



岩間 合気道

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# A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO AIKIDO

## Mission Statement

*Our mission is to empower individuals within our community through positive personal development. We will create an inclusive, safe, and supportive environment for all students to grow mentally and physically by providing high-quality Aikido instruction. As black belt instructors, we are committed to modeling the values of respect, discipline, and perseverance to inspire all students to reach their full potential.*

*We will measure our success by tracking the progress of our students and ensuring that they feel supported and challenged to grow. Additionally, we are committed to providing exceptional customer service to all members and ensuring the longevity of our dojo and staff by continually improving our programs and facilities.*



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This guidebook was primarily adapted from Reynosa & Billingiere's book, 'A Beginner's Guide to Aikido'. Regrettably, we were unable to contact them to obtain a copy of the book, so we utilized pertinent information and supplemented it with additional material from the University of Tasmania 'Judo and Aikido Club Aikido Handbook', the 'Aikido Ki Society Australia', and Eric Sotnak's 'Aikido: A Primer on the Internet'.



**Aiki Jinja – Iwama, Japan**  
(Aiki Shrine, Built by Morihei Ueshiba)



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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Our 'Beginner's Guide to Aikido' aims to address numerous questions, both spoken and unspoken, that typically arise for Aikido students. The initial phase of Aikido training can be an overwhelming experience for the body, mind, and spirit, filled with a mix of excitement and confusion. Amidst the need to focus on the physical aspects of Aikido, you may find yourself surrounded by unfamiliar customs, language, and puzzling conversations. Questions such as "What are they talking about?", "Who's that?", "Should I ask?", and "Can I ask?" are common among beginners. Uncertainty about what to do between training sessions or the lack of a helpful resource can result in confusion, causing many to leave Aikido in frustration before giving themselves a fair chance. This manual aims to address this issue.

This guide offers insights on how to best approach Aikido studies and adapt to this fascinating new world. It contains essential tips for beginners and an introduction to the rich cultural, ritual, and social environment integral to the genuine study of Aikido. While consistent training is irreplaceable, this guide can help maintain continuity in the learning experience between training sessions and enable students to enter the dojo with greater self-confidence and a sense of belonging.

Aikido is an "open-ended system," meaning that new levels of understanding will continuously emerge throughout your years of training. As you embark on your journey with preconceived notions, the vastness of the art reveals itself, offering new concepts to ponder, physical skills to hone, and new areas in which to assess yourself. Each subsequent reading of the crucial information in this guide will deepen your understanding and appreciation of Aikido.

To all our fellow students . . . **Onegai shimasu!**



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## Chapter 2

### **Aikido Is for Everyone!**

Aikido can be studied by individuals of any gender and age. Its practitioners come from diverse backgrounds, including philosophers, doctors, lawyers, musicians, scientists, police officers, nurses, students, and many others. People's motivations for studying Aikido range from self-defense, fitness, discipline, focus, mind-body integration, and confidence to the desire to practice a traditional martial art without causing harm.

Aikido's study emphasizes cooperation rather than competition, allowing participants to engage in a contact activity that is active yet non-violent. It enables individuals to work at their own pace based on age and personal goals. Aikido training becomes more aerobic after the initial stages, where the basics are learned slowly. Once past the "3rd Kyu" level, the workout's pace intensifies. Students interested in gentle stretching can easily practice alongside more vigorous trainees. However, Aikido is not a spectator sport. Learning occurs through practice and interaction with others on the mat. Finding like-minded individuals is not difficult, but it requires being on the mat and working with various partners who provide diverse stimuli for different types of practice. Keeping an open mind during this learning process allows your technique to become more versatile and meaningful.

One of the biggest challenges for beginners is overcoming the feeling of inadequacy in specific classes. This mindset is misguided! Aikido is a humbling experience for everyone, each time they train. It demands that we set aside much of our prior knowledge and embrace new, improved methods. We must relearn fundamental skills like breathing, moving, and seeing.

The journey is difficult, challenging, and ultimately rewarding. It would be absurd to assume that we could enter a dojo and already know more about a practice someone else has been studying for years, simply because we are older, more intellectual, or physically stronger. Acquiring expertise in something of high quality takes time. Just as a finely crafted piece of art requires patience and dedication, so does learning Aikido. We must cultivate patience with ourselves and extend that patience and understanding to others.



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**The following is an excerpt from an article written by Mr Nobuo Iseri Sensei**

Aikido can be an important factor in the development sequence of growth and maturity within ourselves, because it stimulates adaptive perceptual motor responses to help us more effectively cope with our environment. Aikido stimulates basic awareness of the senses of touch, gravity, balance, body position, body pressure, sight, sound, smell, heat, energy, time, space, and intent. In a survival context, Aikido is an activity of learning to develop immediate and appropriate responses to threatening situations in order to maintain personal safety and equilibrium. Complex physical situation responses must normally be dealt with on a thinking level and worked out methodically. The goal in Aikido is to attain automatic reaction for protection of the self.

The non-competitive nature of Aikido training adds a dimension of mutual trust and protection. This attitude of trusting care becomes an integral part of the developmental process of one's interaction with his or her environment . . .

As the individual matures, the cognitive function comes to dominate, thereby giving rise to a defense system separate from the body. The development of body knowledge may come to be retarded or misguided, learning to further separation of mind and body. Without an integrated defense system, the individual is open to feelings of anxiety and insecurity. Aikido training will help the individual to integrate the psychological and physical defense systems.



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### Chapter 3

#### About the Founder

To the new student of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba (also referred to as O-sensei) often seems to be a very mysterious, even mystical figure. The senior members of any dojo speak of him in deferential terms and obviously hold him in great respect, if not awe. “Who is this man?” – “Why should I, as a student of this art called Aikido, respect him?” Even when students ask these questions, the answers are usually vague, confusing, and not satisfying. However, human nature soon takes over and in response to peer pressure and a normal need to be accepted by their new group of friends, students quickly adapt and conform to the outward signs of respect and acceptance of O-sensei, which is the group norm.

Phase two of this process comes much later. It usually begins after a long period of dedicated study and hard training. The student develops an appreciation of the incredible beauty, logic, and power in the movements and techniques of Aikido. In addition, many students become aware of the positive effects that Aikido has on other, seemingly unrelated, areas of their lives. At this point, the student begins to realize the enormous potential of Aikido and the kind of genius it took to create it. Along with this new understanding comes a new, enhanced sense of respect and curiosity concerning O-sensei.

As students of Aikido, we have all chosen to follow the “Way of Ueshiba,” and we should therefore strive, in all ways, for a greater understanding of Ueshiba, the man; his personality, his strengths, and the circumstances and events which helped to shape his life and led eventually to his creation of Aikido.

