

Kiai **(more than just noise)**

Kiai could be described as a spirited yell, but it is much more than that.

Kiai is a technique in the same way as Oi Tsuki, Gyaku Tsuki, Age Uke and Mae Geri are techniques.

Just like any other technique Kiai must be practiced and focused to become truly effective. A good loud focused Kiai will accomplish a number of things immediately. Firstly it will startle your opponent, this is an opportunity you must use to advantage (strike or flee). It will lift your spirits, this is particularly important if we are being threatened as in a self defence situation when you may feel nervous or unsure. It will also focus your mind on the task at hand.

Kiai must not just come from your throat, this is nothing. Kiai must come from the hara and nowhere else. When this happens the air is forced out of your body and your abdominal muscles tense. This tensing of your abdominal muscles combines with the tensing of the rest of your body at your kime point (power delivery or focus point).



Breathing in karate is very important:

- Breathing cannot be separated from correct timing and the application of our techniques.
- Our techniques cannot be separated from our subconscious mind.
- Our subconscious mind cannot be separated from everything else in karate.

Our movement, breathing, subconscious mind, correct technique and correct timing must all be one with each other. They must be in total harmony.

Kiai helps us to focus our mind, breathing, timing and physical effort in the form of a technique at one moment in time. At that moment all our power is being called upon to defend or attack.

This is karate in action. No haphazard unnecessary or sloppy movements. Everything coming together at one moment in time. Relaxation followed by strong Kiai at the very moment maximum power is applied against our opponent in the form of a block or a strike.

New students are often self-conscious when performing Kiai. Sometimes I will run a short Kiai class when I notice this happening. All of us, students and sensei start off saying "say". As sensei gets louder everyone must get louder, and louder and louder until the hall starts to shake. This exercise usually has the desired effect of removing any feelings of self-consciousness.

So practice your Kiai at the dojo where you will not feel self-conscious. Kiai must be loud!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Start off using "A" or "SAY" as a Kiai. Remember Kiai must come from the hara and nowhere else.

You will soon develop something that suits you as a Kiai. Some people like myself use more than one Kiai depending on the moment and your mind-set at the time. Kiai is a technique, practice it, use it, and it will serve you well.

John Hackett
Chief Instructor, ASKA