

“Teaching Children Karate – A Guide for New Shodans”

v9

Okinawan Shorin Ryu Karate Do, Orlando, Florida

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“Patience is the answer to success.”

Renshi Geoffrey Gaudoin
Methods of Teaching, 7/1990

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1 About This Guide

1.1 Focus of this Paper

This paper provides high level guidance regarding the challenges of teaching children karate. As a high level guide, it does not delve deep into any particular direction; instead, it attempts to present practical and common topics that may be unclear to new Shodans. The content in this paper is primarily directed towards instructing children ages 7 and up.

1.2 Document Format

This document begins with an introduction to “Learning Styles” and how they impact the dojo. It then presents some common disorders and “General Success Tips”. Next it provides a variety of “Games / Drills” and then it concludes with a “Resources” section containing links to additional information sources.

“When the student is ready, the teacher will appear.”

Author unknown

“This is an underlying principle we as instructors must accept as a fundamental basic if we are to teach. We can do nothing (and therefore seem to not even exist) for a student who is not ready to learn what we have to teach, no matter how long that student has been in the dojo or what rank that student has achieved.

We must accept that the student has control over their learning, and therefore above all else we must have the patience to still be there when the student is ready for us to appear.”

Sensei Chris Hagy
Teaching the Martial Arts, 12/1999

2 Learning Styles

“If we are to ‘reach’ our students we must understand the best way they learn. To do this on an individual level, we need to be willing to vary our instruction till we find the method that brings that student to the understanding necessary to do the movement correctly. An instructor might need to word something differently, or move more slowly, or move the student’s body to the proper position. Or it may be that we need to seek the assistance of another instructor who can give a new perspective on the movement.”

Sensei Patricia Gaudoin
Learning Styles, 12/1999

There are three basic learning styles:

- Visual Learners
- Auditory Learners
- Kinesthetic Learners

Though people typically rely on all three styles to learn, individuals do tend to have a dominant style. It’s helpful to be aware of the styles and their nuances and understand how to adjust your teaching method when working with individuals that lean heavily in one direction or the other. Understanding this information can also help you avoid misjudging an individual when their learning style makes them appear disinterested.

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2.1 Visual Learners

Talk is cheap, We need to See it to believe it...

“I find teaching visually much more effective than verbal, especially with children.”

Renshi Geoffrey Gaudoin
Methods of Teaching, 7/1990

These learners need to see the teacher's body language and facial expression to fully understand the content of a lesson. They tend to prefer being at the front of the classroom to avoid visual obstructions (e.g. people's heads). They may think in pictures and learn best from visual illustrations.

Dojo Impact:

Visual students learn karate best by demonstration. Explanations aren't as helpful. They won't be as patient with long explanations and may not be as interested in having tasks broken into small pieces.

Try This:

- For visual learners, make sure technique demonstrations are clearly visible.
- Demonstrate techniques and movements from different angles (e.g. front facing, side facing).
- Demonstrate techniques using different speeds.
- Show the effect of executing the technique in different ways.
- Demonstrate the common faults and their effect on the technique being instructed.
- Demonstrate the entire technique and then let them do it.
- Use such terms as "Can you see how this makes the technique stronger" or "Do you notice how a weak stance makes the technique less effective".
- Use the mirrors so the students can watch themselves.

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2.2 Auditory Learners:

We need to hear it and repeat it...

They learn best through verbal lectures, discussions, talking things through and listening to what others have to say. Auditory learners interpret the underlying meanings of speech through listening to tone of voice, pitch, speed and other nuances. Written information may have little meaning until it is heard. These learners often benefit from reading text aloud and using a tape recorder.

Dojo Impact:

Auditory learners may seem distracted while you're talking because they are looking at their feet or around the room but they often listen better this way. They learn from both hearing and speaking, so they may have a lot of questions or may want to go into a discussion when you ask them to perform – this is sometimes misconstrued as being disruptive or avoiding a task.

Try This:

- Give plenty of verbal explanations of the techniques you are teaching. Be descriptive - instead of saying "Put your hand here," say "Put your right hand on the inside of the opponent's left forearm."
- Speak loudly and clearly.
- Describe the common faults for particular movements.
- Talk about the reasoning behind the techniques.
- Tell them verbally about the corrections required to improve their techniques and the reasoning behind it.
- Emphasize the rhythm of a movement, or the count associated with the technique.

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2.3 Tactile/Kinesthetic Learners:

Enough gabbing, let's get some action going here...

Tactile/Kinesthetic people learn best through a hands-on approach, actively exploring the physical world around them. They may find it hard to sit still for long periods and may become distracted by their need for activity and exploration.

Dojo Impact:

Kinesthetic learners may fidget during visual demonstrations and verbal instructions. Kinesthetic learners will seem to want more action and less background information. They will appreciate the repetitions of physical drills. Kinesthetic learners will attempt to internalize the mechanics of each movement which can have them looking downward while performing a kata. This is not necessarily a lack of confidence; it's how they take ownership of a movement.

Try This:

- Allow them to try a technique after a brief explanation.
- Use repetition of movement to help them to get a feel for the technique.
- Make physical corrections to techniques (e.g. adjust arm and leg position for them), allowing them to feel the difference between incorrect and correct positions.
- Talk about the "Feel" of a technique (e.g. the feeling of awareness, sharpness, spirit etc.).

2.4 Learning Style Summary

It is important to realize that just about everyone uses a mix of learning processes; however, most people do have a dominant learning process and it's up to the instructor to be aware and adjust their teaching methods to adapt to different needs.

Since classes are a mixture of all three types of learners, it is best to use a mixture of teaching methods in a class. When teaching a new technique, demonstrate the technique for all to see in precise manner, clearly state what you are doing during each step, and then have the students perform the technique repeatedly, stressing that students be aware of and feel the balance, body position, and force needed while performing the technique.

