



INTERNATIONAL COMBAT KARATE-DO FEDERATION

國際格鬥空手道連盟

REFEREEING REGULATIONS

COMBAT KARATE-DO

Certified Referee Level 1 — 3

A tournament can be held with three officials

Referee qualification is not a source of revenue

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Preface — Purpose of These Regulations

Competition rules work as rules only where referees can apply them to a single standard. These Regulations provide for the qualification, training and certification of referees.

The purpose of these Regulations is to increase the number of referees. Where qualification is set narrowly and high, referees do not come forward and tournaments cannot be held at all. Three principles therefore apply.

1. **Referee qualification shall not be a source of revenue.** Course fees are limited to actual cost.
 2. **A composition allowing a tournament to be held with three officials is maintained** (the Simplified Panel, Article 27 of the Competition Rules).
 3. **Overseas member organisations can obtain qualifications without travelling.**
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Chapter 1 Qualification

Article 1 (Referee Qualifications) Referee qualifications are of three levels.

Qualification	Roles	Requirements
Certified Referee Level 1	Judge , timekeeper	Attendance at a referee course / written examination / practical examination
Certified Referee Level 2	Referee , deputy referee	Experience as a Level 1 Judge in 10 or more bouts / practical examination
Certified Referee Level 3	Chief referee , auditor / certification of Levels 1 and 2	Experience as referee at two or more tournaments as a Level 2 / examination by the Federation

2 A higher qualification carries the roles of the lower.

Article 2 (Qualifications Required to Form a Panel) The panels provided for in Article 27 of the Competition Rules are formed as follows.

Composition	Qualifications required
Simplified Panel (3)	Referee = one Level 2 ; Judges = two Level 1
Full Panel (5)	Referee and deputy referee = two Level 2 ; Judges = three Level 1 ; auditor = one Level 3

2 The timekeeper requires no qualification, though attendance at a referee course is recommended. 3 **A tournament can be held wherever there is one Level 2 and two Level 1 officials.**

Article 3 (Period of Validity and Renewal) Referee qualifications are valid for **two years**.

2 Renewal is by **attendance at a renewal seminar held by the Federation**. No further examination is required. 3 **Where the Competition Rules are amended, a renewal seminar covering the amendments is held.** A person who does not attend that seminar may not officiate at a tournament under the amended Rules, even within the period of validity.

Rules are amended. **Ensuring that no referee continues to officiate under old rules** is the sole purpose of renewal.

Article 4 (Fees)

Amount	
Referee course (Level 1, Level 2)	actual cost only (venue and materials; capped at ¥3,000)
Level 3 examination	free
Renewal seminar	free (including online)
Registration and annual fees	free

2 **Referee qualification shall not be a source of revenue for the Federation.** Referees are part of the Federation's administration, and charging fees prevents people from coming forward.

3 **Officiating at least once a year is added to the requirements for renewal of instructor qualifications.** This secures referees and raises the value of the instructor qualification at the same time.

Chapter 2 Training and Certification

Article 5 (Referee Course) The Federation holds referee courses. A course includes the following.

1. The structure of the Competition Rules (Book 1 common to all Lines; Books 2 onwards for each Line)
 2. **Times and counts** (see the Schedule)
 3. **Distinguishing a knockdown from a fall** (Competition Rules, Article 17)
 4. **Judging non-response and the undefended state** (Articles 22 and 50)
 5. **The duty to progress and calling passivity** (Articles 46, 52 and 72). **Passivity is a prohibited act and rides on the ladder of warning → Penalty 1 → Penalty 2 → disqualification** (Articles 24 and 25(6))
 6. **Scoring under the 10-point system and first-to-points** (Articles 66 and 67)
 7. Checking of equipment (Articles 6 and 7)
 8. Preparation of records (Article 32)
- 2 Courses **include practical work**: judging exercises using video, and the operation of flags in practice bouts.

Article 6 (Written and Practical Examinations) Level 1 is certified by written and practical examination.

