

# 虎

TIGER SPIRIT  
KARATE ACADEMY

# About Our Karate!



Tiger Spirit is an independent school teaching Shotokan based Karate.

## ***So what is "SHOTOKAN"?***

There are many styles of Karate, Shotokan is a name that defines one particular style

Shotokan Karate was devised by Gichin Funakoshi. Apart from being a Karate instructor he was also a poet and school teacher. Shotokan was the name of the first official hall used by Funakoshi in 1936 (located in Toshima Ward, Japan).

**"Shoto"** (松濤, Shōtō) meaning "pine-waves" (*the movement of pine needles when the wind blows through them*) was Funakoshi's pen-name, which he used to sign his philosophical writings. **"Kan"** means hall.

Initially Shotokan Karate didn't have a defining name. When Funakoshi's students were asked what style of karate they practiced, they replied by saying they learn at the **"Shoto Kan"**. Through common usage this became one word and the name for the style.

Although Shotokan Karate is a Japanese martial art, Funakoshi was not born in main land Japan. He came from Okinawa, an island to the south governed by the Japanese. Many of today's Karate styles originated from Okinawa. Although governed by Japan, Okinawa is just as close to Fozhou (a city in China) as it is to Tokyo. It is believed that martial arts came to Okinawa via Fozhou by travellers and traders.

At the time Funakoshi learned martial arts, martial arts training in Japan was banned and taught in secret. The earliest forms of what would later become known as Karate were introduced to the public in 1902, as part of the physical education program in Okinawan Prefecture public high schools.

At this point in time it was not called Karate and instead had various names and descriptors. Karate also didn't have defining or organised styles, as it was in the domain of the individual teachers.

In 1914 or 1915, a group of instructors, including Funakoshi, toured Okinawa and gave the first public displays of what can be considered today as Karate.

In 1922 Funakoshi left Okinawa to do a display in Tokyo for the Department of Education. He was urged to stay in Tokyo, and spread his teaching of this martial art through Japan. He believed it to be in the best interest of expanding the art and agreed to do so.

## Shotokan is symbolised by the Shotokan Tiger!



Few Karate practitioners know the origins of this famous symbol, but most instantly recognise it as the Shotokan Tiger. It is actually called “Tora no Maki” (The Tiger Roll).

The markings behind the tail of the tiger are the artist's signature, the signature belongs to *Hoan Kusugi* who was a student of Funakoshi.

It is said that he was instrumental in influencing Funakoshi to write a book instructing Karate, and promised him that if he did, he would design the cover art. If you own a copy of Karate-Do Kyohan (The Master Text), remove the paper cover and you will see “Tora no Maki” embossed in silver.

*So why is there a tiger?*

*Why is it in a circle?*

*Why is it called Tiger Roll?*

“Tora no Maki” (**Tiger Roll**), is a Japanese phrase that describes an official document, established as a reference on a system.

Traditional Japanese texts in the 1800's and very early 1900's were not written in books, they were written on **rolls** of paper. These rolls of paper were then put into canisters with **circular** caps over the ends. The caps would have the name of the text, or art work depicting the nature of its contents. The Shotokan Tiger was drawn in honour of this tradition.

Karate-Do Kyohan (The Master Text) is regarded by many as the bible of Shotokan, but it was not the first book published by Funakoshi instructing Karate.

The first book was "Ryukyu Kempo Toudi" with a limited publication in 1922. “**Ryu Kyu**” are the set of Japanese Islands incorporating Okinawa, “**Kempo**” is the name of a Chinese martial art, but was used as a generic description of martial arts at this time. “**Toudi (Tō-de)**” translates as ‘Chinese hand’. At this stage the term *KARATE* was not in use.

In March 1925 Funakoshi published a second book with slight revisions “Retan Goshin Toudi-jitsu” after the plates for the first book were destroyed by fire as a result of the Kanto Earthquake in September of 1923.

