

Yondan Requirements

1. The Dreaded Paper

At the yondan level, a karateka must demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the art. You will be asked to do that through a combination of writing and demonstration. The written part can be on a wide variety of topics, but must meet the following criteria:

- be at least 1500 words in length
- contribute to our knowledge of Shotokan karate. This can include history, philosophy, technique, teaching, training practices or other aspects that shine light on a particular aspect of Shotokan. It should not be a parroting or copy of what someone else has written but should show your own ideas and insights.
- credits and bibliography. You must show, through citing sources, that you have consulted authoritative works on your topic. This need not be extensive, but you should have read references that relate to your topic. Some basic reading would include:

Nakayama, M. *Dynamic Karate*. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1966.

Funakoshi, G. *Karate-Do, My Way of Life*. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1975.

Kanazawa, H. *S.K.I. Kumite Kyohan*

Nishiyama, H. *Karate: The Art of Empty Hand Fighting*. Tokyo, E. Tuttle and Co., 1960.

Cook, Harry. *Shotokan Karate - A Precise History*.

There are also a number of reputable journals and magazines such as *Asian Journal of Martial Arts* and *Fighting Arts* that have many good, scholarly articles.

Your own senior instructors are also a useful, citable source of information and can be consulted to provide you with direction. If you are looking for a topic and an approach to writing about it, ask your seniors.

How to go about writing

"Tell them what you're going to tell them. Tell them. Then tell them what you told them."

Like any story, you need a beginning, a middle and an end.

Decide what point(s) you are going to make, make that point, then summarize what you have told us so we are clear on how you arrived at your conclusion.

Introduction

If you are writing about a training exercise, you should make the point right at the beginning in your introductory statements.

"Most people beginning karate lack the ability to rotate the hip properly in mawashi geri. This paper presents some training methods for developing hip rotation and making effective kicks."

Body

The body of the paper should provide information explaining your point.

- why hip rotation is important to a strong kick and safe execution of the technique.
- how to loosen the hip joint.
- exercises for training the kick and ensuring rotation.
- common errors and injuries and how to correct them.
- what other instructors and knowledgeable people have said about training mawashi geri and what you know from your own experience. This is where you need to go out and find what other people might have said about this topic.

Conclusion

Your conclusion should refer back to the introduction and summarize your findings. "Through use of the exercises and training I have presented, a student can develop strong and supple hip movement resulting in fast and effective kicking technique."

If you are writing a history of, say, *Shotokan on Vancouver Island*, you will need to organize your information so it has a clear beginning and proceeds in a logical manner. You may, for example want to organize your information by date or by club or even by instructor. It should not be a date - fact - date - fact type of paper. You can get an idea of how to write these from the many articles written about martial arts masters and styles.

Some Suggested Topics

Teaching Children: Kindergarten vs Grade School

What is the difference between Shotokan and Okinawan styles?

Tournament Training: Personal observations and approaches

Training Abroad: Outside of the home dojo

Cross training: What activities work better than others?

The Do in Karate: Why we are so different than MMA

Chinese influences in Shotokan: Where did the Chicken Head block come from?

Why does karate wreck your knees? Improper training methods

Should kids and adults train together in the same class?

2. Experience

As an aspiring yondan, you are moving beyond the point where your grading is purely about your physical ability to perform. It is now more about your accumulation of knowledge and experience and your ability to communicate that knowledge and experience. Yondan is a teaching grade. That is why there is a teaching component in the exam. This will test your ability to communicate knowledge by analyzing a student and determining what will help them correct any problems they may be having.

But the grade is also about your maturity as a person and martial artist. What have you done to accumulate knowledge? Have you trained extensively with senior Shotokan instructors other than your own sensei? Have you competed, helped organize karate events and organizations, or taught extensively? In short, do you have a breadth of experience that will make you a well-rounded, senior karateka?

Obviously, this is somewhat subjective, but the Technical Committee wants to know that you have gone beyond your own dojo in your search for karate knowledge and that you have given some of that back to your organization and the next generation of karateka.

