



INSTRUCTOR TRAINING

How to Run a Martial Arts School: The 16 Key Lessons

*A martial arts instructor's guide
to successful instructor training.*

BY MASTER RON SELL

SPARK

16 LESSONS/www.sparkmembership.com

WITH GRATITUDE

A LIFETIME OF TEACHING. SHARED.

The content and best practices in this guide were developed by **Master Ron Sell** over a lifetime of teaching **tens of thousands of students** and mentoring **hundreds of martial arts studio owners**.

Ron opened his first school in 1991 at age 19, grew it into a four-school operation, and turned the systems behind that growth into the software now used by thousands of studio owners worldwide. As Co-Founder & CEO of **Spark Membership**, he continues to bring that fire, and that burning desire to help small business owners, to the entire community.

It is with Ron's permission and generosity that these learnings and best practices are being provided to the community, to help studios, instructors, and leaders **grow and succeed**.

"Spark is about bringing the fire and burning desire to help small business owners."

MASTER RON SELL



MASTER RON SELL

FOUNDER • SPARK MEMBERSHIP

7th Degree Black Belt

PRAISE FOR THE IMANUAL

What Instructors Are **Saying.**

“

“Great information, fantastic teaching format!”

MASTER BILL CLARK

“

“Ron Sell is a Master Teacher. His manual is easy to understand, and it works.”

DAVE ALLARD, ALLARDS MARTIAL ARTS

“

“Ron Sell’s iManual is absolutely incredible. My staff has doubled in performance.”

IAN MCINTOSH, 3RD DAN, TAEKWONDO

“

“The most complete manual on instructor training I have ever seen. Bravo.”

GEORGE DENSON, MARTIAL ARTS AMERICA, KENPO

“

“Good job, Ron! I’m super impressed!”

WIL MAIER, 9TH DAN NINJITSU

“

“This solved my staff problems. Now we have a great resource to develop a stronger instruction team. Easy to understand, easy to implement. Well worth the investment.”

RICK OSWALT, 5TH DAN



DEDICATION

To Jesus Christ.

He has given me everything. I owe him everything. I will be forever grateful.

To my wife.

Without you, most of this project would not be possible. I love you.

To my parents.

Thank you for helping me along the martial arts way.



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THE CURRICULUM

SIXTEEN LESSONS.

EACH ONE A STEP FORWARD

LESSON 01 / FOUNDATION

Why Do We Teach?

01

Before any technique. Before any drill. Define why you do this, and the rest follows.

- Begin with vision. Where do you want your school in 5 years? In 10? How many students? How many locations? What will you teach? What will be your main focus? Write it down. Share it with your leadership in lesson one.
- Then have your staff list every benefit martial arts gives a student, confidence, fitness, concentration. Commit them to memory. Understand why we do what we do. It's about passion.
- Have each instructor write a one-page essay on the benefits the martial arts has had in their own life. The exercise is the lesson.

Every great instructor starts with a clearly defined vision.

LESSON 02 / WHO YOU ARE

Qualities of a Great Instructor

02

Enthusiasm. Charisma. Patience. Attitude. Motivation. The qualities that turn a coach into a leader.

- **Enthusiastic:** If your class is boring, you won't have students. Voice. Body language. Facial expression. Confidence. Smile. Pump the energy.
- **Charismatic:** Charisma is the ability to influence others positively by connecting with them physically, emotionally, and intellectually. Have a vision, communicate it, and share it often.
- **Gold Digger:** Master the power of the genuine, specific compliment. They cost nothing and they multiply.
- **Patient. Positive. Motivated.** The student doesn't learn at your pace, they learn at theirs. Stay calm, stay positive, stay hungry.

"People flock to excitement, but stay where they are loved." . Master Keith Hafner

LESSON 03 / WHO YOU ARE • 2

Knowledgeable. Loving. Punctual.

03

Master your craft. Love your students. Show up early. Set a goal you can see.

Knowledgeable: Know your style. Know teaching pedagogy. Know your students by name and by story.

Love & Understanding: Every student walks in with something. Meet them where they are.

Punctual: Arrive 30 minutes before class, every class. Set the tone.

Clean: Uniform pressed. Mat clean. Lobby spotless. The standard you walk past is the standard you accept.

Goal Setter: Write the vision. Make it visible. Hit it.

The standard you walk past is the standard you accept.

LESSON 04 / FEEDBACK

Correcting Mistakes

04

How you correct is a hundred times more important than what you correct.

- **The Compliment Sandwich:** Praise → correct → praise. Never sandwich a correction between two negatives.
- **Never-ending Correction with a Smile:** Correct as many times as it takes, and never let your smile fade. Frustration teaches frustration.
- **Be Gentle:** Replace “BUT” with “NOW.” “Your stance looks great, NOW kick faster.” That word change keeps the door open for every correction that follows.

