

The State of Virginia holds Top Ten Martial Arts Schools in Virginia Beach, Virginia and Chesapeake Virginia.

Changing Lives Martial Arts Stands Up as a TOP TEN leading Karate School in the American Taekwondo Association. Master Instructor, Sr. Master Tracy Lee Thomas takes martial arts training to the next level in both Virginia Beach and Chesapeake. "Our students are family to us, it's more than kicking and punching, it is the ability to professionally train our students in martial art techniques and LIFE SKILLS that will change their lives", states, Tracy Lee Thomas a local resident of Virginia Beach. Changing Lives Martial Arts was founded in 1991 in Virginia Beach. With five locations now serving the area Changing Lives MA is the leading martial arts school in the state of Virginia.

Changing Lives ATA Martial Arts hits it big in local communities. An affiliated member of the American Taekwondo Association. The American Taekwondo Association (ATA) was founded in 1969 in Omaha, Nebraska by Haeng Ung Lee of South Korea. It is one of the largest taekwondo organizations in the United States, and in association with the Songahm Taekwondo Federation (STF) and World Traditional Taekwondo Union (WTTU), is one of the largest in the world, claiming a membership of 350,000.[1] The ATA is currently headquartered in Little Rock, Arkansas and led by Soon Ho Lee.[2]

ATA-affiliated schools also host self defense seminars to teach techniques for emergency escape from an attacker.[3]

Songahm Taekwondo

Songahm Taekwondo is the style of martial arts practiced at ATA affiliated schools. Songahm means "Pine Tree and Rock." [4] According to the organization, the term Songahm itself represents "Evergreen strength the year round, long life and a symbol of unchanging human loyalty" [citation needed] as represented by the pine tree and the rock. Soon Ho Lee gave the name, Songahm, and its meaning to his brother, Haeng Ung Lee years before H.U. Lee founded the ATA. In the ATA, the student is compared to a growing pine tree, from a seed (white belt) to a massive tree (black belt).

According to the ATA, practitioners of Songahm Taekwondo study poome sae (forms, a preset combination of offensive and defensive techniques, designed to simulate self-defense techniques being used upon multiple opponents), gyeo-roo-gi (sparring), one-steps (scripted sparring segments), self defense, rebreakable plastic board breaking, weapons and leadership. The ATA has a leadership program that allows students to work as junior leaders/instructors in junior classes. This helps the trainee instructors become qualified taekwondo instructors and earn the ATA title of Certified Instructor.[4]

According to the ATA each belt has a symbolic meaning that compares the student's growth in taekwondo to the growth of a pine tree:

- White belt - "Pure and without the knowledge of Songahm Taekwondo. As with the Pine Tree, the seed must now be planted and nourished to develop strong roots." [5]
- Orange belt - "The sun is beginning to rise. As with the morning's dawn, only the beauty of the sunrise is seen rather than the immense power." [6]
- Yellow belt - "The seed is beginning to see the sunlight." [7]
- Camouflage belt - "The sapling is hidden amongst the taller pines and must now fight its way upwards." [8]
- Green belt - "The pine tree is beginning to develop and grow in strength." [9]
- Purple belt - "Coming to the mountain. The tree is in mid-growth and now the path becomes steep." [10]
- Blue belt - "The tree reaches for the sky towards new heights." [11]
- Brown belt - "The tree is firmly rooted in the earth" [12]
- Red belt - "The sun is setting. The first phase of growth has been accomplished." [13]
- 1st Degree Black Belt Recommended (half red and half black in appearance) - "The

dawn of a new day. The sun breaks through the darkness."

- 1st Degree Black Belt - "Begin planting seeds for the future." [14]
- 2nd Degree Black Belt - "With your noble character, you will develop a new permanence in life." [4]
- 3rd Degree Black Belt - "Peace of mind and tranquility." [4]
- 4th Degree Black Belt - "Crest of granite mountain." [4]
- 5th Degree Black Belt - "Mastered all kinds of knowledge and utilizes this to do many things." [4]
- 6th Degree Black Belt - "Long Life." [citation needed]

Belt and rank system

The American Taekwondo Association uses a rank system divided into two series: the colored belt series, and the black belt series. The purposes of a rank system include establishing a chain of command, and measurement of student progress. Each series has nine ranks within it due to the significance of the number nine as the highest attainable goal of a measurable endeavor in oriental culture. [4] [dubious - discuss]

The use of nine levels in the colored belt and black belt systems, is rooted in Korean numerology and has been explained by General Choi (nine is an important number in Korean culture). The increased number of smaller goals provided by nine levels of colored belt rank was designed "for added motivation by giving many short term goals to achieve and eliminating having to remain in a single color for several months at a time" and likely satisfies the need of many American students for immediate gratification. [5]

