



WHY DO WE DO POOMSAE?

For many students, poomsae can be a challenge. It may feel like a memory test, or seem like doing the same thing over and over for little benefit. When done with a martial arts mindset, poomsae has a huge number of benefits, so many you could probably write a whole book on the subject.

Every single one of those benefits is a good reason why we do poomsae, but the combination of **practical, physical, mental and character quality building** results in the developmental equivalent of a knockout punch.

Poomsae is a historical database of martial arts moves (forms/patterns), much as many martial arts styles have similar patterns (Japanese martial arts for instance have kata).

Poomsae is a **living record of techniques**, commenced long ago when martial arts were banned or could not be written down (or those practicing could not read and write). Many of these moves, if done with good technique and full power, would be too dangerous to practice in sparring against a friend.

Done slowly, and repetitively, poomsae patterns are learned by the mind and the body through **muscle memory**.

Learning these moves and doing them over and over in a safe environment, visualising an imaginary opponent, helps students to learn potential combat moves such that their muscles will respond in a **reflex-like manner** if necessary and also allows them to slowly learn and demonstrate more complex moves and combinations of moves.

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It may help some students to see poomsae as a sequence of micro sequences – very short 2-3 move sequences, strung together. So one sequence in a simple pattern consists of a single block and punch.

That single sequence, when done in sparring or a fight can be highly effective, and if you need to string a few together, all the better to have a range of combinations on tap that your muscles know how to respond to.

Poomsae is excellent for **physical conditioning**. Try standing in an L stance for a few minutes while the instructor coaches someone, or doing white belt form so fast you can barely breathe at the end. The stances build **balance, muscle control and endurance**.

Done slowly and holding poses, poomsae is isometric (muscles do not contract) in nature.

Done fast, poomsae is isotonic (muscles contract) in nature, its explosive nature has cardiovascular benefits, builds strength through a range of motion and develops the fast twitch muscles capacity to respond at will.

When done with focus and intention, poomsae is **anaerobic whole body conditioning**, the equivalent of HIIT (high intensity interval) training many parents may do at the gym.

Poomsae builds **coordination** through undertaking moves using multiple body parts simultaneously (arms, legs, head and hips all involved in each movement), while also building **dynamic flexibility and enhances breathing control**.

Many people do martial arts, or bring their kids, to develop mentally and learn good qualities of character. Poomsae delivers huge mental and character-building benefits including developing **perseverance** and a sense of continual improvement, focus, attention and intention, mindfulness, and self-discipline.

In poomsae training, unlike some other more combative aspects of Taekwondo, a student **competes only against themselves**.



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The martial arts journey is well captured in the art of poomsae which is about persevering while learning moves, remembering them, and then **continuously refining** each and every move.

The quality of striving to improve and be excellent places every student well in every area of life: school, uni, work, parenting, hobbies, and other activities like music.

Poomsae requires **attention and focus on every body part** while doing each move, and improves focus and memory at the same time. Intention is developed through understanding a move and focusing on what it achieves.

Poomsae also develops **mindfulness** – while doing poomsae a student enters a zone of such intense focus on what they are doing, that everything else falls away, a state of mindfulness or entering **“the zone”**.

It is exceptionally difficult to do poomsae while thinking about other things. All of these benefits result in an increase in self-discipline through the combined effort of mind and body to deliver a result, and to keep improving in what is delivered.

You will often hear instructors suggest that all students should practice poomsae in their spare time (even practicing it visually in their minds when they are waiting for something, like at the bus stop).

That is partially because the more a student practices their poomsae, the more all of the above benefits accrue to them: it's like **an investment in oneself, body, mind and character**.

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