

Full Terminology

A karateka who has learned the Japanese karate terminology is able to enter any karate dojo in the world and participate.

Many Japanese letters sound the same as they do in English, but some letters are pronounced or written differently. To learn the Japanese sounds of these letters, study the following chart.

Sounds

Japanese sound	English sound	Example
a	ah	aka (ah-ka)
ai	i	Shotokai (as in eye)
e	eh	hajime (as in let)
ei	ay	Sensei (as in day)
i	ee	Obi(oh-bee)
o	oh	dojo (doh-joh)
oi	oy	kiroi (key-roy) (as in boy)
u	oo	uchi (oo-chee)

In Japanese, the letter “r” is never emphasized. It is pronounced like a soft “d”. The letter “g” is always pronounced like the “g” in go.

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General Terms

Term	Meaning
Karate	Empty Hands
Karate Do	The Way of Karate
Karateka	Practitioner of Karate
Dojo	School or training room
Sensei	Teacher
Sempai	Senior
Kohai	Junior
Renshi	Entry Level Master
Shihan	Master Instructor
Kyu	Rank
Gi	Uniform
Obi	Belt
Hai	Yes
Iie	No
Osu	"I understand and will try my best." Also used to show respect, enthusiasm. Do not use outside of the dojo!
Do	Way
Budo	Way of combat
Zanshin	Poise and control
Kime	Focus
Kihon	Fundamentals/Basics
Kiai	Spirit shout/focus of spiritual energy
Kata	Practice form
Embusen	Floor pattern/lines of a kata
Maai	Distance
Bunkai	Application (interpretation) of kata techniques
Kumite	Sparring/fighting
Ippon kumite	One-step sparring
Yakusoku kumite	"Promise" premeditated sparring
Gohon kumite	Five-step sparring
Jiyyu kumite	Free sparring
Waza	Technique
Dachi	Stance
Tsuki (Zuki)	Punch
Uchi	Strike
Uke	Block
Rei	Bow
Waza	Technique
Geri	Kick



Ashi-barai	Foot sweep
Kamae	Posture
Yori-ashi	Sliding the feet
Tai-sabaki	Body shifting
Shotokan	"House of Shoto"; "Pine Sea"; pen name of Funakoshi.
Mokuso	Meditate/Gather Your Thoughts
Dozo	Please
Domo Arigato Gozaimashita	"Thank-you very much"
Onegai Shimasu	"I welcome you to train with me" Literally: "I make a request." Said to one's partner when initiating practice.

Major Concepts

Term	Meaning
Zanshin	Awareness; Continuing mind/heart - connotes "following through" a technique while maintaining awareness
Sen	Initiative
Sen no sen	Seizing the initiative earlier; attacking at the same moment your opponent attacks.
Go no sen	Seizing the initiative later; Allowing your opponent to attack first so as to open up target for counter-attacks.
Sen sen no sen	Seizing the opponent's sen no sen; Attacking before your opponent attacks-a preemptive attack.
Ikken Hissatsu	"To kill with one blow"
Karate ni sente nashi	Karate does not include the first move.
Karate wa sente nari	Karate is the first move.
Shorin (kata)	Quick movement, emphasizing speed
Shorei (kata)	Slow, strong movement, emphasizing strength
Sun-dome	Stopping a technique just prior to contact (three centimeters)

Commands

Term	Meaning
Narande	Line up
Seiretsu	Line up by rank
Yoi	Ready
Yame	Stop
Yasume	Relax (or ready position)
Sensei ni	Face towards the teacher
Otaigai ni	Face towards each other
Shomen ni	Face towards the front
Rei	Bow
Seiza	Meditation position-kneeling
Age-te	Hands up (cover position)



