**TIPS ON FINDING THE RIGHT SCHOOL**

1. AVOID CONTRACTS!

There is absolutely no need to ever sign a contract with a school. Would you sign a contract with a hair stylist, dentist, doctor, and little league or soccer coach? It is a ridiculous concept to sign your child or yourself to a contract for 1 year, 3 years or even 6 months to a school. Things change maybe you or your child will realize the martial arts are not for you. Maybe the instructor or curriculum will change and you will be dissatisfied later. The only instructors demanding contracts are those that cannot retain students the legitimate way, by great teaching skill, motivation and responsibility to their art. Contracts are often a way to keep students captive in a poor school. They are also used for money, money, money and to guarantee income to an instructor who is less than qualified to teach and worried about his students quitting. What is the purpose of a contract? Why do you have to guarantee the school owner that you will be there a year from now? If you do not like the school you should be free to leave. The contract only benefits the instructor who struggle retaining students.

*We never use contracts at Dukes Martial Arts Academy, we have been in the Harrisburg / Charlotte, NC area for ten years and have never had to need or seen the reason to hold our students to a contract. We have heard horror stories of students trying to get out of contracts with other schools. This is ludicrous, a student either wants to continue training in the Martial Arts or they do not. Training in the Martial Arts is an important decision and it is not for everyone. Binding everyone that walks in the door to a contract is simply ludicrous and a cheap attempt at guaranteed income.*

1. BEWARE OF UNUSUAL HIDDEN FEES & RENEWALS!

*There are no additional Federation renewal fees at our school.* There are also no annual renewal membership fees or multiple certification fees at our school. Shop and compare and avoid the school which burdens its students with unnecessary renewal fees & annual dues. Ask what each fee is for. Inquire specifically about renewal fee. You are already a member of their school why do you have to renew? It’s a ridiculous fee. We only charge for tuition & tests, no other money is sent up the ladder to corporate leaders or Federations. Corporate sales oriented style schools have association and federation fee as well as annual renewals for membership. See “Chain Store” school info below. This “Chain Store” mentality has spawned a new breed of Grandmaster. They sit atop their organization collecting fees from all their schools and it has little to do with the Martial Arts and everything to do with greed and corruption. It is all about multi-level marketing and it is a scam.

1. A VOID THE MULTI-TIER PRICING!

A common and unethical practice in the martial arts is to draw students in at one price, get them interested and then raise their tuition price. This is extremely unethical. It is no better than the dreaded “lead-in” sales promotion which promises

a product and one price and then bait and switches to another product at another price. It is ridiculous. Beware of the schools that want to upgrade your tuition price. Multi -level sales is another warning sign you are in the wrong school. They enroll you at one price and surprise you when you reach a certain belt that now yours in a different level and they quickly raise the tuition price and program! *We never raise your tuition price.*

*Unfortunately chain store marketing oriented “belt factory” schools are now opening in Brandon. For decades Brandon had mostly traditionally run Martial Art schools owned by local Black Belts. Now outside corporations are recognizing the growth market here so the “belt factory” schools have arrived.*

*One woman called me about her young son who was only a white belt in one of these schools. He had only been in the school a month or so and their price was already raised once, she had to buy another uniform because he was awarded the Black Belt club and she signed a contract for financing a loan for their training and she didn’t even know it! Unscrupulous money oriented schools are slick with their marketing, sales pitches and their tiered pricing. They get you in at one price and then raise the prices and retail you to death. It is their way; it’s the only way they know. They are not true Martial Artists they are professional marketers. At Dukes Martial Arts Academy you will find a peaceful relaxed atmosphere focused on Martial Arts education not retail and revenue. Training under a traditional Martial Arts Master or a Master of marketing and business? Traditional Martial Arts training is not motivated by money and greed it is motivated by helping someone learn valuable physical and mental skills which can help in all aspects of life. I read these business publications that teach all the above methods of “making more money” from your students and I’m appalled. They should have articles on how to be better instructors, not better businessmen. Our school is an educational environment focused on traditional training, not lining my pockets.*

1. TESTING FEES

Are another big difference between schools and usually a hidden surprise. Another common horror story is a student trains for years to get to brown belt only to find out that the test for Black Belt costs $500!**Imagine your child or children get to brown belt and the instructor informs you that the testing fee for Black Belt is $450 or more!** What do you do? Your child has worked years to get to this level; do you disappoint them and tell them they cannot test for Black Belt? The fact is many schools charge $450, $650, $850 or even $1000 for 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th Degree testing’s and they do not disclose this when you sign up at white belt. Some families with multiple children training are then surprised they must come up with $1000, $1500 or more for their children to test for Black Belt.

**Our testing fees begin at $45 intermediate levels, NO fees for beginner levels, $75 for advanced brown belt level and never exceed $150.00 for Black Belt test.**

**Black Belts are reviewed for rank every six months but our testing’s are extremely affordable compared to the vast majority of schools. Find out what a Black Belt test costs before you enroll in the school!**

Some schools operate at a higher monthly tuition and do not have testing fees. We feel this is also can be deceiving. You are paying a higher tuition fee each and every month but you do not test every month. It is better to offer the student a lower tuition price and then once every 3 to 5 months they test for promotion and pay a fair fee. The schools that advertise “No Testing Fee” very often cost much more over the long term because you are paying that higher tuition price every month.

