



Consumer Awareness Guide to Choosing a Martial Arts School

Discover:

- *The 5 misconceptions of the martial arts*
- *The 5 questions to ask any martial arts instructor/owner and*
- *The 5 greatest rip-offs in martial arts and how to avoid them*
- *The new standard for martial arts schools and training*

This is the guide that most martial arts schools, owners and non-professionals hope you never read!

By Mel H Abraham

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Mel Abraham's Consumer Education Message

Hi! This is Mel Abraham. Thanks very much for your interest. I am grateful and honored to have the opportunity to provide you with information about the martial arts and to help you choose a qualified martial arts school for your child or family.

I am a speaker, author, coach and a two-time inductee into the U.S. Martial Arts Hall of Fame as well as the owner of PUMA Karate. More importantly, I am a father that realizes the importance of positive influences, role models and training for children, especially in today's world. I have been in the martial arts for well over 3 decades and during that time I have seen many horror stories occur where families, parents and children who were misinformed or uninformed about martial arts schools end up being taken for a lot of money with little if any results. Or worse yet, with negative results.

I decided to offer this consumer education message so when you select a martial arts school for your family or child, you can make an informed intelligent decision. Through my studies in psychology, success strategies, Neuro-Strategies and influence communication and my experience as a coach and advisor I have found that certain factors and characteristics are necessary to increase the likelihood of success in life.

Unfortunately, I have also seen the unscrupulous tactics; misleading representations and the lack of qualifications of instructors combined with the sheer naiveté of the consumer have a damaging effect on the child, the family and ultimately society. It is my desire that before you make an **investment** in any martial arts program or training, to provide you with the education so you, your child and your family will never have these negative experiences. I use the term "investment" because by working with a qualified school with properly trained and educated instructors it will be an investment in your child's future that will pay dividends for their life time. The value derived in the

long-term from a qualified school and instructor far surpasses any cost associated with it.

Where to begin?

I know that just the thought of looking for a martial arts school can be overwhelming and daunting, let alone finding the best for your child.

Does the thought of your child gaining self confidence, self respect, respect for others and an "I can do it" attitude interest you? Are these the character traits you would like to see in your child? If so, I think you're going to find the rest of this presentation very interesting.

Why? Because over the next several minutes you'll discover the answers to the five costly misconceptions parents like you have about choosing a martial arts school for their child. You will also learn the five greatest rip-offs and key critical questions to ask a school before you make a commitment to join one.

Unfortunately, without this information many people wind up choosing a poorly qualified martial arts school and sometimes even worse having such a negative experience that martial arts is something they never try again. However, luckily, armed with the information you're about to discover in the rest of this presentation you can rest assured knowing that the martial arts school you do choose for your family and the experience you will have will be phenomenal.

What most parents don't realize about martial arts is that having a good experience and reaping its tremendous character building benefits has as much to do with the school you choose to join as it does with the instructors themselves.

This is why the same diligence and research should go into choosing a martial arts school that goes into choosing the right academic school for your child. After all,

martial arts training can have lifelong positive benefits or negative consequences on your child depending on your choice in schools.

The benefits of an appropriately focused after-school program can go far beyond what meets the eye. Just the same, the negative impacts can also go far beyond the eye.

Quality after-school programs can have far-reaching benefits. Though not always immediately evident, the benefits for students include increased learning, improved health, increased exposure to career choices, and enhanced social and psychological development. (U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, 1998).

Additionally, during my studies for my certification as a Master Practitioner in Neuro-linguistic Strategies I learned about something called the "imprint period". By understanding the effects of the imprint period we gain a better understanding of the importance and the influence that we as parents and role models have on our children, early in their life. Once you have an understanding of these elements you can't help but be more selective of the activities, organizations, coaches, and people your children are exposed to.

The imprint period is from birth to about age 7 and is the time when your child is like a sponge. They pick up and store everything that goes on in our environment. The basic programming occurs between the ages of 2 to 6, by which time the bulk of the programming is complete. They also get their basic programming which includes drivers and the script at about this age.

During this period the child unconsciously picks up the parents' behavior as well as the behaviors of those powerful and influential people they are exposed to regularly. Imprints established during these periods establish core beliefs that shape the personality and intelligence of the individual.

If imprints only affected your behavior, they would be relatively easy to change. Every day, you keep practicing a new behavior and after about 21 days (although this can be accelerated through Neuro-Strategies), you have a new behavior pattern that replaces your old pattern.

