



National Association of Professional Martial Artists

# NATIONAL BLACK BELT CLUB

## NEWSLETTER

### Black Belt Posture

Good posture isn't automatic; it takes practice. Black Belt martial artists learn that posture is an integral part of performing martial arts techniques, so they work hard to ensure that they consistently maintain good posture. Practicing good posture requires lower body strength, torso strength and upper body strength, combined with balance. Your back muscles work with your abdominal muscles to hold your torso in an upright position, while your shoulder and neck muscles accomplish the same result for your upper body. Then your hip and thigh muscles work to hold your torso and upper body erect. Your balance enables all of the muscles to work together to keep your body in alignment.

In addition to the physical requirements to maintain good posture, it's equally important to be mentally aware of your posture. If you begin to slouch, then you must recognize and correct bad posture. Consistent awareness and correction enables your body to develop good muscle memory, which will transform into good posture habits. As martial artists, you will achieve many of these habits through training. You'll observe that Black Belts tend to walk and sit with great posture. They keep their backs straight, shoulders back and heads high. One thing that has always impressed me is that martial arts Black Belts, big or small, are able to show great confidence and strength without much effort. The reason is that they exert great confidence, strength, discipline and even class and sophistication through their "Black Belt" posture.



The good news is that you do not need to be a great Black Belt to have good posture. You can begin today to walk, sit and stand just like a Black Belt. All it takes is practice. You must practice by building strength in your muscles. You must also practice mentally by maintaining good posture every time you walk, sit and stand. It is not easy to have Black Belt posture, just as it is not easy to become a Black Belt. It will not happen overnight, but each night you can become a little bit better. Eventually, your effort will achieve results, and before you know it, you'll experience a higher state of mind and body.

# TRAINING TIP: MARTIAL ARTS CROSS TRAINING

Cross training may be the most effective fitness strategy for total physical conditioning. Martial arts cross training can produce impressive results, such as an increase in speed, power, flexibility and endurance. To become proficient with any given technique, you must practice it thousands of times.

Martial arts is about balance. When you perform thousands of front kicks, yet fail to stretch your legs, you deprive yourself of your potential speed and power. Plan an effective martial arts cross training regimen with these strategies.

**Stretch Daily:** Stretching is a critical component of your fitness plan. Proper stretching prepares your muscles for the physical demands of your workout. Stretching helps reduce the risk of injury, and your muscles can fully respond to those demands, improving performance.

**Incorporate Light Weights:** A few times per week, practice your techniques using very light weights. Hold one-half to one-pound hand weights as you practice punches and blocks, and light ankle weights while practicing kicks. When using weights, execute the techniques slowly and with control.

**Vary Your Speeds:** Practice one or two speeds slower and faster than your normal exercise speed. Slower speeds enable you to focus on the finer details of each technique, while faster speeds build endurance and improve reflexes.

**Meditate:** Take time during your workout to relax and breathe. Replay in your mind's eye what a perfect technique looks like and then picture yourself executing the technique with perfection. When you visualize yourself being successful you will often experience actual success.

**Supplement Your Martial Arts:** Three to four times per week for 15 to 30 minutes, supplement your martial arts training with non-related, low-impact activities, such as walking, swimming or biking.

## FELLOW MARTIAL ARTIST: CHUCK NORRIS



Chuck Norris is known worldwide for his movie and television acting, but he's better known in the martial arts community as a martial arts role model. Chuck Norris is the embodiment of the true martial artist.

From 1964 to 1968, Chuck won many state, national, and international martial arts titles. Then in 1968, he won the World Professional Middle Weight Karate Championships. He remained the undefeated champion until he retired in 1974. He was inducted into the Black Belt Hall of Fame as Fighter of the Year and Instructor of the Year, and received the Man of the Year honor. In 1997, he was the first man in the Western Hemisphere to be awarded an 8th degree black belt in the taekwondo system.

In addition to acting and performing martial arts, Chuck has excelled in the area of "inspiration." He has written two books, "The Secret of Inner Strength" (an autobiography) and "The Secret Power within: Zen Solutions to Real Problems." He has won many humanitarian awards and offered his services to many worthwhile organizations.

According to his website, Chuck thinks his most rewarding accomplishment was the creation of his Kick Drugs Out of America Foundation. This program began by teaching martial arts to 150 high-risk children in Houston, TX, as part of the school curriculum. The program's success in "helping these children raise their self-esteem and instilling discipline and respect, as well as getting them out of gangs," led to the program being implemented in over 30 schools, with more than 4,200 young boys and girls participating.

Chuck Norris has shown us what it means to be truly successful in the martial arts.