Like all great men, Morihei Ueshiba (1883 – 1969) was a man of seeming paradox. A man of true “Budo” a modern samurai who exemplified the martial heritage of his culture. He was a man of strong emotion, dedication, and dynamic personal power and the same time, he was committed to his pacifist religious philosophy. Aikido is the blending of these elements of his personality into a form that we may all use to make our lives better. Aikido is his legacy to the world.

From an early age O-sensei applied himself to the discipline of Japan’s martial arts (Budo), becoming an accomplished master in many styles. It was this thoroughly expert foundation in the ways of the fighting arts that led him to develop Aikido.

Mirroring his appetite for martial knowledge was the depth of his spiritual explorations. In developing these aspects, he saw that Budo should follow the laws of nature, be in harmony with them and serve to protect them.

O-sensei believed in universal harmony, that Aikido was a means of attaining that goal and that violence and aggression could be turned aside by harmony of spirit.



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## Morihiro Saito Sensei (1928 – 2002)



Saito Sensei was admitted into Aikido in 1946 as a youth. As luck would have it, he was born and raised in Iwama where the Founder was to come, to be "... engrossed, day and night, in consolidating the techniques he had developed... when Aikido was on the threshold of consummation." He was a dedicated student until the Founder's death in 1969 when as an eighth dan he was asked by the Doshu to head the Iwama Dojo and was made the custodian of the Aiki Shrine. He can be seen on tape taking ukemi for Osensei and teaching an Aikido class in Iwama with the Founder watching.

Saito Sensei is the author of the five-volume series "Traditional Aikido" and has produced a number of instructional videos. With a significant international following, he frequently traveled abroad from Japan. Saito Sensei visited Melbourne five times, and during those visits, his fifth Dan teaching student, Michael Field, acted as his translator and occasional uke.

### From Saito Sensei:

*Aikido is a martial art seeking after the truth. The way to truth is interminably long. Paradoxically, however, truth is not far away. It is right at your feet. Those pursuing truth should know that they are always at the beginning of their endeavor. In other words, they should always remember the modest spirit and behavior of the beginners they once were and refrain from indulging in the self-conceit that they have already completed their pursuit.*

*Truth is an unwritten law governing human life. Gaining an awareness of such truth through Aikido is a valuable lesson of life. To get to know Aikido is equal to know such truth. Seeking after truth in social life is an endeavor to accomplish one's ordained mission in life. Truth may sound difficult to attain if interpreted complicatedly. It is not all that difficult, however, if you turn your eyes to the immediate surroundings of reality and start with what you can do in ascending the ladder of truth.*

*We live in modern complicated society. Each of us is but a cogwheel of society. We tend to be too self-centered to pay due attention to society as a whole, and dissatisfaction and complaints are brewed. But those who have stepped into the path of truth are required to accomplish their individual missions and become enlightened selves above the overriding pressures of society.*

*The Founder of Aikido would be most pleased if his followers discovered their own paths to truth and could live in a divine world of peace and calm transcending earthly discontent. I regard such a way of life as a "fruitful life" – the kind of life I wish to have our prosperity inherit.*

*To get to know Aikido is to get to know yourself. I want you to consider Aikido your mirror. You should remember that the essence of Aikido lies right at your feet.*





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### Michael Field Sensei (1947-2018)



Michael Field Sensei was the Head of Iwama Ryu in Australia. He was admitted into the Founder's dojo in Iwama in 1978 where he became the student of Morihiro Saito Sensei, training twice daily for the next three years.

On his return to Melbourne Australia, he opened his own Aikido dojo (training place) in April 1983. By February 1994, he had over one hundred and fifty actively training students. In 1987, he returned to Iwama for six-week intensive training, and again in 1994 with a couple of his own students. In 1989 the Aikido school was large enough for him to become the

first full-time professional Aikido teacher in Australia; and by July 1992 he opened Field Aikido Center on Kerr Street, Fitzroy which is dedicated to all students to becoming their best (their true self), and for all as a group to be their best on every occasion.

Field Sensei also authored a five series of training tapes titled "Precision Aikido."



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## Daniel Brasse Sensei



Daniel Brasse (5<sup>th</sup>-dan, Aikikai) is a highly experienced Aikido instructor and founder of Aikido By the Bay, a full-time Aikido dojo in San Mateo, California. With over 25 years of teaching experience, including the last decade as a professional instructor, Daniel is deeply committed to sharing his extensive knowledge and passion for Aikido with students of all levels.

Before his career in Aikido, Daniel spent 25 years working in law enforcement and corporate security. During his time in private security, he served as a personal bodyguard to a range of well-known celebrities during their visit in Australia.

Daniel's passion for martial arts began in 1978 with Karate before he transitioned to Aikido. He started his Aikido training under Michael Field Sensei in Melbourne, Australia, and subsequently helped open a branch dojo of Field Aikido in Doncaster, Melbourne. This experience equipped him with the skills necessary to successfully operate an Aikido dojo.

Daniel first trained under Morihiro Saito Sensei in the 90s. He has been a live-in student (uchideshi) at the Aikido founder's dojo in Iwama, Japan, under Morihiro Saito Sensei and his son Hitohiro Saito Sensei. He travels regularly to Japan and has brought several of his students to train there as well. In addition to attending seminars and workshops with internationally renowned Aikido instructors in Europe, Australia, and the United States, Daniel has also taught seminars internationally and holds special self-defense workshops for non-Aikido practitioners and law enforcement.

For Daniel, Aikido is not just a physical practice but a path towards self-improvement and inner growth. He encourages all his students to approach their practice with an open mind and heart, and to strive for personal growth both on and off the mat. With his extensive experience and deep passion for Aikido, Daniel is committed to helping his students achieve their full potential and become well-rounded practitioners.



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## Japanese Language and Culture Importance of learning Aikido

As Aikidoka (students of Aikido), we strive to understand the Japanese language and culture to better grasp the essence of the art. This does not imply that we should aim to become more Japanese-like, but rather appreciate the cultural elements we find beautiful and enriching as part of our study.

Exploring a different culture is a thrilling and rewarding experience when approached with an open and accepting mindset. Unique languages, foods, clothing, customs, and even perspectives on reality contribute to this adventure. However, it is often the similarities rather than the differences that prove most enlightening. For instance, equating the Japanese custom of bowing with the Western tradition of handshaking allows us to see both as expressions of a common human need. While not a perfect analogy, it helps demystify aspects of Aikido study.

Dojos with a Japanese Sensei (teacher) may adhere more strictly to Japanese language and customs, whereas dojos with non-Japanese Sensei might not. As a student, it is essential to respect each Sensei's chosen teaching approach within their dojo.

