

# United States Martial Arts Association

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## USMA MARTIAL ARTS PROMOTION TIMES

Our United States Martial Arts Association is the largest unified Martial Arts association in the world as far as we know. We now have over 1.100 different Martial Arts registered and recognized. New Ulster Steel Fighting is the latest (April, 2010).

Our entire USMA rank system is based on two vastly important principles (1) We desire to show respect to every sincere Martial Artist, of any race, creed or country. Also (2) We have an overwhelming desire to be fair, to give rank and credit where rank and credit is due. This is in line with Plato's concept of justice. We have tried to eliminate politics completely from Martial Arts ranks.

### **HERE IS A ROUGH OUTLINE OF WHAT MARTIAL ARTS RANK YOU SHOULD HAVE**

In the detailed chart on page three of this essay, you will find more details concerning time in grade for each rank. But first, here is a rough outline of what rank you should have.

If you have trained in the Martial Arts for three years, YOU SHOULD BE 1<sup>st</sup> DAN.

If you have trained in the Martial Arts for five years, YOU SHOULD BE 2<sup>nd</sup> DAN.

If you have trained in the Martial Arts for nine years, YOU SHOULD BE 3<sup>rd</sup> DAN.

If you have trained in the Martial Arts for 14 years, YOU SHOULD BE 4<sup>th</sup> DAN.

If you have trained in the Martial Arts for 20 years, YOU SHOULD BE 5<sup>th</sup> DAN.

If you have trained in the Martial Arts for 28 years, YOU SHOULD BE 6<sup>th</sup> DAN.

If you have trained in the Martial Arts for 37 years, YOU SHOULD BE 7<sup>th</sup> DAN.

If you have trained in the Martial Arts for 47 years, YOU SHOULD BE 8<sup>th</sup> DAN.

Promotions to 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Dan are not made only on the basis of time. Each promotion to these ranks is individually considered, often by our Board of Governors.

**What does this mean to you?** It means that at last you have a chance to be treated fairly by a large international Martial Arts association to obtain the Budo ranks you truly deserve. **Have you been training for 35 years, and teaching your own club for the past 20, only to have your rank held down to 3<sup>rd</sup> Dan?** If you have, that's not unusual. Join the Club! But really, if you are a **teacher**, why are you still holding student's rank? Let me assure you that in Japan, with this kind of background you would be 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> Dan. I lived in Japan for two years, and am quite familiar with their rank traditions.

Remember that the above is only a guideline for you. Often, promotions may be made for less time in the arts, depending upon your individual record. Your achievements and effort are unique. You are one of a kind, and we will study your record carefully to determine exactly where you should be.

**How will we determine that you are a bona fide Martial Artist?** First, until you are proven to be a liar, we will presume that you are honest! I know this is unusual, but please read my essay, “Martial Artists Aren’t Liars!” which is on our USMA website: [www.mararts.org](http://www.mararts.org) . This essay will give you our approach to trusting our fellow Martial Artists.

To be evaluated for registration or promotion in Martial Arts rank, we expect you to become a USMA member. To do this, download a USMA form from our website and send it to us with the \$50 Life Membership fee. Send the form and fee to us at: USMA, 8011 Mariposa Avenue, Citrus Heights, CA 95610, and include the resume described below.

**Your Martial Arts Resume.** In addition to our trust in you, if we do not know personally of your experience and your record, we expect you to give us a one page resume of your Martial Arts career. This should include, but is not limited to: (1) your age, (2) the year you started Martial Arts training, (3) the art you first practiced, and all the other arts you have studied and the year you started each one, (4) the names of your first and other teachers and the years you studied with them, (5) your competitive record, (6) your highest rank in each of your arts and the year you were promoted to that rank, (7) how many champions at any level you have coached, (8) the number and names of clubs you have started, (9) name of your present club, (10) whether or not you are now the coach of your club, (11) the year you first started coaching your own Martial Arts club, and (12) a description of any special achievements you have in the Martial Arts such as creating books and DVDs, or founding your own system.

From this resume, we will determine, using the above outline and the other materials contained in this essay, what ranks you should have, and will immediately send you a USMA registration and promotion form giving you a chance to have your ranks registered and also to be promoted in Martial Arts rank.

## **DEFINITIONS OF THE DIFFERENT MARTIAL ARTS RANKS**

The USMA accepts the tradition, common around the world, that ranks may be described by words as well as numbers. Here is a brief outline of the traditional description of the ranks. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Dan (Step or degree) are **students of the Martial Arts**. A 3<sup>rd</sup> Dan may be a skillful student, but he is still a student. These players are taught, usually, only the “shoden,” the beginning knowledge.

