

SPARRING

COMMON QUESTIONS & INFORMATION ABOUT SPARRING AT UFA

Is sparring the same as fighting?

No, to the untrained eye they look the same when in reality they are very different.

Sparring is basically a form of training by making the motions of fighting, using the techniques learned in class, without the need for heavy contact.

Fighting is done with a different mentality, involving the exchange of heavy contact and intensity with the intent of stopping an opponent from being able to continue.

Why are some people fearful of sparring?

The idea of sparring can be very confronting for most people, so if you are fearful of sparring then you are not in the minority, most people actually fear and are uncomfortable with sparring. The reason for this is, they relate sparring with fighting and getting hurt. No one likes to get hurt so it's really a natural fear for all of us, but with the correct training and partners, anyone can become accustomed to sparring.

Why do some people take to sparring more easily than others?

In my opinion there are several factors with the most common being, the type of childhood and lifestyle they had when growing up.

Those who played competitive sport at an early age are accustomed to competition, and depending on the sport they played, there may have been some contact involved. Some grew up with older siblings in a rough, tumble lifestyle and some just grew up in a less giving, harder environment. This plays a huge part in accepting the potential of some contact when sparring, those don't see it as any different to their childhood or lifestyle but it doesn't necessarily mean they are better at sparring, it just means they are more accustomed to the intensity of competition and are more willing to accept it.

I have never played contact sport, can I be good at sparring?

Definitely, like most other things in life, sparring is a learned skill and regardless of the lifestyle you grew up in, anyone can learn a sparring system that suits them. Sparring is not just about physical attributes, sparring is as much a strategic game as it is a physical game. Most people don't realise there are different styles and levels of sparring and by progressing through these levels over time, one can become more confident and even enjoy sparring.

What are some of the benefits with sparring?

Self Defence, confidence, technical ability and resilience are just some of the benefits gained through sparring.

As mentioned sparring is strategic as well as physical, it's a puzzle which engages the mind as well as the body, it can be very rewarding but like everything else takes persistence with lots of practice.

Sparring regularly is a great way to build resilience, a necessary trait for the demanding world we live in.

How can I improve in sparring?

Good training partners play a huge role in our progression, we don't want to be overprotective but if a partner is sparring with too much intensity, lack of control or too much contact, it can have a negative impact with your confidence when sparring.

This is why UFA Martial Arts Academy have a progressive sparring system, to help everyone gain confidence and feel safe while sparring. Small percentages of improvement with regular sparring and a GOOD partner can boost a person's confidence and skill level. Everyone is different and that's why we have different levels of sparring, so everyone can test their ability under pressure with an emphasis on improvement.

What is the long term goal with sparring at UFA?

Over time competitive sparring with controlled contact, it is physically and mentally challenging but it's also beneficial and a lot of fun. Even with contact sparring we need to look after our partners and help them become more comfortable with competitive sparring. This means we may need to reduce the intensity if necessary, for the benefit of our partners.

We all can benefit with a good sparring culture, we need to remember, it's about improvement and gaining confidence, it should be fun and it shouldn't be about winning at all cost.

RESPECT YOUR PARTNERS they are not your OPPONENT, without them we can never reach our full potential

What are the different levels of sparring at UFA?

- **Beginners and White Belts:** No sparring - White belts are NOT prepared for sparring, they are still learning the basics and don't fully understand or can execute the techniques at this stage
- **Orange Belts:** No contact sparring, strikes which come close but do not touch their partner - Orange belts are still learning control over their limbs, this style of sparring is a great way to learn the different range of techniques and control over the techniques being used
- **Yellow Belts:** Touch sparring, strikes which only just touching their partner - Speed, range and timing is gained for both attack and defence with this style of sparring.
- **Green Belts:** Light contact, strike that make a little more than the touch contact - Control of the power you need to use is gained along with increasing confidence in both yours and your partner control
- **Blue Belts and above:** Partner agreement, strikes maybe harder but at the agreement of each person - This more realistic sparring helping with desensitization from being hit, which is essential for realistic self defence

Not all sparring sessions will require gloves and shin instep, there will be a lot of sessions with open hand sparring, this is to develop open hand strikes, takedowns and throws during sparring

What equipment do I need for sparring?

Most sports require gear and equipment to participate, martial arts is no different. Members of UFA are required to have their own personal safety and training gear bought to class at all times.

Even though beginners and white belts have no contact sparring and orange belts have only touch sparring the following training gear is essential for everyone to have, as it will also be used in regular class.

Good quality training gear may cost more but it will last longer and offer more protection for you and your partners

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- Gloves - Quality boxing gloves are required for sparring, no MMA or bag mitts will be permitted
- Shin Instep - Quality shin instep are required for sparring, no cloth shin instep will be permitted
- Mouth Guard - A tight fitting mouth guard is required for sparring
- Groin Guard - Is not a requirement but should be highly considered, a strike to the groin can be devastating for men or women
- Chest Guard - Is not a requirement but should be considered for women

REGULAR CLASS (for striking pads – not sparring)

- Gloves - The same gloves you use for sparring, MMA gloves or bag mitts are permitted for pad work
- Focus Mitts – A pair of personal focus mitts are required, don't rely on borrowing focus mitts

Hygiene is important to us and should be important to you, for hygienic reasons UFA members are required to have their own gloves and focus mitts. You slide your fingers and hands into gloves and focus mitts making them very difficult to clean and disinfect. The gloves and focus mitts in the storeroom have been used by numerous people over many years, I would not recommend using them all the time.

Do's and Don'ts when sparring?

- When sparring a different rank, spar to their level and rules. E.G. If a White and yellow belt are sparring, white belt rules (no contact) are to be used with less intensity from the yellow belt. Same rules apply if a black belt is sparring a green belt the black belt spars according to the green belt rules and intensity.
- Respect your partner at all times, we don't know how confident our partner is with sparring
- When contact sparring, if one person requests less contact or intensity, we must respect their decision and reduce the contact and intensity immediately
- When a controlled or pulled strike occurs, a quick acknowledgment is warranted, do not counter strike if the technique (if followed through) would have stopped the chance of a counter strike
- No linear (straight) kicks to the knees or face, this includes front kicks, side kicks, oblique kicks and back kicks
- Contact sparring should use controlled contact at all times otherwise it could escalate with the potential for serious injury
- A good rule of thumb for sparring "only hit as hard as you want to be hit" it should be competitive but it's not a competition, there are no medals or trophies on offer.