

Wilkes Academy Sparring Safety Policy

At Wilkes Academy, the safety and well-being of our members is our top priority. Sparring is an essential part of martial arts training, allowing us to apply techniques in a controlled environment. To ensure that everyone enjoys a safe and productive training experience, we have established the following Sparring Safety Policy for all adult members.

General Guidelines

1. **Respect your partner:** Sparring is not a competition, it's a learning tool. Treat your sparring partner with respect, regardless of their skill level.
2. **Communication is key:** Always communicate with your partner before, during, and after sparring. If there is going to be any form of an increase in intensity, both partners should agree beforehand.
3. **Control your techniques:** Precision and control are more important than power. Full-force strikes are NOT permitted, especially to the head and other sensitive areas.
4. **No ego in sparring:** If you are unsure or uncomfortable at any point, pause the sparring session and inform your partner or coach. Remember, sparring is about improving, not winning. Leave your ego at the door.

Protective Gear

1. All participants must wear the following protective gear during sparring sessions:
 - a. Mouthguard
 - b. Groin protection (for males)
 - c. Headgear (for MMA or heavier contact sparring)
 - d. 16oz gloves for boxing or striking-based sparring
 - e. 7oz MMA Sparring gloves for MMA Sparring
 - f. Shin guards for kickboxing and MMA sparring
 - g. 4oz gloves for professional fighters to grapple with. No sparring with 4oz gloves is permitted.
2. Other recommended gear includes knee pads, elbow pads, and appropriate footwear depending on the discipline.
3. Ensure that your gear is properly fitted and in good condition before sparring.

3. Types of Sparring

1. **Non Contact:** Focuses on technique, footwork with either no contact at all or touch contact to the body with no contact to the head.
2. **Technical Sparring:** Focuses on technique, footwork, and light contact. There is minimal to no impact, and this type of sparring is used for learning and practising specific skills.
3. **Controlled Sparring:** Moderate intensity with a focus on applying techniques under pressure. Strikes and grappling should be controlled with reduced force.
4. **Full Sparring:** Only permitted for competitors under the supervision of a head coach or his chosen representative. It involves increased intensity but must still maintain control and respect for safety. This type of sparring should be reserved for advanced students or competition preparation.

4. Injuries and Reporting

1. **Immediate Stop:** If you feel pain or believe you are injured, stop the sparring session immediately. Do not “push through” an injury.
2. **Report All Injuries:** Any injury, no matter how minor, must be reported to a coach immediately.
3. **Medical Clearance:** For any injuries deemed serious or requires time off, medical clearance may be required before resuming sparring.

5. Coach Supervision

1. All sparring sessions must take place under the supervision of a Wilkes Academy coach or instructor.
2. Coaches have the authority to stop any sparring session if they feel it is becoming unsafe or too aggressive.
3. Always listen to and follow instructions given by the coaching staff. All instructions given by a Wilkes academy team member must be obeyed.

6. Tap Early, Tap Often (For Grappling & MMA)

1. If you find yourself in a submission hold or compromised position, tap early and tap clearly. Whether physically, verbally or both. Your health and safety come first.
2. If your partner taps, release the hold immediately and safely.
3. Do not attempt submissions unless you and your partner have a clear understanding of the execution of and defence of the technique.

7. Fitness and Health

1. Ensure you are in good physical condition before participating in sparring. If you are feeling unwell or fatigued, notify your coach and avoid sparring until you are fully recovered.
2. Stay hydrated before, during, and after training sessions.

8. Conduct and Sportsmanship

1. Avoid using excessive force, even in full sparring sessions. Remember that sparring is a tool for learning and development, not for proving dominance.
2. Always help and encourage your fellow members. Support each other in improving both technically and physically. Any loss of control will not be tolerated.
3. Any misconduct, including intentional strikes after a break or showing aggression outside of sparring boundaries, may result in disciplinary action or suspension from sparring. This can also result in your removal from the academy.

9. Progressive Intensity

1. Newer students are required to start with light, technical sparring under close supervision of a coach. As experience and confidence grow, intensity may be increased progressively with agreement between training partners and in the appropriate classes.

2. More experienced students may engage in technical or controlled sparring, but only if they demonstrate control and respect for their partner's safety.
3. Hard sparring for competition preparation is not to be conducted without coaches being present. There are allocated competition classes for this type of training and must not be conducted outside of these allocated classes unless expressly arranged by a head coach.

Acknowledgment

By participating in sparring at Wilkes Academy, you agree to adhere to this Sparring Safety Policy. Any or repeated violations of this policy may result in restrictions on sparring privileges.

Stay safe, train smart, and remember: respect, control, and communication are key to successful sparring! In the wise words of John Kavanagh "Upgrade the software without damaging the hardware"