



## ***UNITED STATES MARTIAL ARTS FEDERATION***

### ***UNITED STATES SHOTOKAN KARATE RANK REQUIREMENTS***

#### ***National Office***

3816 Bellingham Drive  
Reno, Nevada 89511  
Phone or Fax: (702) 851-8875

Website: [www.usmaf.org](http://www.usmaf.org)



Copyright: United States Martial Arts Federation, 1999, Reno, NV  
This publication may not be reproduced either whole or in part without the expressed written permission of the United States Martial Arts Federation (USMAF)

# USMAF

## UNITED STATES SHOTOKAN KARATE RANK REQUIREMENTS

Revised 12/15/1997

---

*United States Shotokan Karate Rank Requirements* are designed to provide students and instructors minimum guidelines for advancement. Instructors may substitute rank requirements including kata, with techniques of the same skill level or higher. Rank requirements currently online are through Shodan (1<sup>st</sup> Degree Black Belt) and Kata requirements thru Yondan (4<sup>th</sup> Degree Black Belt).

---

### **SHICHI-KYU (WHITE BELT - 7<sup>TH</sup> KYU)**

#### **General Requirements**

1. This rank is assigned to individuals of good moral character who have been accepted as a student by an officially recognized instructor of the United States Shotokan Karate in the United States Martial Arts Federation (USMAF).
  2. No age requirement.
  3. Basic knowledge of dojo rules and procedures.
- 

### **ROK-KYU (Yellow Belt – 6<sup>th</sup> KYU)**

#### **General Requirements**

1. Sound moral character.
2. No age requirement.
3. Regular dojo attendance.
4. Member in good standing with the United States Martial Arts Federation (USMAF).
5. Minimum of three-month time in grade as Shichi-Kyu.

## **General Knowledge**

1. **Origin of Karate: Okinawa**
2. **Translation of "Kara-Te": Empty Hand**
3. **Known length of Karate's history: Over 1,000 years**
4. **Official style of Karate as taught by the United States Martial Arts Federation: "United States Shotokan Karate"**
5. **Basic Martial Arts Etiquette**

## **General Terminology**

**Students should familiarize themselves with the following terms.**

1. **Formal Exercise: Kata**
2. **Free Exercise: Kumite**
3. **Forward Stance: Zenkutsu Dachi**
4. **Back Stance: Kokutsu Dachi**
5. **Horse Riding Stance: Kiba Dachi**
6. **Punching: Tsuke**
7. **Striking: Uchi**
8. **Kicking: Geri**
9. **Blocking: Uke**
10. **Shout (release of Ki): Kiai**
11. **Teacher: Sensei**
12. **Place of Learning: Dojo**
13. **Begin: Hajime**
14. **Stop: Matte**
15. **Upper (level): Jodan**
16. **Middle (level): Chudan**
17. **Lower (level): Gedan**
18. **Taikyoku: First Cause ("cause" as in causeway or bridge)**
19. **Counting Numbers:**
  1. **Ichi**
  2. **Ni**
  3. **San**
  4. **Shi**
  5. **Go**
  6. **Roku**
  7. **Shichi**
  8. **Hachi**
  9. **Ku**
  10. **Ju**

Copyright: United States Martial Arts Federation, 1999, Reno, NV

This publication may not be reproduced either whole or in part without the expressed written permission of the United States Martial Arts Federation (USMAF)

## **WAZA – Techniques**

Students will demonstrate the following techniques.

### **Ate Waza: Hand Techniques**

1. **Lunge Punch: Oi-Tsuke**
2. **Reverse Punch: Gyaku-Tsuke**
3. **Two-fisted Punch: Morote-Tsuke (horizontal and vertical)**

### **Geri Waza: Kicking Techniques**

1. **Front Kick: Mae Geri**
2. **Front Snap Kick: Mae Geri Keage**
3. **Front Thrust Kick: Mae Geri Kekomi**
4. **Side Kick: Yoko Geri**
5. **Side Snap Kick: Yoko Geri Keage**
6. **Side Thrust Kick: Yoko Geri Kekomi**
7. **Back Kick: Ushiro Geri**

### **Uke Waza: Blocking Techniques**

1. **Outside Block: Soto Uke**
2. **Inside Block: Uchi Uke**
3. **Downward Block: Gedan Barai Uke**
4. **High Block: Jodan Uke**

