

Karate – do Ranking System

The dan – i or dan ranking system is relatively recent in all Japanese martial arts. Near the turn of the last century judo founder Jigoro Kano gave black belts to some of his senior students, distinguishing them from lesser experienced students who wore white belts. In the early 20th century Mikonosuke Kawaishi devised the series of colored belts we know today. He also instituted the practice of having students learn part of a set curriculum, then testing them and awarding a particular belt for their efforts.

This method of grading was quickly adopted by practitioners of karate – do and later aikido. Some modern martial arts like kendo iaido adopted the dan – i method of grading, issuing certificates but not colored belts. Some schools of other Japanese arts like calligraphy and the board game Go also employed the dan – i system. In it kyu ranks are used to signify relative beginners; they run in reverse order, making a 4th kyu a lower rank than a 1st kyu. Dan ranks go up, making 5th dan higher than 2nd dan.

Nevada Karate – do Ranking System

Kyu Ranks

8th kyu – yellow belt

7th kyu – orange belt

6th kyu – green belt

5th kyu – blue belt

4th kyu – purple belt

1st, 2nd & 3rd kyu – brown belt

Dan Ranks

1st – 9th dan

10th dan – normally given as an honorary ranking to the most senior masters of karate - do