

How To Choose A Martial Arts School

Choosing a martial arts school may seem like a daunting task. But with a little bit of information you can make sure you choose wisely. There are estimated to be more than six million martial arts practitioners in North America. Schools today range from facilities that rival the finest health club chains to grungy “garage dojos”.

Tip: “Dojo” means training hall or school in Japanese

According to Frank Silverman, Director of the Martial Arts Industry Association, the price range for the martial arts industry averages out at about \$125 per month, however schools can be found that charge anywhere from \$35 per month to more than \$200. So, how do you choose the right school?

First off, you already know how to choose the right school. You should evaluate a martial arts school the same way you would evaluate any other school. The same scrutiny should be applied to their professionalism, teachers, and facilities.

Tip: Being a black belt, at any level is not a sign of a good teacher!

Use common sense and good judgment when choosing a school. Make sure you choose a school that has good customer service as well as great teachers.

Here are some tips to help you find the right school:

Appearance

The way the school looks and its cleanliness says a lot about the attitude of the owner. The school should be clean and organized. If the school doesn't look professional, it probably isn't.

The Staff

How are you treated? The staff should be courteous, professional, and personable. If you get better service at a fast food restaurant then spend your money there instead.

The Style

The style that is taught at the school is not as important as who is doing the teaching. A good instructor will motivate you and genuinely be interested in why you joined the school. You should however find out what the emphasis of the training is. For example, is the emphasis on tournaments or is it on self defense. Even schools that teach the same style may vary in the way they teach that style. Don't presume to know what a style is about, do some research.

Tip: Check out the schools website if they have one. Look for descriptions about their particular style.

The Classes

How are the classes divided? Are the classes for children and adults separate or combined? A professional school will have classes that are designed for specific ages. Just as you would not put kindergarten student in the same class as a fourth grade student in school, you should put them in the same martial arts class because they are at different developmental stages both physically and mentally.

Tip: If you have a 3-5 year old and are looking for a school for them, make sure the school has a specific class for that age group.

The Students

Does the school seem to have a lot of intermediate and advanced students? If they do then chances are you found a school that knows how to keep students interested. Are the students in the class people with who you would feel comfortable training?

The Financial Arrangements

Many martial arts schools will ask you to sign an agreement for a certain number of lessons or a certain amount of time. That's OK. A school has to generate cash flow just as any other business. You shouldn't think twice about signing an agreement with the school under the following conditions:

1. You've had adequate time to witness and experience the service the school provides. Most schools have a great sales pitch, but some aren't able to follow through with the level of service they promised. Most schools will allow you to try a month of classes, for a price, before you agree to enroll for longer period of time. If the school does not allow this trial period, it's a definite red flag. Most schools will have Pay In Full option on memberships. It's ok to pay in full, but be sure you know the school thoroughly before doing so. Most schools will have a no refund policy.
2. The agreement you sign should clearly explain how you leave the program should you have to leave or if you become dissatisfied with the service. It's ok to pay an exit fee or some other penalty should you decide to leave before fulfilling the terms of the agreement, but the penalty or penalties should not be unreasonable (and some are so check carefully). Most schools will be willing to write a special "exit clause" in the agreement if it is not contained in it already.

Tip: The way the owner or staff member treats you when you try to negotiate the trial period or a change in the school's agreement will give

you a great insight into what the school's service is really like after the sale. If you aren't treated with respect, go somewhere else.

The Service

When you visit a martial arts school, if you don't see a high level of customer service you should be suspicious. A martial arts school is like any other business and you, the customer should be appreciated. If the level of customer service is poor, you should examine the school further before thinking about enrolling.

**BOTTOM LINE...
TRUST YOUR INSTICNT!**

Dear Future Student,

As a martial arts school owner I wanted to provide you with some information that may be useful in choosing a good martial arts school. Of course I hope that you enroll at my school, but I realize that perhaps you will choose another. My pledge to you is this:

Come try our school, if you feel that we are not the school for you, simply tell us how we could improve and we will help you find another one!

Sincerely,

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