Regardless of the emphasis on Japanese language and customs, basic protocols will always be practiced. When visiting another dojo, be prepared for variations in how classes are opened, conducted, and closed. Embrace and respect these differences while experiencing Aikido in that setting.

Understanding and using the basic language employed in Japanese dojos can facilitate Aikido practice worldwide and create a sense of comfort. Failing to learn the terminology might result in time lost translating before training. Moreover, a Yudansha (Black Belt) practitioner might find it embarrassing not to comprehend the terminology when training at a more traditional dojo. Aikido students should endeavor to learn all aspects of their training, seeking comprehensive knowledge of Aikido, whether or not their Sensei emphasizes specific aspects.

In Appendix E, you will find a list of basic vocabulary and terms used in Aikido dojos. This list is by no means all-inclusive but will provide you with an understanding of many commonly used words and phrases.



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## CHAPTER 5

### The Dojo - Where Training Begins

**John Hyams, author of 'Zen in the Martial Arts' writes:**

A dojo is a miniature cosmos where we make contact with ourselves - our habits. It is an arena of confined conflict where we confront an opponent who is not an opponent but rather a partner engaged in helping us understand ourselves more fully. It is a place where we can learn much in a short time about who we are and how we react in a world of conflict. The total concentration and discipline required to study Aikido carries over to daily life. The activity in the dojo calls on us to constantly attempt new things, so it is also a source of learning, a source of self-enlightenment.

The word *dojo* literally means, "place of the way." The dojo is a place of learning, a place to respect, to keep clean and to care for. A place to be made special for practicing a special art. Aikidoka can and will train anywhere and everywhere - back yards, garages, youth centers, basements, warehouses, etc. It is important to remember that the place where Aikido is practiced becomes, at least symbolically, a dojo and must be treated as such. All students should take the responsibility to help whenever they can to keep the dojo clean, and to contribute actively to the maintenance of the dojo. This is part of the reality and the tradition of Aikido. Consider it a part of your training. Eventually you will come to appreciate its inner value. Each beginning and advanced student should actively seek to be the first to the brooms and the washrags, before and after class. Advanced students should actively strive to be role models for newer students. At Aikido by the Bay the senior students have a schedule of dojo jobs. When one of them asks you to do a job, if it is your first time at that job, say so, and someone experienced in that job will teach you how to do it according to the standards of the dojo. Remember we are dedicated to be our best; how we do our jobs should reflect that commitment. The senior students who give out the jobs have the responsibility to see that they are done properly; assist them as they assist you with your on-the-mat training.

When entering the dojo through the main entrance, one should perform a formal standing bow (*ritsurei*) towards the Shomen. Before stepping onto the mat, students should remove their shoes and socks and place them along wall. As you step onto the mat wipe your feet carefully on the white footcloth; perform a standing bow in the direction of the Shomen.

Now you are ready to practice. About one minute before class is to start all students should have formed a very neat row across the mat along the shimoza. To show that we are on the same path (the Aiki path) and to symbolize how far we have traveled with our Sensei, we form these rows knee to knee beside each other in order of rank. If you see new students still wandering around, please make sure they follow suit in sitting in *seiza* with the rest of the students.



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### The Dojo - Where Training Begins (cont'd)

As your Sensei or Sempai starts towards the Shomen to begin class, remain still and quiet with your back straight and look straight ahead. Your Sensei or Sempai will be seated in front of the Shomen and perform a formal sitting bow (zareai) towards the Shomen. This you should also perform with our Sensei. Your Sensei will then turn to face you and again perform a formal bow to you and the rest of the student body. At this point the Sensei will go right into technique training. An important aspect of the formal opening bow is the hand clapping; this will vary from dojo to dojo depending on the background of the Sensei.

At Aikido by the Bay we clap twice. It is said that the claps of the hands send out a vibration into the spirit world and call attention to the spirit of O-sensei. The vibration then returns to the dojo in the form of an echo and the air is thick with "Ki." The number of claps and number of bows will vary from one to four. (Please refer to Appendix A for more information on meaning of handclaps.)

A formal opening bow should be performed alone, say example if you come in late. If you are late, wait at the entrance until the Sensei acknowledges you. Proceed onto the mat and perform a formal bow with two handclaps and sit in seiza until your Sensei invites you to join the class. This etiquette is for respect and also for safety, as we cannot have someone walk onto the mat area while people are being thrown.

When class is finished, all students should quickly take a seat at the shimoza and wait for the closing bow by the Sensei. After the Sensei completes the bowing ceremony, *do not* get up immediately. Stay seated and Sensei will ask all students to form a circle where we bow to each other, thanking everyone for training.

When bowing in and out of the class with weapons, they should be placed parallel to your knees noiselessly and far enough out that you do not have to bow over the top of them. The blade of the boken must be facing you and the grip to your left. When bowing to your training partner, the weapons should be in your left hand along your left side and should be carried in your left hand in the dojo. Outside the dojo, always carry your weapons in a weapons bag in your right hand. Carrying your weapons in your left hand outside the dojo means that you are ready to be challenged.



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## CHAPTER 6

### Dojo Etiquette - Rules of Behavior

In an Aikido dojo, the observation of etiquette is integral to the creation of respectful and attentive atmosphere, which is conducive to learning. Although Japanese forms are unfamiliar to most Westerners, over a period they not only become comfortable expressions of courtesy, but also, as we come to understand the level of meanings behind the forms, they enrich and further our practice. Most basic to these forms is the bow, a gesture of respect and gratitude. If students follow the dojo etiquette, they will realize that behind it lies a far deeper meaning that first seems apparent. The humility and respect needed to practice Aikido encourages a growing sensitivity to our environment and interaction with others.

Aikido is a living, growing martial art designed for the modern world. The physical aspects of Aikido, as awesome and beautiful as they can be, are only the outward manifestation of what is most importantly a real and direct way to improve the quality of our lives.

