



*Jay  
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# Family Karate Center

## **Choosing The Right Martial Arts School For You And Your Family**

By

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# Choosing the Right School for Your Family

## Introductory Letter

Thank you for your inquiry concerning karate lessons for yourself or your children. Training in the martial arts can produce very valuable benefits. I can attest to this personally in my over twenty years of experience. I hope that your path in the martial arts is as fulfilling as mine has been!

I have included for you a couple of key articles that will help you along the path of finding the best martial arts school for yourself and your family. First, you will find a wonderful “Four Step Process” for choosing the best school available! Second, you will see the tips, guidelines, and pitfalls that you want to avoid when looking around for a school.

Sincerely,



Jay Haynes  
Owner / Chief Instructor  
Family Karate Center  
Colorado Springs, CO

# **Choosing the Right School for Your Family**

## **Your Four-Step Process for Choosing a Karate School!**

### **Step One:**

When choosing a school, you should clearly understand exactly what you want for yourself or your child to gain from training in the martial arts. Is it to have fun? Is it for self-defense? Is it for personal development? Most parents of children who train in the martial arts agree that the martial arts are actually part of their children's personal educational development. A good, high quality, professional martial arts school will accomplish this in a very real way.

### **Step Two:**

Recognize that picking out a school is really simply choosing a martial arts instructor. Because of this, it is very important to visit every school available to you and watch the instructors work with children the same age as yours. Martial arts schools are as different as automobiles because every instructor is different. If you go to buy a car, you wouldn't just pick the first one you saw. You would test drive several before choosing the one that best suits your situation and your family. The same is true with martial arts schools. Don't be swayed by claims of black belt levels (called degrees), tournament wins or styles of martial arts. The only "style" that should matter to you is the teaching style of the instructor! How your child will respond to him or her is what matters the most.

### **Step Three:**

Trust your instincts! A professional school will be very clean, will have a family atmosphere, will have a very positive environment, and be well kept and neat. You should feel very comfortable in the building, and with the instructors and staff.

Most of the time, as a result, the martial arts school you choose may not end up being the closest to your house. This should not matter, however, when it comes to the safety of you and your children! An extra ten-minute drive can make a world of difference in your satisfaction with a school.

When you first walk in to a martial arts school, trust your first impression. A professional martial arts school is clean, well lit, smells good, is spacious and has good, positive, family-oriented atmosphere. The mirrors should be polished, the workout surface should be clean, and the locker rooms should be in good order. On the wall you might see pictures of students. Look carefully at the picture boards. You can tell a tremendous amount about a martial arts school and its emphasis by examining the picture boards!

#### **Step Four:**

Lastly, there should absolutely be an area for parents and other family members to sit and enjoy the classes. Beware of any school that does not allow you to watch the classes in action, especially as a parent looking for your kids. You should have a real concern about a martial arts school that does not allow parents watch the instructors work with the children. The typical response that an instructor might say is that they don't want the children to be distracted by spectators. The reality is the instructor doesn't want to be held accountable by the parents.

On the other hand, it is my opinion that truly professional instructors will encourage or practically insist that you stay and be involved. I know that I do! Professional instructors know that once you have seen the positive impact they are giving to your child, that you will be even more supportive of the school, and of your child's learning process.

I feel that as a martial arts instructor, when I encourage a parent to take the time to observe their children in class, I am doing the parent and the child a great service. In our busy world, it is far too easy to simply drop off the kids and not be involved enough to really share the experience of learning new things. I have also found that children whose parents are in class with them do much better in the martial arts and are more well adjusted than the drop off kids. Children, more than anything else, want their parents to be interested in what they are doing. Martial arts, taught by a professional instructor, has a series of "victories" for each child ranging from a new belt or stripe on their belt to other forms of recognition for the child. That recognition is greatly enhanced when the parent is there to share in the pride.

Consider your child's professional martial arts instructor as a part of the whole team whose goal it is to instill a strong sense of self-esteem, confidence, discipline, and respect in your children. As a parent, your presence in that classroom is critical to the success of the team.

# Choosing the Right School for Your Family

## Jay Haynes' Guidelines for Choosing a School

As I said before, it is really important to pay attention to the details when looking at a karate school. No matter how closely you are paying attention, however, there are certain "secrets" in the martial arts industry that you need to be aware of before you join any program!

