



WATERLOO KUNG-FU
ACADEMY

**Spring
2026**

Fu for You



Editor: Sibok Lloyd Fridenburg
Produced by: Waterloo Kung
Fu Academy
Spring 2026



Editorial

by Sibok Lloyd Fridenburg

Is Sparring Really Necessary?

Sparring can be one of the most stressful elements of early Kung Fu training for children and adults alike. As kids, we may have had some schoolyard tussles but as adults, very few of us have ever been involved in a physical confrontation. The act of hitting someone else is completely unnatural and can, in the early stages of training, even be traumatizing for some. Most sparring skills can be taught through technique and drills. Footwork, punches, kicks, reaction time, evasion, blocking, identifying targets, positioning; these skills are inherent to sparring and can be taught, and mastered without sparring.

I regularly would put students in a basic stance and have a partner circle them and deliver various strikes, in a controlled manner. I would put students in a forward stance with arms up and have a partner deliver controlled roundhouse kicks to the abs. These drills teach how to get hit and how to breathe when you get hit, all in a very controlled manner. The person being struck can ask their partner to go harder, or not so hard. They are in control.

Enter sparring! I have often told students that the only thing that I can't teach without sparring is how to get hit unexpectedly. When you are sparring you are face-to-face with a partner that not only doesn't want to get hit but wants to hit you. There is an element of the unknown and unexpected introduced into your training. You think, move, strategize, react, and then boom, a kick comes out of nowhere and quickly reminds you that your partner is thinking and doing the same things. When you get hit, it is very often unexpected.

In time, thinking and strategizing disappear - sparring becomes effortless. You have reached the pinnacle of sparring when it becomes effortless effort; you act and react instinctively without thought or planning. This skill cannot be taught; it evolves by integrating sparring into your training on a regular basis. With practice, you learn to go with the flow in a non-thinking, mercurial manner.

Always spar with control and respect for your partner(s) but accept that getting hit unexpectedly is also part of the learning process. The ability to get hit and keep going often determines who will persevere in a true self-defense situation. Allowing your mind to be clear and act, without active thinking or planning, will give you the ability to switch from rules-based sparring to street style self-defense automatically, should the need arise.

So, is sparring really necessary? The answer is a definite YES! You can achieve a high degree of skill without ever sparring, but you will never reach the pinnacle of the Kung Fu experience without it.





Sigung's Corner

I was already complaining about shoveling in [my last article](#) (November). It's February 23rd as I write this and the shoveling continues - but add in lion dancing and pushups. Today, [our team](#) performed our fifth lion dance in support of the Year of the Fire Horse. We've taken on the February Push Up Challenge, again setting an Academy goal of 100,000! My kids just counted out my 3,000th pushup of the month (although not near the mind-boggling tally of Alex, Lily and Owen who have already cleared 10,000!). I've spent parts of this winter skiing and biking through forests on top of the regular regime of weightlifting and teaching/training Kung Fu. All these strength and cardio-based pursuits start to take their toll; I find it essential to have a system of physical maintenance: Enter yoga.

For years, the culture of our style of Kung Fu was resistant to "softer" practices like yoga. Before Kung Fu, my teacher, [Sigung Bob Schneider](#), came from a background of weightlifting and high cardio exercise, like running. Once he began his Kung Fu journey as an adult, Sigung stretched a lot more diligently and achieved a very inspiring degree of flexibility; he could touch the back wall with his foot in the front partner stretch!

His sister, Mary, was a well-loved yoga instructor in Waterloo. I was always curious as to whether any of her practices would influence our Kung Fu. Sigung was careful to keep the two disciplines separate, which was understandable at the time, given the culture of martial arts 20+ years ago.

In the years following, oddly enough, the world's hardest martial artists were the catalysts for embracing the practice of yoga. At a mainstream sporting level, this millennium witnessed the rise of mixed martial arts. As an important counterbalance to the intense wrestling and striking done by MMA athletes, they started training in yoga. In a way, it opened yoga to a larger and perhaps unexpected following.

