



# Taekwon-Do Protocol Handbook



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**By: Michael L. Munyon**



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# **TaeKwon-Do Protocol Handbook**

**By: Michael L. Munyon**

**The purpose of this handbook is to provide a guide to all Taekwon-Do members on the finer points of proper protocol and etiquette. Again, this is a guide for instructors, students and directors to enforce and abide by.**

**Note: Throughout this handbook terms such as student, instructor and director/officer are intermixable depending on the content of this publication.**

## **Customs and Courtesies:**

TaeKwon-Do customs and courtesies are proven traditions that explain what should and should not be done in many situations. They are acts of respect and courtesy when dealing with other people and have evolved as a result of the need for order, as well as the mutual respect and sense of fraternity that exists among TaeKwon-Do personnel. TaeKwon-Do customs and courtesies go beyond basic politeness; they play an extremely important role in building morale, esprit de corps, discipline, and organizational effectiveness. Customs and courtesies ensure proper respect for the chain of command and build the foundation for self-discipline. The handbook is not all-inclusive, but highlights many of the customs and courtesies that make TaeKwon-Do and its people special.

## **Bowing:**

The bow is a courteous exchange of greetings, with the junior member always bowing to the senior member first. A bow is also rendered to the senior as a sign of respect. Any student, black belt or instructor recognizing a need to bow or a need to return one may do so anywhere at any time. When returning or rendering a bow, the head and eyes are turned toward the person being bowed to. When in ranks, the position of Joon-bi (attention) is maintained unless otherwise directed. The following guidance is offered on exchanging bows:

## **Outdoors.**

Bows are exchanged upon recognition between juniors and seniors members of the martial arts when they are in or out of uniform. Bowing outdoors or in public means bows are exchanged when the persons involved are outside of

the Dojang. The junior member should initiate the bow in time to allow the senior officer to return it. To prescribe an exact distance for all circumstances is not practical; however, good judgment should dictate when bows are exchanged. When bowing for some reason or another is not practical then a verbal exchange of greetings will suffice. Also, use the same procedures when greeting martial artists of other systems and/or organizations.

When a senior black belt approaches, the first individual noticing the black belt calls the group to attention. All members face the black belt and bow. If the black belt addresses an individual or the group, all remain at attention (unless otherwise ordered) until the end of the conversation, at which time they bow to the black belt.

Bowing between individuals are not required in public gatherings, such as sporting events or meetings, or when a bow would be inappropriate or impractical.

Persons in uniform must bow. The President of the International TaeKwon-Do Federation, as the organization president, is always accorded the honor of a bow. In addition, if the exchange of bows is otherwise appropriate, it is customary for TaeKwon-Do members in civilian clothes to exchange bows upon recognition.

**Indoors and/or at the Dojang:**

Always bow upon entering and departing the Dojang or training area.

**TaeKwon-Do Etiquette:**

Etiquette is defined as common, everyday courtesy. The TaeKwon-Do community functions more smoothly and pleasantly when members practice good manners. Simple things like saying “please” and “thank you” help the organization run smoother because people respond more enthusiastically when asked in a courteous manner to do something. They also appreciate knowing their efforts are recognized when told “thank you.”

One of the most valuable habits anyone can develop is to be on time. Granted, there are times when a person cannot avoid being late. If this happens, it is best to call ahead to let the people know you’ll be late or to reschedule the appointment. Do not keep others waiting.

Address customers, family members, friends and etc properly. As a rule, address them appropriately as “Mr.,” “Mrs.,” “Miss,” or “Ms” and a last name, unless requested to do otherwise. **Always** address a superior formally. This is especially important in public settings where use of first names is not recommended.

Don't gossip.

A discussion of others' personal habits, problems, and activities, real or rumored, often results in quarrels and disputes among people who train together. The morale of any organization may suffer because of feuds that arise from gossip. The best policy is to not gossip and to discourage others from gossiping.

Use proper telephone etiquette. Always be polite and identify yourself and your organization. When an individual is not available to take a call, ask: “May I take a message?” or “Is there something I may help you with?” If a call is to be returned, write down the individual's name, organization, telephone number, the message, and then pass this information along to the intended recipient.

