



What is Kudo?

Kūdō (空道, *Kūdō*) is a Japanese hybrid martial art. It is a full-contact combat sport that aims to achieve both safety and practicality, a style of mixed martial arts practised with headgear and gloves. It features stand-up striking, with throwing and grappling techniques being also allowed in the competition, including restraint, locks and chokeholds.^[1]

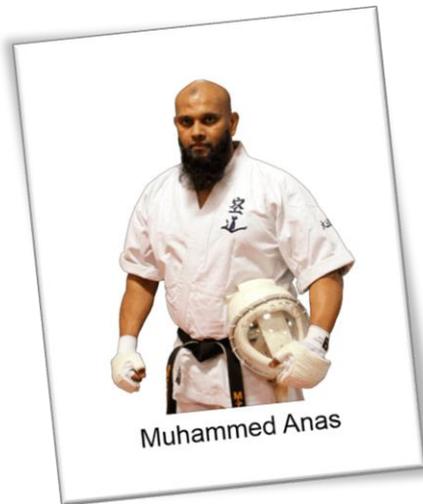
Kūdō is a budo martial art that originated in the Daido Juku school. Daido Juku is an organization founded by Azuma Takashi in 1981.

The Kudo is found in more than 100 locations in Japan and is practised in more than 60 countries around the world. Although it is a martial art created by the Japanese, Russia currently has the largest number of Kudo athletes.



What is your background and how did you get into Kudo?

I began my martial art journey in Judo when I was in primary school and then moved to a Budokan Karate when I was 11 years old. I remain a Karate-ka to this day it's just the emphasis of my practice has evolved. I have always been a 'black sheep' as I have always been drawn to the martial art schools which had a different or controversial way of training, so I cross trained in Boxing, Muay Thai and Capoeira. After over a decade of competing in various styles of Karate competition and kickboxing with my highest achievement being winning a European Championship in Bergen, Norway. I became increasingly frustrated that the level of contact in Karate was being reduced and competition was becoming less realistic, so I chose to focus my efforts more on the self defence applications found in Karate. By doing this I found myself isolated from the traditional Karate organisations and pathways which were mainly focused on fighting without throws and groundwork and the only option for full contact was Kyokushin Knockdown without striking to the head. Of course, there was more options along the Muay Thai route but this was



only a supplemental part of my training. I left my 'traditional Karate' path in the year 2000 as a 2nd Dan forming my own group under the name Goshin Karate supported by the late Curtis Page, father to Michael 'Venom' Page and but he was World Kickboxing Champion in his own right. Curtis was the head of a multi style organisation which was the perfect place to test myself in more than one way of fighting. In 2005 I graded to 3rd Dan by completing a series of semi and full contact fights across several disciplines. That reignited my passion for the practical application of Karate so I started training Judo again. I continued on my traditional Karate path grading to 4th Dan in Goshin Karate by a professional technical multi-style panel in 2012, later being awarded my honorary 5th Dan in 2017 after the retirement of my instructor Brendan Simmons.

In the later part of 2013 I and spent a significant amount of time trying to find a full contact all-round fighting platform in which my students could test themselves. This led me to the discovery of Kudo in 2014 via Muhammed Anas who was the only registered UK regional branch of Kudo in the UK. Initially my only interest in Kudo was in its sporting aspects as it was a perfect way of my students testing their Karate. It was the only combat sport which was close to a real fight and used protective equipment. I had no idea that Kudo was a martial art with its routes embedded in traditional Japanese Martial Arts with heavy emphasis on 'Budo', the war like code in which all martial arts are based. I felt that this separated Kudo from modern mixed martial art route. My group, Kudo Wales was born in 2014 as an affiliation to Kudo Windsor, England. In 2018 Kudo Wales was recognised as an independent official regional branch and I was personally awarded my Daido Juku Kudo blackbelt by Jukucho, Azuma Takashi.

In 2019, I received the great honour of receiving my 6th Dan Kakuto Karate from Peter Consterdine in recognition of my work keeping combat the main function of Karate.

Where is Kudo practiced and how long has Kudo been in the UK?

Kudo is practiced in over 60 countries over the world with the largest branches being in Russia and Japan. The first Kudo Branch in the United Kingdom was registered 10/07/2003 by Muhammed Anas (pictured above left) from Sri Lanka. Muhammed Anas developed his branch in Slough, England with Muhammad Fazil (Kent) and Suraj Bandara (Liverpool) also from Sri Lanka who also became official **regional** branches in 2019. With the support of Fazil and Suraj, Anas organised several National Kudo Competitions. The first UK born Kudo blackbelt was the infamous 'God father of MMA' Lee Hasdell (pictured above right) from Milton Keynes, England who was graded by founder Azuma Takashi in 2008. Lee was the driving force behind Kudo in northern England alongside Neil Holden also a Kudo blackbelt. Lee created the successful Combudo fighting competition in the year 2000 as a gateway for fighter wishing to compete in Kudo or in MMA. In 2016, I attended the largest Kudo Seminar in Europe, Rennes France. This triggered the beginning of the bond between Kudo Wales, France, Spain and Italy. My efforts toward raising awareness began to be recognised and In 2019 after the launch of my social media campaign other martial arts group began to take notice. In 2020 Mark 'Spenna' Spencer and ex professional MMA fighter, SBG Bradford and IMMAF Head Coach began his Journey into Kudo through my branch. As a well-respected Brazilian Jiu Jitsu blackbelt Mark has become the lead BJJ at Kudo Wales and the coaches have graded with him. SBG Bradford Gym is now the proud home to the official Kudo Yorkshire Branch with Mark at the helm under the guidance of Kudo Wales. In 2021, Gary Hobbs a Choi Kwon Do back belt and Brazilian Jiu Jitsu blue belt began his journey to become a regional Kudo branch in Hertfordshire. Initially part of Muhammed Anas's class he left to begin his own branch under the mentorship of my branch Kudo Wales. Gary is in great company at well-respected BJJ blackbelt Darren Jones's Force Submission Gym. On 1st April 2022, Jukucho Kenichi Osada of the KUDO International Federation Tokyo, Japan made my dojo in Wales the honbu (headquarters) for Kudo in the United Kingdom making me the first Official UK International Branch Chief. As the lead for the newly created UK Kudo Federation I am now responsible for all 6 existing branches and the development of Kudo in the UK.