3 Challenging Children and Learning Disabilities

Karate instructors deal with a wide variety of children. Some are quiet, dedicated and disciplined while others always seem to be staring off in the distance, talking and fidgeting or disrupting other students. And of course, most students fall somewhere in-between. These challenges can be tied to personality types, lack of interest and other parameters but they also may be symptomatic of one or more disorders. Increasing awareness of the disorders can help make you more effective when dealing with special needs children. This section presents some of the more prevalent disorders and some general teaching strategies.

3.1 Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

As of 2007, approximately 9.5% (5.4 million) of the U.S. children ages 4-17 years of age have been diagnosed with ADHD. This is a 22% increase from 2003 to 2007. Furthermore, studies have concluded that karate training has a positive impact on children with ADHD and many teachers, Doctors and counselors urge parents to have their ADHD children participate in karate to help improve their behavior. The moral of the story is that there is an extremely good chance every karate instructor will have one or more children with ADHD in their classes. This is not necessarily bad news, it just means that it's worthwhile to understand the disorder better and learn how to help set these children up for success. The good news is that all of the teaching strategies described in this section also apply to other students.

3.1.1 ADHD Symptoms

- Problems taking turns
- Going from one uncompleted activity to another
- Difficulty being quiet. They will often play in a loud voice
- Talk excessively
- Do not seem to listen
- Poor eye contact
- Decreased coordination
- Less mature than same age peers
- Fidgety
- Easily distracted
- Difficulty with timed tasks
- Forgetful
- May hear/understand only part of what is said
- Difficulty standing in line

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3.2 Autism Spectrum Disorder (Aspergers/Autism)

Autism is a spectrum of disorders where children have difficulty relating to the outside world. Thus, it is often hard for them to have many friends or engage in “normal” activities. They may have difficulty understanding other people’s feelings or their point of view. Also, they may become fixed on one particular aspect of a subject. Severely autistic children are rare in the dojo because of the intense challenges getting through to them.

Aspergers is a high functioning disorder on the autism spectrum. It’s considered high functioning because people with this disorder can function successfully in society and in class. Children with this syndrome often are socially awkward, fail to develop friendships, have limited interests and have communication problems including poor nonverbal communication. They also often have poor eye hand coordination, may be overly clumsy and may exhibit odd body movements. On the other hand, individuals with Asperger syndrome often have normal or even superior intelligence.

Like ADHD, Asperger’s prevalence is on a rapid rise so it is quite likely that you will encounter one or more students with this disorder in your dojo.

3.3 Tourette’s syndrome

Tourette’s is commonly thought to be a disease where people are prone to sudden uncontrollable and inappropriate outbursts, but this is true only in a minority of cases. The most common symptoms are “ticks” or sudden involuntary muscle spasms. Students may also have to rub their hands together or make a similar repetitive motion.

3.4 Teaching Strategies

- **Reduce distractions** - if possible, try not to have two easily distractible children next to each other and try to reduce unnecessary distractions. It’s not reasonable to expect a totally quiet class void of distractions but you can limit the unnecessary distractions. For instance, do not allow parents to communicate with or get the attention of their children during class. Also limit the chatter from people on and off the deck.
- **Give short, direct commands** – if you give a long rambling command, the student will have forgotten the first part by the time you get to the end.
- **Teach in smaller, more manageable chunks** – Teach no more than 4 to 6 movements at a time – less is definitely better.
- **Don’t pre-judge** – These kids are often labeled “problem kids” from school or their peers. Let them know that they have a clean slate with you. As teachers, we have to believe in all our students. It may take a while but you’ll find untapped potential within.
- **Develop rapport** – many of these kids have few actual friends. While it is not your job to be their friend, respecting you and knowing that you are “in their corner” will help their self-esteem and make them more receptive to you.

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- **Be consistent and fair with discipline** – Overusing discipline tends to dilute its value. Use all your techniques / resources to influence the “right” behaviors. Also, remember these children will provide you a lot of opportunity to discipline them so don’t overdo it and make sure you are fair and consistent with the rest of the class as well. If you warn, then follow through.
- **Reinforce the desired behaviors** - sometimes children will act up just to get attention. Praising them for things they do well will help alleviate this problem. Also, sometimes it’s hard to find a great technique worthy of a compliment so praise them for their effort.
- **Be specific and positive** – Saying “Keep your leg straight” instead of “don’t bend your knee” will help reinforce the right way and give less room for misinterpretation.
- **Reinforce structure** – if a kid says “I want to play a game” remind him who is in charge.
- **Be patient** – Above all, it will take a longer time, but the students will learn. Practice basics repeatedly.
- **Speak Pleasantly** - If you want an ADD or ADHD child to listen to you, try speaking slowly, quietly and briefly. Children who are used to getting yelled at tune out the yelling just like instructors tune out children who whine and complain all the time. It also helps to make eye contact before beginning to speak so you know you have the child’s attention.
- **Helpers** - Most kids love being helpers and kids often tend to learn better from kids. Instead of teaching a technique repetitively which tends to bore kids and lose their attention. Have each kid model the technique and have the kids practice.

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4 General Tips for Success

4.1 Know and Use the students' names

It is important for instructors to know and use the names of all their students – adult or child. With adults it may be more a matter of mutual respect. It's also a respect issue with children, but additionally it's a critical step in gaining their attention. Furthermore, parents feel more connected with the dojo family when their children's names are known and used.

The importance of this tip cannot be overemphasized. You must learn and use every child's name in order to effectively teach them.

Techniques to Learn Student Names

- Arrive for adult class early and while waiting for the children's class to end, scan the class and quiz yourself on each student's name. After you complete this, look at the "name" board and try to match names to students.
- When instructing, always have the students hand their attendance cards to you. Quickly review their name on the card.
- Every time you interact with a child either say their name or ask it if you don't know it. They won't get insulted as a grownup might. They actually find it funny – especially if you add dramatics when they restate their name for the 100th time. "Ohhh, I can't believe I messed that up again. I got it now Brian." Thirty minutes later when you have to ask again, redo the drama and they'll think it's funny.

