



CHAPTER 12
DEVELOPING RULES FOR YOUR BUSINESS
EXCERPT FROM BOOK

Why Should It Be Any Different In Martial Arts Schools?

Redskins Get Dressing Down

Redskins' running back Clinton Portis and safety Sean Taylor were fined by the NFL for uniform violations in a Sunday night game against the Eagles. Portis was fined \$20,000 for wearing black shoes, which did not match the rest of the team, and for wearing striped socks and an unapproved eye shield. Taylor was fined \$5,000 for wearing striped socks.

I have found it necessary to talk to my students about the same kind of issues, without the fines of course. At L.I. Ninjutsu Centers it is mandatory for students to wear complete uniforms. Our uniform includes a kimono style top and bottom called a "GI." Underneath, a student must wear a school t-shirt with our emblem, and shorts underneath the pants, also with our emblem. We also require our boys and men to wear groin protectors, and for all students to wear the footwear known to the Ninja as "Tabi." These Tabi are a split toe shoe and are a must for all Ninja enthusiasts.

At this point some of you are saying, "Wow! That is a lot of stuff." If you think about it, it's not that much to ask of the students. Think about hockey and the amount of gear a person needs to buy to play that sport.

When traveling around the country teaching seminars, I notice many schools with students who wear whatever they want. In the Brazilian Jiu Jitsu community, many students wear patches and slogans from sports companies. Usually the patches represent sponsorship, but now it is becoming a *fashion statement* to wear such patches. In our school we believe in showing individualism through expression and technique, not clothing. So it is very important for our students and parents to realize that the way a student wears the uniform is the first expression of responsibility and respect. As in any private educational facility, students have a mandatory uniform. If students don't wear the uniform, then they get penalized in some way, either through detention or not being able to attend school. I once had a young boy student who attended Catholic school and had a ponytail. The school asked him to cut his hair. The parents refused, so the school refused to allow him to attend. We feel strongly about our need to enforce our rules as well.

Studies have shown that school uniforms reduce gang activity as well as bullying within schools. Sometimes children are ostracized for being different because of the clothes they wear. Schools that have instituted uniforms have found less trouble overall.

We believe that if students are not in full uniform then they are unprepared. If they are unprepared in this way once or twice, it may be a fluke, but we look at three or more occurrences as a flagrant disregard for authority and respect. It shows that the students do not agree with our teachings, and also shows us that they incorrectly believe that the small things are not important.

Some people say, "Well it doesn't matter too much to me, why is it a big deal?" The answer is that if a rule is established then it must be abided by. The reason behind the rule may not be clear, or, in fact, the rule may be totally arbitrary, but the school has the right to establish the rule and the right to expect that people attending the school adhere to it. In the ancient world of Martial Arts, a student could be "Hammoned" (Japanese word) kicked out of a school for not listening to the teacher. Many of us, as Martial Artists, explain until we are blue in the face, often to the point of excess. Yet some people still don't listen. Why? I think it is often a lack of communication. In a small number of cases, it is a way for the students to try to push the boundaries and bend the rules. In any case, if you show students that disregarding rules is not proper protocol and is disrespectful, usually they will abide.

Here are some of the reasons behind the uniform:

1. The keiko gi: The traditional uniform of Japan, the keiko gi is formal wear used by many Martial Artists. Once worn under the kimono, it was considered underwear, but most Budokas (Martial Artists) practiced in it. The clothing that you wear in the school no matter whether you are very traditional or not so traditional reflects on your status and commitment. It is similar to how you decide what to wear to work, where your boss may require you to dress in a particular manner. You are probably required to look neat, to wear no clothing that would offend anyone, and depending on your level of responsibility, even to wear a jacket and tie.

In my schools, if even one piece is missing from the uniform, it is an infraction. I always tell my students that I would never wear a ballet uniform to a football game, nor would I wear a baseball helmet to a football game. One does not go with the other. Just one missing piece makes you unprepared.

2. The reason for under clothing: The t-shirt and the shorts are made to absorb sweat. They also serve a second purpose. The sports short – compression shorts are actually good for you. Most professional basketball players wear these for the protection of their muscles. Full underwear is also important if we take time in class to jog. Students who don't wear underwear as part of their complete uniform are unprepared.

Now let's look at an entirely different aspect of the uniform, the benefit to your school:

Branding! If you are not currently branding your school's name and asking your students to display it everywhere they go, then you are missing the boat. It is imperative to stress pride in your school and in your students' accomplishments in your school. In my schools we sell approximately 500 - 1,000 shirts per year. Students should be proud to wear your school colors. The question to ask yourself is, if they are buying clothing that displays logos, shouldn't they buy it from your school? It is a lot better for them to be wearing your logo than the logo of some far off brand that means nothing to you or to them. Not only does it provide advertising but it also connects the students to the school.

Envision, looking out at a sea of students, all of them dressed identically and looking neat, clean and sharp. When the next prospect walks through your door, he or she will take notice of your students and be impressed with the school. It will look like the scene from "Enter the Dragon" with Bruce Lee.

Rules Apply to all aspects of your school

Even though we have discussed previously the rules of uniforms, many other rules must be put in place to keep your school from Chaos and Anarchy. For each policy within your school you should have a specific standard set of rules to apply to each situation. For example: Make up Policies, what have you establish when a student misses a certain amount of classes within their contract period or training month. Do you just extend the period of time forward into the future beyond the term of the agreement allowing them time to make up the lost classes or are you specific in regards to this stating you can only make up classes within the period time in the year you are currently paying for.

Question like these arise continuously in a martial arts school. So for every system or program in your school you should predetermine the policy that you will have in effect. Remember retail stores have a specific return policy. If the client returns the item purchased within 5 days they get a full refund, if they do it after the 5 days they receive a store credit. It is essential to be prepared with this information so you do not have to fall back on your immediate decision. It is also imperative so you do not treat one client differently than the next.