Please take a minute to read through this list of questions that every individual who is thinking about training should ask his/her potential instructor:

### **Safety**

Safety should *always* be the number one concern above all else when your child is involved in any activity. Please make sure that your instructor is certified by the Americans Coaches Certification program (ACEP) which is standard for every coach in any sport. Is your instructor certified in First Aid and CPR and capable of handling emergency medical situations? Also, make sure that the instructor has at least a basic knowledge and training in sport kinesiology. When watching classes, do the instructors allow students to behave in a manner that could be inherently dangerous? Lastly, as a major safety concern, decide for yourself how safe the surface used for training is. Is it a padded non-adhesive surface, or a hard wood or cement floor? If you or your child accidentally fell down or was thrown to the ground, would he/she be injured?

### **Teaching Style**

The instructors should teach in a style that is fun, exciting, educational, and positive. Students should learn respect and courtesy. They should never be downgraded especially in a negative manner and especially in front of class, which would be damaging to their self esteem. Positive reinforcement techniques are the only acceptable teaching techniques that I would allow for myself or my child, and should be the only ones acceptable for you or your child as well. Karate classes can be taught with discipline and at the same time in an enjoyable environment. You should settle for nothing less!

### **Technical Knowledge (What is Taught!)**

A complete karate school should be able to teach all aspects of the martial arts including: weaponry (Kobudo), empty hand forms training (Kata), sparring (Kumite), as well as self defense. A true Karate instructor should be always trying to develop the positive qualities in the student: self confidence, self esteem, discipline, etc. Different children grow better with different incentives, therefore unless your school teaches what excites your child, you are wasting your money. Most of all, it is important that the school emphasizes the *defensive nature of karate*. Many schools teach a very combat aggressive approach. Especially if you are looking for your children, the karate school you choose emphasize when and where your child should do karate and when and where they shouldn't. This is very important!

### **Rank (Who is Teaching!)**

The Chief Instructor should be at least a 4th degree black belt in order to run a school. At the Family Karate Center we feel that a minimum of this experience and rank is necessary in order to provide the excellent instruction we are known for across the country. The instructor should be able to readily give you a phone number to call to verify the authenticity of any rank certificates displayed in the school. Also, many schools will have lower ranking instructors teaching class. For example, having green (novice, 1-2 years of training) belts teaching white belts (beginners, under 1 year of training), brown belts (intermediates, 2-3 years of training) teaching green belts, black belts teaching brown belts, and the owner only teaching the black belts is very common. Try to find a karate school where Black Belts teach all of the classes. At the very least, make sure you know exactly who will be teaching you and your children. Lastly, do not be unnecessarily swayed by high-ranking black belt rankings. The twenty-two year old 20th Degree Black Belt is probably more interested in pumping his own ego than in developing his students' technique. Most reputable martial arts organizations have time and age requirements for black belt ranks. A young kid with a high-ranking black belt is usually only fooling himself!

### **Tuition and Other Fees**

Some schools quote you a low monthly rate, but then charge you an outrageous price for advancing in rank. In fact many schools charge several hundred dollars for promotion to black belt!

On the other hand, many karate schools will require (or highly encourage) you to sign a long-term contract as a commitment to your training. Unfortunately, this is more the standard rather than the norm. The contract mentality damages an instructor's customer service. Once you have signed a long-term contract, the instructor has no incentive to make sure you and your family are happy with the instruction. You have already agreed to pay for several years. Why should they worry that you are going to quit? In fact, if you do, their job will be much easier and you will still have to pay!

If you do sign a contract, absolutely make sure that you have a legal way out of the agreement without a high-price early exit fee. Certainly it goes without saying that you should have an attorney review any contract before you sign it. The best thing to do is to go with a karate school that collects on a month-to-month basis. They understand that customer service will be vital to the continued success of their school. Lastly, please know that in many states, there are laws that govern the implementation of long-term contracts in the fitness industry. Make sure you know what they are.

As an educated consumer, you should be wary of other fees that can be charged as well. Some good questions to ask are:

- ❑ How much do they charge for belt tests? Do those increase with the rank testing (are they graduated fees)?
- ❑ How often do belt tests take place?
- ❑ Will I be required to buy karate uniforms and how much are they?
- ❑ What other items / equipment will be required to be purchased for training and how much do they cost?
- ❑ What “membership” fees will I be required to pay?
- ❑ What “start up” fees will I be required to pay?
- ❑ What “insurance” fees will I be required to pay?
- ❑ What annual “association” dues will I be required to pay?
- ❑ Do I have to sign a contract?
- ❑ Will I be required to sign another contract in the future?
- ❑ Will my tuition increase with that new contract, and if so how much? What are the upgrade “price points” for each future contract that I will be required to sign? In other words, how much will my tuition go up with each new contract?