If imprints only affected the level of your capabilities, then going for an intense program that improved your capability to function would help give you a new sense of ability in a particular area. This is the highest level at which most self improvement program work.

There is also a secondary developmental stage which is from ages 7 to 14 called the "modeling period". In the modeling period the child, both consciously and unconsciously, begins to model the behaviors of people around them. Until around the age of seven, most children do not distinguish between self and parents.

However around eight years of age the child begins to separate enough to notice the differences between self and parents. Now he or she develops awareness of other people. They begin to model or emulate the behavior of their heroes and/or people who they look up to in their life. Certain mental filters such as individual values begin to form at this age.

The child is beginning to form a sense of self...an identity of their own. From eleven to thirteen they play around with different roles and different ways of being based upon their favorite role models.

This is why finding a highly qualified, professionally run martial arts school is so important. Unfortunately, though, this is not always easy.

Finding a qualified school amongst the sea of so-called martial arts practitioners out there who will help your child instead of damage your child, as well as conduct themselves professionally, can be quite tricky, so how do you ensure you chose the right martial arts school.

Well, let's first cover the five costly misconceptions parents have when choosing a martial arts school and then we'll cover the five greatest rip-offs to avoid and the five critical questions to ask a school before you make a commitment to join one.

1. Many parents believe that martial arts promotes violence when, in fact, quite the opposite is true. Although martial arts does teach kicking, punching and blocking, a professional martial arts school with the right perspective, values and philosophy uses it more as an vehicle for teaching life skills, such as, increased confidence, self esteem, discipline, energy and spirit, academic success, avoiding peer pressure, staying fit,

living a healthy lifestyle, leadership, communication and being a force for good at home and in the community. Yes all of this comes through learning how to kick, punch and block.

Let's look further at this to understand the significance of the proper martial arts training. Your child's first and biggest challenge is not from fighting for his or her rights on the street or being beat up by the neighborhood bully, but it comes instead from battling more sinister forces, **his or her own fears and self doubt.**

The big and most important question for a parent is - ***How do you get your child to fight these things AND win?*** Here is the challenge you face as a parent. Your child has a rough time even telling you they are haunted by them, never mind how they might conquer them. Well, the good news is properly educated and trained martial arts instructors in a professional martial arts school will teach this and all the other benefits I mentioned above as well as how and when to hit and practical ways to control anger.

2. The second misconception parents have about martial arts is that there must be one specific style that is the best for your child to learn and that's not true at all. It is not the style or art that determines whether your child develops physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially. It is more important to find a school with properly trained instructors, and a integrated curriculum that develops your child and their character in many ways that ultimately impact all areas of their life including school, home, family and interpersonal skills to name a few. For instance, the right martial arts school could teach stranger danger, bully safe skills, character development, goal setting, self defense, on the ground self defense, verbal interaction skills, wrist locks and control techniques with pressure points. A professionally well run martial arts school should be able to provide these benefits in their program and, in fact, they really are essential.
3. The next misconception parents have about martial arts schools is that all schools teach eastern religious views in their program. Although some schools may teach from this perspective most schools leave the religion to the families to teach and their program teaches martial arts techniques as just physical techniques. Additionally,

instead of eastern religion or mysticism their emphasis is on strong morals and strong values such as honesty, integrity, self discipline, gratitude, family values, friendship and much more.

4. The fourth misconception is a real worry for most parents and it has to do with getting hurt during martial arts training because a free sparring or fighting for points. Let's face it, any physical or contact sport has the possibility of injury, however, the right and professionally run martial arts school will have very few injuries. They will control the environment to have safety as one of the primary goals. The physical safety is much easier today given all of the protective gear available. However, safety goes well beyond equipment and here is where school policy and the instructors training and knowledge play a vital role in your child's safety. The environment in a properly run school with properly trained instructors will be one where your child feels safe both physically and psychologically.

Further, in the schools where free sparring is used it is imperative that the student have the appropriate foundation of training before participating in this type of training. Too many times a nonprofessional school will have the students start to spar even after their first couple of weeks of training.

Now, how crazy is that? How can anyone, let alone a child, be expected to spar when they don't even know how to block or defend? Typically they haven't even developed the control with their body to be able to throw kicks and punches properly either. This is where choosing the right school is critical. Martial arts' training, if conducted properly, is very safe and can build tremendous character.

