

Maintenance Scheduling 2

[I]f I spend time maintaining my flexible competition kicks, I'll have less time to improve my subtle application of self-defense receptions and counters. If I spend time maintaining my low entries to big hip throws, I'll have less time to improve my minimal motion and internal aiki skills.... And yet, I manage to do a pretty good job of imitating myself as a fresh *mudansha* (black belt holder) in both arts, as well as being able to teach novices and advanced black belts alike.

It all has to do with a little self-discipline and scheduling. As mentioned in my article "[Mastery and Complacency](#)", one must try a little harder so that the extra effort is a normal, scheduled affair. Since I teach 4-5 days a week, my evenings are about training others, not myself. Yes, I may occasionally join in, but often I am mostly observing in order to correct rather than my maintaining or improving the details of my own skills. Most instructors have this problem, so it is incumbent upon us all, I think, to schedule separate times in which to train ourselves.

I maintain my general fitness 3 days a week using weights, and maintain my kata 2-3 days a week, as well. No workout exceeds 50 minutes so I can easily add them to my morning schedule without detracting from other parts of my work schedule. Each kata day, I also stretch and, in good weather, do a short ride on my bike. Kata=10-15 minutes. Stretching=5-10 minutes, and Bike=10-15 minutes.

What about advanced karate, and beginning, mid-level, and advanced aiki?

First, every kata day, I not only vary which kata I perform, but alternate methods of performance. Some days, it is fast and hard, other days it is slow, fluid, or very mindful, varying stance length and energy use. I try to imagine what the applications might not for every movement but frequently during the workout.

Advanced aiki training has proven to be a bigger challenge. Where I may do some thought experiments about aiki movements during the day without putting on a *gi* or having a partner, ultimately I need a partner to know what works and with what sort of energy. So I experiment with an *uke* for a few minutes before or after an evening class. Sometimes I even teach what I am working on as a variation of a standard technique (obviously explaining to the students that I am no expert at this level). In this way, I can learn from trying to correct the students' movements.

You may have a completely different schedule. Your workouts might be during lunch (I once had a girlfriend who always took her lunch break at the gym and then snacked on her lunch during the rest of the day), or perhaps your workouts are at night. Or, you might do a short workout in the morning, and one or two more, later that day. The details of the schedule are not

essential, but it is essential that you *schedule* the details you need to work on. You already schedule your class training don't you? Just add to that schedule, inserting the items for which you need review, maintenance, or additional development.

This takes us back to “You can only *own* it, if you *earn* it”. Scheduling always seems daunting to modern busy people. But it needn't be. If you have the self-discipline to get the schedule working, even 5 minutes of additional time can turn into a habit that contributes to the maintenance of your martial skills. And maintaining your martial skills goes a long way toward avoiding the complacency that prevents mastery.