

The First Art Decision Guide

Mat Manual companion guide to "Which Martial Art First?" Print it. The article states the trade-offs and reaches its one firm conclusion: the art matters less than the room. This guide turns that into a decision you make yourself: first-year cards for all six arts, a fit worksheet, a school-visit checklist, a two-week trial protocol, and a decision page at the end. The decision page is blank where the answer goes, on purpose. It is free, because choosing well at the start should not cost anything.

Name: _____ Choosing for (self / my child):
_____ Town and travel limit: _____ Start
date I am aiming for: _____

BEFORE ANYTHING: HOW THIS GUIDE DECIDES ☐ This guide does not rank the six arts and does not end with a verdict. It ends with your choice, made from your answers. Any page that seems to lean is presenting a trade-off; check it against the opposite trade-off before trusting the lean. ☐ Safety gates in any art belong to that art's instructors and normal standards. A trial class does not clear a beginner for hard contact, throws at speed, or submissions applied with force, in any art, whatever the enthusiasm in the room. ☐ Tell every school you visit about injuries, conditions, and concerns before the first class, not after. Their answer is part of what you are evaluating. ☐ Children try classes as children: no adult contact levels, no pressure to perform on a first visit, and a parent watching the whole class. A school that will not allow a parent to watch a children's trial class has answered your most important question. ☐ Money honesty is part of the decision. A contract you cannot afford comfortably will end the training more surely than any technique problem. Part 11 prices the choice before Part 28 asks for it.

Part 1: How to Use This Guide

Three passes, in order. The first pass is paper: Parts 2 and 3 collect your wants, your body, and your schedule before any art is described, so the arts are judged against your life rather than against each other's highlight reels. The second pass is reading: Parts 4 to 10 present the six arts to one shape, and Part 13 tests the survivors against an ordinary week in year two. The third pass is visiting: Parts 14 to 21 take you into real rooms, on trial, with checklists, and Part 21 compares the finalists on evidence.

Your position	Your route through the book
No idea at all	Every part, in order. The cards exist for you
Leaning toward one art	Parts 2 and 3 first; if the lean survives them, visit that art's room and one other
Choosing for a child	All parts, with Part 18 read before any visit
Returning after years away	Parts 2, 3, and 13 carry most of your decision; your old art is a candidate, not a default
Choosing a second art	Part 22 first, then the cards for the candidates

Keep every worksheet. The decision page (Part 28) is filled in from them, and a choice that can show its working survives the first hard month better than a choice that was only a feeling.

Part 2: The Wants Worksheet

Rank, do not rate. For each want, mark your top two with a star. Forcing a ranking is the point: an art that serves everything a little serves the year badly.

Want	What it really asks	Star if top two
Fitness that arrives as a byproduct	Classes physical enough that training is your exercise	☐
Self-defense confidence	Skills tested against resisting partners at some stage	☐
Competition	Events, brackets, medals, a season to aim at	☐
Forms and tradition	Set patterns, detail, a lineage to belong to	☐
Striking with hands and feet	Standing fighting skills, distance, timing	☐
Grappling and ground skill	Throws, pins, control, submissions	☐
Community	A room of regulars, social roots, training partners who become friends	☐
A practice that lasts decades	Something your body can still do, adapted, in twenty years	☐

Want	What it really asks	Star if top two
Something for my child that builds confidence and discipline	Structure, respect, visible progress, fun that survives	☐

Then write the sentence this worksheet exists to produce: "The two things I most want from a first art are _____ and _____." Copy it onto the top of Parts 4 to 9 as you read them. A card that serves neither of your two wants can be admired and then set aside, and setting it aside is the worksheet working, not the art failing.

The honesty check. If your stars were placed by the person you wish you were rather than the person whose Tuesdays these will be, redo the ranking. The guide cannot tell. Your February attendance will.

Part 3: Body and Schedule Inputs

Facts before arts. Complete every line; write "none" where none applies, because a blank looks like a skipped question later.

Input	Your answer
Age, and the age band of classes available near you	_____
Body facts an instructor should know: joints, back, neck, past injuries	_____
Contact honesty: I welcome contact / I accept it in stages / I am unsure and want to watch first	_____
Falling and being thrown: fine / unsure / a real concern	_____
Close contact and grappling: fine / unsure / a real concern	_____
Evenings genuinely free each week, named by day	_____
Travel time I will actually sustain, one way, in February weather	_____
Monthly budget for fees and gear, comfortably	_____
Other training or sport already in the week	_____
The thing most likely to make me quit in month two	_____

That last line is the most useful one on the page. Name it now, boredom, embarrassment, cost, a sore knee, a partner who goes too hard, and the school visits in Parts 14 to 16 are instructed to look for it specifically. A room that handles your named quit-risk well is worth more than a room that merely avoids your unnamed ones.

