

Over the many years that I have been teaching martial arts I find it amazing how many people never make it to truly learn the real systems they begin studying. For every single black belt in existence today there are over 500 more white belts. For every black belt that actually makes it to a third degree there are about .02 that actually make it to a TRUE master's level in their training. I need to state true master's level because I know many people who have made it to fourth degree and yet only can perform basic level techniques. So here is the problem. People come into a karate school wanting to learn karate. Regardless of whether it is self defense, self esteem, character development or to just get in shape each person has their own reason. In the course of your studies you will learn much more than just karate, but real martial arts have a way of choosing the people that will continue on into the real training, or Kai (Warrior) methods.

Karate is taught in two basic types. The first is the method called Do, or way. In Karate-do a student learns how to apply basic level techniques, strengthen their bodies, discipline their minds and actions and generally get in decent shape. This is the most popular level and widely know level of karate training the world today. It has been credited to Funakoshi Gichin Sensei who created the first Japanese system of Karate-do called Shotokan. When Funakoshi Sensei began offering his program all the masters of the arts said he was not teaching true Karate. What they were referring to was that he was teaching a "way" (Do) of Karate but had removed all the dangerous techniques thus making it a different form of the art. These masters were claiming to teach the "Kai", warrior ways which are about actual combat with no emphasis on personal development but rather opponent destruction. In order to better understand this you would need to have clear and concise view of the founders of Karate (the majority of them were not moral men but rather tend to violence and liked to test their methods on others through challenges or by walking the red light districts of Okinawa to find the thugs/criminals).

Today the real training of karate is reserved only for those who have earned the right to learn it. So, what does it take to gain this honor and privilege? First you have to recognize that is an honor to be selected as a member of the Okuden, or inner council ([click here for related article](#)). Second you have to understand that learning this system is a privilege and not a right. Finally you have to be very sincere in wanting to learn the martial arts and be a loyal student of the Ryu (family). By loyalty we do not mean that you put your training above your job, family or religion but rather that if your sensei or Ryu needs something you can be counted on to be there when asked without the complaining most people do nowadays. Simply put you must train hard, be consistent in your attendance at the dojo and be dedicated to your Ryu. Sounds simple but you would be amazed how many people quit training because of the cost involved, they get bored or they simply can not follow through on anything the begin.

Now we will learn about the "Kai" method of training. It is very rare to see or even hear some one refer to Karate as Karate-Kai. Kai refers to the real combative training methods of martial arts. This is not watered down, the classes are hard but thought provoking and very valuable in real life situations. By the time you are a black belt a true dojo you will have been given a taste of the Kai principles in your training. You may have learned to dislocate a joint, how to choke someone out or even how to break an arm if needed. But these are all beginning phases of Kai training. Real Kai training is about the simplest essence of karate called "One hit / One kill".

In the beginning Karate was designed to destroy opponents, or a group of opponents in the fastest and most devastating manner possible. A karateka did not want to waste energy or time in winning a confrontation. This is not the tournament structure so many people relate to modern martial arts. It was kill or be killed, but even then a karateka had the ability to end a match without killing their opponent. This type of training involves complete trust from the sensei in your ability to make proper decisions on using the skills you will learn. This is the major argument on why children under 18 should never wear a black belt. The importance of these teachings are irrelevant but the knowledge is the key. When I began learning these under Takanami Sensei my eyes were opened just in one class. I have never realized why we stand a certain way or the true reason behind the rotation of the hip in our techniques, even though I was already a 3rd degree black belt in Tae Kwon Do. It was amazing to see the actual Bunkai of the kata and the reasoning behind them and how truly destructive they were. Bunkai is the

application of what you are actually doing when performing a kata. Up until that point in my training I was simply doing the same thing and now those things had a new purpose. To date only a hand selected few of my students have learned any of these Kai methods. Not because I want it that way but rather because they have earned the right to learn them and I can trust them never to violate the rules in teaching these to their students who have not in turn earned that right.

What I find amazing is that people begin karate today as a hobby or just something to do. You never realize the great benefits of the training until you have long since quit. If I had \$10 for every time one of my old students said the famous line of "I wish I had never quit" I would definitely have a nicer dojo or drive a better vehicle. But this is the best part of martial arts training for those of us who are instructors. We realize that not everyone will make it to black belt. In the Aiki Te Ryu system we have a saying. During class we tell you to look around you and see the people standing next to you. If there are 20 people in the class we tell them that typically about 15 of them will make it to green belt. Out of that 15 about 7 will make it to brown belt. Out of those 7 usually only 4 will make black belt first degree. Out of the 4 that make it to black belt only 2 will make it to third degree and typically only 1 makes it to master level in their training. We challenge you to prove us wrong. To date it has never been proven wrong, actually the opposite with fewer people dedicating their time to earn their black belt. This is why I get such a kick out of these schools that promote everyone to black belt if they can purchase a program that promises them they will get there. What a lie that is.

In conclusion keep this mind. Training under a sensei is a privilege. It is not a right you get for paying those tuition fees. It is not a customer service item because we are here to train you not make you happy (in life you learn the most when you are forced to push yourself...no one is happy about that struggle until it is over). Just like the marines say, only the few will ever really learn the art of Karate...at least in a good dojo.