

"Wax On ... Wax Off ..." What *The Karate Kid* Can Teach You About Mastery *By Jason Gaspero*



[Watch Movie Clip from *The Karate Kid*](#)

"Wax on ... wax off ..."

This famous line from the 1984 hit movie *The Karate Kid* rings a bell with most movie goers.

In the beginning of the film, "new kid in school" Daniel (played by Ralph Macchio) spends his time getting pummeled by a gang of pretty boy thugs. Then one night during a routine beating, a seemingly old, frail Japanese man, "Mr. Miyagi" (played by Noriyuki "Pat" Morita) comes out of nowhere, completely manhandles the thugs, and saves Daniel.

Daniel is astonished at Mr. Miyagi's ability to beat up a bunch of well-trained karate buffs without breaking a sweat, so he begs Mr. Miyagi to train him so he can defend himself from further punishment.

Mr. Miyagi agrees. To begin, he asks Daniel to start waxing his collection of antique automobiles, using a strict, circular motion.

"Wax on ... wax off ... wax on ... wax off ..."

After many hours of waxing cars, Mr. Miyagi asks Daniel to sand the floor, and then paint a large fence ... all while using strict and specific motions ... "Side to side ... up and down ..." and so on.

The training is unorthodox, to say the least ... but it works. Daniel soon learns how these simple, repetitive exercises are preparing him with the moves he'll need to defend himself in karate.

In the final scene, Daniel goes on to face the toughest, most skilled karate student in the "All-Valley Karate Tournament" championship.

Who wins? Watch the movie! In the meantime, here are a few ideas borrowed from the movie that you can use to master any highly valued, worthwhile skill:

Get mentored by a master instructor. In the movie, Daniel knows a little karate before he starts training with Mr. Miyagi.

However, he learned it from a cheap book printed in black and white ... and a few classes at the local YMCA back in Newark, New Jersey. Once master instructor Mr. Miyagi begins to train Daniel, his skills improve so rapidly that only a few months later, he's able to defeat many brown belts and black belts.

To achieve mastery, nothing beats high-quality instruction from a master instructor. George Leonard, author of the book *[Mastery: The Keys to Success and Long-Term Fulfillment](#)*, wrote, "There are some skills you can learn on your own, and some you can try to learn, but if you intend to take the journey of mastery, the best thing you can do is to arrange for first-rate instruction. For mastering most skills, there's nothing better than being in the hands of a master teacher, either one-to-one or in a small group."

Think of how you can get mentored by a master ... no matter what your craft. Just make sure it's a "win-win" deal for both you and your instructor. Often, this means simply paying your instructor for his time. However, you can make other arrangements, too. Maybe you possess a skill that your instructor lacks ... and wants to master himself. Perhaps you can make a "barter" deal – skill-for-skill – with your instructor. Or ... you can help your instructor with other things he may need in exchange for his time and expertise. Get creative if you have to. Figure out what you need to do. Whatever your situation may be, just make sure you come up with a deal that's both good for you and your instructor.

Establish a consistent daily routine and stick with it. Once Mr. Miyagi agreed to start training Daniel for the tournament, he set a strict schedule for Daniel to follow. Often, this meant starting as early as 6:00 a.m.

Perhaps you've got a similar situation. You want to master a highly valued, worthwhile skill ... but you don't have a lot of time to get there. And then there's your full-time job ... your family obligations ... and all the other responsibilities that take up your time.

Well, to get to that level – to achieve mastery – it's in your best interest to establish a daily routine and STICK WITH IT ... no matter what your other obligations are.

The best way to do this? Start at the exact same time, every single day. But please ... don't just take my word for it!

William Zinsser, author of the classic writing-instruction book *[On Writing Well](#)*, wrote, "The professional writer must establish a daily schedule and stick to it."

Pulitzer Prize winning novelist Ernest Hemingway once said in an interview, "When I am working on a book or a story, I write every morning as soon after first light as possible. There is no one to disturb you, and it is cool or cold, and you come to your work and warm as you write ... You have started at six in the morning, say, and may go on until noon or be through before that."

And here's legendary copywriter Gary Bencivenga's take on establishing a routine: "I rise early, and the first thing I do, before showering, shaving, *anything*, is sit down at my keyboard and write for at least one hour. I do this seven days a week, every day of my life no matter where I am. My friends and colleagues Dan Kennedy and Clayton Makepeace, two of the most productive and successful copywriters of all time, do the same."

Yes, these are all writers, but the same principle can be applied to any craft. Whether you're a writer, graphic artist, photographer, web designer, or whatever field you've chosen, it's in your best interest to establish a daily routine and stick with it.

Master the fundamentals. In the movie, Daniel's "training" begins by waxing cars, sanding the deck, and painting the fence. At first, Daniel thinks he's just performing free labor for Mr. Miyagi. Then, in perhaps the movie's most famous scene, Daniel

confronts Mr. Miyagi about his apparent lack of training. Mr. Miyagi takes the opportunity to show Daniel he's been mastering the fundamentals of karate defense the entire time ... albeit in an unorthodox manner. Mr. Miyagi unleashes a furious barrage of strikes right at Daniel, all of which Daniel successfully blocks using the moves that have almost miraculously become instinctive.

[Michael Masterson](#), the inspiration behind [AWAI's Accelerated Program for Six-Figure Copywriting](#), wrote, "The master has the student doing the same patterns over and over again – patterns the student can't begin to understand – until one day, the meaning becomes clear to the student. He masters the nuances – and moves on to become a master himself."

Think about the ways you can practice and master the fundamentals in your chosen skill. One great way is to continue reading and studying the classic instruction manuals in your given field. Every field has them. For example, Porter Stansberry, founder of Stansberry & Associates Investment Research, recommends that every copywriter read Claude Hopkins' [Scientific Advertising](#) once a year ... just to stay sharp.

Determine what skills you can practice on a regular basis to keep yourself sharp ... and make a point to practice them regularly.

Develop world-class courage. Daniel had to deal with a lot of adversity both before and during the big tournament. But he didn't let any of that stop him. He didn't want Johnny or anyone else to get the best of him. And so he continued to fight.

How badly do you want success in your chosen field? How badly do you want to win? Do you want the rat race to get the best of you? I don't think so! Yes, you're going to have to deal with setbacks. Lots of them. It's inevitable. Hey ... if mastering a highly valued, worthwhile skill were so easy, everyone would do it, right?

So get tough ... get strong ... get courageous ... and believe in yourself. Believe that you can master whatever skill you've chosen. And soon, you'll be competing with the other "black belts" out there in your chosen field.

Recommended Resources

BOOKS:

- [The Practicing Mind: Bringing Discipline and Focus Into Your Life by Thomas M. Sterner](#)
- [The Creative Habit: Learn It and Use It for Life by Twyla Tharp](#)

COURSES:

- [The AWAI Accelerated Income Goals System – Smashing Down the Roadblocks to Your Success](#)

FILMS:

- [The Karate Kid starring Ralph Macchio and Noriyuki "Pat" Morita](#)

- [The Karate Kid Part 2 starring Ralph Macchio and Noriyuki "Pat" Morita](#)
- [The Karate Kid Part III starring Ralph Macchio and Noriyuki "Pat" Morita](#)

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