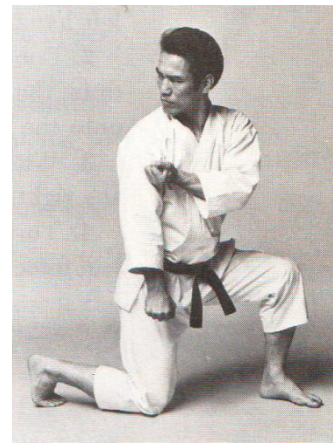
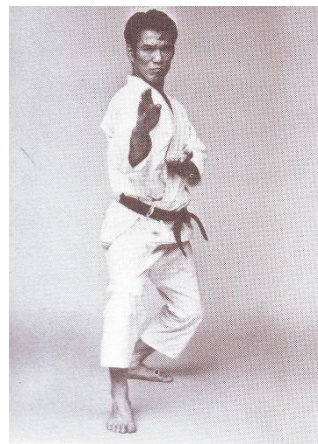
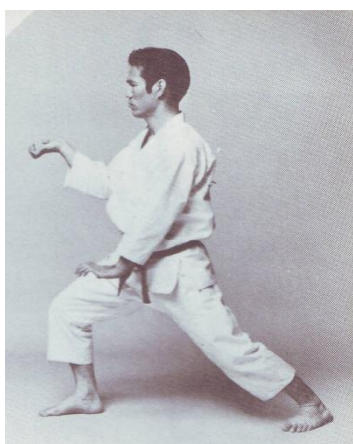
“Karate-Do Kyohan” (TRANSLATION: **Karate:** Empty Hand, **Do:** Path or Way **Kyohan:** Instructors Manual or Master Text) was a subsequent revision published 10 years later in 1935, and set the foundation for what is Shotokan Karate. Now simply called **Karate-Do** this style of Karate was still not defined by the name “**Shotokan**”. It was in the following year that Funakoshi would begin teaching in the hall that would be the styles namesake.

The following decade would see Japan enter World War 2. During March of 1945 the Toshima Ward of Japan was heavily bombed, and the Shoto Kan hall was destroyed.

10 years on, and close to 90 years of age, Funakoshi decided to republish a second edition of the Master Text. Funakoshi states in the preface to the second edition: *“For several years, I have thought about the necessity of republishing this book. Recently, in an attempt to locate a copy of the first edition in the large number of second-hand book stores in the Kanda district of Tokyo, I was surprised at its scarcity and high price”* October 13, 1956.

On April 26, 1957, with the manuscript almost complete, Gichin Funakoshi died. Exactly one year later to the day, the finished manuscript was placed on his altar with the burning of incense, and was offered to his soul.

Below are photos from the books ‘Retan Goshin Toudi-jitsu’ (featuring Funakoshi) and ‘Karate-Do Kyohan’ second edition. The evolution of ‘Ryukyu Kempo Toude’ to ‘Shotokan Karate’ can be seen clearly. The notable differences of “Ryukyu Kempo Todue” are that the stances are shorter and more grasping movements are present.



Note: Even longer stances are common throughout today's Shotokan and are considered standard.

## ***About Tiger Spirit's Karate!***

At Tiger Spirit we teach Shotokan *based* Karate. It is important to emphasize the “**based**” for two reasons.

- 1) We have modified what we teach from Shotokan Karate. We want our students to know this from the start, so that later, people are not confused when they see differences between what is taught in class, and what is in traditional reference materials on the internet or in books. We also don't want people to think that we are pretending to be something that we are not.
- 2) We believe that calling what we teach **Shotokan based** pays respect to, and acknowledges, the system that gave us the majority of the Karate we do. However we do not want to be disrespectful to Gichin Funakoshi's legacy by allowing students to perceive that we teach exactly what he taught!

We are also an independent club. That means that we are free to teach our own syllabus, and we have the freedom to make technical changes as we see fit. We are not controlled by a governing body half a world away. So if you ask a technical question in class, you will be given a technical answer. You will never be told “*we do it that way because that's how they do it in Japan*” or “*we do it that way because that's the way it's been done for hundreds of years*”

Being independent doesn't mean that we are alone. We have friendships with other independent Shotokan schools, and exchange knowledge freely.

## ***The Tiger Spirit Name***

When Tiger Spirit started it needed a name that could identify the school as having a Shotokan heritage. Shotokan being symbolised by a Tiger made “Tiger Spirit Karate Academy” an easy choice. Hence our logo with a version of the Shotokan Tiger and a red heart symbolising spirit.



虎

TIGER SPIRIT  
KARATE ACADEMY

In Karate circles it is traditional to have Kanji (Japanese writing) depicting the name of the school. The Japanese Kanji above our name says “Tora” (Tiger). While a verbal translation of Tiger Spirit into Japanese is “Tora Shin”, we don't have any Kanji for shin

(spirit) because there are at least 6 different Kanji, each having a specific meaning of spirit. None of the Kanji options translate back into English as “Tiger Spirit”. An example of one poor translation was “Tiger Alcohol”. Fortunately “Tora” by itself has a significant meaning of spirit in traditional Japanese culture.

Our Karate consists of 3 main areas of training.....