4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Dan are Renshi, **skillful technicians or fighters**. They are now taught the “chuden,” the advanced techniques.

6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Dan are **teachers** of Budo. Sometimes the term “Kyoshi” is used for these two ranks.

8<sup>th</sup> Dan is considered to be above teacher and below master. An 8<sup>th</sup> Dan is often called **an important person of Budo**. This rank is usually the final or terminal rank for most Martial Artists. Sometimes the term “Hanshi” is used for this rank.

9<sup>th</sup> Dan is called **Master**.

10<sup>th</sup> Dan is called **Grandmaster**. In our USMA, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Dan are exceptional Budoka. They have fulfilled, to some degree, the criteria set down by the USMA for promotion to Master and Grandmaster. There is also a tradition in some arts that the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Dan are taught the “Okuden,” or “Hidden,” the secret techniques or knowledge.

## **TABLE OF MINIMUM AND AVERAGE TIME IN EACH MARTIAL ARTS RANK**

Our system is very traditional. It is quite similar to the system used in Japan for Judo, JuJitsu, Karate and many other arts. We consider that the key requirement for promotion is years of training. Based on this “years of training and service” concept, here is an outline of the times a martial Artist should serve in each black belt rank before being eligible for promotion, plus the times usually served. Note that the minimum time in grade for 2<sup>nd</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> Dan is always the same number of years as the dan grade held. In general, this is the system that is used, world-wide, to make Budo promotions.

<b>RANK</b>	<b>MINIMUM TIME TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR PROMOTION</b>	<b>USUAL TIME SPENT BEFORE PROMOTION</b>	<b>USUAL TOTAL TIME IN THE MARTIAL ARTS</b>	<b>EXAMPLE USING O-SENSEI’S CAREER</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> Dan	2 yrs training	3 yrs	3 yrs	3 yrs, total 3 (1951-1954)
2 <sup>nd</sup> Dan	1 yr, total 3	2 yrs	5 yrs	2 yrs, total 5 (1954-56)
3 <sup>rd</sup> Dan	2 yrs, total 5	3-4 yrs	8-9 yrs	3 yrs, total 8 (1956-59)
4 <sup>th</sup> Dan	3 yrs, total 8	4-5 yrs	12-14 yrs	4 yrs, total 12 (1959-63)
5 <sup>th</sup> Dan	4 yrs, total 12	5-6 yrs	17-20 yrs	7 yrs, total 19 (1963-70)
6 <sup>th</sup> Dan	5 yrs, total 17	6-8 yrs	23-28 yrs	3 yrs, total 22 (1970-73)
7 <sup>th</sup> Dan	6 yrs, total 23	7-9 yrs	30-37 yrs	7 yrs, total 30 (1973-81)
8 <sup>th</sup> Dan	7 yrs, total 30	8-10 yrs	38-47 yrs	8 yrs, total 38 (1981-89)
9 <sup>th</sup> Dan	8 yrs, total 38	9-11 yrs	47-55 yrs	5 yrs, total 43 (1989-94)
10 <sup>th</sup> Dan	9 yrs, total 47	10-15 yrs	56-65 yrs	11 yrs, total 54 (1994-05)

It should be understood that 8<sup>th</sup> Dan (Hachidan) is considered to be the terminal or final rank given to most Judoka. To be promoted to 9<sup>th</sup> Dan, Kudan, a Judoka must comply with the criteria noted in the USMA essay, “Criteria for Promotion to 9<sup>th</sup> Dan in Judo,” which is available on our USMA website.

**BATSUGUN OR INSTANTANEOUS PROMOTION.** There is also an important provision in Judo and many other arts for batsugun “instantaneous promotion.” Usually, batsugun is given for beating six of one’s own rank in a line-up contest without stopping. However, the concept of instantaneous promotion is often modified in many arts to include early promotion for any outstanding or extraordinary achievement such as winning the World Games or Olympics in any art.

**YUDANSHA TAIGU.** Note that in Judo, in Japan, and in all Martial Arts in the USMA, there is a special rank called “Yudansha Taigu.” This rank is given to leaders in industry, education, government or the Armed Forces who have made extraordinary contributions to the Martial Arts, but who have not necessarily training seriously in any art. The Judo rank of a Yudansha Taigu is the same as the highest rank of any person attending a meeting where a Yudansha Taigu is present. That is, if a Yudansha Taigu attends a meeting where the highest rank is a 9<sup>th</sup> Dan, then he is a 9<sup>th</sup> Dan also for the duration of that meeting.