Read the body lines back before the art cards. They are not disqualifications; every art adapts something. They are lenses. A real concern about falling reads the judo card differently, and that difference is the worksheet doing its job.

Part 4: First-Year Card: Shotokan Karate

The year feels like: lines of basics moving up and down the floor, forms (kata) learned section by section, partner work that starts arranged and loosens by stages, and gradings that give the year its landmarks. Detail is the texture.

It asks: standing fitness, hips that will learn to rotate and settle, patience for repetition, and comfort being corrected on small things in front of others.

It gives back: clean punching and blocking mechanics, posture and balance, a clear belt ladder with named requirements, and striking that keeps its distance.

The trade-off to face honestly: ground fighting is not the art's home; most rooms touch it lightly if at all. A student whose stars sit on grappling (Part 2) will feel the gap by year two.

Class shape and costs: typically two to three classes a week offered, uniform (gi) required, gloves and pads arriving with sparring stages. Grading fees exist in most schools; ask (Part 15).

Trial watch-for: whether the arranged partner work is taught as a skill with standards, or marched through as ceremony. Good rooms explain what a drill is for while they run it.

My notes on this card, against my Part 2 sentence:

Part 5: First-Year Card: Taekwondo

The year feels like: energetic classes with a great deal of kicking from the first month, forms (poomsae) in parallel, pad work, and sparring that in good rooms arrives with clear gates.

It asks: flexibility that will be built but is asked for early, leg strength, spring in the calves and ankles, and a willingness to look ungainly while the legs learn.

It gives back: fast, confident, varied kicking, agility and bounce, a strong forms tradition with its own competition path, and fitness with a skill attached.

The trade-off to face honestly: hand techniques and close-range work usually get less of the year than the legs do, and ground skill is outside the art's scope. Rooms vary in how much sparring emphasis they carry; ask what a beginner's first year of sparring actually looks like here.

Class shape and costs: often several classes a week at multiple times, which suits difficult schedules; uniform required, sparring gear a real cost when that stage arrives. Ask for the gear timeline in writing if the school sells packages.

Trial watch-for: whether beginners' kicking is built on a chamber and a rechamber, or swung. Even in a trial class, a good instructor's corrections name mechanics, not just effort.

My notes on this card, against my Part 2 sentence:

Part 6: First-Year Card: Judo

The year feels like: learning to fall first, thoroughly, until the mat stops being an event; then gripping, moving, and throwing partners who are learning to fall just as thoroughly. Groundwork follows throws in most rooms. Randori, the live practice, is physical in a way that surprises people.

It asks: grip strength that will be built in the hands and forearms, a neck and core that learn to be sturdy, comfort with close contact and with impact, and trust built rep by rep with falling partners.

It gives back: throws that work on resisting partners, balance and grip fighting, and falling skill that protects you on ice, stairs, and playing fields for the rest of your life. Few arts pay a dividend off the mat as directly as that one.

The trade-off to face honestly: no striking, and the early months are physically demanding in a blunt way; the body adapts, and the adaptation is the first grading nobody awards a belt for. Competition rules shape what is taught in many rooms; ask if that shape suits your wants.

Class shape and costs: a heavier uniform (judogi) built for gripping; class frequency varies, two to three a week where the room is established. Mat fees and federation membership appear in some schools; ask.

Trial watch-for: how the falling is taught in the beginner class. Patient, staged, and checked by name is the standard to demand, because it predicts how everything else in that room is taught.

My notes on this card, against my Part 2 sentence:

Part 7: First-Year Card: Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu

The year feels like: positions before submissions, escapes before attacks if the room is wise, and rounds of live grappling that feel like solving puzzles at body temperature while someone sits on your chest. Progress is oddly measurable: the position that was hopeless in March is merely hard in June.

It asks: floor mobility, patience while pinned by smaller people, comfort with sustained close contact and with tapping, often, in front of others, as the normal price of learning.

It gives back: ground control, escapes, and submissions, problem-solving under genuine pressure, and in most towns a deep, welcoming community that socializes as readily as it trains.