1. **Basics (Kihon)**
2. **Forms or Patterns (Kata)**
3. **Fighting exercises (Kumite)**

## **KIHON (Basics)**

Kihon (basics) are the techniques that make up Karate. Shotokan Karate consists of 5 main categories of Kihon. These are **Stances**, **Blocks**, **Punches**, **Kicks**, and **Strikes**.

### **STANCES**

Stances are body positions!

Most Shotokan Karate clubs will say that stances are the foundation Karate is built upon. Everything else, all the kicks, punches, blocks and strikes are built on top of these stances. This is somewhat true, however at ‘Tiger Spirit’ we teach that our feet are our foundation (because we stand on them). Stances are the body positions that link our foot work, our techniques, and body movements. Stances can generate power to techniques, and can give stability when delivering a blow or engaging an attack with a defence.

Shotokan is renowned for its long stances, typically two shoulder widths in length or longer. At Tiger Spirit we have shortened our *default* stances to a longish mid-length stance, enabling more movement through the body when executing techniques. We also teach short and long versions of many of our stances. (Our default stance lengths are almost identical to the stances lengths in the Master Text, this was not by design and was only noticed years after the change!)

In summary, long stances are perfect for stability. Short stances are perfect for balance. Mid-range stances don’t have perfect balance or stability but offer a mix of both. Mid-range stances allows for movement to shorter or longer stances if required.

Having a mix of stance lengths enables foot shifting (Ashi-Subaki), body shifting (Tai-Subaki) and body rotation (Tenshin). These areas of movement tend to be absent from pure Shotokan systems.

The balls of the feet are also more predominate in generating movement and power, especially when moving in-between stance positions. One other fundamental difference is that we rarely turn on the heels in-between stance movements.

## **BLOCKS**

Blocks are defensive moves done mainly with the arms and hands. Our students will learn as many as 28 blocks. However the initial 6 blocks that are taught are our staple.

## **KICKS**

Kicks are attacking movements using the feet, knees, or legs. Compared to other martial arts such as 'Taekwondo' our kicks are not very elaborate or spectacular. In total our school only number 14 kicks. Our approach is that kicks should be effective and simple. This is because when you execute a kick you no longer have solid footing because you no longer have both feet the ground!

## **PUNCHES**

Punches are attacking movements that impact with at least one knuckle while the forearm is behind the hand. Most punches are done with a clenched fist and impact with the larger two of the four knuckles located where the fingers join the hand.

## **STRIKES**

Every other attacking hand technique that is not a punch is a strike!

At Tiger Spirit we have several sections, or ways of practicing our Kihon (Basics)

We have a traditional section, where individual techniques are done from a stationary position. This supplies the student with a multitude of techniques they can use in other activities. It also helps to develop body movement and power for each individual technique. *This is very 'old school' karate!*

We have a moving and combination section, that is traditionally Karate in its method. Movements are done in stance steps and are linear in direction. This section develops co-ordination and techniques better suited to movement. *This practice method is found in most, if not all Karate schools.*

Finally we have sections incorporating foot shifting, body shifting, and body rotation. These sections teach students how to shuffle, how to shift their body for either defence or attack, and how to rotate the body for power and direction change. These movement methods are not usually found in Shotokan Karate systems.

Each grading or belt has specific techniques that have been selected to give the student the skills required to progress to the next level.

Kihon is also practiced with punching bags, kick shields, and target mits, to ensure power is present. Through impacting a target, students can also feel if there is an error in their technique, and can better judge their body positioning to deliver a more powerful blow in self-defence.

Typically we will spend 5 to 10 minutes on impact exercises during class. As it requires greater effort to impact a kick shield than to perform a technique into thin air, this strengthens the body and builds stamina.

We also practice our foundation basics with weights to strengthen our key muscles.

## **KATA (Patterns or forms)**

Kata is a series of movements performed in a set sequence.

Kata has been in martial arts for hundreds of years. Many Shotokan Kata are directly based on Kata older than Karate itself.

The precise history of many Kata is unknown and subject to speculation and myth. Through much of the 1800's martial arts practice was banned in regions governed by Japan. During this time Kata was directly passed down from father to son or practiced by a brave few in secret gatherings. Written histories and records were not kept due to fear of persecution.

The majority of Shotokan Kata learned by coloured belt students are modified versions of Kata authored by "Yasutsune Itosu", one of Funakoshi's teachers in Okinawa, and are believed to be based on older Chinese Kata (hence some striking similarities between Karate styles). In the mid to late 1920's many of the Okinawan and Chinese Kata names were changed to the current Japanese names so that Karate would be more palatable to the mainland Japanese.