### **Kata: Formal Exercise**

1. **Taikyoku Shodan**
2. **Taikyoku Nidan**
3. **Taikyoku Sandan**

### **Self Defense**

Students will demonstrate a defense for the following attacks:

1. **Wrist Grabs: straight, cross and two-handed grabs**
2. **Lapel Grabs: one and two handed**
3. **Hair Grab**

## **Ippon Kumite**

Students will demonstrate one step defenses for the following:

1. **Lunge Punch**
  2. **Overhead Strike**
  3. **Front Kick**
  4. **Side Kick**
- 

## **GO KYU (Orange Belt – 5<sup>th</sup> Kyu)**

### **General Requirements**

1. **Sound moral character.**
2. **No age requirement.**
3. **Regular dojo attendance.**
4. **Member in good standing with the United States Martial Arts Federation (USMAF).**
5. **Minimum of three-month time in grade as Ro-Kyu.**

### **General Knowledge**

US Shotokan Karate belt ranking system by belt colors. (Japanese terminology for ranks through 10<sup>th</sup> Dan.

### **WAZA – Techniques**

Students will demonstrate the following techniques.

#### **Ate-Waza: Hand Techniques**

1. **Knife hand Strike: Shuto Uchi**
2. **Elbow Strike: Hiji Uchi (all directions)**
3. **Inverted Fist Punch:**

#### **Geri-Waza: Kicking Techniques**

1. **Round Kick: Mawashi Geri**
2. **Knee Kick: Hiza Geri**
3. **Crescent Kicks: Inside Crescent Kick & Uchi Mikazuki Geri**
4. **Outside Crescent Kick: Soto Mikazuki Geri**
5. **Jumping Front Kick: Mae Tobi Geri**
6. **Reverse Round Kick: Gyaku Mawashi Geri**

## **Uke-Waza: Blocking Techniques**

1. **Palm Heel Block: Shotei Uke**
2. **Wrist Block: Koken Uke**
3. **Knifehand Block: Shuto Uke**

## **Kata: Formal Exercises**

1. **Taikyoku Yondan**
2. **Tekki Shodan**
3. **Taikyoku Godan**

## **Self Defense**

**Students will demonstrate a defense for the following attacks:**

1. **Basic Punch**
2. **Head Lock**
3. **Arm Twist**
4. **Rear Choking (with arm)**
5. **Full Nelson**

## **Ippon Kumite**

**Students will demonstrate a one-step defense for the below listed attacks. Also, increased proficiency will be demonstrated for previous listed attacks:**

1. **Reverse Punch**
2. **Round Kick**

---

## **YON-KYU (Green Belt – 4<sup>th</sup> Kyu)**

### **General Requirements**

1. **Sound moral character.**
2. **No age requirement.**
3. **Regular dojo attendance.**
4. **Member in good standing with the United States Martial Arts Federation (USMAF).**
5. **Minimum of five-month time in grade as Go-Kyu.**

## **General Knowledge**

1. **Clear knowledge of fundamental "key" points of techniques and how to perform with maximum efficiency.**
2. **Understanding of "Atemi" and the correct methods of striking the below listed target areas:**
  - **Top of Skull**
  - **Base of Nose**
  - **Ears**
  - **Mastoid Process**
  - **Chin**
  - **Solar Plexus**
  - **Floating Ribs**
  - **Abdomen**
  - **Groin**
  - **Inner Thigh**
  - **Outer Thigh**
  - **Knee**
  - **Shin/Ankle**
  - **Instep**

## **General Terminology**

**Students should show increased proficiency and knowledge of terms at Yellow Belt level including names of various techniques. Students should also be familiar with terms listed below:**

1. **Striking of the body vital points: Atemi**
2. **Way of the Warrior: Bushido**
3. **Martial Ways: Budo**
4. **Way of Life: Do**
5. **Heian: Peaceful Mind**
6. **Applications of Kata: Bunkai**
7. **One Step Sparring: Ippon Kumite**
8. **Three Step Sparring: Sanbon Kumite**
9. **Free Exercise: Juji Kumite**

## **WAZA – Techniques**

**Students will demonstrate the following techniques.**

### **Kamae: Postures**

1. **Forward Stance: Zenkutsu Dachi**

Copyright: United States Martial Arts Federation, 1999, Reno, NV

This publication may not be reproduced either whole or in part without the expressed written permission of the United States Martial Arts Federation (USMAF)

