



How to...

WOW!

More than 6 million people in the US practice some form of martial arts.



Try out martial arts

Get to know more about these ancient traditions of self-defense.

Martial arts are a form of combat skills that originated thousands of years ago. There are many different types, from karate to judo to jujitsu, which teach self-defense while also building confidence and increasing mental and physical strength. Here's how to get started.

Learn the background

Martial arts can be traced back as far as 3000 BCE. Many of them originated and were developed in Asian nations, but other countries, like Germany and Brazil, also created their own versions. Martial arts were originally used in ancient battles, and the different styles each have their own moves that require agility and concentration to execute.

Consider different styles

Among the different forms of martial arts, karate, tae kwon do, and Brazilian jiu-jitsu (which stems from judo) are considered good options for beginners because they're made up of simpler moves. Kids can learn to master the moves one by one, then combine them into more complicated sequences as they progress. One way to find out more about the various styles of martial arts and

which you might like best is by watching videos on YouTube. With an adult's help, you can also call or email a martial arts school in your community to ask questions.

Take a class

Many martial arts studios will allow you to take a complimentary beginner class to try it out. Once you connect with a martial art that you like, you can proceed with beginner classes. Some community recreation departments also offer martial arts classes with qualified instructors. In addition, there are free online options that can help you get started. Two sites you can check out are dojogohomeschool.com and greatstartkarate.com.

Practice and compete

In every style of martial arts, it's particularly important to work on correct form, which takes time and patience. Many martial arts have a belt ranking system. In this type of system, you can progress to different belt levels, which are coded by color. As you improve, you might also have the opportunity to participate in martial arts competitions. This allows you to practice the moves you've mastered during your classes—and learn how to face opponents and adjust your strategy on the fly.



You can advance to different belt colors.

4 popular styles of martial arts

There are more than 180 types of martial arts. Here are some options that might interest you.

Karate

This type of martial art focuses on self-defense and targeting the weaker parts of the opponent's body with moves like elbow strikes, kicks, punches, and hand strikes.



Judo

With many techniques similar to wrestling, judo uses skills like

throwing and grappling an opponent to overcome them.

Jujitsu

This martial art form is based on the hand-to-hand techniques of the samurai.

Jujitsu involves close-combat moves that turn an opponent's force back against them.



Tai chi

Instead of being primarily used for self-defense, tai chi is a gentle

type of martial art focused on reducing stress and improving health. The slow, steady movements can strengthen muscles and flexibility while helping to clear the mind.