The number of Kata practiced varies from club to club. In Shotokan circles it is not unusual to have schools with as few as 15 or 16, but more common now is a total of around 26. At Tiger Spirit we currently have 20 in our grading syllabus and are expanding. With one exception, we practice all the Kata from Gichin Funakoshi's "Master Text" (Karate-Do Kyohan).

When the ban on martial arts was lifted, and Karate came out from the shadows, it is speculated that over 50 Kata were practiced in Okinawa. Gichin Funakoshi's "Master Text" only has instruction on 15 of these Kata, plus some Basic/Introductory Kata that he devised. Some schools see this book as the Shotokan Bible and only practice the kata it lists.

In 1948 various instructors from Japanese universities met and added another 11 Kata that were in common practice. The objective was to unify the teaching of these Kata, as different instructors had different teachings depending on who handed the Kata down to them. It is said that Funakoshi was present at these gatherings and approved.

Many of these Kata are documented in the "Best Karate" Series of books by Master Nakayama (A student of Funakoshi). Unfortunately Nakayama died before he could finish the last book of the series. Master Kanazawa (A former student of Nakayama) completed the reference documentation of these Kata in his book "Karate: The Complete Kata"

Students at Tiger Spirit start learning Kata at Yellow Belt (8<sup>th</sup> Kyu) in preparation for Orange Belt (7<sup>th</sup> Kyu). From that point on each belt has set Kata. Initially the Kata are basic, focusing on direction, posture, and coordination. As students' progress the technical demands of Kata become greater.

We don't start teaching Kata earlier than Yellow Belt because we have found that students retain technical deficiencies in the Kata.

Kata practice becomes a form of moving meditation. In order to do well the Karate practitioner must focus all their concentration on the current move. The past move has gone from existence, and the next move is still in the future. The student must be totally focused on now!

To excel at Kata, it must be practiced over and over for years and years, and even then it may not be totally perfect. Perfection in something as big as an advanced Kata is achieved by the execution of hundreds of little things done well. This teaches the Karate practitioner a valuable martial arts lesson... HUMILITY!

Kata are categorised into 3 levels. **Basic, Intermediate** and **Advanced**. At Tiger Spirit we have 5 basic level Kata in our syllabus. This is highly unusual in Shotokan Karate, but is not that unusual in other styles.

We have included these basic Kata to allow us more focus on the little details that can greatly improve a Karate practitioner's execution of Kata in the long term. Furthermore, the attention to detail on intermediate Kata is expected to be high when students eventually study them.

Most Shotokan schools start Kata at an earlier stage than we do, and some start Kata almost immediately. It may be as long as 1 year before an adult student learns their first Kata at our school. This may lead to the incorrect conclusion that we place very little emphasis on Kata. This could not be further from the truth!

One reason that we start Kata later than other schools is because we believe that students who have trained for some time will have a greater appreciation and understanding of Kata, and give Kata the respect it deserves. To a beginner, Kata is more than likely not what they are interested in learning at this point. It may seem to have little value as it doesn't have direct self-defence application. It may also be too demanding for the un-coordinated.

To compensate for starting Kata later, and having many basic Kata, most of our belts have more than one Kata per grading in order to "catch up". By the time students get to advanced Kata they are learning at same rank as students from many other schools.

To achieve the first level of black belt, a Tiger Spirit student must know a total of 14 Kata. For those who are interested, the following list is our Kata syllabus.....

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Belt</u>	<u>Kata</u>	
9 <sup>th</sup> Kyu	White - Black Tag	<i>No kata</i>	
8 <sup>th</sup> Kyu	Yellow	<i>No kata</i>	
7 <sup>th</sup> Kyu	Orange	Taikyoku Shodan	} BASIC KATA
6 <sup>th</sup> Kyu	Green	Taikyoku Nidan Taikyoku Sandan	
5 <sup>th</sup> Kyu	Blue	Heian Shodan Jo-No	
4 <sup>th</sup> Kyu	Brown	Heian Nidan	} INTERMEDIATE KATA
3 <sup>rd</sup> Kyu	Brown - 1 Black Tag	Heian Sandan Tekki Shodan	
2 <sup>nd</sup> Kyu	Brown - 2 Black Tags	Heian Yondan Tekki Nidan	
1 <sup>st</sup> Kyu	Brown - 3 Black Tags	Heian Godan Tekki Sandan	} ADVANCED KATA
1 <sup>st</sup> Dan	Black - 1 Stripe	Bassi Dai Hungetsu	} ADVANCED KATA
2 <sup>nd</sup> Dan	Black - 2 Stripes	Kanku Dai Jutte Empi	
3 <sup>rd</sup> Dan	Black -3 Stripes	Gankaku Jion Bassi Sho	

Note: Tekki Nidan and Tekki Sandan are considered Black belt Kata at many Shotokan schools. It is only in the past 20 years the Tekki Nidan has been considered an advanced Kata. Prior to this it was typically a 1<sup>st</sup> Kyu Kata in Karate schools around the world. Tekki Sandan was typically at 1<sup>st</sup> Dan.

