

# WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO STUDY MARTIAL ARTS

## WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO STUDY?

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Words like dedication, loyalty, spirit, duty, and commitment are always being used by teachers to describe what it takes to learn a martial art. In the years prior to the 1980's these words were often used and practiced by all students who wanted to learn an oriental martial art.

Let's examine the definition of these words and how they apply:

1. "DEDICATION" to commit [oneself] to a certain course of action or thought
2. "LOYALTY" the state, quality, or fact of being loyal; allegiance; fidelity.
3. "SPIRIT" the part of a human being characterized by intelligence, personality, self consciousness and will; the mind
4. "DUTY" that which one is morally or legally bound to do; obligation; the impelling or controlling force of such obligations.
5. "COMMITMENT" to place in trust or charge; consign; to devote [oneself] unreservedly; the act or process of entrusting or consigning.

After reading these definitions of words, what do they mean and how are they applied to one's study of a martial art?

Let's first define martial arts, which according to Funk and Wagnalls, means "pertaining or concerned with war or warfare". Art means "any system of rules and principles, that facilitates skilled human accomplishment. So "martial arts" means "the study of principles that facilitates skilled methods of armed and unarmed combat "COMBAT" means to fight or contend with one or more in a struggle.

The martial arts come to us from a time in history when all mankind was fighting to survive. Whether it was for food or possession of a living area, man has devised ways of protecting himself and family from those who wanted to take his possessions. This could apply to a local neighborhood, city or country, but it still boils down to the struggle for survival.

As the years progressed, sophisticated styles of combat emerged. This was accomplished by bringing people together for protection; thus different methods or styles of combat were joined to form very sophisticated means of combat. Sophisticated means of teaching were also developed so that these new methods of combat could be taught and used by everyone for protection of all in the community.

Dedication was a normal mind set because everyone wanted to be part of a particular system, thus helping in the community. So one committed themselves to a course of action, which improved themselves and the style of combat. By committing to do the exercises, forms, techniques, breathing and general learning, one became a good student.

By having loyalty or allegiance to a particular style one devoted his time, friendship and will to the study of the art. This meant bringing friends, relatives or acquaintances to their dojo so that the dojo could prosper and grow. The more workout partners of different size and weight that you could train with meant that you had to delve deeper into your art.

Duty meant that you committed yourself to be at the place of learning (dojo) at a specific time and place. Colds, stiffness of body and other excuses were never used to prevent you from going to learn. Not doing your duty meant you let yourself, the teacher, family and friends down, thus the possibility of town or village being destroyed.

While commitment is a lot like duty, without commitment the process of entrusting yourself to your school and community and its growth is impossible, thus the failure to protect yourself and loved ones is a consequence of no commitment.

In Seki-Ryu Jiu-Jitsu, the "commitment of the knife" means that your sole dedication or concentration when training or performing a technique is if you are using a "live blade" [steel]. If when training with an "artificial blade" [rubber or wood] one can easily develop a lackadaisical mind set, and when faced with a "live blade" could distort a person's ability to protect yourself and loved ones.

Now in Modern times, all these things have a different tone to them, but the end results should be the same. The rules to follow should be these:

1. Select an Art to learn.
2. Set the time aside each day or week to attend classes.
3. Once at the Dojo, the body and the mind should also be there, all other thoughts left in the outside compartment- to be opened after class.
4. Taking of notes and dedicated practice follows and the commitment should be to learn the complete system, so as to be able to pass on the art to others, so that they may also learn.

The duties of a complete student is first to help in the Dojo. This might include cleaning, putting away the tools of learning such as weapons, striking dummies, towels, mats, and so on. Secondly the student need to bring in new students to help in the growth of the Dojo, create a wider base for learning, training and personal growth of the mind and spirit. Last, a student needs to be there for all the students and the teachers.

In closing "EGO" should never be a part of training. Those that are ruled by their ego are no help in the Dojo, do not facilitate the growth of the dojo, and their learning process is clouded. To think of yourself before others and not be an active participant in the dojo will just show to all, students, teachers, friend, and family, that you are not a true Martial Artist, but one that only wants to play the role.