

Vancouver Aikikai - Beginner's Information Guide

General Information

The Granville Aikikai is a registered non-profit society in B.C. and is affiliated with the B.C. Aikido Federation, Canadian Aikido Federation, and the International Aikikai Foundation (Aikido World Headquarters), in Japan.

Aikido is a Japanese martial art, founded by Master Morihei Ueshiba (1883-1969). It is a martial art which trains one in self-discipline, coordination, and concentration. The techniques are based on the principle of non-resistance and harmony, and teach the practitioner to develop the natural power (Ki) inherent in the body. In addition to the development of martial skill, the aim of Aikido is "to unify the mind and body and to promote peace, harmony, and cooperation among all beings".

Chief Instructor

The chief instructor of the Granville Aikikai is Professor Y. Kawahara., 7th Dan. Kawahara Sensei holds the title of Shihan (Master Teacher) and is the technical director of the Canadian Aikido Federation – Western Region. Professor Kawahara is one of only six Aikido Masters in North America; he is the only Shihan residing in Canada.

Granville Aikikai

Granville Aikikai is one of a number of satellite dojos of the Vancouver Aikikai. The main instructor of Granville Aikikai is Michael St. Germain., 4th Dan.

For Prospective or Beginning Students of Aikido

Granville Aikikai integrates new students into a mixed class.

By becoming a member of the dojo and by participating in regular classes the student will have the opportunity to master the basic Aikido forms, learn more advanced techniques, and practice with students of different ranks. While some classes may cater to beginners or to advanced students only, in general students of all levels train together in the same classes.

Beginning students often think Aikido movements are easy to imitate. However, when students try to execute an Aikido movement for the first time, they will realize how difficult Aikido really is. It is important to be relaxed and flexible, while remaining balanced and centered.

What is Aikido?

Aikido is a martial art founded in Japan by Professor Morihei Ueshiba. Ueshiba Sensei or O-Sensei (Great Teacher), as he was called, applied himself to years of intense training in "Budo", the Japanese martial tradition, becoming one of the greatest martial artists in the history of Japan. O-Sensei's search for the true meaning of budo was far more than a physical challenge; it was an intense spiritual journey as well. Ueshiba Sensei eventually came to the conclusion that the true spirit of Budo was not to be found in

combative or competitive activity, but the quest for understanding, perfection and mastery of the self. This realization gave birth to the original concept of Aikido as a totally new approach to martial training.

Philosophy of Aikido

The work "Aikido" in Japanese consists of three characters. The first is "Ai" which means "to meet, to come together, to harmonize". The

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second is the character “Ki” which means “energy, spirit, mind”. In a large context “Ki” means “the spirit of nature” or “the spirit of the universe”, and not just the spirit of human beings. The third and last character is “Do” which means “the Way”. This signifies that the sincere study of Aikido does not involve merely self-defense techniques, but includes character-building ideals that can become part of a more integrated perception of one's relationship to nature and to others. Budo (martial art) is not a means of felling an opponent by lethal instruments. True Budo calls for bringing the inner energy of the universe to order, protecting the peace of the world and molding, as well as preserving everything in nature in its right form”.

The way in which Aikido differs most from other martial art disciplines is that it stresses the idea of being in harmony with an opponent rather than being in conflict with him. The ideal of Aikido is not to think of defeating your enemy, but rather to be in harmony with him physically, mentally, and spiritually. This is why Aikido is sometimes called “THE ART OF NON-RESISTANCE” or “THE NON-FIGHTING MARTIAL ART”.

However, Aikido is not merely an art of self-defense; into the techniques are woven principles of movement, awareness, and energy dynamics. As students learn the various movements and techniques they will, if their intention is sincere, also gain improvements in health, self-confidence, and concentration. Through the practice of the techniques and the training of the body the student will come to understand the internal or spiritual aspects of the art.

Aikido concentrates on developing a natural relaxed extension of awareness called through natural breathing called “Kokyu-Ryoku” (Breath Power). This is the essential power cultivated in Aikido training. Unlike pure muscular power, Kokyu-Ryoku does not deteriorate with age, but increases with age and experience, regardless of one's size, sex or physical strength.

Since Aikido does not rely on muscular strength, the practitioner does not need to be physically large or strong to be effective in applying Aikido techniques. It is therefore a beneficial and effective martial art for men and women, as well as young people.

Aikido Movements and Techniques

During Aikido practice, partners train together - learning when and how to yield – blending with an opponent's movements. The student learns to position himself in a solidly grounded triangle, keeping the center of gravity very low by relaxing the upper body, keeping the back straight and breathing naturally from the “Hara” or center of the lower abdomen.