I met Maureen, a local yoga instructor, over 12 years ago, as I taught her (now adult) children since [Little Ninjas](#). We had occasional chats exploring the similarities between Kung Fu and yoga – mobility, core strength, proprioception. About eight years ago, acknowledging my need for a more concentrated form of stretching, I took a class with Maureen. I was amazed by how euphoric I felt! As something we could do together, my family and I started taking weekly classes with her and that energizing and grounding feeling continues after each class.

Yoga is a wonderful complement to the hard training I do. I'm meeting my initial goal of more flexibility training, but I've discovered many more benefits. I get sore less often and recover better from injuries. The focus on balance and breath work is invigorating and deepens my application for Kung Fu. [We now proudly offer the option of taking yoga classes with Maureen at our Academy.](#) If you or someone in your life might benefit from this practice – I'll see you on the mats!





Youth Students Column

by Chantal Moylan

Improved Kung Fu in Just 5 Minutes

Did you know that to become better at Kung Fu, you don't actually need an hour of training every day?

What if it only took you five minutes each day? A lot of students might think they can only improve during classes. And yes, classes are important for getting corrections and learning new things. But the students who improve the fastest usually do something else: they practice at home, even if it's just for just a little bit. And it doesn't have to be for an hour, not even for 30 minutes - five minutes is all it takes!

Five minutes might not sound like a lot but think about it like this: if you practice for 5 minutes a day, even just 5 days a week, that's 25 extra minutes of training. You can even have a parent set a timer for you.

If you aren't sure what you could practice for those 5 minutes, here are some ideas to help get you started:

Minute 1: Stance Sequence. Try and make sure all of your stances are nice and low! Remember: you won't be holding them for very long.

Minute 2: Forms. In just 1 minute, you could probably practice your form 2-3 times! Pick either your current form or an old one.

Minute 3: A Section of your Form. After practicing your whole form, pick a section you think needs some work and drill it a few times.

Minute 4: Kicking Sequence. Pick either an old or a current kicking sequence and try it out to both sides.

Minute 5: Blocking Sequence. Make sure you're in a low horse stance and run through your blocking sequence a few times on both sides.

And that's it! It's not a lot of time but you can accomplish lots of things in that time. Some days, you might not feel like practicing. Maybe you're tired from school or sports or maybe you'd rather play a game or watch TV. But remember: It's only five minutes and it will help you to become a strong and disciplined martial artist!

Here's another thing: If you come across a move or part of your form you are unsure of, you can write it down and ask an instructor for help at your next class. This also helps you remember exactly what you need to work on when you have the extra time to practice in class.

So here's a spring challenge for you: For the next few weeks, pick a time like after school, before dinner, or before bed and practice your kung fu for five minutes - without being reminded! After those few weeks, see if you notice any changes, whether it's stronger stances, sharper techniques or more confidence in your Kung Fu. Having success in your training doesn't come from one giant effort. It comes from lots of small efforts repeated over time. So take just five minutes each day this spring - that's all it takes!



Junior Students Column

by Sifu Charlie Romeo

Leadership and Taking Initiative

As you advance in your Kung Fu journey, the time will come to adopt a leadership role within the academy. A great way to do this is through our decades-long tradition of students helping students, called the Leadership Team (LT). This team is composed of knowledgeable, motivated students who commit their personal time to assist with weekly classes. Becoming an LT member is a crucial step towards earning your Black Sash. It's a requirement for our Adult Brown Sashes, but is open to students starting at Junior Blue Sash. Joining the team comes with great benefits as well as responsibilities.

The Leadership Team provides a great opportunity to gain teaching experience through regularly assisting with classes. This role involves quietly correcting or assisting students individually, leading small groups through specific activities, and eventually, leading a full class through a well-planned warm-up. We don't expect anyone to lead a full warm-up right off the bat; remember: gaining experience is a process, not an ON / OFF switch, and the skill of teaching must be learned over time. By regularly helping with classes, receiving feedback from Black Sashes, and attending the monthly Leadership Team meeting, you'll gradually build the confidence and skills needed for Black Sash.

As an LT member, it's important to know your roles and responsibilities when assisting with a class:

- Follow the instructions of the Black Sash teaching the class. They may give you direct instructions, or you might need to stay alert and watch for details while the instructor is teaching.
- Show up every week, 15 minutes early. If you know you'll be absent, find coverage immediately. Treat this commitment like a job.
- Be helpful and non-interruptive. Don't draw the entire class's attention to you when assisting an individual student.
- Show your experience. Use your knowledge to best help the students. If you're asked a question and you don't know the answer, find out and get back to them.