2. **Back Stance: Kokutsu Dachi**
3. **Horse Stance: Kiba Dachi**
4. **Cat Stance: Nekoashi Dachi**
5. **Narrow Fighting Stance (hour-glass stance): Sanchin Dachi**

### **Ate Waza: Hand Techniques**

1. **Back Fist Strike: Haishu Uchi**
2. **Ridgehand Strike: Haito Uchi**
3. **Four Finger Spearhand: Yonhon Uchi**
4. **Heel Hand Strike: Teisho Uchi**
5. **Hammerfist Strike: Kentsui Uchi**

### **Geri Waza: Kicking Techniques**

1. **Heel Kick: Kakato Geri**
2. **Turning Rear Kick: Tenkan Ushiro Geri**
3. **Turning Heel Kick: Tenkan Kakato Geri**
4. **Jumping Side Kick: Yoko Tobi Geri**
5. **Cutting Kick: Fumikiri Geri**
6. **Stomping Kick: Fumikomi Geri**

### **Nage Waza: Throwing Techniques**

1. **Major Outside Reaping Throw: O Soto Gari**
2. **Advancing Foot Sweep: De Ashi Harai**
3. **Gathering Foot Sweep: Okuri Ashi Harai**
4. **Minor Outside Reaping Throw: Ko Soto Gari**
5. **Major Inside Reaping Throw: O Uchi Gari**
6. **Minor Inside Reaping Throw: Ko Uchi Gari**
7. **One Arm Shoulder Throw: Ippon Seoi Nage**

### **Ukemi Waza: Breaking Falling Techniques**

**Student should demonstrate proficiency with basic Ukemi.**

### **Kata: Formal Exercise (including all previous Kata)**

1. **Tekki Nidan**
2. **Heian Shodan (Heian mean "peaceful mind")**
3. **Heian Nidan**



## **Juji-Kumite: Free Exercise**

Student should demonstrate basic level sparring skills exercising control and timing. Emphasis should be on a "give and take" approach between partners.

---

## **SAN-KYU (Brown Belt – 3<sup>rd</sup> Kyu)**

### **General Requirements**

1. **Sound moral character.**
2. **No age requirement.**
3. **Regular dojo attendance.**
4. **Member in good standing with the United States Martial Arts Federation.**
5. **Minimum of five-month time in grade as Go-Kyu.**

### **General Knowledge**

1. **Intermediate level knowledge of the basic physics of Karate, or "what makes Karate work".**
2. **Ability to teach beginning level students basic skills.**
3. **Intermediate level skill of one and two step sparring and combination techniques.**
4. **Japanese terminology for all techniques required for this and previous ranks.**
5. **Further understanding of Atemi and the correct methods of striking the below listed target areas:**
  - Forehead
  - Elbow
  - Sternum
  - Center of Spine
  - Collarbone
  - Throat
  - Base of the Skull

### **WAZA – Techniques**

Students will demonstrate the following techniques:

#### **Kamae: Posture**

1. **Masubi Dachi: Informal Attention Stance (feet at 45° angle)**
2. **Heisoku Dachi: Attention Stance (feet completely together)**
3. **Fudo Dachi: Rooted Stance**

### **Ate Waza: Hand Techniques**

1. **Ren Tsuke: Alternate Punching**
2. **Dan Tsuki: Consecutive Punching (with same hand)**

### **Geri Waza: Kicking Techniques**

1. **Hook Kick: Kaki Geri**
2. **Turning Back Hook Kick: Tenkan Ushiro Kaki Geri**
3. **Jumping Round Kick: Mawashi Tobi Geri**
4. **Jump Turning Back Kick: Tenkan Ushiro Tobi Geri**
5. **Turning Outside Crescent Kick: Tenkan Soto Mikazuki Geri**
6. **Alternate Kicking (in combination using both legs): Ren Geri**
7. **Consecutive Kicking (with same leg): Dan Geri**

### **Uke Waza: Blocking Techniques**

1. **Wedge Block (from Heian Nidan [hands closed], and Heian Yondan [hands open])**
2. **Simultaneous blocking and striking**

### **Nage Waza: Throwing Techniques**

1. **Neck Throw: Kubi Nage**
2. **Four-corner Directional Throw: Shiho Nage**

### **Ukemi Waza: Break-falling techniques**

**Student should be able to demonstrate all basic Ukemi with increased proficiency.**

### **Kansetsu Waza: Joint Manipulation**

1. **Straight Armbar: Wake Gatami**
2. **Outward Turning Wristbend: Kote Gaeshi**
3. **Basic Wristbend: Kote Hineri**
4. **Rolling Armbar: Ikkaijo**
5. **Half-turning Wristbend: Nikaijo**
6. **Coiled Wristbend: Sankaijo**
7. **Ulna Manipulation: Yonkaijo**
8. **Leaf turning Wristbend: Kanoe Gaeshi**
9. **Coiled Armbar: Ude Garami**

### **Kata: Formal Exercise**

1. **Tekki Sandan**
2. **Heian Sandan**

### 3. Heian Yondan

#### **Kumite: Free Exercise**

Student should demonstrate intermediate level sparring techniques.

