Member
United States Olympic Committee

USA KARATE

RULES OF KATA & KOBUDO COMPETITION

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USA KARATE RULES OF KATA & KOBUDO COMPETITION

The rules of Kata & Kobudo competition for all tournaments, matches, and competitions sanctioned by USA KARATE shall be as stated herein. These rules shall be used in all sanctioned competitions, without modification or amendment except as allowed by these rules. These rules are based upon the rules adopted by the World Karate Federation (WKF) for use in international competition. In any competition utilized to select competitors for the United States National Karate Team, the international rules without modification shall be used to conduct all such USA team selection divisions. These rules, or any part thereof, may be modified or amended by USA KARATE at any time.

Whenever a specific rule is in conflict with a more general rule, the specific rule takes precedence. Exceptions to these rules may be made only with the prior approval of the Referee Committee of USA KARATE for special circumstances attendant to a particular event, tournament, match or competition. A written request for exception should be submitted no less than thirty days prior to the date of the event.

Kata competition may be divided into appropriate categories or divisions based upon age, sex and experience.

USA KARATE may elect to offer optional divisions for senior male and/or female athletes who are over the age of thirty-five years.

The number of divisions that may be established, and the age categories thereof, shall be determined and set at the discretion of USA KARATE according to interest and the number of competitors who may elect to compete in such divisions. USA KARATE reserves the right to create categories or divisions for physically and/or mentally challenged competitors, consistent with their abilities and training.

Age Categories for USA KARATE Kata Competition:

USA BRACKET	**AGE**
Child(ren)	**11 years & younger**
Junior Cadet	**12-13 years old**
Cadet	**14-15 years old**
Junior	**16-17 years old**
Senior	**16 years & up**
Masters	**35 years & up**

*All USA KARATE divisions, **except** USA Team Trials/International Divisions, age/weight/duration are subject to change or modification by the Tournament Director and Chief Referee for the particular event. Age categories for team competition shall be determined by the Tournament Director for each event.*

The experience categories for USA KARATE Kata competition shall be as follows:

Beginner	0 – 1 year of training
Novice	1 – 2 years of training
Intermediate	2 – 3 years of training
Advanced	3 + years of training
Elite	Divisions that qualify athletes for the USA National Team

A contestant with the rank of brown belt or above may not compete in the Beginner or Novice category; a black belt may compete only in the Advanced and/or Elite category.

At the USA KARATE Open Championship, the Junior International Cup and the National Championships, a competitor may compete as a Beginner, Novice, or Intermediate, however they must move up in divisions based upon the rank criteria set forth herein.

No competitor may compete in a division designated for members of the opposite sex.

These rules shall apply to all entrants, officials, administrators, and other personnel for all competitions sanctioned by USA KARATE.

USA KARATE may authorize additional special rules as needed for a particular event, tournament, match or competition, or may promulgate unique or novel rules to meet unusual circumstances in accordance with the rules of USA KARATE, and as such must be approved by the Tournament Director and the Chief Referee for the event.

In the event that these rules are violated, then USA KARATE, by and through its duly authorized representatives, may impose one or more of the following sanctions: verbal reprimand, written warning, monetary fine, disqualification or suspension. All such disciplinary sanctions imposed shall be subject to review according to the Bylaws of this Federation but shall be effective immediately upon imposition. Any athlete who is disqualified for violation of any regulations of prohibited substances or drugs shall forfeit any titles and/or honors awarded and shall promptly return any medal and/or other awards. Examples of prohibited behaviors that would merit the imposition of sanctions include making a false or fraudulent statement regarding age or experience, entering under an assumed name, grossly unsportsmanlike conduct, theft, or any other act contrary to the recognized principals of karate-do.

Age Categories for PKF Kata/USA KARATE Team Trial Competition:

PKF BRACKET	AGE
Jr. Cadet Individual	**12-13 years old**
Cadet Individual	**14-15 years old**
Junior Individual	**16-17 years old**
Under 21 Individual	**18,19,20 years old**
Team Kata	**14-17 years old**
Senior Individual	**16 years & up**
Senior Team Kata	**16 years & up**

Age Categories for WKF Kata/USA KARATE Team Trial Competition:

WKF BRACKET	AGE
Cadet Individual	**14-15 years old**
Junior Individual	**16-17 years old**
Under 21	**18, 19, 20 years old**
Team Kata	**14-17 years old**
Senior Individual	**16 years & up**
Senior Team Kata	**16 years & up**

