

The Path to Black Belt

The following information is designed to paint a clear picture of what is required and what you will achieve on your journey to black belt and beyond.

Going from white belt to black belt takes around 4 years on average. If you didn't miss a grading it would take 33 months, almost 3 years. In reality 4 years is more likely as you are expected to miss a few gradings along the way.

We've done our best here to cover all the FAQ's at each stage. Each stage is different and may have different requirements to get to the next level. We've also given many tips on what to expect along the way so there's no surprises, or things you may not have been aware of.

As parents I would encourage you to read ahead, and not just your (child's) belt level to get an overall picture of the entire journey. This will really help when your child becomes a bit disheartened at not earning stripes so easily in the higher levels and possibly missing gradings. Missing gradings is not the issue per-say, that's expected to happen, knowing the road ahead and managing your child's perspective is the key to keeping them on path.

We make this guarantee to every person who joins our club. 100% guarantee that you will make it to black belt, if you don't give up of course. We can't guarantee how long it will take – everyone learns at different rates, some people can make training a lot more than others, children's age also plays a major part, but as long as you don't give up, you'll make it.

Becoming a black belt has nothing at all to do with skill, nothing! Every single black belt at our club has one thing in common though – we refused to give up when the going got tough. Somehow we found the will and the way to continue. Quitting is easy and I'm sure most of our black belts seriously considered it more than once, but we didn't quit, we found a way and made it.

No one ever said it was going to be easy, or that everything to do with Taekwondo was always going to be fun. There will be great times and there will be tough times. One thing is for sure though – it'll be worth it!!! Ask any black belt.





White Belts

Overview: This program is designed to take students all the way through to black belt eventually.

Recommended training frequency: Twice a week is usually enough to get through to the yellow belt grading in one term. The best sessions to gain skills for grading are the belt and age specific lessons.

The Poomsae/Self Defence classes and Bonus classes are also good either as an extra or a “make up” session.

Special requirements: (Juniors only) Gold stripe is earned by having the parents write, txt, email a letter to David or the instructor about good behaviour at home and at school. This can be done at any time throughout the term.

White Belt Grading Guarantee:

By meeting the following criteria you are guaranteed as many one on one free private lessons with head instructor David Vernon to allow you to grade regardless of how many stripes you may be short of for grading.

Training Frequency in one term: 15

Minimum age: 7

First grading:

As this is most likely your first grading there are a few things you need to be aware of. We will keep you informed as we get closer to grading but have summarised it here as well.

Students are eligible to grade once they have achieved their pink stripe. The pink stripe is for verbal terminology and is always the last one awarded. The instructor will go through the terminology questions frequently in class and the questions/answers are all available in this syllabus.

Grading applications are all done on-line on the Team website. Notices about grading will be emailed prior to grading and all the information is up on the website under “Gradings”.

Once graded you will move to the Yellow Belt class (if you’re a junior)

If you have any questions about the process please contact us.



Yellow Belts

Overview: From this level onwards the rotational training schedule kicks in. That means that every week we are concentrating on particular skills. We cover the entire grading syllabus over a 3 week period and repeat that cycle up to grading. It's very important to keep training regularly so you don't miss out a chunk of syllabus and have to try and catch up later.

Training frequency: Twice a week is usually enough to get through to the next grading in one term. The best sessions to gain skills for grading are the belt and age specific lessons. The Poomsae/Self Defence classes and Bonus classes are also good either as an extra or a "make up" session.

Special requirements:

Sparring class - All students must attend at least one Sparring class throughout the term before grading. The first one is free and no need to book.

Team Tournament – All students must enter at least one Team Tournament and compete in either Poomsae or Sparring some time before grading to blue belt.

A list of the compulsory and recommended protective gear is on the website.

Yellow Belt Grading Guarantee:

By meeting the following criteria you are guaranteed as many one on one free private lessons with head instructor David Vernon to allow you to grade regardless of how many stripes you may be short of for grading.

Training Frequency in one term:20

Minimum age: 8





Blue Belts

Overview: Blue belt class is a big jump up from yellow belts both physically and technically. This is where we expect some members to start missing gradings. A lot of that has to do with age and training frequency.

There are 3 extra skills that will be learned, practiced and performed at grading throughout this belt level.

At blue 2 stripe – One Step Sparring.

At blue 3 stripe – Board breaking and contact sparring.

Training frequency: At least twice a week is recommended. The best sessions to gain skills for grading are the belt and age specific lessons.

The Poomsae/Self Defence classes and Bonus classes are also good either as an extra or a “make up” session.

Special requirements:

Sparring class - All students must attend at least one sparring class throughout the term before grading. The first one is free and no need to book. It is recommended that students at this level, register for the sparring class and attend regularly. When students grade for their black belt they are required to undergo 11 continuous rounds of contact sparring so the more practice at the lower level the better.

Team Tournament – All students must enter at least one Team Tournament and compete in either Poomsae or Sparring some time before grading to red belt.

A list of the compulsory and recommended protective gear is on the website.

Blue Belt Grading Guarantee:

By meeting the following criteria you are guaranteed as many one on one free private lessons with head instructor David Vernon to allow you to grade regardless of how many stripes you may be short of for grading.