4.2 "Plan" to succeed!

"Those that fail to plan, plan to fail"! This is never truer than when dealing with children in an organized setting. Children need constant instruction and guidance or they wander – literally and figuratively. Instructing a children's class without an adequate plan is - in essence - setting the children up for failure. Instructors should always go to class with a basic plan and a back-up plan. Planning too much is better than not planning enough.

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Basic Plan

When planning your class, start off with a general theme to focus on - for instance: defense techniques, katas, and basic techniques. Then create an outline of drills that builds toward the theme. Account for 15 minutes in the beginning of class for warm ups and try to allocate time at the end for games. Pick games that reinforce the theme.

Training Sequence
1. Warm-ups
2. Basics
3. Kata
4. Specific drills or activity
5. Game

Backup Plan

- Be prepared for classes that are too large or too small for some of your drills. Make sure to have drill alternatives that are appropriate for different class sizes.
- Keep in mind the different skill levels and have a plan for splitting out less experienced students with a helper. Have drills the helper can take the students through that focus on the theme. Check up on the helpers – don't assume they are doing what you've asked.
- Also have alternative games that address different class sizes and training space.

4.3 Break lessons into smaller units

Most instructors know to break katas into smaller pieces because it makes it easier to present the first two steps and then the first four steps and so on. However, this teaching method can also be applied to less obvious topics like teaching a chest block. For a new student, the simple chest block can seem like a major challenge.

The non-blocking arm crosses first and touches a thumb to the shoulder while the blocking arm crosses over top and touches a thumb to the shoulder. Then the blocking arm fires outward and the non-blocking arm disappears into the chamber. If you include a walking step, you're almost guaranteed a total mess.

For a student first learning this technique, you should illustrate the entire technique first and then consider breaking it into distinct segments and use simple repetition to help lock it into the student's muscle memory. Regardless of the teaching approach, **always keep it simple!**

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Try This:

- Have the student stand in natural stance as if they just fired a chest block with their left arm.
- Now have them cross their left arm and touch their right shoulder with their thumb and then extend back to blocking position. Have them do this ten times.
- Now take the left arm out of the picture and have them use their non-blocking arm to touch their left shoulder with their thumb and retract back to the chamber multiple times.
- Now put the two steps together and have them practice the move with only their left as a blocking arm.
- Switch arms.
- Practice with both arms together.
- You can now try having them walk using one arm at a time.
- Now add a step.

4.4 How to Give Constructive Criticism

It's often necessary to give "constructive criticism" to students to help them improve their techniques. Knowing how to give criticism that doesn't feel like criticism helps protect the students' feelings while providing crucial information for their success. When students only hear criticism, they tend to tune the instructor out and may feel the instructor does not like them.

The **Praise-Correct-Praise** (PCP) method attempts to get around this by sandwiching a constructive criticism between specific praises. For instance: *"Your double kicks are improving quite a bit. Remember to turn your hips fully so you kick with the top of your foot. There you go, that's much better – great job"*.

4.5 Pair more experienced students with those needing help

Children often learn best from other children. When you are having difficulty getting a child to understand a new concept, try pairing them with a child who can perform the technique well. Ask the more advanced child to practice the skill together or to help the other child with the skill. Avoid using the word "teach".

Keep in mind - children do not have the communication skills to correct other students. They should be included as Examples not Teachers.

4.6 Don't become too playful with the students

It's important for instructors to build controlled relationships with their students. Some level of play helps break down barriers between instructors and students. This actually can be beneficial to learning because it helps build a relationship based on mutual respect and trust which is needed to foster a healthy learning environment. However, too much play brings the instructor down to the students'

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level and dissolves the authority / respect foundation. This inhibits learning and results in an overall lack of control within the dojo.

Other black-belts may joke around with classes because they have already developed a rapport with the students. As a new black-belt, do not assume you have this relationship.

Instructors must always remain cognizant of their role as a leader within the dojo. This is absolutely critical in order for the instructor to continue providing the students what they need to learn – guidance, direction and control. A new black-belt should limit games to a short time during warm-ups and at the end of class, allowing the students to start and leave on an upbeat note.

4.7 Shhh, we're trying to practice

Talking is clearly helpful when pre-demonstrating a technique to a class. Describe the technique and its purpose and explain the moving parts – especially the more hidden / subtle mechanics; for instance “Look first, then step on the ball of your foot. Does everyone know what the ball of the foot is? Etc..”. Once the demonstration is complete there should be little/no need to talk other than to count.

Providing further instruction while the children are practicing a technique just prevents them from concentrating on their task and it can dilute the value of the drill. If they are struggling with the technique, then stop them and provide brief clarification and let them return to practice. Instead of talking, try walking around and making quiet adjustments or perform the technique with them.

4.8 Silence + Demonstration + Repetition = Effective

Some people learn better by hearing instructions, some by seeing examples and some by going through the motions. With that being said, an instructor typically cannot split a class into groups based on learning styles so they are forced to pick a teaching technique that has the widest appeal. For complex movements such as those taught in the dojo, a silent, follow-the-leader instruction methods is one of the most powerful teaching tools.

As stated throughout this document, verbal instructions are clearly needed in the dojo but when teaching a complex sequence of moves, it's often best to trade discussion for the show/do/repeat method and keep the verbal instruction short and to the point; example: “Now step with your left foot.”

When teaching kata, try this:

Have the class line up – Shugo formation with extra space for the kata movements. Surround the newest students with higher ranks so they will always have someone skilled to look at when they turn. Quietly announce the kata and slowly move through the sequence with the class quietly following. Go

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through as many iterations as appropriate for the given class. The newer students may get a little frustrated but “doing” is far superior to “saying” for something like this.

