

# WHITE BELT ESSAY

## Respect

*Deferential regard for those more advanced in the study of  
Tae Kwon Do and its tenets, and those with more life experience.*

When we think of respect, we often think of appreciation and high regard. Appreciation and regard we have for others and ourselves put a value on people, just like it does on their possessions or belongings – the things they own or have. It is because of respect that we do many of the things that are the “right” things to do, the things that lead others to admire us.

Juan Child wanted a chance to earn respect and make a name for him every time he obeyed the rules of his school, his family and his Martial Arts Academy. Juan liked respect. It made him feel proud for people to think he was a “good person.”

Almost everyday all of us are “tested” on respect as we deal with life. It is sometimes much easier to do things the “easy way.” Doing the “right” thing can be harder.

In Juan’s case, he was trying to get a better grade in gym class. His coach gave tests on fitness once every six weeks. At such times, the coach had the students do five or six different skills timing how long it took them to do the skills.

One of the skills was long-distance running, with three times around the schoolhouse being the distance to run. This was to help Coach Smith figure out which students were good enough to send to the district track meet in a few months.

Juan thought about the glory of being in the track meet and how that might help his gym grade. He thought about going around two times and saying it was three. Juan knew this way he would come in first and be the fastest in his class.

It did not take Juan long to decide it just was not worth it to “win” without really winning. He did not want to do something that was not fair. So Juan lined up where he was told to and ran his hardest around the school, three times, just like everyone else. Guess what? Proud Juan came in fourth, which was still good enough to be considered for the track meet. His coach gave him an award later in the year for his good attitude and sportsmanship in many of the school activities, too. Juan had earned the respect of others through many “tests” like this. His self-respect grew as well.

We could all take a lesson from the practices of wolves in their communal packs. They have highly developed rules for respect for one another, as well as codes for earning this respect. Pups are taught that they must show respect for their elders, and that there are pack penalties for failing to show this respect, isolating those who disobey from the rest of the group, and forcing those who show disrespect to earn their way back into the pack.

Working for the good of the pack as a whole, wolf packs have generated this respect for one another and their leaders for centuries. It is the one thing that has kept them from becoming extinct, even against great obstacles brought on by man. Their very survival has depended on this respect, and there are many tests of leadership within the pack as to which wolf has earned the most respect.

# YELLOW BELT ESSAY

## Courage

### *Personal Bravery*

Anyone can most likely imagine a situation in a movie or even in real life where one demonstrated great courage or bravery.

I remember watching the movie "Braveheart," where a Scottish slave lead a society of peasants, who were abused and denied freedom, into battle against the Lords of England. Knowing very well that their chances of survival were slim, the slaves fought against soldiers of England who were better equipped and better trained. This demonstrated the courage, which can only be followed by Great War.

When we observe a situation like the one mentioned above, we could only imagine how those slaves felt. They must have felt frightened knowing that they could die during a war against a whole nation. The ironic part of this story is that even though these slaves felt this horrendous amount of fear nonetheless demonstrated great strength and courage. Feeling scared or anxious does not necessarily show a sign of weakness; but instead, it can give one the strength and spirit to deal with great odds.

These types of courageous actions do not just happen in movies. We are constantly surrounded by great obstacles or peer pressure in our lives when we are challenged to make the right choices. I believe that courage can only come when obstacles and hard times strike us.

When we hear about little children who live in ghettos of cities surrounded by drugs and violence, it really breaks our hearts. Soon as a child steps out to his front door step, he is confronted with crime and drugs every single day. But by learning to say "no" to drugs and violence, he lives with the risk of being harmed or killed. Still some children try to overcome this treat and danger by taking different roads walking home and staying away from gangs.

These are great examples of courage and bravery. As mentioned before, fear is no a sign of weakness; but ironically, it can mean strength and the word we all seek to hear "**courage**."

# ORANGE BELT ESSAY

## Self-Control

*Self-restraint regarding your actions*

The word, self-control, involves self-restraint with regard to your acts and impulses. Having good self control often takes a lot of will power and inner strength.

