

Kids Class 4 – 6 Years (mixed rank/45min)

Theme: Animal Styles

The animal styles are actually exercises based on animal movements and are excellent in developing coordination and strength. Each animal technique is used to cross the floor and the distance, amount, and speed should be increased each week to make it more interesting and challenging for the children. The first week is emphasizing technique while the last week can be a relay race, or a timed race for the entire class to beat.

The Other Animals of Kung Fu

Bunny: Crouched small hops with fingers pointing up next to the head like “bunny ears”

Toad: Large leaps from a crouching position with hands touching the floor, reach out all limbs as far as possible, extending forward and backward, in mid-air.

Puppy: Only hands and feet touch the ground, with knees bent (knees do not touch the ground like a crawl) keeping the body low, run across as fast as possible.

Duck: Low steps forward, touching the knees to the ground is acceptable, back straight and arms bent to make “duck wings.”

Bear: Arms and legs straight the entire time, only hands and feet can touch the ground.

Crab: Hands and feet on the ground, belly up and flat like a table top. Depending on the experience level and space, crab walking can be done head first, but feet first is suggested to avoid students bumping into each other.

Lizard: Similar to a push up position, only the hands and feet touch the floor, the child must stay as close as possible to the ground without touching their belly or knees as they crawl forward.

Monkey: From a crouched down position, back straight, and hands touching the ground, the monkey walk is performed by reaching the hands forward first, and then bringing the feet up to meet the hands and return to the crouching position. The monkey can also be done with a particular side leading, and if that is the case, have the students switch sides so both are trained evenly.

Inchworm: The inchworm starts from standing straight up and then bending forward to touch the hands to the ground as close as possible to the feet. Then walking the hands forward until the belly is on the ground, then keeping the palms on the ground, walk the feet in until they meet the hands with both the arms and legs straight.

The best way to do this training is to have them show the stance first and then either the instructor or one selected student can demonstrate and afterward everyone can try. Do not make it competitive when the children are still learning as they will cheat the structure to try to move faster. All animals are introduced from the very first class, and as each new animal is introduced it is best to review each prior animal. The first week is to get the correct structure and remember each animal, the following weeks can increase distance and repetition to really work the children out. A course can be set up requiring the children to switch animal styles for specific obstacles, or a simple circular path to make them navigate instead of just moving in straight lines. The final week can be a team relay race or entire group timed race, having them

improve their timing and beat their last score. The usual animals I use for the 4-6 years old class are: Bunny, Toad, Puppy, Bear, Duck and Crab. The rest can be added or substituted if the children can handle the workout or difficulty of technique.

Mat Chat: Respect and Bullies

The first week, introduce or review what respect means, and how it is shown inside the school. Engage the children with guiding questions so they can contribute to the conversation instead of just having them sit and listen to you list school rules. An example of topics for Respect in the School would be: How and when to bow, and who to bow to, how to show respect to the instructors by listening, and showing respect to the school by keeping it clean and tidy. The second week continue the topic of respect and after a very quick review, engage them on how they can show respect outside the school like: Listening to their parents and doing what is asked of them the first time, listening to their teachers, and finally listening to their friends and paying attention to what they want to do too. The third week transitions from respect to identifying bullies. Begin the chat by asking them what they think makes someone a bully. There are many ways to lead this conversation, but the basics are to identify a bully as someone who hurts other people on purpose with their words or actions, and that if they a bully the first way to deal with the bully is to stay away from them, don't play with them, don't eat with them. The conversation can be even furthered from this point into specific scenarios, but that must be adapted to the class itself. The fourth and final week returns to the topic of bullies, quickly review what makes someone a bully, but then turn this concept of a bully or bad guy mindset into a more realistic perspective, steer the conversation like this: "We know that many bullies can be like... but, can our friends be bullies? ... can we be bullies?" these two questions need to be emphasized, in that "Even our good friends that we've known for a long time can become bullies, and if they do we do not have to be friends with them anymore, especially if all they do is hurt us." The last one is extremely important for the kids to hear, as it lets them know that their way of doing things and treating others is not always the right way. "We can be bullies too, if we hurt our friends or call them names, that could mean we are the actual bully." Following this statement is the most important part and question "Can bullies change?" The answer here is yes, but it depends if they want to change, and if they know they are being a bully. It takes work, but some bullies will change and become our good friends. I had a personal story to share at this point, and it worked well for the lesson, but if you don't have a personal story it's best not to make one up and just leave it there, that bullies can change if they want to.

