

# Belt Testing

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## **Preparation!**

### **- Make sure you qualify to test.**

Prerequisites include attendance, time at current rank, understanding of reading materials, and proper courtesy and respect. (See the website or ask any Black Belt instructor.) If you're not sure you qualify don't worry: a Black Belt will approach you and tell you you're ready.

### **- Get a second opinion.**

If you meet the minimum requirements, ask your instructor his or her opinion. Let them review your kata. Listen very carefully to their feedback. They'll probably have some key suggestions on what to work on in the remaining weeks.

### **- Take the plunge!**

Once you decide you want to test, formally ask permission from Kyoshi. You could always argue, "I'll be better prepared if I wait," but the promotion process is about going out to meet a challenge with what you have. If you weren't ready your instructor would have told you.

### **- Research**

Study the written materials appropriate for your level WAY before the test date. On the day of the test, respond to questions concisely and with confidence, even if it's "I do not know, Sensei, but I will look it up."

### **- Attendance**

Try to add at least one class per week to your schedule to build your endurance. But don't get distracted by last minute corrections during the final week of the test.

### **- Makiwara**

If your test includes a breaking technique, pick up your makiwara training at least four weeks beforehand. NEVER attempt to break a board or brick before the test.

### **- Paperwork**

Submit your written paragraph, test fee and attendance sheet at least a week before the test. The paragraph may be on any topic related to karate that interests you - history, technique, personal experience - just be concise.

### **- Keep it simple**

Don't make any radical changes to your routine, such as diet, sleep pattern or exercise regime, the day before the test.

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## Testing

### - Spirit and "Showing up"

This means arriving early and blocking out the rest of the day. It means being 110% present in every moment of the event, not just the few minutes you're on the spot. You're being reviewed from the time you arrive at the dojo to how you conduct yourself after the final bow out. No detail escapes the judges' attention, so make sure you're wearing your special "promotion gi," the one in pristine condition with all the patches.

### - Courtesy

Karate begins and ends with courtesy. This includes bowing, verbal courtesies and attentiveness. Listen! Once you're called to the spot, bow to the deck, the senior Black Belt (Hanshi or Kyoshi), the Board of Judges (as a group), and then to the person calling the test. When you leave the spot bow in reverse order. Remember: never turn your back to the judges!

### - Breathe

The test is a demonstration of endurance and poise under pressure. Nervousness and adrenaline will speed you up, so consciously pause, focus, breathe and relax between techniques. If you freeze, lose your place in a kata, or perform the wrong move, just keep going! Do not stop or attempt to start over from the beginning.

### - Full speed and power

The judges want to see the power inherent in Ueshiro Shorin-Ryu techniques. This is your opportunity to put it all out there in a safe environment.

### - Support

Contrary to appearances, you are not up there alone; you have months of diligent training backing you up, plus the support of everyone on the board of judges and in the audience. They've all been there... or soon will be.

### - Just do it!

Be proud of the knowledge you've acquired up to this moment, yet humble about how much better your skills could be. Remember, you only earn your current rank after you've been promoted to the next. By testing you show your willingness to take on more difficult (and rewarding!) challenges.