## KUMITE (fighting exercise)

Before we go into detail about our fighting exercises it is important to mention one key aspect of Tiger Spirit. We are initially Non-contact.

This simply means that students do not hit or kick each other during training. Apart from teaching control, this makes for a safe learning environment. It also enables the practice of techniques that couldn't be done safely in a contact situation such as punches to the nose and attacks to the groin, throat and eyes.

We are different from traditional Shotokan in our execution of non-contact. Traditional schools completely execute an attack finishing in front of the target. In effect just missing the target, this is not what we do!

Our non-contact method requires that attacks **“stop”** before impact, so if the attack continued it would hit the opponent with force, not **“miss”**. This is to ensure that students learn where to place their bodies for maximum effectiveness when executing an attacking move. Furthermore, students are used to defending an attack at close or impacting range.

At later stages light controlled contact to the body (below the shoulders and above the belt) is permitted. This is to ensure that distancing is correct from attackers, and that defenders know beyond a doubt if their defence was adequate. In light controlled contact, the force is removed from the attack just before impact, and the attack stops upon touching. In effect a punch would be a high speed tap, not a hit!

Regardless of non-contact or light controlled contact, students wear protective gear to shield each other.

The most common fighting practice is Jiyu Kumite (Free fighting). Although it is called free fighting, rules apply for safety. The term 'Free Fighting' implies that the students are free in their movement and not limited to set steps routines.

In our club we typically spend 15 minutes of the general class on Jiyu Kumite. This usually consists of 10 minutes of drills to hone our skills or develop new skills, and 5 minutes of Kumite practice. Kumite drills consist of combinations, movements or strategies that may not be covered in other section of karate training, thus ensuring a well-rounded and capable student.

Apart from free fighting, we have all the step fighting methods of development that are traditional to Karate. We also have several types of step methods that are not traditional, and some methods are unique to our school.

Many fighting exercises in Karate are set to a template. For example the attacker may have a set amount of predetermined movements or number of attacks. Or the defender may have set limitations on movements. These template activities are designed to hone precise attacking and defensive skills in a safe and controlled environment.

All set training exercises in our syllabus are designed to lead to the next level, or compliment other exercise at the same level. They may have direct self-defence application, or they may be developing motor skills or co-ordination for later use in other Kumite sections.

To note the purpose and benefit of each of the exercises in detail would make for extremely heavy reading. The following list is an overview of our Kumite related exercises in our grading syllabus, with a brief description.

### **Ippon Kumite (One Step)**

Attacker: One lunging attack with a single step

Defender: Defence starting from standing position

### **Sanbon Kumite (Three Step)**

Attacker: Three lunging attacks.

Defender: Various actions depending on Belt Level

### **Gohon Kumite (Five Step)**

Attacker: Five lunging attacks.

Defender: Various actions depending on Belt Level

### **Kashi Ippon Kumite (Attack and Counter Attack One Step)**

Attacker: Single step lunging attack, then evade and counter defenders lunging counter attack.

Defender: Defence from standing position and counter with a lunging action forcing the attacker to evade

### **Kiso Kumite (Fundamental Kumite)**

Attacker: Shuffling forward twice with rapid attacks

Defender: Shuffle backwards twice and position for a shuffling counter.

### **Happo Ippon Kumite (8 Direction One Step fighting)**

Same as 1 step except the attacker can come from different directions.

### **Kaeme Happo Ippon Kumite**

As above but defender starts from a fighting position.

### **Kaeme Ippon Kumite**

Same as one step fighting but both participants start in a fighting position

### **Zen No Zen**

Attacking your attacker before he/she has finished attacking you!

### **Jiyu Ippon Kumite (Free One Step fighting)**

Same as one step fighting, except moving in fighting positions.

### **Okuri Jiyu Ippon Kumite (Follow-Through Free One Step)**

Same as above but the attacker follows the defender with a second attack.

### **Multiple Attack**

More than one attacker to a single defender

### **Jiyu Kumite (Free Fighting)**

Free fighting between two people.

### **Self Defence**

Getting out of, or defending various grabs.

*Further information about Dojo Kun, our grading syllabus, and our belt system are available from our information stands in class, or via our web site*

[www.tigerspirit.com.au](http://www.tigerspirit.com.au)