

American Taekwondo Association  
Tournament  
Frequently Asked Questions



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Prepared for:  
The students, family, and friends  
of Toledo ATA Martial Arts

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*\*click on one of the questions above to be taken to that section of the tournament FAQ*

# INTRODUCTION

## **What are ATA tournaments, and why should I compete?**

ATA tournaments are controlled competitive events that allow practitioners to display and improve their skills in a safe environment. In Songahm Taekwondo, we emphasize the importance of competing with a good attitude and learning under ideal conditions.

Many people think that the main goal at a tournament is to win a trophy, but that is not what our tournaments are all about. Tournaments allow our members to meet new people, make new friends, put their nerves to the test, and display their skills. By focusing on these aspects, it is very possible to be happy and have a positive experience whether one goes home with a trophy or not.

Competition exists not just in a tournament ring; in reality, students of Songahm Taekwondo (as well as all other human beings) compete on a daily basis. We compete with our body to lose weight, for example. We compete with our mind to retain knowledge, and we compete with our intellect on our spiritual convictions. Even in the case of a match against an opponent, we are not only competing against that person's skill, but also against ourselves to become the absolute best that we can. Therefore, tournaments are a great opportunity for increasing skills, as well as boosting confidence. And, just as importantly, tournaments help us to learn self control over a temper, or become motivated to react positively instead of negatively to outcomes we do not like.

For all these reasons and more, tournaments are a vital part of Songahm Taekwondo and are one of the most dynamic, fun aspects of our sport.

## **Ask questions**

We'd be more than happy to answer any questions that you may have about the tournament event. Feel free to contact us in whatever way works best for you (phone, email, or in person).

## **Complete Tournament Rules**

A PDF file with the complete tournament rules and guidelines is posted at [ataonline.com](http://ataonline.com).

## **BEFORE THE TOURNAMENT DATE**

### **How do I register for the tournament?**

A staff member will have a sign-up sheet in class if you are interested in competing in the tournament. You will be required to turn in your competition fee no later than the last class before the tournament day.

### **What does it cost to compete?**

Traditional competition includes forms and one-steps/sparing. The cost for traditional completion is \$35.00 each for the first and second family members. For traditional weapons, the cost is \$25.00 each for the first and second family members. After the second family member, the cost is only \$5.00 more per person for each individual event. These fees are subject to change.

### **Are there any additional fees I should keep in mind?**

For all non-competitors, there will be a spectator's fee of \$5.00 to enter the area (kids under 5 years of age get in for free.) The attendants will stamp your hand so you can leave and re-enter the tournament floor as often as you like.

### **Is there any merchandise sold at the tournament?**

You will be able to purchase merchandise (T-shirts, souvenirs, etc.) at the tournament. Sometimes food is available to purchase; however, it is usually a good idea to bring your own food, just in case. Many times there is a table set up where a student can have their name engraved onto a plaque and placed on their trophy. It's a great way to remember the special occasion.

### **When do I have to be there?**

Times may vary from one tournament to another and we suggest that you always check the tournament flier to confirm the exact times. In general though, Black belts should be present for the black belt meeting at 8:30 AM. All color belts should arrive early enough to get settled and be ready to go by 9:00 AM. Also, make sure you have enough time to get your registration form from your instructor before the opening ceremony starts (see What is a registration form?). If for some reason you won't be able to make it to the tournament on time, please notify your instructor as soon as possible.

### **Are there rules about what safety gear and weapons I can use?**

All equipment and safety gear must be ATA-approved, and you can only compete with the Pro-tech weapons purchased from your ATA school. No other weapons will be allowed. If you have any questions or concerns about the gear you currently have or may need to purchase, talk to your instructor.

## **What are the rules regarding my appearance during competition?**

### ***Uniform***

ATA uniforms should be clean and in good condition (not wrinkly or stained.)

### ***Uniform Patches***

All competitors must have their ATA patch sewn on the right side of their uniform. For all other patches or stripes, make sure they are in good condition, firmly attached to your uniform, and positioned according to [ATA guidelines](#).

