

What does a black belt mean to me?

A black belt to me shows a high level of appreciation for the sport, self discipline, confidence, co-ordination, a lot of determination and strength mentally and physically. However much strength you need physically one of the many lessons I've learnt is you need even more mentally. I believe I have developed immensely in these skills since I have started karate at SESMA.

I first started SESMA as a shy nervous 9 year old girl, I was dragged to watch my sister do her first little dragons sessions with my dad, I complained for the whole half an hour for the first few lessons but when I realised how much she loved it, I then took an interest and decided this was something I wanted to do myself as well. When I spoke to my Dad about wanting to do it I wasn't sure because I was nervous and had very little self confidence. However he pushed me to go and join, he told me I would love it once I got started and he couldn't have been more right about that. Even after my first introduction lessons with Sensei Lynda who gave me that first bit of confidence and told me I was doing well, I knew straight away karate was something I definitely wanted to carry on with for a very long while.

Once I got my first suit I felt so welcomed as part of the group. Within my first few weeks I noticed all of the black belts on the wall and knew that was my dream and an achievement I wanted to reach. It kept me motivated seeing them all stacked up, so every lesson I worked my hardest to try and get where I am today. After every tough, tiring grading receiving my new coloured belt was amazing and made me feel like I was getting even closer to my main goal - my black belt. At my 2nd green belt, when I realised my name was put on the wall of black belts, I was ecstatic and pushed myself to work even harder. Even in covid I was determined to work towards my black belt. Master Wayne kept the studio open and even did lessons on Zoom, meaning I was able to keep improving. During the times of covid every other activity I did closed down, but thankfully the one I enjoyed most didn't. Karate kept me physically and mentally well during these times and I loved every moment of it.

In the last 2 years SESMA has had one of the biggest impacts on my life. I have spent many hours training for my black belt grading and spent it with some of the best people. Sensei Tom gave me the offer to help assist with teaching which I love. It has also helped me regain a lot of my confidence back which I lost during the tough few years before. Also in the last year I joined the competition squad and competed against

others who have achieved the goal of receiving their black belt. I have liked learning new things from other black belts and improving myself and my katas in every way possible. Sensei Will has taught me to have the resilience to keep going with something, even when it is tough. When I was told my kata makes his eyes bleed I continued to carry on improving! For me resilience is a key part of working towards the goal of a black belt because the amount of times you have to keep working, even when its hard is unfathomable. Having a black belt at competitions changes the way other competitors and even team mates view you as a person. The majority of the time they are viewed as someone who is an expert at what they do, someone who has respect for others but is also determined to work hard to achieve what they want to achieve.

After 6 years of great training, I still can't believe that the day I have dreamed of since I joined is finally nearly here. I am beyond excited but also extremely anxious of whether I have what it takes to finally become a black belt and be viewed in the way I view other black belts. If I have worked hard enough to achieve my black belt, I would feel very grateful and privileged. In the upcoming years I would like to continue progressing through the higher levels of black belt and constantly improving in many ways. I also hope to be able to one day teach my own class and inspire other young martial artists who have similar dreams and aspirations to me. I would love other students to view me as a role model, in the same way I have been inspired by my instructors at SESMA and I would also like to earn the opportunity to compete at high level competitions. I know to complete my goals I have to work extra hard to improve my mental resilience and my physical performance. This is what having a black belt is partly about being determined and realistic to yourself about the goals you set and work towards while hopefully inspiring others along the way.

Earning a black belt demonstrates that I have developed the skills necessary to achieve highly in karate and be a proficient martial artist. The time has come to attend for my black belt grading, 6 years of training, hundreds of hours, amazing instructors who have helped me along my way, endurance and resilience all have led to this epic chance to earn what I have strived for over the last few years.

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