For instance, there was an obese woman who was restricted to stay away from chocolate. Her doctor told her that she really needed to watch her weight or she may be at risk for a heart attack. One day she went to the mall and passed by a Fannie May's candy store (it was her favorite); she suddenly stopped and just stood watching the chocolate in the showcase. Her mouth started to water and her cravings for the sweets were magnified more than ever before. Internally she heard a little voice that said, "No, you cannot have that! Do not you remember what the doctor said?" She started to fight with her conscience and her cravings for the chocolate.

At that point, the woman needed to make a decision, which only she could have made. No one was around her to keep her away from going up to the counter and buying the pound of chocolate she desperately wanted. She had to make a right decision, which is for most situations very hard to do. Well, I am sure you are curious about the ending of the story. Did the woman retain her self-control and walk away from Fannie May; or did she lose to her cravings?

She said to herself that her health is more important to her than a box of chocolates and walked away slowly from the store. Then months later, she went back to her doctor and he complimented the woman for losing five pounds. Everyday in our lives, we face situations where we have to practice self-control. No one ever said it was easy to say "no" to our wants and desires because human instinct just does not work that way. However, in most cases, by having self-control over some of our desires in life; it usually benefits us in the long run.

For most people, practicing self-control does not happen overnight. It takes hard work to reach a certain level of self-control with which we can only be satisfied. Unfortunately, many families and relationships break apart due to having a **lack** of control. It can be gambling, drinking, spending money, gossiping, or anything else we can imagine. By just practicing to have self-control over bad habits we may all have, it can mean saving something far more valuable and meaningful.

# GREEN BELT ESSAY

## Self-Discipline

### *Dedication to Self-Improvement*

Within the Martial Arts in general and Tae Kwon Do in particular, the term self-discipline means dedication to self-correction and self-restraint for your own improvement – as a student and as a person.

In order to practice self-discipline, one needs to have a certain attitude, which does not come easily. We can probably all look back in our lives and say, “If I only had some self-discipline back then, I probably would have had the chance to do...” and wonder and dream throughout the nights about it.

We can all relate back to when we were in high school or college; we could have been out partying and chatting with friends when our first priority should have been studying. Then when we got “C’s” or “B’s” back from the final exams, it is likely that almost everyone said, “I could have done so much better if I had only studied a little more.” Too many times in our lives, we end up regretting the past and wonder how different our lives could **have** been.

Developing self-discipline can really make a difference in our lives. However, the results of self-discipline do not come overnight. Instead, the positive results may not show through until much later. For most people, this is the most difficult part because we all expect immediate results.

For instance, there was a medical student who has always dreamed of being a doctor; however, to become a doctor, takes many years of sacrifice and hard work. If one does not have the self-discipline which is needed to accomplish this dream; it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to succeed. While other friends were out having a good time, this medical student staying in his dorm room and studied until dawn. The other students graduated within four years and secured jobs making good money. He, on the other hand, had to save every penny for school expenses in order to get by the long, dreaded ten years for medical school and training.

Ten years in school is not a short time. To sacrifice all that time in school meant giving up the luxuries and conveniences other people took for granted. Who would not want to go out and have fun with friends rather than study? Not too many people are self-disciplined enough to resist all the temptations, which comes along in their daily lives. Nevertheless, the hard-working student who focused on his goal and retained his self-discipline ended up as one of the best-known doctors in the field. The lesson in self-discipline is that hard work and effort never goes to waste. Many people fail because they tend to look at what is right before them rather than look at what is in store for the future.

Everyone has heard the famous saying, “**No pain, no gain.**” That is a true lesson of life that no one can escape. Let’s face it; there are no short cuts in life.

# BLUE BELT ESSAY

## Integrity

*Honesty and morality of your life –  
Whether or not others are observing*

Have you ever met anyone in your lifetime that could not lie if they tried? Perhaps one or two people might come into your mind. Unfortunately, there are many more people who would lie to get ahead or to be liked and accepted by others.