4.9 Tap the Technique

When teaching techniques like katas, there are often multiple moving parts that need to be communicated and some of the moves can be extremely difficult to translate between instructor and student. For instance, teaching a student to perform a 180 degree turn with the right foot while throwing a lower block with the right hand can confuse the best students including adults. Teaching this to a new student or a child with a learning difficulty is similar to teaching someone to juggle with three or four bowling pins – it’s a lot of moving parts. “Clearing things up” with verbal instructions like “No, your right hand” just adds to the confusion when a child is trying to make sense out of a human puzzle. Verbal instructions at this point are confusing and they move the students’ focal point to the instructor’s face.

Instead of speaking the instructions, try this:

Your right foot is stretched way behind your left leg (preparation for a 180 degree turn) and your right fist is touching your left shoulder (preparation for a lower block). Your student has all or part of this backwards. Instead of talking – remain still and gently tap the part they have wrong. If they have the wrong foot, then tap your right foot on the ground they’ll look at your foot and make the appropriate adjustment. If they have the wrong hand/shoulder, tap your fist on your shoulder until they make the adjustment. If a student has a solid pattern of getting the foot or hand wrong, then start your tap earlier so they can make their adjustment prior to executing their move. When they make the appropriate adjustment, a smile goes a long way as encouragement. When they make the adjustment without the tap then let them know how pleased you are.

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4.10 Use games to teach

Kids love to play games so much that they often don't realize they are working. Children actually need games to help hold their attention and generate enthusiasm otherwise they will be much more likely to become bored, distracted and present behavior problems.

Games present the following benefits:

- Kids learn techniques much quicker
- Build core body strength
- Improved eye-hand and eye-foot coordination
- It makes learning fun
- Kids are excited to exercise and learn and will work harder

→ See the games in section 5 for more information; Also be creative and invent your own games.

4.11 Don't yell too much

"If everything is emphasized, then nothing is emphasized" - M. Kleiman.

For all practical purposes, yelling or raising your voice may be unavoidable when dealing with a room full of kids and is probably quite appropriate at times. Sometimes it may be necessary just to be heard over the commotion but most of the time instructors begin yelling when students don't react to a previous instruction. Yelling often gets results so some instructors fall into the bad habit of always yelling and this leads to problems:

- Yelling too much casts a negative cloud over the positive experience of learning karate.
- Though it may get results, it also creates a disconnect between the instructor and the students that limits the instructor's ability to influence the students in other areas.
- Students become desensitized (immune) to the yelling and at some point yelling quits producing results.

Instead of yelling instructions, you might try:

- Raise your voice to get their attention but then immediately switch to a softer voice to give the instructions. If they are out of control, you might try "Kyotsuke" or "Shugo". Make sure they are all "quiet and still" then give quiet instructions.
- If the commotion is limited to a few students, get their attention individually and let them know you expect better behavior. If needed, push-ups may get their attention.
- The commotion may also be an indication that you've pushed the limits with their attention span concerning a repetitive drill – try another approach or change to another activity.

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4.12 Don't make idol threats

One of the most common parenting traps has to do with not following through with warnings. Some instructors also fall into this trap. This is incredibly unfair to children because it teaches them to ignore warnings which earns them a reputation as a problem child in many adult's eyes. The bad news is that once the pattern is established, it can be a slow, frustrating process to turn around.

Rules of Warnings

- It's ok to give warnings. Just don't overuse them and follow through.
- Be fair, respectful, clear and in control.
- Only warn once! Multiple warnings encourages intelligent people to search for limits. One warning and then action – this is in the student's best interest.
- If you are not prepared to follow through, then do the student a favor and don't warn them.

4.13 Expect success – not failure

There's no doubt that some students are more challenging than others. But as instructors, we have a responsibility to not let our frustrations evolve into permanent judgments - for many reasons:

- The Pygmalion effect ¹– a social study that explored the impact teacher's judgments have on students. It concluded that children's behaviors are to some degree shaped by their teacher's expectations. In other words, "If a teacher expects failure from a student, the teacher will actually help the student achieve it, and the same goes for a teacher expecting success from a student". It is each instructor's responsibility to expect success from their students.
- When an instructor "writes off" a student as a problem, there may be a tendency to avoid interactions with that child. This inhibits the relationship from growing and limits the positive influence the instructor can have on the child.

4.14 Focus on "what to do" as opposed to "what not to do"

"We go towards that of which we think" ²

If a child thinks about undesirable behaviors, the tendency is to move in that direction and the same is true for desirable behaviors.

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pygmalion_effect

² Lou Tice – "Investment in Excellence". <http://www.pac-inst.com/>

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Many parents fall into the trap of continually talking about what “not to do”. It’s also common for instructors to fall into this same trap. It’s easy to fall into this pattern because we see the negative behavior and immediately begin talking about it. Instead we need to take a moment and offer the child a positive behavior we want them to move toward.

For instance:

- Instead of “Tony, stop moving and don’t talk” change this to “Tony, I need you to stand still and remain silent”. Or better yet, “Tony, when you stand still and remain quiet, we’ll be able to start the game”.
- Instead of “Tony, don’t flail your hand’s when you perform that technique” try “tony, your hand should go straight from your shoulder to your hip when you perform that technique”.

4.15 Singling out students

4.15.1 When misbehaving:

As a rule, try to avoid singling out children in front of the class. It can be embarrassing and in some situations the public attention may actually encourage the undesirable behavior. Some behaviors like staring off to the side might be ignored while disruptive behaviors must be handled directly.

Instead of singling-out a student try:

- If more than one student is acting-out, you might address the whole class for example: “When everyone is quiet with their hands at their sides, we can begin ...”.
- If the problems are tied to a single student, go to the student and quietly tell them what you need from them.
- You might try pulling the student to the side and working with them in a smaller group when you have enough helpers.
- Have the student demonstrate a technique so they can use their energy in a positive way.

These guidelines are not always practical. Sometimes, the class is too big or there are too few helpers to give special attention to a single student. Furthermore, singling out a student in a respectful way can be an effective method of getting their attention and it also sends a clear message to the rest of the class. In this situation tell them what you need from them (what to go towards) instead of what to stop. For example, “Tommy, I need you to keep you keep your hands to yourself”.

