

# Karate Institute of America



## Black Belt Requirements

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**KARATE INSTITUTE OF AMERICA**  
**BLACK BELT TESTING REQUIREMENTS**

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## I. BASIC INFORMATION & ELIGIBILITY

1. All formal requests for black belt promotions must be made four (4) weeks prior to the pre-dan technical test. A testing fee of \$175 must accompany the registration. The black belt testing candidate must obtain a letter of recommendation from a KIA Class A certified instructor and has the responsibility of mailing it to:

KIA National Headquarters  
Attn: Testing Board  
P.O. Box 1095  
Chardon, OH 44024

2. All black belt candidates, first degree to fourth degree, must pass a pre-dan technical test of their style to be eligible for the Style test.
3. All written paperwork, including log books, must be forwarded with the formal request to the KIA National Headquarters four (4) weeks prior to the pre-dan technical test. (Registration form available on website.) This is the candidate's responsibility, not his/her instructor's responsibility. The instructor's sole responsibility is to give all the information (technical and administrative) to the candidates. Information to be included in the documentation:
  1. KIA national membership number;
  2. Full name and address;
  3. Log books with total hours trained and tournaments;
  4. School and KIA Class A Certified Instructor's name;
  5. Rank testing to; and
  6. Date of last test.
4. Black belt candidates should be participating in KIA national events.
5. After passing the pre-dan technical test, the test candidate is eligible to test at the next Style test as held by the KIA. Dates for the Style test dates are announced at least six (6) months in advance on the KIA calendar. If a candidate fails the Style test, the candidate is eligible to test at the *next available* Style test without re-taking the pre-dan test.

## II. STYLE TESTING

### A. BASIC REQUIREMENTS

1. The Style test is a time to show off the leadership, performance skills, and knowledge of the candidate. A poorly designed or executed program is grounds for not passing.
2. The candidate *must* use a new elective form for each advancement. The candidate cannot use the same elective or outside kata to fulfill future requirements: i.e. same elective form for first and second degree black belt.
3. The candidate *must* provide a minimum of six (6) outlines of their formal testing program for the national testing board prior to the beginning of the Style test. Programs are to be typed on 8½” x 11” white paper. Program covers must be a clear plastic film, with a plastic side bar that binds the material (i.e. don’t just staple the program together).
4. The candidate *must* follow the submitted program outline meticulously and deviation from a submitted outline will automatically result in failure.
5. All Style programs must contain at least four (4) assistants. The candidate may not use any assistants from another testing program that is occurring on the same day. All assistants must be or equal or lower KIA rank than the test candidate. Non-KIA assistants may be used in the program.

### B. GENERAL FORMAT FOR STYLE TESTING & TESTING DOCUMENTATION

The following general layout format will be followed by all candidates for black belt testing within the Karate Institute of America without exception. The program layout will consist of four sections and be detailed in the testing documentation.

Page #1 - Identifier page:

- Photograph of candidate, 5” x 7” or digital picture, borderless, passport style (no action shots). Test candidate must be in regulation uniform and wearing belt.
- Below photograph:   Name  
                                  Instructor’s Name  
                                  Testing Date (00/00/00)

Page #2 – Information page for testing introduction

- Awards & certifications
  - Karate
  - Other
- Martial arts philosophy (50 words or less)

- Martial arts goals (50 words or less)

Page #3 – Testing Program:

- Should contain all material covered in presentation. The test format shall be typed with a brief description of each technique to be performed.
- Time limit: See rank specific requirements (below).
- General program outline
  - I. Introduction
  - II. Basic to Advanced techniques
  - III. Self Defense
    1. Basic to Advanced
    2. Multi-person attack to include:
      - a. Two person defense
      - b. Three person defense
  - IV. Breaking (optional)
  - V. Forms
    1. Required Form
    2. Elective form of your choice (in style) – **first degree only**
    3. Outside form (first degree black belt) / Elective form list  
Choice (second degree black belt and above)
- The candidate may arrange the format in any order that he/she chooses, with any techniques that conform with his/her training, and with any number of techniques in each area, as long as all the above areas are represented.
- ***ONCE THE FORMAT IS COMPLETED AND SUBMITTED IT MUST BE CLOSELY FOLLOWED.*** Failure will result for poor performance or deviating from the written format submitted to the board.

Page #4 – Appendix Page:

- Should contain any/all information the candidates wishes the board to consider, pertinent to his/her promotion.