Integrity can be a very unfamiliar word to many people these days. People tend to lie or exaggerate things more often than ever before. The lies that we or others tell must have a root from somewhere. What can it be? Could it be that we want to get ahead or to be liked by others? The true answer can only come from each individual's heart.

Even though the results may not be too positive, we should all try to maintain integrity. Due to our own moral conscience and convictions, living free from guilt will help us more live more fulfilling lives which people will eventually praise and recognize.

There was a Christian missionary who went to China to spread the word of God to millions of Chinese people. Each day, he met with groups in little underground shelters secretly; while knowing that if they were caught, they could be sent to prison or even executed. One horrifying day, they were in their shelter singing praises and hearing the sermon when a Chinese guard came searching into the shelter. They were doomed. They were all taken to prison and beaten terribly. When the missionary was brought into a room to be questioned about his beliefs, he had to choose between life and death. If he confessed what he had been doing and told the government officials that he will continue, he would certainly be put to death. However, even after brutal beatings and torture, he stood by his faith and integrity. He refused to lie and say that he would not believe in his faith even though that was the only way he could get out of prison alive. Sadly, the missionary was hanged for not denying his faith.

Most people probably would have lied to save their lives. However, there are a very few people who believe that their integrity is more important than their lives. How important is integrity to you? It is probably a question that most people do not really stop and think about. In life, we come across many types of people; would not you like to run into people who will only be honest and sincere to you? Most people would answer "yes." What can be the starting point for this?

**Ultimately, we cannot expect others to be truly honest with us when many of us are not even honest with ourselves. Then isn't it simple? We have to first start being honest with others if we want others to be honest with us. Integrity could mean pain, discomfort, and loss; regardless of the sequences, one must never compromise his integrity.**

# PURPLE BELT ESSAY

## Courtesy

*Considerate behavior toward others*

In the art of Tae Kwon Do, courtesy means considerate behavior towards others. Let us look at an example of what we are talking about with the idea of courtesy.

Pretend that you are in line getting a drink of water. You may have just come in from a long, hot recess or finished a hard sweaty workout. You can almost feel that nice, cool drink of water going down your throat.

A group of much younger kids comes by, also wanting a drink of water. Their teacher tells them they may not all have time to get a drink because they are running late to meet their parents or go back to class.

You step out of line behind them, waiting longer for your drink. By doing so, you show respect for those younger or weaker than you. You also improve your regard for yourself. That adds to your own value as a person, which is your self-respect. This is something that makes you feel really good inside!

Sometimes certain areas of our country suffer the agonizing losses and terrible inconveniences of floods. It is genuine acts of kindness and courtesy that causes some of us, young and old alike, to come forward and offer our services at such times. We fill bags with sand and try to hold back the water and prevent loss to others. We work to make sandwiches or cool beverages for those working at the flood sites. A few of us get involved in rescuing those people or animals whose lives are at stake within the areas flooded. Other generous souls hold garage sales or participate in other fund-raising events, contributing whatever they can to the victims of the disaster. In doing so, each person participating to help their neighbors or fellow countrymen is practicing the theme of considerate behavior to others.

# BROWN BELT ESSAY

## Leadership

*The ability to guide and direct others toward a desired goal*

Leadership shows the way by setting a positive and proper example. In middle school, Mary served as Student Council Treasurer. She was responsible for keeping the money collected from Student Council bake sales and other fund raisers to earn funds for gifts to a local Crisis Center. It was this year's goal to help the community in this way as a donation from the Council, all of whom gave parts of their study hall, after-school or lunch time to help raise the money.

She kept the money in a special envelope until she could deposit it in a locked file drawer in the school office. One day she put the envelope under her chair in math class, snugly situated under her books, intending to go right afterwards to the office to put the money where it was safe.

After class, Mary reached under her desk for her things and noticed how flat the envelope felt. Opening the envelope, she noticed \$15 was missing. Mary knew \$125 had been there when she came into the room. She reported the missing money to her teacher.

