

Aikido

The Beginner's Guide

Arrival at the Dojo

Please be punctual. Enter the dojo (the practice location) and be on the tatami (mat surface) at least five minutes before the class starts and meditate until the Sensei (instructor) begins the class. When you come earlier than 5 minutes, do warm-ups exercises and practice by yourself or with other practitioners. If you happen to be late, do your warm-up exercises off the tatami (these must be done to prevent injury to yourself). Obtain permission to step onto the tatami from the Sensei (instructor). It is mandatory to receive permission BEFORE stepping on the tatami so that the instructor is aware of all who are practicing at all times – this is for safety reasons as well as a sign of respect to the Sensei.

Lateness, occasional or stemming from special circumstance (work for instance), is acceptable. However, habitual lateness caused by poor planning is an indication of a disorderly mind and unless corrected will slow down one's learning and progress in Aikido.

About Rei

Aikido is more than a sport, it teaches a way of life. As such, it commands our appreciation and respect. This appreciation and respect is owed to O'Sensei (founder of Aikido), the dojo (place of practice), the Sensei (instructor) and the other practitioners. Rei or bow means "appreciation and respect" and the manner by which, it is expressed.

Rei in the Dojo

Upon entering the dojo, do a standing bow towards the Kamiza (shrine): face the Kamiza arms held by the side of the body and bend the torso to a 30 to 45 degrees angle. At all times while in the dojo but not on the tatami, it is necessary to wear zori (sandals). They should be put on upon entering the dojo and neatly left at the side of the tatami during the practice. Assure that one's zoris are neatly placed at the side of the tatami, as it is a good sign of one's discipline.

Rei on the Tatami

Upon stepping onto the tatami, kneel down in seiza (sitting on the heels with the back straight) and bow to the Kamiza by bending the torso down to an horizontal position while lowering both hands in front of the knees. Your back should stay straight. This bow is also required whenever you leave the tatami temporarily or at the end of the class. In either case permission to leave the tatami before the end of the practice must be obtained from the Sensei as a matter of respect but also for practical reasons of safety (so the instructor remains aware that there are no injuries or illness that need attention.)

Rei to O'Sensei

The spirit of the founder is always present in the dojo through his legacy. That is why we express our gratitude and respect with a kneeling bow to the Kamiza at the beginning and end of each class. If you are late, bow on your own to O'Sensei before joining the class.

Rei to the Sensei

Rei to the Sensei at the beginning and end of a class, immediately after bowing to O'Sensei. The Sensei and the practitioners bow to each other during the class. Do a kneeling bow to the Sensei whenever he gives you personal attention. Note also that during a class the instructor is addressed as "Sensei" and not by his personal name. When one bows to the Sensei, at the beginning of the class, tradition is that one says "*Onegai shimasu*" ("please do me a favour and practice with me") whereas at the end of the class, one says "*Domo arigato gozai mashita*" ("thank you very much").

Rei to partners

Your partner is the mirror of yourself. Ignoring his individuality and self-esteem is against the spirit of Aikido. Your partner is not someone you compete against, but a person to train and improve with. Helping your partner is helping yourself. At the beginning and end of each movement, practitioners bow to each other (in seiza) to eliminate all trace of aggressiveness. Normally one changes partner for each technique. Senior practitioners are precious helpers for you. Regardless of age, sex, and social status, they deserve your respect. Listen to them sincerely and follow their directions during practice. On the other hand, senior students should not take advantage of their position. They should remain humble and sincere, both in attitude and behavior, and to try to be a good role model for beginning practitioners.

Rei to weapons

Aikido training sometimes involves usage of weapons: the bokken (wooden sword), the jo (a 3 to 4 feet wooden stick), and the tanto (wooden knife). When used, they are an extension of yourself and help improve your Aikido. As such, they deserve respect and are bowed to before and after their usage: while standing hold the weapon with both hands at eye level the blade toward you with the tip to your left (except for the jo which has neither) and bow to the Kamiza. They should not be thrown, stepped on or over.

Pay particular attention to safety when practicing with weapons. Never swing a weapon until you are completely sure that there are no fellow students who might be injured by your actions. You are responsible to be aware of anyone entering your practice area, as they may not notice your activity.

