

How to Choose a Martial Arts School

Don't enroll into a martial arts school until you have read this important report.





How Do I Choose A Martial Arts School?

The martial arts is a fantastic way to gain control of your life and transform yourself into a healthy, confident person. However, the martial arts is also an unlicensed profession. There are hundreds if not thousands of various styles and interpretations.

While earning a black belt is an honored achievement, there are no universal standards for obtaining the coveted rank. There are also no professional or educational requirements to open a school. Someone could come out of college with an MBA and open a school and someone could come out of prison and open down the street.

When it comes to choosing a martial arts school, it's all about the instructor. A martial arts school is first and foremost a personality driven business. The atmosphere, attitude, and make up of the school is a reflection of the owner / instructor. With that in mind, here are three steps to choosing a good school.

Step One: Define Your Goals

Clearly define what you want you to gain from learning the martial arts. Is it a light recreation? Then a community center or YMCA program may suffice. However, if you goal is personal development of mind, body, and spirit, then a good full-time professional school will be more suitable.



Step Two: What to Look For

Because martial arts is an unlicensed practice, you want a school that is committed to continuing education. For instance, schools that are members of the Martial Arts Teachers' Association (MATA) are schools that are keeping up to date with best practices for teaching, classroom management and safety. MATA is the largest organization specifically focused on instructor education and offers the MATA Instructor Certification Program. Look for MATA Certification as an indicator of the schools' commitment to continuing education.

Look for a school that is clean, uncluttered, and has a track record in your community. When you consider a school, look at it as a place you will spend at least 2 – 3 nights per week for the next three years as you pursue your black belt. You want to feel comfortable enough to look forward to class and inspired enough to work hard.

If you want to get into good shape, look at the brown belts or other students and instructors who have been there for at least a year. Are they in shape? Are they friendly and respectful to others? Do they look skilled? Those three areas are key to a good school.

A school of athletes who are not nice people is not a martial arts school as much as a martial gym. Other schools can be like motivational centers with everyone bowing and showing respect but the students look



soft and unimpressive. It's the combination of skills, fitness, and respect that makes a martial arts school attractive.

Step Three: Evaluate the Leadership

Choosing a martial arts school is really choosing an instructor. Be sure to visit the school and watch the instructor work with other students your age. Most all schools will allow you to take a free or inexpensive trial course. Every school is different because every instructor is different. Don't get confused by claims of black belt degrees, tournament wins or martial art styles. The only style that matters is the teaching style of the instructor and how you will respond to him or her.

Just because someone is a champion doesn't automatically translate to being a good teacher or that you would enjoy learning from him or her. Mike Tyson was a champion, but I wouldn't want him as my instructor. Instead, look for a commitment to continuing education.

Finally, the best school for you may not be the closest or cheapest school. That is a decision you have to make, but in my experience a little extra drive and a few dollars more a week are often the ingredients to a short term pain for long term gain strategy that pays off in the long run.