

cut out and save for a martial artist you know

## A MARTIAL ARTS EDUCATION

**Tony Annesi, head instructor,  
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Martial or Artist?, 1**

Martial Arts is comprised of 2 simple words: "martial" comes from "Mars," the Roman god of war; "arts" comes from the Latin "ars," meaning "a way of being or acting, hence a skill." Martial Arts, then, are activities where practitioners develop certain skills common to military people.

If you are eager to act like a soldier, join the army and see the military world. Over age? Join the reserves or various police forces. That is probably not what you had in mind when you thought of studying a martial art, but it is important to know that that is the "martial" extreme. On the "artistic" extreme are arts that have martial movements but offer no preparation for personal combat. Arts that often fall into this group are many styles of t'ai-chi, aikido or even karate styles that train for only *kata* (forms)



competition. Most schools stand somewhere in between. A potential student should decide where his/her aspirations lie. "What percentage of **martial** should I mix with what percentage of **artist**?" One should consider not only what one wants for today but what one wants for tomorrow. Too many candidates think that they will achieve some rank, stop training and become Superspy for the rest of their lives. They will have members of the opposite sex in awe of them and will be able to order *cuissees des grenouilles* in 12 languages. The schools that discourage these fantasies come closer to actually producing real physical and psychological change in the student.

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**Tony Annesi, head instructor,  
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Martial or Artist?, 2**

The schools that discourage fantasies come closer to actually producing real physical and psychological change in the student. But this does not happen just because some new belt color is wrapped around one's waist. Real study can go on indefinitely. Training becomes not just a means to an end but a method to support and enhance one's self-development for life. Training constantly challenges one, makes one humble and rewards one. With the proper perception of what martial arts training is about, one can stay interested for decades, keep one's unrealistic fantasies in check and quietly garner real benefits galore.

Artistry, for martial artists, means body control, aesthetic performance, creative problem solving within a simulated combat context and developing physical and mental skills. Martiality means discipline and combat

effectiveness. Some school offer a program of discipline (the martial) but effectiveness measured only by sportive trophies. Others offer relaxed discipline, exercise and no attempt at combat effectiveness.

Interviewing a school will not tell you what percentage of martial and artist that school offers. A potential student should observe several classes over a period of time and then ask for the rationale behind certain practices. If you are interested in self-defense, ask how this exercise relates to self-defense skills. If you are interested in exercise, ask how a certain drill will affect one aerobically. If you are interested in aesthetics, observe what type of detailed corrections are made and ask why they are made just that way. You may get what you ask for.

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