### ***Undershirts***

If you wear an undershirt or undergarment under your uniform top, it must be plain white. Just as a reminder, undershirts are required for all female students.

### ***Jewelry***

For safety reasons, no jewelry is allowed to be worn during competition. The only exceptions are wedding rings (which must be taped or have the stone turned towards the palm), medical bracelets, and mandated religious medals.

### ***Finger nails/toe nails/bare feet***

Finger nails and toe nails should be trimmed, and competitors should be bare-foot unless they have a medical condition that requires them to wear shoes.

## **What is proper tournament behavior?**

Competitors are always expected to show their “black belt attitude” – they should answer up loudly, be enthusiastic and positive, and always show courtesy and respect to others. Poor sportsmanship (complaining about scores, disrespecting judges and fellow competitors, etc.) will not be allowed. Students may be disqualified for rude and disrespectful behavior, and their instructors will be notified. For repeated and severe offenses, students could be expelled from the tournament and from future competition at other tournaments.

## **BEFORE OPENING CEREMONIES**

### **What should I do when I arrive?**

When you arrive and enter the tournament floor, you will need to find your instructor or designated staff member to get your registration form.

### **What is a registration form?**

The registration form is a slip of paper that is required for competition. Most of the information on the form will be filled out for you, but minors must have their forms signed by a parent or guardian in order to be allowed to compete.

### **Who are the people in the blue suits?**

They are black belts who are certified instructors. Many times, the highest ranking people in the region wear their suits during the tournament. To see the rank of these instructors you can look on their suit jacket collar; there will be a rank patch that looks similar to the rank patch on the black belts.

## **AFTER OPENING CEREMONIES**

### **How will I know what division I/my child will compete in?**

Whatever rank the competitors will have at the time of the tournament will indicate which rank division they will compete in for that tournament. Age divisions are as follows: 7 & under, 8-10, 11-13, 14-16, 17-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, and 60 & up.

For the most part, divisions are separated by rank and age; however, depending on the number of competitors in each division, sometimes divisions will be combined. So, for example, blue belts may be combined with purple belts if necessary.

### **What if I just earned a new rank but don't know the new material yet?**

In this situation, you would wear your new belt, if you've received it, but you would compete with the material from your previous rank. For example, if you just earned your yellow belt but did not have time to learn the yellow belt material before the tournament, you would be able to compete with your orange belt form and one-steps. This applies to everyone except for new camouflage belts.

Since a new camouflage belt student has transitioned from one-steps to sparring, there is no longer a one-steps competition in their division. New camouflage belts can compete with the yellow belt form but would not be able to compete in one-steps. The student would be able to compete in sparring instead.

### **When will my division be called to compete?**

Normally, ATA-Extreme and Tiny Tiger competitors are called first; after that, competition times for each rank and age vary. Tournament programs are passed out at the start of the tournament and will provide a general idea of the competition schedule. The announcers will call each division a few times over the loud-speakers so that everyone knows when to go to the staging area and prepare for competition.

### **What is the staging area and where is it located?**

The staging area is an area separate from the competition floor where all competitors report to when called over the loud-speakers. The staging area location will be announced at the beginning of the tournament; however, if you miss the announcement, you can ask your instructor, a staff member, or another competitor where it is.

### **What if I miss my call to go to the staging area?**

The announcers will call each division a few times over the loud-speakers, so unless you leave the area for an extended period of time, you should not be overly concerned about missing your call. If you are late to your ring there is still a chance that you will get to compete (see What if I am late for my competition?).

# TINY TIGERS

## **What will the Tiny Tiger's competition be like?**

The Tiny Tigers event is seen as an introduction to competition.

### ***Forms and one-steps***

All Tiny Tigers will go through their forms and one-steps in front of three judges. If they need help, one of the judges will be able to lead them through their material. The Toledo ATA staff will mark the Tiny Tiger's registration form to indicate what they will be doing and whether or not they will need help with their forms and one-steps.

### ***Tiny Tiger Sparring***

If the Tiny Tiger is a camouflage belt or above they will perform "no contact" sparring with a partner instead of one-steps. The Tiny Tiger will need to have all of their safety gear. This includes foot and hand gear, head gear, face shield, chest guard, mouth guard, and groin protector for boys (regardless of age.) Competitors who are missing any of their sparring gear will not be allowed to compete.

