

Mililani Shotokan Belt Grading (kyu tests)

(Updated 6/3/2025)

Non-black belt rankings are called “Kyu.” There are eight kyu levels. 8th kyu is the lowest level. 1st kyu is the highest level. 1st (ikkyu), 2nd (nikyu), and 3rd (sankyu) kyu wear a brown belt. 4th–8th kyu wear a white belt.

Black belt rankings are called “Dan.” Shodan (1st dan) is the lowest level black belt. Godan (5th degree black belt) is the highest black belt level in the SKA system. (Most other schools of karate divide the black belts into 10 levels rather than 5 levels.)

Kyu tests are held twice a year (April and November) at the Mililani YMCA.

Dan tests are held once a year on the mainland following summer special training in front of senior SKA black belts.

In order to take a kyu test:

- You must be a member of Shotokan Karate of America and current in your dues.
- You must have been coming to class regularly for at least 3 months prior to the test.
- You must have your instructor’s recommendation.

What you will do for your first kyu test:

KIHON (Basics)

Stances used: Zenkutsu-dachi (front stance); kokutsu-dachi (back stance); kibadachi (horse-riding stance).

Blocks: Gedan-barai (down block); age-uke (rising block); ude-uke (inside forearm block); tetsui-uke (hammer block); shuto-uke (knife-hand block).

Punches: Oizuki (front punch) and gyakuzuki (reverse punch), stomach level and face level.

Kicks: Maegeri (front kick); yokogeri keage (side up kick); yokogeri kekomi (side thrust kick).

KATA (Forms): Heian Shodan as a group kata.

KUMITE (Sparring): Ippon gumite (basic one-time attack) and sanbon gumite (basic three-time attack), stomach level.

For your second and following kyu tests:

All of the above, plus:

KIHON: Mawashigeri (round kick); mikazuki-geri (crescent kick); fumikomi (stamping kick).

KATA: You will be asked to perform Heian Nidan as a group kata and present your favorite kata as an individual. You may not select Heian Nidan as your favorite kata.

KUMITE: Ippon gumite (basic one-time attack), face level.

Note: After your second kyu test, you may not select Heian Shodan or Heian Nidan for your favorite kata.

Testing for brown belt:

- People testing for brown belt will be asked to present Bassai as the group kata. People testing for brown belt may select any Heian kata as your favorite kata.
- People testing for brown belt will also perform sanbon gumite face level.
- Adults testing for brown belt are expected to have attended at least one SKA special training. Minors are exempt from this requirement since you must be at least 16 years old to attend special training.

The rank you will be awarded will be determined by the mental and physical quality of your technique.