

Choosing a Martial Arts School for My Child

Many children can benefit from the study of the martial arts, but how do you determine which is the best programme for their needs? This can be especially difficult for adults with no background in the martial arts. However, children's martial arts programs can be easily assessed with a little forethought.

To help you make the right choice for your child here is a simple process to followed:

- Step1:** Define your expectations for the programme. Is it merely for recreation? Does the child need exercise or discipline? Is it to be a convenient after-school program? Does he or she wish to participate in competitions? Is there a reason that a specific style or school is being sought?
- Step2:** Consult local telephone directory and the Internet to assemble a list of nearby martial arts schools. Consult your friends and associates, as often martial arts programmes, particularly those not being run for profit, will not be listed and will rely solely on word of mouth.
- Step3:** Contact the closest schools (or those of the proper style if this is a consideration). Ask the school if they have a children's program, when it is held and what the driving principles behind it are. Ask schools directly what they charge and if there are additional fees for uniforms, lockers and showers, testing or anything else. Ask if the employees have submitted to any type of a background check and if they have relevant skills and certifications; such as CPR (**C**ardio-**P**ulmonary **R**esuscitation) beyond their martial arts rank. Use this information to compile a short list of possibilities.
- Step4:** Ask to visit each school to watch a class and observe the teaching styles. Bring the child, if possible, to help determine which school seems to be the best fit.
- Step5:** Investigate the possibility of a trial period before any long-term contracts are signed. Many children lose interest in martial arts in a short period of time and, unfortunately, some schools will require a 12 to 24 month commitment.
- Step6:** Choose the school that seems to be the best choice in the context of the needs determined in earlier steps.