

THE SIX STEPS TO FINDING A GREAT MA SCHOOL AND SUCCEEDING IN IT!

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Step 1: DECIDE what your goal is. Do you want to be a Black Belt? Would you rather just learn Self Defense?

--A Black Belt will inevitably reap the rewards of Self Defense, obviously, but it isn't the other way around. If you only want to learn Self Defense, you may not have to spend as much time (or money) but you won't develop the attributes of a highly trained martial artist. Such training is invaluable, but only if desired.

Step 2: UNDERSTAND that a martial art "style" is not as important as an excellent instructor. In other words, **don't worry so much about what style you learn as much as the quality of the instructor.**

--If you prefer Brazilian JiuJitsu over Judo but you run into three BJJ McDojos in your neighborhood and only one legit Judo school, take the latter.

--You don't want to waste your money by "buying the style" while compromising honest and pure education.

Step 3: Make sure it's not a McDojo! Do Your Homework! See article ["Avoiding McDojos"](#) for more information. In a Nutshell, make sure that...

--The school is not overpriced. A "pay-as-you-go" policy is optimal. 70% of all new students drop out in the first 3 months, so it is not in your favor to sign a binding contract that forces you to sign a check every month on the off chance you will be among the 30%. Also keep in mind that only 3% actually make it to Black Belt level.

--The school does not hand out black belts like hot cakes, with guarantees and binding contracts.

--The Head Instructor is a good and reputable martial artist whose credentials are easily researched and are proportionate to his/her claims and advertising. (look into their reputation, credentials, and MA lineage.)

--There is a heavy emphasis on sparring, including, but not limited to, reality-based sparring, grappling, takedowns, joint locks, head-strikes, leg-strikes, small joint manipulation, etc.

--Testing fees are not excessive and do not grow with rank.

--The school DOES NOT discourage or prohibit other outside training in other disciplines.

--The school does not discourage or prohibit competition.

--The Head Instructor trains and spars with the students instead of delegating it to other instructors. (Any Instructor who is reluctant to spar with a student may not be as qualified as he claims.)

--Students with Black Belts are not younger than age 16.*

--The Head Instructor, or the salesman, does not advertise a bran-new, state-of-the-art Martial Art, "originally used by Navy Seals," that will take out any opponent no matter their size, strength, or how many weapons or friends they have. (These McDojos are trying to sell the idea to you that there is an easy way to self-defense. In reality, it takes hard training. It is not easy. These McDojos want to take advantage of a wider audience that

does not want to work hard to earn results. They will give you a false sense of security and their scams could get you killed.)

Step 4: BE OPEN MINDED and don't let "cockiness," arrogance, or pride interfere with great opportunities. If you have previous MA experience, don't show it off to a qualified instructor with the condescending intention of comparing martial penis size. Be humble and do as you're told. Even if you meet a "McDojo Master," be respectful and don't pick fights, verbal or physical. Politely thank him for his time and move along.

Step 5: Once you've found a good fit for you, PRIORITIZE YOUR TIME according to #1 your interest in martial arts and #2 the amount of money invested in the training.
--Most schools, dojos, clubs, or organizations cost money. Don't commit your money if you're not equally committed to the time and effort it takes to excel in martial arts.

Step 6: DON'T GIVE UP when the going gets rough. It's *supposed* to be hard!

* "Child black belts" is a misrepresentation of true Martial Arts. If you take an 8 year old black belt and put him up against a normal, 30 year old joe, without protective gear, referees, or rules; could he win? There is a snowball's chance in Hell, but I sincerely doubt it. A "Black Belt" should be physically and mentally superior in martial combat over your average joe. If not, then somebody somewhere got money from some child's parents for wrongfully handing out the sacred title of "Black Belt."

Keep in mind that this is a debatable topic, so don't let my opinion be the *only* one you look at. I know of a couple schools that produce "Child Black Belts" but are very good schools with incredible instructors. A fabulous and extraordinary instructor can compensate for several McDojo traits, within reason of course. Make sure you feel it out and use your judgement. **There are exceptions to every rule in every book.**