



Lab A7-3 *Martial Arts Fitness Program*

In recent years, martial arts workouts such as cardio boxing, kickboxing, and Tae Bo have become a popular form of group exercise. If designed properly, such workouts have the potential to develop cardiorespiratory endurance, muscular strength and endurance, and flexibility. Studies indicate that a 135-pound person can burn 350–450 calories during a typical workout.

Choosing a Class and Instructor

To get the most out of your martial arts workout, find a class that is safe and suits your needs. Observe a class before you sign up, and evaluate it using the following checklist:

- | Yes | No | |
|-------|-------|--|
| _____ | _____ | Are you free from balance and joint problems that could make the martial arts moves in the class difficult or unsafe for you? |
| _____ | _____ | Is the class progressive, so that activities are adapted for people of varying fitness and skill levels? |
| _____ | _____ | Are the participants in the class at a fitness and skill level similar to your own? |
| _____ | _____ | Are appropriate warm-up, cool-down, and stretching periods included in the workout? |
| _____ | _____ | Is the class small enough to ensure individual attention by the instructor as well as plenty of room to work out safely? |
| _____ | _____ | Do the routines seem easy to follow—not too fast or too heavily choreographed? |
| _____ | _____ | Are any periods of high-intensity exercise alternated with slower activities (to help prevent fatigue and injury-producing bad form)? |
| _____ | _____ | Is the instructor certified by a nationally recognized organization, such as the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) or the American Council on Exercise (ACE)? |
| _____ | _____ | Does the instructor have training or experience in the forms of martial arts exercise included in the class? |
| _____ | _____ | Does the instructor keep a close eye on the class and make appropriate modifications in the routines for participants of varying fitness levels? |
| _____ | _____ | Does the instructor clearly explain how to perform all the moves in a safe and effective manner? |
| _____ | _____ | Is the emphasis of the class on developing health-related fitness components and successful stress management? |
| _____ | _____ | Do you have appropriate clothing, shoes, and equipment for the activity you've chosen?
(List: _____) |
| _____ | _____ | Does the class seem fun? Do you think you would enjoy it? |

(over)

LAB A7-3 (continued)

Sample Martial Arts Workout

The following sample martial arts workout includes an appropriate warm-up and cool-down and activities to develop the health-related components of fitness.

COMPONENT/ TIME	DESCRIPTION
Warm-Up 6–8 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tai chi–inspired: breathing and balance focus• Bob and weave moves to stimulate heart rate• Standing stretches (legs and chest, shoulders)
Conditioning Part 1 10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Box and weave• Punching series: jabs and hooks• Advance and retreat using punch combinations
Part 2 10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kicking series: knee strike and front kick• Punch and kick combinations• Performance variation: punches and front kick with explosion jacks
Part 3 10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Punching series: uppercuts and crosses• Lateral slide using punch combinations• Performance variation: alternate jogging in circle executing cross punches with lunge-switch jumps
Part 4 10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kicking series: side kick and rear kick• Kicking series with squat jumps and front kick• Squats with rising blocks alternating hook
Post-Conditioning Taper 2–3 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bob and weave• Slow, shallow squats with shoulder rolls
Muscle Fitness 6–8 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Abdominal/upper body strengthening
Cool-Down 5–6 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flexibility stretches and focused breathing

Source: Scharff Olson, M., and H. N. Williford. 1999. Martial arts exercise: A T.K.O. in studio fitness. *ACSM's Health & Fitness Journal* 3(6): 6–14.

Practices to Be Avoided

For a safe workout, the following practices should be avoided:

- Fully extending or locking elbows, knees, or other joints when throwing punches or kicking
- Kicking beyond your normal range of motion (beginners should avoid high kicks)
- Kicking without pivoting the foot on which you are standing
- Wearing weights or holding dumbbells when kicking or throwing punches
- Performing many repetitions of a single move
- Attempting fast and/or complex combinations
- Exercising beyond your skill level or to fatigue
- Hitting a bag or sparring without appropriate instruction, equipment, and skill development
- Not warming up, cooling down, and stretching
- Not drinking enough fluids

Sources: Scharff Olson, M., and H. N. Williford. 1999. Martial arts exercise: A T.K.O. in studio fitness. *ACSM's Health & Fitness Journal* 3(6): 6–14. American Council on Exercise. 2000. *Fit Facts: Kick Your Way to Fitness* (http://www.acefitness.org/fitfacts/fitfacts_display.cfm?itemid=88; retrieved April 27, 2000). HealthAtoZ Fitness Center. 2000. *Kickboxing: Getting a "Kick" Out of Your Aerobics Class—Safely* (<http://www.healthatoz.com/atoz/fitness/cardiocraze/kick.asp>; retrieved April 27, 2000).