

DOJO RULES & ETIQUETTE

A Dojo “Place of the Way”, is a sacred place for the sincere and committed practice of Aikido. Its purpose is to provide and foster a safe and positive environment for mature individuals to practice Aikido as a “way” of peace. The purpose of etiquette is to assist the practitioner of Aikido to have a safe, positive, and dynamic training experience. Please study and absorb the inner and outer meaning of the following rules of etiquette.

ENTERING THE DOJO

When entering the Dojo, please remove your shoes, and place them orderly on the shoe racks.

Do not enter the mat room with your shoes on!

Please sign your attendance card prior to entering the mat room.

Please bow once toward the shomen when entering or leaving the mat room. This expresses your intent to concentrate fully on Aikido training.

If a class is in session please be mindful not to disturb the class with loud conversation.

Please do not bring food into the dojo (except for special events).

PREPARATION FOR TRAINING

Please take care of any personal needs (restroom, water, phone calls, etc.) prior to suiting up.

Please wear a gi (training uniform) that is clean and in good condition (a ripped uniform or holes in the knees are unacceptable). Your belt must be tied correctly, and if you wear an undergarment, it must be white.

Your personal hygiene is important for a safe and positive training experience. Please make sure your hands, feet, and face are clean before getting on the mat. Keep your fingernails and toenails trimmed short so as to not injure yourself, or your training partner. If you have a recent cut please bandage it prior to practice.

For your own safety, and the safety of your practice partner(s), please remove jewelry (rings, earrings, watches etc.) prior to stepping on the mat.

Do not use alcohol or drugs prior to class.

Prior to stepping onto or off the mat, please bow once toward the shomen.

Commit to being on time for class. The bow-in ceremony and warm up exercises are important for achieving the correct state of mind for training. Please be on the mat, ready to train, 5 to 10 minutes prior to class.

Please take a few minutes before class begins to sit quietly on the mat in seiza. Use this time to relax your mind and body in preparation for practice.

You may perform movements to stretch and loosen the body before class begins. Quiet conversation is acceptable, however be mindful to respect the training environment of the dojo.

Two minutes prior to the beginning of class students should line up in seiza on the edge of the mat, quietly waiting for the sensei to start class.

TRAINING

Formal training begins and ends with all students in seiza (formal seated position), facing the shomen. Your sensei will then lead you in a bowing ceremony which consists of 2 bows (unity), 4 claps (air, fire, water, earth), and 1 bow (gratitude). This is followed by “onegaishimasu” (please begin practice) to start class or “domo arigato gozaimashita” (thank you very much) when ending class.

Students should make a sincere effort to be on time for class, however, if lateness is unavoidable, please perform the formal bow-in ceremony on your own before beginning practice. If it is necessary to leave class early, you should inform the sensei and do a formal bow-out at the close of your practice.

The proper way to sit in class is in seiza. A cross-legged seated position is acceptable if seiza is impossible. If you have a particular problem with knees or feet that interferes with the ability to sit in seiza, make sure that your sensei is informed of the problem. In any case, an attentive posture should be maintained. Slouching and sitting with legs outstretched is unacceptable. Please do not lean on the walls at any time.

When your sensei is about to give instruction, quietly line up in seiza and give him or her, your full attention. After your sensei demonstrates a technique, students bow, choose partners quickly, and begin to practice. When beginning practice with a partner (aite), bow once and say “onegaishimasu”. When the end of a particular practice is signaled (often with two claps), students should stop practice immediately, bow to their partners thanking them for practice, and quickly line up in seiza for further instruction.

For reasons of safety, respect, and courtesy, it is essential that the Sensei’s instructions be followed exactly. Many Aikido techniques can be dangerous if not practiced properly. Emphasis should be placed on learning as much as possible through intent, observation and concentrated practice. Competition of any sort is not allowed. Cooperation is a requirement for all Aikido practice.

When your sensei is giving you direct instruction, or if you wish to listen to an explanation given to another student in practice, you should sit politely in seiza. When your sensei offers some critique or comment on your training, respond with “hai sensei”, or “thank you sensei” to acknowledging your comprehension of the teaching.

Please do not sit with your back directly toward the shomen or kamidana. Traditionally this is the place where the sensei sits while viewing class.

Respectfully address the chief instructor of the dojo as “Sensei” at all times within the dojo. When any Black Belt leads the class, please address him or her as “Sensei”.

