Manukau, Midlands etc. and the other Nationals. Tournaments are a great place to build confidence and be inspired. Tournaments not only test your patterns, sparring skill, braking techniques, but also reaction skills, confidence, timing, humility and self-awareness and build friendships with other members from around the country.

As with competition, you have opportunities to choose how far in experience you would like to go. There is the choice of international tournaments as well with plenty of opportunity to do extra training or tuition in our organisation. There are procedures in place to reach this international level, talking with your club instructor will better inform you how to follow through.

When we have a tournament coming up, the enthusiasm seems to pick up and the training steps up to another level. Everyone starts to encourage each other to do better in a team environment. We also start training with other clubs in our area which is a good skills builder when training with someone that you haven't practiced with very often. Practicing with other clubs and various members is also another skills level that teaches us how to face off a challenge when entering the tournaments and meeting other like-minded competitors. In a tournament inspired training session, the comradery that is generated is inspiring and not just from the practitioner's point of view but from the parents and support crew which helps to create a big family environment.

Another of the ways we get together is seminars or IIC (International Instructor courses) where we have Masters and special guest instructors both local and overseas, come and teach for the weekend,

which is so really awesome and interesting. You learn a lot and mix with other Taekwon-do practitioners from around the country and some visiting from overseas they are always a great way to spend a weekend and are highly motivating.

Other training get-togethers are Regional and National camps which are a great way to train and socialise with other practitioners. As the name denotes, we spend the weekend at the same venue so there is plenty of time to socialise and get to know each other. Forming long lasting bonds and cherished memories. Another great thing about National camps is generally there is a senior Dan grading which is always inspiring and a great way to start a training weekend camp.

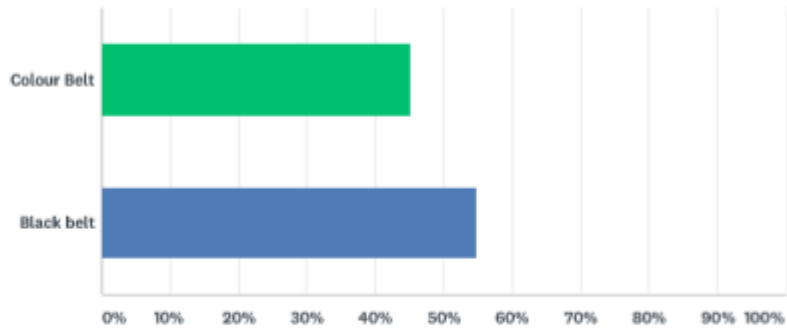
Taekwon-Do is quite a full on activity as there is quite a lot going on in any particular year, and by being active with your training your general fitness and wellbeing improves by tanning regular your body adapts in small steps. Why do I keep training because it's Interesting, challenging, de-stressing and fun.

By choosing to join Taekwon-Do, you will learn the art of building confidence and self-esteem. Through learning the five tenets training and learning discipline you will succeed in good physical mind and body.

Here is the results from a survey I have done.

## Q1 What belt are you?

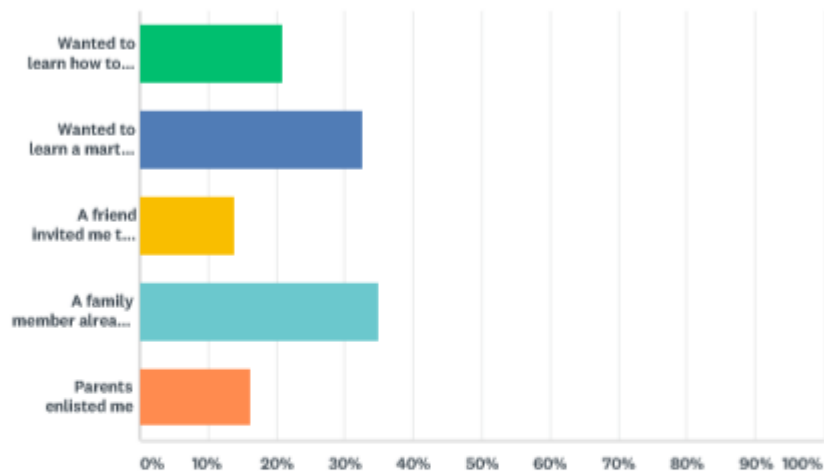
Answered: 42 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Colour Belt	45.24% 19
Black belt	54.76% 23
Total Respondents: 42	

## Q2 Why did you choose Taekwon-Do?

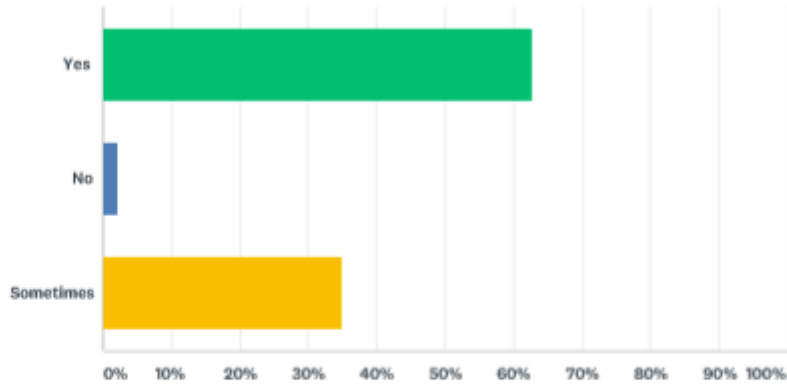
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Wanted to learn how to defend myself	20.93% 9
Wanted to learn a martial art	32.56% 14
A friend invited me to come	13.95% 6
A family member already going	34.88% 15
Parents enlisted me	16.28% 7
Total Respondents: 43	

