Introduction to Aikido

Ai = harmony, unity, to be in accord with or to join

Ki = spirit, life force or universal creative energy

Do = the way or path

Aikido’s founder, Morihei Ueshiba, was born in Japan on December 14, 1883. As a boy, he often saw local thugs beat up his father for political reasons. He set out to make himself strong so that he could take revenge. He devoted himself to hard physical conditioning and eventually to the practice of martial arts, receiving certificates of mastery in several styles of jujitsu, fencing, and spear fighting. In spite of his impressive physical and martial capabilities, however, he felt very dissatisfied. He began delving into religions in hopes of finding a deeper significance to life, all the while continuing to pursue his studies of budo, or the martial arts. By combining his martial training with his religious and political ideologies, he created the modern martial art of Aikido.

Aikido is rooted in several styles of jujitsu (from which modern judo is also derived), in particular daitoryu-(aiki) jujitsu, as well as sword and spear fighting arts. Oversimplifying somewhat, we may say that Aikido takes the joint locks and throws from jujitsu and combines them with the body movements of sword and spear fighting. However, we must also realize that many Aikido techniques are the result of Master Ueshiba’s own innovation.

Aikido is not a sport. It is a discipline, an educational process for training the mind, body, and spirit. An Aikido dojo is not a gymnasium. It is the place where the way of the discipline is revealed. Physical technique is not the final objective, but a tool for personal refinement and spiritual growth. The correct attitudes of respect, sincerity, and modesty combined with the proper atmosphere
are essential to the learning process. And as Aikido is a martial way, they are essential to the safety of each individual. The following rules are necessary to the maintenance of this atmosphere and vital to your study of aikido.

**Rules of the Dojo and Training**

This dojo follows the traditional rules of proper conduct. Its spirit comes directly from the Founder of Aikido and it is the place of the succession of his teachings. It is the responsibility of each student to act appropriately and to honor those teachings. It is the responsibility of each student to cooperate in creating a positive atmosphere of harmony and respect.

- Cleaning is an active prayer of thanksgiving. It is each student’s responsibility to assist in cleaning the dojo and to cleanse his or her own mind and heart.
- You cannot buy technique. The membership dues provide a place for training and a way in which to show gratitude for the teaching received. It is each student’s responsibility to pay dues on time.
- Respect the Founder and his teachings as succeeded and handed down by your teachers.
- Respect the dojo, respect your training tools and respect each other.
- It is necessary to respect the way in which the instructor of the class directs the training. Receive instruction and carry out suggestions for training sincerely and to the best of your ability. There is no room for argument on the mat.
- It is the moral responsibility of each student never to use Aikido technique to harm another person or as a way to display his or her ego. It is a tool to develop a better society through the character development of the individual.
- There will be no conflicts of ego on the mat. Aikido is not street fighting. You are on the mat to train and purify your aggressive reactions and embody the spirit of the samurai by discovering your social responsibility.
- There will be no competition on the mat. The purpose of Aikido is not to fight and defeat an enemy, but to fight and defeat your own aggressive instincts.
- The strength of Aikido is not in muscular force, but in flexibility, timing, control and modesty. Be aware of your limitations.
- Everyone has different physical abilities and reasons for study. These must be respected.
- True Aiki is the proper and flexible application of technique appropriate to any changing situation. It is your responsibility to cause no injury to your training partner or yourself.
- There will be no power struggles within the dojo. The dojo membership is one family and the secret of Aikido is harmony.

**Proper Dojo Etiquette**

Aikido is not a religion, but the education and refinement of spirit. You will not be asked to adhere to any religious doctrine, but only to remain spiritually open. When we bow, it
is not a religious performance, but a sign of respect for the same spirit of universal creative intelligence within us all.

Although Aikido is a relatively young art form, it is derived from the ancient fighting arts of Japan and is therefore steeped in tradition. Although there seem to be many forms of etiquette to remember, they will come naturally as you continue to train. Please do not be resentful if you are corrected on a point of etiquette for each one is important to your safety and to the learning experience.

If you are unsure of what to do in a particular situation, ask a senior student or simply follow your senior’s lead.

The opening and closing ceremony of each aikido class is a bow directed to the shomen (or kamiza) followed by a bow between the instructor and students. At the end of class, thank each of your practice partners. The bows directed to the shomen symbolize respect for the spirit and principles of aikido and gratitude to the Founder for developing this system of study.