Mawatte	Turn around
Hajime	Begin
Naore	Return to Shizen-tai

Directions

Term	Meaning
Mae	Front
Yoko	Side
Ushiro	Back
Tate	Vertical
Mawashi	Round
Jodan	Head high level
Chudan	Mid-high level
Gedan	Low level; Down
Migi	Right
Hidari	Left
Tobi	Jump
Gyaku	Reverse
Age	Rising
Uchi	Inner
Soto	Outer
Otoshi	Dropping
Sokumen	Side

Dachi Waza (stances)

Term	Meaning
Kamae	Posture (Yoi)
Heisoku dachi	Formal Attention Stance (Yoi)
Zenkutsu dachi	Front Stance
Kokutsu dachi	Back Stance
Kiba dachi	Straddle Stance
Fudo dachi	Fighting Stance
Musubi dachi	Informal Attention Stance (feet in a "V")
Hachiji dachi	Open-legged Stance (Yoi)
Shizen-tai dachi	Natural Stance
Neko-ashi dachi	Cat Stance
Renoji dachi	"L" Stance
Kosa dachi	Cross-legged Stance
Hangetsu dachi	Wide Hour-glass Stance
Migi Ashi Orishiku	Right Leg Kneeling

Hidari Ashi Orishiku	Left Leg Kneeling
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Uke Waza (blocks)

Term	Meaning
Age uke	Rising block
Gedan uke	Down block
Soto ude uke	Outside forearm block
Uchi ude uke	Inside forearm block
Shuto uke	Knife block
Morote uke	Augmented block
Kakiwaki uke	Reverse wedge block (Heian 4)
Juji uke	X block
Kosa uke	Cross block (Uchi/gedan uke-Heian 3)
Manji uke	Hi/low block (Heian 5)
Tate shuto uke	Vertical knife-hand block (Heian 3)
Haishu uke	Back-hand block (Heian 5)
Empi uke (or Hiji uke)	Elbow block (Heian 3)
Osae uke	Pressing block (Heian 2, 3)
Otoshi uke	Dropping or falling block (Heian 2, 3)
Nagashi Uke	Sweeping block (Tekki, Jion)
Haiwan Nagashi Uke	Sweeping back-arm block
Te Nagashi Uke	Sweeping hand block (parry) (Heian 5)
Sukui Uke	Scooping block (Bassai, Chinte)
Sokumen Awase Uke	Side combined block (Bassai-Dai)
Tsukami Uke	Grasping block (Bassai-Dai, Jion)
Awase Shuto Age Uke	Combined rising knife-hand block (Kanku-Dai)
Ryowan Uchi Uke	Double inside block(Jion, Bassai-Sho)
Seiryuto Uke	Ox-Jaw block

Geru Waza (kicks)

Term	Meaning
Mae geri keage	Front snap kick
Mae geri kekomi	Front thrust kick
Yoko geri keage	Side snap kick
Yoko geri kekomi	Side thrust kick
Mawashi geri	Round kick
Ushiro geri	Back thrust kick
Fumikomi geri	Stomping kick (Heian 3, 5)
Uchi mikazuki geri	Inside crescent kick
Soto mikazuki geri	Outside crescent kick



Tobi geri	Flying kick
Name ashi geri	Returning wave kick (Tekki 1)
Hiza geri	Knee kick/strike
Nidan geri	Double kick (Kanku-Dai)

Tsuki Waza (punches)

Term	Meaning
Oi tsuki	Lunge punch
Gyaku tsuki	Reverse punch
Kizami tsuki	Jab
Choku tsuki	Straight punch
Kagi tsuki	Hook punch
Oi-gyaku tsuki	Lunging reverse punch
Ura tsuki	Close punch
Morote tsuki	Parallel punch
Ren tsuki	Double punch
San tsuki	Triple punch
Age tsuki	Rising punch
Gedan tsuki	Downward punch
Yama tsuki	Wide "U" punch
Awase tsuki	"U" punch
Otoshi tsuki	Dropping punch (Empi)
Ippon Ken tsuki	One-knuckle fist punch (Hangetsu)

Uchi Waza (strikes)