5. The last misconception is a little more sensitive. Why? Because it has to do with your pocketbook; some parents believe that if a martial arts school costs less and has a shorter time commitment that they can get the same training for less money and they don't have to make a long-term commitment. Now, I won't go into specific pricing here due to the differences that exist around the country. I will say you should get the prices for each of the schools you visit. However, only use them as a guide, and not necessarily a major criterion for your choice. Finding the right school for your child

and their overall growth and character development is the primary goal. Remember when your parents would say, you get what you pay for?

So if the better school costs a few dollars more a month it's well worth it. Remember, listen to your parents. It is also important to focus on the value provided through the growth of your child in the areas of self confidence, self respect, respect for others and an "I can do it" attitude. These character traits are absolutely priceless and will serve your child for the rest of their lives. When your child trains in a qualified martial arts school with properly trained and educated instructors, the fees you pay are an investment in your child's future. This investment will pay lifelong dividends. Focus on the investment and the return you will see in your child.

You see, the average child in a well run martial arts school will participate for many years. But in a poorly run school, one that lacks motivation, has only a regimented attitude, one that is boring or has unplanned classes, or is simply just too difficult, the average child may only stay for a few months.

Many schools offer programs ranging from one month to several years in duration. Now, provided your child has attended an introductory session I would recommend a course of 9-12 months initially and after completing three months to one year of the initial beginners program you can then extend to a 3-4 year black belt program.

I do not recommend month-to-month programs at a school for many reasons. The reality is that a properly educated and trained martial arts instructor understands the importance of the many character building benefits a child will get in a good martial arts school. They also understand that Rome wasn't built in a day and a child will need time to eat, digest and become nourished from these benefits. It would be horrible to steal from a child the chance to develop their self confidence, self respect, respect for others and a chance to learn how to have an "I can do it" attitude by enrolling them in a short-term course. Remember to focus on the life-long value your child will benefit from when trained by an educated and qualified instructor in the right martial arts school.

Your child certainly needs to try things out first to see if they will like them, and most new students will quit during the first year of training if their parents don't make a commitment for them to stay. And here's why. The initial excitement and intrigue may wear off. The student may realize that the training is slightly more difficult than they thought it was going to be, or they may hit a plateau in their development or training that they believe they can't overcome. These plateaus whether in the martial arts school or in other areas of their life will and can be overcome through persistent consistent effort and with the proper coaching and guidance provided by a properly educated and trained instructor.

A properly trained instructor understands how to navigate through the plateaus and how to psychologically motivate your child to continue their growth through all 4 stages of learning. The 4 stages of learning are:

- Unconsciously incompetent
- Consciously incompetent
- Consciously competent
- Unconsciously competent

Everyone goes through these various stages of learning anytime they are learning something new – be it tying their shoes, walking, music or the martial arts. The challenge is that many will quit before they actually get to stage 4. A qualified instructor (we will discuss certifications later) will be better suited to work with your child to support their growth through each of these stages.

Here is another key. In a good program when a child gets past the first year of training, they will typically stay for a long time. And this is where you will start to see even greater growth in your child. This is why they need both the commitment and support of their parents and their instructor not for the short-term, but for the long haul. I firmly believe that if an instructor is properly educated and really understands the benefits of the martial arts they will refuse to offer short-term programs. As I said before, good character traits can't be built in a day just as Rome wasn't.

Now for the 5 greatest rip-offs to watch out for...

1. **Bait and switch** - There are schools that bring you in on a short-term program. This program usually does not include all of their training, and once your child gets entrenched into the school and gets to a certain point in the program or training, they tell you that you need to upgrade to another level to continue training or to get all of the training available. This is unfair to you and your child. It has an emotional impact on your child and a financial impact on you, and more importantly doesn't demonstrate the integrity that should exist in a professional martial arts school. This would also place in question the schools ability to provide the appropriate character development for your child since they, themselves do not aspire to that.
2. **Guaranteed outcomes** - There are schools that try tell you before they ever see your child train that they will be a black belt in a certain period of time be it 1 year, 2 years or even 3 years. The reality is that any school that makes that kind of promise is solely focused on taking your money because typically they are asking for the full amount of the fees up front to pay for the program. Training in the martial arts is an individual developmental program, which means that each and every student develops at their own pace. And since a professionally run school with qualified and trained instructors is focused on developing the whole person including their character, their confidence, their self-esteem, their determination, their focus and not only punches and kicks, it is impossible to give this type of guarantee, especially if they are truly focused on the well-being of the child. There are simply too many variables involved such as how much your child trains, the frequency of training, the focus during training, the amount of time spent practicing and more importantly, the instructors that are training them.
3. **No Lineage** - Unfortunately the martial arts industry is not regulated and anyone can call themselves a master, instructor or even a black belt without actually having earned these distinctions from a licensing organization. Many people have simply self-ranked themselves without testing, ongoing training or any tie to a certified ranking