The trade-off to face honestly: standing skills, throws and striking both, are a small part of most first years; the art starts where a fight has already fallen down. A student whose stars sit on striking should read that sentence twice. The laundry is also real.

Class shape and costs: gi classes, no-gi classes, or both, depending on the school; several sessions a week is common, including lunchtimes in city schools. Fees sit at the higher end in many towns; price the year, not the month.

Trial watch-for: how the room treats a tapping beginner, and whether higher belts roll at a learner's pace without being asked. That behavior, seen once, predicts your whole first year.

My notes on this card, against my Part 2 sentence:

Part 8: First-Year Card: Muay Thai

The year feels like: pad rounds in pairs, conditioning woven into everything, the clinch introduced as its own world, and sparring that in good rooms arrives behind gates the instructor can explain. The training is honest about its aims: a fighting art that trains everyone with competition's seriousness banked down to their level.

It asks: cardio that will be built by the work itself, conditioning of the shins, core, and neck over time, and a willingness to train tired, because tired is one of the states the art deliberately practices.

It gives back: the full striking set, punches, kicks, knees, and elbows, clinch skill, ring craft, and a level of fitness that arrives whether you chase it or not.

The trade-off to face honestly: the training load is the highest on this shelf, and contact arrives as a real feature rather than a distant stage in many rooms. Students recovering from joint problems, or whose Part 3 contact line reads unsure, should trial carefully and ask about the beginner track specifically. Belt ladders are not the art's tradition everywhere; progress may be measured in skill and rounds rather than grades.

Class shape and costs: gloves, wraps, and shin guards early; several classes a week in most gyms, often including morning options. Trial weeks are common and worth taking fully.

Trial watch-for: whether beginners have their own track or are fed into the room's general intensity. A good gym can point to exactly what changes for a student in month one, month three, and month six.

My notes on this card, against my Part 2 sentence:

Part 9: First-Year Card: Catch Wrestling

The year feels like: top control, rides, turns, and holds, learned inside a wrestling or grappling room. Where Brazilian jiu-jitsu begins underneath, catch begins on top and intends to stay there: break the base down, ride, turn, finish.

It asks: wrestling strength built in the neck, back, and hips, comfort driving through a partner's base at close quarters, and the same tapping honesty grappling always asks.

It gives back: dominant top play, pins and control that end arguments, turns and holds from the ride, and a direct education in grappling history that deepens the other grappling arts if you meet them later.

The trade-off to face honestly: availability. Standalone catch wrestling classes are uncommon in many towns; the art is often taught inside wrestling, grappling, or mixed rooms, which means the room search (Part 14 onward) does more work for this art than for the other five. Striking and forms are outside its scope, and its submission culture, in careful rooms, is staged with the control-first standards this library prints elsewhere; ask any room you visit how it stages leg locks and neck-adjacent holds for beginners, and judge the answer closely.

Class shape and costs: wrestling shoes or bare feet per the room, no uniform in most rooms, fees folded into the host gym's. Ask what the room's beginner curriculum actually is, since provision varies more here than in the other five.

Trial watch-for: control taught before finishes, in that order, visibly. It is this guide's one hard technical demand of any room teaching any grappling art, and catch rooms that meet it are rooms to trust.

My notes on this card, against my Part 2 sentence:

Part 10: The Six Side by Side: Trade-Offs at a Glance

One table, for the evening when the cards blur together. It repeats the article's shape deliberately; consistency between the two is how you know neither is selling.

Question	Shotokan	Taekwondo	Judo	BJJ	Muay Thai	Catch
Main range	Standing, at arm's length	Standing, at leg's length	Standing clinch to the floor	The floor	Standing, all ranges in close	Top, on the floor
First month dominated by	Basics and stances	Kicking and movement	Falling and gripping	Positions and escapes	Pads and conditioning	Rides and breakdowns
Contact arrives	Staged, by drill	Staged, sparring gated	Early, as throws and randori	Early, as live rounds	Early in training load, sparring gated	Early, as live wrestling
Grading ladder	Clear belts	Clear belts	Clear belts	Belts, slower	Varies by gym	Varies by room
Body's main bill	Hips and repetition	Legs and flexibility	Grip, neck, impact	Floor mobility, patience	Cardio and conditioning	Neck, back, driving strength
If you quit it is usually because	The detail felt slow	The legs never came	The physicality was blunt	Losing felt endless	The load was heavy	You could not find a room

Use the last row most. Choosing against your likeliest reason for quitting is a more reliable method than choosing toward your favorite highlight, because quitting is what actually ends first arts. Check the last row against Part 3's final line, the quit-risk you named before reading any card. Where they match, that art needs an exceptional room to survive; where they differ, you have learned something worth writing in Part 24.

