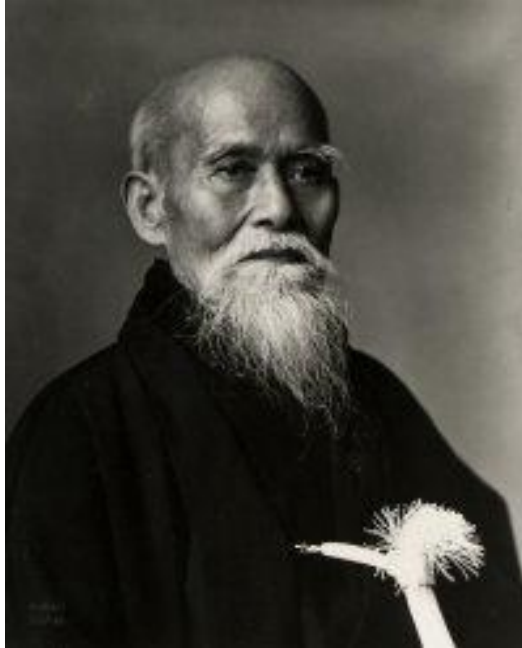




Guide for New Students



“The Art of Peace begins with you. Work on yourself and your appointed task in the Art of Peace. Everyone has a spirit that can be refined, a body that can be trained in some manner, a suitable path to follow. You are here for no other purpose than to realize your inner divinity and manifest your innate enlightenment. Foster peace in your own life and then apply the Art to all that you encounter.”

Morihei Ueshiba, O Sensei
The Founder of Aikido

“A human being is a part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty.”

Albert Einstein

GENERAL GUIDELINES

O Sensei's rules for training Aikido

1. Aikido decides life and death in a single strike, so students must carefully follow the instructor's teaching and not compete to see who is the strongest.
2. Aikido is the way that teaches how one can deal with several enemies. Students must train themselves to be alert, not just to the front, but to all sides and the back.
3. Training should always be conducted in a pleasant and joyful atmosphere.
4. The instructor teaches only one small aspect of the art. Its versatile applications must be discovered by each student through incessant practice and training.
5. In daily practice first begin by moving your body and then progress to more intensive practice. Never force anything unnaturally or unreasonably. If this rule is followed, then even elderly people will not hurt themselves and they can train in a pleasant and joyful atmosphere.
6. The purpose of aikido is to train mind and body and to produce sincere, earnest people. Since all the techniques are to be transmitted person-to-person, do not randomly reveal them to others, for this might lead to their being used by hoodlums.

Doshu's (O Sensei's son and successor) addendum to the rules

1. Proper aikido can never be mastered unless one strictly follows the instructor's teaching.
2. Aikido as a martial art is perfected by being alert to everything going on around us and leaving no vulnerable opening (*suki*).
3. Practice becomes joyful and pleasant once one has trained enough not to be bothered by pain.
4. Do not be satisfied by what is taught at the *dojo*. One must constantly digest, experiment and develop what one has learned.
5. One should never force things unnaturally or unreasonably in practice. One should undertake training suited to his body, physical condition and age.
6. The aim of aikido is to develop the truly human self. It should not be used to display ego.

DOJO ETIQUETTE

Why do we bow and use Japanese at certain times during a class?

It is important to maintain the traditions of the art in order to preserve its integrity and also as a mark of respect to both its founder and its history.

The extent to which these customs are adhered to depends on the dojo. Some customs are almost universally observed: showing respect to your teacher by bowing and saying "*Onegai shimasu*" [lit. "I make a request"] before class and "*Domo arigato gozaimashita (sensei)*" ["Thank you very much (teacher)"] after class, as well as to your training partner(s) (before and after each technique in some *dojos*, only before and after class in others) is arguably the most important. Some *dojos* insist on using the Japanese terms, and although English versions are allowed at Aikido of Prescott, it is useful to practice the Japanese to be able to feel comfortable at any dojo.

The bowing is meant as a mark of respect to O Sensei, the instructor or your partner - it does not have any religious significance and is in fact more akin to a handshake in Western society. It does not symbolize worship of any sort.

What should one do before class?

Perform a standing bow when entering the dojo and a standing or kneeling bow toward the *kamiza* when going on the mat.

The students kneel in one or more lines parallel to the front of the *dojo*, or *shomen* a minute or two before the class. The *sensei* enters and kneels. All present bow toward the *shomen* (where a picture of O Sensei is on display). Then there is another bow, *sensei* to class and class to *sensei*. If you arrive after the class has begun, bow in on the edge of the mat and sit in *seiza* until the *sensei* invites you to join the class.

Is talking permitted on the mat?

