

**TITLE: PARTNERS, NOT OPPONENTS**

**AUTHOR:** Allan Waddell 3<sup>rd</sup> Dan  
South East Self Defence  
NCAS Senior Coach Level 3

Date: May 2009

Published to members library Australian Jujitsu Federation [www.jujitsu.com.au](http://www.jujitsu.com.au)

---



**LOOKING AT THE BENEFITS OF AN ORGANISED INTRODUCTORY PROCEDURE WHEN DEALING WITH DIFFICULT STUDENTS**

**INTRODUCTION**

Being involved in martial arts for some time I have seen quite a lot of introductory procedures - from a punch-up to see how much you knew, to a 6-week course in the corner of the mat doing rolls with a brown belt holder who doesn't want to do the warm up. Add to that a quick membership form to minimise any legal liabilities (handled by one of the mums) and then you're into it. As far as price and the operation of the dojo, we hope the other parents have worded them up and this saves us from doing the sell. This does not sound like a very professional introductory to an activity that so many people feel will help with so many ailments?

Now that someone has finished our casual introduction, we get into the meaty bit - the bit everyone wants to do, even the new student - the discipline, the rituals and the syllabus. Only, who are we really teaching?

Eventually they may appear to be gifted or “hooked up” or on the other hand lazy, disrespectful and suffering from ADHD. We don’t really know because we never really conducted any professional or scientific introductory process that would have warned us of how this student may react to the type of training we do, let alone have some type of tailored program to help suit their learning style or physical and mental make up.

No, you either sink or swim!! You are either physically or mentally capable or you just didn’t have it in you.

So, after a while the student quits because he could not satisfy what it was that he thought he could achieve from the study of martial arts. And the instructor gets rid of another student with no commitment.

The instructor doesn’t keep any statistics on his dojo so he doesn’t know the demographic he is attracting or the demographic he is losing. He was taught to kick, punch and throw and he knows this trade well. But like a lot of tradesmen he hasn’t been taught a professional business-like approach to complement his skills.

Whilst this may seem a little dramatic, the fact is that some dojos would do far less by way of introductory procedures.

**BEGIN  
WITH  
THE  
END  
IN  
MIND**



### **WHY IS THE INTRODUCTION SO IMPORTANT?**

More recently martial arts are experiencing a resurgence in popularity. Even in this difficult financial climate people are making a choice to enter into the world of martial arts. Why? My investigations and experience have revealed that people are looking to martial arts for a number of reasons - fitness with purpose, weight management, positive male role modelling, confidence, character development, inner peace, self defence, stress management, self discipline, self control, self respect, personal endeavour, baby sitting, something to do between tennis and piano lessons, because they like ninja turtles, because they have excess energy, because they hurt their brother, because they are getting bullied, because they need to manage their anger, and so on and so on. One quickly realises that the reason people, and especially children, come to martial arts is wide and can encompass a lot of behavioural type issues.

It is great that our industry could be identified with helping so many aspects of a person’s life. So it is important that instructors realise this position we have. It makes sense therefore to spend some time up-skilling ourselves so we can better serve some of these needs. It does sound like we might have to go off and enrol in a psychology major at a local university and there would be nothing wrong with that. However it is not always feasible.

The fact is that with so many students enrolling to work on behavioural issues an instructor could easily feel like they had a class full of difficult, disobedient, lazy and disrespectful students, when in fact it could be quite a different story.

In a lot of professionally run organisations which deal with people, there is a comprehensive enrolment strategy. Take a well-run gymnasium for example. Firstly there is the facility tour, then the discussion of fees and the membership agreement, then the fitness assessment, then the nutrition assessment, then on to the personally tailored physical regimen and nutrition program. Then, at regular intervals i.e. (2 to 6 weeks), a review of your progress through the keeping of diaries and the physical measuring of your results.

Whilst martial arts are similar in some ways, I believe we have a lot more to offer. The problem is that we do not tend to systemise what would appear on the surface to be a less important aspect of our operations. What I hope to do is to raise the bar for the thinking instructor/dojo so that we can lift what we do from merely an activity in the minds of many to a professional service for the public.