Focus Groups

Weeks 1 and 2, the groups will focus on:

- Backward Rolls
- Roundhouse Kicks for Power
- Punches for Accuracy (beginners) or Ranking Material (belt level requirements)

Weeks 3 and 4, the groups will focus on:

- Backward Rolls
- Side Kicks for Power
- Blocks (beginners) or Ranking Material (belt level requirements)

Backward Rolls

Backward Rolls are important whether they are a required technique in your school or not. They can help children safely recover when falling backward and develop special awareness and coordination. The difficulty of a backward roll is not being able to see where they are going and trust their technique. My typical progression would be to start week 1 by placing a soft kicking shield on the ground behind them at their heels, they cross their arms and tuck their chin, then squat straight down until they sit on the kicking shield, then I place one hand behind their neck and the other on their ankle and guide them back and over the pad. Naturally they will drop off the edge of the pad feet first which helps them end the roll in a more natural position. As they get more comfortable with the drill I will put a little more power in moving the ankles over the head resulting in a faster roll. Although it may be slightly uncomfortable, the hand behind the neck builds their awareness of staying rounded and keeping their chin tucked when moving faster. In week two I will begin the exact same way, but after the first time (or if they need an extra time with assistance) I will stop putting my hand behind their neck, but still guide the feet over. I will also start emphasizing that they need to stand up quickly into a guard stance, and after they roll and stand up I will fling the kicking shield upward to hit their guard hands (only when they are already up). If they can handle rolling back on their own without assistance I will let them do it, but I do not require it. The third week I bring a striking pad and have the student roll back over the kicking shield as before, then when they stand up I use the striking pad to tap and check their guard hands and then I will have them follow up with a strike, either a punch or a kick, having them quickly react to what I call out. The fourth and final week is similar to the third week with the striking pad to follow up, but this time we focus on what happens before the roll. I will start by tapping their crossed arms instead of saying "go" to initiate the roll. Then I will start pushing a little bit, and eventually the final phase of the drill is a light shove into the backward roll, then a quick stand up into guard position, I tap the guards to check them and then call out either a punch or kick. When students are more advanced I will remove the kicking shield.

Kicks for Power (Roundhouse and Side Kick)

The main emphasis is power, and therefore perfect technique is not expected. That can be focused on in another drill or lesson. The best training aid is a small, child size free standing bag, with little to no weight in the base making it fairly easy to tip over. Start by having the students kick the pad one at a time while you support the bag from falling over. This will give you a chance to control the technique and make sure the basics are correct before moving into the power kicks. Then demonstrate a powerful kick to knock the bag over, and then give each student three chances to kick the pad over before returning back to the line. Each time they return to the front have them switch legs so both are trained evenly. This is pretty straightforward and can move fast, but the repetition is necessary for overall development so keep it moving fast and exciting and set goals like higher kicks, or 3 knockdowns in a row, or knocking it over while holding a pad above their head. Always cheer them on and encourage them to cheer each other on.

Punching Accuracy

Although there are a number of drills that can improve punching accuracy, the goal of this focus group is specifically geared towards the basic traditional punches, tsop (straight), jong (uppercut), kwa (backfist) and sow (hook). Each week focuses on a different punch, after all punches are reviewed. Short Foam Noodles (Pool noodles cut in half) are best used for this drill as they can be held in specific ways to correspond with each punch. For the straight punch, the short noodle can be held either parallel to the direction of the knuckles and the student can punch it several times, or it can be held pointing directly to the student becoming a smaller circular target. It should be held just tight enough that the first few punches cause it to push through your hands, and then the grip can be loosened for the student's final punch so it will fly through your hands giving them a boost of encouragement. Similarly, the noodle can be pointed at the student at face level for the uppercut, but a helpful method for accuracy is to have them hold the uppercut out after striking, then rest the edge of the foam noodle on their hand before they punch again. Pointing the foam noodle at them for the backfist can be a very difficult target for the student to strike and it is suggested that the foam noodle is held horizontal in front of them so they can get used to targeting and striking. If the student can handle it the noodle can be pointed towards them or they can try to hit the base of the noodle as explained in the straight punch part. Lastly, the noodle can be held from the bottom and point directly upward, encourage the student to strike at the top of the foam noodle for accuracy. I prefer holding the noodle from the bottom and having the free end up instead of the revers as it encourages the student to pay attention and move their hook over your arm and hand.