ALL PERSONS WHO ELECT TO COMPETE IN ANY EVENT AUTHORIZED UNDER THESE RULES AND SANCTIONED BY USA KARATE DO SO AT THEIR OWN RISK, RECOGNIZING THAT KARATE COMPETITION NECESSARILY INVOLVES SOME RISK OF SERIOUS, PERMANENT PHYSICAL INJURY OR DEATH. NO LIABILITY FOR ANY LOSS, INJURY OF ANY KIND, OR DEATH, SHALL ATTACH TO USA KARATE OR ANY OF ITS OFFICERS, DIRECTORS, MEMBERS OR EMPLOYEES, ETC. FOR ANY CAUSE OF REASON ARISING OUT OF, OR SUSTAINED IN ANY COMPETITION CONDUCTED HEREUNDER, INCLUDING NEGLIGENCE OR GROSS NEGLIGENCE.

KATA RULES

ARTICLE 1: KATA COMPETITION AREA

1.1 The competition area must be flat and devoid of hazard.

1.2 The competition area must be of a sufficient size to permit the uninterrupted performance of Kata.

EXPLANATION:

I. For the proper performance of Kata a stable smooth surface is required. Usually the matted Kumite area will be suitable.

ARTICLE 2: OFFICIAL DRESS

2.1 Contestants and Judges must wear the official uniform as defined in Article 2 of the Kumite Rules.

2.2 Any person who does not comply with this regulation may be disbarred.

EXPLANATION:

I. The karate-gi jacket may not be removed during the performance of Kata.

II. Contestants who present themselves incorrectly dressed shall be given one minute in which to remedy matters.

ARTICLE 3: ORGANIZATION OF KATA COMPETITION

3.1 Kata competition takes the form of team and individual matches. Team matches consist of competition between three person teams. Each team is exclusively male or exclusively female. The individual Kata match consists of individual performance in separate male and female divisions.

3.2 Kata competition may be conducted using the flag system of judging. Unless otherwise decided by the Tournament Director and Chief Referee, the flag system shall always be used.

3.3 The elimination system with repechage shall be applied at USA KARATE Signature Events.

3.4 Any traditional karate kata maybe performed in kata divisions with the exception of weapons kata (kobudo), which can only be performed in weapons kata divisions.

3.5 Variations as taught by the contestant's school of Karate will be permitted.

3.6 In USA Team Trial divisions, the score table will be notified of the choice of Kata prior to each round.

3.7 In USA Team Trial divisions, contestants must perform a different Kata in each round. Once performed a Kata may not be repeated.

3.8 In divisions other than USA Team Trial divisions, competitors may repeat the same kata in every round, except in all Advanced divisions, of every age category, competitors must perform a different kata in the final ("medal") round.

3.9 Beginner and Novice competitors may perform only the following Katas:

Taikyoku
Heian – Pinan
Gekisai
Fukui Kata
Kihon Kata

3.10 In the bouts for medals of Team Kata competition, the teams shall perform their chosen Kata in the usual way. They shall then perform a demonstration of the meaning (Bunkai) of the Kata. The total time allowed for the Kata & Bunkai demonstration combined, is six (6) minutes.

3.11 The official timekeeper shall start the countdown clock as the team members perform the bow upon entering the tatami and will stop the clock at the final bow after the Bunkai performance. A team which does not perform the bow at the completion of the performance, or which exceeds the six-minute period allowed shall be disqualified. The use of traditional weapons, ancillary equipment or additional apparel is not allowed.

EXPLANATION:

I. The number and type of kata required is dependent on the number of individual competitors or teams entered as shown in the following table. Byes are counted as competitors or teams

COMPETITORS OR TEAMS	KATA REQUIRED
65-128	7
33-64	6
17-32	5
9-16	4
5-8	3
4	2

ARTICLE 4: THE JUDGING PANEL

4.1 In USA Karate Signature Events, if sufficient personnel are available, a panel of five (5) Judges for each match shall be designated by the Referee Committee or Tatami Manager. Otherwise, at the discretion of the Tournament Director and Referee Committee, a panel may consist of three (3) Judges.

4.2 A scorekeeper, caller/announcer and when necessary, a timekeeper will be appointed.

EXPLANATION:

I. The Chief Judge will sit in the center position facing the contestant and the other four Judges will be seated at the corners of the competition area.