Soon a story was going around school that Mary had stolen the money. It was vicious rumor started by a girl who was jealous she had not been elected to student Council.

A few days later another Student Council member, Janet, was in the restroom and overheard her cousin laughing with another girl about how funny it was that they had taken advantage of Mary and gotten away with it.

Janet went to see her cousin after school that very day. She told her what she had heard and spoke with her about how unfair it was to Mary, as well as to the children at the Crisis Center. Janet just could not ignore the situation, cousin or no cousin! She liked her cousin and knew this was not typical behavior on her part. Should Janet tell her own parents or her cousin's? Tell Mary she believed in her honesty? Janet decided on another choice. She told her cousin that if the cousin would replace the money, apologize to Mary and the Student Council, and inform her parents what she had done herself; she would turn a bad mistake into a lesson. Janet was pleased that her cousin decided to do the right thing, even if the other girl involved would not.

Mary had her good reputation restored, Janet felt grateful for finding out in time to do something to correct a bad situation, and Janet's cousin was again able to sleep at night without worrying about the terrible thing she had done. She also learned to be less of a follower and more of a leader in the future. In a way, you could say that all three girls showed potential leadership qualities when all was said and done.

This story about leadership could take place in any age group or elementary school, middle school, high school, or even college level or adult community education sports league or martial arts competitions. It's about overcoming the urge to get even.

Team A came to play Team B at the chosen site for the two teams to play, which just happened to be at Team B's local school. Team A had not tried very hard to win their game and lost by a lot of points. They decided to vandalize the locker rooms; just to show Team B how mad they were that they had lost. A real mess is what they left behind – broken lockers and showers, spray paint on the walls, and broken benches!

Some of Team B's players felt it was only fair and just for them to "return the favor" the next time they played at Team A's school. In other words, they really wanted to do the same thing back to Team A.

Team B's captain and their coach talked long and hard with their team about how important it was to set a good example and rise above the situation, how sometimes it was more gratifying to fix a "wrong" with a "right." They voted and decided to send a letter about sportsmanship to the Team A and all signed it. They presented it to Team A the next time they played at Team A's school, along with 8 x 10 photos of how their own locker room had been harmed by Team A. To really make an impact, Team B also offered to come back to Team A's school to teach them how to paint their own dingy locker rooms and give tips on fund raisers to earn money to fix it up.

Of course, Team A learned some important lessons. They returned to Team B's school and repaired all the damages they had done and apologized to the entire school for what they had done.

***Team B had really set an important example!***

# RED BELT ESSAY

## Loyalty

### *Allegiance*

Loyalty means allegiance or devotion. It can be to a person, a school, a cause, a community, a country, one's family, team or Academy.

A person who practices loyalty shows pride and tells others good things about the people or places where he puts his loyalty. If a loyal person hears unkind or bad remarks about the source of his loyalty, he had the courage to take up for that source, to make it look better and "set the record straight."

This kind of allegiance, or devotion, is always part of happy families where people take up for each other and help one another reach their goals and share their chores. It's also what makes any group or country strong and powerful.

Have you thought about your own loyalty lately? A little bit of it can go a long, long way!

Dennis was a boy four years old. He lived in a farm house with his big family and a dog, named lassie.

Lassie was very dedicated too little Dennis and stayed close by him. Dennis had watched his older brothers play a game of "Fetch." Lassie would faithfully run up the stairs after the ball, and Dennis would shut the door at the bottom of the stairs.

The little boy would wait a few minutes, open the door and find loyal Lassie always there waiting for him with the ball in her mouth.

On day Dennis was in the middle of the game when his mother announced she was taking him to town with her. That evening, at dinner time, everyone in the family remarked about not seeing Lassie anywhere in sight.

Dennis ran to the stairway door, opened it and there was Lassie, Cheerfully waiting for him with the ball still in her mouth!

What a loyal, devoted pet she was!