Someone once wrote the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. As an instructor how many miles are your students going to walk with you? Are they going the distance or have they somehow been forced to take such seemingly difficult steps in the beginning that their first steps are off a cliff into an abyss. As an instructor, have you assessed your student's capabilities so as to find a suitable road, still challenging but suitable? Or, have you merely sent them on the path you know despite the fact that they may not be suited to it. There are many paths to the summit and a well-organised journey has a mapped specific beginning and a mapped end with the route being assessed for possible obstacles. If I were to travel to Brisbane, which way would I go? Some may say south and some say east; but they could only say it if they truly knew where they were starting from.

So it stands to reason that if we are to take our students on the longest journey possible we must firstly begin correctly. To start just one degree off at the beginning of a journey could leave you thousands of kilometres off course in the end, if unchecked.

## **A NEW WAY OF THINKING: WHAT COULD I TEST FOR?**

There are many things a correctly organised introductory procedure could help assess - things like



coordination, balance, fitness, strength, level of tone, attention span, flexibility, predominate learning style – visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, the students ability to take onboard commands and how many (sequential ordering), their reading and writing level (some curriculum's expect you to be able to take notes and read and interpret actions in the written form), their ability to learn another language (higher level processing), sight and hearing impairment, ability to train at home, their response to discipline, their ability to switch thinking to another style of task quickly, whether or not they have short term or working memory issues, religious beliefs, fears and phobias other than getting injured and looking silly, ability to

explain or repeat instructions, body posture, limitations in joint and limb movement (recently we discovered that a student had a serious limitation in the rotation of his forearm, and the parents were totally unaware of this (he was 9),

What an introductory assessment gives is a real snap shot of the student as they come to you – a measured starting point for you to organise and monitor a structured plan which when implemented will help build on your students' strengths, thus improving confidence and enjoyment, and with that commitment and longevity in your program. It also allows you to affect their limitations in a positive way towards the specific goals of your program, depending on age. You may have to alter earlier requirements in the syllabus to help the student move through the ranks – a term we call rigid flexibility.

## OTHER BENEFITS

With this detailed starting point, a parent/student is going to take your program more seriously because it jumped out of the activity basket. Also, it helps to show progress in more areas than just fighting. When you explain the introductory procedure to the parent/student then they become aware that your class has a meaningful structure and they can start to see how kicking, punching, throwing, doing push-ups and sit-ups, sparring, falling and grappling are going to help them in a higher way. They become a greater advocate of your program and are more likely to stay when things become tighter, and also invite their friends to participate.

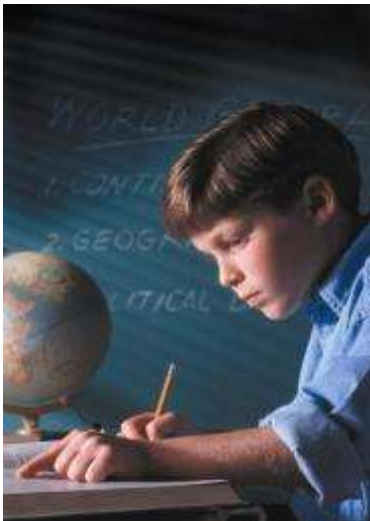
If you are a school that runs multiple strands like MMA, Jujitsu, Kick Boxing, Yoga, BJJ, etc. then you can place your new student more effectively to give them a better chance of being successful.

**SEEK  
FIRST  
TO  
UNDERSTAND  
THEN  
TO BE  
UNDERSTOOD**

## LEARNING THEORY

One important part of learning is the neuro developmental system. These systems form the basis of learning and therefore a students' behaviour. To complicate things more there are a subset of systems within each system. I am going to introduce each system so that instructors can see there is a lot more theory to learning that can be investigated and with this understanding have a more educated approach to teaching skills and the handling of behaviour issues.

