

Tips/Ideas for teaching Mini Kid's -



Mini Kids classes are for kids around 6-9 years old. It is a great age, as the kids are often full of enthusiasm, open to learning new things and pick up new ideas quickly. It can also be very challenging, especially with large class sizes. Trying to keep students engaged and having fun while learning is an important part of any sport, especially Martial Arts. Martial Arts in general are known for teaching discipline. This also needs to be balanced with fun, new ideas, plus catering to all learning styles. Here are a few tips/ideas for teaching Mini Kids, including good stances, correct crossings, fun self-defence and more:

'Start out as you mean to go on' when you get new students

Obviously, each Mini Kid is different and learns at a different pace. The majority of kids can pick it up quickly if the expectation is there. As well as teaching them basic rules and when to bow etc, getting the technical basics right in this class will help prepare them for when they are moving up to the senior class. Aim to make sure stances and crossings are correct (mostly) at white belt level and before they enter the main class. That is far easier than trying to re-teach a yellow belt or green belt how to change stances and crossings correctly after they have been doing them wrong for a year or more.

Extra helpers are highly recommended

Having a few enthusiastic teenagers to be role models and to help out with everything from crowd control, shy kids and holding pads, (and hands) is a must for a successful class. Plus, having a couple of older kids (choose yellow or green belts who are well behaved, motivated and good examples of what Taekwon-Do is supposed to look like). Using them in front of the class to demonstrate is a fantastic way for beginners to pick things up. It is also a great way for the older students to start developing their leadership skills as future Instructors.



Use a Theme

Finding fun ways for Mini Kids to learn the basics will keep them engaged and put them in good stead for years to come. A great way to do this in the Mini Kid's classes is to use a theme.



An example: 'Train Theme'

Stances - (Train Theme)

Traditionally beginners have very narrow and short stances and stand almost side facing. A few ideas to help combat that:

-Train Tracks and Tunnels

Focus on getting the stances wider first, then on longer. Running with the train theme, tell them you want them to have their stances like they are doing them with each foot on an imaginary train track rather than both feet on a single track. Start with them imagining they are the 'tunnel' that is standing on the tracks, the train is parked between the feet (small pad is the train). Both feet are on separate tracks.



Then get them to take a step forward from parallel stance into a walking stance. The train needs to still be able to fit through the tunnel straight. So, they need to take a slightly wider step and stay on the track. Start with using one pad for on the spot. Once coming forward, use two pads in a row, or a long pad (or even a couple of long pool noodles taped together would work). That way, they cannot step narrow like on one track, otherwise they will step on the 'train'. Then practice without the train, and just imagine it is there, but just going straight forward and backwards to start with. Once they can do that and keep wide, you can move on to longer steps.



- Noodle Inspector (or Fat Controller from Thomas the Tank Engine)

The Noodle Inspector/ Fat Controller is coming to inspect the tunnels (stances). Walk around with a noodle and if they are too short or narrow the train inspector taps the foot until it is correct. Usually, they can figure out what needs changing before the inspector needs to tap them. This can be joined with forearm rising blocks and the noodle is the attack. The helpers enjoy this job.

The train between the feet can also be used once they are ready to learn Saju Jirugi. A lot of kids manage to get a good stance going forward, but once they have to turn, they revert back to going narrow again when they turn to block.

Get the 'train' pad out. Practice doing Saju Jirugi by numbers, as they turn around into their forearm low block, get them to stop. Then get the 'train' pad and see if the 'train' will still fit under the tunnel going straight, or is it going to crash into the back foot? Which it usually does to start with, as they revert back to the 'one track stance', as they turn around, so the 'train' crashes.

They eventually learn to make sure as they turn around, there will still be room for the 'train' to go under the tunnel. Literally go down on the ground and push the 'train' between the feet and crash it into their foot if it is too narrow.

Once they know the pattern, if you see a narrow stance, even without the pad, you can still ask if a train will fit, and they instantly widen their stance.



