

Karate Terminology

Karate is, quite literally, “a whole new language”. Recognising the Japanese origins of the art, we continue to use the Japanese names for techniques and use Japanese for simple instructions during training, such as counting or instructions such as “bow” or “begin”. Set out below are translations of the most common Japanese words and phrases Karate students will hear and come to understand.

General Terms

Chudan (chew-dahn): Chest area
Dojo (doh-joh): Training area
Gedan (geh-dahn): Lower body area
Gi (ghee): Uniform
Hajime (hah-zhim-ay): Begin
Hidari (he-dah-rhee): Left
Jodan (joh-dahn): Face area
Kamae (kah-mah-eh): Sparring posture
Karate (kah-rah-teh): Empty hand
Karateka (kah-rah-teh-kah): Karate student
Kata (kah-tah): Form
Ki (key): Mind, Spirit, Energy
Kiai (key-aye): Focusing shout
Kihon (key-hohn): Basic technique
Kime (key-may): Focus of power
Kumite (koo-me-teh): Sparring
Kyu (kyoo): White/Brown belt Rank
Mae (mah-eh): Front
Mawate-te (mah-wha-tay): Turn around
Migi (me-ghee): Right
Osu (oh-soo): Greeting
Rei (rey): Bow
Sempai (sehm-pye): Senior student
Sensei (sehn-seh-ee): Instructor
Yame (yah-may): Stop
Yoi (yoy): Ready

Numbers

Ichi (ih-chee): One
Ni (nee): Two
San (sahn): Three
Shi (she): Four
Go (go): Five
Roku (roo-koo): Six
Shichi (Shih-chee): Seven
Hachi (Hah-chee): Eight
Ku (koo): Nine
Ju (joo): Ten

Stance (*Dachi* – pronounced “dah-chee”)

Hachiji-dachi (hah-chee-gee dah-chee): Open leg
Kiba-dachi (key-bah dah-chee): Side stance
Kokutsu-dachi (koe-koo-tsu dah-chee): Back stance
Zenkutsu-dachi (zen-koo-tsue dah-chee): Front

Block (*Uke* – pronounced “oo-kay”)

Age-uke (ah-geh-oo-kay): Upper block (Raising)
Shuto-uke (shoe-toe oo-kay): Knife-hand block
Uchi-uke (oo-chee oo-kay): Inside centre block
Gedan-barai (Geh-dahn bah-rye): Down block
Soto-uke (so-toh oo-kay): Outside centre block
Sashite-uke (sah-she-tay oo-kay): Rising hand block
Teishi-uke (tay-sho oo-kay): Palm-heel block

Punch (*Zuki* – pronounced “zoo-key”)

Age-zuki (ah-geh zoo-key): Rising punch
Awase-zuki (ah-wah-say zoo-key): U-punch
Choku-zuki (cho-koo zoo-key): Straight punch
Chudan-zuki (chew-dahn zoo-key): Middle area punch
Gyaku-zuki (gya-koo zoo-key): Reverse punch
Jodan-zuki (joe-dahn zoo-key): face level punch
Morote-zuki (moe-row-the- zoo-key): Double “U” punch
Oi-zuki (oh-ee zoo-key): Lunge punch

Kick (*Geri* – pronounced “geh-rhee”)

Ashi-Barai (ah-she bah-rye): Foot sweep
Fumikomi (foo-me-koh-me): Stamping kick
Keage (key-ah-geh): Snap kick
Kekomi (kay-koh-me): Thrust kick
Mae-geri (mah-eh geh-rhee): Front kick
Mae-geri-kaege (mah-eh geh-rhee kay-ah-geh): Front snap kick
Mae-geri-kakomi (mah-eh geh-rhee kay-koh-me): Front thrust kick
Mawashi-geri (mah-wha-she geh-rhee): Round kick
Ushiro-geri (oo-she row geh-rhee): Back kick
Yoko-geri-kaegi (yoh-koh geh-rhee key-ah-geh): Side snap kick
Yoko-geri-kekomi (yoh-koh geh-rhee key-ah-geh): Side thrust kick

Strike (*Uchi* – pronounced “oo-chee”)

Empi-uchi (en-pee oo-chee): Elbow strike
Haishu-uchi (hi-shoo oo-chee): Back hand strike
Nukite (noo-key-teh): Spear hand
Kentsui-uchi (ken-tsue-ee oo-chee): Hammer fist
Shuto-uchi (shoe-toe oo-chee): Knife hand strike
Teisho-uchi (tay-sho oo-chee): Palm hand strike
Uraken-uchi (oo-rah-ken oo-chee): Back fist strike