General manners

While you practice, always be alert. Careless practice causes accidents and makes no improvement in one's Aikido.

YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR SAFETY DURING PRACTICE. REMAIN ALERT!

Report all injury or illness immediately to the Sensei and do not leave the tatami until you have received permission. This is out of respect for the Sensei but is also a safety precaution so that the Sensei is made aware of any illness or injury that needs attention.

Do not waste both yours as well as your partner's time in unnecessary talking during practice. Keep the conversation minimal at all times. Do not hesitate to let your partner and the Sensei know when you cannot continue practice because of sickness, injuries, or genuine tiredness. When only a short rest is necessary, go quietly to the corner after bowing to your partner and the Sensei, and watch the class. If you feel sick, and still want to practice, see the Sensei and ask permission. Your body belongs to nobody else but you. Take good care of it and prevent injuries.

Wash your dogi (the uniform worn during practice) regularly, ideally after every class.

Keep your toe and finger nails short and filed at all times.

Never wear jewelry or affixed body decorations of any kind at any time during practice. This is dangerous and you will be told by the Sensei or senior students to remove these articles before you will be allowed to practice. This will help prevent accidents to both yourself and your partner.

Relieve yourself before class. If you sweat a lot keep a handkerchief or a hand towel in your dogi. Do not drink during class unless you have asked permission from the Sensei.

Please mark the appropriate box on the attendance list for each of your practice days. If your name does not appear on the list, just add it in one of the provided blank lines. This must be done before each class and as you enter the JCCC facility at the reception desk.

Each and every member shares the responsibility of keeping the dojo clean at all times and should enjoy it. Cleanup is done after each practice day. Do not wait to be directed, but show initiative and do whatever is necessary to assure that the facility is clean. If you have any questions, ask the Sensei or any advanced student, they will cheerfully answer.

Those not on the tatami during a class should keep their voices low to avoid disturbing those who are practicing. During the Rei at the beginning and the end of the class, those off the mat should remain quite. By keeping in mind that the main goal in the dojo is to train in Aikido, it becomes easy to understand the proper attitude that one should have while there.

Fees: This is a non-profit organization run for the benefit of its member and promotion of Aikido. Fees go towards the payment, expenses and the general upkeep. Please help the administration with the prompt payment of your dues.

Terminology

Counting	
1	ichi
2	ni
3	san
4	shi (yon)
5	go
6	roku
7	shishi (nana)
8	hachi
9	ku (kyu)
10	ju

Clothing & equipment	
Dojo	Practice place
Kamiza	Shrine (picture of O'Sensei)
Tatami	Practice mat
Gi	Uniform
Hakama	Black or dark blue pleated pants worn by Yudansha (Black Belts)
Obi	Belt
Shiro obi	White belt or a practitioner with a belt
Zori	Sandals worn in the dojo
Bokken	Wooden sword
Jo	Wooden stick
Tanto	Wooden knife

Manner	
Rei	Bowing; literally "appreciation and respect"

Roles	
O'Sensei	Founder of Aikido
Sensei	The Instructor
Yudansha	Blackbelt practitioner
Nage (Shite)	The person who does the technique
Uke	The person who receives the technique

Posture	
Ai hanmi	Partners face each other, each with the right or the left foot forward (right/right or left/left)
Gyaku hanmi	Partners face each other, one with the right foot forward the other with the left foot, or vice-versa (right/left or left/right)
Maai	Proper distance between the two partners facing each other
Seiza	Kneeling position, sitting on the heels with back straight

Falls (Ukemi)	
Koho Kaiten	Back roll
Ushiro Ukemi	Back roll
Zempo Kaiten	Forward roll
Mae Ukemi	Forward roll

Warm up (Jumbe undo)	
Haishin undo	Final backstretch

Category of Movements	
Tachi waza	Standing technique
Hanmi handachi waza	Technique done with uke standing and nage sitting
Suwari waza	Sitting technique

Taisabaki	Body movements
Omote waza	Entering movement in front of uke; considered positive
Ura waza	Entering movement behind uke; considered negative
Soto kaiten mawari	Outside turning movement
Uchi kaiten mawari	Inside turning movement
Irimi	Entering movement going towards uke
Tenkan	Turning movement, pivoting
Renzoku Tenkan	Continuous pivoting
Tenshin	Nage steps back

Note: Most basic techniques can be omote, ura or both.