Part 11: Cost and Gear Worksheet: Pricing the Year

Price the first year, not the first month, for each finalist art and room. Schools price differently and none of the structures is automatically a warning; the total is what your budget (Part 3) has to carry.

Cost line	Room A: _____	Room B: _____
Monthly fee, and what it includes		
Contract length and cancellation terms		
Joining or registration fees		
Uniform cost, and how many you will realistically need		
Protective gear, by the month it becomes required		
Grading or testing fees across a year		
Federation or membership fees		
Event costs if competition is a want		
First-year total, added honestly		

Contract questions that matter. Can the membership pause for injury or a hard season, and at what cost? Does the fee rise after an introductory period, and to what? Write answers, not impressions.

The resentment test. Divide the first-year total by the sessions you will actually attend at your Part 3 frequency. That per-session number is the one your motivation will meet in February. If it makes you wince, the room must be exceptional in every other part of this guide, or the honest choice is the other finalist.

Part 12: Class-Shape Fit: The Schedule Is a Technique

An art you cannot attend is not an art you train. Test each finalist against your real week from Part 3.

Frequency. Beginners progress on two sessions a week in most arts; three is better where life allows; one is maintenance wearing a beginner's clothes. Mark each room's beginner sessions on your actual calendar for a sample month, including travel. A room with six weekly classes of which two fit your life is a two-class room for you.

Session length and timing. Forty-five minutes to ninety is the normal band. Very short sessions demand narrow focus; late sessions tax the next morning's job; weekend sessions rescue weeks that weekdays break.

Each is a fit question with your name on it.

The February test. Picture the worst ordinary week of your winter: dark, busy, a cold going around the house. Which of this room's sessions do you still attend? Count them. That count, not the brochure count, is your real frequency, and Part 11's per-session cost should be divided by it before you sign anything.

Child logistics, for parents. Class time against dinner, homework, and a sibling's activities ends more children's training than any technique does. A school with two children's slots that both survive your family calendar beats a famous school whose one slot fights bedtime weekly.

Part 13: The Year-Two Test: An Ordinary Tuesday

Novelty carries year one in any art. Year two is Tuesdays. This part tests the finalists against the ordinary, before you have spent money learning the answer.

Write the ordinary class. From your trial visits (Parts 19 and 20) and the cards, write four lines for each finalist: the warm-up, the main drilling, the partner work, the end of class, as they happen for a student a year in. Not the grading. Not the tournament. The Tuesday.

Score the Tuesdays. For each finalist, mark: I would look forward to this most weeks / I would attend this willingly / I would endure this. Endure is a failing grade at year two, whatever the art's other virtues, because endurance is a budget and it runs out. If both finalists score endure, the shortlist is wrong; return to the cards.

The partner test inside the Tuesday. Picture the room's regulars, the people you actually saw, as your weekly partners for a year. A room whose regulars you would happily be pinned by, outkicked by, and corrected alongside has passed the deepest fit test this guide owns.

Part 14: The School-Visit Checklist

Visit at least two rooms if your town allows it, even if the first visit delights you; a single visit gives you nothing to compare, and comparison is this guide's method. Watch a beginner class. You are buying a first year, so inspect the first year.

☐ I watched a full beginner class, not a demonstration or the advanced class ☐ Beginners were corrected specifically, patiently, and by name ☐ The contact level matched what I was told at the door ☐ Students like me, in age and shape, were present and had clearly stayed a while ☐ The instructor could say what a beginner's first three months contain ☐ The room, mats, and gear looked cared for; the class started on time ☐ I was quoted the full first-year cost (Part 11) without evasion ☐ Trial terms were offered clearly: how

many classes, at what cost, with what gear □ My Part 3 facts were asked about, or welcomed when I offered them □ I left knowing the name of the person I would ask a question of next week

Score nothing yet. A checklist completed in the doorway is a first impression wearing a uniform. Part 16 turns the visit into a record that evening, while it is still made of facts.

One visit is a sample of one. A room has off nights. Where a visit disappoints on atmosphere but the worksheets point there strongly, visit once more on a different day before deciding. Where a visit disappoints on safety or honesty, once is enough, at any strength of pointing.