Do not lean or sit on desks. Also, do not lean back in a chair or put feet on desks. This type of conduct doesn't present a professional TaeKwon-Do image.

In general, use common sense and be considerate of other people and insist your students do the same.

### **Courtesies to Other Organizations/Martial Arts:**

All martial arts are part of the martial arts family; therefore, extend the same TaeKwon-Do courtesies to members of the other arts. While it is natural that friendly rivalries exist between the arts/organizations, TaeKwon-Do courtesies among arts/organizations remain the same. Thus, the members of the other arts/organizations are as much comrades in-arms as are any other student.

This is equally true of the friendly INO's (Independent National Organizations) and ISD's of the ITF. Bow to all organizational officers and pay the same respect to their President, Dojang/dojo and other appropriate encounters.

## **Respect and Recognition:**

### **Common Acts of Courtesy.**

Common acts of courtesy among all ITF Taekwon-Do personnel aid in maintaining discipline and promoting the smooth conduct of affairs in the TaeKwon-Do establishment. When courtesy falters within an organization, discipline ceases to function, and the morale is endangered. Many of the TaeKwon-Do courtesies involve the bow. There are, however, many other courtesies commonly extended to black belts, seniors, and organization associates.

The following paragraphs list some of these courtesies:

Always give the senior person the position of honor when walking, riding, or sitting with him or her. The junior person should take the position to the senior's left.

Unless told otherwise, rise and stand at attention when a senior official enters or departs a room. If more than one person is present, the person who first sees the officer calls the group to attention. However, if there is a black belt already in the room who is equal to or has a higher rank than the black belt entering the room, do not call the room to attention.

Unless the black belt/senior directs otherwise, stand at attention when speaking to a senior. If in a parked vehicle, always get out before speaking to or replying to a senior who is not in the vehicle.

TaeKwon-Do personnel enter automobiles and small boats in reverse order of rank. Juniors will enter a vehicle first (and take their appropriate seat on the senior's left). The senior official will be the last to enter the vehicle and the first to leave it.

Upon entering or leaving transport aircraft, the senior officer enters last and exits first. This procedure only applies to passengers and not to crewmembers of the aircraft who must be free to carry out their normal duties.

### **Rank Has Its Privileges (RHIP)**

The TaeKwon-Do system is a hierarchy. Black belts/instructors placed in charge of students, events and/or schools in the TaeKwon-Do structure must

exercise control. All must display disciplined obedience combined with loyalty, in accordance with the organization rules and regulations. From the highest to the lowest, students must extend an unfailing respect to the authority that train and promote them. Personal admiration is a voluntary tribute to another that the TaeKwon-Do protocol does not demand. But the protocol does demand respect for authority by unfailing courtesy to people who exercise it. The privileges of rank do not include the privilege of abuse of position. The privileges of rank and position are privileges indeed, well worth striving for and attaining.

### **Proper Addresses.**

Senior organization members frequently address juniors by their first names, but this practice does not give juniors the privilege of addressing seniors in any way other than by proper titles. If students are present, senior organization members should address junior members by their titles. Organization members of the same grade, when among themselves, may address one another by their given names. Increasingly, organization members use first names. Formality, however, is the best policy. Junior organization members should always be conservative until they can sense what is appropriate. It is wiser to err by being too formal, rather than too familiar. Note: This applies in person, in letters, phone calls and the internet.

### **Award Ceremony.**

An award ceremony affords an opportunity to recognize a member's accomplishments. The organization president or other official determines whether to present an award at a formal ceremony or to present it informally. Many organizations present awards during organization events. Since there are no specific guidelines for an award presentation, organization presidents and instructors must ensure the presentation method reflects the significance of the award.

### **Promotion Ceremony:**

**Basic Guidelines.** Promotions are significant events in the lives of TaeKwon-Do students of all ranks. Organization presidents and instructors are responsible for ensuring their personnel receive proper recognition. Many of the guidelines for promotion ceremonies are the same as for decoration ceremonies. Some organizations hold a state-wide promotion for all promotees.

### **The Dining-In and Dining-Out:**

The only difference between a Dining-In and Dining-Out is that anyone may attend a Dining-Out. The Dining-In is a formal dinner for TaeKwon-Do members only. Members now recognize the Dining-In as an occasion where ceremony, tradition, and good fellowship serve an important purpose.