---

### **NI-KYU (Brown Belt – 2<sup>nd</sup> Kyu)**

#### **General Requirements**

1. Sound moral character.
2. No age requirement.
3. Regular dojo attendance.
4. Member in good standing with the United States Martial Arts Federation (USMAF).
5. Minimum of four-month time in grade as San-Kyu.
6. Demonstrated willingness to assume responsibilities as an "assistant" to the instructor teaching primarily beginning students.

#### **General Knowledge**

1. Ability to explain and demonstrate primary important points in the study of Karate (form, balance and center of gravity, power and speed, concentration of power, role of muscular power, rhythm, timing, lower abdomen and hips, discipline of training and the development of character).
2. Understanding of basic First Aid for common dojo injuries.
3. A written essay on "The Art of Karate and Its Meaning in Everyday life".
4. Japanese terminology for all techniques required for this and previous ranks.

#### **Demonstration of the following:**

1. Improved ability on all previous rank requirements, to include all techniques, terminology and knowledge, one and three step Kumite, Juji Kumite, and self-defense. This test will include all previous testing requirements.
2. Defensive Skills against multiple attackers.
3. Interpretation of the applications within Kata as applicable in Self-Defense.

#### **Tameshiwari: Power Demonstration**

Student should demonstrate basic breaking skills with both hand and foot techniques. Proper "kime" (focus) and technique at this level is the primary concern regarding tameshiwari.

### **Kansetsu Waza: Joint Manipulation**

Student will demonstrate improved ability to effectively utilize Kansetsu Waza in a self-defense application. See San-Kyu requirements for list of required techniques.

### **Nage Waza: Throwing Techniques**

Student will demonstrate improved ability to effectively utilize Nage Waza in a self-defense application. See San-Kyu requirements for list of required techniques.

### **Self-Defense:**

Students will demonstrate a defense against the following attacks. Also, the student should be familiar with "minimum force" techniques against all previously listed self-defense requirements.

1. **Front and Rear Bear Hug (with arms held and free)**
2. **Headlock (front and rear)**
3. **Hair Grab from rear**
4. **Front Kick**
5. **Side Kick**
6. **Round Kick**
7. **Turning Kick**
8. **Club Attack**

### **Kata: Formal Exercise**

1. **Heian Godan**
2. **Bassai-dai (Bassai means "to break down the fortress")**

---

## **IK-KYU (Brown Belt – 1<sup>st</sup> Kyu)**

### **General Requirements**

1. **Sound moral character.**
2. **No age requirement.**
3. **Regular dojo attendance.**
4. **Member in good standing with the United States Martial Arts Federation (USMAF).**
5. **Minimum of five-month time in grade as Ni-Kyu.**
6. **Demonstrated willingness to assume responsibilities as an "assistant" to the instructor teaching primarily beginning students.**

## **General Knowledge**

1. **Students are required to read the following books and present a 500-work report on the philosophy and history of Karate-do.**
  - a. **Karate-Do: My Way of Life by Gichin Funakoshi**
  - b. **Weaponless Warriors by Richard Kim**
2. **Students must know the entire belt rank system in include color or belts, Japanese terminology for each rank, step of development, and significance of each belt rank.**
3. **Ability to explain the relationship of Karate and physical fitness.**
4. **Japanese terminology for all techniques required for this and previous ranks.**

### **Demonstration of the following:**

1. **Improved ability on all previous rank requirements, to include all techniques, terminology and knowledge, one and three step Kumite, Juji Kumite, and self-defense. This test will include all previous testing requirements.**
2. **Defensive Skills against multiple attackers.**
3. **Interpretation of the applications within Kata as applicable in Self-Defense.**

