

## Teaching Students How to Practice on Their Own

Many martial arts instructors request or require that their students practice at home, before class begins and during class when the lead instructor is helping others. Simply asking students to practice on their own may not provide them with enough information to obtain the most from their practice time.

Your G.O.L.D. team can be taught how to communicate clearly with students about what and how to practice for maximum skill improvement and enjoyment. When your students receive clear direction on proper practice, they will feel more comfortable and competent in their abilities to rehearse on their own; and, in turn, they will be inspired to practice more often.

### What to Practice

You can help your students practice successfully when you explain what they should practice. When working with children and new adult students, or implementing a "practice-at-home" policy for the first time, your G.O.L.D. team should recommend that students start by rehearsing their favorite techniques.

This can help students develop a great practice attitude and the competence to try more challenging techniques. Some students may not be in the habit of practicing, or may be reluctant. You can motivate and excite them about practicing when they start with techniques they like.

Next, your leadership team can recommend that students practice a portion of current material or curriculum that has been taught during class. G.O.L.D. team members should explain that practicing for a few minutes immediately after students have learned a new technique can help them to acquire the information faster than without practice. Even if they don't remember all of a form or combination, some practice is better than none. If some portion of that form or



combination stalls their practice, then they can always pick up the phone and call a classmate or a leadership team member for help.

Your G.O.L.D. team should also encourage students to practice curriculum on which they have already been tested, and work hard to improve it, even if your lesson plans include a review of past test material. If the material will be included in their Black Belt tests, and is considered important, then you'll want your students to practice it alone as well as during some classes.

As a summary, your G.O.L.D. team can help students benefit from independent practice by making sure that they know what to practice.

- Favorite technique first.
- Newest or current rank curriculum.
- Previous ranks curriculum.

### How to Practice

Now that your students know what to practice, you'll want to help them understand how to practice. Without proper guidance, your students may go through the motions of practice without focusing on what's most important for maximum improvement. How-to-practice methods include realistic practice times, setting improvement goals and using a variety of fun methods.

First, recommend that new students practice just five to ten minutes during the days they aren't scheduled to attend martial arts classes. Tell students to add five additional minutes for each

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# BLACK BELT LEADERSHIP

GUIDANCE ON LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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belt rank that is higher than your school's first belt level. For example, White Belts practice five minutes, Gold Belts practice ten minutes, etc.

Ask students to select a time of day they are more likely to practice. The goals are to designate enough practice time to be beneficial, but not so much practice time that it is unappealing.

The next step is to help students understand that each time they practice they should work towards a specific improvement goal. If the practice material is new, then simply remembering it is a fine goal. If students plan to rehearse a form, then a goal of excellent technique or aiming punches and kicks at the correct target would suffice. Students' practice time will be enjoyable and beneficial when they have set clear goals.

Another way your G.O.L.D. team can help students achieve the most from practice time is to structure their sessions that will not only help them improve, but also keep them from becoming bored. Be prepared to provide your students with ideas how to practice kata, combinations, kicks and other techniques from your curriculum. For example, if your students will be practicing kicks at home, then you may suggest that they do ten in slow motion, ten at medium speed, ten at full speed, and then ten on a target or heavy bag if they have one at home.

As a summary, your G.O.L.D. team can help students benefit from independent practice time by making sure that students know how to practice.

- Scheduling realistic practice times.
- Setting specific improvement goals.
- Planning different ways to practice.

## **GOLD Team Lesson**

Review all the preceding information with your G.O.L.D. team members about how to help

students make the most of their practice time. Be sure to add any important points that are specific to your school's program.

Next, lead your team through the following series of drills that will help them teach your students how to practice on their own. Ask each team member to perform the drills, and then rate him or her on a scale of 1-to-10. Each team member should score at least a 7 to pass the drills satisfactorily.

Step 1: Instruct each team member to lead the rest of the group through a mock class, using a drill that is regularly taught near the very end of a class. Ask him or her to complete the physical portion of the class by explaining to students how practice will benefit them, what they are expected to practice and for how long (the duration of the practice session). Rate each team member on a scale of 1-to-10.

Step 2: Instruct each team member to lead the rest of the group through a mock class, using a drill that is regularly taught at your school. Ask him or her to assign homework to the class that complements the drill and suggest several specific improvement goals for the class to accomplish during their practice sessions. Rate each team member on a scale of 1-to-10.

Step 3: Instruct each team member to lead the rest of the group through a mock class, using a drill that is regularly taught at your school. Ask him or her to assign homework to the class and suggest a variety of practice methods that students can do at home that will help them improve and not become bored. Rate each team member on a scale of 1-to-10.

When your G.O.L.D. team helps you clearly communicate what to practice and how to practice, students will feel more competent and comfortable to take the time to practice and set out-of-class achievement goals. This will not only help increase student proficiency in the long run, but also student retention.