

Principles of Judo

What is Judo?

Judo, like Karate, is a martial art that originated in Japan. Judo is an offshoot of *Ju-Jitsu*, which is the martial art practiced by the Japanese *samurai*, or nobility. Because samurai wore armor and carried weapons, Ju-Jitsu focused less on punching and kicking and more on holds, throws, and trips.

The founder of Judo, Jigoro Kano was a master of Ju-Jitsu who disliked the formality and violence attached to the ancient martial art. In 1882, he began teaching a new martial art form called Kodokan Judo. This art form was less about elaborate, stylized forms and more about simple, easy movements that allowed the practitioner to control his opponent in a way that injuries could be all but avoided, without sacrificing the practitioner's safety.

Judo is now one of the world's most popular martial arts and an accepted sport in practically every country in the world. Judo has been a part of the Olympic Games since 1964 and was the first Asian martial art allowed in Olympic competition.

What are the principles of Judo?

"Judo" translates as "the gentle way" or "the soft way". It is a martial art of control, cooperation, and courtesy to your opponent. Judo involves using your opponent's strength and momentum against them, causing them to trip or fall to the ground. The intention is not to harm your opponent, but to control them without injuring them.

The guiding principle of judo is "giving way" or "yielding". Students of judo are not taught to oppose force with force, but with gentleness. This teaching applies to daily life as easily as the dojo: a Judoka (practitioner of Judo) avoids conflict when possible and deflects it when avoidance is not an option.

Judo teaches that the highest ideal is perfect balance in all things. A balanced Judoka cannot be moved or controlled; only when one is off-balance is one vulnerable. Students learn to be courteous to opponents and to treat others with respect in order to maintain balance both in the dojo and in their daily lives.

In class, we focus on the "3 C's": Courtesy, Cooperation, and Control. These concepts help to keep the children safe in class, but they also teach the children valuable skills they will need in life.

Is Judo safe?

In many ways, Judo is one of the safest of all martial arts. The emphasis in Judo is not on striking an opponent to win, but on safely controlling a match so no one is hurt. The first thing

all students learn is how to fall safely, so that when they fall in a match they are not hurt. This is a useful skill in daily life, as well, since children do tend to fall a great deal and knowing how to fall without injury will save Mom and Dad many a sleepless night!

Judo students do practice on each other more than students of Karate. This is necessary: unless you have practiced a movement on another person, you haven't really learned it. This is why judo has so much emphasis on safety, courtesy, and good falls. By keeping a 'safety first' attitude, we can allow students to practice with each other without getting hurt.

How is Judo different from Karate or Tae Kwon Do?

Judo is primarily about grappling, holding, and throwing an opponent, rather than punching or kicking them. Judo focuses on controlling an opponent, getting them off-balance, and rendering them harmless without injuring them. Karate or Tae Kwon Do focus on striking an opponent with enough force to injure or incapacitate them. All of these martial arts are self-defense techniques, but they have very different attitudes. Rather than meeting violence with more violence, Judo is about meeting force with softness and gentleness.

What does all this mean?

At My Gym, we don't want Judo to be about fighting. Instead, we want Judo to be a way of thinking and living, a culture to help children develop courtesy, confidence, and patience. We want children to embrace the Gentle Way. To help with this, we work extensively on our "3 C's" and discuss the principles and ideals of Judo in order to teach the children that Judo is not just a sport: it's a way of life!