

# MARTIAL ARTIST (Strength)

## MARTIAL ARTS SCHOOLS

Martial artists organize in schools, usually focused on a single weapon style and attendant life philosophy/religion. These schools are led by a master martial artist (usually 9th level or better if the master is the founder, but of any level if the leader is of a subsequent generation) and can have anywhere from one to hundreds of students. Many schools also operate with monks and clerics of similar philosophies. Some schools are hidden in distant wilderness, others are found right downtown in large cities. Most martial arts schools spring up in regions where weapon use is restricted or has been historically, as development of the body as a weapon is often a reaction to the limitations on weapons.

Martial arts schools have a history of being in conflict, as much over proving to each other that their own weapons styles are superior as any other overwhelming aspect of their philosophy. Schools are also often politically active, as many schools are havens for dissidents who are not desirous of the complete devotion required for the monastic lifestyle (though many schools espouse a very ascetic lifestyle).

Martial artists can also be found among thieves' guilds, where fallen and exiled martial artists train others in their arts for money and fame. Some schools are little more than lightly-disguised thieves' guilds!

Schools often have unusual descriptive names reflective of their style, such as Drunken Monkey School, Soaring Crane Brotherhood, or Pouncing Tiger School. Others are named after colors, philosophies, or even the whims of the founder, such as Golden Blade Brotherhood, Silver Spear Sisterhood, The Invisible Alliance, or Brother Lou's Posse.

Most schools have additional special abilities that their members can gain, either by expending experience points or spending time and money in training. Most of these special abilities are based on the properties of the school's focus weapon. Several suggested examples are included below, along with several new weapons traditionally associated with martial arts. Consult your Judge to find out what schools and special abilities might be available for you to choose from.

**SPECIAL:** Martial artists do not normally wear armor, as it distracts them from complete concentration on the

practice of their art. A martial artist may wear armor if the occasion demands, but the character suffers several penalties when using class abilities and wearing armor. The martial artist gains no benefit from his unarmored defense ability; his base AC is reduced to 10, and he gains no bonus to his AC from any wisdom bonus. Additionally, any use of hide, move silently, and sixth sense suffers a -1 penalty for each point of armor class the armor confers. Helmets and shields each cause the martial artist to suffer an additional -1 penalty to these abilities. All penalties are cumulative. For example, a martial artist wearing chainmail, which confers a 15 armor class, suffers a -5 penalty. The same martial artist using a large shield suffers a total -6 penalty, and if the same martial artist also wore a great helm, the total penalty would be -7. These penalties apply even if the armor is magical.

**HIDE (Dexterity):** Martial artists use this ability to conceal themselves from others. A successful check means that the martial artist is hidden so well as to be almost invisible. The martial artist can move up to one-half normal speed and remain hidden. Hide checks suffer no penalty in this circumstance. At more than one-half and up to full speed, the character suffers a -5 penalty to the check to remain hidden. It's practically impossible (-20 penalty) to hide while running or charging.

If the character is being observed, even casually, they cannot hide. If observers are momentarily distracted, though, the character can attempt to hide. While the observer averts its attention from the character, the character can attempt to get to a hiding place. This check, however, is at a -10 penalty because the character has to move quickly to the hiding place. A martial artist cannot hide if there is nothing to hide behind or conceal oneself with. Deep shadows can count as concealment at the Judge's discretion.

Martial artists cannot hide and move silently at the same time until they reach 3rd level. At this level and beyond, a martial artist can attempt both but must make a successful hide and move silently check at -5. In this case, movement is reduced to one quarter the normal movement rate.

**MOVE SILENTLY (Dexterity):** This ability allows a martial artist to move so silently that others cannot hear the movement. The martial artist can use this ability both indoors and outdoors. A martial artist can move up to one-half the character's normal

speed at no penalty. At more than one-half and up to the character's full speed, the character suffers a -5 penalty. It's practically impossible (-20 penalty) to move silently while running or charging. To move silently and hide, see the hide ability.