## ATTENTION CONTROL SYSTEM



Attention controls direct the mental energy within the brain, so that we have the where with all to complete tasks, and slow down thinking so that we can plan and finish tasks competently. Attention controls help filter out distractions. This modality has the highest profile with terms such as ADHD etc. There are 14 sub modalities in this system between intake, output and mental energy controls.

## THE MEMORY SYSTEM

The stress on children to work their memory is enormous and such loads will never be repeated in a working environment. The memory system is complicated because there are many skills in memorising. Some students' rote-learn very well but unravel when it comes to application. Most people have parts that work extremely well but some aspects of their memory fail them like a whole in a bucket.

There are 3 sub-modalities - working, short term and long-term memory.

## THE LANGUAGE SYSTEM

The language ingredients of learning include among other things the ease with which the brain detects differences in the 44 or so different English language sounds, the ability to understand, remember and start using new vocabulary, the capacity to express thought while speaking and on paper, the speed to keep pace with verbal explanation and instruction. There are 6 levels in language sounds, word bits, and word meaning, words put in sentences, language in big chunks, and thinking about language.

## SPATIAL ORDERING SYSTEM

Through spatial ordering we perceive how parts of things fit together. It also helps us to organise the things required to complete a task. Spatial ordering helps us to think in pictures. There are 5 levels - perceiving, remembering, creating, organising, and thinking on a higher plane.

## SEQUENTIAL ORDERING SYSTEM

This system deals with the number of commands a student can process and fulfil. It goes hand in hand with spatial ordering and has a lot to do with the management of time etc. It has the same levels as spatial ordering.

## THE MOTOR SYSTEM

This system governs the very precise and complex network of tight connections between brain and various muscles all over the body. Motor coordination is important to children; being able to show proficiency is an important contribution to overall self-concept and confidence. There are 5 sub-modalities - gross motor, fine motor, graphomotor (writing), oromotor (speaking), and musical motor.

## HIGHER THINKING SYSTEM

Higher thinking includes the ability to problem solve and reason logically, to form and make use of concepts, to understand how and when rules apply, and to get the point of a complicated idea. Higher thinking also takes in critical and creative thinking. There are 5 sub-modalities – concepts, problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, and rules.

## THE SOCIAL THINKING SYSTEM

This is the ability of a person to function in social settings and understanding the dynamics in interpersonal relationships. Gratification and humiliation is born out of



social thinking and this system alone can undermine all other systems if not attended to. So you can see from this very brief overview of ways of learning that there are many facets to

contend with. Any one of these systems not functioning properly can affect students' confidence and therefore performance in any environment. There are many other factors that influence learning such as environment, genetic, emotional, peer influence, physical health, educational experience, cultural values, and family.

The idea here is to identify that there are a lot of things to consider when putting pressure on a student. As professor Garland Johnson says: "Go after the conduct and leave the self-esteem intact." Take time to demystify the student and let them realise that any shortcomings are behaviours and skills that can be acquired or, with practice, changed.

**THE AIM OF ART  
IS TO REPRESENT  
NOT THE  
OUTWARD  
APPEARANCE OF  
THINGS, BUT THE  
INWARD  
SIGNIFICANCE.  
ARISTOTLE**



For example you may have a student who has great higher thinking and can accept the notion of levels of force and understands your rules. He also has great motor function such that he can apply locks, but he has output control issues and is constantly injuring other students or acting without processing the consequences. In a class environment this student will attract the attention of the sensei and possibly end up with some discipline. But if the sensei has an awareness of neuro developmental profiles, then he may also suggest some skills for working on his output control issues. This gives the student something to work with and also helps the instructor build a bridge of rapport.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Initially, this process could take as long as it takes to do some research into learning and behaviour management. Also, as a starting point it may be useful to do a skills audit of your students and parents to see who has a background in psychology, child psychology, teaching, learning support, educational kinesiology, counselling, human movement sciences etc. These people could act as a panel to help provide input to the process. Great leaders know they don't have to know everything about everything, but they do have to know how to source their information.