Part 15: Questions to Ask at the Door

Ask these out loud, and write the answers the same day. A good school answers all of them without a flicker; the answers matter less than the ease.

1. What does a beginner's first month look like, week by week?
2. When does contact, sparring, randori, or live rolling start for a beginner, and what gates it?
3. How do gradings work, how often, and what do they cost across a year?
4. What gear will I need, and by when? (Part 11's rows.)
5. What happens if I am injured, or life interrupts for a month? Can the membership pause?
6. Who teaches the beginner classes, and is it the person I met today?
7. For a child: how do you handle a child who is frightened, or one who is rough with partners?
8. What do students here usually quit over, in their first year? (The honest instructor's answer to this is gold; compare it with Part 10's last row.)
9. May I watch the beginner class before any trial, and may a parent watch everything?
10. What would you tell a beginner who is choosing between your art and another? (You are listening for fairness about the other art. A school that can praise a rival's strengths will teach yours honestly.)

Part 16: The Visit Record

Complete within a day of each visit, from notes, not from the feeling in the car.

Line	Room visited: _____ Date: _____
Instructor who taught the beginner class	_____

Line	Room visited: _____ Date: _____
Class size, and how many were beginners	_____
One correction I heard, in the instructor's words as nearly as I can	_____
Contact level I actually saw	_____
The moment the room felt most like a place I could belong, or least	_____
My Part 3 quit-risk: did I see it handled, ignored, or embodied?	_____
Full first-year cost (from Part 11)	_____
What surprised me	_____

The correction line is the record's heart. An instructor's actual words to an actual beginner are the most predictive thing in the building. "Again, slower, watch your base" and "come on, put some effort in" describe two different years of your life.

Keep the record even for rooms you reject. Part 21's comparison reads these.

Part 17: Red Flags in a Room

Some findings end a candidacy on one visit, whatever the worksheets say. They cluster in three groups.

Safety flags. Beginners thrown, struck, or submitted hard in their first classes; contact levels beyond what was described; an instructor who treats a beginner's fear as comedy; injuries met with impatience rather than a protocol. One clear sighting is enough.

Honesty flags. Costs that grow as you approach signing; grading promises tied to timelines ("black belt in two years, guaranteed"); pressure to sign a long contract before any trial; claims that this art alone works. A room selling certainty is selling something other than training.

Care flags. Beginners invisible to the instructor for a whole class; children managed by fear; senior students who use beginners as equipment for their own practice without adjusting. Care is a habit, and its absence in small things predicts its absence in the large one: your injury on a tired Tuesday in month four.

Note the flag, name the room, and do not return to be argued out of it. Part 14's second-visit rule applies to atmosphere, never to these rows.

Part 18: Choosing for a Child

A parent's version of the same decision, with the differences that matter.

What children need first. A room that is warm and completely controlled at once: children settled, listening, active for most of the class, and plainly glad to be there. Watch the transitions, lining up, water breaks, the end of class; an instructor's real teaching shows there, not in the demonstrations.

Age fit beats art fit. For young children especially, the developmental match matters more than the art: class length their attention can hold, contact at zero or touch level, success experiences every session, and a grading rhythm that rewards without inflating. Every art on this shelf has schools that do this beautifully and schools that run children as small adults. You are choosing between those.

The two-visit rule for children. Watch once yourself. Then let the child trial, with you watching, before any contract. A child's verdict, "I want to go back," delivered unprompted the next day, outweighs a shelf of adult analysis. The reverse also holds: a child who dreads the second visit is giving data, and the answer is a different room or a different season, not persuasion at the doorway twice a week.

Questions only parents ask. How are partners matched for size? What happens when a child cries, or is hit harder than intended? Who, by name, supervises the children's class? Ask all three, with Part 17's care flags open beside you.

Part 19: The Trial Protocol, Week One

A trial squandered on spectating teaches little. Run it as a protocol.

Before class one. Tell the instructor your Part 3 facts, and one thing you are watching for. Arrive early enough to see the room set up and the previous class end; how a room treats its transitions is unscripted evidence.

In class one. Be a beginner completely: follow instructions, ask the questions a beginner asks, decline nothing out of pride and attempt nothing to impress. Notice your body honestly the next morning; soreness is information about the art's demands, and its pattern tells you which card you have been reading with your muscles.

