

How to start a Martial Arts Club - Introduction

This guide is intended for anyone thinking of starting a new community Martial Arts club - for adults or juniors. It takes you through some of the questions and processes that you need to consider if you are to establish a successful new club.

STEP 1: CHECK FOR EXISTING CLUBS IN THE AREA

There's little point in duplicating something that already exists. So, no matter how good your ideas are for a new club, please do first check around to see how many similar clubs already exists in your town or neighbourhood, try to keep to an area where there is little or no styles same as your proposed club. Some places to start include:

- Check our [Club Finder](#)
- Local library and other information centres who are likely to maintain directories of local clubs
- Local newspapers, to see if there are any reports from established clubs

STEP 2: IS THERE REASONABLE DEMAND FOR A CLUB?

There is a minimum number of people required to make any club viable. This number very much depends on the nature of your Martial Art. You can probably start a new club with just four or five people.

You probably know two or three other people who share your interest in forming a new club. Now is the time to build a list of potential members. At this stage you're not asking people for subscriptions or training commitments; you want to build a potential membership list of people who might join any new club.

There are many ways of doing this:

- Organise an open day demonstration and publicise it well through the local papers, sports centres and other outlets
- For a junior club, talk to the Schools coordinators in your local schools
- Publish your ideas in local papers and ask people to get in touch
- Arrange a leaflet distribution around the estate or community and ask people to get in touch with you.

STEP 3: ASK FOR HELP FROM NGB'S & LA'S

There are three organisations that should be able to help you as each of them is committed to helping develop sport throughout the community. You should make contact with each of them, and find out what practical help they can offer. They are:

- NGB's whose role is to help local clubs

- The [Local Authority](#) which is likely to have a sports or leisure department; they can help with the hiring or letting of sports facilities; they may have small grants for new clubs; and their officers may be able to give you practical advice.
- The [County Sports Partnership](#) brings together many local sports clubs; there is a wealth of expertise that you can draw on here to help you get off to the best start.

Make sure you speak to each of these groups in the early stages of forming your new club.

STEP 4: PUT THE BASICS IN PLACE

Whilst some small clubs can manage with just one person running the show, As your club grows it's usually a good idea to recruit a few people to form a small club committee. This helps to spread the load by dividing out the tasks, and also brings different ideas and skills into your club. Once you give your club a name and form a committee, you have effectively become what is known as an 'unincorporated association'. With a simple constitution and some club officers you can then open a bank account to manage your club's money. You can find information below which may help you make these important decisions:

- Have a Club Registration Form in place
- Have an Accident Report Form in place
- Gain Health and Safety awareness

This section of the [Club Mark website](#) explains more about becoming an unincorporated association and whether you might also consider becoming a charity or a recognised 'Community Amateur Sports Club'.

This section on [Constitutions](#) gives you some downloadable templates that you can edit to suit your needs and also gives info on roles within a club.

As your club grows, you may need to consider other legal structures but you can return to these in due course. Of course, no club can exist without a group of active and enthusiastic volunteers to keep it going.

STEP 5: SECURE THE INITIAL FUNDING AND FACILITIES

This can be one of the hardest parts of getting started. Most clubs begin with initial funds from the Club Instructor or subscribed by the members and then realise that they need additional monies and resources if they are to become successful. There are probably more sources of help than you have imagined.

The range of Funding options includes club-based fund-raising activities, local authority support, Awards for All, sponsorship, other Lottery funds, and collaborative agreements with other sports bodies. See our Documents page for some ideas on getting funding.

STEP 6: GET AN ATTRACTIVE SPORTS PROGRAMME GOING

What brings people into clubs and an interesting and enjoyable programme of sport? So the first thing you need to focus on is getting your syllabus programme together. Depending on your members, you'll need to decide whether to pitch your activities at novices, juniors, seniors, or both, it can be hard to sustain motivation. As your club grows, you will probably want to develop a more coherent 'student pathway' to encourage progression from recreational or novice students to more competitive and experienced ones. Don't forget that many members also enjoy the social side of any club and the opportunity to make new friends; your programme may include social activities as well as training activities.

STEP 7: JOIN LOCAL COMPETITIONS AND LEAGUES

Many of the more experienced players will want to have some competitive activities and for this you're likely to have to look outside your own club. With sufficient members, you can organise your own internal club leagues, ladders and competitions. In many sports and localities there are also inter-club leagues and competitions where you can play against other teams and individuals.

For an excellent guide check out the IMASA website's "Calendar" page for Events and Competitions

STEP 8: DEVELOP SUPPORTIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Whilst most members don't want to spend too much time on club administration, there is a certain level of procedural work that you will need to do if the club is to keep running along smoothly. Some of the questions that you may be faced with include:

- Who do we want to encourage to join us as members?
- Are we going to involve juniors in our club?
- If we do have children and young people, how do we protect them?
- What are the health and safety considerations that affect our sport, our use of equipment, and our premises and facilities?
- How do we support the volunteers that are contributing to our club?

IMASA holds a yearly Coaching Workshop – Highly recommended for new Club Instructors.

STEP 9: START TO PLAN FOR THE LONG TERM SUCCESS

If your club just keeps the same members and doesn't review its activities, it runs the risk of becoming static and eventually withering away as members drift off. A healthy club is one that has a regular influx of new members and a periodic change

in office-bearers on the committee. It has a mix of recreational, competitive and social activities. And it's regularly thinking about the future.

You don't have to be ambitious, provided you keep reviewing whether your club is doing what current and potential future members actually want. If you look around at other clubs, you'll find that they may be recruiting more younger members (the full members of the future), looking to expand their facilities, starting new competitions or attending out of club competitions, or providing more training and coaching for their members. There are many options for developing your club - you just need to decide which is the most appropriate.

STEP 10: HAVE FUN AND CELEBRATE YOUR SUCCESSES!

It can be hard work as well as rewarding to be involved in the establishment and running of a community sports club. So don't forget to take time out to enjoy it and celebrate all your successes:

- Create your own club competitions and award medals and trophies to the winners
- Keep a photographic record of your activities, and publish details in your member newsletters
- Organise some social events that bring members together across all ability levels
- Host an annual dinner or awards ceremony to provide a focal point for recognising the achievements of your members and your club.
- Speak the language of the young and Embrace Social Media, Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, and YouTube.

Also check out the Codes of Conduct on our "Document" page.