

## Kata Is Like A Textbook

By [Buzz Champion](#)

Judging by some articles practitioners of the martial arts are beginning to seriously look at their arts and asking the question - is what I am being taught really self-defense or just an oriental art form?

What's more, they're asking why you do this and that technique. Rather than just following blindly from one technique to another because someone tells them its so.

This is not to say there is anything wrong with their particular martial art just the way they have been viewed or interpreted.

Of course, it all depends on what you are training for in the first place. Are you doing it just to keep fit or as a sport? But for those of us who may need it for something more practical because of your job or environment then studying a martial art or some other combative system that offers you the best possible chance of surviving a bad situation is your best bet.

Even so, unfortunately, many instructors of various systems are only capable for what ever reason, in teaching young and active trainees and do not teach traditional kata at all. Believing, wrongly in my opinion that kata has no place in a modern day combative system.

Therefore, the very people who need practical training such as: senior citizens, women, girls, small and weak individuals are left behind.

However, I would like to suggest a somewhat different approach to kata training, "The Urban Warrior."

It's a fact; the person who survives on the street is not necessarily the fastest, nor the smartest or the strongest. It's the species that is most able to adapt.

That's why, as a traditional martial artist you must first realize that many of the techniques you have learned in the controlled atmosphere of the dojo will not work on today's mean streets where there are no rules and no second chances. I'm sorry to disappoint you but after all, we are dealing with reality here.

Don't get me wrong I firmly believe the traditional martial arts has much to offer all the souls that take up the challenge. But please understand we live in the 21st century not in the feudal times of ancient Japan.

Moreover, those modern fighting systems that do not include kata in their training program are actually doing a disservice to their trainees. Why? Because as we get older training gets harder simply because of the natural ageing of the body flashy high kicks, reflexes, stamina, strength to name just a few, make it almost impossible to take part in the intensive training programs required in some fighting systems.

In other words, your joints start to weaken and your muscles get smaller and less flexible, muscle tears and strains become commonplace. However, traditional kata transcends all the above and actually allows you to train into old age. You just have to relax when doing the techniques and it will give you an all round body workout.

In contrast, if there is no kata within the system the trainees have nothing left, no tradition, no solid foundation which in the end leads to no training and nothing to fall back on when they get older and frailer which inevitably they will.

On the other hand, those of us who have continued to train in traditional kata as part of our training regime can continue to fully exercise our mind, body and spirit right into old age.

Imagine, you can carry on training in the very techniques found within the kata real self defense moves not watered down sports kicks or blows designed to score points or removed from the system because they were to dangerous.

Remember, the ancient masters developed kata or formal exercises to preserve their unique combat proven fighting systems.

Of course, there are many differing views on the value of kata. Nevertheless, it's origins can be found in the very nature of fighting, including more than a thousand years of trial and error based on practical experience as well as keen observations about combat between animals and man against man.

Kata is regarded by some as the very "soul" of martial arts. By others as a complete waste of time and today many modern fighting systems do not even include kata in their training curriculum.

But, if kata weren't useful, it certainly would not have lasted very long after its inception. If then, kata training is not critical to developing fighting skill, why do so many traditional systems like karate make such a big deal about it?

Conversely, karateka who ignore the lessons of kata inadvertently practice karate as a participant. No matter what system you train in kata provides a living link back to that system. Plus, it defines as a way to record and summarize the key combative techniques and principles of a fighting style, without it the system is an empty shell. Powerful hidden applications of a kata Okuden Waza.

When modern day practitioners of any combative system or martial art choose not to bother with kata, they often do so in the name of realism. What they fail to appreciate is that by abandoning kata they have effectively abandoned the very syllabus of their original fighting system.

In comparison, individuals who learn the arts strategy and diligently practice its kata can learn real world fighting applications to defend themselves in a real-world self-defense situation. Kata is like a textbook; it contains all the applications you need to know in order to be able to defend yourself in combat. Just seek and you will find.

Although, having said all that, kata is useless unless you learn how to apply it in actual self-defense situations using realistic scenario based training.

It's also true that there are advanced practical applications within each kata. But here's the kicker, you can find and add your own unique applications to the moves within the kata. Of course this does not mean you alter the kata in any way. No, far from it just add your own combat applications to the moves already there within the kata.

Above all, this will help you analyze and understand what the kata is trying to tell you allowing you to utilize the self-defense fighting techniques more effectively. It also helps bridge the gap between form and street applications in an easy to apply manner.

Vision is the art of seeing the invisible.

One way to validate that your interpretation of a kata technique is suitable is to ensure that it fits within your systems overall strategy.

Look at it this way, you can use its tactics to analyze your techniques to determine the best applications for a given situation. Don't think because you don't have complete understanding you should never assume that the movements have no meaning or function. You must interpret the moves in your own way with intent.

Kata training will help you better understand the concepts and strategies when you add your own effective techniques into your kata training. Exactly what it is intended to do in the first place.

In conclusion, kata training will not only build within you a strong foundation for the future it will give you many more years of being able to train in your chosen system keeping your mind and body active and aware of maintaining the correct mindset for self defense.

All the resources we need are in the mind.

It's worth remembering, that a number of exceptional men and women discovered the true secret of kata training and went on to become known as the greatest karate and martial arts people who ever lived.

In the past, masters of their arts had to ensure that their kata would work in actual combat so the practical uses of kata does relate to the traditional and modern aspects of fighting and self defense as some of them actually fought to the death.

The secrets of kata have travelled across centuries to reach you. It has been discovered, coveted, suppressed, hidden, lost and recovered.

The result, kata is the powerful soul of karate and many other fighting arts and the true knowledge has run like a golden thread through the lives and teachings of all great karateka and martial artists in history.

That's why, when you are seventy years old or beyond you'll still be as tough as ever.

About the author; Buzz Champion is a Urban Close Combat instructor. He is the author of a very useful and informative new self defense and awareness guide that will teach every woman how to avoid or defend herself against an unprovoked violent attack in the home at work or in the street.

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