4.15.2 When technique needs adjusting:

When a student performs a technique incorrectly, be careful not to single them out in front of the class. This can be embarrassing to the student and increase their anxiety over trying new techniques. Students have to “trust” in order to try new things and this trial-and-error is necessary for learning to occur.

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Instead of singling-out a student try:

- Ask the entire class “Who knows where the right hand goes when performing this technique?”. Then provide the instruction to the class as a whole. It’s a softer method of conveying the message and most of class probably needed it reinforced anyway.
- Quietly walk over to them and make the adjustment without drawing unnecessary attention to them.
- You can also walk through the ranks and illustrate the technique for many random students including the one in question.
- If the student needs additional help, you may want to have a helper work with them on the side.

4.16 Be creative when repetition is required

Learning karate requires a significant amount of repetition to lock moves and techniques into muscle memory. Adults tend to be driven by fitness objectives, self-defense or general self-improvement to help motivate them to remain focused when performing repetitive tasks but children are often in karate for the GI, or it seems fun or cool or they don’t have a choice. Their motivation is different than adults and they have a significantly shorter attention span and get bored much quicker.

The conclusion from these observations is that instructors have to be creative when motivating children to perform repetitive tasks. The good news is that small teaching adjustments go a long way with children.

For instance:

- Change the way the students practice a drill i.e. in a line, in a circle, walking across the deck.
- Instead of standing in front of the students and instructing kata after kata, lead once and then select a student to lead and then select another. Instead of being bored, the students will enthusiastically focus on getting selected to lead.

4.17 Avoid failure traps

You can help your students succeed by being aware of their strengths, weaknesses and patterns and helping them avoid situations that lead to failure. Some of these situations may seem obvious but it’s not always obvious to new instructors that they have a responsibility to help students avoid these “failure traps”:

- When pairing individuals, begin by pairing the challenging children with appropriate partners. A higher rank with the appropriate demeanor is a good mix. If you do allow them to find their

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own partners – take a look around and make appropriate adjustments – it's in their best interest.

- If splitting the students into groups, try not to have two “hyper” children on the same team. If they do end up on the same team and are a distraction, quickly (and quietly) split them up instead of continually calling them out or giving them pushups. This can be handled in a positive way – tell the relocated student “this other team needs you”.
- There are many drills and situations where a small percentage of the class is engaged and everyone else is waiting their turn – like sparring. These times can be extremely challenging for some students. Pay attention to who's having the most difficulty. You can try encouraging them to behave a certain way and even dole-out pushups but at some point you should realize they can't succeed in this situation and you should try creative adjustments – try moving them; give them specific instructions “I need you to sit right here, sit up straight, etc.”; if appropriate, you may give them something to do i.e. help you referee or have them select the next fighter...

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4.18 Reducing Risks and Liabilities

The dojo is a great place for students but it also can present a wide array of risks without the proper precautions taken. Below is a limited list of tips, suggestions and rules to help safe guard the students, instructors and dojo.

4.18.1 Kumite

- Provide clear instruction and illustration of your expectations prior to allowing students to spar i.e.: light contact, pull punches and kicks and appropriate/inappropriate strike zones.
- Make sure you have total control and students' full attention prior to starting.
- Provide extra safety instructions to larger/stronger students when pairing them with smaller ones.
- Kids may not spar unless they have protective gear i.e.: mouth guard, hand and foot gear, cup for males.
- New white belts are not to spar.
- Ensure students use proper control during kumite.
- The sensei is fully responsible for:
 - The safety of everyone sparring
 - The safety of spectators. Keep spectators out of ring. Make sure kids always face ring.

4.18.2 Minors

- No adult should be alone in the dojo with a minor they are not related to. When a minor is in the dojo, they should be accompanied by their parent or there should be an adult present.
- No sensei should be alone in an isolated room with a minor they are not related to. When a minor is present, there should always be an adult.
- Don't let kids leave the dojo without their parent.
- If you need to work with a minor in the back room, let the parent know why and ask their permission to take their child in the back. Let the parent know they are welcome to accompany you to the back if they'd like. The monitor should be on at all times when people are in the back room. This rule applies to all students whether blackbelts or not.

4.18.3 Opposite Sex

- No male should be alone in the dojo with a female unless they are related.
- No male should be in the back room with a female during class unless the back room remains in clear site of the dojo via a video camera / monitor.

4.18.4 Parents and other guests

As the teacher, it is your responsibility to control the class and manage a safe environment. It is important to not have parents or other guests interact with students on deck. You must keep parents and other guests off the deck. This can be a challenge when kids seem to need help but it's important in retaining control and promoting a safe environment.

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5 Games / Drills

5.1 Guide the Kata

Reinforces	Kata, focus, discipline, leadership
Class Agenda	Ideal during class for Kata agenda; Good for any agenda
Steps	<p>Line the students up in Shugo formation – with extra room for kata movements. Tell the students that “we” are going to go through some katas and if they do a great job, they’ll be able to take a turn leading. The instructor stands in front and guides the students through a kata. Now, pick a student that gave a great performance and ask them if they’d like to lead the kata. The instructor and the student trade places. Have the student perform all the formalities i.e: announce the kata, rei, yoi, count the steps. After they complete the kata, pick another student and continue doing so for the amount of time appropriate.</p> <p>After going through a couple repetitions, ask the students if they’d like to do it without counting.</p>
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Going through a kata repetitiously presents many challenges to children. They quickly become bored and the challenging children become disruptive. This simple technique motivates the students to behave and participate.• Ideal for smaller groups – 6 or less.

