

USAMA Code of Ethics

The USAMA Code of Ethics represents sound practices that enhance student trust and confidence in a martial arts school. This Code also represents standards for martial arts school accreditation by the USAMA. Martial arts schools that meet these standards and complete application procedures will be accredited by the USAMA.

To be accredited by the USAMA, a martial arts school or organization affirms that it meets and will abide by the following standards:

Certification & Accreditation

An accredited martial arts school or organization agrees to:

A. Have been operational (actively teaching martial arts) for at least the most recent 12 months, unless the owner/chief instructor previously operated another martial arts school with an eligible record (one that qualifies for USAMA accreditation).

B. Fulfill all licensing and certification requirements; provide all license and certification information upon application for USAMA accreditation; and provide periodic updates upon request of USAMA. The school owner and all instructors must have their ranks and instructor licenses certified through the USAMA directly or by a recognized accrediting organization. For a complete list of recognized accrediting organizations, please contact USAMA headquarters.

In order to receive USAMA certification of rank/instructor license, the following criteria must be met:

- Provide a detailed background of your training history
- Provide rank documentation from your direct instructor. Your certificate *must* have a live signature or hanko (seal) on it. You may submit a scanned copy, but no digital certificates shall be accepted. No organizational certificates except those issued by a USAMA recognized accrediting organization shall be accepted for verification.
- If your documentation is not accepted, you have the opportunity to test before the USAMA Board of Directors or a designated panel of representatives for the rank and/or title you are looking to be certified as.
- Letters of recommendation from students and other instructors are welcome.
- If you have already received certification from a USAMA recognized accrediting organization, you automatically qualify for equivalent certification through us provided all other terms of accreditation are successfully met.

C. All school owners must submit to a federal background check. All instructors and staff at the martial arts school must also be CPR and First Aid certified, and provide documentation of such at the request of USAMA.

D. In its relationship with USAMA:

- Meet all applicable standards within this Code of Ethics
- Cooperate with USAMA's activities and efforts to promote voluntary self-regulation within the martial arts community
- Honor any settlements, agreements or decisions reached as an outcome of a USAMA dispute resolution process
- Complete the required application and pay all monetary obligations to USAMA in a timely manner

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Quality of Instruction

An accredited martial arts school or organization agrees to:

A. Be upfront and open with potential students about the type of instruction offered at the school and whether the primary focus is open martial arts, traditional martial arts, modern self defense or a combination thereof. Failure to disclose this information or misrepresentation of such shall be immediate grounds for dismissal from the USAMA and the revocation of any and all certification and licenses.

B. Designation Guidelines - In determining the primary focus of your school and how you shall be classified by the USAMA, the following criteria must be considered. It is understood that there may be reasonable crossover between guidelines, and you shall be classified according to the designation that most fits your school.

- **Open Martial Arts**
 - The students and/or instructor(s) regularly compete on an open circuit (ISKA, NASKA, NBL or any like organization at a state, national or international level)
 - Kumite (Fighting) is taught based upon open point fighting rules, continuous sparring, kickboxing or MMA
 - Weapons and kata (poomsae, forms, patterns, etc.) are taught in a non-traditional manner and may include tricking, music, etc.
 - Focus of martial arts instruction in a non-traditional manner (Classes structure around games, cardio, etc.)
 - Any school that refers to itself as a “club” or “gym”
 - Students and instructors often may not wear a traditional uniform during training

- **Traditional Martial Arts**
 - All students and instructors usually wear a traditional uniform during training
 - Kumite is taught based upon traditional rule sets (WKF, WTF, AAU, Kyokushin, etc.)
 - Weapons and kata (poomsae, forms, patterns, etc.) are taught in a traditional manner, defined as generally having deep stances, limited use of kiai/kiap, no tricking, etc.
 - The instructor has a verifiable lineage to the founder of the traditional system they teach
 - A first generation instructor (founder) may not be excluded from this category and may be classified as a traditional martial artist if they can provide a verifiable lineage to the founder of the traditional systems they studied in the process of founding their own system
 - A first generation instructor (founder) must be certified by the USAMA or a recognized accrediting organization if they wish to be categorized as a traditional martial arts school
 - The school is always referred to as a dojo, dojang, school, etc.
 - Classes are highly structured, and may feature various rituals and meditation

- **Modern Self Defense**
 - Students and instructors may or may not wear a traditional uniform during training
 - Classes may be informal and center around realistic attack scenarios
 - Choreographed self defense techniques (combinations, one steps, etc.) may be taught but students must also engage in freestyle, random defense (randori)
 - Instructor must teach both standing and ground techniques
 - Throughout the curriculum up to the equivalent of Shodan (first degree black belt), students must learn and be able to demonstrate a *minimum* of ten (10) defenses from the

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following empty-hand attacks for a minimum total of 130 kyu/gup rank empty-handed self defense techniques:

- Wrist grabs, front choke, rear choke, side headlock/neck lock, single lapel grab, double lapel grab, shoulder grab, bicep grab, straight punch, hook punch, bear hug, rear naked choke, overhead strike (shomenuchi)
- Prior to reaching the rank of Shodan (first degree black belt) or its equivalent, the student must also learn and demonstrate a *minimum* of five (5) weapon disarms from the following attacks for a total of 60 weapon disarms:
 - Knife
 - Straight stab, overhand stab, underhand stab, inside slash, outside slash, rear hostage hold
 - Hand Gun
 - Front head, side head, back head, chest, stomach, center of back, ribs
- In addition to the choreographed weapon disarms above, the students must also engage in freestyle, random attacks (randori)
- Adrenaline training must be discussed when discussing attack scenarios
- Schools wishing to be classified as a “Modern Self Defense School” must be personally evaluated by the USAMA Board of Directors or a designee. We regard the teaching of self defense with the utmost scrutiny because as instructors, we become responsible for the lives of our students. As an accrediting organization, the USAMA must be confident in the techniques and training methods used by the school in order to stand behind them
 - Schools teaching a combat-based system (Krav Maga, etc.) are not automatically classified as a “Modern Self Defense School” and must also go through the evaluation process to determine if the training methods are up to USAMA standards for classification

*Schools that teach Judo, Yudo, Brazilian Jiu Jitsu or similar styles will be designed as either Open or Traditional, based upon the intent of the instructor and the degree of classical study taught in the school.

School Advertising

An accredited martial arts school or organization agrees to:

- A.** Follow federal, state/provincial and local advertising laws.
- B.** Abide by the USAMA Code of Advertising. Supply, upon request, substantiation for advertising and selling claims. Correct advertising and selling practices, when recommended by USAMA.
 - Do not include negative comments regarding a nearby martial arts school
 - Do not try to slander or degrade another martial arts instructor or style
 - If you cannot promote your school without degrading your competitors, you do not qualify for accreditation
- C.** Cooperate with USAMA self-regulatory programs for the resolution of advertising disputes.
- D.** Use the USAMA name and logos in accordance with USAMA policy.
- E.** Avoid misleading students by creating the false impression of rank, certification, sponsorship, endorsement, popularity, trustworthiness, product quality or martial arts school size through the misuse of logos, trustmarks, pictures, testimonials, or other means.

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Honesty

An accredited martial arts school or organization agrees to:

- A. Make known all material facts in both written and verbal representations, remembering that misrepresentation may result not only from direct statements but by omitting or obscuring relevant facts such as ranks, certifications, licenses, history in martial arts, etc.
- B. Ensure that any written materials are readily available, clear, accurate and complete.

Transparency

An accredited martial arts school or organization agrees to:

- A. Openly identify the nature, location, and ownership of the martial arts school, and clearly disclose all policies, guarantees and procedures that bear on a student's decision to enroll.
- B. Upon request, provide USAMA with all information required to evaluate compliance with USAMA standards. This may include, but is not limited to martial arts school name, address and contact information; names and background of principals; references; licensing and/or professional accreditation; and a complete description of the nature of the martial arts school.
- C. Clearly disclose to students:
 - Direct and effective means to contact the martial arts school
 - Terms of any written contract
 - Any restrictions or limitations imposed
 - The martial arts school's return/refund policy
 - Any recurring commitment into which the student may be entering, including information on how future billing will occur

Honor Promises

An accredited martial arts school or organization agrees to:

- A. Fulfill contracts signed and agreements reached.
- B. Honor representations by correcting mistakes as quickly as possible.
- C. Abide by all written agreements and verbal representations.

Be Responsive

An accredited martial arts school or organization agrees to:

- A. Promptly respond to all complaints forwarded by USAMA by:
 1. Resolving the complaint directly with the complainant and notifying USAMA, or
 2. Providing USAMA with a response that USAMA determines:
 - Is professional,
 - Addresses all of the issues raised by the complainant,
 - Includes appropriate evidence and documents supporting the martial arts school position
 - Explains why any relief sought by the complainant cannot or should not be granted.

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B. Make a good faith effort to resolve disputes, which includes mediation if requested by USAMA. Other dispute resolution options, including arbitration, may be recommended by USAMA when other efforts to resolve a dispute have failed. USAMA may consider a martial arts school's willingness to participate in recommended dispute resolution options in determining compliance with these standards.

C. Comply with any settlements, agreements or decisions reached as an outcome of a USAMA dispute resolution process.

D. Cooperate with USAMA in efforts to eliminate the underlying cause of patterns of student complaints that are identified by USAMA.

Safeguard Privacy

An accredited martial arts school or organization agrees to:

A. Protect any data collected against mishandling and fraud, collect personal information only as needed, and respect the preferences of students regarding the use of their information.

B. Respect Privacy

Martial arts schools conducting e-commerce agree to disclose on their Web site the following:

- What information they collect,
- With whom it is shared,
- How it can be corrected,
- How it is secured,
- How policy changes will be communicated, and;
- How to address concerns over misuse of personal data.

C. Honor Student Preferences

Martial arts schools agree to respect student preferences regarding method of contact, as well as the use of their image or likeness and agree to remedy the underlying cause of any failure to do so.

Embody Integrity

An accredited martial arts school or organization agrees to:

Avoid involvement, by the martial arts school or its principals, in activities that reflect unfavorably on, or otherwise adversely affect the public image of USAMA or its accredited martial arts schools.

Effective 06/10/2015