Attacks	Kogeki
Kamae	Stance
Katate dori	One hand grasp of a wrist
Ryote dori	Two wrists grasp from the front
Morote dori	Two hand grasp of a wrist
Kata dori	Shoulder grasp
Ryokata dori	Two shoulder grasp
Ushiro kubishime	Choke from behind with free hand grabbing wrist
Ushiro tekubi dori	Two wrists grasp from behind
Ushiro ryokata dori	Two shoulders grasp from behind
Ushiro waza	Any attack from behind
Shomen uchi	Descending strike to the top of the head
Yokomen uchi	Sideways strike to the head
Tsuki	Thrust or punch
Tachitori	Attack with a bokken
Jotori	Jo techniques
Tantotori	Attack with a knife

Waza	Techniques
Sumi otoshi	Corner drop
Ikkyo	Arm pin
Nikkyo	Wrist control by turning it in
Sankyo	Wrist control by twisting it
Yonkyo	Wrist control by pressure on nerves
Irimi nage	Entering throw
Shiho nage	Four corner throw
Tenshi nage	Heaven (ten) and earth (shi) throw
Kote gaeshi	Throwing by turning out uke's wrist
Kaiten nage	Throw by pushing uke's arm across his back while pinning their head down
Kokyu nage	Breath throw (timing)
Kokyu ho	Breathing exercise

6th Kyu Test (40 days)

1. Minimum 20 classes.
2. Clean body and uniform.
3. Bowing from kneeling and standing position.
4. Ukemi (breakfalls): back fall, back roll, front roll.
5. Taisabaki (body movements): With a partner, from Gayku-hanmi Katate-dori:
 - a) Tenkan
 - b) Renzoku tenkan
 - c) Irimi
 - d) Tenshin

6. Techniques:

	Kamae	Kogeki	Waza
a)	Gyaku hanmi	Katate tori	Sumi otoshi
b)	Ai hanmi	Katate tori	Ikkyo (omote/ura)
c)	Ai hanmi	Katate tori	Irimi nage
d)	Gyaku hanmi	Katate tori	Shihonage (omote/ura)
e)	Gyaku hanmi	Katate tori	Kokyunage (uchi mawari)

Notes:

1. The student must be both Nage and Uke
2. Etiquette for testing: In the following order, bow first to O-Sensei, the examiner and then to your Uke. When the test is complete, bow in reverse order; to your Uke, the examiner and then O'Sensei. Please bow at the same time if there are other people testing.

Protocol For Testing

When Sensei calls your name, bow, get up and walk along briskly (in front of the students) to the end of the mats (towards the inside windows). Then proceed along the edge of the mat towards the front of the dojo for a few steps. Then turn back across the mat walking towards the examining sensei(s). If there is a group of students who are called up at the same time, please walk in unison, single file. Form a line along the front of the dojo in the order that your names were called facing the picture of O'Sensei. Sit in seiza (sitting position with the legs folded under the body.)