The words spoken at the beginning of practice between the students and instructor are “onegai shimasu.” Loosely translated it is a request which when spoken by the student means, “please give me your instruction.” When spoken by the teacher it means, “please do what is expected of you” or “please receive my instruction.” The words spoken by the student to the instructor at the end of practice are “thank you very much” or “domo arigato gozaimashita.”

1. Upon entering and leaving the practice area of the dojo, make a standing bow.
2. Always bow when stepping on or off the mat in the direction of the kamiza and the picture of the founder O-Sensei.
3. Respect your training tools. Gi (practice uniform) should be clean and mended. Weapons should be in good condition and in their proper place when not in use.
4. A few minutes before class begins, you should be warmed up, seated formally, and in quiet meditation. These few minutes are to rid your mind of the day’s problems and prepare for study.
5. The class is opened and closed with a formal ceremony. It is important to be on time and participate in this ceremony. If you are unavoidably late, go to the back of the room and perform a formal seated bow. Then call out “onegai shimasu.” Once the instructor signals permission for you to join the class, you may join in. It is most important that you do not disrupt the class.
6. The proper way to sit on the mat is in seiza (formal sitting position). If you have a knee injury, you may sit cross-legged, but never sit with legs outstretched and never lean against walls or posts. You must be alert at all times.
7. Do not leave the mat during practice except in the case of injury or illness. In such cases, notify the instructor of your situation first.
8. During class when the instructor demonstrates a technique for practice, sit quietly and attentively in seiza. After the demonstration, bow to the instructor, then to a partner while saying “onegai shimasu” and immediately begin to practice.
9. When the end of a technique is signaled, stop immediately, bow to and thank your partner and line up.
10. Never stand around idly on the mat. You should be practicing or, if necessary, seated in seiza awaiting your turn.
11. If it is necessary to ask a question of the instructor you should go to him or her and bow respectfully (standing bow). Never call the instructor over to you.
12. When receiving personal instruction, sit in seiza and watch intently. Bow formally when the instructor has finished. When another nearby is being instructed you may stop your practice to watch. Sit formally and bow as before.
14. Respect those less experienced. Do not pressure your ideas on others.
15. If you understand the movement and are working with someone who does not, you may lead that person through it. Do not attempt to correct or instruct your training partner unless you are authorized to do so.
16. Keep talking on the mat to an absolute minimum. Aikido is experience.
17. Fingernails and toenails must be short. Feet must be clean. Shoes or sandals are never allowed on the mat.
18. No eating, drinking, smoking or gum chewing on or off the mat during practice.
19. No jewelry should be worn during practice, including rings and pierced earrings.
20. Never drink alcoholic beverages while still wearing practice gi.
21. You are welcome to sit and watch a class at any time, but the following rules of etiquette must be followed.
   a. Sit respectfully, never with legs propped up on the furniture or in a reclining position.
   b. Do not talk to anyone while they are on the mat and class is in progress.
   c. Do not talk or walk around while the instructor is demonstrating or during the opening and closing ceremony.

Although there seem to be many forms of etiquette to remember, they will come naturally as you continue to train. Please do not resent it if you are corrected on a point of etiquette.

**Names of Techniques**

The names of aikido techniques are made up of two parts. The first part is the name of the attack and the second part is the name of the technique utilized to neutralize the attack.

E.g., for the technique, *Kata dori ikkyo*, *Kata dori* is the attack and *ikkyo* is the technique.

The techniques taught during the 6-week introductory class:

- *Katate dori aihanmi ikkyo*
- *Katate dori gyakuhanmi ikkyo*
- *Katate dori gyakuhanmi shihonage*
• Katate dori gyakuhanmi kaitennage
• Kata dori ikkyo
• Shomenuchi ikkyo (tachiwaza and suwariwaza)
• Sitting kokyoho

Note: portions of this document adapted from the ASU Training Handbook by Mitsugi Saotome.

Recommended reading

Aikido Complete by Yoshimitsu Yamada
Aikido Student Handbook by Greg O'Connor
Aikido and the Harmony of Nature by Mitsugi Saotome
The Principles of Aikido by Mitsugi Saotome
Shu Ha Ri by TK Chiba (article can be found at http://www.aikidosphere.com/kceshuhari.cfm)
The Spiritual Foundations of Aikido by William Gleason
Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind by Shunryu Suzuki
## Glossary