Blocks

When there is a requirement to know a number of blocks it is best to use each week to isolate one or two blocks rather than overwhelming the student with all blocks at once. If the students are proficient in their blocks then more freestyle drills can be introduced where they have to block unpredictable attacks, and in that I usually limit the attacks to only two directions. The goal of freestyle blocking is for them to react in time and use something, even if they use a single block against all oncoming attacks, blocking the attack, not the variety is the key to success. When focusing on a single block per week a good way to keep the student's interest as well as give them a more realistic experience is to begin with a push-back. Have the student stand feet together and arms crossed over their chest, use the pad to push them back so they quickly step to a guard stance and put their hands up, then attack with the pad for them to block. This push back will also prepare them for the push back in the backward rolling focus group and make the student a little more familiar with forward pressure.

Freestyle Training

The important thing to remember about freestyle training is that it is placed at the end of class for a reason. It is not uncommon to need extra time for other scheduled elements of class which can cause the instructor to rush to cover everything in class before time runs out, and results in a mediocre class experience at best. Though freestyle training is useful in the actual skill of the student as it develops certain aspects and focuses of their training, it is not necessary in each and every class, so if the instructor needs extra time for another drill or focus, the

freestyle training can easily be cut. On the other hand, it can be used as a support for the instructor that burns through their class at lightning speed and needs something to focus on for the last five to ten minutes. That way, there is something planned and the instructor is not put on the spot to come up with something new to fill up the time. Lastly, if the instructor innovates a new exercise or drill (that is relevant to the theme) it can be implemented during the freestyle training time.

Stick Evasion

Also known as “Duck, Jump, Slide,” “Dragon’s Tail,” and many other names...

This is a simple drill, have the students make a circle and stand in a guard stance position towards the center. Use a long pool noodle or two short ones and swing them at the students for them to either duck under, jump over, or side step to evade the weapon. The benefit of using this drill at the end of class is that it is fun and the student will always leave class on a high note, however, since it is fun and parents may be arriving to pick up their children they may see it only as a game and not martial arts. That is why it is imperative to always introduce the drill with a question, once all the students have circled up and the rules are reviewed make it a point to ask “What does this drill focus on?” and have them all answer “Reaction speed!” that will remind both students and parents that it actually has a purpose. For the best results, make your actions open and more predictable, do not make it a competition between you and the kids, they won’t think you’re cool just because you always catch them on the first try. In the beginning use simple one swing attacks. Making noises with corresponding strikes like “ha!” “hah!” “rah!” will help them learn to use more than their eyes and hear that the move is being initiated. Spin the weapon around and do something fancy in between attacks, make it seem more intense than it is, but keep it fun. Lastly, competition is fine and the students can sit down when hit until there is only one left standing. However, remember that the students that get out first are most likely the ones that need to stay in to get better at the drill, so use competition sparingly and use alternate ways to keep them motivated like having them do one push up every time they get hit, or do a couple of rounds without “outs.”

4-6 yrs Kung Fu : Animal Styles

WEEK 1

Basic Stances

Punches

Animal Styles

- Back and forth from weapons to mirrors

Concentration

Talk about Respect in the School

- Bow to past masters, to teachers, to students.
- Listen to the instructors
- Keep the school tidy and clean

Stretch

Focus Groups

- Backward Rolls
- Roundhouse Kicks for Power
- Punches for accuracy (or forms)

Freestyle Training

Stick Evasion

WEEK 2

Basic Stances

Punches

Animal Styles

- Back and forth the long way across

Talk about respect outside the school

- Listening to parents
- Doing what you are asked to do the first time
- Listening to your teachers

Stretch

Focus Groups

- Backward Rolls
- Roundhouse Kicks for Power
- Punches for accuracy (or forms)

Freestyle Training

Stick Evasion

WEEK 3

Basic Stances

Punches

Animal Styles

- Full laps around the mat

Concentration

Talk about what makes a someone a bully

Stretch

Push back + Combo: Punch, punch, kick, kick

Focus Groups

- Backward Rolls
- Side Kicks for Power
- Blocks (or forms)

Freestyle Training

Stick Evasion

WEEK 4

Basic Stances

Punches

Animal Styles

- Full laps with pad obstacles

Concentration

Talk about who can be a bully

- We know obvious bullies but...
- Can our friends be bullies?
- Can we be bullies?
- Can they change???

Stretch

Focus Groups

- Backward Rolls
- Side Kicks for Power
- Blocks (or forms)

Freestyle Training

Stick Evasion