

Dan grades

The belt system is a distinctive feature of judo. A player can test his ability by entering for examination within a system of grades, and by demonstrating superiority over a cross-section of players at the same level as him/herself he wins promotion to the next rank. In this way successive ranks become populated by increasingly skilful players until eventually all judoka who participate consistently are distributed through the hierarchy according to their proven ability.

The time-honoured distinction is between Kyu (student) and Dan (advanced) grades. Put simply, the distinction marks the point at which the emphasis shifts away from the acquisition of technique on to its effective application.

Promotion with the Dan degree does not carry a change of designated colour until 6th Dan is reached. Even then it is customary for the holder to continue wearing a black belt in everyday practice, reserving the official colour for ceremonial occasions. The Dan grades are as follows:

Grade	Belt Colour	Traditional Name
1st Dan	black	shodan
2nd Dan	black	nidan
3rd Dan	black	sandan
4th Dan	black	shidan (yondan)
5th Dan	black	godan
6th Dan	alternate red and white blocks	rokudan
7th Dan	alternate red and white blocks	shichidan
8th Dan	alternate red and white blocks	hachidan
9th Dan	red	kudan
10th Dan	red	judan

Although examinations are held in the United Kingdom for promotion up to 5th dan, the Dan grades beyond that are only awarded through the Board of Directors of the BJA.