

Beyond Black Belt

Many people believe that being a black belt in karate means you have reached the top of the discipline. It is true to say that being awarded a black belt means you have demonstrated great skill in all the main techniques of karate and that you can successfully apply that knowledge when sparring against opponents. It also means you have the self-discipline to train regularly and control your mind and body. Hard work and application over several years are needed. However, black belt holders recognise that they are not the best they can be; they can still get better.

Rather like passing your driving test, reaching black belt level is an achievement in itself but also the beginning of a whole new journey.

Black belts continue with **training**. Although you will be very good, there is always something that can be improved upon. Training focuses on the details; those small changes that can be made to position, movement and timing which makes "very good" even better. And there are advanced techniques taught only to black belts which need to be mastered.

Grading continues – there are different levels or degrees of black belt, known as "Dan". A first-degree black belt, called "shodan", is 1st Dan. Grading continues, involving ever more complex and challenging kihon, kata and kumite, through 2nd Dan, 3rd Dan, 4th Dan and so on.

Dan gradings only take place at specially approved locations and, at the very high levels, will include consideration of technical qualifications such as referee, instructor and assessor qualifications as well as more general contributions to the art. Time spent training is also a factor. The minimum time between Dan gradings is 2 years from 1st to 2nd, and increases by 1 year for each level after that. Dan grading requires the written permission of the student's senior club instructor.



Competing as a black belt enables you to test your ability against the very best karateka in the country and internationally. When preparing for competitions you will train harder and become an even better martial artist. At the competitions you will meet and become friends with many wonderful people who share your passion for the art of karate.

Hale Karate Club trains students from beginner level to black belt, but also beyond.

Most of the club's black belts have trained with us from beginner levels. They now play an active part in training lower level grades in the club. Teaching karate helps you question your own technique and learn more about your own karate.

To help prepare students for Dan gradings, we have partnerships with other local clubs to allow for training with other black belts and with a variety of instructors, including the most senior instructors in the country.

The black belts from Hale Karate Club are active in competitions in the north west and across the country, enjoying great success in all categories. This success is then a passport for club members to be considered for national squad selection for those who want to compete at that level and have a chance to represent their country.