body. These ranking bodies are typically in Japan, Korea, Brazil, Hawaii or China tied to the headquarters where the art was founded usually many decades ago. To make sure that your child is trained by a properly trained instructor in a certified school you should be able to see the lineage of the instructor back to the founder of the art. If this is not the case, your child will be getting something other than the traditions of the martial arts. It may be some form of fighting art but it will not be a martial art with all of the developmental aspects of character, respect and integrity that go along with a true lineage.

- 4. No Certifications** – Most martial arts instructors are simply black belts that decide to teach with no training and background in teaching, communication, motivation or coaching. Just because someone is a good martial artist, does not make them a good teacher, coach or guide for your child and in many case they are not, without additional training. As a result, the focus is more on teaching physical techniques versus working with developing the child as whole person including character, self esteem, confidence, focus, determination and an “I can do it attitude”. In order for your child to truly develop and grow useable life skills through a martial arts program, the instructor should have had additional training and certifications in communication, psychology, character development and leadership skills to name a few.
- 5. Child Black Belt** – There are schools that have given black belts in less than two years or to children as young as 7 years old. Frankly, this is just plain crazy. If the focus of a program is to develop the child as a whole person including character, self esteem, confidence, focus, determination and an “I can do it attitude” as well as to learn the many techniques proficiently, their chronological maturity needs to be factored in. Be sure that many children are very talented physically and may be able to do the techniques but have they been able to at such a young age or short time develop the appropriate mindset, strength and demeanor to use it (if needed) or to make appropriate choices in these types of situations. You see the black belt is far greater than the demonstration of technique proficiency, it is who they become in the process because black belt is a journey that leads to more journeys and doesn't not end at black belt.

OK So How Do I Find a School?

Well, by now you're wondering how in the world do I choose the right school for me and my family. Well, there are two ways that you can go about doing this – the old approach and the new approach. The new approach is the one we recommend. However, so you can make an informed decision let's talk about both.

First you need to do your research on all the schools in your area. What do I mean by that? Well, first you need to look them all up on the web and in the phone book and write them all down on a sheet of paper.

Next you need to call them all and ask them five specific questions.

1. Question number one is, "***Do you have age specific programs that target my child's age?***" You see, in an age specific program your child will train in an environment that is just right for them. They will train with other children in their age group and not have to be limited or overwhelmed by younger or older children.
2. Question number two is, "***Do you have a free introductory program?***" It's important that you and your child get to try out the school for at least a class or two for free in order to know if that school is right for you.
3. The third question you need to ask the schools is, "***Do children ever fail a test during the first six to twelve months of training?***" Properly run schools should have systems in place that make it almost impossible for a child to fail, at least initially. The reality is in the beginning of your child's training his or her attitude is more important than the martial arts techniques and, obviously, failing a test for a new student does nothing for high esteem and self confidence. Now, I am not advocating that a child should not fail if they don't know their stuff or be held accountable for their own results, but a well run school should have little to none of that.

4. The next question to ask is, "***Do the instructors work from a structured lesson plan and may I see it?***" Most martial arts instructors wing it. Some are great black belts, but when it comes to organizing a structured learning environment they don't have a clue. Why is this important? Well, if you think back to some of your favorite teachers in school or college, what made him or her great in your eyes? It was not how much they knew was it? No it was how much they could motivate you to learn, plus they probably had a structured lesson plan that they worked from and were not winging it.
5. Lastly, you must ask, "***Do you just teach kicking and punching or do you have a systemized character development program to teach and build strong character in and out of the karate school? And if yes, may I see it?***" The right school and a properly educated instructor will teach much more than just kicking, punching and blocking. While some schools will tell you they teach character development and some do. The majority of them have no clue how they do it because they don't have a formal structured curriculum or approach to character education nor do they have training in character education. Certainly implicit in any martial arts training is some level of character development, but most schools stop there and this really means that they're teaching character development by chance and not by design. You want to make sure that the school you choose is not just a kick and punch school teaching character development by chance, but one that teaches character development by design with a structured character development program.