Praise • Correct • Praise. Replace BUT with NOW.

LESSON 05 / STRUCTURE

Pro-Active Discipline

05

Pre-frame the rules. Praise positive behavior. The class disciplines itself.

**A set of written rules. Three to seven, no more.
Posted on the wall. Read a loud at the start of class.**

Praise positive behavior. Catch students doing it right. Spotlight them by name. Reward what you want repeated.

Examples that work: “Look at Sarah’s focus right now.” “Daniel just did the cleanest set point in the class.” The whole room adjusts.

Discipline isn’t a punishment. It’s the structure that lets the class succeed.

LESSON 06 / CONSEQUENCES

Consequences for Negative Behavior

06

Minimize misbehavior by making the right path the easiest path.

- Most behavior problems disappear when class has no downtime, clear expectations, and a steady pace and peak.
- When consequences are needed, they are private. Calm. Brief. Re-entry into the activity comes quickly. Never make a student a spectacle.
- Teach children to behave. Don't assume they know what good behavior looks like. Show them. Practice it. Praise it when you see it.

Praise in public. Correct in private. Always.

LESSON 07 / TEACHING

The Shamu Method

07

Reward small wins. Build big behavior. Make every student feel important.

- **The Shamu Method:** train the smallest piece, reward, repeat. Skill grows because confidence grows.
- **Make Me Feel Important.** Treat every student, and every parent, as the most important person in the room.
- **Difficult techniques:** break them into the ridiculous. The smaller the step, the faster the learning.
- **S.S.L.. Smiling, Sweating, Learning.**
Adults need all three, every class.
- **Grow a small class into a big one** by treating today's seven like they're tomorrow's seventy.

The smaller the step, the faster the learning.

LESSON 08 / CLASS DESIGN

The Makeup of a Perfect Class

08

One main instructor. Squad instructors. A lesson plan. A high-energy drill. A great close.

- **Main instructor** runs the room. **Squad instructors** run the dots, the small groups that keep everyone engaged.
- **Life-skills teaching** ties technique to character: focus, respect, persistence.
- **High-energy drill** is non-negotiable, every class.
- **Close strong** with announcements, bow-out, and the school cheer. Last impressions become the next class's first impressions.
- **Always teach from a lesson plan.** Never wing it.

Plan the class. Run the plan. Adjust nothing important on the fly.

LESSON 09 / ENGAGEMENT

Keep Their Attention

09

Read the room. React fast. Pre-frame and re-frame to keep every student in the game.

- **Identify drift.** Eyes wandering. Slower count. Slumped posture. Loss of formation.
- **Attention-getters:** name calls, pace shifts, sudden stops, target hits.
- **Pre-framing:** tell them what good looks like before they begin. Set the standard, then watch them rise to it.
- **Re-framing:** when something goes side ways, name a new frame. "This is the rep that makes you better than yesterday."

Children learn more when there are more starts and stops.

LESSON 10 / TECHNIQUE

Teaching a New Form

10

Three phases. One direction. Eyes everywhere.

- **Phase 1. Introduction.** Show the form, explain it, and have students mirror you while you face the class.
- **Phase 2. Polish.** Walk them through, correct stance and timing, and watch every direction change.
- **Phase 3. Perfection.** Run it to standard, full speed, full power, full presence.
- **Three learning styles, one class.** Demonstrate (visual), explain (auditory), have them perform (kinesthetic), every technique, every time.

D • E • C • R. Demonstrate, Explain, Correct, Repetition.

LESSON 11 / LEADERSHIP

Role of High-Ranking Students

11

Senior belts run drills, model the standard, and disguise repetition into mastery.

- Leadership Team and high-ranking students are NOT the disciplinarians. That's the instructor's job.
- They **lead high-energy drills**, set the tempo, and demonstrate the technique to perfection.
- **Disguising repetition** is their craft, the same kick, drilled five different ways.
- **In forms:** change the count, change the direction, change the partner. Same form, fresh feeling.
- **In one-step / self-defense:** rotate attackers, rotate angles, rotate intensity. Mastery without monotony.

Drill the fundamentals relentlessly, but never let it feel like drilling.

LESSON 12 / PRESENCE

Body Language & Reward

12

What you do speaks louder than what you say. Reward what you want to see again.

- **Body language while teaching:** stand tall, face the class, plant your feet. Movement is intentional.
- **Rewarding students:** postcards in the mail. Certificates. Spotlights in class. A thank-you to the parents.
- **Watch facial expressions.** Of students. Of parents. The room tells you the truth before the words do.
- **To keep students:** they need to see progress, fun, and accomplishment. Every class.

Reward the behavior you want to see again.