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5.2 Help me find my <technique>

Reinforces	Basic techniques, discipline, participation
Class Agenda	Ideal during class when focusing on basic techniques , Good for any agenda
Steps	<p>Split class in half – lined up side by side on opposite sides of the dojo facing each other. This is the standard formation for practicing basic techniques across the floor.</p> <p>Instead of telling the students to perform a technique like a chest block, act like you misplaced your chest block and ask if anyone has seen it. If someone raises their hand, ask them to show it to you – they should step forward and demonstrate the technique. Compliment anything good about their demonstration and if there is room for improvement, point out the difference – for example: “That definitely is a great looking chest block. It had a lot of power and you stopped right in front of your shoulder. No doubt a great looking chest block but I don’t think it was mine because my fist always touches my shoulder first. Does anyone else know where my chest block might be?”. Pick another person and then if it’s acceptable thank everyone that helped you find it and have the class practice it across the room. This drill can be repeated with different techniques. Give all the children a chance to help you find your techniques a couple times.</p>
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Useful when you will be running through basic technique drills – instead of calling out a technique and pushing through repetitions.

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5.3 The Circle of Doom

Reinforces	Techniques to defend against attacks
Class Agenda	Ideal towards the end of class when the instructor has been teaching specific attack / defense techniques.
Steps	<p>Get all kids into a circle with everyone spread out with both arms stretched out between them, far enough apart to not touch the kid next to them. Everybody settles into a horse stance with hands at hips, fists closed.</p> <p>The instructor stands in the center of the circle and slowly turns looking at each kid. When ready the instructor performs an attack against one of the kids so that they can do the block or counter that they were taught during class.</p> <p>As soon as their technique is finished, move towards another kid in the circle and throw the same or a different attack for them to practice against. Don't choose the victims in any order, just turn randomly and pick one out to approach.</p> <p>When first teaching this, start your attacks slowly and tell them at the start of the game which attacks you will throw. Start with only 2-3 different attacks, as the kids become more comfortable with this game you can increase the number of attacks, the speed and the intensity of the contact you give and receive.</p>
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This game can be used as a reward at the end of class.• You can use a blocker for this instead of your own arm or leg.

5.4 Horse and Snake Relay

Reinforces	Lower body strength, agility, behavior, stances
Class Agenda	Great as warm up for class focusing on legs, kicks; Good at end of class as reward.
Steps	<p>Split the students into teams of 4 or 5 students per team. Have them create lines on one side of the class. All students on a given team should be standing in a straight line with an arm's length between them. They should all stand in deep horse stance.</p> <p>The Instructor yells "hajime" and the students at the back of each line drops to the floor and crawls like a snake through the others legs until they are at the front of the line, they stand up in a deep horse stance and yell "Horse" which signals the student at the end of the line to drop and crawl through. Students continue crawling up the line until the whole team has passed a finish line on the other side of the floor.</p> <p>The first team over wins.</p>
Notes	Make sure the students do not go past one arm length when taking the lead position.

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5.5 Dodge Ball

Reinforces	Eye hand coordination, team work
Class Agenda	Great end of class reward for any agenda
Steps	Split the students into two groups; put half on one side of the dojo and the other half on the other side. Identify a line in the middle they cannot cross. The students face each other; the instructor throws two or three paper balls in the middle of the dojo and the game starts. The students race to get a ball and throw it at students from the other side of the dojo. If a student crosses the line or is hit, they are out and must go sit down. If a student catches a thrown ball, the thrower is out. Play until only members of one side are left.
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You will need a couple helpers to announce who's out.• A game will only last 3 to 5 minutes so if you start 10 to 15 minutes prior to the end of class, you can get a couple rounds in.

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5.6 Dodge Ball Stationary – Sensei Throws

Reinforces	Coordination, balance, focus, defense
Class Agenda	Great end of class focusing on balance or coordination; Good at end of class as reward for any agenda.
Steps	<p>Get a few throwers – either helpers from adult class or parents. Have the students form a very large square (half the dojo). Students should be standing on a painted line on the deck to help ensure they don't move their feet during this activity.</p> <p>Place the throwers in the center of the circle with a bag of paper balls. Instruct the Students: “they can duck, bend, dodge etc. but can't move their feet. The throwers throw underhanded tosses at random students. If a student is hit or moves their feet they are out and have to go sit down. The last student in the game wins a prize prior to going home.</p> <p>The students love trying to gather the most balls for clean-up.</p>
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You'll need a large bag of paper balls (100 or more).• This game goes pretty quick – you can play a few rounds in less than 10 minutes so start 10 minutes prior to class end.

5.7 Simon Says

Reinforces	All basic techniques, focus, behavior, karate vocabulary
Class Agenda	Great end of class game to play after a training session focused on general techniques
Steps	<p>Line up students with standard “Shugo” formation. Instructor stands in front of class and basically plays Simon says but uses techniques. For instance, “Simon says chudan uke”. To make it interesting, the instructor announces one technique but performs a different technique. When students get it wrong, they must sit down. The last student standing wins. You may want to offer a prize after class.</p>
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Instruct students to stand very still or they will be out if they move around – this includes talking.• Can be done with a few students or a large class.• You may need a couple helpers to identify the “outs”.• Typical play can take 10 minutes – especially with more advanced students.• Keep in mind that there can be a lot of idle wait time for the ejected students.

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5.8 Technique Relay Race

Reinforces	Fitness, techniques, team spirit
Class Agenda	Good warm-up for any class
Steps	<p>Split class evenly into three or four groups. Make lines on one side of the dojo. Give first person in each line a pad. Students run across dojo and do 10 techniques or exercises (see below list) and run back. They hand the pad to the next student in line and they sit in the back of the line. They go through the line until all have run. The team that completes first wins.</p> <p>For example, they run across the room, drop the pad and do 10 pushups then get up grab the pad, run back, “hand” the pad to the next person and get in the back of the line.</p> <p>Run multiple races and mix in the following in groups of 10:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pushups• Crunches• Punches - upper punches, chest punches, lower punches• Blocks - upper blocks, chest blocks, lower blocks• Kicks – front kicks• Kiai’s - a favorite of kids
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If the pushups are not performed correctly, then require the students to touch their chest to their pads.• Kids should kiai on 10th pushup.• Don’t allow them to throw the pad to the next in line.