You also have responsibilities beyond your designated class:

- Manage the weight room. Keep volume levels low before class, and ensure nobody is using equipment who is not supposed to.
- Make sure belts and sashes are tied correctly. You should know how to teach sash tying and know how to tie a belt on somebody else.
- Keep the foyer clear. Remind students to neatly put their shoes and coats where they belong (never on the floor!)
- In the winter, shovel the entryway. The walkway in front of our main entrance must be clear, and if it needs to be shoveled, use the shovel in the foyer to clear it.

Black Sashes and Leadership Team members each have designated responsibilities. It's important that we all do our part to keep the Academy in good and safe order for students and families. Most importantly, we must lead by example. Always be attentive and never be careless. Younger students look up to LT members, so be the role model that they need to succeed.



Adult Students Column

by Sifu D'arcy Langois

“Be Curious, Not Judgemental” ~ Walt Whitman

I first heard this quote in an iconic scene in an incredible TV show, and it's one that has stuck with me since I watched that scene. On the surface, it is a call to not assume anything about someone without having all of the facts. While there are certainly aspects within Kung Fu that this facet applies to (e.g. sparring), I am not going to touch on that part today, maybe save it for a rainy day once spring finally arrives. No, I believe this quote can also be applied to oneself: don't assume your abilities without first getting all of the facts - Be Curious, not self-Judgemental.

Physically, this is a pretty obvious one. How many of you have heard a technique called and immediately thought to yourself “No way!?” From the first call of a Turning Double Side Kick, or a Jump Spin Outside Crescent Kick, or my personal example, the Jump Turn 270 Degree Side Kick. Many students, myself included, fall into the habit of assuming that they can't do something long before they even try; before they have all of the facts. Before uttering one of those dreaded words, take a minute and be curious - absorb the lesson that is surely to come. The Instructors at the Academy will have ways to help teach the various techniques we do, often in a variety of ways to support different learning styles. Be curious and absorb the information, ask the questions, listen to the answers, and most importantly TRY.

Being curious in your training is a great way to keep yourself engaged, and interested in the pursuit of the Art. The greatest students (in life, and not just in the Academy by the way) are not those who believe they have all of the answers. Those students who have the answers tend to get stuck in ruts, or cages of their own making, with progress being a long and drawn out process. The best students are those who have figured out how to ask the right questions and are not afraid to ask those questions. They seek out the answers and listen to those answers - never assuming they already know what they are going to hear. Keeping curious in your journey is a great way to stay engaged, even in those times where you feel like you are slogging along through the curriculum.

At the end of the day, this is just another piece of mental training to employ along your Kung Fu journey. It is not something that Instructors can teach, and truly not something we can even enforce - but it is important. Just remember, before you catch yourself saying that you “can't do something”, or “you know all about something”, try to be curious instead. Learn how to find the questions you need to ask, and more importantly learn how to listen to the answers. Be curious, not judgemental.