That evening. Complete Part 16's visit record and add three lines: what my body reported, what I keep replaying, what I dread about class two, if anything. Dread named small is workable; dread unnamed grows.

Class two. Watch the room's regulars more than yourself. Are the month-three students visibly better than you in ways you want to become? Is anyone there a year in, and do they look like a person you would enjoy becoming in this art? Those two questions are week one's real curriculum.

Part 20: The Trial Protocol, Week Two

Class three. Test the schedule, not the art: attend at the time you would actually attend in February, by the transport you would actually use. A trial taken at a holiday leisure hour proves nothing about a wet Tuesday. If class three still happens gladly under real conditions, the room has passed the strongest practical test in this guide.

Class four, or the second room's trial. Where two finalists stand, trial both before deciding, in the same fortnight if life allows, so the comparison is between fresh experiences rather than between one experience and one brochure. Run Part 16's record for each.

The partner sample. Across the trial, you will have worked with or beside several regulars. Write their collective character in one sentence: how they treated the newest person in the room. That sentence predicts your year more reliably than the instructor's best demonstration, because the regulars are the classes, three evenings a week, for as long as you stay.

End of protocol. Stop trialling. More samples stop adding information and start adding delay, and delay is its own decision. Part 21 is next, and after it, Part 28.

Part 21: Comparing the Finalists

Two finalists, two visit records, two trial fortnights. Compare on the worksheet's terms, in this order, and stop when a row decides it honestly.

Test, in order	Finalist A: _____	Finalist B: _____
Serves my two wants (Part 2)		
Survives my body facts (Part 3)		
February frequency it supports (Part 12)		
Ordinary Tuesday score (Part 13)		
Visit record's correction line (Part 16)		

Test, in order	Finalist A: _____	Finalist B: _____
First-year cost I can carry without resentment (Part 11)		
The unprompted feeling, mine or my child's, the day after the last trial		

Read down, not across. The first row where one finalist clearly wins and the other clearly does not is your decision's spine; rows below it are commentary. If no row separates them, they are genuinely close, and the tie-breakers are travel time and the day-after feeling, in that order, because logistics outlast enthusiasm.

Write the losing finalist's strength down too. Part 28 asks for it. A choice that can name what it gave up will not be haunted by the road not taken every time training gets hard; the road was seen, priced, and set aside for reasons written in ink.

Part 22: Switching Later, and Second Arts

A first art is a first art. This part exists to remove the pressure that makes choosing feel like a marriage.

Switching after a year is normal. Many lifelong students trained somewhere else first. A year in a well-chosen art is never wasted: you keep the fitness, the falling or the footwork or the base, the understanding of how rooms work, and a sharper Part 2 worksheet than any beginner owns. If the fit proves wrong after an honest year, switching is the system working, and the sunk cost of the year is the tuition every experienced student has paid in some currency.

Signs it is the art, not the month. Every art has hard months. Switch on patterns, not on a bad fortnight: your two wants are structurally unserved (a grappling star in a room that never grapples), the Tuesday score (Part 13) has read endure for a full season, or the room itself has changed under you. Name which it is, in Part 24, before you leave.

Second arts come later and honestly. Add a second art onto a base that exists, usually after the first art's fundamentals hold, and expect the beginner feeling again; it is not a verdict on your first art. Schedule the second art around the first's core classes, never by splitting both into halves that starve together.

What transfers. Falling, base, distance sense, breathing under effort, and the social skill of being a good partner transfer everywhere. Name yours when you switch or add; you are not starting from zero, only from a different door of the same house.

Part 23: Fault Table: How First Choices Go Wrong

#	Fault	How it happens	The fix and its part
1	Choosing from highlight reels	The art was selected by its best thirty seconds	Part 13's ordinary Tuesday, written from a real trial
2	Ranking instead of fitting	A league table replaced your two wants	Part 2's sentence, recopied onto every card
3	Ignoring the quit-risk	The named risk was never checked in a real room	Part 3's last line, carried into Part 14's visit
4	Pricing the month, not the year	Gear, gradings, and a fee rise arrive as surprises	Part 11's first-year total, in writing
5	Brochure frequency	The February calendar was never drawn	Part 12's calendar test
6	One visit, delighted, signed	No comparison existed to discipline the delight	Part 14: two rooms where the town allows
7	The advanced class audition	The visit watched the class you will not attend for years	Part 14: beginner class, full, every time
8	Choosing for the person you wish you were	Wants ranked aspirationally	Part 2's honesty check; redo the stars
9	Endless trialling	Samples multiply, no decision forms	Part 20: the protocol ends; Part 21 begins
10	Treating the choice as permanent	Fear of switching inflates the stakes past deciding	Part 22: a first art is a first art

Fault 1 and fault 10 keep people in parking lots. One makes the arts look superhuman; the other makes choosing feel irreversible. Parts 13 and 22 are the antidotes, taken in that order.

