

Karate Grading FAQs



What is a grading?

A grading is a test you take to achieve a higher rank. When you start karate, you are a white belt (10th Kyu). If you are successful in your first grading, you become a yellow belt (9th Kyu). There are 10 colour-belt (Kyu) grades and a further 10 black belt (Dan) grades.

What happens at a grading?

You will be asked to demonstrate level-appropriate ability in three components: basic movements (Kihon), pre-arranged combinations of movements (Kata) and sparring (Kumite). You must pass all three components. At colour-belt level, you will not be asked to do any free sparring. Instead, you will be asked to demonstrate predetermined combinations of offensive and defensive movements with a partner.

When can I grade?

There are normally 3 gradings throughout the year. However, you must complete **at least 26 hours of regular training** before you can be considered for a grading (you will need to train more than this as you reach the higher grades, especially if you are training less than 3 times a week). Between 1st Kyu (brown with two stripes) and 1st Dan (black belt), you must wait at least 6 months. **Please note that you cannot put yourself forward for a grading** – the Club Instructors will invite you to grade when they think you are ready.

Where do gradings take place?

In the custom-made dojo at Sobell Leisure Centre in Finsbury Park, which is the Headquarters of ISKF UK.

Who is the examiner at gradings?

Sensei Ahcene Moussaoui (7th Dan), the Chief Instructor of ISKF UK. Black belt gradings are conducted by senior instructors from ISKF, including Sensei Hiroyoshi Okazaki (9th Dan), who is the Chief Instructor of the worldwide organisation.

What do I need for the gradings?

You need to have permission to grade from the Club Instructor and be in possession of a valid ISKF UK licence.

What if I don't pass?

There are three possible outcomes: pass, fail or temporary. A temporary means you did not meet the minimum requirements in every component (Kihon, Kata and Kumite). If you get a temporary, you can wear the belt that you went for and continue to train as if you had passed. However, those with a temporary are required to grade for a full pass at the next opportunity.

What if I have already graded with another Shotokan karate association?

You may wear the belt that you achieved but must regrade with ISKF UK within 6 months. Please note that you will normally only be allowed to grade up to the level you reached with another association. You must be able to provide evidence of your current grade in the form of an official licence or certificate. **If you come from an association that is not internationally recognised, you are likely to be awarded a lower grade.**