

### What is Kyokushinkai?



The *kanji* (Japanese characters) calligraphy, worn universally on the front of the *gi*, simply means "Kyokushinkai", which is the name given by Sosai Mas Oyama to the karate style he created. It is composed of three characters:

***Kyoku*** meaning "Ultimate".

***Shin*** meaning "Truth" or "Reality".

***Kai*** meaning "Society" or "Association".

### What is the Kanku?



The symbol of Kyokushin Karate is the *Kanku*, which is derived from Kanku Kata, the Sky Gazing Form. In this kata, the hands are raised and the fingers meet to form an opening through which the sky is viewed. The top and bottom points of the *Kanku* represent the first fingers of each hand touching at the top and the thumbs touching at the bottom, symbolizing the peaks or ultimate points. The thick sections at the sides represent the wrists, symbolizing power. The center circle represents the opening between the hands through which the sky is viewed, symbolizing infinite depth. The whole *Kanku* is enclosed by a circle, symbolizing continuity and circular action.

### What is Budo Karate?

**What is Kyokushin karate?** To some, it is a way to develop and maintain physical strength and learn effective self-defense techniques. To others, it is much more than that. Kyokushin karate is a way of life that transcends the physical aspects of training. Kyokushin karate is *Budo Karate*.

The essence of budo karate cannot readily be depicted in a few paragraphs. However, one can get a glimpse of its meaning by looking at the origin of the martial arts and its relationship with Eastern philosophies, and by examining the words "Karate" and "Budo" themselves.

**The word *Karate* is derived from the words:**

***Kara*** meaning "Empty", and

***Te*** meaning "Hand"

*Kara* also means "Chinese", and the original meaning of the word *karate* was "Chinese Hand" because of its origins in Chinese kempo. However, Gichin Funakoshi, the Okinawan master who brought karate to Japan and developed Shotokan karate (one of the styles from which Kyokushin was derived), believed that "empty" better described the meaning of karate:

The *Kara* that means "empty" is definitely the more appropriate. For one thing, it symbolizes the obvious fact that this art of self-defense makes use of no weapons, only bare feet and empty hands. Further, students of Karate-do aim not only toward perfecting their chosen art but also toward emptying heart and mind of all earthly desire and vanity.

**The word *Budo* is derived from the words:**

***Bu*** meaning "Martial" or "Combat", and

***Do*** meaning "Way" or "Path".

*Budo*, the Martial Way, is a Japanese term for arts that use peaceful combat as a means of perfecting the self.

**The word *Dojo***, or training hall, literally means the "Way Place", and it is also the name of the room used for meditation in a Buddhist temple. **A karate dojo is not a gym**, even though the training is physically demanding and a lot of sweat is shed in a Kyokushin dojo. **It is a sacred place of learning, and as such, it is treated with respect.** *Karateka* (karate practitioners) bow before entering or leaving the dojo. Shoes are not worn in the dojo not only to keep the dojo clean, but to keep the "outside world" out.

**A karate uniform is called a *Dogi*** (or *Gi* for short), and the word literally means "Way Clothes". Just as a dojo is not a gym, a karate *dogi* is not just clothes in which to train. A *dogi* is what a *karateka* wears on the path toward self-perfection. **It should always be kept clean and in good repair.** According to Mas Oyama, "to repair a torn uniform is no disgrace, but to wear a torn or dirty one is." **However, the *obi* (belt) should never be washed.** Over time, it becomes frayed and stained with the sweat and blood of hard training. An old, worn and stained *obi* reflects the *karateka*'s unique experience of training, which should not be washed away.

Mas Oyama fully understood the nature of Kyokushin Karate as budo karate, a path toward self-perfection through the practice of the martial art:

***"Karate that has discarded budo has no substance. It is nothing more than a barbaric method of fighting or a promotional tool for the purpose of profit. No matter how popular it becomes, it is meaningless".***

The philosophy of budo is evident in the name that Mas Oyama chose for his karate style, *Kyokushin*, which means "Ultimate Truth". It is also reflected in the Dojo Kun, in Mas Oyama's Eleven Mottos, and in the Spirit of Osu.

## Dojo Kun

The Kyokushin *Dojo Kun* (Training Hall Oath) was written by Mas Oyama with the help of Eiji Yoshikawa. The *Dojo Kun* is usually recited at the end of each training session, when the students and instructors are lined up by rank in *seiza* (formal kneeling). Each line of the *Dojo Kun* is recited by the most senior student and repeated by the entire class together.

