

Tsuruoka Karate-Do

Kyu Belt Grading Standards



Revision 1, Adopted 06 April 2025

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Introduction

These Grading Standards have been created to further the Mission of the Tsuruoka Karate-Do organisation, which is as follows:

We the members of Tsuruoka Karate-Do shall endeavour to promote, with guidance, openness and cooperation, the development of Tsuruoka Karate-Do, which embodies the spirit and methodology of its founder, Masami Tsuruoka.

Nous les membres de Tsuruoka Karaté-do nous engageons à promouvoir le développement du Tsuruoka Karaté-do, avec ouverture et collaboration, guidé par l'esprit et la méthodologie de son fondateur, Masami Tsuruoka.

The Grading Standards have been put in place collectively by the dojo leaders of Tsuruoka Karate-Do as an aid for our members and a guide for future generations. They are not to create walls or a ceiling, but a floor from which Senseis can build in different directions within their own dojos.



Yellow Belt – 5th Kyu

Physical Presentation

A student must have a clear understanding of all techniques presented. Maximum speed and power sources are not a prerequisite to graduation, although strong spirit and concentration is mandatory. Full upper and lower body separation is acceptable at this level only.

A karate-ka (participant) must be able to count to 10 in Japanese. They must also demonstrate a basic understanding of dojo etiquette* attitude and formalities at all times.

*A separate guidance will be issued for dojo etiquette.

Kihon (Basics)

1. Strikes
 - a. Basic standing punch
 - b. Lunge punch
 - c. Reverse punch
 - d. Front snap kick
2. Blocks
 - a. Low block
 - b. Inside middle block
 - c. Outside middle block
 - d. High block
3. Stances
 - a. Front stance
 - b. Horse stance
 - c. Musubi-dachi (attention stance)
 - d. Heiko-dachi (shizentai/ready stance)



Students must be able to apply the above techniques and stances to stationary or stepping combinations.

Kumite (Sparring)

As per instructor methodology, the student will perform a prearranged sparring drill, whether 1-step, 3-step or 5-step.

Students must be able to initiate the basic “steps for preparation” before the exchange of techniques can begin. These steps would include: facing each other at attention, preparing proper distance, formal bowing, setting into stance and announcing intention.

Techniques must be delivered with good control. “Visual/physical awareness and good posture” (zanshin) must be present at all times.

After the attack(s) are completed, the defender must show strong counter punch delivered on target with good control. Students must give a strong kiai (shout) when requested by the instructor.

Kata (Pre-Arranged Forms)

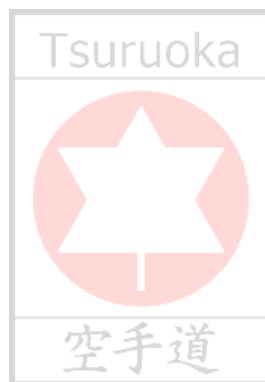
Required kata for this level:

1. Taikyoku shodan
2. 27 movements (minimum expectation is the first ten moves)

At this level, students must demonstrate a basic understanding of all movements within the kata.

Kata expectations include:

- Student looks before turning.
- Student shows good stances and good posture.
- Student shows consistent effort and focus.
- Kata shows rhythm.
- Proper kiais.
- Kata ends approximately where it began.



Orange Belt – 4th Kyu

Physical Presentation

A karate-ka must have a clear understanding of all techniques presented. Maximum speed is not required but energy and spirit must be applied to all techniques. The student must attempt to apply rotation and linear power sources wherever applicable. Strong effort, spirit and concentration must be shown at all times. Upper/lower body separation is acceptable but should be starting to be reduced. Student must show effort to apply the **Tsuruoka extension principle**. Elbows and knees should lead hand and foot techniques.

A karate-ka must also demonstrate a continued understanding of dojo etiquette, attitude and formalities at all times.

Kihon (Basics)

The student is responsible for the requirements of all previous tests.

1. Strikes

- a. Kizami tsuki (jab)
- b. Nukite (spear hand)
- c. Yoko geri kekomi (side thrust kick)
- d. Yoko geri keage (side snap kick)
- e. Front thrust kick
- f. Backfist
- g. Hammer fist
- h. Elbow strikes
- i. knife hand strike



2. Blocks

- a. Shuto (sword hand)

3. Stances

- a. Kokutsu dachi (back stance)
- b. Fighting stance

4. Movement

- a. Types of linear movement:
 - i. Slide
 - ii. Step
 - iii. Shuffle

Students must be able to apply the above techniques and stances to stationary or stepping combinations. Foot and hand positioning must be correct to illustrate readiness for making contact with the intended target.

Kumite (Sparring)

As per instructor methodology, the student will perform a prearranged sparring drill, whether 1-step or 3-step.

Distance should be reduced. Effort to apply applicable power sources should be present.

Students must be able to perform all requirements for initiating and completing kumite drills.

Techniques must be delivered on target with good control. “Visual and physical awareness and good posture” (zanshin) must be present at all times.