Part 24: Notes and Visit Log

One page for the sentences the tables cannot hold. Date every entry; undated impressions migrate toward whichever decision you later wish you had made.

After the cards (Parts 4 to 9), the card that surprised me, and why:

After visit one: _____

After the trials, in my body's words, not the brochures':

For a child, their unprompted words the day after the trial, quoted exactly:

The strength of the finalist I did not choose (Part 21 asks for this):

If a sentence in this part contradicts a worksheet, trust the worksheet for the decision and keep the sentence for the review three months in.

Part 25: Terms Used in This Guide

Term	Meaning
First art	The art a beginner starts in; a beginning, not a verdict on the others
Trade-off	What an art gives and what it asks, read together
Wants	The ranked top two from Part 2, against which every card is read
Quit-risk	The named thing most likely to end your training in month two (Part 3)
Ordinary Tuesday	The typical class in year two, the guide's unit of fit (Part 13)
Finalist	An art-and-room pairing that survives the worksheets and earns a trial
Trial protocol	Parts 19 and 20: the structured first two weeks in a room
Visit record	Part 16's same-day written account of a school visit
Room	The actual school and people, as distinct from the art's name

Part 26: Agreements for the Trial Fortnight

Sign with whoever shares the decision: a partner, a household, or a parent and child together. Trials run on agreements made while calm.

☐ We will trial at the real times, by the real transport, that February would impose (Part 20). ☐ We will not sign a contract longer than the trial terms until Part 21's comparison is complete, whatever the discount for signing today. ☐ Body facts and concerns are told to every instructor before the first class (opening block). ☐ For a child: the child's unprompted day-after verdict is recorded word for word (Part 24) and weighed as data, not managed as a problem. ☐ Either of us may name a Part 17 red flag and end a room's candidacy without owing a debate about it. ☐ The decision, once made on Part 28, gets a full season before it is revisited. Hard months are weather, not evidence.

Chooser: _____ With: _____ Date: _____

Part 27: For Instructors: Running a Trial Class That Answers Honestly

Instructors reading the other side of this guide: a beginner running Parts 19 and 20 in your room is not auditing your hospitality. They are sampling their year. These notes describe the trial class that answers their actual questions.

Minute	Trial-class standard
Before	The beginner's Part 3 facts are asked for and noted; gear lent without a sales conversation attached
Warm-up	The beginner joins the room's real warm-up, scaled, not a separate performance
Main block	Beginners corrected by name at least twice, on mechanics, kindly and specifically
Partner work	The beginner is paired with a regular chosen for their care with new people, and the pairing is explained
Close	The instructor names what the next three months hold, the contact gates, and the full first-year cost, unprompted

The class plan in one line: teach the ordinary class, at its ordinary standard, with the beginner folded into it honestly. A trial class staged as a showcase fails Part 16's record later, when the ordinary Tuesdays arrive and differ from the audition; rooms lose more students to that gap than to any rival art. The rooms this guide sends people to, in effect, are the ones whose trial class and whose February class are the same class.

Part 28: The Decision Page and Sign-Off

Complete from the worksheets, in ink, after Part 21. Every blank is filled from a named part, so the page can be re-read in a hard month and trusted.

My two wants (Part 2): _____ and _____ My named quit-risk (Part 3):
_____ The finalists were: _____ (art, room) and _____ (art, room) The
row that decided it (Part 21): _____ The losing finalist's strength, honestly named:
_____ My February frequency in the chosen room (Part 12): _____ sessions a week
First-year cost I have priced and can carry (Part 11): _____

My choice: The first art I am starting is _____, at
_____ (room), starting _____. I chose the room as much as the
art, for the reasons written above. This is my decision, made from my answers; no ranking was consulted
and none was needed.

The season promise. I will give this choice one full season before revisiting it (Part 26), and I will judge it
then by Part 13's Tuesday test, not by the hardest single week inside it.

Chooser sign-off: _____ Date: _____ Training partner or parent
sign-off (where the decision is shared): _____