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ai hanmi</strong></td>
<td>Basic relation between partners: both have same foot forward (left or right), compare <em>gyakuhanmi</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ai hanmi katate dori</strong></td>
<td>Wrist grip, right on right or left on left, also called <em>kosa dori</em>, compare <em>gyaku hanmi katate dori</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Atemi waza</strong></td>
<td>Techniques of striking</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Bokken</strong></td>
<td>Wooden practice sword</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Budo</strong></td>
<td>Literally to stop the thrusting spear. The way of the warrior arts; the way of protection, of society, strength and honor in peace</td>
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<td><strong>Dan grade</strong></td>
<td>Black belt rank; graduate or <em>yudansha</em> rank (1st dan to 10th dan)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Deshi</strong></td>
<td>Student, pupil, disciple</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dojo</strong></td>
<td>Place of the way; a place for strengthening and refinement body, mind and spirit; training hall</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Domo Arigato</strong></td>
<td>Thank you (very much)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gi</strong></td>
<td>Training uniform</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gokyo</strong></td>
<td>Fifth teach, movement or principle</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gyakuhanmi</strong></td>
<td>Basic relation between partners: they have opposite foot forward, compare <em>ai hanmi</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hakama</strong></td>
<td>Wide-skirted pants worn over <em>gi</em>; symbol of the samurai culture</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hanmi</strong></td>
<td>The relaxed triangular stance of aikido. It is stable yet flexible enough to move quickly in any direction. All technique begins, moves through and ends in <em>hanmi</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hanmi handachi</strong></td>
<td><em>Nage</em> is kneeling and <em>uke</em> attacks from standing</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hara</strong></td>
<td>The lower abdomen. The center of life energy, physical and spiritual. All movement must originate from this point.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ikkyo</strong></td>
<td>First teaching, movement or principle</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Irimi</strong></td>
<td>Front technique, entering, moving into and through the line of attack with no thought of escape.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Irimi nage</strong></td>
<td>Entering throw (&quot;20-year throw&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Jo</strong></td>
<td>4' long wooden staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kaiten</strong></td>
<td>To revolve, rotate; wheel, round; &quot;open and turn&quot;</td>
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</table>
Kaiten nage  Rotary throw
Kamiza  The upper seat, the shrine which houses the picture of the founder and the spirit of aikido (see shomen)
Kata  "Fixed form"; predetermined practice patterns used as learning vehicle
Kata dori  Shoulder grab (always done in gyakyuhanmi)
Katate dori  Wrist grab (may be done in ai hanmi or gyakuhanmi)
Kokyo  The power of breath, renewal of life force
Kubi shime  A choke hold
Kyu  White belt grade
Morihei Ueishiba  The founder of Aikido (dec 14, 1883 - apr 26, 1969), also known as O'sensei
Nage  A throw. Or "Thrower"; defender; the person applying a technique
Nikkyo  Second teaching, movement or principle; uses wrist torque to control the opponent's center
O'sensei  Great teacher; the founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba
Omite  To the front
Onegai shimasu  "I welcome you to train with me," or literally, "I make a request." This is said to one's partner when initiating practice.
Ryote dori  Grabbing your partner's wrists with both hands (usually done in gyakuhanmi)
Ryokata dori  Grabbing both shoulders (done in gyakuhanmi)
Samurai  Originally comes from the verb meaning “to serve.” One who has the duty and responsibility to protect society.
Sankyo  Third teaching, movement or principle; control of the opponent's center through the wrist and elbow
Seiza  Formal sitting position
Sensei  Teacher, one who gives guidance along the way. Literally means “born before.”
Shikko  Knee walking
Shomen  The upper seat, the shrine which houses the picture of the founder and the spirit of aikido (see kamiza)
Shomenuchi  Strike or cut to the top of the head (done in ai hanmi)
Suwariwaza  Techniques which begin with both opponents in seiza and are executed from the
knees.

**Tachiwaza** Standing techniques

**Tae no henko** “pivoting of the body,” basic blend (*tenkan* turn)

**Tanto** Knife

**Tenkan** Turning to dissipate force

**Tsuki** A straight punch to the chest or solar plexus (short for *munetsuki*)

**Uke** “receiver;” the person providing the attack and falling

**Ukemi** The art of receiving or taking actions as *uke*, falling. The art of protecting oneself from injury. The first and most important step to developing strong aikido technique is developing good *ukemi*

**Ura** To the rear

**Ushiro** From behind

**Waza** Technique

**Yokemunchi** Strike or cut to the side of the head or neck

**Yonkyo** Fourth teaching, movement or principle; control of the opponent's center through his wrist, elbow and shoulder

**Yudansha** Black belt rank holders