The movements of Aikido emphasize flowing, flexibility, timing and balance. The aim of the Aikido practitioner is to be in complete control and harmony with his own body and mind, while keeping a calm, flexible, and alert posture. Much of the beauty of Aikido movements comes from the coordinated action of the entire body.

Techniques include throws, immobilizations, and joint flexing movements. Most of the joint techniques, such as those applied to the wrist or elbow, flex the joints in their natural direction of motion. These movements result in no damage to the joints, although some can be painful or dangerous if resisted. Training is progressive, so that students can improve at their own pace without strain.

Ranking in Aikido

As in other Japanese martial arts, Aikido utilizes the “kyu” and “dan” system of ranking. The white belt ranks proceed from 5th kyu until 1st kyu is attained. After passing the black belt test, the student is awarded the rank of “shodan” (first degree black belt). A person holding a black belt rank can also become eligible for examination for advanced “dan” rank.

Because the nature of Aikido philosophy is to promote harmony and non-conflict, tournaments (‘shiai’) are non-existent. Instead, well-executed performance of the techniques becomes the criteria for promotion. In addition, consideration is given to the student's development in the areas of character, attitude (both inside and outside the training hall), understanding of Aikido principles, as well as seriousness and diligence of the student during practice.

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Glossary of Aikido Terms

Pronunciation Of Japanese Words - Consonants and vowels in the Japanese language are pronounced the same way each time they are encountered. Thus, if you know the pronunciation of one word, you already know how the vowels and consonants will sound in another word containing those vowels and consonants. The following guide may be of help:

'a'	sounds like the 'a' in 'march'	'y'	sounds like the 'y' in 'yet'
'e'	sounds like the 'e' in 'bed'	'ai'	sounds like the 'i' in 'mine'
'i'	sounds like the 'ee' in 'kneel'	'ei'	sounds like the 'a' in 'say'
'o'	sounds like the 'oa' in 'boat'	'g'	sounds like the 'g' in 'get'
'u'	sounds like the 'oo' in 'mood'		

Counting In Japanese

ICHI	one	ROKKU	six
NI	two	SHICHI	seven
SAN	three	HACHI	eight
SHI (YON)	four	KU (KYU)	nine
GO	five	JU (JYU)	ten

Names of some attacks encountered in Aikido training

KATATE-TORI	One handed grip on one wrist
RYOTE-TORI	Two handed grip, one on each wrist
MOROTE-TORI	Two handed grip on one wrist
USHIRO RYOTEKUBI-TORI	Ryote-tori from behind
MUNE-TORI (MUNE-MOCHI)	One handed grip on lapel
KATA-TORI	One handed grip to one shoulder
RYOKATA-TORI	Two handed grip, one to each shoulder
USHIRO RYOKATA-TORI	Ryokata-tori from behind
SODE-TORI	One handed grip to the sleeve at the elbow
KATA-TORI KUBISHIME	One handed wrist grip with neck choke from behind
TSUKI	Straight punch
JODAN TSUKI	Straight punch to the high position (face or neck)
CHUDAN TSUKI	Straight punch to the middle position (chest or abdomen)
SHOMEN-UCHI	Vertical strike to the center of the head with the hand blade
YOKOMEN-UCHI	Diagonal strike to the side of the head or neck with the hand blade
KATA-TORI MEN-UCHI	One handed grip to the wrist with a shomen-uchi strike to the head
KATA-TORI YOKOMEN-UCHI	One handed grip to the wrist with a yokomen-uchi strike to the head

Names of some Aikido techniques

IKKYO	Arm immobilization (first technique)
NIKKYO	Ikkyo with wrist turning (second technique)
SANKYO	Ikkyo with hand twisting (third technique)
YONKYO	Ikkyo with pressure on wrist point (fourth technique)
GOKYO	Variation of ikkyo (for knife attack) (fifth technique)
IRIMI-NAGE	Entering throw (throw by entering)
SHIHO-NAGE	Four direction throw
SUMI-OTOSHI	Corner drop
KOTE-GAESHI	Palm/wrist twist
KAITEN-NAGE	Rotation throw
KOSHI-NAGE	Hip throw
TENCHI-NAGE	Heaven and earth throw
UDEKIME-NAGE	Arm-lock throw
KOKYU-NAGE	Breath throw
JUJI-GARAMI	Crossed arm-lock throw
AIKI-OTOSHI	Whole body drop