## C. RANK SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

1. **1<sup>st</sup> Degree Black Belt**
  - a. **Eligibility:**
    - i. Age requirement: 16 years old
    - ii. Minimum hours: 300 Class hours (total) and must have been in continuous training for a minimum of 36 months
    - iii. Required Forms: First degree black belt form of the candidate's style and one outside form (another style, taught by a non-KIA member)
    - iv. Endorsement: Log Sheets endorsed by Class A Certified Instructor
    - v. Competition: Must have placed in top three (3) places at five (5) tournaments since previous test. Placements must be in either sparring, empty hand kata, or weapons kata.
  - b. **Style Testing:**
    - i. The candidate's program must be between eight (8) to twelve (12) minutes in length. Any candidate whose program does not fall within this time constraint will fail.
    - ii. The candidate may not use any music, props, skits, or weapons kata in his test, though a self-defense set against a weapon is allowed.
2. **2<sup>nd</sup> Degree Black Belt**
  - a. **Eligibility:**
    - i. Minimum Time in Grade: Twenty-four (24) months at first degree level
    - ii. Minimum hours: 300 Class hours since last test (training/teaching)
    - iii. Required Forms: Second degree black belt form of the candidate's style  
Elective form choice
    - iv. Endorsement: Log Sheets endorsed by Class A Certified Instructor
    - v. Competition: Competed in a minimum of two (2) tournaments as a Black Belt
  - b. **Style Testing:**
    - i. The candidate's program must be between nine (9) to eleven (11) minutes in length. Any candidate whose program does not fall within this time constraint will fail.
    - ii. The candidate may use skits, weapons kata, and self-defense sets against a weapon. The candidate may not use any music.
3. **3<sup>rd</sup> Degree Black Belt**
  - a. **Eligibility:**
    - i. Minimum Time in Grade: Thirty-six (36) months at second degree level.
    - ii. Minimum hours: 500 Class hours since last test (training/teaching)
    - iii. Required Forms: Jion and Elective form choice
    - iv. Endorsement: Log Sheets endorsed by Class A Certified Instructor
  - b. **Style Testing:**
    - i. The candidate's program must be between nine (9) to eleven (11) minutes in length. Any candidate whose program does not fall within this time constraint will fail.

- ii. The candidate may use skits, weapons kata, music, props, and self-defense sets against a weapon (i.e. no restrictions).
4. **4<sup>th</sup> Degree Black Belt**
- a. **Eligibility:**
    - i. **Minimum hours:** 500 Class hours since last test (training/teaching)
    - ii. **Required forms:** Gojūshiho and Elective form choice
  - b. **Style Testing:**
    - i. The candidate's program must be between nine (9) to eleven (11) minutes in length, though the candidate may request additional time needed for the program. Any candidate whose program does not fall within the above or requested time constraint will fail.
    - ii. The candidate may use skits, weapons kata, music, props, and self-defense sets against a weapon (i.e. no restrictions).
5. **5<sup>th</sup> Degree Black Belt**
- a. **Eligibility:**
    - i. **Minimum Hours:** 600 Class hours since last test (training/teaching).
    - ii. **Required form:** Elective form choice
  - b. **Technical test:**
    - i. No technical test is required for the rank of fifth degree black belt and any higher rank.
  - c. **Style Testing:**
    - i. Time Requirements: 9-11 minutes or may request time needed for program.
6. **6<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> Degree Black Belts**
- a. All candidates for the rank of sixth degree black belt and upward will be considered for advancement by the Board of Directors.

### **III. NATIONAL BLACK BELT TESTING BOARD**

1. The Style testing board has the final approval on all black belt promotions certified with the KIA. Black belt candidates must have three-fourths approval of the testing board in order to receive their next rank.
2. The testing board for each Style test will be chosen by the KIA Board of Directors.
3. If the candidate's primary instructor is not on the testing board, the instructor may accompany the board to deliberations regarding his/her student.

### **IV. ELECTIVE FORM LIST**

1. Kanku dai (Shōtōkan)
2. Unsu (Shōtōkan)
3. Jitte (Shōtōkan)
4. Kankushō (Shōtōkan)
5. Gankaku (Shōtōkan)
6. Tokumine (Bo form)
7. Shushi no kun shō (Bo form)
8. Tsuru no hisho (Bo form)
9. Additional forms may be used with approval from the Board of Directors.