5.9 Dojo sprints

Reinforces	Fitness
Class Agenda	Good warm-up for any class
Steps	<p>Split class into even quarters and number each group from 1 to 4. Have students stand on outer deck perimeter line - one group per side - facing the center of the dojo. When you call out a number (1, 2, 3 or 4), the respective side will race to a deck-line in the center of the dojo and return to their spot. Make sure they know to touch the line.</p> <p>Repeat this drill enough times to ensure the students are warmed up.</p>
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Turn it into a competition by pitting the sides against each other.• Make it hard for the students to predict which side will be next.

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5.10 Baseball

Reinforces	Kicking technique, team spirit
Class Agenda	Great end of class reward after a kicking training session
Steps	Split students in half; One team is up first and the other takes the field. The batters get in line and the instructor pitches. Prior to playing, identify first, second and third base. Pitch paper balls underhanded to individual batters. The batter uses their foot for a bat. You might require them to all use a specific kick – typically a roundhouse kick. Three outs and the teams switch places. The batter can have endless fouls and there are no walks. Three strikes is an out. Catching a kicked ball is an out; tagging the base or the player with the ball is an out but students cannot throw the ball at the runner. Runners cannot lead off or steal bases. Runners can move one base per kick i.e. only singles are allowed. Runners get a home run only if they hit a certain point in the dojo for instance if they hit the wall on the opposite side of the dojo. Play until you run out of time.
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 15 minutes will typically provide time for everyone to have at-bat multiple times.• If using ich/ni to split the class, then the ich's are up first.• Need a large class i.e. at least 5 people per team.

5.11 Don't Tag the Bag

Reinforces	Offensive techniques, kumite control
Class Agenda	Great during class focusing on offensive techniques or kumite skills . Great when included in general bag drills .
Steps	Setup three bags in a line. Separate them by 5 feet or more. Split students into three lines – tell them to get in line in front of a bag. Have one helper stand behind each bag. Each student will step up to the bag and throw a punch or a kick. The strike should come very close to the bag (1 inch or so) and should be executed with speed. Students break a rule when they throw too slow, soft or far away. When they break a rule, they have to do 5 push-ups and go to the end of a line.
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Instructors should use kumite referee hand gestures to indicate:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Contact, too far away, too soft.• Begin by explaining the drill and explaining the referee hand gestures used.• This can be enhanced by switching to two or three strikes or a punch kick combo.• Emphasize form, technique, looking for speed and control over force.

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5.12 Add Ons

Reinforces	Focus, technique, Japanese terminology, memorization skills
Class Agenda	Good during class for any agenda
Steps	<p>Have students line up for forms – “Shugo” formation and then add space to make room for kata.</p> <p>The first student performs a technique i.e. “chest punch”. The instructor should ask for clarity if needed for instance “do we step and punch or stand still?” – the instructor reaffirms the technique i.e. “Ok, we’re going to step with our left foot and perform a chudan zuki with our left hand. The instructor makes sure everyone understands the instruction – if no questions... then the instructor leads the class in the technique and all do it together.</p> <p>The next student in line “adds on” a technique. For instance a lower block. While standing in the position from the last technique, the student performs a lower block with their left hand. Again the instructor asks for clarity and then leads the class in both techniques. Continue this drill until all of the class has gone or the kata becomes unreasonably long i.e. over 20 moves.</p>
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can be done with a few students or a large class.• Instructor can provide Japanese term for each technique.• Can be helpful to switch gears during class if it seems students are getting bored with repetitious drills.• Instructor can ask students for Japanese term for their techniques.

5.13 Sensei May I

Reinforces	Technique, discipline
Class Agenda	Great end of class for any agenda
Steps	<p>Line all students against one wall – side by side. Instruct an individual to do a technique i.e. “Tommy do a chudan uke”. Tommy will do the technique and then Tommy will ask “Sensei May I”. If the technique was adequate, the response is “yes you may” otherwise “no you may not”. If “yes” then the student can take one step forward otherwise they have to stay put. The student can respond with “Why?” and the instructor can provide the answer. Once they reach the other side of the dojo, the game is over.</p>
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Best with younger students and small classes i.e. 4 to 6 students.• Keep in mind, there will be a bit of idol wait time for ejected students.• If you have assistants, they can be asking other students at the same time.

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5.14 Balance Beams with Blockers/Pads

Reinforces	Balance, attack / defense, confidence, kumite
Class	Great during class focused on offense/defense techniques or kumite
Agenda	
Steps	Treat it like one-point-kumite. Setup two or more balance beams. Students get the blockers and pads. Have kids sit on side lines. Select two kids for each beam; Announce Hajime; A point is scored by hitting the point areas or by stepping off the beam. Stop as soon as a point is scored.
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students do not need protective gear on• Stop the action if kids are wild• Show kids what is expected before starting• Emphasize point areas, light head contact and control• Point areas: head, chest, abdominal, legs

5.15 Race to the Blockers/Pads

Reinforces	Attack / defense, confidence, kumite
Class	Great during class focused on offense/defense techniques or kumite
Agenda	
Steps	Treat it like one-point-kumite; Use the classroom split into halves. Each half is a ring. Set a blocker/pad on the line of one side and the opposite side of the ring. Select two students. One next to one blocker/pad and one next to the other. Announce hajime. Students race across ring, pick up blocker/pad and turn to engage in blocker kumite. Stop as soon as a point is scored and select next two competitors.
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students do not need protective gear on• Stop the action if kids are wild.• Show kids what is expected before starting• Emphasize point areas, light head contact and control• Point areas: head, chest, abdominal, legs

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5.16 Balance Beam Kicks

Reinforces	Balance, form, posture, technique
Class Agenda	Great during class focusing on kicking techniques
Steps	Set up balance beams extending across the entire class. Line up students in front of beginning beam. Have first student mount the beam and step across while performing a kick. Students should continue to the end and then go to the back of the line.
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You can start out by selecting a specific kick e.g. have them all do front kicks, then try sidekicks, then let them choose their own• Make a competition by applauding anyone that makes it to the end without stepping off. Also bring attention to anyone that kicks above their belt or performs difficult kicks like a crescent or a heel hook.