Specifically, these ceremonies provide an occasion for ITF members to meet socially at a formal TaeKwon-Do function. They also provide an excellent means of saying farewell to departing members and welcoming new ones, as well as providing the opportunity to recognize individual and organizational achievements. These are effective in building and maintaining high morale and esprit de corps. TaeKwon-Do members who attend these ceremonies must wear formal uniform.

### **A General Guideline for Planning a Ceremony.**

Appoint someone to set up the ceremony.

Notify the honoree to ensure the date and time are good.

Select and reserve a location for the ceremony.

Determine who the honoree would like to assist with the ceremony honors and have the honoree extend the invitation.

Mail personal invitations to guests (optional).

Ensure all award elements and certificates are ready. Select an emcee and individuals to act as escorts to any special guests as required.

Request photographic support from the base photo lab.

Ensure media equipment, if appropriate, is available. Recommend a “walk through” of the actual ceremony.

Order refreshments.

Print programs and make or obtain signs for seating and parking of special guests.

Verify guest list with honoree and obtain special guest information (relationship, title, and correct spelling of name).

Provide guest information, agenda, proposed remarks, applicable biographies or personnel records, and honoree’s personal data to officiating officer and emcee.

Dry run the ceremony with all key players.

Set up the location at least 2 hours before the ceremony.

Meet with honoree to go over last-minute details.

Honoree and special guests often meet with the officiating officer just before the ceremony.



The ceremony begins with the emcee announcing their arrival at the ceremony location.

Emcee welcomes everyone and introduces the special guests.

The emcee or officiating officer provides career highlights of the honoree.

The emcee reads the special order of the honoree and the officiating officer performs ceremony procedures.

Photos are taken throughout the ceremony.

Honoree provides remarks.

The emcee thanks everyone for coming and invites participants to congratulate the honoree and enjoy the refreshments.

### **General Rules for Giving Commands.**

When giving commands, the person giving the commands is at the position of attention. Good TaeKwon-Do bearing is necessary for good leadership.

### **Command Voice Characteristics.**

The way a command is given affects the way a movement is executed. A correctly delivered command is loud and distinct enough for everyone in the Dojang to hear. It is given in a tone, cadence, and snap that demand a willing, correct, and immediate response. A voice with the right qualities of loudness, projection, distinctness, inflection, and snap enables an instructor to obtain effective results.

### **Loudness.**

Loudness is the volume used in giving a command. The loudness should be adjusted to the distance and number of individuals in the formation. The instructor takes a position in front of, and centered on, the class and facing the class so his or her voice reaches all individuals.

### **Projection.**

This is the ability of your voice to reach whatever distance is desired without undue strain. To project the command, the instructor should focus his or her voice on the person farthest away. Erect posture, proper breathing, a relaxed throat, and an open mouth help project the voice.

### **Distinctness.**

Distinct commands emphasize clear enunciation.

**Inflection.** Pronounce the preparatory command with a rising inflection near or at the end of its completion, usually the last syllable. A properly delivered

command of execution has no inflection. However, it should be given at a higher pitch than the preparatory command.

**Snap.** To achieve snap, instructors must know the commands and have the ability to voice them effectively.

### **Structure:**

#### **Purpose.**

The TaeKwon-Do structure defines specific responsibilities for each rank, the relationships between ranks and how each rank fits into the organization, and career progression through the ranks.

#### **Tier Structure.**

The TaeKwon-Do chain of command is comprised of distinct and separate ranks. Each correlates to increased levels of training, education, technical competence, experience, leadership, and managerial responsibilities.

#### **Rank and Precedence.**

The policy for rank and precedence stems from time-honored TaeKwon-Do customs and traditions. Within the TaeKwon-Do tier, students/instructors take rank and precedence over all students according to rank. Within the same rank, the date of rank, total years in TaeKwon-Do training, and date of birth determine the process. Responsibility and accountability increase commensurate with rank. Within each rank, responsibility for leading rests on the individual who is senior in rank.

