

## How To “Schedule” Your School’s Growth

*[Editor’s Note: The NAPMA staff has carefully crafted a Black Belt Report with general information and a few specific ideas that can help most members improve their schedules; however, it is virtually impossible to write a report that reflects the unique characteristics of every member school. The final content of your school schedule will depend on whether you’re a part-time or full-time instructor; your style; the square footage of your school; the specific training you offer; whether you teach children, adults or both; the number of staff members; etc.]*

There are many reasons why every martial arts school needs a well-developed and -managed schedule. The most important, however, is that it can help you grow your school.

Think of your school-growth situation as gold fish in a bowl. The number of fish in the bowl is limited by the size of the bowl, just as your school can only grow as much as your schedule allows.

You must schedule for growth. Rather than wait until you have 300 students to create a schedule for 300 students, create a schedule now to teach 300 students in the future. That’s one less roadblock to reach your goal of 300 students, and you’ll be more motivated to work toward that goal.

You may be still using a schedule for a new school with only beginning students, even though you’ve been opened for a few years and have students at various belt levels. This could be the reason you’re not growing. Your schedule doesn’t match your current or future student body. The solution is to update your calendar, and start your school growing again.

This report can help you do exactly that. It presents a few other reasons why you should develop a school schedule, some practical tips to make it easy, and proven successful strategies on which to base your schedule.

### Other Reasons Why A Convenient School Schedule Can Drive Your Growth

#### Customer or student service

As a martial arts instructor, you are justly proud of your Black Belt rank, athletic abilities, competitive record and teaching skills; however, many students (or parents) decide to train with you first because of the convenience of your schedule.

In the minds of your prospective students, you provide a service, similar to any local retailer, so it shouldn’t be surprising that the consumers of your service consider a convenient schedule a primary reason to enroll at your school.

Like it or not and regardless of the size of your school, you must recognize that student service is equally as important as martial arts instruction, especially if your goal is to operate a growing and successful school.

A convenient schedule helps to make the process of being a student at your school as easy as possible. That’s the “process,” not the training or the exams. Your schedule should make it easier for students to concentrate on difficult training and prepare for challenging exams. They’re more likely to succeed—and that might be the ultimate student service.

A convenient schedule is also beneficial to parents, who must manage their children’s schedules as well as their family and work schedules. Your school schedule eliminates one of their concerns, and helps to reduce stress and anxiety and provide much-needed peace of mind.

#### Improve your school’s efficiency

Your school schedule can help you improve the efficiency of your operations, which is also necessary if you expect to grow your school. A well-developed schedule is a practical tool that martial arts schools need just as much as any organization, from Microsoft to the local garden club to the street-cleaning department.

#### Create more time

Your school schedule can literally create more time for you and your staff to invest in high-return,

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school-growth activities, such as developing better relationships with parents, making DNS calls, selling pro shop merchandise, asking for referrals and pre-framing for upgrades/renewals.

The efficiency of your schedule may provide more time for your instructors to better serve students. Since your instructors **WILL BE ON-TIME**, according to your schedule, they'll have the opportunity to talk with students arriving for the next class. This brief time can be very valuable, building rapport with students, helping them understand a specific lesson better, and reinforcing the value of their training. Instructors can also ask for referrals and pre-frame students for renewals.

You maximize class time for learning, instead of wasting part of it, waiting for students and staff to arrive on time and be ready to teach and learn. Your instructors can also be organizing the next class before it starts, so the students are ready to enter the classroom in an orderly fashion and go to work.

## How To Create Your School Schedule

Remember, the goal of your school schedule is to create one for your future number of students, so you can grow into it. If you have a new student body today of 50 or less and most of them are at beginning belt levels, then you have no need to schedule a Brown Belt class. You will want to schedule Black Belt Club, Master's Club or Leadership Training classes, however, because you should start to upgrade or renew your beginning students to those programs just a few weeks after enrolling at your school.

