

Self-Correction

Overview

- In order to advance, each student must work corrections independently (examining and experimenting with how to fix ineffective techniques).
- Use the corrections you've received in the past to guide your self-corrections going forward. You should never be bored simply because you are not receiving a personal correction at the moment (or even for an entire class). We all should have a long list of issues ready to work on at all times.
- Traditionally, an instructor should only have to correct you once; after that, it's up to you to continue working the correction. However, beginner students are likely to receive multiple reminders.
- Try to overcome the "I *am* doing it" syndrome when you do receive a correction. Embrace the correction in the moment, regardless of why it was given. Wrestle with it, *exaggerate* it; make it work. A correction is a golden opportunity to expand your mind and body (not to mention rein in your ego). Enjoy the process! Karate-do requires the mind-set of a life-long learner.
- Actively observe senior students (both while doing kata in groups with them and watching from the sidelines). Find areas of improvement for yourself based on their techniques and how they are executing them.

Half-speed and Power (Slow Motion) and 2-Second Pauses

- Half-speed and power allows for self-awareness, which is needed for self-correction. Explore every nuance of each move in the smallest detail. Half-speed and power should be as much work for the mind as 100 deep-knee bends are for the legs.
- Even if not working half-speed and power, use the 2-second pause between counts to critique the previous move without getting into the habit of micro-adjusting your form after every move. Instead, take a mental note and make sure the same mistake doesn't happen the next time, and/or work that move using the mirror later, on your own.
- Beginner students should take advantage of the pause to verify that your techniques match senior students (i.e., correct foot forward, etc.) and make adjustments if needed.
- Both half-speed and power kata and the 2-second pauses are key learning opportunities, NOT simply chances to rest. In many ways they require more effort than kata performed full-speed and full power, without count.

The Mirror

- Make frequent use of the mirrors in the dojo (and at home) before and after class. The key is to ignore personal appearance and look at your form critically.
- Choose a technique that's giving you trouble and repeat it in front of the mirror from various angles. Slow it down until you can clearly see and *feel* the rough part(s), and then make changes using trial and error. Repeat the correct version at least a dozen times so it "sticks." Sometimes doing the technique slow motion forward then backward, left then right, is helpful (experimentation idea again). If you get stuck, ask any advance student for assistance.
- Resist checking the mirror during formal classes unless the instructor asks you to, especially during kata. However, quick unobtrusive glances and peripheral vision are usually tolerated.

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Photography

Stills

- Still photographs of your performance at dojo events can be an excellent resource for documenting incorrect technique. (Knowledge is power!) Again, ignore your personal appearance and your ego, and focus objectively on your alignment, the tightness of your hands, etc. Official photo galleries tend to show you at your best, so ask a friend or family member to photograph your performance so you can study your mistakes, not just your “home runs.”

Video

- Making a video of your kata is one of the best ways to self-assess. Again, you need to get past your self-consciousness and vanity and focus on technique. Watch the video at normal speed to evaluate your speed and fluidity, then in slow motion to scrutinize the details of each move. This is perhaps the best way to understand why you are getting some of the same corrections over and over again, *and* get yourself motivated to finally fix them!
- Avoid videoing your kata immediately before a test. It can make you self-conscious about specific technical flaws and hamper the “Just Do It” display of power and commitment you want to show on the spot.
- Keep a library of your kata videos, but give yourself time to make noticeable corrections between video sessions. Stay motivated: self-corrections form a direct path to self-improvement, but be patient with yourself! Karate is meant to be a lifetime marathon!