Each rank from orange belt to second degree black belt may be held either as a Recommended (R) or Decided (D) rank. The "decided" rank is a half step above the "recommended" rank. Some schools denote this rank with a piece of black tape around the end of the belt hanging on the student's right side. Other schools show the recommended rank with dual colored belts. The higher rank would be worn as the top half of the belt and the lesser rank as the bottom half of the belt. Decided ranks wear the full color belt. At promotional rank testings, students may receive a "Full Pass," "Half Pass," or "No Change." In rare cases where students have prior martial arts experience, they may be promoted by 1½ ranks or "double test" and get a full two rank promotion. For example, a decided Camo Belt (6D) could go half a rank to recommended Green Belt (Half Green/Half Camo - 5R), a full rank to decided Green Belt (Solid Green - 5D), or stay the same. And in extreme cases, if they go 1½ ranks, they would become recommended Purple Belt (Half Purple/Half Green - 4R) or "double Test" and achieve decided Purple Belt (Solid Purple - 4D). [citation needed]

Colored belt series

- 9th Grade White Belt
- 8th Grade Orange Belt Recommended (8R)
- 8th Grade Orange Belt Decided (8D)
- 7th Grade Yellow Belt Recommended (7R)
- 7th Grade Yellow Belt Decided (7D)
- 6th Grade Camouflage Belt Recommended (6R)
- 6th Grade Camouflage Belt Decided (6D)
- 5th Grade Green Belt Recommended (5R)
- 5th Grade Green Belt Decided (5D)
- 4th Grade Purple Belt Recommended (4R)
- 4th Grade Purple Belt Decided (4D)
- 3rd Grade Blue Belt Recommended (3R)
- 3rd Grade Blue Belt Decided (3D)
- 2nd Grade Brown Belt Recommended (2R)
- 2nd Grade Brown Belt Decided (2D)
- 1st Grade Red Belt Recommended (1R)
- 1st Grade Red Belt Decided (1D)

Martial Arts Black Belt Series

- 1st Degree Black Belt Recommended (1BR, Red/Black Belt)
- 1st Degree Black Belt Decided (1BD)
- 2nd Degree Black Belt Recommended (2BR)

- 2nd Degree Black Belt Decided (2BD)
- 3rd Degree Black Belt (3BD, 3rd-9th degree are "Decided" ranks - there are no "Recommendeds")
- 4th Degree Black Belt (4BD)
- 5th Degree Black Belt (5BD)
- 6th Degree Black Belt (6BD) Eligible for the title Master
- 7th Degree Black Belt (7BD) Eligible for the title Senior Master
- 8th Degree Black Belt (8BD) Eligible for the title Chief Master
- 9th Degree Black Belt (9BD) Grand Master[15]

For recommended Black Belt ranks, the student is required to successfully pass testing for their next decided rank within 6 months of achieving their current recommended rank. Failure to do so would result in the student being returned to their next lowest decided rank (i.e. a 2nd Degree recommended would be returned to 1st Degree decided).

The honorary rank of 10th Degree Black Belt, styled "Eternal Grand Master", was bestowed upon Haeng Ung Lee following his death in 2000. The rank was sponsored and awarded by Grand Masters of other major martial arts, [citation needed] many of whom attended Haeng Ung Lee's funeral.[16]

Martial Arts Mastership

Upon attaining the rank of 6th Degree black belt, the next step is earning the mantle of "Master Instructor"; this is not automatic. A 5th Degree may only test for 6th Degree at the Songahm Taekwondo World Championships, held in Little Rock, Arkansas each June. The new 6th Degree will have new criteria which must be met in order to apply for Mastership, and cannot be awarded until Worlds the following year. Similarly, there is a minimum period of a year between earning a 7th Degree and the Senior Master title, as well as 8th Degree and the Chief Master title. Mastership is only earned after many years of dedication to the ATA, [citation needed] which is why Masters are styled "Instructors of Instructors." [4]

Tiny Tigers Karate for pre-school children ages 3-6 years old.

The Taekwondo for Tiny Tigers program for preschool students (2-6) uses patches with animals on them instead of black stripes on the belt to denote the half step graduations: Tiger for orange belt; Cheetah for yellow; Lion for camo; Eagle for green; Phoenix for purple; Dragon for blue; Cobra for brown; and Panther for red. [17]

Forms

A form (poome sae) is a series of kicks, blocks and other techniques put together in a set pattern. The pattern becomes more complex as students progress through the ranks. For example, the 9th grade white belt form contains eighteen moves.