II. Five Judges, each holding a red and a blue flag, may be used when sufficient personnel are available, to allow neutrality of state and karate style. Otherwise, at the discretion of the Tournament Director and Chief Referee, a panel may consist of three (3) Judges.

III. Officials may not judge a contestant who is from the official's dojo, karate organization or Approved Sports Organization (ASO).

ARTICLE 5: CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

5.1 **Assessment:**

In assessing the performance of a contestant or team the Judges will evaluate the performance based on the four (4) major criteria; **Conformance, Technical Performance, Athletic Performance, and Technical Difficulty:**

KATA PERFORMANCE	BUNKAI PERFORMANCE (applicable to team bouts for medals)
1. Conformance to the form itself and the standards of the applicable school	1. **Conformance** (to kata) using the actual movements as performed in the kata
2. Technical Performance a. Stances b. Techniques c. Transitional movements d. Timing/Synchronization e. Correct Breathing f. Focus (kime)	**2. Technical Performance** a. Stances b. Techniques c. Transitional movements d. Timing e. Control f. Focus (kime)
3. Athletic Performance a. Strength b. Speed c. Balance d. Rhythm	**3. Athletic Performance** a. Strength b. Speed c. Balance d. Timing
4. Technical Difficulty of the kata	**4. Technical Difficulty** of the techniques performed

5.2 **Disqualification:**

A competitor or team of competitors may be disqualified for any of the following reasons:

a. Performing the wrong kata or announcing the wrong kata.
b. A distinct pause or stop in the performance for several seconds.
c. Interference with the function of the judges (such as the judge having to move for safety reasons or making physical contact with a judge).
d. Belt falling off during the performance of kata.
e. Exceeding the total time limit of 6 minutes duration for Kata and Bunkai.
f. Failure to follow the instructions of the Chief Judge, or other misconduct.

5.3 In USA Team Trial Divisions, a contestant who repeats a Kata will be disqualified.

5.4 **Fouls:**

The following fouls, if apparent, must be considered in the evaluation according to above criteria.

a. Minor loss of balance
b. Performing a movement in an incorrect or incomplete manner (the bow is for this purpose considered part of the movements of the kata), such as failure to fully execute a block or punching off target.
c. Asynchronous movement such as delivering a technique before the body transition is completed, or in the case of a team kata, failing to do a movement in unison.
d. Use of audible cues (from any other person, including other team members) or theatrics such s stamping the feet, slapping the chest, arms or karate-gi, or inappropriate exhalation.
e. Causing injury by lack of controlled technique during Bunkai.

EXPLANATION:

I. Kata is not a dance or theatrical performance. It must adhere to the traditional values and principles. It must be realistic in fighting terms and display concentration, power, and potential impact in its techniques. It must demonstrate strength, power, and speed – as well as grace, rhythm and balance.

II. In Team Kata, all three team members must start the Kata facing in the same direction and towards the Chief Judge.

III. The members of the team must demonstrate competence in all aspects of the Kata performance, as well as synchronization.

IV. Commands to start and stop the performance, stamping the feet, slapping the chest, arms or karate-gi, and inappropriate exhalation are all examples of external cues and should be taken into account by the Judges when arriving at a decision.

V. It is the sole responsibility of the coach or the competitor to ensure that the Kata as notified to the score table is appropriate for that particular round.

ARTICLE 6: OPERATION OF MATCHES

6.1 At the start of each bout and in answer to their names, the two contestants, one wearing a red belt (AKA) and the other wearing a blue belt (AO), shall line up at the match area perimeter facing the Chief Kata Judge.

Unless otherwise determined by the Tournament Director and Chief Referee:

6.2 All Advanced competitors and competitors 18 years old and older shall perform their kata one at a time, in accordance with paragraph 6.3 (a) below.

6.3 Competitors 17 years old and younger in the Beginner, Novice, and Intermediate divisions shall perform their Kata two competitors at a time, in accordance with paragraph 6.3 (b) below.

a. Individual Execution:

i. Following a bow by both competitors to the Judging Panel, Ao shall then step back out of the match area.
ii. After moving to the starting position and a clear announcement of the name of the Kata that is to be performed, Aka shall begin.
iii. On completion of the Kata, Aka shall leave the area to await the performance of Ao. After Ao's Kata has been completed, both shall return to the match area perimeter and await the decision from the Panel.

b. **Simultaneous Execution:**

i. Following a bow by both competitors to the Judging Panel, both competitors shall enter the match area and space themselves so as to avoid collision or interference in the performance of their Kata.
ii. After moving to their starting positions and a clear announcement of the names of the Kata to be performed, both competitors shall begin.
iii. On completion of their Kata, the competitors shall stand side-by-side in the match area and await the decision from the Panel.