1. INSTRUCTORS SHOULD BE QUALIFIED

An instructor should be a high level student both physically and mentally who qualified for their position within their school by demonstrating leadership skills and a concise knowledge of the curriculum. The traditional way to become an instructor is to earn an instructor position from your original instructor. The new unethical way is to purchase a piece of paper from some corporate ceo who runs a magazine add. He never witnessed the training or testing’s. A mail order instructor is what this creates.. Beware of those instructors who purchased their paper credentials from an unethical organization. Many “For Profit” organizations will sell paper credentials just to increase their numbers without truly qualifying their instructors. A paper certificate hanging on a wall does not qualify an instructor, years of dedication, experience and high level teaching skills are what you should look for in a qualified instructor staff. Schools also have a tendency to just place someone at the head of class. We’ve heard everything from brown belt teenagers to black belt children being entrusted with instructor duties. There should be a qualified trained instructor at the head of every Martial Arts class. This can be very safe or dangerous activity depending on who is in charge.

1. A VOID THE CHAIN STORE SCHOOL

There are “National, International” Chain store like Martial Art schools. These are generally corporate run “mail order” black belt type schools where the standards for black belts and instructors are very low. These chain store type schools and corporate federations are generally interested in one thing, money. Their bottom line is more important than the quality of black belt or instructor that they turn out. Their criteria for instructor level is either extremely low, non-existent or it is based on how wall an instructor “sells” not teaches. They are staffed by expert salesmen not expert Martial Artists. Be very careful when approaching these schools. Expect a slick presentation, slick charismatic instructors, carefully planned phone and in school sales pitch and a belt-factory like atmosphere. Some will go as far as promising rank faster to color belts & black belts. The genuine traditional black belt owned school is usually family owned and operated. The franchise method does not work well for Martial Art schools and changes the focus from education to bottom line profit and earnings.

AT OUR SCHOOL YOU WILL NOT FIND:

1. Required additional enrollment fees at signup
2. Mandatory Annual Federation membership fees & renewal fees
3. Pressured sales of videos, merchandise, & seminars
4. Contracts & long term obligations
5. Tiered pricing which raises your tuition price later!
6. Unethical rank & instructor standards, quick automatic rank advancement, usually every two months!
7. The fast track to Black Belt

* Beware of schools with the above practices. Seek out a traditional ethical Martial Arts school not a school motivated by business, retail sales & revenue.

What you will find at our school is an educational environment. Fair pricing of fees which are not raised like clockwork with deceptive practices. Do not take my word for it; speak to the students and parents within my school that have been with me for years. Ask if they have experienced any of the above tactics. Have you experienced them? Will you tolerate them? The Martial Arts can be an extremely rewarding experience for children, teens, adults and seniors but that is largely dependent on which school you join. Choose wisely because the differences are staggering.

* IMPORTANT REGARDING TESTINGS & RANK\*

1. MAKE SURE SCHOOL PROMOTES BY SKILL NOT THE CALENDAR

Some poorly run and unethical Martial Art schools promote by the amount of classes you attend or how many weeks or months have passed, instead of what you’ve actually learned. Sometimes the instructor’s income partially based on how often you test. These schools will generally rush you through the ranks at 2 month intervals and not really care whether or not you have truly learned the material or earned the rank. Basically you get the marks on the card, write your check and get your belt. These schools operate for profit instead of Martial Arts principles. There are schools where every student promotes every two months regardless of skill. Be wary of these schools, they are belt factories and they do a great injustice to the Martial Arts. If you never see a child being held back from rank promotion you may be in the wrong school. At Dukes Martial Arts Academy we promote by your skill level not by the calendar or the marks on your attendance card. We have children who have remained at the same belt level for six months or even one year until their discipline or skill level warrants there rank. This is the true Martial Arts not a business for profit. The same applies to Black Belts. Beware of the quick Dan rankings. If you truly have not earned rank it is a hollow accomplishment. Those offering the “fast path” to Dan ranking are unethical and are just trying to sell certificates and phony rank. An instructor should determine rank by skill, dedication, and attitude, not solely by how many months have passed. If all black belts are offered the same promotion in the same amount of time, something is wrong.

1. QUALIFYING THE CHIEF INSTRUCTOR

Some instructors claim to be experts, yet they rarely or sometime never hit the mats or continue their education. Seeking out new information and constantly learning is a Masters responsibility and the correct example to set for students. Make sure the instructor has sought out training and is a serious martial arts practitioner and not just a business man who sits behind a desk and never trains. Be wary of a Master who never truly demonstrates the kicks, strikes, and self –defense skills he is trying to teach, this is the first sign that something may be wrong. Also be aware of the instructor that did not qualify under his instructor but just purchased his instructor credentials. Some will claim that a CEO or magazine ad Grandmaster s their instructor when in fact that individual never witnessed a single test of this supposed instructor.

**Grand Master E. Dukes**

**9th Degree Black Belt**

**Join to day**

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