### **Uke Waza: Blocking Techniques**

1. **Hand Pressing Block: Te Osae Uke**
2. **Hand Sweeping Block: Te-Nagashi Uke**
3. **Reverse Wedge Block: Kakiwake Uke**

### **Ippon Kumite: One Step Engagements**

**Advanced ability to defend against attacks and advanced ability with combination techniques.**

### **Juji Kumite: Free Exercise**

**Advanced level of endurance and the ability to spar with multiple opponents.**

### **Kata: Formal Exercise**

**Advanced level of Kata performance should be noted at this level with all previous required Kata:**

1. **Bassai-sho**
2. **Konku-sho**

## **Tameshiwari: Power Demonstration**

Student should show advanced power and focus and the ability to perform advanced and multiple breaks.

### **Self-Defense:**

Students will demonstrate defenses against the following knife attacks.

1. **Straight thrust**
  2. **Slash**
  3. **Overhead**
  4. **Upper Cut**
  5. **Knife at throat with lapel grab (against a wall and in open area)**
  6. **Knife held at throat from rear**
  7. **Knife held against the back from rear**
- 

## **SHODAN (Black Belt – 1<sup>st</sup> Degree)**

1. **Sound moral character**
2. **Minimum age of 16 for "senior" black belt. Juniors may test for "junior" black belt, but upon reaching the age of 16 may be required to retest for senior level black belt. This will be at the instructor's discretion.**
3. **Regular dojo attendance.**
4. **Minimum of six-month time in grade as Ik-Kyu.**
5. **Member in good standing with the United States Martial Arts Federation (USMAF).**

### **General Knowledge**

1. **Understanding the concept of Karate-do as a lifelong art.**
2. **Ability to explain the strengths and weaknesses of techniques learned to this point.**
3. **Ability to move and explain the key points of movement when transitioning from one stance to another,**
4. **Ability to explain the role of the Martial Arts Instructor, and the student/instructor relationship.**
5. **Ability to explain "What is Karate-do" in a comprehensive manner.**
6. **Student should show advanced knowledge of Japanese terminology to include all previous techniques and terms.**

**Demonstration of the following:**

Students will be tested on all previous rank requirements and should show advanced skill level on all techniques, including self-defense, Ippon and Sanbon Kumite, Juji Kumite, etc. Testing may take more than one day to complete.

**Kata: Formal Exercise**

1. Konku-dai
2. One additional black belt level kata from the following list:
  - a. Chinto
  - b. Gojushiho
  - c. Jion
  - d. Nijushiho

---

**UNITED STATES SHOTOKAN KARATE KATA**

**Order and Level of Instruction**

**ROK-KYU (6<sup>th</sup> Kyu) Yellow Belt**

Taikyoku Shodan

Taikyoku Nidan

Taikyoku San

**GO-KYU (5<sup>th</sup> Kyu) Orange Belt**

Taikyoku Yondan

Taikyoku Godan

**YON-KYU (4<sup>th</sup> Kyu) Green Belt**

Heian Shodan

Heian Nidan

**SAN-KYU (3<sup>rd</sup> Kyu) Brown Belt**

Heian Sandan

Heian Yondan

**NI-KYU (2<sup>nd</sup> Kyu) Brown Belt**

**Heian Godan**

**Bassai-sho**

**IK-KYU (1<sup>st</sup> Kyu) Brown Belt**

**Bassai-dai**

**Konku-sho**

**SHODAN (1<sup>st</sup> Dan) Black Belt**

**Konku-dai**

**NIDAN (2<sup>nd</sup> Dan) Black Belt**

**Gankaku**

**SANDAN (3<sup>rd</sup> Dan) Black Belt**

**Gojushiho**

**YONDAN (4<sup>th</sup> Dan) Black Belt**

**Jion**

**The kata listed within the rank requirements are required for advancement. Students should be familiar with at least one kata above their present rank. Instructors may substitute kata at any place within the rank requirements with kata of comparable skill level. Other kata which may be required by instructors are as follows:**

<b>Tekki Shodan</b>	<b>Hangetsu</b>	<b>Wanshu</b>
<b>Tekki Nidan</b>	<b>Jutte</b>	<b>Unsu</b>
<b>Tekki Sandan</b>	<b>Sochin</b>	<b>Nijushiho</b>
<b>White Crane</b>	<b>Chintei</b>	<b>Jitte</b>
<b>Tanda No Kata Dai Ichi</b>	<b>Jiin</b>	
<b>Anaku</b>	<b>Wankan</b>	