# DAN BO BELT ESSAY

## Perseverance

*Persistence in reaching your goals, even in the face of opposition*

Perseverance? “Buckets” of it are needed by those who are born “different” or “special.” As children grow up looking or acting different from others around them, regardless of the cause of their difference, they can be treated very differently, too. Sometimes such children are made the brunt of jokes. Sometimes they have few or no friends. They often carry feelings of low self-esteem into adulthood because of the way others have treated them.

Every day becomes a test of their perseverance, just as it is for those parents who see their children suffer and try to reassure them. A lot of people will want to treat us differently when we take up for those who are less fortunate, less attractive, less intelligent or weaker. We can help them to persevere, however, by “treating others as we would have them treat us.” It will add to the feeling of inner peace we carry in our hearts and minds and help them with their own perseverance.

Most adults remember the story “*The Little Engine That Could*.” They may have heard it as a child, told it to a younger sister or brother or even their own children.

In the story, the little engine felt overwhelmed by a task that seemed unachievable. How could its small, underpowered engine make it up such a big, mighty mountain? The little engine tried and tired, but just could not seem to make it.

Someone spoke to the engine about the powers of positive thinking, a mindset that says, “I think I can! I think I can!” and the powers of perseverance, never giving up for something that is important.

The little engine kept on trying, this time with renewed encouragement, and his perseverance paid off. Little engine made it up and over the mountain, huffing and puffing with all his might. His perseverance was a spectacle for all to see and remember! How we can adapt this to you own goals!

Canadian Geese are beautiful creatures to watch! They spend their summers in Canada and their winters in Northern Mexico or the Gulf of Mexico. They are very large as birds go, and it requires a lot of perseverance and effort for them to make their long migration each year.

The geese fly in a v-shaped formation, with the point to the front. Individually, each could not make the trip, but together they are successful. Along with perseverance, they use teamwork. Each goose takes turns being in the front, the most difficult part of the pattern because of the strong winds. At the front, the goose breaks up the wind for the others, so that their flight is easier.

The geese at the back are “drafting.” That’s a lot like a race car driver following another race car to save gas and wear and tear for a period of time.

Canadian Geese always perform their own turns for each other, no matter how strong the wind, rain or bad weather. They never fail in their duty to lead the group, and their perseverance is a model for humanity.

# ASSISTANT BLACK BELT ESSAY

## Success

*Attainment of your desired goal – the mastery of Tae Kwon Do*

Success is measured by the attainment of your desired goal. Every sport and art requires a great amount of practice. One must be able to automatically respond to each situation without needing to take the time to think about what is happening.

You do not become a Michael Jordan or Magic Johnson overnight. It takes years of practice and preparation to achieve this success. Instead of going directly to the NBA and playing professional basketball, there are many steps associated with your age level and preparedness skills to master. Grade school teams, high school teams, college teams and then maybe, if you are the elite, you reach the pros. Each step must be mastered before the next one is available to you.

The same is true with the Martial Arts. To be successful, you must practice and complete each belt before you are capable of taking on the requirements on the next level. If you maintain your focus and persistence, success will be achieved. You will have attained the mastery of Tae Kwon Do.

In the business world, entrepreneurs strive to manufacture the best products, provide the best service and develop an environment that is economically rewarding. These goals do not just happen; they require careful planning and the proper mindset.

To be successful, these entrepreneurs develop a plan for success. They write down their plans and goals and then set out to make them happen. If their plan requires getting a loan, a visit to the bank is necessary. The bank will not take them seriously if they have not prepared themselves for their future with a well thought-out business plan. Once the plan is developed, it must be followed. Their banker expects it, their customers expect it, and their families depend on it. If they are not achieving their goals, it is very important to understand why. Only then can plans be made for further success.

Each step affects every other step, or the chain of success will be broken. It is similar to the carefully planned levels leading to Black Belt in Tae Kwon Do. To achieve the desired goal of mastery requires much planning and effort, along with a positive mind set that will one day bring attainment of success.