Tip for Forward Facing 🏊‍♂️

Kids all learn differently, for some thinking about their feet helps, for others, thinking about their middle helps. Kids quite often end up side facing in walking stance punches, as a result of their narrow stance.

Get the kids to imagine they have a head torch (like what cavers have for their head). Tell them to now strap it to their waist. They need the torch on their belly button. To start with they can put their fist on their belly button and pretend it is the torch. Or they can even pretend to be a train and the torch is the train light on their tummy. Tell them that their tummy torch needs to be facing the direction they are going.

Do a few moves forward and back, then call out "freeze! which way is your torch light facing?" If it is out to the side, they then need to change their feet/hips so the light can face the direction they are going. This also helps them think about what they need to change to 'self-correct'. Without even saying how, they then move their foot to make the stance wider, so they can change the position of their hips, so the torch light can then face forward.



General - Other theme related activities to keep the theme going.

- Train Races

All the kids line up in two teams, then face each other. The kids all get into a plank position, or a press up position. The row of kids then become the tunnels.

Then get two train drivers (usually two assistants, older helpers). Even name the trains, one is always 'Thomas the tank engine' and the kids usually choose the other name, Gordon, Percy etc.

They need to stay in their 'tunnel' until the train driver gets back.

The two drivers then have to push their 'train' (small pad) under the tunnel of tummies, run to the end of the hall and then back under. The train driver needs to reach in to get the 'train' from the feet end of the tunnel, when it cannot be reached from the sides, so they don't head but each other.

It is a race with the two drivers.

This is a fun introduction to the plank and endurance.



- Chagi Train

Chagi Train is a fun way to learn a Korean word, that is easy for kids to remember. In teams all the kids line up behind each other, putting their hands on the shoulders of the kids in front. Teams can be made up of kids of a similar size, or have them mixed and in order from shortest to tallest or vice versa. Depending on class size as to how many trains you would want. The first person is the 'train driver' and will go off first in the 'Chagi Train'. The rest of the train follows behind, kicking as they walk. Kids walk along saying, "Chagi" every time they kick. The kicks are out to the side slightly so they do not kick the person in front of them. They do a circle getting back to the station, then everyone 'toots'. Then ask "What's the Korean word for Kick?" and they all call out "Chagi".



- Game - Stuck on the Track

Stuck in the mud, can convert to tunnels and train theme. Stuck on the track, they need a train to go under the tunnel and rescue them.



Tips for Correct Crossings

- 'Kiss' the bees or 'Squash' the bees?



This is an idea for teaching crossings for forearm low block and knifehand low block. This helps with getting kids to make sure the wrists are the correct way around for the blocks. Get a bee stamp and get all the kids to hold out their hands. On the top of both wrists put a bee stamp.

Then say "when we do our crossings the bees need to meet. You can either let your bees 'kiss' (and they all giggle), or you can 'squash' your bees".

Then demonstrate a crossing for the block. Then go along and ask them all if they are going to have their bees kiss or are they going to squash them? Either way they think it's funny and they make sure they have their wrists facing the correct way so their bees meet before they block.



- "Hip on Top"

This is also a useful phrase for these blocks. Telling them what ever hand is on your hip is the one going on top next (to squash/kiss your bee). Rather than saying left or right. "Just bring it straight out from your hip and put it on top of your other hand/bee. 'Hip on top', then block".

-Look at your watch



This is an idea for teaching the crossing for the inner forearm side block for Saju Makgi. Draw a watch on their left wrist or if they have a watch they can wear it. Or you can even use a stamp or sticker and they can pretend it is their watch.

After they have done their knifehand low block, get them to step forward to half way and bring the knifehand blocking hand up into a position to 'Look at your watch'. Demonstrate at chest height, this also helps with keeping the crossings higher, as most beginners cross too low. The leg that is moving pauses there. The other hand then goes in behind it so you can still see the watch. Then once they have the crossing correct, they can finish the step forward and do the block with the hand 'without' the watch. Then continue to do the block in two halves, first half stop and 'look at the watch', bring the second hand up, then second half finish with the block. Stop at that intermediate position on every block 'look at your watch', until they get it.