### **Other Value Added Services**

The karate school you choose should emphasize many other positive goals besides simply punching and kicking. Ask the instructor of the school what other events and activities they have available besides Martial Arts training. Some different things that many schools do may include things like:

- ❑ *Awards ceremonies* for getting good grades, keeping your room clean, using your please and thank you’s, making your bed, doing what your parents ask you to do, and more!
- ❑ *Personalized parent/teacher conferences* tracking each student’s progress through our unique program.
- ❑ Nationally acclaimed “*Good Touch / Bad Touch*” and “*Child Abduction Prevention Programs.*”
- ❑ *Sleepovers* on Mother’s Day, Father’s Day and New Year’s Eve.
- ❑ *A Halloween Costume Party* every year
- ❑ A “*Karate Youth Club*” for middle / high school students to keep them off the streets and in a positive peer environment.
- ❑ *Positive karate tournaments* and other competitions.
- ❑ *Karate Summer Day Camps* for kids interested in learning more.
- ❑ Many more activities and events specifically geared towards developing you and your children in the most positive way possible!

# **Choosing the Right School for Your Family**

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, it is important that you see for yourself the school, the instructors, and the classes your family will be participating in. If you are not allowed to watch classes or see how the instructors interact with the students, do not join the school. Also, talk to the students and their parents about the program. Ask them why they like the school, and determine for yourself if their reasons for training are similar to your own! If the other students and parents are there for the same reasons that you are looking for, then that is a really good sign.

Good luck, and as always, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me!

You may reach at (719) 574-7557 or via email at [jhaynes@familykaratecenter.com](mailto:jhaynes@familykaratecenter.com).



# **About the Author**

## **Jay Haynes**

Kyoshi Jay Haynes was born and raised in Colorado Springs where his parents and family still live. He graduated from Palmer High School in 1985.

Kyoshi Haynes has been training in the martial arts since 1982. Having started his career in TaeKwonDo, he now holds several black belts in many styles including Kung Fu, Japanese Karate-do, Luzviminda Arnis, and Okinawan Karate-Jitsu. He is currently working on black belts in several other styles including Jujutsu and Kobujutsu.

Kyoshi Haynes holds two Bachelors Degrees in Business Administration (Marketing and Finance) from the University of Colorado. He graduated in 1989 in Boulder, CO. His strong belief in gaining a high quality education has made the Family Karate Center and its programs a highly recommended facility by teachers, counselors, medical professionals and social workers for years. Kyoshi Haynes has owned or managed karate schools full-time since 1990. Now with over 500 students in Colorado Springs, Kyoshi Haynes is recognized as one of the top traditional karate instructors in the state of Colorado.

Kyoshi Haynes has held several important positions in the martial arts community including General Secretary of the Colorado State Regional Sports Organization for the USA National Karate-do Federation, the National Governing Body for the sport of Karate, as recognized by the United States Olympic Committee in 1995. As a certified coach, he was the official 2001 Team Colorado Head Coach and represented all Colorado athletes in the USA-NKF National Karate Championships in Houston, TX on July 9-15, 2001. He is a League Certified Referee for sport of traditional karate (recognized by the United States Olympic Committee's National Governing Body for the sport of traditional karate) and has been actively involved in the movement to continue the elevation of the sport of traditional karate in the Colorado Springs area as well as worldwide. Kyoshi Haynes is a lifetime member of the Olympic Family through the USA-NKF, and has been since the inception of the USA-NKF in 1994. He has served as the karate commissioner for the Rocky Mountain State Games, the State Games of the West, and the State Games of America.

Kyoshi Haynes is also very active in the Colorado Springs community performing several community service projects on a regular basis. These include womens' self-defense seminars, child abduction prevention programs, parent educational clinics, community fund-raisers, food drives, anti-gang activities, corporate sponsorships of worthy events and more!

For more information about Kyoshi Jay Haynes, please visit the Family Karate Center's website at [www.familykaratecenter.com](http://www.familykaratecenter.com).