

# Test Preparation

## *at the Okinawan Karate School*

Rank tests, especially for *Dan* or "Black-Belt" levels, are major milestones in the martial arts student's training. Consequently, these events should be taken seriously, and deserve appropriate preparation on the part of the student. The following are guidelines for student qualification and preparation for promotion tests.

**Attendance** - Students must train with consistent attendance and focus to qualify for rank promotions. Each rank level requires the student to attend a minimum number of classes and or time in rank. Students should understand that the established minimum requirements are just that, and most students will actually need additional preparation time. As the student approaches higher level tests, they should gradually increase their training frequency and intensity. This means additional practice at home and at the dojo. In the last three to four weeks immediately prior to testing the student should be attending three to four classes per week. They should rotate their attendance so that they are able to train with, and get feedback from, both of the Chief Instructors.

**Form** - In preparation for their test students should listen carefully to the feedback they are given and strive to eliminate any "quirks" or bad habits in their form. The student must DO the best that they can to make their form as perfect as possible for a test. Any form problems that persist for the student deserves extra attention, where the student should isolate trouble spots and perform repetitions of the move until the problem is resolved.

**Strength** - Students should balance perfection in form with the development of speed and power in technique. Every technique that the student performs should exhibit a quality of "pliable strength", or power that is fluid and smooth. An emphasis of power should be placed on "hard" techniques and conversely, "soft" movements should exhibit more grace and beauty. Repetition and practice is the only way to eliminate tense or "jerky" movements.

**Spirit** - Of the qualities developed by the martial arts student, spirit may be the most elusive. Real spirit, or intensity and focus, must be present in the student to make their material truly come alive and be effective. This quality is cultivated by an unconditional dedication, effort and trust in their material. These qualities are fostered by what is known as *ganbarimasu* or success through perseverance. This concept is not about the struggle of "trying", but actually DOING your best! *Kiais* are an indication of the student's level of spirit and must not be neglected.

**Fitness** - The student should prepare for high level tests similarly to the way a fighter prepares for a fight. Among the physical demands of a *Dan* test, students must engage in *Kumite* (free sparring) with two partners. In addition to training at the dojo, adult students should also train to improve their cardiovascular fitness. Supplementing dojo time with running, rope-jumping, or heavy-bag drills can provide this. Students should also monitor their food intake and nutrition to trim down to a "lean mean fighting machine" bodyweight. Excess body weight will inhibit the student's ability to perform and move properly.

**Dojo Conduct** - Candidates for *Dan* promotion are expected to model exemplary behavior in the dojo, and follow the standards for rules of etiquette established in traditional Okinawan dojos around the world. The student must consistently demonstrate a positive attitude towards training and their instructors in the dojo. Students preparing for *Dan* levels should take an active role in assisting others in their training.

Students are scheduled to test with an assumption that they will prepare properly, following the guidelines noted above. Failure to comply with ALL of the standards noted (appropriate to rank levels) will result in a delay in testing. The qualities noted are expected to improve and, or, increase with each rank level. It is considered bad form to repeatedly inquire about rank testing.