Tip, don't teach the other side until they have got it correct on the first side. Then the following week they can swap their watch to the other hand, or redraw a watch etc. Just continuing to go very slow and stopping to look at their watch every time. If they cannot see their 'watch', the crossing is not correct, they will then start to 'self-correct' so they can still see the watch at the crossing.



Go Bananas



When teaching kids basic self-defence (shoulder grab), using the 'banana twist' can be a fun way.

Start with a game of 'Banana Tag', if you get tagged, you become a 'Banana'. To get free someone needs to 'peel' the banana by taking their wrists and gently pulling them down and out. Telling the taller kids, they will need to be bent bananas so they can be saved.

Then, self-defence, pair up. Usually start by both partners facing front, one in front of the other. The back row grabs the shoulders of front row. Front row, are the bananas, so when they feel the hands grab their shoulders - BANANA! (They need to put their arms in the air like in Banana Tag) Then twist quickly to face their partner and put hands up in passive self-defence stance.

This also works facing each other, but start with behind first as it makes them twist/spin around faster to see their partner.



Be a Chicken? - or not a Chicken?



Self-defence - *'Be like the chicken'*. People who own chickens can also own cats and they usually have no problems with them living together. Ask the kids if they know why the cat does not kill the chickens? The cat is a predator that kills birds, it has 4 legs each with 5 claws, that is 20 claws, the chicken only has 2 legs with 4 claws each, that is only 8 claws. The cat has a big mouth full of large teeth, the chicken does not have any teeth. Cats are very fast at running chickens are not. The cats should easily be able to catch and kill the chickens, they kill most other birds. Why don't they bother the chickens? - Because when the chickens feel threatened, they use their body/wings and in particular, their voice (Squawk!!!!).

When chickens were introduced to a household that had 4 hunting cats, to begin with, the cats did go in the chicken coop. The cats thinking they were like all other birds. Each cat went running into the coop to catch a chicken. All of the chickens went crazy, flapping their wings, leaping about and squawking at the top of their lungs. The cat got such a fright it took off at full speed. Good lesson on using their voice. e.g. "STOP BACK OFF!!" "LEAVE ME ALONE!!!" 'Be like the chicken'.



'Not like a Chicken' - When doing kicks in line work a lot of beginners flap their arms out to the side, rather than having them in front. For kicking - 'not a chicken', then demonstrate how they look like a chicken when they flap their arms out to the side, even squawk, the kids will laugh. Then demonstrate correctly.... "Not like a chicken".

Tip for Left or right?

For many Mini Kids, when learning the fundamental movements, they struggle to remember which side they are doing, is it left or right? When they are still beginners, always start using the first move only of the first side, then making sure they are all on the correct leg before continuing. Same when ready to start the second side. If they are still struggling with their left and right and need to be doing it on their own without help, (e.g. gradings, tournaments) putting a hair tie or elastic band on the right wrist can be helpful. Whenever they need to start on their own, tell them always start on the side that has the hair tie/elastic band first. This can be very helpful for the younger kids.

Tip for more Power

Sometimes in line work, kids can just put the punches or blocks there and don't have a lot of power. An idea to get more power, is to make line work a bit competitive for fun. Form up, do forward facing punches first. Then get row 1 and 2, and 3 and 4 to turn and face each other, then ask them, "who is the most powerful out of you and the person next to you?" Repeat punches on the spot facing each other. All of a sudden, they are putting power into their line work, as they want to be more powerful than the person they are facing.

Also get them to block a noodle or a pad while doing line work. It gives them a target and a purpose which can also help increase power.

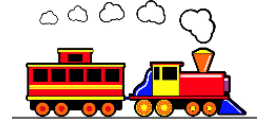


Face front



Then face each other

By making sure stances are good and crossings are correct, this helps Mini Kids when moving up in to the main class where they can sometimes get a bit lost at the back. There are many ways to teach good stances, correct crossings, self-defence and fun games, these are just a few extra tips and ideas.



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