

Grading Guidelines

These guidelines will help the grader determine the appropriate score at which to judge the student being tested for performance of each of the categories listed on the grading charts. Some of these concepts are repeated here from the training guidelines.

Correct *kata* or technique

The student must perform the very *kata* or technique called out by the instructor. Typically, names of *kata* and techniques will be announced as they have been taught, without unnecessary emphasis on Japanese vocabulary.

Correct *kata* sequence

The student must perform the *kata* in the traditional sequence and end on the same spot the *kata* began.

Well-formed stances

In general, each stance must be formed with each foot gripping the floor between the toes and the heel, both knees pushing apart from each other (or pulling together, for some stances), the hips not too high or too low, and the tailbone tucked under.

Each front stance must be formed with the front foot pointed forward and slightly in, the back foot pointed forward and slightly out, the front knee bent forward, and the front knee over the arch. The outside front stance is formed with the hips rotated away from the opponent and the back leg bent. The inside front stance is formed with the hips rotated as far in as possible and the back leg straight or nearly straight. Weight distribution should be approximately 60% on the front foot and 40% on the back foot.

Each back stance must be formed with the front foot pointed straight forward, the heel of the back foot in line with the toe and heel of the front foot, the back foot pointed at a right angle away from the front foot, the back leg bent and pushed back, the front leg bent, and the body facing at nearly a right angle away from the opponent. Weight distribution should be approximately 50% on each foot.

Each horse stance must be formed with both feet pointed at a right angle away from the opponent, the outsides of the feet parallel with each other, both knees bent, and the body facing at a right angle away from the opponent. Weight distribution should be 50% on each foot.

Good posture

When moving, in a stance, or performing a technique, good posture is formed with the back straight, the belt farther forward than the nose in most cases, the shoulders even-leveled and pulled down and back, the chest out, and the chin pulled in and pointed forward parallel to the floor.

Firm heel placement

When performing a punching or blocking technique, both heels must be in solid contact with the floor at the moment of execution and power delivery. When performing a kicking technique, the same applies to the supporting heel. It should be evident that the heel provides the foundational push that results in power to the delivery.

Definite movements

Techniques must be performed deliberately, firmly, and with precision. Each move must be concrete and distinct, yet rhythmic (without undue hesitation). When stepping, the head must be kept level and the center of gravity must move in a straight line. While the *kata* must be performed with powerful, effective movements, it must also flow from one movement to the next.

Focused attention

The student must always be facing and concentrating on the opponent or target during any given technique. Eyes must be kept open during technique delivery, the head must be turned as much as possible toward the direction of the opponent or target, and full attention must be fixed upon the opponent or target.

Technique accuracy

Each technique must be directed at and impact a specific target at the right time. The student must also demonstrate accurate timing for the appropriate technique, including reaction to attack.

Technique coverage

Each technique must be preceded by an appropriate guard, in preparation for a possible attack. At no time should there be an absence of the guard or cover. That being said, it must be remembered that one of the purposes of the "guard" is to counter-pull or counter-balance the technique.

Each *kumite* technique must be followed by an appropriate cover, in preparation for a subsequent attack. Typically, the *kumite* cover is formed by standing in fighting position, which is a front stance with the leading hand forming a horizontal fist covering the face and the trailing hand forming a fist with the palm up, covering the solar plexus.

Powerful movements

Techniques must display unwavering power in both movement and delivery. Power refers to focused energy delivered in a short amount of time rather than brute strength. (Force is the measure of impact on a target by a projectile that the power acted upon.) The

kata must be performed as though being applied to actual opponents.

Correct energy generation

The student must demonstrate correct energy generation for each technique, as appropriate. Energy may be generated by rotation (counter- and with-), vibration, translation, up motion, down motion, and inside body motion. It is especially important for students to master hip rotation early in their training, so that more advanced forms of energy generation may be learned unencumbered. Also, the student must use *hikite* (the pulling arm) to aid in energy generation for the technique.

Forceful *kiai*

Each *kiai* must be forceful, deep, and short, and coincide with the impact or delivery of the technique. The *kiai* must force air to vacate the lungs, allowing maximum compression of the stomach muscles, which in turn help tense all other muscles involved in the delivery. While loudness may not necessarily be an accurate measurement of *kiai* forcefulness, it is probably difficult to completely vacate air from the lungs quickly without producing some significant sound. The longer *kiai* is permitted only during the execution of the final technique in *Jion*.

Proper breathing

The student must accompany each movement and technique with the appropriate breathing method that applies, resulting in optimum energy generation. Generally, while stepping, the student should inhale and relax until the feet cross, at which time the student should begin exhaling and tightening the delivery muscles, climaxing at the point of delivery. Proper breathing will help the kata remain fluid.

Whole body action

When appropriate, the student must display *whole body action* when performing each technique. Whole body action is executed when the entire body is involved in executing the technique, employing tensing, rotation, heel placement, and proper breathing during the entire movement. The idea is to deliver force with the body acting as a unit rather than individual components.

Good balance

The student must demonstrate anchoring stability for each technique, during movement and at the moment of delivery. This is important while stepping or while kicking, but is especially important when both feet are planted.