#### **In the dojo, please observe the following guidelines:**

- ✦ Arrive at least fifteen minutes early for class, change smartly and help prepare the dojo, and then be ready for the formal bow.
- ✦ Students not training on the mat (but watching the class instead) should be quiet. If asked questions by interested visitors answer them quietly, accurately and with respect, but not at length. At the end of the class mark that you attended the class.
- ✦ Mark your attendance before stepping on the mat. Attendance is tallied at the end of each month and only those people who have satisfied the dojo attendance requirements will be tested. So, to get to first base do not forget to mark your attendance.
- ✦ A standing bow is done when entering and leaving the dojo.
- ✦ A short period of mokuso (meditation) will be led by the instructor immediately after the warm-up and just before the start of practice. If you do not know how to meditate and wish to learn let Sensei know. The formal bow at the beginning or the end of practice consist of one or two seated bows towards the Shomen and then a mutual bow between the teacher and students. The form and complexity of this ceremony marking the beginning and the end of class varies somewhat from place to place, so in case of a visiting instructor his or her example should be followed.
- ✦ Real effort should be made to be on time for class, but if unavoidably late, wait for the instructor's direction. Remember, when the instructor allows you on the mat, you should perform the formal bow individually before beginning to practice.
- ✦ If it is necessary to leave the class early, a student should inform the instructor and do an individual formal bow to their training partner and to the Shomen at the close of his or her training practice. Do not disturb the rest of the class.
- ✦ There should be no excessive laughter, loud talking, roughhousing, or running in the dojo before or during class is in session.
- ✦ Always look after your junior and lend a helping hand to lower ranks. Refrain from misusing your knowledge.
- ✦ A report of any/all fights must be made to the office within 24 hours. Failure to do so may result in your discharge from the dojo.
- ✦ Onegai shimasu ('please' 'I ask a favor' or 'I request') and arigato gozaimashita ('Thank you') are the expressions used at the beginning and the end of class, and between partners at the beginning and end of class, respectively.



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## Dojo Etiquette - Rules of Behavior (cont'd)

- ✦ Shitsurei shimasu is used to excuse yourself, e.g., if you unexpectedly knock into someone whilst training or generally need to excuse yourself to Sensei or a senior deshi.
- ✦ The chief instructor is addressed as Sensei in the dojo and at any other time and place. Yudansha should be called by their given name followed by Sempai, e.g., Mary Sempai. All Kohai (juniors) should be addressed as their given name plus San, e.g., Peter San.
- ✦ Gi(s) should be kept clean, taken home and washed a minimum of once weekly. If you train more than two training sessions in a week, you should own two gis, or see to it that you wash your gi twice weekly. Your name should be printed in black on the right sleeve of your gi top. Roll up your sleeves before training; however, lower them for Juuwaza training, as fingers can get caught in the roll.
- ✦ Fingernails and toenails must be kept short for the protection of training partners.
- ✦ The proper way to sit during class is in seiza - formal Japanese sitting posture. A cross-legged sitting position is acceptable if seiza is impossible. If a student has a particular problem with knees or a foot that interferes with the ability to sit in seiza, make sure the instructor is informed of the problem, and sit cross-legged. Slouching, slumping or leaning against objects is not conducive to the practice of balance and centering.
- ✦ Students should not sit with their backs toward the Shomen. Traditionally this is the place for the instructor or master to sit while watching class and is designated in Aikido by the Bay by the red mats in front of the Shomen.
- ✦ If it is necessary to pass by people when they are lined up in seiza facing the Shomen, walk behind them rather than in front.
- ✦ After the instructor demonstrates the first technique, students bow, choose a partner quickly, and begin to practice. When the end of a particular practice is signaled (often with a clap or the word "tsugi," meaning next) students should stop practice immediately, bow (Standing) to their partners, and quickly sit in seiza for further instruction, but not with your back directly to the Shomen.
- ✦ For reasons of safety, respect, and courtesy, it is essential that the teacher's instructions be followed exactly. Many Aikido techniques can be dangerous if not practiced properly. Emphasis should be placed on learning as much as possible through intent observation and concentrated practice; questions should be saved for when they are necessary.
- ✦ Do not use alcohol or drugs before class.
- ✦ If you have a permanent pre-Aikido injury you must tell Sensei; if he thinks you can benefit from Aikido training, he will allow you to train; however, he will mark your gi so that people are aware you have a problem (and where) so they can take care of you and not aggravate the injury. Temporary injuries must be marked with a pink stick -on marker, supplied by the dojo, so that your training partner knows to take extra care. Do not be reckless with the only body you have.
- ✦ Many dojos, including Aikido by the Bay, will wipe the mats down with freshly rinsed rags. It is the students' responsibility to keep the dojo clean. These responsibilities should be taken seriously. Dojo literally means, "place of the way." It should be a place for misogi (purification) and for our sincere personal work. It is also a matter of hygiene as we are in constant contact with the mats.
- ✦ Observation of these traditional forms of etiquette help to create a good atmosphere in the dojo, but more important is the sincere and openhearted attitude toward training which gives meaning to all forms.
- ✦ Tie back long hair securely, so as not to inconvenience your training partner.
- ✦ Make sure you average at least twice weekly training.
- ✦ Your monthly training fee must be made by the first of each month.
- ✦ All Aikido arts are not to be revealed publicly and must only be practiced under proper conditions.
- ✦ You should ask Sensei's permission if you wish to train at other dojos. Should he agree, he might write you a letter of introduction. The dojo is a place to be made special for practicing a special art.
- ✦ Your Sensei is special and rare and must be treated with great respect.



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- ❖ Uncooperative persons, persons persisting with a destructive attitude, persons who will not learn the style taught at this dojo, who persistently disturb others or refuse to obey dojo etiquette will be dismissed.
  - ❖ Bowing is an appropriate way of showing gratitude and humility, while at the same time placing one's mind in a state of non-dissension, which is necessary for correct training. Bow when requesting person instruction from an instructor.
  - ❖ When receiving personal instruction, remain quiet until the instructor has completed his explanation, then bow. Bow after the instructor demonstrates a technique to the class.
  - ❖ When a deshi (Student) attains a dan rank (first, second, third degree black belt or higher) attendance at the dojo party to celebrate this auspicious achievement is *compulsory*.
  - ❖ Always enter the dojo with an empty mind and with positive energy (light ki). If you assume you already know, it will be difficult for you to learn.
  - ❖ Any negative feelings you might be harboring must be left outside the dojo. There is no place for them inside.
  - ❖ You must purchase your own weapons. Do not use the weapons of other students. The few dojo weapons there should be used only by beginners in their first few classes.
  - ❖ No rings, watches, earrings, nose-studs, or jewelry of any kind should be worn during practice. If body piercing cannot be removed, they must be secured with a Band-Aid, so they cannot be pulled or torn.
  - ❖ Do not wear heavily scented perfume, cologne, or after-shave in the dojo, as some people are very allergic to these scents.
  - ❖ When your belt comes undone and/or your uniform needs adjusting, you should face a wall and rectify the situation.
  - ❖ Do not leave the mat during class without first obtaining the permission of the instructor.
  - ❖ Never interrupt the class to question unnecessarily. If you must ask a question, wait until an appropriate moment.
  - ❖ Do not callout or interrupt the instructor while he/she is teaching.
  - ❖ There should never be conversation of any kind while the instructor is demonstrating. When training with your partner, speak only when necessary; avoid self-justification to your Sempai or instructor.
  - ❖ Never argue about a technique. If there is a problem that cannot be resolved, ask the instructor for help.
  - ❖ Never be idle during practice, even when in a threesome. You should be copying or "shadowing" the technique.
  - ❖ Instructors are always treated with respect. Never compare one instructor with another. Every Sensei has something unique to share with you. Your job is to discover it.
  - ❖ Traditionally, the Aikido dojo is a place to train in an atmosphere of calm and serenity. Aikido training requires total concentration.
  - ❖ Aikido students expect and enjoy the: "get away from it all" feeling during practice. A good uke is responsive, responsible, and sensitive.
  - ❖ A good nage is accurate and skillful.