### Q3 Do you set goals in Taekwon-Do?

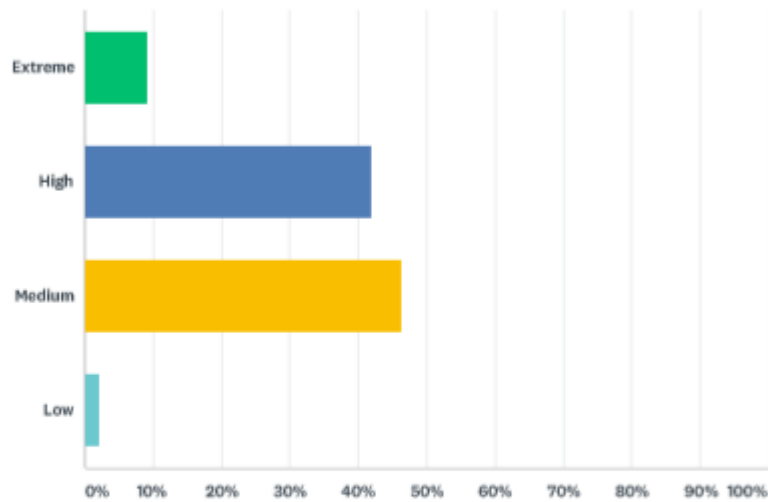
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	62.79%	27
No	2.33%	1
Sometimes	34.88%	15
TOTAL		43

### Q4 What fitness level do you rate Taekwon-Do?

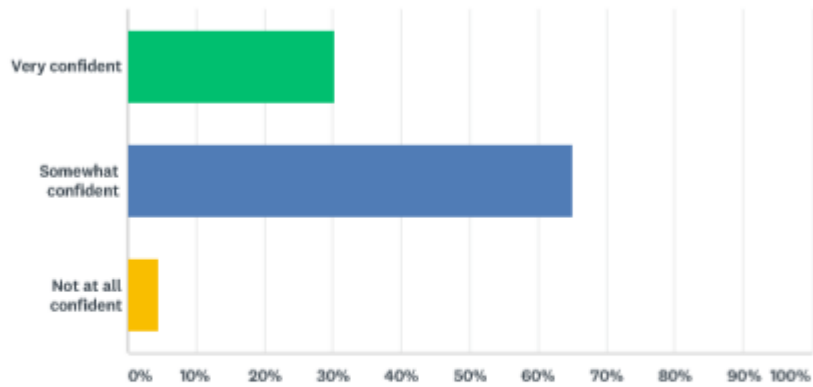
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Extreme	9.30%	4
High	41.86%	18
Medium	46.51%	20
Low	2.33%	1
TOTAL		43

## Q5 How well do you think your self defence skills will work?

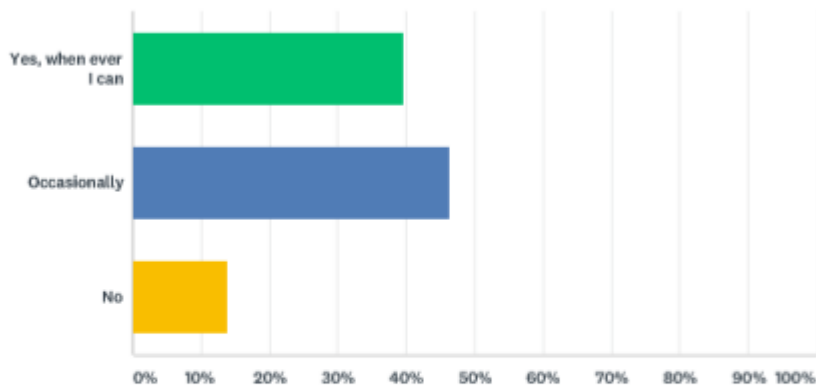
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very confident	30.23%	13
Somewhat confident	65.12%	28
Not at all confident	4.65%	2
TOTAL		43

## Q6 Do you go to seminars or camps?

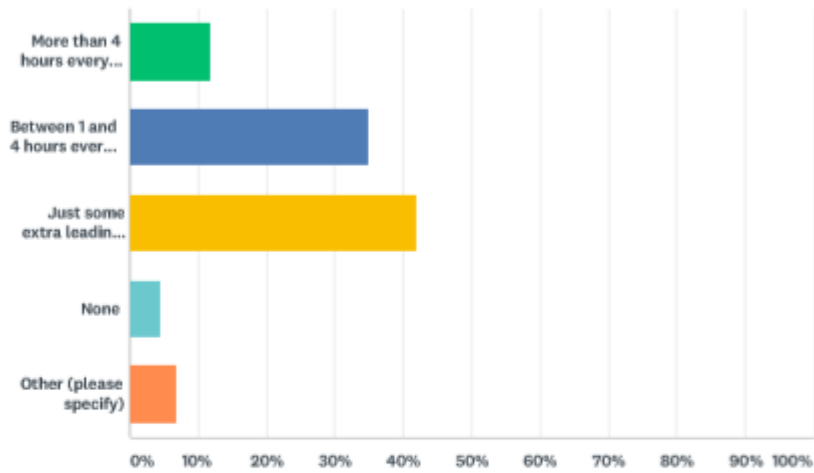
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, when ever I can	39.53%	17
Occasionally	46.51%	20
No	13.95%	6
TOTAL		43

## Q7 How much do you train at home or in addition to your normal club training?

Answered: 43 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
More than 4 hours every week	11.63%	5
Between 1 and 4 hours every week	34.88%	15
Just some extra leading up to a grading or tournament	41.86%	18
None	4.65%	2
Other (please specify)	6.98%	3
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>43</b>

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