

## **What Black Belt Means to Me**

I have been studying karate for half my life! I can't even remember a time when I didn't study karate. Attending classes, practicing drills and working with Sensei and my friends has become a normal part of my life. Now, there will be a new normal. The bar will be set a little higher and expectations will be raised. Fortunately, the knowledge, perseverance, discipline, and leadership skills that I have been accumulating make me confident that I am ready to meet the challenge of a black belt. Here are examples of how I learned these skills.

Perseverance is the steady persistence in a course of action, especially in spite of discouragement. At the karate tournament, last year, I was distracted during my kata and was disqualified. I was very disappointed and tried so hard not to cry. A sensei that I knew from Shugyo, came and spoke to me and that cheered me up. Sensei and Ms. Kimberlie told me how proud they were of me for the way I had handled the disqualification. Surprisingly, my outlook changed and I knew I had to concentrate on how to learn from my mistake. I will persevere and do better at the next tournament.

Karate classes develop discipline. Attending class twice a week and giving one hundred percent is hard when I have a lot of homework or I'm tired and just feeling lazy. It's important to plan my homework schedule ahead of time because regular attendance helps improve and develop skills.

People typically think that karate is just kicking and punching, but it is much more than that. Technical knowledge is necessary for fully learning a martial art. In class, we do learn how to kick and punch, but we also learn Kata, Bunkai, Kumite and sparing. Memorizing this

choreography, along with the techniques gets more difficult at each belt level. At first it is not easy, but after a couple of months I have it memorized.

My leadership role at the dojo will change when I get my junior black belt because I will have to set an example for the kohai in the dojo. They will look to me and the five other junior black belts to understand how a black belt should act. I can continue to set an example in class, at karate summer camp and karate fun night. Hopefully, they will follow in my footsteps and strive to also become black belts.

My six years of hard work have paid off and I am now extremely proud of my accomplishment. When I was an orange belt, I remember that I wanted to quit karate. Sensei spoke to me privately encouraging me to reconsider. I cried, but followed his advice, and I am so glad I did. I have accomplished so much more than just learning karate with Sensei Quimby. My self-esteem, and my confidence have grown due to karate and my ideas of respect and honor have deepened. This is a special day for me as I celebrate all the skills I have learned with my junior black belt as proof of my hard work.

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