Now, once you've done your research and have chosen the schools that can answer all of the questions "yes", the next step is to visit them. Arrange a consultation with schools in your area that fit the criteria and interview each school to verify if what they said on the phone and what you see in front of you is the same thing. Again, you want to make sure you only work with a highly qualified school.

Lastly, if you choose to take this approach to finding a school you'll want to take an introductory lesson with all the schools and discuss a bit about why you think martial arts would benefit your child. This is a crucial step in the selection process.

Finally, once you've done all your research and have narrowed it down to the one school that is best for your child and one school owner qualified enough to deliver it for you, you can then

proceed with confidence. But, again, if you choose to go this research route be sure you've truly taken your time and done your due diligence.

Now, if this approach to finding a highly qualified martial arts school who can deliver all the things that you are looking for seems like a tremendous amount of work, you're not alone. Most people feel the same way about finding a martial arts school on their own, which is the exact reason why we recommend using the new approach to ensure you have the best possible martial arts experience for your child and family.

The New Approach is a Better Way

The new approach is simple, quick and doesn't require any research on your part. What is it? It's working side-by-side with properly trained instructors at PUMA Karate and here's why. Because we have done all the research and hard work for you of training the absolutely most qualified instructors in your area, you can feel comfortable knowing that the instructors selected to build your child up in our school has been properly and thoroughly trained formally (in the martial arts, communication skills and character development). They are complete professionals and have had plenty of hands-on experience working with a variety of students.

And, best of all, using the experienced professional martial arts instructor at our school ensures that you have **the** best martial arts training experience possible. Because we've done all of the selection work for you, you don't have to make any phone calls to schools, schedule time consuming interviews or worry about whether you're making the right decision. We have done all of the work for you. All that's left for you is to enjoy the tremendous physical, emotional and mental benefits of professional martial arts school and instructors.

The Next Step...

If that's something you're interested in doing here's what you should do right now. Simply go to this link www.PUMAKarate.com/consultation and fill out the form a complimentary martial arts consultation certificate and introductory course. You'll instantly be given the certificate that allows you to take advantage of a risk free consultation in our school to make sure you're

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"I Can Do
It
Attitude!!

comfortable with us. Once you fill out the form and receive your instant martial arts certificate simply pick up the phone and call our school at **805.578.2401** to schedule your appointment; otherwise, we will contact you within the next business day at the number you provided. We will find the most convenient appointment for you possible.

So go ahead, fill out the form and call us, then get ready to experience the best change of your life.

About the Author - Mel is a CPA with over two decades of experience as a financial expert, valuation expert and business and success strategist. Mel is a Success Strategy Coach and Master Practitioner in Neuro-Linguistic Strategies. Mel is regularly sought after for consulting and valuation engagements around the country such as family limited partnerships, co-tenant interest valuations, operating businesses as well as various entities. These projects have ranged from small family owned businesses to large \$1.7 billion companies.



He has been involved in martial arts for over 3 decades and is the owner of PUMA Karate in Simi Valley, CA as well as a two-time inductee into the **United States Martial Arts Hall of Fame**. He is also the Founder and President of **The SAVE Foundation**, a nonprofit charitable organization that provides programs and funding to assist those that have been or may be victims of abuse and violence as well as raise the public awareness to the problem and educate them in prevention. He is the creator of the much in demand program, **Entrepreneurship & Smart Business**. This educational program shows you how true value is created in businesses. It helps identify people's potential as well as blind spots as an entrepreneur and provide an understanding of the traits that "Synergistically Successful" entrepreneurs possess.

He has also created or authored numerous articles, seminars, multi-media digital products and books including *A Healthier You*, (with Deepak Chopra and Billy Blanks) and *Masters on Success*, (with Ken Blanchard, Jack Canfield and John Christensen).

This guide combines Mel's many years of experience as a business person, entrepreneur, coach, success strategist and speaker to identify the keys to success in a martial arts school. It is meant to quickly guide a parent through the selection process. It will make sure they have the information to make an appropriate decision to easily avoid the typical "nightmares" of the wrong martial arts schools and to assure not only a good experience for your child but to allow your child to thrive and grow their "life skills" through their martial arts training.

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