

## Are you a Black Belt in Physical Fitness

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Many of you probably think that children are naturally physically fit. In 1985 the National Children and Youth Fitness Study determined that 1/3rd of our youth are not physically active enough to be fit. Further the study found out that fitness was related to not only the behavior of the children themselves, but also to that of the parents. The exercise attitude of parents communicates a value attitude of the parent toward physical education which the child perceives. The increase in sedentary lifestyle is due to a variety of basic life style changes. These changes in lifestyle have led to an alteration in the capacity to work and play, a lowering of the quality of life affecting the ability to perform certain functional tasks for day to day living, an increased chance of lower back or other muscular skeletal problems, an increased rate of heart diseases and increased vulnerability to degenerative diseases.

The education system in the United States can play a pivotal role in influencing youth in physical fitness and exercise habits, but often does not provide enough guidance or time for correct physical activity. According to studies in 1985 and 1987, due to lack of proper personnel, supplies, and facilities, comprehensive physical fitness programs are not part of the school curricula. The trend in schools toward team sports for physical activities often ends up in a distinction between the physical haves and the physical have nots. Often, because one youth may simply blossom later than another, many youth are discouraged from physical activity.

OK, you can probably see where this is leading. Take karate, this will solve the problem of being physically fit. You can develop a habit of healthy exercise and learn a useful skill at the same time. Each person can develop individually at their own pace and maturity level independent of the peer pressure of team sports. This would be great if karate does all that. Karate can, but does your karate dojo program really accomplish this? I am not talking about fitness for competition. I am talking about just plain old aerobic fitness. So let us just answer a few questions.

- a. Do you include at a very minimum of 20 minutes of aerobic activity in the target zone at least 3 times per week for all your students?
- b. Do you do at the very least 20 minutes of resistance exercises a minimum of 2 days per week?
- c. Do you include warm up and cool down sections with each training session?
- d. Are you classes enjoyable targeting the fitness needs of the various age groups. If not you will defeat the goals of a lifelong habit of physical fitness.

It is not only important that the right amount of exercise is included, but that the right type of the exercise be utilized. Fitness must deal with cardio-vascular fitness, muscle strength and endurance, and flexibility. Exercise and skill practice must be tailored to the maturity, growth, and development of the student. In general, the below training pyramid reflects the training emphasis at the different age levels.

If you are going to place yourself as being the solution to the problem of physical fitness, you had better know what you are doing and design your programs to accomplish at least the minimum fitness goals we have discussed. If so, you will be able to grade yourself to a Black Belt in Physical Fitness.

Note: For those of you interested in competition, the above minimums would be inadequate for your competition needs.