#### **Authority.**

Directors/officers are delegated the authority necessary to exercise leadership commensurate with their rank and assigned responsibility. They are given privileges commensurate with their rank and are not assigned duties that will compromise their position. Directors/officers give orders in the exercise of their duties.

#### **Insubordinate Conduct Toward Seniors.**

Any student/instructor who commits any of the following actions shall be “corrected” as directed:

Strikes or assaults a student/instructor while that officer is in the execution of his or her office/position.

Willfully disobeys the student/instructor.

Treats with contempt or is disrespectful in language or deportment toward a student/instructor.

Leadership:

Webster defines the word *lead* as “to act as a guide” or “to guide,” and *leader* as “a person who leads, directs, commands, or guides a group or activity.” Both definitions are stated simply, but the underlying implications of leadership are many and deep. There is a significant difference between commanding and leading. Given the authority, anyone can command. Leading, on the other hand, is a delicate art calling for people-oriented attributes that many find elusive or difficult to develop; however, with determination and practical experience, people can acquire leadership attributes. Organization presidents depend upon students/black belts to lead students to accomplish TaeKwon-Do training. This portion of the handbook discusses the art of leadership and provides information to help evaluate a member’s own leadership abilities.

### **The Art of Leadership.**

Leadership is the art of influencing and directing people to accomplish what needs to be done. This definition highlights two fundamental elements: (1) the organization, goal, or task, and (2) the people who accomplish it. Leadership must support both elements. Producing excellent students, instructors and benefiting society is the primary task of every TaeKwon-Do organization; everything else must be subordinate. However, a successful leader recognizes that instructors do most of the work, and that without their support, the organization would fail.

### **Accountability.**

Martial artists/instructors must be ready to hold themselves and their people accountable for their actions. They must be prepared to face difficult problems head-on and understand the organization, the people, and the standards.

### **Setting the Example.**

Setting the example can sometimes be the toughest part of being a leader. However, to be successful, martial artists must evaluate themselves and work on their shortcomings. Effective martial artists lead rather than drive people. They make fair and firm decisions that are in the best interest of good order, discipline, and the successful accomplishment of the organization. A leader's responsibilities go further than just being responsible for their own school and students. Effective leaders are not only expected to continue spreading the art of TaeKwon-Do, but to do so with the minimum cost in people, materiel, and money. While no one expects the instructor to be perfect, an instructor/leader cannot demand the best from others if he or she cannot perform as expected.

### **A Way of Life.**

TaeKwon-Do people are to realize that they represent TaeKwon-Do, their instructor and their organization 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. If so directed by a competent authority, they must address for duty at any hour, any location, and must remain there as long as necessary to get the job done. The ITF necessitates more restrictive rules and standards than are normally found in civilian life. Individuals unable to maintain these higher standards will not be appointed as directors/officers in the ITF.

### **Chain of Command.**

The chain of command provides the control and communications necessary to adhere to proper protocol. Each level is responsible for a lower level and accountable to all higher levels. The chain cannot work without loyalty to every level. The key principle is to resolve problems and seek answers at the lowest possible level. With loyalty up and down the chain, it is a highly efficient and effective system for getting things done.

An example would be when a student wishes to test. As we all know a student should not ask when they are to test next. This goes especially for black belts. An instructor should make that decision and address it through the chain of command. The instructor should ask permission via the state director who then continues to bring the word up the chain of command. Many times black belts feel that they are allowed to skip the chain of command and go directly to the board of promotions without seeking permission through their instructor and state director. This demonstrates poor character, lack of respect to individuals and the chain of command.

**Conduct.**

The ITF is a critical organization within the United States and overseas. Each member has specific responsibilities for their conduct. Each member must carry out orders, perform specific duty-related tasks, and live up to ITF standards. Instructors must make sure their students meet these standards at all times. Standards of conduct apply both in and out of the Dojang, in personal behavior, and in the treatment of others in both TaeKwon-Do and civilian environments. Note: This applies in person, in letters, phone calls and the internet.

**Professional Relationships.**

To have an effective operation, the ITF must have professional relationships among its members. In all instructor situations, professional relationships must support the organization and operational effectiveness of the ITF. Officers and instructors must make sure their personal relationships with coworkers and students do not give the appearance of favoritism or impropriety. Excessive socialization and undue familiarity, real or perceived, degrade leadership.