LESSON 13 / DIALOGUE

Teach with Questions

13

Ask. Listen. Pre-frame. As in life, so in class, you get what you expect.

- **Ask questions about what you just covered.**
Repetition by retrieval beats repetition by drill.
- **Pre-frame the class** with what you expect, and then expect it.
- **Never-ending corrections, with a smile.** Until the technique is right.
- **The 5-Foot Rule.** Anyone within five feet gets greeted, eye-contacted, smiled at.
- **Returning students.** Call promptly anyone who has been out a week or more. The call says, “You matter.”
- **Avoid burnout** by keeping the why visible, your vision, your students, your reason.

As in life, in class, you get what you expect.

LESSON 14 / DISCIPLINE

Break It Down. Drop the Push-Ups.

14

Push-ups are training, not punishment. Greet every prospect inside five seconds.

- Break it down to the ridiculous. If a student can't learn it, the chunks are too big.
- **Push-ups as discipline?** Never. Push-ups are training. Use structure, expectations, and accountability instead.
- **Proper attitude.** Walk in like you own the room because you do.
- **Greet every prospect within 5 seconds.** Greet every parent within 15.
- **Action steps:** assign greeters by shift train the script, and audit it weekly.

Push-ups are training, not punishment.

LESSON 15 / STANDARDS

Compare Yourself to Disney.

15

Don't measure yourself against the dojo down the street. Measure against the best customer experience in the world.

- **A-Rated is the only way to be.** Lobby, mat, instruction, follow-up, every touch point, every time.
- Demonstrate techniques to standard. Even in the smallest class.
- Call every student by name, at least three times, every class. If you can't remember names, build a system. Photos. Roster review. Mnemonics.
- **Staff exercise:** rate every part of the customer journey on an A-F scale. Fix any thing below A.

If it's not A-Rated, it's not done.

LESSON 16 / MASTERY

Three Laws of Concentration

16

See everything. Overlook a lot. Correct a little.

- **The three laws.** Awareness, restraint, and precision. The instructor who masters the trio runs the calmest, cleanest class in the area.
- **D.E.P.T.H.**, your daily mantra for class quality. Demonstrate, Explain, Perfect, Test, Hone.
- **Look through your students.** Don't see only the rep, see the person doing the rep.
- **Refrain from the word NO.** Replace it with "Try this instead," "Better like this," or "Closer, now finish it."

"See everything. Overlook a lot. Correct a little." . Pope John Paul



ASSIGNMENTS

DO THE WORK.

STAFF WORKBOOK • 5 LESSONS

LESSON 7 • SHAMU METHOD

Questions.

Q01 Briefly describe the Shamu Method of teaching martial arts.

Q02 Explain the analogy of teaching kids to swim as it relates to teaching new students.

Q03 Write the quote from Zig Ziglar about making others feel important.

Q04 How do you teach a difficult technique if the student seems frustrated?

Q05 What does S.S.L, mean? S: ____ S: ____ L: ____

Q06 How do you grow a small class into a big one?

**LESSON 8 • PERFECT CLASS**

Questions.

Q01 Define: Main Instructor / Squad Instructors / Life Skills / High Energy Drill.

Q02 What is the main focus of the instructors while class is in session?

Q03 Write out a sample lesson plan.

Q04 Why is it important to have and follow a lesson plan?

Q05 Why is it important to teach from a lesson plan?

**LESSON 9 • ATTENTION**

Questions.

Q01 How long is the average adult attention span?

Q02 How long is the average child's attention span?

Q03 Name six ways you can tell your students have lost attention.

Q04 What are some simple ways to change your students' enthusiasm level?

Q05 Children learn more when there are more _____ and _____.

Q06 An instructor has to be _____ for your students to be _____.

Q07 Always give commands with a sense of _____ in your voice.

**LESSON 13 • TEACH WITH QUESTIONS**

Questions.

Q01 Why ask questions to your students about the material you just covered?

Q02 As in life, in class _____.

Q03 Give an example of how you could pre-frame a class to give you what you expect.

Q04 In what manner should you correct a student?

Q05 How many times should you correct a student?

Q06 What is the 5-Foot Rule?

Q07 Proper procedure for a student who has been out of class for more than a week?

Q08 Give some ways for an instructor to avoid burn-out.

**LESSON 15 • DISNEY STANDARD**

Questions.

Q01 Instead of competing against other martial arts schools, who should we try to compete against?

Q02 Why?

Q03 What questions could you ask yourself to keep you focused?

Q04 What grade do you strive for each and every day?

Q05 In what areas could you become A-Rated?

Q06 What are your future plans in the martial arts?

Q07 What are your current goals besides the future plans?



TEACH WELL.
LEAD WELL.
GROW WELL.

*Master your craft. Multiply
your impact.*

MASTER RON SELL

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