If you have forgotten your child's safety gear, you may borrow equipment from someone or see if it is possible to purchase equipment at the event. Speak to one of your instructors as soon as possible if you forget any of your equipment so that he/she can help guide you in the right direction.

### ***Do Tiny Tigers get scores for their performance?***

There is no point scoring for Tiny Tigers; instead, they are awarded compliments on things they do well (great attitude, strong kicks, paying attention, etc.)

### ***How are trophies awarded?***

In the Tiny Tigers division, since the focus is on introduction to competition, every child who participates gets a trophy.

## **DURING COMPETITION**

### **Do I have to compete in all events for my division?**

The traditional events include forms competition and one-steps/sparring. One-steps are performed if the student is a white, orange, or yellow belt and sparring is performed for camouflage belt and up. We encourage you to have fun competing in as many events as your training allows, but if there is an event you do not feel comfortable competing in, you will not be required to participate.

### **What if I am late for my competition?**

If you can, find your instructor and let him/her know. With the permission of the Regional Chief of tournaments, you may be able to enter your ring late, depending on which event is going on when you arrive.

If an event has ended, you will not be able to compete in it. For example, if you arrive after forms competition has ended, you will not be able to compete in forms, but you might be able to compete in weapons if it has not started yet or if it is early enough in the weapons competition that the judges can squeeze you in. No late entries will be allowed for sparring/one-steps once the first round has begun.

If you miss your division completely, the Regional Chief of Tournaments will check to see if there is another ring available for you to compete in. Please keep in mind that although the tournament staff will make every effort to get you into a ring to compete, they can't guarantee that one will be available in the event that you miss your division.

### **What will I need to bring with me to the competition area?**

If you are competing only in traditional forms and one-steps, you will not need any extra equipment beyond what you normally wear in class.

If you are competing in weapons competition, you will need the weapons you have chosen to compete with.

If you are competing in sparring, you will need all of your sparring equipment. This includes foot and hand gear, head gear, face shield, chest guard, mouth guard, and groin protector for males (regardless of age.) Competitors who are missing any of their sparring gear will not be allowed to compete.

If you have forgotten your safety gear, you may borrow equipment from someone or see if it is possible to purchase equipment at the event. Speak to one of your instructors as soon as possible if you forget any of your equipment so that he/she can help guide you in the right direction.

## **How many people will I compete against?**

The amount of competitors in each ring varies. Divisions depend on the number of competitors in each of the age/rank groups.

## **Who will be judging me?**

The judges at tournaments are black belts who have been trained over a period of time to become qualified as a Level 1 Corner Judge, a Level 2 Center Judge, or a Level 3 Chief Judge. Each ring will have 3 black belts to judge the competitors. Two of the black belts will be corner judges and one will be the center judge.

## **What does each of the judges do?**

When judging forms, the three judges are responsible for judging different aspects of the competitor's performance. The judges will assign a score based on how you performed in relation to the rest of the group (see [What is the range of scores for forms?](#)).

For one-steps, the judges will assign a point to the student they thought performed the best.

For sparring, each judge is responsible for calling points if they see them; however, the center judge is the one who facilitates the match and calls the points out for the score-keeper to record.

## **What will I compete in first?**

The order of competition events is as follows: traditional form, weapons, and one-steps/sparring.

## **What is the range of scores for forms?**

The judges' scores range from 9.0 to 9.9. These scores are comparison scores based on how you performed in relation to the other competitors in your ring. The scores that the three judges give you may differ greatly, because each judge is scoring different aspects of your form. The total score, which is the three judges' scores combined, determines where you stand in the competition (first, second, third, etc.)

## **What if I forget my form?**

If you forget your form as a color belt, you may request permission from the center judge to start your form over. However, it may be more harmful than helpful to do this, because on your first attempt only the center judge can give you a low score for not finishing your form. The two other judges must score you based solely on the quality of your hand techniques, your kicks and your stances. If you request to do your form a second time, the highest score that any of the three judges can give you is a 9.1.