Learn to trust. The non-competitive nature of Aikido has a dimension of mutual trust and protection. This attitude of trusting care becomes an integral part of your interaction with and within the environment.





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## CHAPTER 7

### Attire and Weapons - Care and Use

The dojo, or gi, as it is known in casual terms, is the three-piece uniform that students should wear during practice. Typically, in Aikido you will find the single-weave, all-cotton gi to be most popular and the most durable. The fabric and weight of the gi is not very important for the beginner, although as you continue to practice, you will acquire a liking for one kind or another and this choice is really up to you. Regardless of the weight, make, or style of gi, they are all cared for in the same manner.

When donning the gi, first put on the pants. Make sure the little loop goes right under the belly button. Pull the drawstrings tight and then thread the strings through the little loop in the opposite directions. Tie a bow in the strings making sure it is secure (you don't need this coming undone in the middle of class)/ Next put on the jacket. Place the right lapel under the left before putting on the belt. Finally, put on the belt. The correct way of putting on your belt will result in a triangular knot at your tanden. Be conscious of the fact that your gi is going to get to the point of smelling foul if it is not washed after being worn. Keeping your gi clean is not only courteous to the others, but the practice of misogi (cleansing mind and body) teaches us that it is the right thing to do. Remember - we strive to be defensive, not offensive!

#### **What about the hakama? Why is it so important? What does it symbolize?**

The following is an excerpt from a small article written by Mitsugi Soatome:

In many ways the wearing of the hakama has degenerated into merely a symbol of rank, but it has a very deep spiritual meaning.

The traditional costume of the Samurai warrior was the joining of the two triangles. The uppermost triangle opens toward heaven and symbolizes the spiritual worlds. The lower triangle extends to earth, making a broad and stable base, symbolizing the physical world. These two triangles are joined at the "Hara" - heaven and earth united in the human body. The physical and spiritual are one. Therefore, each affects the other. The way we speak and move, our facial expressions, even our manner of dress affects our attitude and our spiritual vibrations. We must embody the "Way", the universal concepts in movement, in costume, and in everyday life training to keep the Way before us in all our endeavors. O-sensei said: "The Way means to be one with the will of God and practice it. If you are even slightly apart from it, it is no longer the Way."

It has become the custom to wear the hakama after reaching the rank of Shodan (first degree black belt). It is generally accepted that the male student will not wear the hakama until attaining the rank of Shodan. However, this is not always the case for female students. There doesn't seem to be any universal consistency here, so as a result, you will sometimes find women of all ranks wearing hakamas. The decision is up to the individual dojo Sensei. At Aikido by the Bay, only black belts wear the hakama.



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The accepted way of wearing the hakama varies from dojo to dojo. The background of the chief instructor determines the accepted way. So, all students must realize that if you visit another dojo and see everyone wearing a hakama you have not necessarily found a large gathering of yudansha or black belts; this may be the accepted way for all students at a particular dojo. Respect the way of the dojo, and do not pass judgement on wearing or not wearing the hakama.

Cleaning the hakama is just as important as cleaning the gi. Although the hakama is an outer garment, it will still get sweaty and dirty. It too will eventually get to the point of smelling foul if not aired out regularly. As you learn over time the cleaning of the hakama does not have to be done nearly as often as the gi. As a matter of fact, if you air it out regularly, the hakama need only be cleaned out once every six months. The best way to clean it is to get it dry-cleaned. It costs very little and they will press the pleats for you also. In addition, some hakamas have a cardboard piece in the backboard and if you get this wet, it will disintegrate or get out of shape. The most durable backboards are made of rubber. You'll also find some made out of felt and these can be damaged also by washing in a machine. Along this same thought, it is very unbecoming to see a hakama (especially all-cotton) that has just come from being stuffed in a gi bag, as they appear very wrinkled if not folded well. So take care when cleaning and stowing your hakama (or gi) in your bag. Ask your Sempai how to do this. If they are unsure, they should ask their Sensei to instruct them.

When buying a hakama there are a few suggestions we can make. First, consult your Sensei for a source and seek his advice for length specifications, because no matter what is said in this section, your Sensei's wishes should take precedence. In any case, the first consideration is the length, which should be such that when the final knot is tied in front, the bottom of the hakama is about an inch off the floor. This fashion will vary greatly but this seems to be the most popular and functional way of wearing it. A caution here is probably in order. Please do not tie your hakama knot in the back. Tying it in this way has been known to cause serious injury to people when taking hard ukemi (falls). Also, the knot will not be conducive to the feeling of being centered. Another consideration is the length of the belts. The back belts are not quite as important when it comes to length, but the front belts should be long enough to go around you at least twice and then have enough left over to make a nice neat knot at your tanden. This of course will depend on your won physical shape, so you will have to make sure of this measurement yourself. Black and dark blue are the most common colors for the hakama in Aikido.

Folding your hakama is an art that should not be taken lightly. One should take extreme care to fold the hakama very neatly.

**Special note:** The day just may come when you are asked to fold the hakama of a prominent instructor and every student should be ready to do a good job of it.

We suggest you ask an advanced student to take the time to show you how to fold the hakama. Take particular care when folding the pleats and make sure all corners are square. Make sure all belts lay flat and are folded flat, as this will maintain their shape for a much longer time. If you buy a 100% cotton hakama,



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be prepared for a lot of wrinkles, so take special care when folding these. A blend of 50% polyester 50% cotton is probably the most popular because of the wrinkle-free nature of the material. Also, the blended material is not so apt to tear as easily. There are many other materials used to produce hakamas, but these will vary just as the color will. Here again, the choice is yours.

Students should always try to wear zoris (sandals) in the dojo. The main reason for this is that they can be removed quickly. You should never come to the dojo bare-footed. The mat gets dirty enough without each student bringing more dirt on the soles of their feet. Therefore, try to wear something on your feet that you can get on and off comfortably and quickly. Whenever you enter the mat area you will find a damp white towel at the entrance. Make sure you brush the soles of your feet on this. When everybody does this there is little chance of undesirable matter getting on the mat where we will roll on it. After you have brushed your feet check that the towel is lying flat.