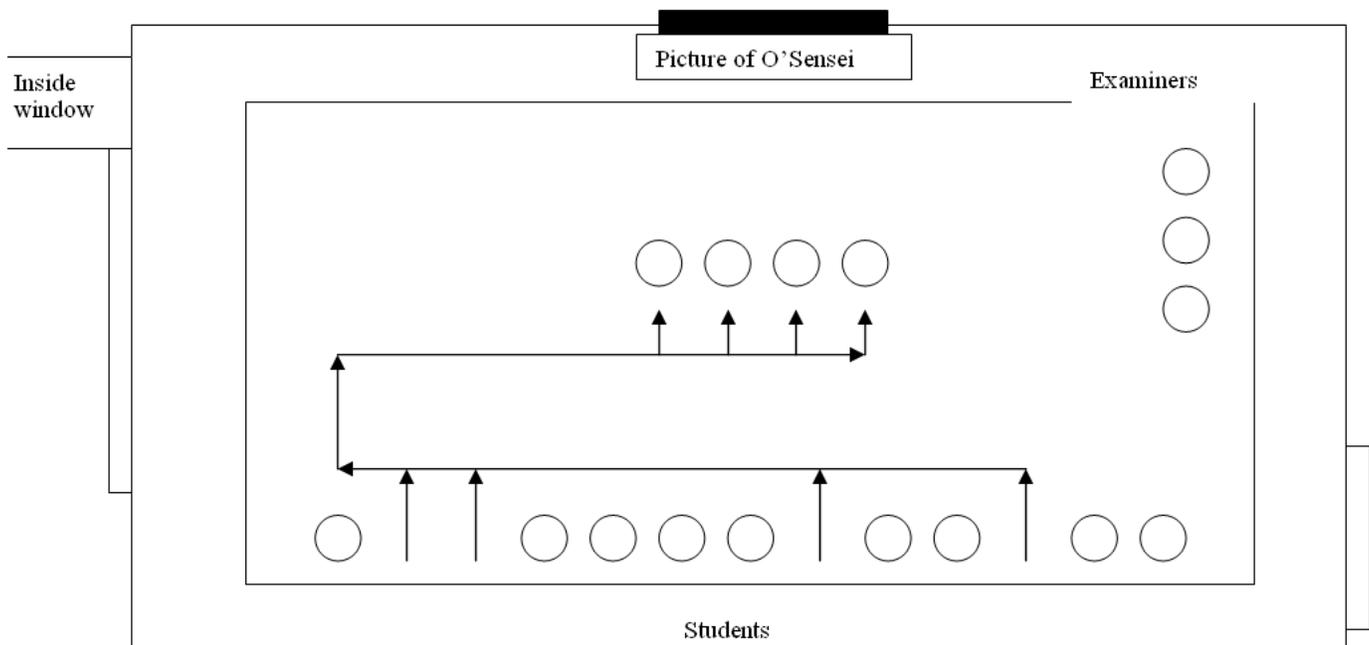
At the same time, all people sitting in seiza should:

- a) bow first to O'Sensei,
- b) next turn to the examiners and bow,
- c) and then lastly turn to your partner and bow.

Stand up together, face your partner (Sensei will designate who your partner is, which one of you will be Shite/Nage (defender with your back to the picture of O'Sensei) and which one will be Uke (attacker with your back to the students).

The examiner will call out the requirements to you. Do them repeatedly until he tells you to stop. He will say "yame" [ya-may] meaning "stop" in Japanese. Please remember this word. Unless the examiner tells you differently, please do Omote first then Ura movement.

When you are finished your test, sit down in with your Uke and do exactly what you did at the start of the test but in REVERSE order (bow to your Uke, the examiners, O'Sensei) get up and go back the same way to you came. Please remember to move together.



Life of Morihei Ueshiba, Founder of Aikido

Morihei Ueshiba was born December 14, 1883, in a village called Tanabe. His father, a retainer of the Kii family who were lords of the province now called Wakayama, taught the secret method of combat called Aioi-Ryuu and some Tai-jitsu and Kendo mixed in. This method which the boy learned from his father (beginning around the age of 10) lies at the root of present day Aikido.

When Morihei was 12 years old, his father served as chief of the village and as a member of the village council. Thugs hired by political opponents sometimes came to the house and assaulted him. These incidents of violence made a permanent impression on the boy and formed the edge of his resolve to become strong through the martial arts.

In 1901, when he was 18 years old, the young man worked on the streets in Tokyo in the wholesale business. There he studied the jujitsu of the Kito School (Tokusadura Tosawa); a style influenced by the Chinese Kempo techniques of striking the vulnerable parts of the body, but with a prominence for the arts of throwing an opponent.

After a few months in Tokyo, he developed a heart condition known as beriberi and had to return home. When he recovered, he was determined to strengthen his body. As a youth, his short body (he was only 5'2" tall) had been rather slight, but now he became solid and muscular. His study of martial arts continued. He went to Sakai to study Yagyu School fencing (Masakatsu Nakai), finally receiving the certificate of that sect in 1908, his training having been interrupted by a period of military service.

At that time he loved to participate in the rice-cake making contests of his village. In these contests, a large quantity of rice is placed in a stone mortar and pounded with a heavy mallet until it becomes a rubbery paste that is laid out in flat cakes to cool before eating. Ueshiba would invariably win these contests to pound out the most rice, in his own and other villages and finally, as the story goes, he ended up by breaking the mallet itself.

