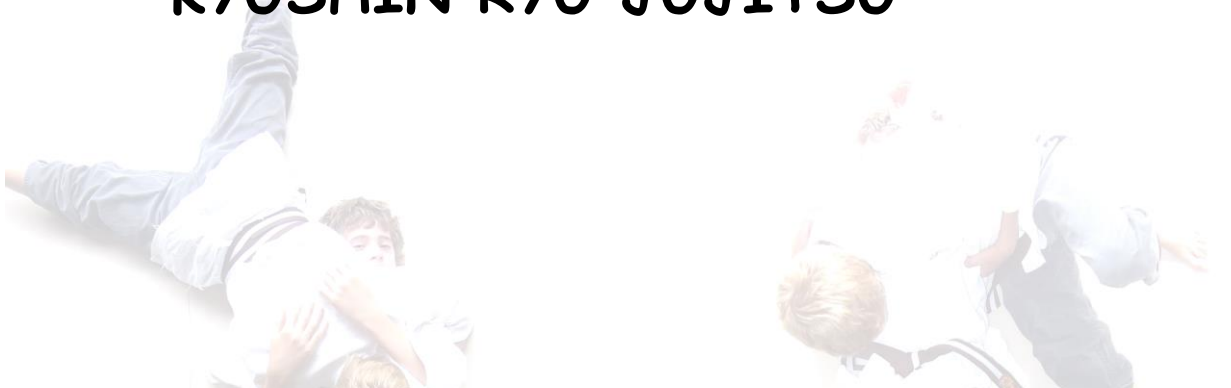


Teaching Ne Waza Techniques to Children



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A Question for the Coach

Take a step back and observe your students interacting with each other within the dojo environment. Ask yourself, "Is what I am doing as their teacher, truly creating opportunities for learning? Are they learning what I want them to learn?"

Introduction

The primary basis of this paper revolves around the belief that it is easier for a person to learn and commit to memory a movement, rather than a static position. The body's ability to memorise or perform a well rehearsed motion automatically is well known and much studied. With practice a conscious action can be converted into an automatic action that requires no thought. A secondary, but no less important, topic that will be covered is the need to keep children active, moving and entertained on the mat, so that focus and concentration is maintained for the duration of the lesson.

The Process of Learning Movement

Declarative Learning (Explicit Learning)

Declarative Learning is the result of knowledge that can be consciously recalled and thus requires processes such as awareness, attention and reflection. Declarative Learning would be demonstrated in the explanation of the finer points of a technique and the specific sequence of the movement.

Procedural Learning (Implicit Learning)

Procedural Learning refers to tasks that can be performed automatically without attention or conscious thought. Like a habit, Procedural Learning develops slowly through repetition of a movement many times over. It is expressed through improved performance of the task that was practised.

Constant repetition can transform declarative learning into non declarative or procedural knowledge. Instructors need to structure the lesson so that the children transition from a Declarative Learning stage at the beginning of the lesson when attention levels are high, through to a Procedural Learning stage towards the end of the lesson.

Muscle Memory in Relation to Movement

Many people believe that muscle memory simply refers to the body's ability to regain muscle lost after an extended period of detraining. It is in reality much more than that. As movements are reinforced through repetition, the neural system learns fine and gross motor skills to the degree that thought is no longer needed - just to react and perform the learned skill. There is even a curious phenomenon called 'Delayed Gain'. Delayed Gain is a large improvement in performance that occurs 5 to 6 hours after the first training session despite there being no additional training.

Does Practice Really Make Perfect?

The ability to learn, or the required number of repetitions, will vary from individual to individual. Human movement studies give no generalised indications as to how many times are needed to perform a movement before learning actually begins. However, there are clear examples of specific movements that can achieve success. One such movement is a simple movement used in strength training - the bench press. It is considered that completing a movement at least 50 times, allows the learning process to begin. A student performs a bench press with a light weight for the first time and it is noticeable that the arms will wobble while transitioning through the movement. Towards the end of the fifth set of ten repetitions, the arms will stop wobbling because of learning how to control the bar. With this information in mind, set the minimum target for students to practise each new holding to 50 times - simply because it gives a starting point and target to aim for success to be achieved. However, it is not realistic to expect a young child to want to repeat a specific movement 50 times in a row, as the child would quickly become bored and lose interest. To achieve the goal of 50 repetitions, individual session lesson plans should allow for a repeat of the lesson perhaps in a modified form within a specific time frame. The time frame referred to in this instance would be the length of time between quarterly club gradings. The lesson should be revised and students should practise at least twice within the allocated period at the dojo, and also practise at home, if the movement is to be accomplished to a satisfactory degree.

Teaching a Holding

The methodology proposed is that any holding should be taught as a transition from one position to another whilst under control. Kesa Gatame (commonly known as Scarf Hold or Cross Chest Holding) is generally the first holding in the curriculum.