### **Aikido weapons**

There are many ways in which "practice weapons" are used in Aikido training. O-sensei used weapons in his Aikido and his uchideshi have continued with this training to this day. The most popular of the weapons that we have come to know as Aikido weapons are the boken (wooden sword), and jo (wooden staff) and the tanto (wooden knife).

If you practice with a boken or a jo, then the following paragraphs should help you out. First you should know that not all weapons are created equal. Some of them are manufactured to be hung on the wall. A new student can often feel he has just got a good deal on a weapon that has no functional value at all. The boken is a wooden sword that should be used like a sword and not as a piece of wood shaped like a sword. It has a handle end that should be held like the handle of a sword. And lastly, it has a tip, which should be respected as the tip of a sword. *Note:* If you don't believe this, don't practice with a boken.

Practicing with a boken without these sincere considerations will not only give you a completely false idea of weapons training, but you will be quite dangerous to yourself and anyone else with whom you train.

The most durable of all bokens are those that have been made from Japanese white oak. This weapon will hold up for a long time regardless of the treatment it gets and what style of weapons training you practice.

At Aikido by the Bay we supply imported weapons hand-made in Tskuba, Japan from Japanese white oak which are superior to those usually available from martial arts supply stores, except for the more expensive Japanese white oak ones when they stock them. Do not buy hardwood weapons. They are too hard and damage the surface of the white oak ones before they themselves dangerously splinter and split with the potential to injure you or other students. The best advice is to buy the best white oak weapons you can afford. Do not bring hardwood weapons to the dojo.



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Put some kind of identifying mark(s) on your boken so that it is not easily lost or mixed up with someone else's after you have marked it well, you have two choices: if you use the weapon on a regular basis, you do not need to do maintenance on it, but if you foresee any length of time between the times you are handling it, then you may want to apply a light coat of wood-finishing oil. This will especially be true of the tips as they may check if they dry out.

The preceding suggestions also hold true for the jo. Again, we have found that the most durable jo is the one made from Japanese white oak. As with the boken you will have to decide whether or not to oil it, because if the oil is put on too thick it will start to get sticky.

No matter what kind of wooden weapons you acquire, remember that your weapons will need regular attention, such as sanding (very fine grade) or get rid of small splinters. These splinters may not only be dangerous to you, however, please consider your training partners. Be courteous to others and keep your weapons in good shape. When there are too many splinters to be repaired, or you suspect your weapon has sustained a fracture, use it for firewood or simply retire it.

One last suggestion on weapons; get a carrying bag for them. These can be purchased from the dojo or fabricated by you. They will help keep your weapons protected from the weather. Never leave your weapons in the trunk of your car for any length of time. If you do you will inevitably find new curves in them, as extreme heat and moisture will definitely distort them. And remember, it is illegal to carry weapons in public places unless they are in a bag. Do not frighten people, even unintentionally. If you stand your jo in a corner at home, make sure you give it a slight turn on occasion, when you pass it, as it is more likely to stay straight if you do.



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## CHAPTER 8

### Mat Survival

#### **Better Training - physically and psychologically:**

Aikido is a physically and mentally vigorous activity. The learning process of Aikido demands the development of great flexibility, strength, endurance and tolerance for pain. Muscle toning and development is the result of dedicated training. At a seminar (a special day of three or four classes) you will need at least two clean gis. To the surprise of many, it is quite common for practitioners of other arts to be amazed at the intensity of physical effort expended during an Aikido class. The point is that Aikidoka are athletes, and athletes must prepare and maintain their bodies in order to excel in their chosen field.

Jumbi taiso are traditional exercises specifically designed to prepare the body immediately before a training session and are extremely important. They are just as much a part of the Aikido experience as anything else and you must consider them so.

To the beginner, jumbi taiso (in whatever form it takes in *your* dojo) may seem to be a collection of unusual, exotic and perhaps boring contortions. Your eagerness to train and your over-drive adrenaline levels are screaming, "All right, already! Enough! Let's do some Aikido!". This is a perpetual problem common to the beginner. The fact is, you are doing Aikido, you just haven't learned to recognize it yet. Jumbi taiso is an act of *misogi* of cleansing the body and mind. It has many benefits, including preparing your biological systems for high-level performance demands during the rest of class.

Careful preparation of the body is the most effective method of preventing injury and is basic to all other organized rigorous activities. Successful athletes do not play or train "cold", and neither should the wise Aikidoka.

Like most things in life, you will receive rewards in direct proportion to the amount of energy you invest. If you have paid proper attention to your jumbi taiso, the results will be a feeling of warmth in your muscles and a light sweat on your body. The muscular tensions of the day will have gone, and you will feel a readiness to proceed. Mentally, or spiritually if you prefer, extraneous thoughts will be swept aside. Your attention will be focused on the reality of Aikido and you will experience a heightened sensory awareness of yourself, the dojo, your instructor, better Training - physically and psychologically and your fellow students.

This is the beginning of zanshin (mindfulness), the proper mental and spiritual state of the warrior. To achieve true zanshin is the goal of the serious Aikidoka. It is not a simple thing. Be prepared to start now



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## Mat Survival (cont'd)

and spend the rest of your life in the development of this higher reality. Remember that the greatest opponent you will ever face on the Aikido mat (an allegory for life in general) is yourself.

Freedom from your won self-imposed barriers is the growth and the reward of serious Aikido training. Eventually, *jumbi taiso* will become a part of your natural behavior pattern. The movements will be rational and meaningful. This will signify your first major step away from the beginning point.

The next element of mat survival, which relates to you personally, is your *ukemi* practice. *Ukemi* is the art of defensive falling. The trained *uke* is a person who has added an extra dimension of movement to their repertoire; movement through the horizontal plane. *Ukemi* teaches a sense of body awareness like that enjoyed by gymnasts. The serious *ukemi* student becomes a very difficult person to attack successfully. This is a direct result of their increased ability to move in all directions and their developing *zanshin*. *Ukemi* practice also brings with its other important benefits; it provides physical conditioning of the body, teaches the fundamentals of rational movement, builds self-confidence, and is essential to all future learning in Aikido. If you listen around the dojo, you will quickly learn that Aikido students have great respect for individuals known as *good ukes*. In fact, for *kyu* ranks, *ukemi* ability is probably the single most important criterion for judging the seriousness of the students. Without good *ukes*, true Aikido practice cannot take place.

Training is co-operative process. The ability of the *nage* to execute techniques properly, with speed and power, is heavily reliant on the *uke's* ability to take the fall successfully and get back up, ready to attack again. Remember that *uke* and *nage* are a team, each doing their part, each helping the other along the path of learning. Proficiency in the defensive art of *ukemi* is the most basic and in many ways one of the most important elements of your new art.