**Delegate Responsibility and Authority.**

Instructors have highly skilled and trained professionals working for them. Therefore, instructors must demonstrate trust in their workers to get the job done by giving students the responsibility they deserve for making decisions and changes. When appropriate, instructors should delegate responsibility to the lowest feasible level. This practice makes good use of everyone's expertise. Instructors must never lose sight of the fact that they are ultimately accountable for organization accomplishment.

**Professional and Unprofessional Relationships.**

Professional relationships are essential to effective operation of all organizations, both TaeKwon-Do and civilian, but the nature of the TaeKwon-Do organization requires absolute confidence in command and an unhesitating adherence to orders that may result in student/instructor convenience, hardships, or (at times) injury and death. While personal relationships between ITF members are normally matters of individual choice and judgment, they become matters of official concern when they adversely affect or have the reasonable potential to adversely affect the ITF by eroding morale, good order, discipline, and respect for authority, school/organization cohesion, or organization accomplishment.

### **Professional Relationships.**

Professional relationships contribute to the effective operation of the ITF. The ITF student/instructor encourages personnel to communicate freely with their superiors regarding their careers and performance, duties, and organizations. This type of communication enhances morale and discipline and improves the operational environment while, at the same time, preserving proper respect for authority and focus on the organization. Participation by members of all grades in organizational activities, such as seminars, instructor courses, and tournaments, enhances morale and contributes to the organization's cohesion.

### **Unprofessional Relationships.**

Whether pursued in or out of the Dojang, unprofessional relationships may detract from the authority of superiors or result in, or reasonably create the appearance of, favoritism, misuse of office or position, or the abandonment of organizational goals for personal interests. Unprofessional relationships can exist between students, instructors, between officers with TaeKwon-Do students and etc.

### **General Guidelines on Avoiding Unprofessional Relationships Including Fraternalization.**

Experience and history has shown that certain kinds of personal relationships present a high risk for being or developing into unprofessional relationships. Unprofessional relationships negatively impact morale and discipline. While some personal relationships are not unprofessional, they may be or become unprofessional when other facts or circumstances are considered. For example, factors that can change an otherwise permissible relationship into an unprofessional relationship include the members' relative positions in the organization and the members' relative positions in the instructory and command chains. ITF members, both officers and instructors, must be sensitive to forming these relationships and consider the probable impact of their actions on the ITF in making their decisions. The rules regarding these relationships must be somewhat elastic to accommodate differing conditions; however, the underlying standard is that ITF members are expected to avoid relationships that negatively affect morale and discipline. When economic constraints or operational requirements place instructors and students of different grades in close proximity with one another (such as combined or joint clubs, joint recreational facilities, and etc), TaeKwon-Do students are expected to maintain professional relationships. The mere fact that maintaining

professional relationships may be more difficult under certain circumstances does not excuse a member's responsibility to maintain ITF standards.

### **Uniform.**

The TaeKwon-Do uniform called the dobok should be clean and maintained at all times. When tying the belt turn away from the instructor/senior. This goes for putting the belt on and taking it off.

### **Walking Away.**

After you have completed a task or finished talking with the instructor or senior it is disrespectful to turn your back to the instructor/senior. It is recommended that you walk backwards when possible. Naturally, keeping in mind the safety of oneself and others.

### **Hands on Hips.**

There are two ways we communicate. They are both verbal and non-verbal. When someone is not sure what you're trying to communicate they tend to lean towards the non-verbals. The way you stand. Placing one's hands on his/her hips or crossing one's arms in front of the instructor shows disrespect and you could accidentally communicate to a senior that you don't believe them or they may take your posture as a challenge. The best place to put one's hands is either in front or in back.

### **Testings.**

During a testing, students will be required to perform a variety of things. Certain portions of one's testing will require you to have a partner. Examples would be like step sparring and Hosin Sul. It is not proper protocol to utilize a senior in rank for these tasks. It is preferred that promotees utilize a peer or someone of less rank for these tasks.

### **E-mails/Correspondences.**

Use the same customs and courtesies in e-mails as you would in person. With the internet being easily accessible to both youths and adults we must understand that it is a form of communication. Exercise what we call Neticate.