1. We will train our hearts and bodies,  
For a firm unshaking spirit.
2. We will pursue the true meaning of the Martial Way,  
So that in time our senses may be alert.
3. With true vigor,  
We will seek to cultivate a spirit of self denial.
4. We will observe the rules of courtesy,  
Respect our superiors, and refrain from violence.
5. We will follow our God,  
And never forget the true virtue of humility.
6. We will look upwards to wisdom and strength,  
Not seeking other desires.
7. All our lives, through the discipline of Karate,  
We will seek to fulfill the true meaning of the Kyokushin Way.

### Eleven Mottos

Mas Oyama summed up his entire martial arts philosophy in eleven mottos,

1. The Martial Way begins and ends with courtesy. Therefore, be properly and genuinely courteous at all times.
2. Following the Martial Way is like scaling a cliff – continue upwards without rest. It demands absolute and unfaltering devotion to the task at hand.
3. Strive to seize the initiative in all things, all the time guarding against actions stemming from selfish animosity or thoughtlessness.
4. Even for the Martial Artist, the place of money cannot be ignored. Yet one should be careful never to become attached to it.
5. The Martial Way is centered in posture. Strive to maintain correct posture at all times.
6. The Martial Way begins with one thousand days and is mastered after ten thousand days of training.
7. In the Martial Arts, introspection begets wisdom. Always see contemplation on your actions as an opportunity to improve.
8. The nature and purpose of the Martial Way is universal. All selfish desires should be roasted in the tempering fires of hard training.
9. The Martial Arts begin with a point and end in a circle. Straight lines stem from this principle.
10. The true essence of the Martial Way can only be realized through experience. Knowing this, learn never to fear its demands.
11. Always remember, in the Martial Arts, the rewards of a confident and grateful heart are truly abundant.

## **The Spirit of Osu**

Osu is the one word that you'll hear the most in a Kyokushin dojo or at a Kyokushin tournament. When you enter or leave the dojo, you bow and say "Osu". When you greet a fellow Kyokushin karateka, you say "Osu" instead of "hello". When you respond to an instruction or question in class, you say "Osu" instead of "yes" or "I understand". When performing kihon waza (basic techniques) in class, each technique is often accompanied with a loud "Osu". When practicing jiyu kumite (free fighting) in class and your opponent lands a good, hard technique, you say "Osu" to acknowledge your opponent's skill. As a measure of respect, knockdown fighters at a tournament bow and say "Osu" to the front, to the referee and to each other, before and after the fight.

**Osu is used in many situations and seems to mean a lot of things. But what does it really mean?**

**Osu is a contraction of the words:**

***Oshi*** meaning "Push", and

***Shinobu*** meaning "to Endure".

**It means patience, determination and perseverance.**

**Every time we say "Osu", we remind ourselves of this.**

**Kyokushin training is very demanding.** You push yourself until you think you've reached your limit. First your body wants to stop, but your mind keeps pushing you. Then your mind wants to stop, but your spirit keeps you going. You endure the pain. You persevere. **That is Osu.**

Kyokushin karate is not learned overnight. It takes years to properly learn the fundamentals. The basic techniques are performed thousands of times (ren ma – "alwayspolishing") until they are done by reflex or instinct, without conscious thought (mushin – "no mind"). It's easy to get frustrated by doing the same thing over and over again, especially when progress seems to be slow. To overcome that frustration and continue training takes patience and determination. **That is Osu.**

**The absolute and unfaltering devotion needed to "scale the cliff" of Kyokushin karate is Osu.**

**The spirit of Osu is probably best described by Shihan Cameron Quinn of Australia in his book The Budo Karate of Mas Oyama. He writes:**

There is a saying in Japan, "*Ishi no ue ni sannen.*" Translated, it means "Three years on a rock." This saying symbolizes the need to persevere at all times. It is one of the most important philosophies in Kyokushin karate. Kyokushin is an art offering many things according to the immediate and long term aims of the trainee. Ultimately, one realizes that transcending the kicks, the punches, and the kata, there is a special spirit in the heart of the participants. It teaches them to face the demands of daily life with a mature and enduring attitude. A *budo-ka* is not easily shaken by the blows of adversity, realizing that for a person to draw near to their true potential, a never-say-die spirit of perseverance is required.

This strength of character develops in hard training and is known as *osu no seishin* (the spirit of Osu). The word *Osu* comes from *oshi shinobu*, which means "to persevere whilst being pushed". It implies a willingness to push oneself to the limits of endurance, to persevere under any kind of pressure.

The single word *Osu* captures most accurately the ultimate in what the art of karate, particularly Kyokushin, has to offer. One who is truly able to manifest the spirit of *Osu* in every word, thought, and action may be regarded as wise and brave. Training should first and foremost be approached in the spirit of *Osu*. One's daily life, and the responsibilities it holds, would be more completely lived if addressed in the spirit of *Osu*.

**In other words, *Osu*.**