



Kata: Why Practice Forms For Self Defense?

By

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Kata

I was introduced to self-defense forms (Kata) 60 years ago. We began by learning the individual techniques, moving to combination techniques, and eventually to forms (also called patterns). Forms were a progression of physical movements that interpreted appropriate response to a variety of attacks. I was amazed by the speed and fluidity of the higher ranking students as they moved through their forms. I felt clumsy at first, but eventually began to feel comfortable with the movements. That comfort eventually led to a real enjoyment of form practice.

Watching a martial artist demonstrate a form might seem like little more than a powerful dance, but add one or more “attackers” to the form and it quickly becomes obvious that the form can be a powerful self-defense. Forms are also excellent for physical exercise, but defense is the primary reason we practice them at Grace Martial Arts.

Self Defense

So, how many forms are there and how many should you learn to be proficient in defending yourself? Thousands – and one. There are hundreds of different styles of martial arts around the world and many of those styles have multiple forms. Some have as few as three Kata, while other styles have dozens of Kata. However, you only need to learn one form to be proficient in defending yourself. Which one? Any one of them will do fine, if the form was created for the purpose of self defense. The key is to understand the movement and the purpose and be able to do it quickly, powerfully and effectively.

Most martial arts forms have between 10 to 600 individual movements. Each individual movement has dozens of self-defense applications. If you learn a simple form with 10 movements and each movement has dozens of defensive applications, you will have at your disposal an arsenal of hundreds of self-defense responses to a wide variety of attacks from one or more attackers. How many people need that many weapons at their disposal? Not many, but it's nice to have them available.

One of the first forms I remember learning was Junino Kata. It's similar to Taikyoku Nidan and Ki Cho Hyung E Bu. These are part of the Basic Kata series for many martial arts systems. While the systems have some differences, most include the same steps in the same directions (Capital I Pattern), along with high punches and high blocks.

We use three of the Basic Kata in Grace Martial Arts: #1, #2 and #3 (Taikyoku Ichi, Taikyoku Ni, Taikokyu San). Basic #1 includes low blocks and punches to the chest. Basic #2 includes low blocks, high blocks and punches to the face. Basic #3 includes outside blocks, punches to the chest and low stance side punches. We also include training in Bunkai (Application) with each Kata so the student understands how the movements can be used to Escape, Block, Strike, Trap and Throw in multiple directions.

One of our basic forms in Yon Ch'uan is [Mawashi Kata](#). We also use it for Black Belt training because of its power and elegance. It is a simple 18-movement form that teaches the basics of Yielding, Clearing, Contacting, Controlling and Countering. Mawashi Kata moves in multiple directions, protects from the center, high and low, includes multiple escapes, blocks, strikes, kicks, throws, and traps and can be used against one or more attackers. Movements are both linear and spherical and include power generated internally and externally.

Mawashi Kata has scores of self-defense applications, so why learn more than Mawashi Kata? If all you want to learn is self defense, then one form may be enough. But if you want to learn the “art,” you will want to learn many forms.

The “art” in martial arts is why we teach many forms at Grace Martial Arts. Musicians want to play more than one song – dancers want to dance more than one dance – artists want to paint more than one painting – photographers want to take more than one picture – and martial artists want to practice more than one form.

If you would like more information about Grace Martial Arts classes in your area, contact Senior Instructor Mark McGee at gracemartialarts1@gmail.com.

Saved and Safe!

“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love.” 1

Corinthians 16:13-14