

# Special Training

Greece Shotokan Karate conducts national special practices known as "Special Trainings" once a year, usually in spring. This is the most important event for any karate student, for it allows one to push oneself to one's limits through intensive training periods from three to four days in duration, with several practices per day. Many students agree that Special Training is the most demanding and strenuous mental and physical experience of their lives.

The beginning student is allowed to attend Special Training with the consent of the instructor, based on physical condition and knowledge of kata, kihon, and kumite. During the Special Training, closed practices are held for black belts and brown belts in addition to the general practices.

The individual is given the opportunity to train with a large number of members of all ranks and other dojos, who gather to increase their self-awareness through this rigorous training. The event is usually held in a large facility where students all share the common experience by living, eating, and training together. Separate facilities are always provided for men and women students. Special Training represents an opportunity for the serious karate student to advance himself both mentally and physically. No drinking, taking of drugs, or sexual activity is tolerated.

In line with the martial arts tradition of "what you begin you must finish," one may not leave Special Training until it is officially over without the permission of the chief instructor. Any student who breaks this rule automatically loses his membership in GSK, and will never again be allowed to practice with any GSK dojo. There is absolutely no exception to this rule.

Special Training has come down to us from martial artists of the past who sought a way to put their mental and physical powers to a test by calling upon their innermost strengths—strengths that you will realize you also possess

after this intensive training experience. Indeed, to put ourselves into hardship, to push ourselves to our physical limits and thereby to strengthen our mentality, and to see ourselves with clearer eyes are the ultimate goals of this practice.

The ideals behind Special Training are most clearly articulated by SKA senior Sadaharu Honda:

“We know that human beings are very kind to themselves and are living as easily as they can. In this kind of situation we only maintain what we have, and the only way to obtain something new is to push ourselves strongly forward. The purpose of practicing karate is to develop physical and mental strength by putting ourselves into hardship.”