Once you have an idea of what you want to achieve, create a form that gives you an accurate idea why the student is coming to train with you. Organise some skills to test, based on your style of martial art, using actual aspects that benefit your art. Have a form that clearly maps out your results and also includes information provided by the parent.

Once you have a detailed assessment of your new student, then you can set about making a management plan for this student. This plan could include the types of exercises that would get results for the student, the presentation of the syllabus and how much should be given at a time, the way the student should be engaged in class depending on their learning style, the type of disciplinary measures to be employed based on their emotional constitution, any specific alterations to your syllabus to cater for the students mental or physical limitations, the type of home work assignments which would benefit them, leadership challenges designed to bring about better performance at school or in the workplace, teamwork challenges to bring discipline and unity to the family in which they operate.

Make sure all instructors who deal with the student have read and understand the requirements for motivating this student. Let the parents know how elements of your class assist in helping the student with the development of things other than just the physical, i.e. cross-punching a target works the gross motor function, involves using coordination between the left and right hemispheres of the brain, works with spatial and sequential ordering especially if there are a lot of commands to follow.

Try to organise a review of all students' progress in the dojo. All instructors, assistants and people of influence should attend. You start with names beginning with A and go to Z, and when that is done go back to A again. This process could take more than a month to complete each time and may seem time consuming at the beginning, but it will gather momentum once you are across your students and all instructors are active in the motivational plans.

Instructors should not be discouraged by what seems to be a greater workload. The fact is that you are already dealing with your students and after a while you will still be dealing with them. Only for the new students you will start to have a plan in place which communicates to all instructors just who they have in the dojo and how to handle them, rather than waiting six months to anecdotally assess them and usually only by the interested instructor or student.

Once this is in place it is no longer acceptable for an instructor to label a student as a difficult and lazy person who should not be here, especially if no plan has been acted on to assist the student or no scientific process has been followed to determine how best to get results from them.

## SAMPLE INTRODUCTORY PLAN

**# Shake hands and introduce yourself and ask the same of them**

(Look for attitude and eye contact)

**# Show bowing on the mat**

(Introduce rules and procedures)

**# Form the students in a line and go and get some equipment to use**

(Check output controls. I.e. touching things they do not own)

**# Ask students to put right foot forward but do not demonstrate. (Facing away from distraction)**

(Spatial ordering – checking for awareness and ability to comprehend simple instructions)

**# Give a right left cross pattern on focus mitts**

(Sequential ordering, left right brain coordination)

**# Increase the pattern right left elbow duck**

(Sequential ordering and competitiveness. Gross motor skills)

**# Demonstrate a roundhouse kick and have the student replicate how they think you did it.**

(Ability to pick up new concepts, look for previous martial art training, hip rotation and flexibility)

**# Correct roundhouse kick and ask them to redo**

(Look for reaction to correction)

**# Face student to distracting class and give a verbal reaction i.e. how fast can you go to attention stance.**

(Check how student handles voice commands when distracted)

**# 5 push ups (older age groups do as many as they can)**

(Functional strength)

**# 5 sit ups (older age groups do as many as they can)**

(Functional strength)

**# 5 squats (older age groups do as many as they can)**

(Functional strength)

**# Hop on one leg**

(Balance, coordination)

**# Two-foot jumps**

(Balance, power, discipline)

**# Karate kid balance stance**

(Balance, mental concentration)

**# Wide horse stance and push on side for strength and balance**

(Mental concentration, body tone for resistance)

**# Check for joint rotation in all joints by getting them to perform actions that require rotation, e.g. reverse punch**

(Correct rotation of joints – more complex task)

**# Front stretch with ruler (Flexibility)**

**# Side stretch with chair aid**

(Flexibility)

**# Teach a self-defence skill – wrist grab**

(Willingness to learn)

**# Teach a technique with a Japanese name**

(Higher thinking)

**# Ask them to write which bit of the introduction they liked and present it to you before class next week.**

(Discipline, graphomotor skill, enthusiasm outside the dojo, pre-frame home training)

**# Introduce them to a senior student of similar age and leave them for 5 minutes.**

(Social thinking system, confidence, start to untie them from you)

**DON'T BE  
AFRAID OF  
MAKING  
MISTAKES.  
BE AFRAID  
OF  
NOT LEARNING  
WHAT  
VALUABLE  
LESSONS  
THEY HAVE  
TO OFFER YOU.  
  
