



**ENGLAND WADO-KAI
KARATE-DO RENMEI (EWKR)
CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY
ANNEX 1**

**GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES
FOR PAIR WORK AND KUMITE**

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FOREWARD

This document is an addition to EKWR's Guidelines for Safeguarding Children (although the principles outlined are relevant for all karate participants). Experienced Sensei's will already apply these guidelines but they should provide a useful **reminder checklist** and be helpful to those starting to take classes.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Young children are particularly vulnerable during training as they are still developing physically and mentally, so instructors need to be aware of the added responsibilities this brings; children should not simply be treated as small adults, with small adult bodies.

The minimum age for starting Karate is six but the build, maturity and attention span¹ of individuals varies widely and training should be designed to take account of these factors. Some basic principles are described below.

2. WARMING UP FOR CLASSES

All karate training activities should start with warm up exercises that are appropriate for the level of activity taking place and the age and development of the students:

Do's:

- Instructors need to familiarise themselves with the sort of warm up exercises that are suitable for children of different ages and abilities.
- The focus should be on movements that helps develop mobility of muscles and joints, balance and a general level of fitness

Dont's:

- Children should not do assisted stretching - they generally do not need to and there is a risk of injury with an inconsiderate or over-enthusiastic partner.
- Exercises such as knuckle press-ups or impact work such as hitting heavy bags, are also not appropriate for children as their joints are still developing and can be damaged by such activities. [These are not appropriate as warm ups for adults either].

3. PAIR WORK

Karate pair work involves attacks (punches, strikes, kicks) and defensive moves (brushes, blocks, foot sweeps and controlled takedowns). The key word in all of this is '*controlled*'. Pair work teaches distance, focus and timing and this needs to be explained so that students understand this. They also need to know that it is OK for partners to tell each other if they feel either of them are being too 'rough'.

In a properly supervised class, pair work should not result in any injury to the attacker or defender. However, the nature of the techniques means there is always an element of risk so, to ensure safe practice:

- All classes must be run by an experienced instructor who should ensure that children are taught controlled techniques that will not cause injury.

¹ In general, the younger the child, the shorter the attention span. One hour is generally considered sufficient training time for the average 12-year-old or below.

- Ideally, partners (whether adults or children) should be matched according to similar age, height, weight, size and ability. However, the mixed nature of classes means this is not always possible - a senior student or instructor may be paired with a junior for demonstration or tuition purposes and/ or it may be helpful to students to mix grades within the class. In such cases, careful judgement must be made by the Sensei on the suitability of any pairings so as to ensure the speed and level of force of techniques is matched to the abilities of the lower grade student.
- Instructors need to make sure that no jewellery (e.g. wrist watches, fit bits, ear rings, studded rings) is worn by students whilst practicing pair work. This is one of the dojo rules and is important since jewellery can cause injuries.
- The training area must be checked for any obstacles or surfaces that could cause harm.
- If mats are used, these must be checked for suitability and safety, particularly where mats have been joined together.

4. KUMITE – FREE SPARRING AND COMPETITIONS

EKWR clubs are responsible for providing a safe environment in which sparring, the organisation's fight club and competitions can take place under careful supervision by experienced senior instructors. In addition to the points in the pair work section above, good practice includes:

- Competition participants are expected to wear appropriate protective equipment such as a gumshield, gloves, shin and instep pads, body protector and a headguard.
- Mixed gender sparring is allowed for children up to 11 years of age.
- All students need to understand the target areas, level of contact allowed and the scoring and penalty system.
- For children, no head contact is permitted due to significant health concerns regarding the health impacts of concussion.
- For Senior kumite competitors, non-injurious, *light, controlled "touch" contact* to the face, head, and neck (but not to the throat) is allowed.
- Parents/guardians of children should be encouraged to stay and watch classes and competitions.

5. DEALING WITH POTENTIAL INJURIES

In order to deal with any injuries that do occur it is essential that all EKWR clubs should have *at least* one person in the dojo during normal training, preferably the senior Sensei, who is first aid trained and capable of recognising and responding to an injury at an appropriate level. This is even more important during competitions when preferably St John's ambulance should be present.

In addition, all club instructors should:

- be aware of any medical conditions that may affect an individual's (child or adult's) training or response to an injury
- keep an easily accessible in-class list of emergency contact names and numbers for all students whether child or adult;
- inform parents/guardians/partners if a student is injured or has an accident;

- keep an accident book in the dojo and record any injuries that occur together with subsequent actions;
- keep a well-stocked, easily accessible first aid kit in the dojo;
- know the location of the nearest defibrillator (see www.defibfinder.uk)
- always administer minor first aid to children in the presence of other people.

Minor injuries that could occur include cuts, sprains, strains or bruises. More serious injuries to guard against include concussion from a knock on the head, or injury to joints or bones from falling on a hard floor. In a properly supervised class these kinds of injuries should not occur but, if they do happen to a student (or others in the immediate area of the dojo), then professional medical attention should be sought as soon as possible. Depending on the injury, the person may need to be taken to A&E or a Minor Injuries Unit if it is possible to do so safely, or it may be necessary to call 999 (see below).

Head injuries

Head injuries are unlikely to occur but are a very serious concern so the emergency services on 999 must be called if someone has sustained such an injury and has any of the following symptoms all of which can be potential symptoms of concussion:

- been knocked unconscious, has come round or is unresponsive
- difficulty staying awake or keeping their eyes open
- a fit (seizure)
- fallen from a height more than 1 metre or 5 stairs (in cases where there is a stage in the training space/dojo)
- problems with their vision or hearing
- a black eye without direct injury to the eye
- clear fluid coming from their ears or nose
- bleeding from their ears or bruising behind their ears
- numbness or weakness in part of their body
- problems with walking, balance, understanding, speaking or writing
- a head wound with a dent to the head
- vomited since the incident
- a blood clotting disorder (like haemophilia) or they take medicine to thin their blood
- a lasting headache that does not go away with painkillers
- a noticeable change in behaviour, like being more irritable or losing interest in things
- problems with memory

The emergency contact person (parent/guardian/partner) must also always be immediately informed if any of these symptoms have occurred even if the injured person says they are OK, since concussion may not be apparent for 24 hours and sometimes may not appear for up to three weeks.

If in doubt about this, or any injury always seek expert advice from a qualified first aider or medical professional.