What are your aims as the First UK Kudo International Branch Chief?

I hope to attract more established martial artists to Kudo by setting up interest groups around the UK. There is already growing interest in Birmingham, London and Edinburgh. With more official regional branches we will be able to have more Kudo Competitions and events. The founder of Kudo, Azuma Takashi's vision was for the sport to become an Olympic Sport so with more branches of Kudo in the UK we have a better chance of becoming a recognised British Sport. Until then we will continue to compete at international Kudo competitions.



Picture taken at Kudo UK Headquarters – GKA DOJO

What is the competition format?

Kudo is a mixed Budo sport comprising full contact punches, kicks, throws, headbutts and submission techniques on the ground. The format of Kudo competition rules implies victory over the opponent by direct, full contact punches and kicks, which bring the opponent down and gives the winner victory by 'Ippon'. There is 10 second rule for the standing clinch. Victory can be also achieved by winning 'Ippon' as a result of an effective submission technique, and by conducting effective techniques that award the performer with 'Wazari', 'Yuko' or 'Koka' points. In a regular division ground fighting is allowed for 30 seconds twice during a 3-minute match. If the winner is not decided in the main match 3-minute extensions are permitted. There is no 'ground and pound' in Kudo but the use of 'Kime' strikes will award the performer with points. Full contact strikes upwards are allowed from the competitor on his/her back, which includes 'up kicks' as well as strikes to the head. Full contact strikes to the body are permitted by both competitors on the ground.

How can an interested party get involved? Do they have to train at a Kudo Branch to enter Official Kudo Competition?

YES, you must be registered at an Official Kudo Branch but how often you practice can vary due to geographical location of your closest branch. We just ask that you try your best to attend as often as you can.

If an interested party has a blackbelt in a different martial art, do they have to start at white belt when joining a branch?

NO, but it depends on your grade, level of experience and the relevance of the martial art studied. Kudo is a Japanese mixed martial art and students are expected to learn striking, throwing and grappling using a kimono or do-gi. An instructor will assess your application and discuss the rank which he or she feels is relevant for you.

Do you have to be blackbelt in Kudo to setup an Official Branch?

NO, but you must be at least a 4th Kyu (Green Belt) and been approved by an existing Regional Branch Chief. New branches must be authorised and registered at KIF Headquarters, Japan. The new branch is assigned the status of 'Pre-approved' and is under the guidance of an assigned regional branch until the leader becomes Shodan (first degree blackbelt) or above. A pre-approved branch cannot conduct Kudo gradings or competitions without the presence of a Regional Branch Chief.

After registering how can an interested party fight or take a Grading Promotion Test?

JUST GET IN CONTACT, we can let you know if there is a branch in your area. If there is you can get registered there, practice and enter competitions or grading promotions. If there is no branch in your local area and you just want to practice Kudo then you can contact any of the branches to take part. You can also choose the branch that you feel more comfortable at or want to represent. If you are looking to setup a Kudo Dojo then you can affiliate to the Kudo Branch Chief of your region but there can only be one Regional Branch Chief. If you want to setup a dojo in a region where there is no Kudo Branch then you can make an application to become a 'Pre-approved Branch' providing you are a 4th Kyu in Kudo or above. If you have no grade and would still like to setup a dojo then you can arrange for one of the existing branch chiefs to conduct a series of seminars or classes for you. Once you have had time to study the Kudo Syllabus then you can take a Grading Test Promotion at any Official Kudo Branch Internationally. Once you have achieved your grade you will be supported to make your application.



Picture taken at the International Kudo Seminar in Rennes, France. Featuring Jukucho Osada and Shihan Takahashi

Where can interested parties buy the Kudo Headgear? Do they have to be a Kudo Student to get one?

YES, unfortunately you need to be a registered member to buy the Official Safety equipment and clothing. Once you have registered you can buy directly from any of the Regional Branch Chiefs. You can only participate in Kudo events with the Official Kudo merchandise.

Obviously, Kudo is a big part of your life now but what is next for you in the Karate world?

That's a difficult question really as Kudo and Karate are interchangeable as they are both martial arts. I will be heading out the European Championship in Rome, Italy this year and the World Championship in Japan next year but I am also enjoying supporting the Practical Karate movement so will be supporting Les Bubka's Karate for Mental Health project in the UK. My main goal is to promote Kudo but I equally enjoy supporting people that are trying to put the combat back into their Karate. I love meeting new people and becoming part of a wider martial community!

For more information regarding Kudo or organising seminars you can contact:

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