6.4 If the Kata does not conform to the rules, or there is some other irregularity, the Chief Judge may call the other Judges in order to reach a verdict.

6.5 If a contestant is disqualified the Chief Judge shall cross and uncross the flags (as in Kumite Torimasen signal).

6.6 After completion of both Kata, the Chief Judge shall call for a decision (HANTEI) and blow a two-tone blast on the whistle. The flags shall be raised at the same time.

6.7 The Chief Judge shall blow a further short blast on the whistle, whereupon the flags shall be lowered.

6.8 The decision shall be for Aka or Ao. No ties are permitted. The competitor who receives the majority of votes shall be declared the winner by the caller/announcer.

6.9 The competitors shall bow to each other, then to the Judging Panel, and leave the area.

EXPLANATION:

I. The starting point for Kata performance is within the perimeter of the competition area.

II. The Chief Judge will call for a decision (HANTEI) and blow a two-tone blast on the whistle. The Judges will raise the flags simultaneously. After giving sufficient time for the votes to be counted, (approximately 5 seconds) the flags will be lowered after a further short blast on the whistle.

III. Should a competitor fail to turn up when called or withdraws (KIKEN) the decision shall be awarded automatically to the opponent without the need to perform the previously notified Kata.

ARTICLE 7: MODIFICATIONS

7.1 Only the USA KARATE Referee Committee, with the approval of the Board of Directors, may alter or modify these rules.

KOBUDO RULES

ARTICLE 1: APPLICABILITY OF KATA RULES

1.1 The provisions of the Rules of Kata Competition, with the exception of the rules concerning flag-system matches, also apply to Kobudo competition, with the modifications provided in these Kobudo rules.

ARTICLE 2: OFFICIAL DRESS

2.1 Article 2 of the USA KARATE Kata Rules applies, but for Kobudo, competition contestants may elect to wear a white, blue or black jacket and hakama. The jacket and hakama colors may differ. However, if the contestant chooses to wear a karate-gi, both the jacket and the rousers must be solid white without stripes or piping. No emblem or logo indicating the contestant's affiliation may be worn in either case. An official USA Karate patch shall be worn at USA Karate Signature Events.

ARTICLE 3: ORGANIZATION OF COMPETITION

3.1 Kobudo competition consists of Bo competition and short-weapons competition. Eku (also called "Kai" or "Kai Bo") is regarded as a type of Bo and is included in Bo competition. Short weapons include traditional Okinawan weapons of Sai, Tonfa, Kama and Nunchaku.

3.2 Kobudo competition takes the form of team and individual matches. Team matches consist of competition between 3-person teams. The individual match consists of individual performance in separate male and female divisions.

3.3 In Kobudo competition the contestants must perform a traditional kobudo kata.

ARTICLE 4: WEAPONS SPECIFICATION

4.1 Weapons must be of traditional design and any decision as to a weapon's eligibility will be made by the Chief Referee and/or Tournament Director.

4.2 In short weapons competition, the contestants must use the following traditional Okinawan weapons: Sai (2), Tonfa (2), or Nunchaku (1 or 2). No weapons variations are allowed unless otherwise approved in advance by the Tournament Director and Chief Referee.

ARTICLE 5: THE JUDGING PANEL

5.1 The panel of three or five (3 or 5) Judges for each match shall be designated by the Referee Committee before the match.

5.2 In addition, for the purpose of facilitating the operation of Kobudo competitions, scorekeepers and caller/announcers shall be appointed.

EXPLANATION:

I. Kobudo Judges sit in the same positions as Kata Judges, whether three or five judges are used. See Appendix 1 of the USA KARATE Rules of Kata Competition.

II. The panel should, as far as availability permits, contain a cross section of both regional affiliations and Kobudo styles.

