

Traditional and Contemporary Titles in Chinese Martial Arts

It is important to understand the correct way of respectfully addressing those around you in the school. Similar to titles in family structure (Parents, Grandparents, Brothers, Sisters, Aunts Uncles...) the correct title can become quite convoluted in the specifics. Traditionally the chief instructor would be called Sifu, and then every other student would be addressed in relation to their rank both in the school and to the student addressing them. For example, elder students would be numbered with the term *si hing*; in order of who started learning first (regardless of rank) – *yat si hing* (#1 elder brother), then *yee sihing* (#2 Elder Brother), and so on until it reached your place in ranking, then the following students would be addressed as *si dai* or *si moi* in numbered order.

Nowadays, the numbered order has been removed and terms have become adopted as more professional titles for teaching levels. This however, has created the occurrence of newer titles like *Tai Sifu* which in some associations is a term for a Sifu with multiple students who have achieved the title of Sifu. These contemporary terms are however different in certain associations, so it is best to simply remember the basics in addressing your Sifu, your Sifu's teacher, and your Sifu's classmates, all the rest will be within your school's code of conduct.

***note** the term *Tai* vs *Dai* is a form of respect, you wouldn't use "Dai Sifu" because it would mean "big teacher," rather "Tai Sifu" becomes more like "great teacher." The level of senior student is still be referred to as "Dai Sihing."

Cantonese Titles for Martial Arts

Sijo: Founder of a system

Jerng Moon: Keeper of the system. Usually a blood relative of the founder, the keeper of the system is appointed to maintain all written record and relics related to the system. Though many successors have held the level of Sifu, martial skill is not a requirement.

Tai Si Gung: A Sifu of Tai Sifus. This is a more modern term that is specifically used long established martial arts schools that have enough generations of Tai Sifus, Sifus, Dai Si Hings/Dai Si Jehs and so on.

Si Gung: Teacher of your Sifu. This is the respectful way to address your Sifu's Sifu.

Tai Sifu: A Sifu of Sifus. Tai Sifu is a more recent term developed for addressing a Sifu who has many students that have become Sifu level. Generally, this term is meant to be kept within the association and not typically recognized in public ceremonies or settings in which the term Sifu would still be used.

Losi: Teacher. This term is used very commonly when properly addressing a teacher for anything, with a great level of respect.

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Sifu: Master/Teacher. Sifu is the term for your teacher in martial arts, although it can be used to address anyone with much experience and skill in their field like a taxi driver or a chef. Nowadays, the term Sifu tends to pertain specifically to a teacher of martial arts.

Simo: The Wife of a Sifu. Simo is not a ranking title based on skill level, but a title based on the relationship to the Sifu.

Si Jeong: Husband of a Sifu. When a woman achieves the level of Sifu, she adopts the title of Sifu, therefore her husband adopts the title of Si Jeong or “*teaching uncle*” even if he does not hold any ranking or skill in martial arts.

Si Bak: Teacher’s Elder. Si Bak is a term of respect for your Sifu’s elder classmate. Like the term Sifu, Si Bak can be used for both male or female.

Si Sook: Teacher’s Junior. Similar to Si Bak, Si Sook is a title based on the relation to your teacher. Si Sook is the respectful term for your teacher’s junior classmate.

Dai Si Hing: Senior Student. Dai Sihing is a term of respect for a male senior student in relation to the students of the school. In most modern schools, it is a title for a senior instructor that is adopted upon receiving a specific advanced level in the ranking system.

Dai Si Jeh: Senior Student. Dai Si Jeh is a term of respect for a female senior student in relation to the students of the school. In most modern schools, it is a title for a senior instructor that is adopted upon receiving a specific advanced level in the ranking system.

Si Hing: Elder Brother. Si Hing is a term of respect for a male student that is higher rank and experience in relation to you. In most modern schools, it has become a term for a male instructor.

Si Jeh: Elder Sister. Si Jeh is a term of respect for a female student that is higher rank and experience in relation to you. In most modern schools, it has become a term for a female instructor.

Si Dai: Younger Brother. Si Dai is a term for male junior classmates by rank in relation to your rank.

Si Moi: Younger Sister. Si Moi is a term for female junior classmates by rank in relation to your rank.

Toh Dai: Student. This term is used from teacher to student level.