The 5th grade green belt form has 34 moves, the 1st degree black belt form has 81 moves, and the 9th degree black belt form has 99 moves. If all of the forms (eighteen in all) are done in sequence, they form the pattern of a nine pointed star (eight outer points plus a center point) referred to as the Songahm Star. According to the ATA, when the outer points of the Songahm star are connected, they form a circle which exemplifies complete balance. The ATA claims that forms create a contextual application for new material learned at each belt level.[4]

Taekwondo Colored belts

- 9th Grade White Belt - Songahm 1 - 18 moves [5]
- 8th Grade Orange Belt - Songahm 2 - 23 moves[6]
- 7th Grade Yellow Belt - Songahm 3 - 28 moves[7]
- 6th Grade Camouflage Belt - Songahm 4 - 31 moves[8]
- 5th Grade Green Belt - Songahm 5 - 34 moves[9]
- 4th Grade Purple Belt - In Wha 1 - 44 moves[10]
- 3rd Grade Blue Belt - In Wha 2 - 42 moves[11]
- 2nd Grade Brown Belt - Choong Jung 1 - 44 moves[12]
- 1st Grade Red Belt - Choong Jung 2 - 46 moves [13]

Taekwondo Black Belts Black belts

- 1st Degree Black Belt - Shim Jun - 81 moves [14]
- 2nd Degree Black Belt - Jung Yul - 82 moves [4]
- 3rd Degree Black Belt - Chung San - 83 moves [4]
- 4th Degree Black Belt - Sok Bong - 84 moves [4]

- 5th Degree Black Belt - Chung Hae - 95 moves [4]
- 6th Degree Black Belt - Jhang Soo - 96 moves [4]
- 7th Degree Black Belt - Chul Joon - 97 moves
- 8th Degree Black Belt - Sah Boo - 98 moves
- 9th Degree Black Belt - Dong Seung - 99 moves [citation needed]

Martial Arts One-step sparring

One steps are a short combination of blocks, strikes and kicks that serve as a precursor to free sparring. The ATA aims to teach students to put moves into combinations, focus their techniques at a specific target, learn distancing and gain self control. There are three specific one steps for each belt level starting at white belt and ending with green. As with the forms, the one steps become more complex as a student progresses in rank.[5][6][7][8][9]

Martial Arts Uniform

Students and instructors alike each wear a traditional white dobok with the appropriate belt to all classes, promotional rank testings, and tournaments. Each dobok has on the right breast an ATA shield patch with a school or club-specific patch on the left. On the back of the uniform, instructors and trainee instructors are required to have the word "TAEKWONDO" arching over a red and blue ATA patch. Underneath the patch is the instructor's name, either as "JOHN DOE" or "J. DOE." Non-instructor students may wear a uniform with "TAEKWONDO" and an ATA patch on the back, however, these students do not wear their names on their backs. Instead of a name, the student will have the location of the dojang (dojo) he or she attends, e.g., "Norman, Oklahoma." [4]

ATA Patch

American Taekwondo ATA patch

ATA students wear a patch on the right breast that is in the shape of a shield. At the top-left of the patch is the American Flag. The flag of South Korea is next to it in the top-right corner. The lower two-thirds of the patch is a white field with a large "ATA," the consonant in blue and the vowels in red, tapering away from the center. The stitching around the flags and the whole of the patch is blue.

The ATA patch worn on the back of the uniform is made up of large block letters with the same color pattern as on the breast patch. The rear patch has a white silhouette of a jump side kick superimposed on it.[citation needed]

Black Belt Club patch

Martial Arts Black Belt Club patch or Master Club patch

The Black Belt Club (BBC) or Master Club (MC) patch is worn on the top of the left sleeve. The BBC patch is in the shape of an inverted triangle over top of a circle. The MC patch is in the shape of a circle with the Songahm star stitched into the center. These patches are worn by all members of the respective club. The BBC and MC are where students may learn additional material as communicated by their instructor for additional fees.[18]

ATA Leadership Program patch

Karate Leadership Program patch

The Leadership Program Club patch is worn on the top of both sleeves. This patch is worn by all members of the Leadership Program. The Leadership Program is where students learn advanced training material and leadership/instructing skills for additional fees.[citation needed]

Taekwondo Instructor collars

Black Belt students not certified as instructors nor enrolled in a trainee instructor program may wear a one inch black ribbon along the edge of the uniform jacket from the bottom of the jacket to the level of the belt. Instructors wear a ribbon on the entire length of the collar with one half inch of white showing on

the top/inside of the collar.

Leadership students wear a 1" Red Ribbon and are eligible to work toward instructor certification. The Certified Trainer wears a red/black collar denoting the first rank in the instructor program. The Specialty Certified Instructor wears a black/red/black collar as the second rank toward full instructor certification. The Certified Instructor collar ribbon is solid black.