1. **Written** — on the times, counts, order of decision and prohibited acts in the Competition Rules. **80 % correct is required.**
 2. **Practical** — serving as a Judge in a practice bout, assessed on **raising and maintaining the flag** and on **scoring under the 10-point system.**
- 2 Level 2 is certified, for a person who has served as a Level 1 Judge in **10 or more bouts**, by practical examination as referee in a practice bout. The practical examination assesses **counting aloud, the declaration of SUSUME and of passivity, and stopping the bout where danger is found.**
- 3 **Attending a course and being certified are separate.** Attendance is a requirement for certification, but **certification follows from passing the written and practical examinations.**
- 4 **A person who passes the course is certified at Level 1 (Judge).** Certification at Level 2 (Referee) requires, in addition, the experience of 10 or more bouts as a Judge under Article 1.
- 5 The practical examination is passed as follows.

	Level 1 (Judge)	Level 2 (Referee)
Items	10	12
Maximum	20	24
Pass	14 or more (a fail where three or more items score 0)	17 or more
Additional condition	—	A 0 on any safety item is a fail, whatever the total

The safety items are stopping the bout where undefended strikes continue, noticing impact to the head or neck and abnormal responses, and distinguishing a knockdown from a fall. **A person who cannot stop a bout on finding danger must not be placed in the area as referee.** A sufficient total does not cure a 0 there.

6 **A candidate who fails may re-sit. There is no limit on attempts.** This examination is not designed to reduce the number of referees; it confirms that the rules can be applied to a single standard.

Article 7 (Overseas Member Organisations) For persons belonging to overseas member organisations, **qualifications are certified by a method not requiring travel.**

1. Courses are **held online.**
2. Written examinations are **held online.**
3. The practical is assessed on **submission of video of the person officiating at that organisation's tournament.**
4. The 10 bouts as Judge required for Level 2 **include service at that organisation's tournaments.**

2 **Application of the Competition Rules does not differ in any respect inside or outside Japan.** The Simplified Panel (3) is a composition allowing these Rules to be applied identically in regions where qualified officials are difficult to secure (Competition Rules, Article 27).

Article 8 (Certification and Registration) Levels 1 and 2 are certified by **holders of Level 3.** Level 3 is certified by the Federation.

2 The Federation maintains a register of referees recording qualification, period of validity, tournaments served and number of bouts. 3 The register is updated annually and the number of qualified officials is published on the Federation's website.

Article 9 (Transitional Provision) For two years from the date these Regulations come into force, persons designated by the President are deemed to hold Level 2.

2 A person so designated **must attend the first referee course held.** Failing that, the designation ceases to have effect. 3 For the first two years after entry into force, Level 3 is designated by the President.

4 **A designation under paragraph 1 is for serving as referee and has effect independently of the result of the course.** A designated person may therefore continue to serve as referee throughout the transitional period, even without

passing, provided they continue to attend.

5 **Where a designated person passes the course, they are formally certified at Level 1 (Judge).** That certification does not lapse when the transitional period ends.

6 **Bouts served as referee under the transitional provision count towards the 10 bouts as Judge required for Level 2 under Article 1.**

Over the two transitional years, referees are secured by designation and judges are filled by those who pass the course. A tournament can be held even if not everyone passes the first course. At the same time, because designations expire after two years, paragraphs 5 and 6 secure the path by which a designated person becomes a certified Level 1 in the meantime and carries their bouts into the Level 2 practical.

Without this Article, no tournament could be held from the day the Regulations were made. Because the Federation begins with no qualified official at all, the first panels are formed by designation.

Chapter 3 Duties of Referees

Article 10 (Duties) Referees are responsible for ensuring that athletes compete in a safe and fair environment.

2 Referees judge **independently of athletes, member organisations and spectators**. 3 A referee shall not officiate at a bout in which an athlete they coach is competing. Where this cannot be avoided, the referee shall so inform the tournament executive chairman.

Article 11 (Responsibility for Decisions) Decisions are made by the panel collectively (Competition Rules, Article 28). **An individual official is under no duty to bring their judgment into line with that of others.**

2 **Not raising the flag is equally a judgment.** Because measurement of non-response and of the undefended state requires that a majority of the panel so recognise, an official in doubt does not raise the flag.