After the attack(s) are completed, the defender must be able to counter, while showing a strong counter punch delivered on target and with good control.

Tai sabaki (10 step, whole drill) to be taught as a standalone exercise.

Kata (Pre-Arranged Forms)

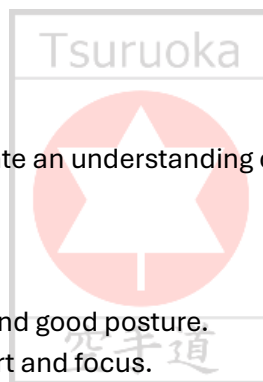
Required kata for this level:

1. Heian Shodan
2. Heian Nidan
3. 27 Movements (all)

At this level, students must demonstrate an understanding of all movements within the kata.

Kata expectations include:

- Student looks before turning.
- Student shows good stances and good posture.
- Student shows consistent effort and focus.
- Kata shows rhythm.
- Proper kiais.
- Kata ends approximately where it began.
- Student must attempt to apply applicable power sources (see above).



Green Belt – 3rd Kyu

Physical Presentation

A karate-ka must have a clear understanding of all techniques presented. Speed, energy and spirit must be applied to all techniques. The student must attempt to apply rotation, vibration and linear power sources wherever applicable. Strong effort, spirit and concentration must be shown at all times. Upper/lower body separation is still acceptable but should be further reduced.

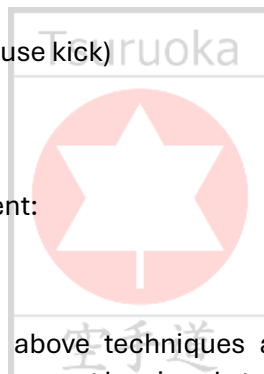
Student must show effort to apply the following **Tsuruoka Principles**:

- **Extension principle**
- **Hip lock principle**

A karate-ka must also demonstrate a good understanding of dojo etiquette, attitude and formalities at all times.

Kihon (Basics)

1. Strikes
 - a. Mawashi geri (round house kick)
 - b. Hook punch
 - c. Palm heel
2. Movement
 - a. Types of linear movement:
 - i. Double-step
 - ii. Turns/Circular



Students must be able to apply the above techniques and stances to stationary or stepping combinations. Foot and hand techniques must be aimed at a specific target to illustrate a karate-ka's ability to control hand/eye co-ordination.

Kumite (sparring)

As per instructor methodology, the student will perform a prearranged sparring drill, whether 1-step or 3-step.

Distance should be reduced. Effort to apply applicable power sources should be present. Techniques must be delivered on target with good control. Visual and physical awareness (zanshin) and good posture must be present at all times.

Students must be able to perform all requirements for initiating and completing kumite drills. At this level, the concept of the three timings (go-no-sen, sen-no-sen, and sen) are introduced. Go-no-sen is the minimum expectation.

After the attack(s) are completed, the defender must be able to counter using tai sabaki while showing strong counters using kicks, punches and strikes delivered on target and with good control.

Kata (Pre-Arranged Forms)

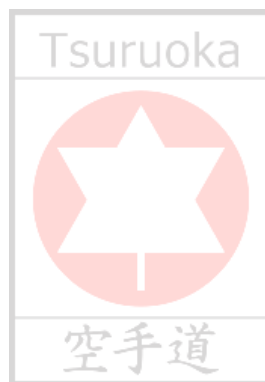
Required kata for this level:

1. Heian Sandan

At this level, students must demonstrate an understanding of all movements within the kata.

Kata expectations include:

- Student looks before turning.
- Student shows good stances and good posture.
- Student shows consistent effort and focus.
- Kata shows rhythm.
- Proper kiais.
- Kata ends approximately where it began.
- Student must apply applicable power sources (see above).
- Speed should be offered.



Blue Belt – 2nd Kyu

Physical Presentation

A karate-ka must have a good understanding of all techniques presented. Maximum effort in speed and power must be applied and strong spirit and concentration is mandatory. The student must apply rotation, vibration, pendulum (power source on snap kicks), and linear power sources wherever applicable. Student should strive to eliminate upper-lower body separation.

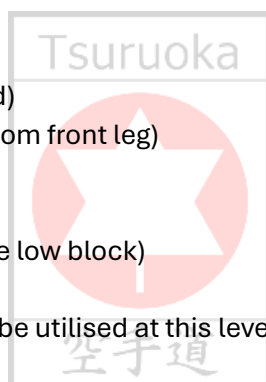
Student must show effort to apply the following **Tsuruoka Principles**:

- **Extension principle**
- **Hip lock principle**
- **Tight-release principle**

A karate-ka must also demonstrate a good understanding of dojo etiquette, attitude and formalities at all times.

Kihon (Basics)

1. Strike
 - a. Haito (inside ridge hand)
 - b. Kizami geri (front kick from front leg)
 - c. Ushiro geri (back kick)
2. Blocks
 - a. Uchi gedan barai (inside low block)
 - b. X-block
 - c. Reverse blocks should be utilised at this level
3. Stances
 - a. Kosa dachi (cross-legged stance)



Students must be able to apply the above techniques and stances to stationary or stepping combinations. Foot and hand techniques must be aimed at a specific target to illustrate a karate-ka's ability to control hand/eye co-ordination.

