



## Whiteness Counts!

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Personal appearance is important in the Japanese/Okinawan martial arts, and so it is essential that every student should take pride in having a clean white uniform. This is especially true for tournament competition, if you expect to impress the judges.

To get a uniform nice and white on a regular basis, the Honbu recommends *Oxydol with Bleach*. Dissolve the detergent in warm or hot water, then add the uniform and agitate for a minute or two. At this point it helps to turn off the washer and let the uniform soak undisturbed for 30 minutes, then finish the wash cycle as usual.

Liquid chlorine bleach is tough on cotton uniform fabric, and will eventually weaken it so much that it wears out rapidly. However, if you must occasionally take drastic steps to whiten a uniform (as before an important tournament), use a 30-minute pre-soak in a plastic (*not metal*) pail containing a gallon of hot water plus a half-cup of dishwasher detergent and a quarter-cup of liquid bleach. Following the pre-soak, immediately wash the uniform in the washer as usual. (The bucket of pre-soak solution can be saved and re-used.)

Heavy-weight uniforms are the best for competition because they look neater and they give you a better chance of achieving an audible pop against you arm during kata performance (judges love to hear that). Ironing helps them look smooth and neat, and a little starch can help even the lighter-weight uniforms look snappier. Some people who don't mind spending \$7 to \$8 prior to a big event prefer to have their uniform professionally cleaned and ironed. The big industrial-strength ironing presses are good for flattening those heavy-weight uniforms that have shrunk and gotten a little puckery or irregular on the surface. Some competitors even like to have a crease in the pants. Of course, it helps to have *two* uniforms so that the best one can be sent to the cleaners early in the week while training continues in the second uniform. Some people have a heavier,

more expensive uniform which they save exclusively for use in tournaments and promotional ceremonies.

In any case, it's always a good idea to wash a uniform at least once a week, or every three or four class periods. A good uniform can be expected to last a year or two before it starts to look badly frayed on the high spots. Besides, remember how your car always seems to run smoother right after it's been washed? If you feel like your karate uniform is clean and snappy, your karate moves will very likely be more clean and snappy too. It's part of the complete mental game of always striving for your best in karate training and competition.

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