



Information for Parents considering Judo For their Children (or the whole Family).

If you are contemplating signing up your child or family for some organized sports activity, here are some of the excellent benefits your child will gain from Judo.

- 1. Self-Defence:** Judo is a great way to learn how to defend oneself. Not only will judo teach you the techniques to defend yourself, but also the way to think about defending yourself.
- 2. Self-Confidence:** As people become more proficient in judo their confidence gets a big boost. They become more self-assured and confident. Their *Sensei's* (Teacher's) encouragement goes a long way to help them achieve this goal, but the confidence level will extend far beyond the *Dojo* (Martial Arts Studio).
- 3. Discipline:** The mantra of any martial art is 'practice makes perfect'. Sessions include warm-up exercises and regular practice of Judo holds and throws. Even while sparring or competing – where a martial artist shows how creatively he or she can apply what they have learnt– there are still rules and protocols to be followed. All of this teaches respect for one another, their opponents and colleagues. It also teaches them the benefits of self-discipline, a value that is important for the whole of life.
- 4. Belts and Ranking:** Judo uses belts and ranking to help provide clear goals for your child's confidence and their desire to succeed. Belts are a great way to help track your progress and motivate people to strive higher.
- 5. Emphasis on individual Achievement:** In many team sports not all people get the opportunity to be on the team for the whole game– which means that someone has to start each game on the bench. In Judo, however, each child's success is based on his or her own individual merits. Yes, you may not be the most winning *Judoka* in your Judo class, but that will be because you tried and lost, and not because you weren't good enough to make it off the bench.
- 6. Gender Equity:** Some people still initially consider judo for their sons and not their daughters. However judo should be considered as one of the few sports where both boys and girls can play together. It gives brothers and sisters an opportunity to practise together and learn from one another as well (not to mention the convenience of having all the family in one place at a time).
- 7. Exercise:** The typical 1 1/2 hour martial arts class will often consist of warm-up, teaching and practising of moves and possibly some sparring. The warm-up and practice comprise the bulk of the time, and for that time you will be constantly on the go. The workout each child gets will not only assist in the natural development of his or her muscles, but also help them build stronger cardio-vascular systems.
- 8. Respect for Strength:** The first thing the parents of (even slightly) mischievous children think about when they send them to martial arts class is: "Is my child going to use this to hurt others?" Although this is a legitimate concern, it is always addressed early by instructors who remind students that the techniques they learn in the *dojo* stay in the *dojo* (except in self-defence), and shouldn't be used to bully people.

9. Competition: Just like in team sports, Judo is all about competition. Competition is great to test newfound skills and show your progress. Each competition is a fresh start, where you will normally get at least three or four turns.

10. For the whole Family: We are extending classes to cover both adults and children. Classes are in age groups, which means that you can watch your children workout, and then they can watch you. This will give you a special activity to use as a bonding tool with your children. You can also become physically fit together.

11. The Never-Ending Season: Many team sports, especially those primarily played outdoors, or in specific weather, are seasonal. However, judo is all year-round. Having this consistency also helps build upon discipline, and allows children to progress very quickly.

12. They will exercise their minds too - Physics, Languages While all martial arts teach you to fighting strategies, Judo really teaches much more. While learning *Kuzushi* (the art of breaking your opponents' balance) and throwing techniques, they learn Mechanical Physics. Combination techniques and follow-ups teach them improvisation, and finally, they learn a lot of Japanese too!

13. Judo isn't about brute force, it is about control: *Kano Sensei* (Dr. Jigoro Kano, the founder of Judo), in his teachings, emphasised the concept of maximum efficiency / minimum effort. This is evident, as the crux of many Judo techniques is not necessarily brute force, but using your opponent's movements and strength against him or her. While physical strength and size are important, mental strength is probably the most vital factor in competition.

14. Your child will be well co-ordinated (and we're not talking about Fashion) When you're using your opponent's moves against him or her, timing is everything. Many of the throws in Judo will simply not work if you don't time them correctly. Feet, hands, hips and head all need to move in fluid and exact timed motions to properly execute a throw (which is why an *Ippon* – or full point – is so hard to achieve in competition). As your child practises he or she will learn more complex throws and, in turn, will demonstrate better reflexes and co-ordination as a result.

15. Judo is Universal Unlike many other martial arts, Judo techniques and principles are practically universal. There are well over a hundred member countries in the International Judo Federation, and it has held Olympic status since 1964. Although the styles of teaching and ranking and promotion standards may vary slightly from club to club – Judo is Judo is Judo. Which helps your child stick with it, even into adulthood, as it will never be hard to find a *dojo* to train in.

We offer a free trial session for new starters, so you don't need to make a huge financial commitment up front if you feel that it isn't for your child.

In conclusion, Judo is a wonderful alternative to team sports that will provide your children with not only an excellent physical workout, but also act as a vehicle to provide them with a mental and emotional workout as well. We look forward to seeing you.