General Curtis E. LeMay, first Commander in Chief of the Strategic Air Command, later Chief of Staff of the USAF, was awarded Yudansha Taigu status by the Kodokan for his extraordinary

support of Judo in the US Armed Forces. So far, in the first 130 years of Kodokan history, only two Americans have been Yudansha Taigu. Besides General LeMay, the other was Professor Doiguchi of California. Both are now deceased.

**CREATION OF NEW MARTIAL ARTS.** Martial arts are expanding in America and throughout the world. One of the signs of this growth is the creation of new Martial Arts. The USMA now has over 1,100 different Martial Arts registered. Many of these have been created in the past 30 years. Our USMA policy is to respect and recognize these arts when the Founder of the art applies for USMA membership. As Founder or “Soke” of the art, the Founder is free to choose any rank including 10<sup>th</sup> Dan, as his or her rank in this new art, providing that he pays the promotion fee for that rank when registering his system.

When some people find out that we recognize the rank each Founder gives himself, they often say “You can’t do that!” My answer is, “Study your Martial Arts history!” Remember that an upstart 22 year old college kid in Japan started a new art after only six years of JuJitsu training. His crazy new “scientific art” was called Kodokan Judo, and before long, he allowed himself to be promoted to 12<sup>th</sup> Dan! That was Jigoro Kano, and he made Judo stick. Or think of the great contemporary master, Maasaki Hatsumi, who combined seven styles of Ninjitsu to create Budo Taijutsu. He now has promoted himself to 20<sup>th</sup> Dan. Hatsumi Sensei has a bona fide and highly respected international organization. He has made it stick! When a person has, through his own study, created what he considers to be a new system of Martial Arts, we respect his efforts and register his system and his rank. Remember, **“Everybody knows who can dance!”** and sooner or later the truth will be known.

**A NOTE ON MARTIAL ARTS POLITICS.** Unfortunately, Martial Arts today is full of politics. What is that? Essentially, it is always having a secret motive for your actions. The politician always has an ulterior motive for his actions, seldom or never what he says to the public. Thus, in the Martial Arts, the politician who has never been in a fight himself, who has never coached a champion, and who holds high dan rank without ever having taken an exam, always shouts loudly, demanding “proof,” and “examinations,” and “rank integrity,” and “high standards.” These people are control freaks. They want to be able to tell you when and how you can promote a brown belt in your club, and also kowtow to them begging for a promotion. They never say what they mean. They are actually after power, political power over you and me. Remember the words of Thomas Jefferson: **“I HAVE SWORN ON THE ALTER OF GOD UNENDING HOSTILITY OVER ANY FORM OF TYRANNY OVER THE MIND OF MAN!”** May God help us to keep our blessed USMA free of Martial Arts politics forever.

**WE SHOULD REMEMBER JUDO PHILOSOPHY.** Dr. Jigoro Kano, the Founder of Kodokan Judo, said that there are two guiding spiritual principles for Judo. He taught that we can and should run our lives by these principles. The first principle is “Seiryoku Zenyo,” which means “Maximum efficiency,” or “Best use of energy.” The second principle is “Jita Kyoei,” meaning “Mutual benefit and welfare.” Jita kyoei is also sometimes beautifully translated as “You and me, **SHINING TOGETHER.**”

The Martial Arts politicians hate the very idea of “Jita Kyoei.” They despise those of us who believe that we can live and let live, be fair, and shine together. They don’t want to live together,

the want to CONTROL OTHERS. Their aim is always to restrict. As an example, note how contest Judo has become more and more restricted in recent years. Now, I understand, it is a violation to touch the other player's legs. No more kata guruma,, morote gari, kibisu gaeshi or kuchiki taoshi! Far from wanting everyone to prosper, they want to dictate to and command and control you and me.

The result is that Judo is dying and Mixed Martial Arts is bursting at the seams. In my city, Sacramento, California, there are 44 Mixed Martial Arts clubs for every Judo club! Let's never forget the words of Patrick Henry: "GIVE ME LIBERTY OR GIVE ME DEATH!"

You are always in my heart,

O-Sensei Phil Porter

Founder, USMA

10th Dan: Judo, JuJitsu, Taiho Jitsu, Budo Taijutsu, Jun Kin Shin, Shorindokai Karate, Beikoku Mizu Ryu JuJitsu, and Mixed Martial Arts.