

Types of Martial Arts School

Shihan Tony Annesi, © 2009, Bushido-kai, www.bushido-kai.net

There are many ways to categorize types of martial arts schools: traditional vs. modern; competitive vs. non-competitive; by ethnic origin; by type of training regimen. I have taken a few that I think are most relevant to those seeking out a martial arts education.

SPORT/ART: Although most martial arts schools are a mixture of traditional art and contemporary sport versions, many schools *emphasize* sport. If you like the idea of competing with your martial art, this is for you. Many semi-traditional schools emphasize open all-style competition. Conversely, some traditional schools train for closed competitions that emphasize one type of art and make rules to favor that emphasis. Competition can be full-contact (not usual for most schools), semi-contact, or no-contact (often degenerating to semi-contact in the heat of competition.)

Non-sportive schools usually emphasize self-defense or personal development. For them, sport martial arts are a branch of training that is more appropriate for those more interested in trophies than self-improvement.

SELF-DEFENSE/SELF-DEVELOPMENT: Self-defense schools appeal to people who want to be able to handle themselves if attacked. Unfortunately, these schools can proffer unrealistic abilities to the eager student. Self-defense is the root of martial arts training, to be sure, but to suggest that self-protection is possible in *any* circumstance and *in short order* and to *everyone* is unrealistic. Long-term training improves self-defense capabilities in many but not all situations.

Self-development schools can vary from the effete to the very effective. Their emphasis is a training that challenges and thus develops each person in different ways. Self-defense may be one of them but it is not necessarily the prime emphasis.

STRIKING/GRAPPLING: **Sport**-oriented schools can further be divided into striking methods (represented by Karate and Tae Kwon Do) and grappling (represented by Brazilian Ju-jitsu and sport Judo). **Art**-oriented schools can be any mixture of striking and standing grappling (seldom ground grappling.) Aikido, Aiki-ju-jitsu, and Ju-jitsu schools emphasize standing grappling and Ju-jitsu schools sometimes add ground grappling, often adapted from Judo. These schools can vary from gymnastic in their application of technique to minimalist. They can be very effective in self-defense or offer only symbolic victories.

Some shorthand: Korean **Tae Kwon Do**: usually, but not always sport-oriented; Korean **Tang Soo Do**: half-sport, half traditional; Japanese **Judo**: sport grappling (standing and ground;) Japanese **Ju-jitsu**: usually self-defense; **Aikido**: standing grappling, usually with a self-development emphasis; **Aiki-ju-jitsu**: standing grappling, usually with a self-defense emphasis; **Karate**: can be sport, self-defense, or self-development, often a mix; **Kempo**: mostly self-defense, some sport.

Next, we will discuss the distinction between Open and Private martial arts facilities.

BUSHIDO-KAI
Higher Education in the Martial Arts
Framingham, Mass.
508 879-7622