

RIDGEWOOD KARATE COLUMN

THE OFFICIAL KARATE NEWSLETTER FOR RIDGEWOOD

Winter 2022

Sparring Season

For many RKA students, sparring (or *kumite* in Japanese) can be a daunting activity – but the instructors aim to make it fun for the students when it's time to put equipment on. The dojo is a perfect controlled environment for students to practice sparring combinations on each other and prepare for RKA's in-house tournament later this year. However, sparring is not as controlled as kata and can be difficult for younger students to pick up. This is why **Instructor Roosevelt** and **Master Lau** have chimed in with a list of sparring tips to maximize your chances of success. Even if you don't practice martial arts, you'll find a few of these tips practical for daily activities.

1. Control your emotions.

While it's easy to see your opponent as an enemy, remember that it's a friendly match! Losing your cool can lead to poor technique and unnecessary injuries. Losing control of your emotions opens up your defense and makes you prone to losing the match. Staying composed will help you remain rational, even if you're losing.

2. Hips toward your opponent.

Squaring your hips toward your opponent exposes your chest to a potential point – instead, point your hips towards them to increase mobility and decrease your chance of getting hit. Doing this will also assist in moving back and forth quickly, allowing you to dodge your opponent's techniques.

3. Lateral motion.

It's tempting to run into your opponent as soon as the match starts, but you have the entire ring to move in! Take advantage and pivot to get to your opponent's blind side. This could help you score an unanticipated tournament-winning point.



Although she's only an advanced white belt, **Sneha** is already practicing her tournament-winning sparring techniques!

4. Throw combinations.

Often, one kick won't reach your opponent. Follow it up with a punch or a backfist to reach them and prevent an unwanted punch.

5. Be present.

Forget about what happened in the past or what will happen in the future. Be in the moment and don't overthink decisions that won't affect the present. This will give you mental strength and help you focus on the task at hand.

6. Breathe.

Every time you move around or throw a technique, keep breathing. This allows you to pace the fight and hit with power. Likewise, let out a loud yell when you strike your opponent to release energy. This will also help you manage your emotions throughout the fight.

STUDENTS OF THE MONTH

Little Dragons: **Maya Gelfand**

Samurai 5-7: **Mellina Arunraj**

Samurai 8-12: **Daniela Galvis**

Teen/Adult: **Rin Kumita**

Advanced Samurai: **Sneha Anthony**



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

In our popular younger samurai classes, **Mellina Arunraj** stands out as an attentive and hardworking student. Whether it's putting away the equipment after an exercise or executing perfect upper blocks across the floor, she's one of RKA's best ninjas on the mat. She's practiced many sparring combinations this month and has also picked up the first kata, proving her readiness for her future black belt. The RKA staff can't wait to see her in the advanced samurai class!

Self-Defense Seminars: Return to the Basics

When doing self-defense, it's easy to get caught up in the minor details. Should I do a punch first? How about ending with an axe kick (or would a back kick to the attacker's stomach be a better option)? In **Master Lau's** upcoming self-defense seminar, he aims to return to the fundamental ideas and focus on the bigger picture. In reality, many pre-determined moves in self-defense techniques aren't set in stone. Only a few practical moves are needed to escape from an attacker's grasp, and whatever you do afterwards is up for debate. However, self-defense isn't even about being physical all the time. Half of the defense involves avoiding it in the first place.

For instance, smaller children may be an easier target for attackers to take advantage of. While a child may not be able to overpower a larger person, they can learn how to avoid the situation by being aware of their surroundings. Engraining simple lessons in our RKA students such as avoiding walks at night or yelling for help when an attacker is spotted are powerful methods of non-physical self-defense. For adults, staying out of certain areas (like a crowded bar) or avoiding ATM's at night will minimize the chances of an attack.

While a long list of complicated self-defense moves may work in the dojo, a real scenario on the street will never turn out the way you want it to. Somebody may grab you from behind just for you to realize that you can't kick their shins since their legs are out of reach. This is why RKA emphasizes improvised self-defense, too: it's important for students to adapt to the current situation and get out of harm no matter what happens. Drilling various strikes, redirections, and sweeps in class will allow the student to string the moves into a comprehensive self-defense technique.



Christian, an Advanced Samurai student, learns how to improve his sparring by drilling his side kick on the pads.

If attempting to avoid a dangerous situation has failed and self-defense is necessary, remember that there are no rules in an actual fight, unlike the karate dojo. One good way to test your skills is to practice with a resisting and uncooperative partner (while being safe!). By doing this, your skills will improve and will train you to react to unanticipated events. Weapon defense is also a must – disarming the attacker as quickly as possible is essential.

Master Lau will emphasize these points and much more while teaching invaluable self-defense moves in his winter seminar. Talk to Instructor Roosevelt for more information on this special event!



Instructor Teddy practices sparring combinations with the samurais while **Instructor Matt** brings out the wave master for daily drills.

RKA Winter Events/Specials

New Year Special - Ask us about a complementary class to kick off the New Year! Enjoy a free evaluation among other discounts.

Testing Day - January 27th, all classes on the 27th will be cancelled.

Bring Your Report Card - Have your child bring in a report card to receive a special RKA patch!

Self-Defense Seminar - Review and learn new self-defense moves with Master Lau. (Talk to Instructor Roosevelt for seminar dates)

Competition Team - Introducing our invite-only team for events, Talk to us for more information!