**SIXTH SENSE (Wisdom):** A martial artist has a sixth sense that enables him to detect danger. Any time the martial artist is surprised, or is ambushed, especially through use of the rogue or assassin's stealth ability, through the use of magic such as *invisibility*, or through a trap, mechanical or otherwise, the martial artist may make a sixth sense check. The CL is equal to the level or hit dice of the attacking being (with modifiers as the Judge might require). If the sixth sense roll succeeds, the surprise is negated for the martial artist (but not his allies).

**UNARMED ATTACK:** A martial artist specializes in unarmed, hand-to-hand combat. Martial artists gain attacks and improve in unarmed combat damage as shown on the Martial Artist Special Abilities table. The martial artist may choose whether the attacks inflict normal damage or subdual damage.

The martial artist also gains the ability to make a special off-hand attack at 6th level. When martial artists gain the extra off-hand attack, they do not incur penalties to their 'to hit' die rolls provided both attacks are unarmed attacks or the weapon or weapons used are the martial artist's focus weapon. A martial artist fighting with a one-handed weapon other than his focus weapon can make an unarmed attack as an off-hand attack, but suffers the standard penalties for two-weapon fighting. Likewise, a martial artist wielding a weapon in his off-hand gets an extra attack with that weapon, but suffers the usual penalties for two-weapon fighting if the weapon is not his focus weapon.

**UNARMORED DEFENSE:** A martial artist knows how to use his or her body for defense, and gains an armor class bonus that increases with experience as indicated on the Martial Artist Special Abilities table. This armor class is modified by dexterity as normal, and is also modified positively by any wisdom bonus the martial artist might possess. [NOTE: It is suggested by this author that you add this wisdom-based modifier to the armor class of the monk as well.]

**WEAPON FOCUS:** A martial artist focuses his studies on a single weapon, melee or missile, spiritually melding with that weapon such that it becomes an extension of

his body and soul. With this weapon the martial artist gains a bonus to hit and to damage as outlined on the Martial Artist Special Abilities table. At 3rd level and every three levels thereafter, the martial artist can pick one additional weapon in which to gain proficiency (though these weapons **never** count as a focus weapon). When using any other weapon the martial artist suffers the standard penalty to hit for non-proficiency.

The martial artist can also use his focus weapon in combination with an unarmed attack to perform a "special style strike." A foe successfully struck by the martial artist's special style strike suffers both normal weapon damage and the martial artist's unarmed attack damage, plus double his normal strength bonus (if applicable). The martial artist can use this ability once per round, and no more than once per day per level. The martial artist must declare its use before making an attack roll, and the attack must be with the martial artist's focus weapon. A missed attack roll ruins the attempt and counts against the martial artist's daily limit.

**STUNNING ATTACK:** A martial artist has the ability to make a stunning attack. A foe successfully struck by the martial artist's stunning attack must make a constitution saving throw or be stunned and unable to act for 1d4 rounds. Those struck by a stunning attack also suffer normal unarmed attack damage, i.e., subdual damage (even if the martial artist is using his focus weapon). The martial artist can use this ability once per round, and no more than once per day per level. The martial artist must declare its use before making an attack roll, and the attack must be with an unarmed attack or the martial artist's focus weapon. A missed attack roll ruins the attempt and counts against the martial artist's daily limit.

A martial artist can combine a stunning attack with a special style strike; if successful, the foe must make his constitution save against stun against double the normal CL, and suffers subdual damage for the weapon, the unarmed strike, and double normal strength bonus.

**KI STRIKE:** At 3<sup>rd</sup> level, a martial artist's unarmed attack and focus weapon attack is empowered with ki. This attack can deal damage to a creature as if from a +1 magic weapon. This ability improves as the martial artist rises in levels as follows: +2 at 6th, +3 at 9th, +4 at 14th and +5 at 19th. The attack does not gain any bonus to hit or to damage; the ability merely enables the martial artist to hit the creature.