Parents Column

by Sifu Veronica Sas

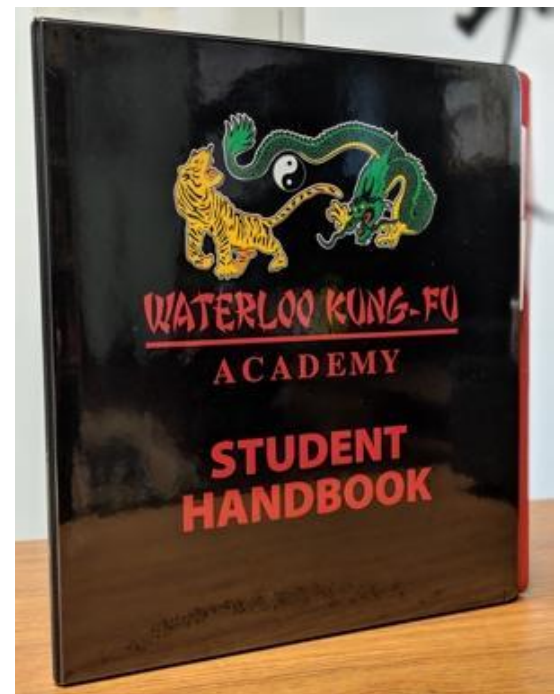
The “New” Student Handbook

Waterloo Kung Fu Academy now has a new version of the [Student Handbook](#) for sale in the office. If your child has been at the Academy for a few years, you might already have an older, still usable copy. However, if your child is newer to the school, I recommend getting a copy. If you train at the Academy with your child, it is advisable to get two separate Handbooks as the included information is different between the Youth/Junior and Adult Handbooks. If you have the Handbook, hopefully you have gone through it with your child. If you have not, I thought I would highlight some of the information it contains that is important for parents.

One of the important sections for parents is the Rules and Etiquette. This section explains some of the procedures at WKFA. This section talks about arriving for class early, how there is a ‘push up penalty’ for being late and that if class has already started, your child would need to wait in a closed stance by the entrance to the Kwoon until invited in. It also explains where to store all your child’s belongings before class. This section also goes over some safety points, such as how nails should be trimmed and there should be no jewellery or watches worn while training. There is also a section that specifically talks about sparring at the Academy. If you have any reservation about that part of your child’s training, I recommend reading it fully and asking any questions you might have.

In addition to Kung Fu Classes, WKFA also has different groups that run throughout the year. The Handbook has detailed information about the Leadership Team, which are the higher-ranking students that help with classes, Competition Team, where students will train over the course of months to compete at different tournaments and the Demonstration Team, who perform in front of audiences to showcase what our academy does. The Handbook also has information about our Lion Dance Team, March Break and Summer Camps and the Board Breaking Seminar that is held once a year in June.

For your child, the Youth/Student Handbook contains all the requirements of both the Youth and Junior Programs. This is different from the Adult Handbook, where adult students will only receive their new requirements as they progress in rank. If your child is thinking about grading, they will need to know and be able to execute all their requirements at their level. Knowing what these requirements are is the easiest way to do this. If your child is unsure of any of the requirements, they can ask an instructor. In addition to knowing the requirements for their current level, Youth and Junior students do have the opportunity to look ahead to what the higher ranks are learning. Perhaps it will motivate them to keep improving just so they can learn that new skill!



Your 2025 Award Winners

Every year the academy gives out awards in these categories for adult, junior, youth and little ninja students:

- **Student of the Year:** this award is presented to the student who best reflects the spirit of Kung Fu. They are a true role model dedicated to furthering the art of Kung Fu through both training habits and attitude towards the art and fellow students.
- **Most Improved Student:** This award is presented to the student who has shown the most significant improvement in their Kung Fu abilities over the past 12 months.
- **Most Dedicated Student:** This award is presented to the student who gives that little extra to help the school, as well as his, or her, fellow students, throughout the year.
- **Most Improved Novice Student:** This is the student who has shown the most significant improvement during their first few months of training.
- **Sigung Bob Schneider Memorial Award:** This award is presented to the outstanding leadership team member. Sigung was always passionate about grooming future leaders.
- **Black Sash Instructor of the Year:** This award is not necessarily awarded on an annual basis; only when it becomes apparent that one instructor, for a variety of reasons, raises a notch above the rest.



Leadership team member of the year
Marshall



Black sash instructor of the year
Sifu Charlie



Sigung Bob Schneider Memorial
Sifu Syd

Little ninja warrior spirit - Kenji

Student of the year



Youth - Edgar



Junior - Mattea



Adult - Dave W

Most dedicated



Youth - Blake



Junior - Charlie



Adult - Dawn

Most improved



Youth - Phalen



Junior - Amogh



Adult - Geoff

Most improved novice



Youth - Abby



Junior - Revan



Adult - Karen

Push-Update

Thank you to those who participated in our February push-up challenge - we crushed our 100K goal this year!



Food for Thought

"We tend to spend a lot of time worrying about things that might happen and in today's stressful times it's difficult to not worry. But it's best to save your worrying for the things that you can control, which basically is yourself, your actions, and your reactions. Everything else may, or may not, happen whether you worry or not."~ Sibok Lloyd