Serious students should take advantage of the time before class by engaging in light stretching followed by personal *ukemi* practice. This *ukemi* warm-up should be done carefully with an orientation towards perfection and refinement of technique rather than speed. Keep in mind that the essence of *ukemi* is controlled movement. Speed will come with practice and is best accomplished under the direct supervision of your *Sensei*.

Aikido is often referred to as the "gentle art". There is truth to this statement, but it can also be misleading to those who are not experienced in actual Aikido training. The term "gentle" refers to the spirit and intent of the art, its form and its true students. It does not refer to the rigors of training or to the effectiveness of the techniques. The intent of Aikido is its martial or "Budo" aspect is to defeat an attack quickly and efficiently, while causing the minimal possible damage to the attacker in the process; this is the elegance of Aikido. When someone who is proficient in the art performs techniques, the movements appear deceptively simple. When a master of the art performs Aikido, the intentionally deceptive and easy movements are often perceived by non-Aikidoka as "mystical." The results seem "out of joint" with reality. Small, quick,



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### Mat Survival (cont'd)

sometimes-imperceptible movements of the master result in potentially devastating effects on the uke. Only Aikido students can know the true reality of these techniques through the rigors of their daily training: thousands of rolls and falls, joint lock after painful joint lock, bruises, aches and strains. Eventually this conditioning hardens muscles and increases their flexibility. This, combined with improved ability to move properly, reduces the number of bruises and pains, but leaves you with a deep respect for the physical conditioning and preparation necessary for even a relatively low level of proficiency within the art. The truest understanding of this comes on the day in your training when you are fortunate enough to have the opportunity to sand on the mat with a true master of Aikido and experience a touch of the awesome power they generate. At that point, you will know in the deepest sense of the word. Whatever mysticism may be associated with Aikido, you have just experienced one of the realest things in your life. You will immediately acquire a brand-new appreciation for the importance of preparation and conditioning of your body, and you will know with absolute certainty that the word "gentle" applies to the intent of the master; and that is the only reason you were able to get up and continue the class. Endurance, speed, agility and attitude, coupled with the rational movement of properly executed technique are the elemental components of Aikido training. Physical and mental fitness is essential.

Thus far, we have spoken of *mat survival* only as it pertains to one's own responsibilities and actions. Remember, Aikido training manifests itself physically as a co-operative relationship between uke and nage. The refinement of this co-operative relationship is part of the inner-learning experience of Aikido. It is important to remember that what we are co-operating to learn are highly effective, potentially lethal combat techniques. While it is true that co-operation demands a certain level of mutual trust, it is also true that the ultimate purpose of Aikido is to enhance our defensive control within our own environment. So, how do we resolve this seeming paradox? With careful rational thought. An appropriate analogy may be found in driving an automobile on the open road. Certainly, there are rules - speed limits, stop signs and such. But only a suicidal fool makes driving decisions based on an implicit trust that the *other driver* will obey all the rules or that they have your best interests in mind. The same is true on the mat. Give everyone the respect of trust, at least until they prove themselves incapable or unworthy; but never, ever lower your personal defense or your control of your environment, at least to the extent of your ability. What this means in brief is, never apply a technique irresponsibly. Do not knowingly push your uke beyond the limits of their ability to protect themselves. Never give a nage a *second* opportunity to use *you* irresponsibly, whether through ignorance or malice.



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## Mat Survival (cont'd)

### Scenario #1

During an Aikido class you find yourself paired up with a student with whom you are not familiar. You quickly realize that your partner is a relatively new student and not as advanced as you. Some indicators may be their awkwardness, unfamiliarity with the basic technique, poor ukemi, obvious intimidation, or proclivity to talking during the practice. Assuming that we are all proper, ethical and non-malicious Aikidoka, two obvious courses of action present themselves:

- ❖ You can, with all good intentions decide to practice as hard as you are able and rely on your training partner to "take care of themselves"; or
- ❖ You can decide that this person is not able to provide you with a rewarding training experience and simply turn off and cruise through the rest of the session.

While both solutions to *Scenario #1* are very common, neither is the proper nor constructive reaction of a true Aikidoka. For the serious student, Scenario #1 presents a wonderful opportunity for learning and growth, a new challenge to your new skills. The statement, "Aikido training is a co-operative process" is an absolute. There are no proper exceptions. In this example, as Sempai, or the senior partner, the responsibility to create a co-operative partnership falls heavily on you. Your challenge is to find a way to work with your partner at a level that is challenging to their abilities. Within this process, you will realize personal learning in self-control, body movement, and refinement of technique. As you progress, you will learn to appreciate the value of these opportunities more and more.

### Scenario #2

In this situation you find yourself pair (or perhaps impaired) with a partner who has probably been training longer than you and knows it. This is the kind of person who will see their experience as an advantage over you and will proceed to use you to satisfy their own ego needs. Typically, they will size you up and then throw you just a little bit too hard, with too much muscle, which by the way is always a sign of actual lack of technique and ability on their part. The pins will be unnecessarily harsh or brutal. You will know when you are working with this kind of individual. You will learn to sense or feel their negativity. The answer to this situation is relatively simple and direct.

Once you understand what is taking place, make your best rational decision as to whether you can continue with a feeling of confidence in your ability to protect yourself from injury. If the answer is yes, consider the situation as a challenge to your training and strive to prove to yourself that your ukemi really is a defensive art. There is much to be learned about your training and yourself in such an experience.

If the answer is no... simply excuse yourself, thank your partner for training and avoid this individual, at least for a while. There is no custom or tradition in Aikido that requires you to allow yourself to be used for anyone's unethical purposes. Make your choice in the best spirit of the philosophy of Aikido, as you understand it.





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### Mat Survival (cont'd)

A related situation, a kind of sub-category, occurs when the behavior of your partner is similar, but the cause of the behavior is very different. It is common for relatively new students who are beginning to realize their new skills and the awesome power they confer, and who may also be physically strong individuals, to become dangerous on the mat. Not for any negative reason, but as a result of their excitement, high adrenaline level and inexperience. They are good people, and they will learn. But, in the meantime, they are just as potentially dangerous as the malicious individual. Your response, therefore, is the same. Selfdefense in the spirit of good training...

#### **Scenario #3 - The best result.**

In this case, a high-ranked individual (perhaps a Sensei) is your partner. The practice demands all you got, plus some that you did not think you had. Advise? Go for it! This is the ultimate training experience in Aikido. You are totally alive, and operating on the upper edge of your potential, an addictive sensation.