ARTICLE 6: SCORING

6.1 Point System Scoring:

a. The following scoring range shall be used for the specified experience levels:

Beginner:	5.0 – 7.0
Novice:	5.0 – 7.0
Intermediate:	6.0 – 8.0
Advanced:	7.0 – 9.0

b. The Kobudo competition is organized into a single round.

c. Each Kobudo Judge displays the score by means of points. The card bearing the points is held in the right hand.

d. When the scorekeeper summates the scores of five Judges for each contestant in a round, the highest and lowest scores awarded are deleted for all further purposes, and the remaining three scores are added to produce a final score. When only three Judges are used, all three scores shall be counted.

e. When all competitors have performed, the highest scores shall determine the first, second, third and (and if applicable) fourth place winners.

f. In the event of a point score tie, the low score from the remaining scores shall be added into the final score. If the tie persists, the high score from the remaining scores is added into the final score. In the event of a continuing tie, the contestants must perform a further kata. If the point scores for the tiebreaker kata are tied, the Chief Judge shall call for a decision by Hantei, at which time the Judges shall each indicate their choice of either Aka or Ao as the winner. Competitors may repeat the same Kobudo kata in each round, including the final/medal rounds.

g. If the Kata does not conform to the rules, or there is some other irregularity, the Chief Judge may call the other Judges in order to reach a verdict.

6.2 Flag System Scoring:

Flag system scoring, if implemented, shall be conducted in accordance with USA KARATE Rules of Kata Competition.

EXPLANATION:

I. To minimize point score ties generally, a wider variation in point scores should be encouraged.

II. The Tournament Director and Chief Referee shall decide what precise system will be used for each competition.

ARTICLE 7: CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

7.1 **Assessment:**

In assessing the performance of a contestant or team the Judges will evaluate the performance based on the four (4) major criteria; **Conformance, Technical Performance, Athletic Performance, and Technical Difficulty:**

KOBUDO KATA PERFORMANCE
1. Conformance to the form itself and the standards of the applicable school
2. Technical Performance a. Stances b. Techniques c. Transitional movements d. Timing/Synchronization e. Correct Breathing f. Focus (kime)
3. Athletic Performance a. Strength b. Speed c. Balance d. Rhythm
4. Technical Difficulty of the kata

7.2 **Assessment - Kobudo Team Kata:**

a. In team competition, the competitors must start their Kata with all three team members facing the same direction, toward the Chief Judge. In addition, the competitors must use the same types of weapons.
b. All those ingredients inherent in the criteria for Individual Kata must be present.

c. The Kata must not alter in rhythm or timing for the sake of synchronization. It must demonstrate correct dynamics of Kata as if performed by an individual.
d. No external cues (e.g., audible breathing) should be given during the Kata as an aid to synchronization.
e. A mistake in synchronization of Team Kata requires the same numerical deduction as a technical mistake in individual kata. The movements must initiate in unison as well as end in unison.

7.3 Penalty/Disqualification Criteria:

In assessing the performance of a contestant or team in a kobudo division, the following criteria must be considered:

a. The contestants must always maintain control of the weapons during the performance. A contestant shall be disqualified if he/she drops a weapon during the performance.
b. A contestant shall be disqualified if he/she interrupts or varies the Kata or performs a Kata different from that drawn or announced. The contestant shall also be disqualified if the performance is brought to a halt.
c. A contestant shall be disqualified if he/she uses a dangerous technique that jeopardizes the safety of the Judges or other contestants.

EXPLANATION:

I. When assessing how many points should be deducted for a fault, the following is recommended:

a. For a momentary hesitation in the smooth performance of the Kata, quickly remedied, 0.1 should be deducted from the final score.
b. For a momentary but discernible pause, 0.2 points should be deducted.
c. For a distinct halt, disqualification results.
d. Momentary imbalance with barely a wobble, quickly remedied, shall result in a deduction in the range of 0.1 – 0.3 points.
e. Actual instabilities where there is a distinct but recoverable loss of balance shall merit a deduction in the range 0.2 – 0.4.
f. If the contestant loses balance completely and/or falls, a disqualification shall result.
g. If the weapon touches the floor anytime during the performance, 0.2 – 0.3 points should be deducted (unless the touch is called for by the kata, as in some Bo katas).
h. If the competitor momentarily loses a grip of the weapon, 0.1 – 0.3 points should be deducted.
i. A disqualification shall result if the competitor drops the weapon.