Kumite (Sparring)

1-step pre-arranged sparring (ippon kumite)

Students must be able to perform all requirements for initiating and completing ippon kumite. The theories of sen-no-sen (simultaneous attack and counter) should be practiced but proficiency is not mandatory at this time.

Techniques must be delivered on target with good control. Visual and physical awareness and good posture (zanshin) must be present at all times. Touch to the body is expected. Distance from head should be further reduced without touching.

After the attack is completed, the defender must be able to counter using tai sabaki while showing strong counters using kicks, punches and strikes delivered on target and with good control.

Kata (Pre-Arranged Forms)

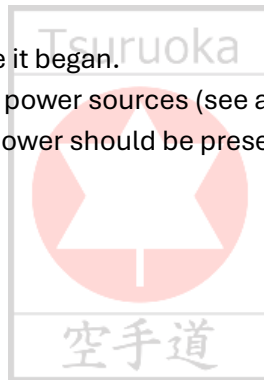
Required kata for this level:

1. Heian Yodan

At this level, students must demonstrate a meaningful understanding of all movements within the kata.

Kata expectations include:

- Student looks before turning.
- Student shows good stances and good posture.
- Student shows consistent effort, decisive focus (kime) and continued commitment (zanshin).
- Student shows strong execution of technique.
- Kata shows rhythm, demonstrating a clear distinction between fast and slow movements.
- Kata demonstrates balance.
- Kata demonstrates proper stepping turning and foot placement.
- Energetic kiais.
- Kata ends approximately where it began.
- Student must apply applicable power sources (see above).
- Maximum effort in speed and power should be present at all times



Brown belt – 1st Kyu

Physical Presentation

A good understanding of all techniques presented. Maximum speed and power are pre-requisites, along with strong spirit and concentration. Upper and lower body separation is no longer acceptable and kime (focus) must be seen. The student must apply rotation, vibration, pendulum (power source on snap kicks), upward, downward and linear power sources wherever applicable. A student should have a basic understanding of Japanese terminology as it pertains to karate techniques.

Student must show effort to apply the following **Tsuruoka Principles**:

- **Extension principle**
- **Hip lock principle**
- **Tight-release principle**
- **Tsuruoka concept of breathing introduced**

A karate-ka must also demonstrate a good understanding of dojo etiquette, attitude and formalities at all times. The student must respect the karate hierarchical system at all times and take a leadership role and be an example for others in respect to etiquette.

Kihon (Basics)

2. Strikes
 - a. Ura-mawashi geri (back hook kick) - basic understanding only
 - b. Ashi barai (foot sweep)
3. Blocks
 - a. Soft/redirecting blocks as opposed to percussive blocks is introduced
4. Stances
 - a. Neko ashi dachi (cat stance)
 - b. Sanchin dachi (hourglass stance)

Students must be able to apply the above techniques and stances to advanced shifting and stepping combinations. Foot and hand techniques are aimed at a specific target to illustrate a karate-ka's ability to control hand and eye co-ordination with full speed and power.

Kumite (Sparring)

1-step pre-arranged sparring (Ippon Kumite), single technique free sparring (Jiyu Ippon Kumite), and free sparring (Jiyu Kumite)

Students must be able to perform all requirements for initiating and completing ippon kumite. At this level students must be able to complete an entire ippon kumite routine without the assistance of the instructor to call out preparation or attack. The theories of sen-no-sen should be understood and the theories of sen (counter before attacker strikes) should begin to be explored. Student should be evaluated performing free sparring.

Techniques must be delivered on target, with good control. Visual and physical awareness and good posture must be present at all times. Proper focus must be present on all techniques. Proper distance from target should be “touch karate gi.” Student must be in control and respect their partner at all times.

After the attack is completed, the defender must be able to counter using tai sabaki while showing strong counters using kicks, punches and strikes delivered on target and with good control.

Kata (Pre-Arranged Forms)

Required kata for this level:

1. Heian Godan
2. Introduce Bassai Dai

At this level, students must demonstrate a good/meaningful understanding of the movements within the kata through the demonstration of bunkai (physical interpretation) and should be able to offer a verbal explanation. The student must demonstrate one bunkai rehearsed prior to the test.

Kata expectations include:

- Student looks before turning.
- Student shows good stances and good posture.
- Student shows consistent effort, decisive focus (kime) and continued commitment (zanshin).
- Student shows strong execution of technique.
- Kata shows rhythm, demonstrating a clear distinction between fast and slow movements.
- Kata demonstrates balance.
- Kata demonstrates proper stepping turning and foot placement.
- Energetic kiais
- Kata ends approximately where it began.
- Student must apply applicable power sources (see above).
- Student should demonstrate proper timing while applying maximum speed and power