ATA School Owners may have additional collars denoting the number of students under their instruction. A Blue Center Stripe (1 ½" black with ¼" blue center stripe) denotes a School Owner with over 200 active students at a every testing cycle. Silver Center Stripe (1 ½" black with ¼" silver center stripe) is for a studio owner that has 500 active students at every testing and a Gold Center Stripe (1 ½" black with ¼" gold center stripe) is for a studio owner that has 1,000 active students at every testing.

The Solid Gold 1 ½" stripe is reserved for the Grand Master.

In addition, a 1 inch black stripe is added down the sides of the pant legs after a student or instructor has reached 4th degree Black Belt. Any individual attaining 4th degree Black Belt wears this pant leg stripe regardless of instructor level or school ownership.[18]

Martial Arts Instructor dress uniform

At promotional testings and ATA tournaments, Level 3 Certified Instructors have the option to wear navy blue suits in lieu of their doboks. Fifth Degree Black Belts and up wear matching blue pants, while 1st through 4th degrees wear grey pants. A special ATA patch is worn on the instructor's left breast. The patch is navy blue with all stitching being done in silver for 1st-4th Degrees or gold for 5th and up. Underneath the shield on the patch is a silver or gold banner (as appropriate) with the instructor's title and name stitched in navy blue.

Songahm Taekwondo Federation STF

The Songahm Taekwondo Federation is a branch of ATA established for South America. It was founded in 1984 by H.U. Lee and Cesar Ozuna. This was the first international chapter for the Songham style of taekwondo outside of the US.[citation needed]

World Traditional Taekwondo Union WTTU

Founded during the fall of 1990, The World Traditional Taekwondo Union (WTTU) is a division of Songahm Taekwondo. While the ATA consists of taekwondo schools in the United States and the STF consists of schools in South America, the WTTU covers the remainder of the world.[citation needed]

ATA-Xtreme (Xtreme Martial Arts)

ATA-Xtreme is a hybrid of traditional taekwondo open-hand and weapons forms and may contain acrobatics, and gymnastics, however it is based on the traditional moves of taekwondo. The goal of its participants is to impress both the audience and the judges with their skill and choreography. Common moves include the butterfly roundkick, backflip, 540 Crescent kick, double jump front kick, L-kick, and Kip-up.[citation needed]

Korean Taekwondo Council

The Korean branch of the ATA.[citation needed]

Songahm Grand Masters in Martial Arts and Taekwondo

Within the Songahm system of taekwondo, there is at most one 9th Degree Black Belt within the organization at a time. This individual holds the title of Grand Master and is considered to be the leader of Songahm Taekwondo. Past and present Grand Masters include:

- Haeng Ung Lee (1969-2000)
- Soon Ho Lee (2000-present) [19]

Martial Arts Master's Council

Upon being diagnosed with cancer in 2000, H.U. Lee decided the creation of a council for the governorship of his organization was necessary. In September 2000, Lee formally created the Songahm Master's Council composed of some of his advisors. The first members of the Master's Council included:

- Soon Ho Lee (then 8th Degree/Chief Master, now 9th Degree Black Belt)
- Robert Allemier (8th Degree Black Belt)

- In Ho Lee (8th Degree Black Belt)
- William Clark (8th Degree Black Belt)
- G.K. Lee (8th Degree Black Belt)
- M.K. Lee (8th Degree Black Belt)

After being unanimously confirmed by the Master's Council as the next Grand Master Candidate, Soon Ho Lee removed himself from the Master's Council to focus on his training to become Songahm's second Grand Master. H.U. Lee holds an honorary position in the Master's Council.

Changing Lives provides you with the best Chesapeake karate, taekwondo a Virginia beach Martial Arts School of Professional Instruction. Changing Lives Martial Arts and Master Instructor Tracy Lee Thomas teaches karate, taekwondo, kung fu and krav maga to everyone from tiny tigers and kids to adults and seniors and all levels from beginners to advanced.

These disciplines, be it taekwondo, karate, or kung fu, can be practiced by people of all ages, from the very young, to the elderly. For adults wishing to practice these disciplines, the benefits of studying them are the same as for children. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NCztJ2T6zBs>

Changing Lives Martial Arts offers all community members ONE FREE INTRODUCTORY CLASS for \$1.00. Donations are given to local public schools for student planners.

Contact Changing Lives Martial Arts at 757-471-9002 for a location nearest you and experience the difference in a top ten martial arts academy. www.atakick.com

Attached martial arts review video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NCztJ2T6zBs>