5.17 Build your own combo

Reinforces	Combinations, offense / defense techniques, confidence
Class Agenda	Great during class focused on techniques, bag drills, kumite
Steps	Have students assemble in Shugo formation. Take volunteers to come up-front and demonstrate a three piece combo. The combination can include any technique i.e. left punch, right punch then kick. The student needs to describe the combination as if they are speaking to a blind person. They need to account for whether to step forward or backward with the technique. Instructor should ask for clarification where needed and then possibly say it back to the student i.e.: “So you’re saying punch with right hand, step and...”. When it’s clear, student demonstrates with back to the class. If it’s clear to everyone, then instructor says, “ok let’s all do it”. Student should lead class in 5 or 10 reps – depending on class size.
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All techniques need to make sense to instructor prior to moving forward;• Instructor may need to space students out to accommodate certain techniques like spinning heel hook..• After students stop volunteering, instructor should make the selection. When selecting, start with the upper ranks in order to ensure the newer ranks get ideas.• Instructor may need to adjust the combo if it’s too far-fetched i.e. jumping double side kick with a flip. may be adjusted to a side kick and then another in the other direction.• Students have to use valid techniques applicable to the style

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5.18 Obstacle Course

Reinforces	Agility, coordination, strength conditioning
Class Agenda	Great after class focused on conditioning ; Good for any agenda
Steps	Create an obstacle course in the dojo by arranging blockers, punching bags, makewara, cones, balance beams and other safe items for the students to jump over, run around and crawl under. Next, have the students form a single file line behind the starting obstacle. Demonstrate how you want them to go through the course prior to letting them go. Make sure only one student is going through the course at a time to keep it safe and under control. Stress the importance of technique over speed.
Notes	<p>An example course:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Place the balance beams at the beginning.• Place blockers at the end of the balance beams. The blockers should be perpendicular to the beam and approximately one foot apart from each other so the students can step off the beam and begin hopping over each blocker.• Place a makawara at the end of the blockers for the students to crawl under.• Place the cones a couple feet apart after the makawara. The students will zigzag in between the cones.• Place a couple punching bags at the end of the cones. Have the students punch one bag and kick the other• After the punching bag, have the students do 10 push-ups to finish.

5.19 Bag Drills – 4 bag Obstacle course

Reinforces	Attack techniques, timing, coordination
Class Agenda	Great during class focused on fighting techniques, bag drills, kumite
Steps	Set up punching bags in zig zag formation with a few feet of space between each bag. Line up students in single file line a few feet in front of the first bag. Have the students move from bag to bag while executing a single striking technique on each bag. Don't let the next student begin until the previous student gets to the third bag. Students should go to the end of line after they hit the last bag.
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Illustrate the drill prior to beginning• Emphasize technique and speed• It's important that the students don't pause at each bag• You can either identify the specific technique to execute on each bag or allow the students to choose• Students should use both kicking and striking techniques

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5.20 Bag Drills – 4 bags – Timed Drills

Reinforces	Attack techniques, conditioning
Class Agenda	Great during class focused on fighting techniques, bag drills, kumite
Steps	<p>Setup 2 or 3 standing heavy bags and 1 hanging bag in separate sections of the dojo. Identify the attack technique to use for each bag i.e. one bag can be punching only, one can be kicking only and one can be punching and kicking.</p> <p>Divide the students into even groups and assign each group to a bag. Have the groups stand by their respective bag. Only one student will attack each bag at a time and the drill will be executed in 30 second cycles. Repeat the drill until each student in each group has had a chance to strike their bag. Then have the groups rotate to the next bag and start again.</p>
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Illustrate the technique for each bag prior to beginning• You can also include makiwaras for larger classes

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6 Additional Learning Resources

6.1 Disorders

“Uncovering the Mysteries of Your Learning Disorder “

This is a terrific online book focused on Discovery, Self-Awareness and Self-Advocacy for those with learning disabilities. It’s also a great informational resource for those involved with learning disabled people.

http://www.ldinfo.com/self_advocacy_manual.htm

“Learning Disabilities Pride Online”

This online resource provides insights into learning styles and learning disabilities. It was originally designed by an adult with a learning disability.

<http://www.ldpride.net>

“Center for Disease Control and Prevention – ADHD”

United States Government managed site disseminating information about ADHD.

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/>

“An Awesome Alternative to Drugs: Martial Arts Practice As Treatment For Children With AD/HD “

Dr. Abida Ripley, September 26, 2003

http://www.milehighkarate.com/pdf/ma_add.pdf

6.2 Martial Arts Instruction

Martial Arts Instructor’s Desk Reference by Sang H. Kim, PHD (2002)

Teaching Martial Arts – A Practical Guide by Bill Pottle and Katie Hoffman

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7 Sample Class Agenda

Theme

Primary Focus	Basic techniques for beginners class
Secondary Focus	

Agenda

	Duration (Minutes)	Task	Comments
1	15	Warm Up – Standard	Bow-in, standard warm-up, stretching; NOTE: always warm-up body parts away from the heart first and work your way towards the heart. Always warm up the muscles prior to stretching.
2	15	Basic techniques	Split class; perform basic techniques i.e.: blocks, punches, kicks; emphasize technique and posture.
3	15	Katas	Split class into belt groups. Assign kata leader to each group. Have upper ranks go through all their katas; Lead the white belts in beginning kata; Consider playing “Lead the Kata” with your group.
4	15	Warm down games	Baseball (example)

Alternate ideas

Warm ups	Consider warming up class with the “technique relay race”
Drills	
Games	

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8.2 Credits

Sensei Krista Force (Shodan)	Topic list and games
Sensei Michael Sae-Uong (Shodan)	Topic list and games
Sensei Trish Gaudoin	Editing and content
Renshi Geoffrey Gaudoin	Editing and content

