

Japanese/English Martial Arts Dictionary

Our style of karate is called Shukokai. This is Japanese for the study of change. It is sometimes translated as “the way for all”.

This style was founded in 1949 by Chojiro Tani (1920-1998) and was developed from another style of karate called Shito-ryu which was founded by Chojiro Tani’s teacher Kenwa Mabuni (1889-1952). It was originally called Tani-ha Shito-ryu.

Our Association is called the Seiken Ryu Karate Association. Seiken Ryu is Japanese for the school of the two-knuckle fist. It was founded in 1975 in Tottington, Greater Manchester by Steve Yates, the father of our present chief instructor, Chris Yates.

Japanese vocabulary and pronunciation

Japanese is very easy to pronounce. The consonants and their combinations all sound more or less as they do in English (but remember the *g* is hard as in Graham rather than soft as in George). There are only five vowels, which are pronounced like this.

a sounds like the a in father

i sounds like the e in be

u sound like the oo in zoo

e sounds like the e in pet

o sounds like the o in god

The vowels can combine however, and the ones you will need for the vocabulary below are as follows.

ai sounds like the ie in lie, for example *Hai* (yes)

ae sounds like the y in my, for example *Mae geri* (front kick)

ui sounds like the ooey in gooey, for example *Tetsui* (hammer fist)

ea sounds like the ear in fear, for example *Keage* (snap)

ei sounds like the ay in bay, for example *Sensei* (teacher)

oi sounds like the oy in boy, for example *Oizuki* (step punch)

When you see two of the same vowels together it just means that you need to lengthen the sound slightly, for example *Juu* (ten).

It is also worth knowing that when some Japanese words are shouted or spoken forcefully they lose the final vowel. This is why *ichi* sounds like the English word “each” rather than something like “eachy” (which is how it would sound in ordinary conversation). If you want to know more, there is some extra information in the notes below the vocabulary list.

Numbers

| | | | | | |
|------|---|-------|-----------|---|-------|
| ichi | = | one | roku | = | six |
| ni | = | two | shichi | = | seven |
| san | = | three | hachi | = | eight |
| shi | = | four | ku (kyuu) | = | nine |
| go | = | five | juu | = | ten |

English

Japanese

General Words

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Teacher | Sensei |
| Senior student (assistant teacher) | Senpai (sounds like <i>sempai</i> as an <i>n</i> before a <i>p</i> sounds more like an <i>m</i>) |
| Begin | Hajime |
| Bow | Rei |
| Formal kneeling | Seiza |
| Sparring | Kumite |
| Right | Migi |
| Left | Hidari |
| Mat | Tatami |
| Stop | Yame |
| Ready/ focus | Kime (both physical and mental) |
| Yes | Hai |
| Turn | Mawate |
| Response (not literally) | Oos |
| Project | Ski |
| Thrust | Kekomi |
| Snap | Keage |
| Two knuckle/front/fore- fist | Seiken |
| School | Ryu |
| Open or empty | Kara ⁱ |
| Hand | Te |
| Forearm | Ude |
| Way | Do |
| Techniques | Jitsu |
| Lower part of body | Gedan |
| Chest/stomach area | Chudan |
| Head area | Jodan |
| Training area | Dojo |

Punches

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Punch | Tsuki (becomes <i>zuki</i> when combined with some other words) |
| Strike | Uchi |
| Reverse punch | Gyaku zuki |
| Step-punch | Oi zuki |
| Leading hand punch | Maeken zuki |
| Spear-hand | Nukite |
| Back-fist | Uraken |
| Elbow (strike) | Enpi uchi (sounds like <i>empi</i> as an <i>n</i> before a <i>p</i> sounds more like an <i>m</i>) |
| Ridge-hand | Haito |
| Hammer-fist | Tetsui |
| Palm-heel | Teisho |
| Single knuckle strike | Ippon ken ⁱⁱ |
| Lunge punch | Junzuki |
| Short/close punch | Ura zuki |
| Double U-punch | Yama zuki |

Blocks

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|--------------------|-----|
| Block (to receive) | Uke |
|--------------------|-----|

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Sweep | Harai (becomes <i>barai</i> when combined with some other words) |
| Downward sweep/down block | Gedan barai |
| Inside block | Chudan uke / Uchi uke / Uchi ude uke |
| Rising block | Jodan uke / Age uke |
| Inside knife-hand block | Shuto uchi uke |
| Outside block | Soto uke / Soto ude uke |
| Outside knife hand block | Soto shuto uke |
| Supported block | Morote uke |
| Cross block | Juji uke |
| Lapel-break double block | Kakiwake uke |

Kicks

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Kick | Geri |
| Front kick | Mae geri |
| Roundhouse | Mawashi geri ⁱⁱⁱ |
| Side kick | Yoko geri |
| Back kick | Ushiro geri |
| Back roundhouse kick | Ushiro mawashi geri |
| Crescent kick | Mikazuki geri |
| Foot sweep | Ashi barai |
| Knee-kick | Hiza geri |
| Blade/edge of foot | Sokuto |

Stances

| | |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| Stance | Dachi |
| Front fighting stance | Zenkutsu dachi |
| Cat stance | Nekoashi dachi |
| Straddle (horse) stance | Shiko dachi |
| Tension stance | Sanchin dachi |
| Ready stance | Yoi |
| T/Crossed-feet stance | Kosa dachi |
| Crane stance | Tsuri ashi dachi |
| Heel step | Tsuri komi |
| Step through | Suri ashi |

Once you have learned the vocabulary and the pronunciation, another thing you can do to sound more Japanese is to try and give each syllable the same stress and duration. A syllable in Japanese is made up of a vowel on its own or a vowel with a consonant (or consonant cluster) in front of it. In English we always stress one of the syllables in a word, but in Japanese all syllables are treated equally and take the same amount of time to say.

So to say a word such as back roundhouse kick in Japanese, you need to give each of its syllables more or less the same amount of importance: *u shi ro ma wa shi ge ri*.

Perhaps the hardest thing you could do is try to learn to pronounce the Japanese *r* sound. It isn't really the equivalent of an English *r* sound at all. In fact it is exactly half way between an English *r* sound and an English *l* sound. When you say these sounds in English, you should be able to feel your tongue touching the front of the top of your mouth for the *r* and then feel it move more towards the middle for the *l*. If you can get your tongue to make the same sound while putting itself midway between the *r* position and the *l* position, you will be saying a perfect Japanese *r*. Because it's half way between the two, this is why we hear Japanese (and Chinese) speakers saying *l* when they mean *r* and the other way round.

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- i The *kara* in *karate* is the same word as the *kara* in *karaoke*. It means empty: empty hand, empty orchestra (i.e. without a voice).
 - ii When you see two consonants together you don't repeat them, you just pause very slightly before saying the (single) consonant, like a tiny stutter: so *ippon* is pronounced *i-pon*.
 - iii The *mawashi* in *mawashi geri* is derived from the same word as *mawate* (turn). They both mean “to revolve”.