

## TAEKWONDO

The word Taekwondo literally means the art of kicking and punching:

Tae = foot  
kwon = fist  
do = art

It includes kicking, punching, blocking, dodging and parrying. It is a form of self-defense as well as a competitive sport. Taekwondo is a martial art and a martial sport.

Taekwondo has its roots over 2000 years ago in the indigenous martial art of Korea, Taekkyun. Taekkyun was, and is, a kicking art developed by Koreans to protect themselves from invading Mongols. Taekwondo is the national pastime of Korea. It is the curriculum followed in all obligatory physical education in Korea. The national pastime of Korea has now become the most popular martial art in the world. Many colleges have varsity teams. There are intercollegiate, local, state and national competitions. Taekwondo is an Olympic sport. It has been a demonstration sport in Seoul, Korea, and Barcelona, Spain. It will be a full medal sport this year in Sydney, Australia.

Taekwondo is a martial art that trains the mind by placing a strong emphasis on the development of moral character and spirit. Taekwondo improves concentration, self-confidence, discipline and patience. When students of taekwondo learn self-defense, they feel secure about defending themselves and gain self-confidence. Students of taekwondo find personal satisfaction from physical training. The goal of training is to strengthen the fiber of

one's character. The improvement of oneself can be achieved through striving to unify the mind, body and spirit.

Consistent practice will improve students' concentration and sharpen their thoughts. It will lead to correct action. Students learn to use judgment to apply only necessary force to gain control. Strengthening the body confers not only health benefits (it reduces body fat, strengthens the heart and regulates metabolism), but it promotes mental health (it reduces stress and promotes relaxation). By developing a strong spirit, you develop the will to do what seems difficult and resolve to overcome obstacles and barriers.

Progress in taekwondo is marked by belt tests that signify rank. Belt or rank order progresses through eight student levels: white, white with yellow stripe, yellow, yellow with green stripe, green, green with blue stripe, blue, blue with red stripe, red, red with black stripe. When all basic techniques have been mastered, a student of taekwondo progresses to black belt. Black belt certificates are issued by the Kukkiwon, the headquarters of the World Taekwondo Federation, in Korea. These prized certificates are awarded upon recommendation of a certified master instructor. The promotional test stresses the student's ability to listen carefully, to recover gracefully from mistakes and to offer absolute effort. To succeed on a promotional test is to defeat the demons of one's fears.

The essence of taekwondo training is realization of the relationship between man and nature living in harmony.