This depends on the policy of the *dojo* at which you train; some frown on any talking on the mat at all, while others are quite permissive. Generally, it is best if one observes the etiquette of the *dojo* they are at, not the one that they usually train in. In no case should anything other than the technique at hand be discussed, however. At Aikido of Prescott, we stress SELF-discipline, the practice should always be fun, but minimizing talking will help hone the observational skills needed in the martial artists. Also, while in class one should concentrate exclusively on Aikido and talking with others around you serves only to break that concentration.

What about cleanliness?

To show respect for the art, your fellow *aikodoka* (aikido practitioners), and for yourself, always have a clean body and a clean *gi* when practicing. Feet must be checked for cleanliness before going on the mat. Keep your fingernails and toenails trimmed to avoid injuries to your partners.

Students are responsible for the cleanliness of the *dojo*, including sweeping and vacuuming the mat and entrance, cleaning of the mirrors, and dusting and cleaning the *kamiza*. This should be done after each class with deeper cleaning as needed on a weekly basis.

What should one do after class?

The students again line up and bow with the *sensei* toward the *shomen*, and then *sensei* and the students as a group bow to each other. When the *sensei* leaves the mat or indicates that you are free to do so, bow to and thank each person that you practiced with during the class.

Perform a standing or kneeling bow toward the *kamiza* when going off the mat and a standing bow when leaving the *dojo*.

PRINCIPLES

1. **Sink with every movement** - Martial arts proficiency depends on a solid base from which to direct energy. Postures should have a continuous structural connection between the base, the waist, and the extension of the arms/hands.
2. **Maintain good posture** - This connection depends on the back being straight and the elbows and shoulders being sunk.
3. **Maintain center alignment** - Keep the hands and arms in front of the body and direct the movement from the waist. When turning, also turn the hands in toward the center of the body to maintain the alignment. Head and eyes should be facing in the same direction as the hands.
4. **Move from your center** - Do not try to execute techniques solely with the hands and arms. They are only energetic extensions of your *hara*, or physical center of gravity. If your posture is good, your hands and arms are in correct alignment, and you move from your center, then the technique will unfold.
5. **Breathe** - *Kokyu*, or breath, is one of the fundamental tools of the *Aikidoka*. *Ki* is also sometimes translated as breath. Breathe energy into your hands as you execute techniques and take *ukemi*, and your arms and body will be filled with that energy.
6. **Extend your idea beyond the target** - Visualize your movement extending beyond your opponent's body. Extend out and gather in as if your partner is not there.
7. **Maintain your balance, take your opponent's** - Aikido works because we sequentially and progressively take our opponent's balance without compromising our own. The best *uke* is one who attempts to maintain his/her own balance as long as possible.
8. **Do not rely on strength or speed** - Internal martial arts such as Aikido develop the ability to direct energy with the mind in order to take an opponent's balance without the use of strength or speed. If a technique is not working, examine your movement with respect to the principles, do not use more strength or speed. Aikido techniques are very effective and safe for your partner when done correctly, but can be injurious when done incorrectly, too strong, or too fast.
9. **Face your opponent** - move in such a way that you do not turn your back on your opponent when he/she has his/her balance, as *nage* or as *uke*.
10. **Relax and enjoy** - Aikido is a path, a journey. Don't be hard on yourself. Take your time. Continuity of training with good intentions is more important than exertion. Focus first on the principles, then on technique, and last of all on throwing or being thrown. In this way your practice will be more meaningful, more rewarding, and safer.

A GLOSSARY OF AIKIDO TERMS

The Basics

Aikido - the way of harmony with *Ki* (universal life force)

Dojo - practice hall (lit. "the place of the way")

Gi - practice uniform, also called *Keikogi*

Sensei - teacher (lit. "the one who has gone before")

Sempai - senior student

Kohai - junior student

Seiza - sitting on the feet

Kiza - sitting on the toes

Kyu - beginner's rank, starts at 5th *kyu* and progresses through 1st *kyu*

Dan - graded or black belt rank, starts at 1st *dan*, progresses through 10th *dan*

Kamiza - front of the *dojo*, with O Sensei photo (lit. "where the spirit sits")

Nage (n.) - partner who executes technique

Uke (u.) - partner who attacks & receives technique

Ukemi - the art of attacking and receiving techniques, falling, and rolling

Omote - directed to the front side of u.

Ura - directed to the back side of u.

