

Question:

Why do many of the traditional instructors suggest students learn the more advanced katas in a certain sequence? For example, Hangetsu may be appropriate for a shodan but not Sochin.

Answer:

Traditional instructors suggest that students follow a certain pattern in learning more advanced kata, because each presents unique challenges. In the Shotokan system, the Heian and Tekki kata contain the fundamentals of karate and must be practiced by all students from beginner to intermediate levels. These kata help students develop speed, strength, flexibility, rhythm and balance.

Advanced kata are categorized in two groups (Shorin and Shorei). For example, Hangetsu (half moon), is in the Shorei group and is characterized by slow movements, both inward and outward tension stances and is designed to develop strength. Bassai dai (penetrating a fortress), is in the Shorei group and emphasizes speed and flexibility. Advanced kata should only be practiced at the appropriate time in accordance with the student's level of skill.