This story suggests that he still possessed an ample measure of competitive spirit in those days. In spring of 1910, Ueshiba went as a settler to Hokkaido, the northern island, which at that time was still a frontier. His study of Martial Arts continued. Sokaku Takeda, a master of the Diato Jujitsu sect was in Hokkaido then. Ueshiba became his pupil, practicing mostly on his own and receiving a lesson only once in a while. He had to pay his teacher between three and five hundred yen for each technique (one yen was worth about half a dollar) and besides that, to cut the master's wood and carry his water before receiving the lesson.

In the spring of 1918 the event of his father's death had a profound effect on his spirit. "Of what use is it to perfect one's self in the arts of self-defense if one must inevitably be defeated by death?" "After all, what does fighting to win mean? If I win today, the time will inevitably come when I must lose. What will I have accomplished if I waste my entire life and all my spiritual power on such things as these? What will I have gained? The universe is absolute; is there no absolute victory?"

He then began to seek an answer in meditation and prayer. He moved to Ayabe where he lived and studied until 1926. In this period, his son Kisshomanu was born. The master also occupied himself with the study of Shinkage jujitsu, with the arts of the spear along with the day-to-day tasks associated with simple farm work.

In the spring of 1925, a naval officer, who was a professor of fencing, came to visit the master at Ayabe. During their conversation, they disagreed over something and agreed to have a contest with wooden swords. The officer attacked but the master dodged each blow and his opponent, unable to touch him, finally gave up. Wanting to rest after this encounter, the master went out into the garden alone. Suddenly a remarkable liberating experience (what in Zen is called satori) struck him. Here is his own description:

"I felt that the universe suddenly quaked and that the golden spirit sprang up from the ground, veiled my body and changed it into a golden one. At the same time, my mind and body became light. I was able to understand God, the Creator of the universe." "At that moment I was enlightened. The source of Budo (martial arts) is God's love, the spirit of loving protection for all beings. Endless tears of Joy streamed down my cheeks. Since that time I have grown to feel the whole earth is my house and the sun, the moon and the stars are all my own things. I had become free from all desire, not only for position, fame and property, but also to be strong. I understood, Budo is not felling the opponent by our force; nor is it a tool to lead the world into destruction with arms. True Budo is to accept the spirit of the universe, keep the peace of the world, correctly produce, protect and cultivate all beings in nature. I understood that the training of Budo is to take God's love, which correctly produces, protects and cultivates all things in nature and assimilate and utilize it in our own mind and body."

This remarkable insight was the beginning of Aikido.

This ethic is reflected in the technique, which the master taught. Therefore, instead of trying to block an attack and reply to it, or avoid an attack and reply, the technical aim is to harmonize the will with the will of the opponent and to conduct his will and his movement so that they cause no harm.

In 1927 the master moved to Tokyo and began to teach. A large house on a hill was rented to serve as a temporary headquarters. Professor Jigoro Kano, the founder of Judo, came to visit along with several of his senior pupils. Kano is said to have remarked on seeing the master's Aikido, "This is my ideal Budo." He sent several high-ranking students from the Kodokan to study with Ueshiba.

The training was rugged and the pupils became very strong. He kept strict control over the admission of new students, requiring from each the recommendation of two persons of high standing. The result was that a majority of the pupils were Budo experts, nobles, military and business leaders, or children of such families. The master strove to preserve the great repute of his new budo by ensuring that his pupils were of a certain position or of a certain personal level.

The outbreak of the Second World War dispersed O'Sensei's pupils, calling many of them into military service. The master left the emptying headquarters dojo and retired to the site of the Aiki shrine at Iwama to engage in farming and private practice and teaching. The master's son, Kisshomaru, took charge of the headquarters dojo at this time.

After the war, in 1948, the new Aiki Association was launched. Following the war, the master had come to feel that the principles of Aikido were essentially international and should be offered freely to all as a way of filling the spiritual vacuum of the modern world. Accordingly, instructors were sent out to all parts of the globe and the special restrictions controlling the acceptance of pupils for the new martial art were removed. Since that time, Aikido has spread widely outside of Japan.

On April 26, 1969, at 86 years of age, the master died in his sleep after two months of sickness.