Firstly, demonstrate this holding in the correct static position that is representative of the holding. An explanation of the finer points required for this holding is important - e.g. legs well spread for balance, one limb immobilised and Uke is held largely on their back under control.



Fig. 1 Kesa Gatame in static position

The students replicate the holding while adjustments are made so that the correct position is apparent (Fig. 1).



Fig. 2a Preparing for Kesa Gatame

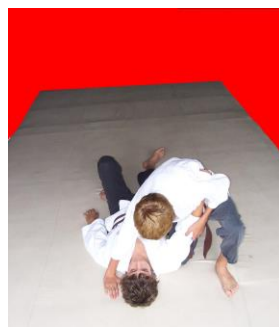


Fig. 2b Moving into Kesa Gatame



Fig. 2c Kesa Gatame

Then, move into the transitional phase of the lesson. Uke will remain lying down on the mat while Tori, who is in a standing position, grasps Uke's gi sleeve with the hand (Fig. 2a).

The students then move directly into Kesa Gatame, (Fig. 2b) (Fig. 2c). The students repeat the movement five times, before switching Tori and Uke around alternating every five times.

The next stage of the lesson creates a slightly different set of circumstances so that the children do not become restless. Uke presents some resistance by moving around, whilst Tori maintains the holding. Through creating slightly different circumstances that require the same position, the following skills are being developed:

1. The student is unconsciously committing the holding to memory.
2. The children remain active through new tasks/instructions whilst focusing on something different, even though the holding remains the same - and the students are less likely to become restless.
3. Tori is starting to learn how to move and react on the ground, using timing, balance, speed, flexibility and strength. Moving on the ground is not instinctive or natural for bipedal animals such as humans, and needs to be practised.

For any of the holdings in the syllabus the same principles apply. For example, while teaching *Kuzure Kesa Gatame* - demonstrate the holding in a static position, showing the finer points. The students assume the previously learned holding, *Kesa Gatame*, and then transition/move from *Kesa Gatame* to *Kuzure Kesa Gatame* whilst keeping the opponent under control. This approach requires that students be taught holdings in a specific structured manner in order for smooth transitioning to occur.

Practising Through Games

Sempai Says

This game is just like the game '*Simon Says*', but with students performing selected holdings in any order. Students pair up and a holding is called. For example:- "*Sempai says Kesa Gatame*". Students should assume that holding position. The first round will be called in the sequence that the children have learned through class. After being satisfied that the students are confident and knowledgeable in the game, holdings will then be called randomly, and those who make a mistake by assuming an incorrect holding are eliminated. The game continues until a winner is apparent.

Grappling Practice

Students commence from a starting position of sitting back to back. There will be imposed restrictions placed on the students depending on what has been taught throughout the class. For example, if the grappling session follows on from a training session focused on holdings, the students would **not** be allowed to use strangles. The students are to focus only on the use of holdings to gain control.

Buffalo's Rush

One student(A) kneels down in the middle of the mat while the rest of the students line up down one end of the mat area. The person in the middle of the mat (A) calls out one of the students' names (B) from the end of the mat area. (B's) goal is to try and crawl to the opposite end of the mat without getting held down. If (B) makes it to the far end, the words, "Buffalo's rush", are called out and all students down the end of the mat area must try to crawl to the far end without getting caught and held down. If any students are caught, those students remain in the middle and assist in catching others. The winner is the last student remaining who has not been caught.

NB: There can be no two students on one student. If a student is intercepted, only the student who intercepted can try and hold. If the hold is not successful and the student escapes, then that student can be intercepted by another student unless the far end of the mat is reached first - whereby that student remains in the game for longer.

Passing the Legs

Student (A) is in a supine position and Student (B) kneels or stands at their feet. Student (B) tries to pass Student (A's) legs to tap Student (A) on the forehead. Student (A) tries to fend Student (B) off without kicking. There is a time limit of three minutes set for either student to achieve the individual set goal. Students switch roles and repeat the challenge.

Setting the Challenge

All children are individually special and need to have a sense of self worth by achieving in some way. That achievement can be small or big depending on the individual, and may be attained in different ways. In Kyushin Ryu Jujitsu, it may be perfecting a high rank throw or just getting a breakfall working correctly, or simply holding down a larger opponent. As long as the student progresses, learns and does not stagnate, a feeling of accomplishment is achieved. A young student who watches a senior student developing a technique may want to set a challenge to learn the same technique albeit modified. It is up to the instructors to observe, be aware, be supportive and assist students in attaining the highest possible level that may be achieved within the student's capabilities. Realistic goals need to be set for certain students - particularly those who are disadvantaged in some regard, whether physically, intellectually or emotionally.

Set challenges for students, modify rules for games, include time trials, set achievable goals, make learning fun and students will always return.

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