Article 12 (Priority of Safety) Referees **give priority to the safety of athletes over the accuracy of decisions.**

2 In the following cases the referee stops the bout without hesitating over the decision.

- An athlete continues to be struck while undefended
- There has been heavy impact to the head or neck
- An abnormality is found in an athlete's responses, gaze or movement
- The tournament doctor calls for the bout to be stopped

3 **Where a stoppage proves in the event to have been excessive, no responsibility attaches to the referee.**

Responsibility attaches only to harm caused by failing to stop.

Article 13 (Records) The referee and the auditor prepare the record required by Article 32 of the Competition Rules (knockdowns, KOs, doctor stoppages and site of injury) and submit it to the organiser.

2 The Federation compiles the records and publishes them annually.

Article 14 (Discipline) Where any of the following applies to a referee, the Federation may suspend or revoke the qualification.

1. Deliberately making a decision lacking impartiality
2. Acting contrary to the provisions on athlete safety and causing a serious consequence
3. Officiating under amended Rules without having attended the renewal seminar within the period of validity

Article 15 (Amendment) Amendment of these Regulations is by decision of the President of the Federation.

Supplementary Provisions

1. These Regulations were enacted by the International Combat Karate-do Federation on **3 August 2026** and came into force on the same date. **The current text is the 2nd Edition, in force from 5 August 2026.**

Record of amendments

Edition	In force from	Content
1st Edition	3 August 2026	Enactment
2nd Edition	5 August 2026	Attendance and certification distinguished, and those who pass certified at Level 1 (Judge) ; pass marks for the practical examination fixed (Article 6) / designations as referee under the transitional provision given effect independently of the course result, and bouts so served counted towards the 10 bouts as Judge (Article 9)
2. The "Combat Karate-do Competition Rules" are superior to these Regulations.		
3. The original of these Regulations is in Japanese. Versions in other languages are translations for reference; in the event of any inconsistency of interpretation, the Japanese version prevails.		

Schedule Figures a Referee Must Know

All counting by the referee is aloud at one-second intervals (Competition Rules, Article 15(4)).

Situation	Figure	Line
Knockdown	10 count (unable to stand and guard by "9" → decided at "10")	all
Knockdown	mandatory 8 count (counted to 8 even where the athlete rises earlier)	all
Standing count	8	all
Non-response	over 4 s = Waza-ari (bout not stopped) / over 6 s = Ippon (bout stopped)	all
Sundome control	5 s = Waza-ari / 10 s = Ippon	Karate KK5
Control sequence	4 or more in one breath / count ends if interrupted for 2 s	Karate KK5
Hold-down	10 s = Waza-ari / 20 s = Ippon	U12 and below
Duty to progress (standing grappling)	SUSUME at 10 s → passivity after a further 5 s	Karate KK5
Duty to progress (ground)	SUSUME at 15 s → passivity after a further 10 s	Karate KK5
Stalling	SUSUME at 20 s → passivity after a further 10 s	MMA
Gripping	"MATE" at 10 s	Karate KK2–KK4
Ground fighting	"MATE" at 30 s × 2	Karate KK4
Clinch	"BREAK" at 5 s	Kickboxing KB4, KB5
Weight over the limit	under 1 kg = warning / 1–2 = Penalty 1 / 2–3 = Penalty 2 / 3 or more = disqualification	all
Delay after the call	immediately = warning / 30 s = Penalty 1 / 40 s = Penalty 2 / 50 s = disqualification	all
Treatment of bleeding or injury	2:00 = warning / 2:10 = Penalty 1 / 2:20 = Penalty 2 / 2:30 = disqualification	all

****Combat Karate-do Refereeing Regulations (ICKF Refereeing Regulations), 2nd Edition**** Published by the International Combat Karate-do Federation (ICKF) The original of these Regulations is in Japanese. This English version is a translation for reference; in the event of any inconsistency, the Japanese version prevails.