Term	Meaning
Tettsui	Hammer-fist strike
Kumade Uchi	Bear Claw Strike
Uraken Uchi	Backfist Strike
Hiraken Uchi	Foreknuckle Strike
Teisho Uchi	Palm Heel Strike
Ippon Nukite Uchi	Single Finger Strike
Nihon Nukite Uchi	Two Finger Strike (Fork)
Shuto Uchi	Knife Hand Strike
Soto Shuto Uchi	Outside Knife Hand Strike
Uchi Shuto Uchi	Inside Knife Hand Strike
Shihon Nukite Uchi	Spear Hand Strike
Gyaku Haito Uchi	Reverse Backfist Strike
Haito Uchi	Backfist Strike
Empi Uchi	Elbow Strike



Mawashi Empi Uchi	Round Elbow Strike
Mae Empi Uchi	Front Elbow Strike
Otoshi Empi Uchi	Downward Elbow Strike
Ushiro Empi Uchi	Back Elbow Strike
Yoko Empi Uchi	Side Elbow Strike
Yoko Mawashi Empi Uchi	Side Roundhouse Elbow Strike
Tate Empi Uchi	Upward Elbow Strike
Hiza Age Ate	Rising Knee Strike
Washide Uchi	Eagle Beak Strike
Koko Uchi	Tiger Mouth Strike
Haishu Uchi	Back Hand Strike

Kata (forms)

Term	Meaning
Taikyoku	First Cause
Ten-No-Kata	Kata of the Universe
Heian	Peaceful mind
Tekki	Iron Knight
Bassai	Storm the Fortress
Sho	Lesser, small
Dai	Greater, big
Jion	Temple Ground
Jiin	Temple Sound
Kanku	To look at the sky
Hangetsu	Crescent or Half moon
Empi	Flying Swallow
Chinte	Extraordinary Hands
Jitte	Ten Hands
Gankaku	Crane on a rock
Sochin	To keep the peace; Grand Suppression
Nijushiho	Twenty-four steps
Shorei Kata	Light and quick; emphasizing agility and speed
Shorin Kata	Slow, hard, and strong; emphasizing muscles and strength

Body Parts

Term	Meaning
Ken	Fist
Ippon Ken	Single-point index-finger Fist
Tate Ken	Vertical Fist
Te	Hand
Kaishu	Open hand
Tekubi	Wrist
Teisho	Palm heel
Ude	Forearm
Empi (also Hiji)	Elbow
Ashi	Leg
Ashikubi	Ankle
Hiza (also Hitsui)	Knee
Ensho	Back of the heel
Heisoku	Top (instep) of the foot
Teisoku	Bottom of the foot
Kakato	Heel of the foot
Koshi	Ball of the foot
Sokuto	Outer edge (knife) of the foot
Tsumasaki	Toe tips
Atama	Head
Wan	Arm
Naiwan	Back of Arm
Kata	Shoulder
Jiku Ashi	Pivot leg
Jodan	Head level
Chudan	Mid-level
Gedan	Lower level

Counting

Term	Meaning
Ichi	One
Ni	Two
San	Three
Shi	Four
Go	Five
Roku	Six
Shichi	Seven
Hachi	Eight

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Missouri Karate Association

Ku	Nine
Ju	Ten
NiJu	Twenty
NiJu-Go	Twenty-five
Hyaku	One Hundred
Ippon	First
Yon	Fourth
Gohon	Fifth

Colors

Term	Meaning
Shiro	White
Ki	Yellow
Aoi	Blue
Midori	Green
Murasaki	Purple
Cha	Brown
Kuro	Black
Aka	Red

Weapons

Term	Meaning
Bo	Long staff
Jo	Short staff
Sai	forked knife (Jitte)
Nunchaku	Thrasher (two sticks joined by a chain)
Kama	Sickles
Tonfa	Batons
Shinai	Bamboo sword
Bokken	Wooden sword