

Common Issues Within Karate

Due to the popularity of martial arts, both in mass media and real life, a large number of disreputable, fraudulent, or misguided teachers and schools have arisen over the last 40 years or so.

Commonly referred to as a "[McDojo](#)" or a "Black Belt Mill", these schools are frequently headed by martial artists of either dubious skill & training, business ethics, or both.

Common means of discerning these types of schools include:

- High rank at a young age
- Very large number of black belt certifications from different styles
- "Grandmaster" status of the head instructor
- Select organizations within the school
- Emphasis on testing and fees
- Rapid promotion of students without discernable improvements in skill
- "New" and "revolutionary" methods
- "Secret" teachings from unverifiable sources

It is not uncommon for traditional schools to maintain that a *sensei* (instructor) of their own school must be at least a third or fourth degree black belt at a minimum.

Another common issue is "chi masters" and others that make claims of superhuman or unverifiable abilities such as "no touch knockdowns", resisting physical force in defiance to the laws of physics, or "world record" speed. These are not to be confused with martial artists that train in feats of strength and focus for such things as breaking competitions.

Common Issues Within Karate

Internal political fighting within schools and styles is quite frequent and the cause of a large number of splinter organisations and schools.

When a recognised master or founder of a school dies, it is common for the senior instructors and students to split off and form their own competing school under a different name without making any substantial changes to the training material, kata, or teaching philosophy.

Self-promotion of rank is an issue without any real solution. While this often happens with long-standing brown belts that did not have the means or opportunity to test for Shodan, it is more likely to be an issue when the owner of a school creates an accrediting organisation for his own style and issues himself a diploma for whatever rank he or she sees fit.

Larger accrediting organisations exist to provide independent assessment of skill and are typically regional or national in nature. It is not unusual for someone to not only acquire rank through their school or dojo, but to also test through one of these organisations as well to provide additional evidence of their ability and put to rest any rumors or concern as to the legitimacy of their rank.

However, due to the large number of schools and instructors, it is not realistic to challenge someone's claimed rank because they lack independent verification - in essence, you pretty much have to take rank claims at face value unless there is substantial reason not to.