



teach me kung fu schools

Safeguarding in Martial Arts: Safe Practice

Martial Arts are activities where safe practice is essential to help prevent injury. *Children are particularly vulnerable as they are still developing mentally and physically, so training methods need to be modified as described below. (*also includes Adults at Risk)

1. Warm Ups

All activities should first include a thorough warm up, and head to toe stretching and gradual cardiovascular activity. To help reduce injury, specific attention should be paid to those muscle groups that will be used during later activity.

2. Martial Arts involving throwing, grappling and strangling

The risks include: falling on unsuitable surfaces: landing on the head: damage to the joints from locks: strangulation.

Safe practice must include:

- (a) Checking the matted area for suitability, particularly where the mats have been joined.
- (b) Checking that there are no hard surfaces or sharp/hard objects around the matted area.
- (c) Having an experienced instructor who will ensure that children are not taught to use locks, throws or strangles which will injure their training partner.

3. Martial Arts involving strikes, punches and kicks

The risks are: concussion (brain injury) from heavy blows to the head; damage to internal organs and joints from heavy blows; injury from inappropriate stretching and other exercises.

Safe practice includes:

- (a) Light contact only, especially to the head. (Light contact means the technique is targeted but controlled so that whilst the opponent is touched the technique is not followed through). Expert advice from a neurosurgeon is that the use of helmets, mitts or foot pads does not eliminate the risk of brain injury from full contact strikes.
- (b) Avoiding excessive stretching and exercises such as press-ups on the knuckles or hitting heavy bags; the joints of children are still developing and can be damaged by these exercise
- (c) Students aged under 18 are instructed to punch to the chest when training with each other. When working with an instructor and the move requires a punch to the head, this is acceptable, however students are instructed to control their punch so there is no follow through.
- (d) Students train in mixed ability groups by age (Little Dragons 4-6 years, Juniors 7-11 years and Youth 12-17 years) until they reach their blacksash (Junior/Youth 12b grade). At this point they train in a mixed age group (Blacksash Masterclass) ranging from 8-17 years, however all students in this group have been training for a minimum of 5 years and access to this class is by invitation only. Students in the Blacksash Masterclass generally train with others of their physical stature where possible.
- (e) Training is not split by gender in any age group.
- (f) There is no competition element to Wing Chun Kung Fu and training is centered around a reflex response to a stimulus (e.g. pressure).
- (g) Students are always supervised by instructors during training sessions, although when an instructor is working with a particular student or pair of students, others may be left for a few minutes with guidance on what they should be training and how.
- (h) Students train in shoes and do not train on mats unless they are specifically working on groundwork exercises.
- (i) Should a head injury occur, all instructors are first aid qualified and have access to a fully stocked first aid kit.

4. Martial Arts involving weapons

Safe practice must include:

- (a) No live blades (sharp or otherwise) in the training hall when children are present
- (b) Safe protocols for the use of training weapons by children
- (c) Good supervision at all times by Instructors

Above all, safe practice means having a suitably qualified and experienced instructor who will ensure that children are not exposed to the above risks and who can make a training session enjoyable whilst maintaining the discipline essential to learning a Martial Art.

