

Safeguarding in the Martial Arts: Safe Practice

Martial Arts are activities where safe practice is essential to help prevent injury. Children* are particularly vulnerable as they are still developing mentally and physically, so training methods need to be modified as described below. (*also includes Adults at Risk). At Soaring Eagle Karate we take safe practice very seriously, as such the following are ways we ensure safe practice for all.

1. Warm Ups

All activities should first include a thorough warm up which is appropriate for the activity taking place. To help reduce the risk of injury, specific attention should be paid to those muscle groups that will be used during later activity.

2. Training involving throwing, grappling and strangling

The risks include but are not limited to: falling on unsuitable surfaces; landing on the head; damage to the joints from locks; strangulation.

Safe practice should include, but is not limited to:

- (a) Checking the matted area for suitability, particularly where the mats have been joined.
- (b) Checking that there are no hard surfaces or sharp/hard objects around the matted area.
- (c) Having an experience instructor who will ensure that children are not taught to use locks, throws or strangles which will cause injury.

3. Training involving strikes, punches and kicks

The risks include but are not limited to: concussion (brain injury) from heavy blows to the head; damage to internal organs and joints from heavy blows; injury from inappropriate stretching and other exercises.

- There are some key points to consider in this section, particularly around head contact for under 16s.
- Head contact is permissible for all children, however, the following should be taken into account
- Only light, controlled contact is allowed during sparring
- Protective equipment (gumshield and gloves compulsory) should be worn during sparring and competition
- During training, care must be taken to supervise children to ensure correct control is maintained.
- Sparring should always occur on the matted area of the dojo
- If a head injury occurs, first aid procedures should be followed by a trained first aider

- (a) Avoiding excessive stretching and exercises such as press-ups on the knuckles or hitting heavy bags; the joints of children are still developing and can be damaged by these exercises.

4. Training involving weapons

Safe practice should include but is not limited to:

- (a) No live blades (sharp or otherwise) in the training hall when children are present
- (b) Safe protocols for the use of training weapons by children
- (c) Good supervision at all times by Instructors

Above all, safe practice means having a suitably qualified and experienced instructor who will ensure that children are not exposed to the above risks and who can make a training session enjoyable whilst maintaining the discipline essential to learning a Martial Art.