Tachiwaza - techniques from the standing position

Suwariwaza - techniques from sitting position

Hanmi-handachi - n. sitting, u. standing

Irimi - entering movement

Tenkan - pivoting movement

Attacks

Katatetori - single-handed grab to wrist

Aihanmi - n. & u. have opposite side feet forward

Gyakuhanmi - n. & u. have same side feet forward

Morotetori - two-handed grab of forearm

Ryotetori - both wrists grabbed from the front

Katatori - single-handed grab to shoulder

Shomenuchi - frontal strike to forehead

Yokomenuchi - diagonal strike to side of head

Tsuki - thrust or punch

Ushiro-ryotetori - both wrists grabbed from behind

Ushiro-katatori - both shoulders grabbed from behind

Ushiro-kubishime - wrist grab from behind + neck lock

Ushiro-eridori - collar grabbed from behind

TESTING

As in many traditional Japanese arts, *aikidoka* (aikido practitioners) are given *kyu* (non-graded or white belt) ranks that begin at 5th *kyu* and advance to 1st *kyu*, and *dan* (graded black belt) ranks that begin at 1st *dan* and advance toward 10th *dan*.

New students have no rank. After 60 days of training, a student may wish to test for 5th *kyu* (testing is totally voluntary). The test requires the knowledge of the Japanese names of, and the ability to execute and take *ukemi* for a given number of techniques (approximately 7) within a formal structure. Subsequent tests require more hours of practice and knowledge of a greater number of techniques with an eye on increased understanding of the principles.

The United States Aikido Federation Promotional Test Requirements (as of September 1st, 1989.)

5th Kyu (60 days)

<i>Shomenuchi ikkyo (omote & ura)</i>	<i>Tsuki kotegaeshi</i>
<i>Shomenuchi iriminage</i>	<i>Ushiro tekubitori kotegaeshi</i>
<i>Katatetori shihonage (omote & ura)</i>	<i>Morotetori kokyuhō</i>
<i>Ryotetori tenchinage</i>	

4th Kyu (80 days)

<i>Shomenuchi nikkyo (omote & ura)</i>	<i>Ushiro ryokatatori kotegaeshi</i>
<i>Yokomenuchi shihonage (omote & ura)</i>	<i>Suwari waza:</i>
<i>Tsuki iriminage</i>	<i>Shomenuchi ikkyo</i>
<i>Ushiro tekubitori sankyo (omote & ura)</i>	<i>Katatori nikkyo (omote & ura)</i>
	<i>Katatori sankyo</i>

3th Kyu (100 days)

<i>Yokomenuchi iriminage (2 ways)</i>	<i>Ushiro ryokatatori sankyo (omote & ura)</i>
<i>Yokomenuchi kotegaeshi</i>	<i>Morotetori iriminage (2 ways)</i>
<i>Tsuki kaitenage</i>	<i>Shomenuchi sankyo (omote & ura)</i>
<i>Suwari waza:</i>	<i>Hanmi-handachi:</i>
<i>Shomenuchi iriminage</i>	<i>Katatetori shihonage</i>
<i>Shomenuchi nikkyo (omote & ura)</i>	<i>Katatetori kaitenage (uchi & soto mawari)</i>

2nd Kyu (200 days)

Shomenuchi shihonage
Shomenuchi kaitenage
Yokomenuchi gokyo
Ushiro tekubitori shihonage
Ushiro tekubitori jujinage
Ushiro kubishime koshinage

Morotetori nikkyo
Hanmi-handachi:
Shomenuchi iriminage
Katatetori nikkyo
Yokomenuchi kotegaeshi
Freestyle - 2 persons

1st Kyu (300 days)

Katatori menuchi - 5 techniques
Yokomenuchi - 5 techniques

Morotetori - 5 techniques

Shomenuchi - 5 techniques
Ryotetori - 5 techniques

Koshinage - 5 techniques
Tantotori
Hanmi-handachi (ushiro waza - 5 techniques)
Freestyle - 3 persons

Sho Dan (400 days)

All of 1st kyu requirements
Tachitori
Jotori

Henkawaza
Freestyle - 4 persons

Ni Dan (600 days)

All of Sho Dan requirements
Kaeshiwaza

Freestyle - 5 persons
Attend 2 seminars per year after Sho Dan

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Way of Peace, Morihei Ueshiba, Shambala Press

The Spirit of Aikido, Kisshomaru Ueshiba, Kodansha

Aikido Complete, Yoshimitsu Yamada, Castle Books

Aikido and the Dynamic Sphere, Westbrook and Ratti, Tuttle Publishing

Aikido - The Way of Harmony, John Stevens, Shambala Press

The Spiritual Foundations of Aikido, William Gleason, Destiny Books

Mind Over Matter: Higher Martial Arts, Shi Ming, Frog Ltd.

Toward the Unknown: Martial Artist, What Shall You Become, Tri Thong Dang, Tuttle Publishing

Beyond the Known: The Ultimate Goal of the Martial Arts, Tri Thong Dang, Tuttle Publishing

VIDEO

The following videotapes may be checked out at the *dojo*:

O Sensei, 3 films about the Founder

Aikido, The Power and the Basics, part 1

Aikido, The Power and the Basics, part 2