Training Frequency in one term:20

Minimum age: 9





Red Belts 1 & 2 stripe

Overview: Red belt class is a big jump up from blue belts both physically and technically. Many people miss gradings at this level. If you've been training twice a week up to this point you should look at upping that at red belt level.

Training frequency: At least three times a week is recommended.

Special requirements:

Sparring class - All red belt students should be registered for sparring and attending regularly. When students grade for their black belt they are required to undergo 11 continuous rounds of contact sparring so the more practice the better.

Team Tournament – All students must enter at least one Team Tournament and compete in either Poomsae or Sparring some time before grading to black belt.

A list of the compulsory and recommended protective gear is on the website.

Red Belt Grading Guarantee:

By meeting the following criteria you are guaranteed as many one on one free private lessons with head instructor David Vernon to allow you to grade regardless of how many stripes you may be short of for grading.

Training Frequency in one term:30

Minimum age: 10





At Red Belt 3 stripe

Overview: Red 3 stripe is the most difficult and demanding step so far on your journey to black belt. Moving beyond this point takes extreme dedication, intense training and tremendous family support.

The next grading from here is to Cho Dan Bo, which translates as probationary black belt.

Cho Dan Bo is basically half of your black belt grading so the skills need to be precise.

The most difficult aspect is re-learning all of the coloured belt patterns. This takes a great deal of time and students need to make the time to practice at home as well as at training. You will never get enough hours at training alone to get to Cho Dan Bo. Home practice is essential. Most students will remain at this level for 6 – 9 months. Family support is crucial at this point to keep them positive and focussed on what they are about to achieve.

It's not an easy task but its definitely worth it!

The black belt syllabus is to be used for this and all future gradings. The file is available for download on the website.

Training frequency: At least four times a week plus home practice is recommended.

Special requirements:

Sparring class - All red belt students should be registered for sparring and attending regularly. When students grade for their black belt they are required to undergo 11 continuous rounds of contact sparring so the more practice the better.

Team Tournament – All students must enter at least one Team Tournament and compete in either Poomsae or Sparring some time before grading to black belt.

A list of the compulsory and recommended protective gear is on the website.

Grading Guarantee:

The grading guarantee does not apply to red 3 stripe, Cho Dan Bo or black belt.

The volume of training hours to get to grading is massive and it's impossible for us as a club to monitor the home practice required.





At Cho Dan Bo

Overview: Cho Dan Bo is the probationary black belt level. When grading to your black belt you'll be required to repeat all of your Cho Dan Bo grading, plus everything else needed for black belt which includes:

11 rounds of contact sparring, weapons defence, Koryo pattern in Korean.

Most students will remain at this level for 6 months or so.

The black belt syllabus is to be used for this and all future gradings. The file is available for download on the website.

Training frequency: At least four times a week plus home practice is recommended.

Special requirements:

Sparring class - All Cho Dan Bo students should be registered for sparring and attending regularly.

Team Tournament – All students must enter at least one Team Tournament and compete in either Poomsae or Sparring some time before grading to black belt.

A list of the compulsory and recommended protective gear is on the website.

Black Belt grading selections:

A grading selections event is held one month prior to the grading to determine if students are ready for their black belt grading. To attend the selections students must first meet the following criteria:

Have attended a minimum 15 sparring sessions over the previous 4 months.

Passed the beep test at sparring.

Know Koryo in Korean to the half way point.

Know their theory to a pass level

At the selections students will also be tested on a variety of aspects of their grading.

Grading Guarantee:

The grading guarantee does not apply to red 3 stripe, Cho Dan Bo or black belt.

The volume of training hours to get to grading is massive and it's impossible for us as a club to monitor the home practice required.





Black Belts

Overview: Congratulations, you've done what most people have tried failed to do. Achieving your black belt is a major life accomplishment but it doesn't have to end there. We recommend that you ease off the training intensity and just enjoy your black belt for a while – you deserve it! Twice a week is enough just to keep in touch with your skills and when you're ready, there's a whole bunch of new skills to learn for your next grading. When you're about 6 months away from your next grading we recommend that you step it back up again to a Cho Dan Bo intensity.

Training frequency: Twice a week until your 6 months away from your next grading – then up to 4 time a week..

Special requirements:

Special requirements prior to grading are the same as that for Cho Dan Bo's. There are also minimum periods between dan gradings as set out by the Kukkiwon (World Taekwondo Head Quarters in Korea). The easiest way to remember it is this: however many dan stripes you currently have on your belt, that's the minimum amount of years to grade to the next dan level. For example if you're second dan you need to wait 2 years till third Dan. The minimum times are calculated from the time your Kukkiwon certificate is stamped in Korea, usually 3 months after your actual grading..

Black Belt grading selections:

A grading selections event is held one month prior to the grading to determine if students are ready for their black belt grading. To attend the selections students must first meet the following criteria:

Have attended a minimum 15 sparring sessions over the previous 4 months.

Passed the beep test at sparring.

Know their black belt pattern in Korean to the half way point.

Know their theory to a pass level

At the selections students will also be tested on a variety of aspects of their grading.

Grading Guarantee:

The grading guarantee does not apply to red 3 stripe, Cho Dan Bo or black belt.

The volume of training hours to get to grading is massive and it's impossible for us as a club to monitor the home practice required.