- KENSHO FURUYA**

## SAMPLE INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONNAIRE

Does your child enjoy school?

Has your child been diagnosed with a learning disorder?

Are you aware of any learning difficulties if undiagnosed?

Does your child find it easy to concentrate or are they easily distracted?

Does your child have full range of motion in joint and full use of limbs?

Does your child have events that trigger changes in mood?

Can your child handle:

\* touch?

\* noise?

\* correction?

When pressured, is your child generally aggressive, passive or emotional?

Does your child have excess energy?

Does your child tire easily?

Has your child recently recovered from an illness or injury?

By what name does your child prefer to be called?

What name irritates them?

What generally motivates your child to perform?

What disciplinary measures work?

What disciplinary measures generally fail?

Is your child generally respectful to authority figures?

Does your child generally make friends or follow friends?

Does your child have an interest in martial arts training?

What benefit would you like to see your child receive from training in martial arts?

Will your child have a space and time to train at home?

Are you going to be in the area for more than one year?

Does the child have shared care arrangements in place?

Is the shared carer supportive of training in the martial arts?

Does your child have a friend they could train with?

(There are many more questions you could ask, but this is just a sample that I would consider useful).



## CONCLUSION

The martial arts industry is gradually moving towards more regulation and structure like childcare and lots of industries before that. A good surfer knows that you get a better ride on the front of the wave and if you miss it you slide back into a trough to wait for another chance. Only we know we usually do not get many chances with a student. Once they have tried it, then they either like it or they move on. Moving on is not always a bad thing but at the wrong time it just trains another quitter, something, our industry is not in the business of doing.

Remember there is no standing still. You are either going forward or you are going backwards. Students are no different as they are either making steps towards black belt and beyond or they are getting closer to quitting.

It would be correct to assume that most martial arts systems have a very clear and formal test to assess the progress of the student through the syllabus, culminating in the very formal and technical assessment of theory, practical knowledge and the application of that knowledge at black belt. Why then is there not the same formal set of evaluation tools applied at the beginning?

My argument is not for the vetting of students, but for the correct assessment on induction so that the best chance possible is given to our new students to stay and gain the maximum benefit from our art.

Being a partner in training, over being an opponent, is as much an attitude as it is a skill. Jujitsuans understand the notion of adaptation and readiness. Now is the time to apply these concepts in the dojo to better prepare our students for their daily life. For some students, the battle is daily and they need your help to build their confidence like never before. All instructors are urged to take a look at their introductory procedure so as to further strengthen the benefits of training in the martial arts.

**THE TEACHER,  
IF INDEED  
WISE, DOES  
NOT BID YOU  
TO ENTER THE  
HOUSE OF  
THEIR  
WISDOM, BUT  
LEADS YOU TO  
THE  
THRESHOLD OF  
YOUR OWN  
MIND.**

**-KAHIL GIBRAN**

### Acknowledgements and recommended reading:

- Mel Levine M.D. *A Mind at a Time*, Simon and Schuster
- Dr Henry Cloud and Dr John Townsend. *Raising Great Kids*, Zondervan
- Dr Henry Cloud and Dr John Townsend. *Boundaries with Children*, Strand Publishing
- William Beausay II. *Boys*, Thomas Nelson Publishers
- John C. Maxwell. *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, Thomas Nelson Publishers
- Sifu Robert Brown. *Lessons in Mindfulness*, Martial Arts Fitness Corporation
- Anthony Robbins. *Unlimited Power*, Simon and Schuster