



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)

Included in our safe practice policy, are:

1. Warm Ups

All activities should first include a thorough warm up which is appropriate for the activity taking place. To help reduce the risk of 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

Some examples are: Brazilian Jiu Jitsu

The risks include but are not limited to: falling on unsuitable surfaces; landing on the head; damage to the joints from locks; strangulation.

Safe practice should include, but is not limited to:

- (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 cause injury.

3. Martial Arts involving strikes, punches and kicks

The risks include but are not limited to: 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.

- (a) There are some key points to consider in this section, particularly around head contact for under 16s.

- Is age a consideration in regard to head contact?

- To what degree is head contact allowed (e.g. controlled light contact, no follow through)?
- Is equipment a consideration when sparring or in competition?
- Is the age of the participants/athletes a consideration when sparring or in competition?
- Is height or weight of the participants/athletes a consideration when sparring or in competition?
- What considerations are taken with mixed gender sparring and competition?
- Is supervision of the athletes considered when sparring or in competition?
- What floor covering (e.g. mats) is considered when sparring or in competition?
- Is appropriate, correctly fitting, protective equipment being worn, if no headguard or gumshield, then student not able to participate.
- What are the steps taken if head injury occurs?
- Is appropriate medical supervision considered when sparring or in competition?

(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 exercises.

4. Martial Arts involving weapons

Safe practice should include but is not limited to:

- (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.