

# 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)

**Please consider the following in designing your own safe practice policy as relevant to your martial arts style and craft your policy around these points:**

## 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

### Taekwon-Do

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. e.g. look for holes.
- (b) Checking that there are no hard surfaces or sharp/hard objects around the matted area. e.g. chairs and seating.
- (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

### Taekwon-Do and Kickboxing

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. **Please consider the following in your safe practice policy:**
  - Under the height of 125cm head shots are not allowed with any technique.
  - Light head contact is allowed with no follow through for all students over 125cm
  - Is equipment a consideration when sparring or in competition? Sparring equipment should be used when free sparring e.g. head guard, hand, foot protection, shin pads, groin guards for male and chest protection for female and mouth guard

- In competition competitors are divided into categories which include children under 14 years, juniors 14 /15 year and 16/17 years
- Children Under 14 years height categories, -125cm, -135cm, -145cm, -155cm and +155cm
- Juniors Under 18 years are divided into weight categories
- Is supervision of the athletes considered when sparring or in competition?
- What floor covering (e.g. mats) is considered when sparring or in competition?
- 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.

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.