

Health & Fitness

Fight clubs

Hong Kong may be one of the safest cities in the world but it never hurts to be prepared. Since self-defence comes in many forms, the *Time Out* writers tried and tested different classes so you can see which is right for you

"We train with a kickboxing coach whose mantra is 'train insane or stay the same'!"

SYSTEMA – SYSTEMA HONG KONG

Cara Hung, Staff writer

WHAT IT IS: A Russian form of self-defence, Systema puts an emphasis on breathing techniques, mental preparation and conquering your fears rather than physical skills.

WRITER'S EXPERIENCE: A majority of the class was spent sparring with a partner, one grabbing from behind and the other trying to break free. Our class was mostly guys, and it was difficult to avoid getting seriously up close and intimate. Not every girl will be comfortable with that.

PRACTICALITY IN A REAL-LIFE SITUATION: There's no special move here. The focus is on staying calm, relaxing the body and reacting quickly to your enemy's movements. I believe that with more practice, it could be quite a handy technique in the long run.



NUMBER OF BRUISES BY THE END: Since it was only the first class, I didn't get a grasp of the techniques and ended falling on the ground a fair bit. I counted nine bruises on my legs.

CONFIDENCE LEVEL AFTER ONE CLASS: If someone were to try and abduct me right now, I doubt I could truly defend myself. It's probably easier to grab some pepper spray.

→ 27/F, Yue Thai Comm Bldg, 128 Connaught Rd C, Sheung Wan, 6443 5227.



KICKBOXING – PURE FITNESS

Daniel Harrington, Contributor

WHAT IT IS: This visceral form of combat is one of the quickest ways to develop fitness, balance and the techniques needed not only to fend off an attacker, but to wreck them.

THE INSTRUCTOR: Hong Kong Muay Thai Level B champion Kyle Yeung's mantra is 'train insane or stay the same'. Yeung had a great sense of when to push me and when to ease off.

LEVEL OF FITNESS REQUIRED: A basic level of fitness is ideal.

PRACTICALITY IN A REAL-LIFE SITUATION
The sessions establish the basics like your stance and punching, elbowing and kicking techniques – all of which are invaluable if someone's looking to start a brawl. Or two.

CONFIDENCE LEVEL AFTER ONE CLASS:
By the end of my session, I already felt I had improved on some basic stuff. In reality, though, it takes around three to six months to be fighting fit.

→ Pure Fitness, various locations inc 3/F, IFC mall, 8 Finance St, Central, 8129 8000.



KRAV MAGA – HONG KONG SELF-DEFENCE AND KRAV MAGA

Dustie Sparks, Contributor

WHAT IT IS: A no-holds-barred martial art focused on, at this level, punches, kicks and simple and effective ways to counter those moves and strike back.

LEVEL OF FITNESS REQUIRED: Hope you like burpees. The warm-up is a series of high intensity drills that had us in sweat-drenched T-shirts 15 minutes in. And that's just the start of the two hour session.

WRITER'S EXPERIENCE: Krav maga isn't thought of as hardcore without reason. We took punches to the face and one drill involved repeatedly nailing our sparring partner in the groin (thank god for the cups).

PRACTICALITY IN A REAL-LIFE SITUATION:
A focus on realism was definitely apparent. There was no fluff about what to do if an opponent slaps you in some fancy MMA armbar, rather it was, "If someone's throwing this sort of punch, here's what you can do."

CONFIDENCE LEVEL AFTER ONE CLASS:
Since I joined the beginner's course halfway through, there were some basics skills I was lacking compared to other fighters, but what I did learn seemed like it could be put to use immediately.
→ Impakt MMA, 2/F, Wings Bldg, 110-116 Queen's Rd C, Central, 2824 8427.



BRAZILIAN JIU-JITSU – ESPADA STUDIO

Olivia Lai, Art editor

WHAT IT IS: It's a martial art style that incorporates judo and jiu-jitsu and which seems to involve a lot of entwined legs and entanglement on the ground.

THE CLASSMATES: A welcoming group of young women who want to raise their fitness game rather than crush the patriarchy between their thighs.

THE PHYSICALITY OF THE CLASS: It's quite draining to constantly be locking legs around your sparring partner, trying to apply a joint lock and chokehold and roll around a whole lot. It's nice to be in an all-women's class, though.

PRACTICALITY IN A REAL-LIFE SITUATION: Since BJJ is more about submission rather than physical strength, with proper training, even the most petite of women can easily defend themselves against a stronger and heavier assailant.

CONFIDENCE LEVEL AFTER ONE CLASS: If I find myself in a chokehold, I'm less likely to panic. But my first instinct is still far off going all Black Widow on any knife-wielding assailant.
→ 2/F, Kin On Comm Bldg, 49-51 Jervois St, Sheung Wan, 2885 1922.