

Basic Aikido Etiquette

In Aikido training, etiquette is as important as the study of the physical techniques. Since Aikido is a Japanese martial art, the interactions between the teacher and the students, and among fellow students themselves, follow the Japanese form.

You will not be expected to know all the etiquette forms at the beginning, but you will be expected to learn them in reasonable time. It is not complex and will quickly become natural. Knowing the appropriate etiquette demonstrates your awareness and readiness to receive instruction from the teacher.

The Dojo: Aikido training takes place in a hall known as DOJO (place of the way). The dojo is considered a sacred place of learning; it must be kept clean and free of distractions. Behave no differently in the dojo than you would in a church or temple. Always bow upon entering and leaving.

Training Partners: Training partners should always be approached with gratitude and respect. They are lending you the use of their bodies to enable you to train together, to 'polish each other'.

Rei (Bowing): Bowing is a way of showing honor and respect. There are two ways of bowing: from a kneeling position, or from a standing position. The kneeling bow is the most formal.

The kneeling bow is performed:

- When first stepping on to the mats, and when finally leaving the mats.
- At the formal beginning and ending of the class.
- To your partner, when beginning and ending practice of a technique.
- When in doubt as to the type of bow, execute a kneeling bow since it is the more formal form.

The standing bow is performed:

- When entering and leaving the dojo.
- When temporarily leaving and returning to the mats.

Etiquette Expressions: The following are common expressions used in the dojo, and their approximate translations:

<i>Arigato Gozaimashita</i>	Thank you very much.
<i>One-gaishimasu</i>	Please show me your favor.
<i>Sumi-Masen</i>	I'm sorry, please excuse me.
<i>Hai!</i>	Yes

Please Be Punctual: You should be changed and on the mats at least 5-10 minutes before the start of class. Take this time to help set up the mats, do warm-up exercises on your own, or practice quietly with other students. When the senior student (sempai) sits down to form the line-up, quickly sit down and form a straight line to the left of the sempai. The line is arranged in order of rank from right to left, higher ranks to the right.

If You Happen To Be Late: Get changed and enter the dojo. If the warm-ups are still being conducted, quickly step onto the mats, bow to O-Sensei, and WAIT attentively until you are given permission to join the class. If class has already in session, perform a quick warm-up on your own OFF THE MATS, then follow the same steps above.

If You Must Leave The Mats During The Class: First ask Sensei for permission.

Always Be Alert While On The Mats. Careless practice can be dangerous and cause injury to you or to other students.

Do Not Teach Other Students: Unless specifically asked by the Sensei, do not teach a fellow student. Questions may be asked to the Sensei or to one of the senior students.

Keep Conversation To A Minimum: Try to learn with your eyes and body. Help each other by following the technique with the appropriate body movements rather than with words. If it is necessary to speak, do so in a low voice. It is particularly impolite to talk while the instructor is addressing the class.

Do Not Wear Jewelry During Practice: Jewelry may be damaged and can be dangerous if accidentally grabbed or caught.

Footwear: Always wear some kind of footwear when not on the mats. Sandals (or thongs) are preferable. No shoes on the mats.

Personal Hygiene: Cleanliness is a reflection of your respect and attitude towards Aikido, your teacher, and your fellow practitioners. To minimize the chances of cutting yourself or other practitioners, keep your fingernails and toenails clean and short. Wash your DO-GI regularly. Keep it in good shape and free of offensive odors. If you perspire heavily, bring a towel with you and carry it in the front of your DO-GI.

If You Become Sick, Overtired, Or Injured: If you become unable to continue practice, let your partner know. INFORM THE SENSEI before leaving the mats. If you just need a short rest, bow to your partner and move to the edge of the mats and sit quietly watching until you are ready to resume practice.

If You Have A Specific Medical Problem: If you have a medical condition which may affect your practice, notify the Sensei of this BEFORE the class starts.

Avoid sitting on the mats with your back to O-Sensei. Also, do not lean on the walls or sit with your legs stretched out. (either sit in seiza or cross legged.)

Do not bring food, gum, or beverages onto the mat. It is also considered disrespectful in traditional dojo to bring open food or beverage into the dojo.

If you are having trouble with a technique, do not shout across the room to the instructor for help. First, try to figure the technique out by watching others. Effective observation is a skill you should strive to develop as well as any other in your training. If you still have trouble, approach the instructor at a convenient moment and ask for help.

Carry out the directives of the instructor *promptly*. Do not keep the rest of the class waiting for you.

Do not engage in rough-housing or needless contests of strength during class.

Remember that you are in class to learn, and not to gratify your ego. An attitude of respectively