ARTICLE 8: MODIFICATIONS

8.1 Only the USA KARATE Referee Committee, with the approval of the Board of Directors, may alter or modify these rules.

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USA KARATE

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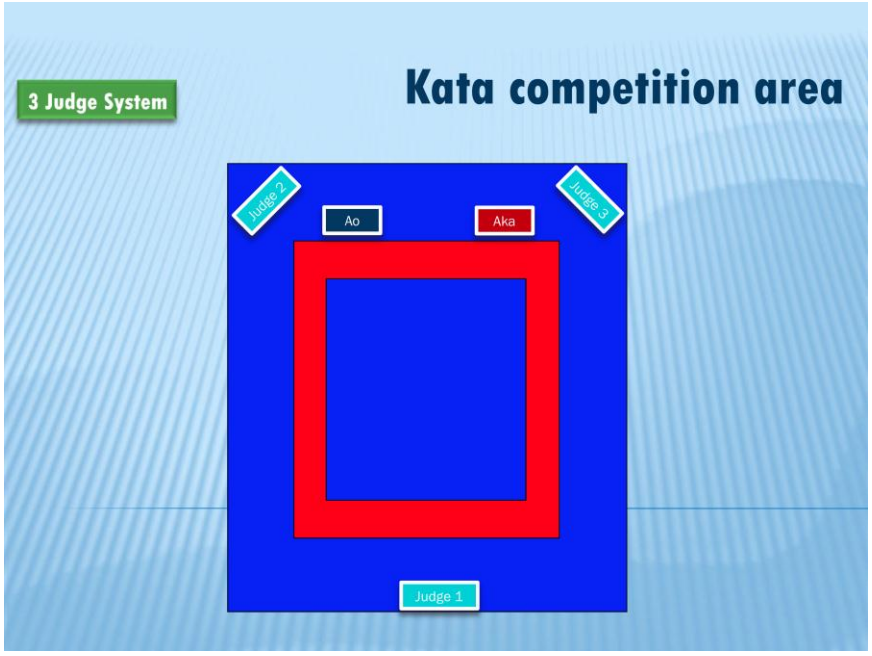
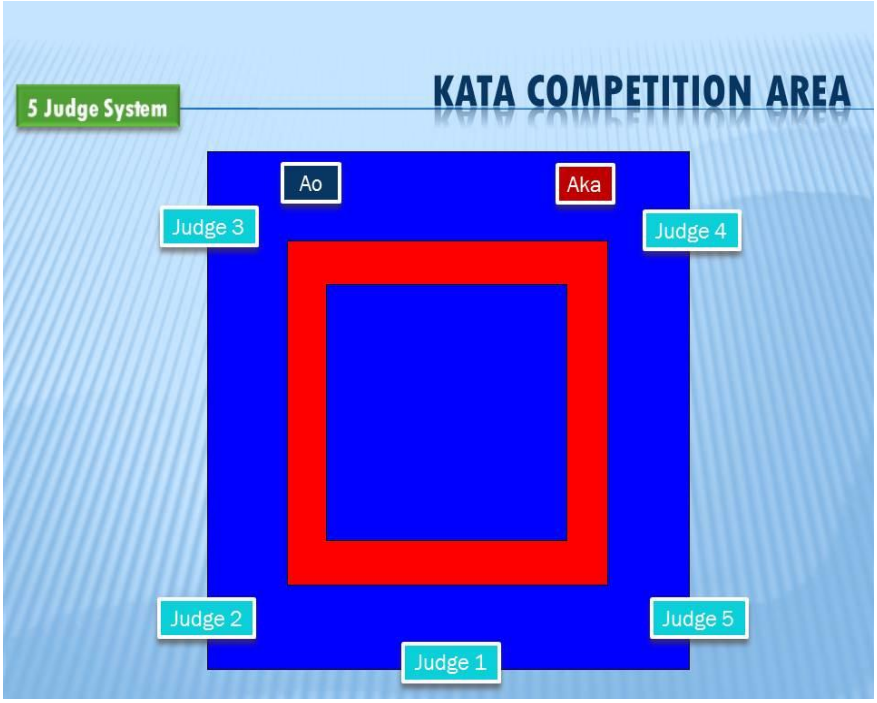
USA KARATE
1631 Mesa Avenue, Suite A-1
Colorado Springs, CO 80906
(719)477-6925

APPENDIX 1: LAYOUT OF THE KATA COMPETITION AREA

Three Judge Layout



Five Judge Layout