

Proper Conduct During Aikido Training

General Principles

Aikido is a means of personal development, training the body, mind and spirit. It is important therefore to always conduct oneself with the proper attitude of respect, sincerity and modesty. Unlike in the West, the position of 'Sensei', or Teacher is one of great honour in Japan. Your teachers are not just selling techniques, but are handing down the teachings of the Founder, they should be treated with proper respect at all times. Unique also to Japan, is the sempai/kohai system, senior students (both in rank and in age) should also be dealt with respectfully and modestly, never put yourself above a senior student.

Aikido is founded on a philosophy of harmony. There should never be any fighting or competition in the training area nor is training a time to display your strength or flaunt your ego. Train always in a spirit of cooperation and modesty. In every class there are people of different sex's, ages and physical abilities while the ideal is to always train as vigorously as possible the physical ability and training goals of each Partner must be taken into consideration.

Whenever a Sensei gives instructions or advice, always listen carefully and try to follow as best as possible. Never argue with a teacher, even if another teacher has said something different. there are many ways of performing techniques and you should follow each teacher, in every class, to the best of your ability.

There are many different items of etiquette which should be learned as quickly as possible. Some are obvious and some are not. Always be observant of the behavior of others so that you can continue to learn the proper etiquette, accept all corrections with due humility. If at any time you are unsure of the proper behavior or way of doing, politely ask a senior student follow the senior's lead in all matters.

In spite of these rules, the practice of Aikido should always be an enjoyable activity. Pleasant and enjoyable practice sessions will always be assured if each student brings a positive and harmonious attitude coupled with goodwill and a respect for others.

Dojo Etiquette

1. Upon entering the dojo, bow. Register your attendance; do not linger in the doorway.
2. Maintaining cleanliness is not only a health benefit but is also good discipline training. Always keep yourself tidy, clean and well groomed. Training suits {keikogi} should be clean at all times and well mended. Never wear jewellery while training for this is dangerous both to one's partner and oneself.
3. The formal opening and closing of each class is an important ceremony. Every student should be on time to participate. If late, never enter the practice area at the same time as the instructing sensei wait until a time when you will not disturb others and quietly join the class. Do not leave the class during practice except in the cases of illness or injury and never leave without consulting with the Sensei.
4. All students should arrive sufficiently early to allow for stretching and warming up before class begins. A few minutes before the starting time, everyone should be sitting quietly, waiting for the appearance of the teacher.

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5. It is proper etiquette to sit in seiza at all times when in the practice area. This is also the correct position to sit in while waiting for your turn for testing or when observing the tests. Cross-legged or other forms of sitting are only permissible in the case of injuries, but one should never sit in a casual or disrespectful manner. Never sit in front ie with your back to the Shomen (front of the training area).

6. When the Sensei is demonstrating a technique to the class as a whole, you should sit at the sides of the practice area (never on the 'shomen' side) and pay close attention. This is not a time to be talking, wiping your face or adjusting your clothing. When the Sensei signals the end of a technique you must stop immediately and go quickly to the edge of the mat area. Do not continue to practice or linger in the middle of the mat. If the Sensei, during the practice period, goes to an individual student to demonstrate or explain something, those students in the immediate area should stop practising, and sit attentively in a circle to watch the explanation. After the individual explanation is finished you then bow to the Sensei and continue on with the practice.

7. Knowledge in Aikido is gained through constant and repetitive practice and not through talking. As a result, talking on the mat should be kept to a minimum never stand around idly during the training session. You should always be practicing, or if waiting for a turn, you should be sitting in seiza watching your other partners. If you feel that you must ask the Sensei a question you should go to him quietly and wait until he acknowledges you, then bow and politely ask your question, bowing again after the answer is received never call out to the Sensei expecting him to come to you.

8. Remember the Sempai Kohai relationship in all matters. Always respect the experience of the senior students never argue with them or anyone else about the proper way of performing the techniques. If your partner does not understand even the basic movements of the technique it is permissible to help guide him through it.

NB. Only senior black belt students should attempt to teach or correct junior partners and even those corrections should be kept to a minimum.

9. Aikido should never be practiced after having consumed alcohol.