To reduce the possibility of injury, please be aware of your surroundings at all times. Should any injury occur during practice, immediately inform the Sensei.

Respect those more experienced. Never argue about technique. Respect those less experienced. Do not pressure your ideas on others. If you understand the movement and are working with someone who does not, you may lead the person through it. Do not attempt to correct or instruct your training partner unless you are authorized to do so.

Should your gi become disheveled or your belt (obi) become loosened during practice, please turn away from the shomen to adjust your attire.

While your partner is adjusting his or her keiko gi, sit next to them quietly. When they are finished, bow to them and resume practice.

If during practice you bump or role into someone else, stop what you are doing and bow to that person, saying “gomen nasai” (please forgive me), and then continue with your practice.

The dojo is for the practice of Aikido and only Aikido. No other martial practice is allowed in the dojo!

WEAPONS TRAINING

Bokken and bo/Jo training can be a powerful and effective way to understand the relationship between body arts and the sword and staff. Please practice with respect and awareness at all times.

Begin and end your practice of bokken or bo/Jo by bowing once to the Shomen while holding the bokken or bo horizontally in front of your head.

The dojo has a limited number of bokken and bo that you may use within the dojo. If you wish to use them, please treat them with care and respect. When you are finished with them, please place them back on the rack neatly.

Do not use someone else's bokken or bo without their permission. All students are encouraged to have their own bokken and bo. If you wish to purchase one or both, please contact your sensei before or after class.

DOJO CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE

It is each member's responsibility to keep the dojo clean and tidy. After the last class of the day, students and faculty perform a cleaning in order to prepare the dojo for the next days classes. Please ask your sensei if there is a specific chore you can perform.

Please keep the change rooms clean and tidy. Fold clothes neatly or hang them up as necessary. Do not leave your gi or other clothing in the change rooms. Hakama may be kept there if folded properly.

Throughout the year, the students and faculty engage in an extended cleaning of the dojo. These events are usually held on Saturdays. Please join in as we bring love and attention to taking care of the dojo.

The dojo is maintained not only by the efforts of the sensei, but by the entire student body and faculty. Everyone combines their talents in order to better the dojo. Your assistance helps to maintain and further the manifestation of the dojo's vision and purpose. If you wish to offer your own unique and special service to the dojo, please contact Sensei.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Membership in an Aikido dojo is a gift. Through it you have the opportunity to improve your character, your health, and your life. It is a very unique membership. Being a member of a dojo, you accept the privileges and responsibilities of membership.

The financial responsibilities of the dojo are met exclusively by funds brought in via membership dues. As a member of the dojo you accept responsibility for paying your tuition on time. Membership dues are payable on the first day of each month. Whether you intend to train every day or sporadically, your membership dues should be paid in full. This keeps your membership in good standing, and, more importantly, supports the welfare of the dojo and your sensei.

If you desire to pay membership dues in advance, you may pay quarterly or yearly. Students who pay yearly receive a 10% discount off their tuition.

Should you require a leave of absence from the dojo for any reason, and wish to forego the payment of membership dues during this period, a formal leave of absence may be granted. Please contact your sensei in this event.

If you will be absent from the dojo for an extended period of time due to travelling, vacation, injury, or other obligations, please inform your sensei.

For respect and courtesy, should you decide to no longer be a member of the dojo, please inform your sensei of your decision.

USE OF THE DOJO

The Aikido dojo is for the practice of Aikido and only Aikido. No other martial practice should be performed in the dojo. Use of the change rooms, offices, lounges, and entry room etc., should reflect the same respect and awareness shown on the mat.

Should you desire to use the dojo for a special practice or private lessons outside of a regular scheduled class, please ask permission from your sensei.

Should you require help regarding any aspect of your training in Aikido, politely ask your sensei or a senior student to assist you before or after class.

SEMINARS

Students of all levels are encouraged to attend regular Aikido seminars. Attending a weekend seminar will help you to deepen your experience of Aikido. Seminars with your sensei, as well as visiting sensei are scheduled throughout the year.

Should you decide to attend a seminar, ask your sensei for any special instructions regarding etiquette or preparation for the upcoming seminar.

For respect and courtesy, please inform your sensei should you plan to attend a class, or seminar outside of the dojo.

Matt Fluty Sensei
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