## **What if I forget my one-steps?**

If this happens during competition, the first thing to do is to stop, take a slow deep breath. Many times, stopping to take a deep breath will help to relax your body and clear your mind. If after taking the breath you remember your one-step then call the other person

forward to attack. If you still don't fully remember the one-step, you can still perform the techniques that you do remember to the best of your abilities. The most important thing is to have fun. So, if you only remember a couple of the techniques then try to have fun putting them together in your mind. This will then give you something to perform.

### **How are trophies awarded?**

For regular competition, competitors can win individual trophies for first, second, and third places. All competitors under 16 years of age will receive a fourth place competitor's trophy if they do not get first, second, or third place in any of their events.

### **As a parent or spectator, am I allowed to cheer on competitors?**

Parents and spectators are allowed to cheer and offer encouragement from the sidelines; however, coaching (directing or guiding, calling out commands or suggestions, saying or doing anything that might give one competitor an advantage over the other, etc.) is not allowed.

A competitor may receive a verbal warning for receiving coaching from anyone during the time he or she is in the ring. If the parents or spectators continue to coach the competitor from the sidelines, he or she will receive a second verbal warning, and in the case of a sparring match, the opponent will be awarded a penalty point.

### **What if I disagree with the judges' calls or believe they made a mistake?**

If you disagree with a call that the judges have made, please do not confront the judges and argue with them about it publicly. Instead, make note of the judges' names and try to find your instructor if possible so that they can report what you saw to the tournament staff.

## **AFTER COMPETING**

### **When am I allowed to leave?**

If you are a color belt and are planning on leaving at any time before the end of the tournament, you can let one of the instructors know before you leave. We're always happy to hear how things went for you during the day and answer any immediate questions you might have.

The instructors may be busy judging for other students when you come by so you can either wait for the instructor to get a free moment or, if you're in a hurry, you can leave and we'll just see you during your next class.

Most importantly, after you're done for the day, we hope you have a safe drive home and enjoy your/your child's personal victory that day.

### **Should I plan on wearing my uniform the whole day or changing while I'm there?**

You can arrive in uniform, wear your uniform all day, and leave in uniform if you choose to. Many competitors will do this. Also, if you are planning to stay until the final bow out at the end of the day, you will need to be in uniform to line up with the rest of the students.

#### ***What if I stay in uniform***

Keep in mind that when you're wearing shoes with your uniform, they need to be white sport shoes; no sandals or flip-flops are permitted.

#### ***What if I change out of uniform***

If you are a color belt and want to change clothes when you arrive or after competition, you may wear "street clothes," but they must be appropriate for the occasion. If you have any questions about what is and what isn't acceptable to wear for tournaments feel free to ask your instructor.

## **FOR BLACK BELTS**

### **Are there rules about what safety gear and weapons I can use?**

Sparring gear is available in either red or black, but if you are a black belt, you should be using black gear.

### **When am I allowed to leave?**

All black belts are required to stay until bow-out unless they have a valid excuse for leaving early and have discussed it with your instructor before-hand.

### **What if I forget my form?**

Unlike color belts, black belts are not allowed a second attempt for their form.

### **Should I plan on wearing my uniform the whole day or changing while I'm there?**

You can wear your uniform all day if you choose to. Many competitors will do this. Also, if you are planning to stay to the final bow out at the end of the tournament you will need to be in uniform to line up with the rest of the students.

#### ***What if I stay in uniform?***

Keep in mind that when you're wearing shoes with your uniform, they must be white sport shoes; no sandals or flip-flops are permitted.

#### ***What if I change out of uniform?***

Black Belts in attendance (whether competing or not) should wear "dress" clothes. Females can wear "dress" slacks, or skirts and tops, or dresses. Males should wear "dress" slacks and shirts (or sweaters) with a tie, sport coats or suits.

Certified Instructors must wear either their Instructor "dress suit" or their white traditional uniform.

This dress code is in effect from the first appearance at the tournament site until away from the tournament site. If you have any questions about what is and what isn't acceptable to wear for tournaments, feel free to speak to your instructor.