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.
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, you should wait, formally seated beside the mat until the instructor signals permission for you to join the class. Perform a formal seated bow as you get on the mat. It is most important that you do not disrupt the class in doing so.
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.

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 kokyo

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

*Ai hanmi* Basic relation between partners: both have same foot forward (left or right), compare *gyakuhanmi*

*Ai hanmi katate dori* Wrist grip, right on right or left on left, also called *kosa dori*, compare *gyaku hanmi katate dori*

*Atemi waza* Techniques of striking

*Bokken* Wooden practice sword

*Budo* Literally to stop the thrusting spear. The way of the warrior arts; the way of protection, of society, strength and honor in peace

*Dan grade* Black belt rank; graduate or *yudansha* rank (1st *dan* to 10th *dan*)

*Deshi* Student, pupil, disciple

*Dojo* Place of the way; a place for strengthening and refinement body, mind and spirit; training hall

*Domo Arigato (Gozaimashita)* Thank you (very much)

*Gi* Training uniform

*Gokyo* Fifth teach, movement or principle

*Gyakuhanmi* Basic relation between partners: they have opposite foot forward, compare *ai hanmi*

*Hakama* Wide-skirted pants worn over *gi*; symbol of the samurai culture

*Hanmi* 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 *hanmi*

*Hanmi handachi nage* *Nage* is kneeling and *uke* attacks from standing

*Hara* The lower abdomen. The center of life energy, physical and spiritual. All movement must originate from this point.

*Ikkyo* First teaching, movement or principle

*Irimi* Front technique, entering, moving into and through the line of attack with no thought of escape.

*Irimi nage* Entering throw ("20-year throw")

*Jo* 4' long wooden staff

*Kaiten* To revolve, rotate; wheel, round; "open and turn"
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Kaiten nage</td>
<td>Rotary throw</td>
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<td>Kamiza</td>
<td>The upper seat, the shrine which houses the picture of the founder and the spirit of aikido (see shomen)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kata</td>
<td>“Fixed form”; predetermined practice patterns used as learning vehicle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kata dori</td>
<td>Shoulder grab (always done in gyakuhanmi)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Katate dori</td>
<td>Wrist grab (may be done in ai hanmi or gyakuhanmi)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kokyo</td>
<td>The power of breath, renewal of life force</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kubi shime</td>
<td>A choke hold</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kyu</td>
<td>White belt grade</td>
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<tr>
<td>Morihei Ueishiba</td>
<td>The founder of Aikido (dec 14, 1883 - apr 26, 1969), also known as O’sensei</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nage</td>
<td>A throw. Or “Thrower”; defender; the person applying a technique</td>
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<td>Nikkyo</td>
<td>Second teaching, movement or principle; uses wrist torque to control the opponent's center</td>
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<tr>
<td>O’sensei</td>
<td>Great teacher; the founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba</td>
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<td>Omote</td>
<td>To the front</td>
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<tr>
<td>Onegai shimasu</td>
<td>“I welcome you to train with me,” or literally, “I make a request.” This is said to one’s partner when initiating practice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ryote dori</td>
<td>Grabbing your partner’s wrists with both hands (usually done in gyakuhanmi)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ryokata dori</td>
<td>Grabbing both shoulders (done in gyakuhanmi)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Samurai</td>
<td>Originally comes from the verb meaning “to serve.” One who has the duty and responsibility to protect society.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sankyo</td>
<td>Third teaching, movement or principle; control of the opponent's center through the wrist and elbow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seiza</td>
<td>Formal sitting position</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sensei</td>
<td>Teacher, one who gives guidance along the way. Literally means “born before.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shikko</td>
<td>Knee walking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shomen</td>
<td>The upper seat, the shrine which houses the picture of the founder and the spirit of aikido (see kamiza)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shomenuchi</td>
<td>Strike or cut to the top of the head (done in ai hanmi)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suwariwaza</td>
<td>Techniques which begin with both opponents in seiza and are executed from the</td>
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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