

Kumite (組手) means [sparring](#), and is one of the three main sections of [karate](#) training, along with [kata](#) and [kihon](#). Kumite is the part of karate in which you train against an [adversary](#), using the techniques learnt from the kihon and kata. Kumite can be used to develop a particular technique or a [skill](#) (e.g. effectively judging and adjusting your distance from your opponent) or it can be done in [competition](#)

Since the word "kumite" refers to forms of sparring, it covers a vast range of activities. In traditional [karate](#), the first type of kumite for beginners is *gohon kumite*. The defender steps back each time, [blocking](#) the attacks and performing a [counterattack](#) after the last block. This activity looks nothing like the *jiyu kumite* (or "free sparring") practiced by more advanced practitioners, which is far closer to how karate would look if used in a real [fight](#), especially because it is not choreographed. Karate and other forms of martial arts have various other types of kumite (e.g. 3-step, 1-step, semi-free, etc.) which span this large range in styles of practice.

Types of Kumite

- *Ippon kumite* - one step sparring, typically used for self defense drills
- *Sanbon kumite* - three step sparring, typically used to develop speed, strength, and technique
- *Kiso kumite* - structured sparring drawn from a kata
- *Jiyu kumite* - free sparring

Many schools feel it is important that karateka "pull their punches". Karate training is designed to give its practitioners the ability to deliver devastating power through techniques like [punches](#) and [kicks](#). Often the aim of training is that each single strike should be enough to subdue the opponent. However, this clearly would make it difficult to train due to the possibility of injury. Many beginners, while sparring, will be instructed to develop control and accuracy first, then speed and power later. In doing this, it may seem like the student is pulling his punches, when actually, he is developing technique first. For injury purposes, certain targets are discouraged, like strikes to the knee and face contact for low ranks. Many schools prohibit strikes to the groin, while others allow it completely. Some schools might limit contact to light contact all around, while others may employ power usage based on rank.

Some karate schools focus more on sparring whilst wearing [protective gear](#) so that strikes can be delivered with their full power. Most karate clubs and most styles of karate make use of some sparring with control and some sparring with protective gear (from just [gloves](#) and feet gear up to full head and even chest guards such as with Tae Kwon Do). Even in full contact karate, punches are often "pulled" to some slight extent in training to minimize the occurrence of injuries that would interrupt practice for the participating students, but usually that will depend on rank, age, gender and school. Nevertheless, it is believed by many that practicing either type of sparring allows the martial artist to develop both control and experience in delivering powerful strikes against an opponent. However, many practitioners of full contact karate believe that full contact/full force strikes and kicks should be employed as much as possible because they believe that "pulling" the strikes can have a negative effect on the striking power of the karate practitioner.

However, a few more traditional clubs that never use protective gear for sparring (except groin and mouth guards that protect against accidental injuries) argue that a karateka will not be able to make their most powerful strike when sparring in the [dojo](#) (against a friend whom they no doubt do not want to injure) even if this opponent is wearing protective clothing. Therefore, the karateka will still be using some level of control, as is obviously necessary, and cannot truly capture the spirit of one lethal strike whilst sparring. Except for a life or death self-defense situation, the spirit and power of the single lethal strike can only be achieved when a karateka does not have to avoid injuring their training partner. The traditionalists therefore argue that there is no benefit to sparring with more forceful strikes. **From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia**