First, prepare your active schedule for your current student body with the help of the following guidelines. Once your schedule is completed and successfully in use, then you can expand it into a future schedule for your specific school-growth goal. Your schedule will help you discover the days and times where you can add new classes to fill with new students.

Remember, this process is not just for those schools without schedules or with outdated schedules. Please review each step below, even if you think your schedule works well for your school—you never know what you might learn.

1. Schedule your first children's class approximately 20 to 30 minutes after children are dismissed for the day from local preschools and elementary schools. Parents will appreciate the convenience

of bringing their children directly to their martial arts classes. That also helps to build retention, as you can be more assured that children will attend, as scheduled. Scheduling your children's classes at this time also maximizes your opportunity to reach your growth goal.

2. If you operate a full-time school and you want to maximize student growth, then consider scheduling two morning classes twice a week for adults. There are many categories of adults—non-working mothers and wives, second-shift workers and college students—who will find morning classes very convenient. You can schedule beginners from 10 to 11 am and advanced students from 11 am to noon. You can organize and market your morning schedule, as if it was a separate school, with its own marketing program and a complete curriculum from White Belt to Black Belt.
3. If you have a small staff, then you might want to schedule a ten-minute break between classes to help students as they leave and arrive for classes. If your staff is larger, then the best schedule is back-to-back classes, so you can offer more classes or more content in your current classes.
4. Schedule the amount of time for each class, according to age and rank or "level" for curriculum rotations.
  - Classes for four- to six-year-olds should not exceed 30 minutes.
  - Classes for seven-year-olds and older can be as much as 45 minutes.
  - Classes for beginning adults can be 45 minutes to 1 hour.
  - Classes for Brown and Black Belts (children and adults) can be an hour.

Two key points to remember:

- 1) End classes when your students are at their peak of enthusiasm, motivating them to return for more of the same fun, energy and excitement. Longer classes can make students wish for their classes to end.
- 2) The length of a class does not equate value, but the quality of the class and your instruction. If you reduce the length of some classes for your new schedule,

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then remind students and parents that the optimum learning time for maximum retention and interest is 30 to 45 minutes for children and 45 minutes to an hour for adults. Teaching excellent lessons that are fast-paced and exciting is more important than the amount of time you teach.

4. Assign students to specific class days and times, otherwise you may have real confusion. Many schools limit students to two classes per week. Those instructors ask students to choose two classes a week. This promotes excellent attendance records and retention. It also makes it easier to schedule make-up classes. You can allow Black Belt or Master's Club members to attend additional classes, or have their classes extended because they've demonstrated a much greater commitment to their training.

## **Additional School Schedule Tips**

5. Recognize and note those times of the week that you must take into consideration to schedule your school's classes properly.
  - "Crunch time" is the period of time when parents are arriving and leaving with their children, or when your largest class is being dismissed.
  - "Slow time" is when you have the fewest number of students in your school; it's also your most inefficient time. Your facility and all or some of your staff must be at full operational readiness to serve a small number of students. It may be wiser and more efficient to schedule that small class, while a larger class is being taught.

6. Survey your staff, students and their parents to help you develop a schedule that will satisfy the greatest number of people. Remember to remind everyone that you are conducting a survey, not promising to change the schedule to make everyone happy. That is impossible. Ask them what scheduling problems or conflicts they may have experienced at your school. Ask them for suggestions to make the schedule more efficient and convenient.
7. 8. Implement your schedule.

You should now be ready to announce and distribute your new schedule during every class, at least two weeks prior to the official start date.

- Make sure to make enough copies for everyone, including the staff.
- Display the new schedule in various locations throughout your school.
- Keep a stack at your front desk.
- Add it to the information and materials you provide new students during introductory lessons.
- Add it to your school newsletter

## **Conclusion**

Creating your school schedule can be challenging, but there are a certain number of fundamental concepts that are applicable to a vast majority of schools—and that is what NAPMA has tried to provide in this report. The fundamental strategy is to be always thinking ahead. Know what you want your school to become, so you can create a schedule that helps you grow into your vision.