Perhaps, in some sense, serious Aikido students are addicts. Addicted to the positive experiences, sensations, and growth that are the best result of serious training. All in that, it comes down to this: training should be enjoyable and should always be a learning experience. Tremendous growth can take place on the mat as well as off. Don't ever be fooled into thinking that the mat itself is the greatest equalizer. You should always keep in mind that not everyone is going to practice the way you want them to practice; this is one of the most important ideas you need to realize, and one of the greatest challenges you will face. Remember that all kinds of learning experiences and challenges, turning the negative into the positive, are all an important part of your Aikido training.



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## CHAPTER 9

### Ranking and Promotional Exams

One of the most controversial parts of Aikido is the ranking system or promotional examinations. Ranked examination can provide some of the most positive and inspiring experiences of any martial artist.

In Aikido, the ranking system is a means of monitoring our progress as individuals and not as a means of judging ourselves against our peers. It is of utmost importance to maintain a humble attitude towards our rank; never let it be to be an excuse for poor manners and discourteous behavior towards younger and less-experienced students. There should never be a need to ask an instructor about an examination that you are to be or have been involved in, because you yourself will know whether you are actually at the level at which you have been asked to perform. Also, hopefully, you will have a Sensei who will have the heart and courage to tell you that you need more work and you are not yet at that level, in other words, does not put you up for a test until he knows you are ready; also fails you for not performing to par during a test.

When student is passed simply to maintain them as students, the process is obviously being badly misused.

Within the art of Aikido today, there are various ranking systems used. At Aikido by the Bay there is only senior grading. The first and formal examination a student takes will be for their fifth kyu certificate (blue belt): then fourth (green): then third (red) and second (purple). Students then work towards their first kyu (brown belt) certificate in preparation for their first black belt test. The promotional test requirements will vary from dojos in one way or other at these levels, with various dojos using different colors for the different kyu levels as well. The black belt is reserved for the advanced student. This student has generally practiced the art for three to four years with good consistency and has a good understanding of *shugyo*. Once you have the basic skills and understanding, you can start to train at a higher level. Wearing a black belt does not mean you know everything, but rather that you have become competent enough in the art to start to train seriously and understand the essence of Aikido. Unfortunately, for some it means they believe they have mastered the art. It seems like such a waste of time and energy to think in this way as it cuts back your training and your learning. The reality is that you have only just begun.

Typically, you will find there are ten grades of black belt. These go from Shodan (1<sup>st</sup>-Dan) to Judan (10<sup>th</sup>-Dan). As one can imagine, there are very few people ranked as Judan. As far as the hakama is concerned, once a student achieves black-belt rank, the hakama becomes part of everyday Aikido attire. This student should take pride in wearing the hakama and treat it as essential gear for training anywhere and for any reason.

Thus, the black belt and the hakama have become indicative of not only the advanced student, but also the instructor. Obviously, anyone can teach what they have learned, but it is generally accepted that the "black belt", also called "yudansha," student be allowed on occasion to teach formally in their Sensei's dojo as a privilege. On the other hand, yudansha are never required to become teachers. One of the fortunate



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## Ranking and Promotional Exams (cont'd)

circumstances in a dojo is when you have many higher-ranked students who alternate teaching classes. In this setting the yudansha have the opportunity to act as students, besides teaching, thus keeping their respective egos in check.

There are several important titles that everyone should know about referring to instructors, whether or not they apply to your instructor. The first term is "Sensei", which means teacher or one that has gone before you.

### **Special Note: Many students have asked, "What should I call my teacher? - Do I call him by name?"**

When you come to a dojo, if there is a *Chief Instructor*, a dojo Sensei, you should know his or her name certainly, however, you should call him or her Sensei then and forever. This is basic Japanese "protocol." When a teacher has earned the title of Sensei, you, as a student, should refer to him or her as such on and off the mat, in or out of the dojo.

It is polite for you to refer to any teacher of Aikido as (*first name in the western society*) Sensei instead of by name if you outrank that person. Some prefer to reserve this title for their personal teacher alone. In either case, one should be careful to treat an instructor with respect.

A student having attained the rank of Nidan (second Dan) will typically be given the title of *Fuku shidoin* or assistant instructor if presently teaching. An instructor having attained the rank of Sandan (third Dan) to Godan (fifth Dan) will usually be given the title of *Shidoin*. Once the instructor attains the rank of Rokudan (sixth Dan), the instructor is honored with the title of *Shihan* or master teacher. (When O-sensei was alive, this was the rank at which he would *graduate* a student). There are quite a few people with the title Shihan, although the numbers drop dramatically once beyond seventh and eighth Dan.

One can see that in Aikido there is a definite hierarchy of sorts within its structure. We honor the students who have gone before us because without their suffering and mistakes we would have to train at a lower level. Instead, because of their hard work, we can benefit from their teaching us what they have learned along the way. We honor the students who have trained with O-sensei in a special way because with them there still exists a link to the man who invented what we know today as Aikido. Lastly, we honor O-sensei at every practice for creating an art form, a Budo, that teaches harmony and caring for nature and the natural ways of the universe.



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## Promotional examinations

There are basically three ways to be promoted within the ranks of Aikido. The first and most popularly used, up to the rank of Yondan (4<sup>th</sup>-Dan), is the actual test - a physical test of a student's technical skill and endurance under pressure. The second method used is a promotion by recommendation. This is usually done when a student is older or has a physical condition, which handicaps the student from the rigors of a physical test. The third way is made up of a combination of the first two. Let's look at the first method of promoting. The "physical test" is generally the accepted way for all kyu grades to be promoted. There have been instances where Shodan has been given by recommendation, but these are few and far between, and usually involve extenuating circumstances such as age or physical handicap. Above the rank of Sandan, one will find that recommendations are mostly used because by this time a student will have been a teacher of some sort, practicing diligently, so objective exams will become academic. A promotion to a higher rank at this level will be a matter of dedication to one's study and time contributed to enhancing and spreading of Aikido. However, don't be surprised to find someone talking about his or her Fourth Dan test and saying it was the most challenging test of his or her life.

Promotional examinations are given in a variety of ways, and here again we remind you that this book cannot hope to be so comprehensive as to cover always, so we will describe one of the most popular ways and the etiquette that goes along with it. In any test there are required techniques that a student must demonstrate to the examining Sensei (or panel of Senseis) in front of the remaining student body. These must be adequately demonstrated and shown to be effective in the way they are used. Kyu gradings are held at Aikido by the Bay at the end of every month. Students will always be required to take the fifth kyu exam before they take the fourth kyu exam. However, they can be on the same day.

Students must make sure their grading applications are properly filled out and grading fees paid on the designated date. If you have not sufficient discipline to do this your Sensei is not likely to test you.

On the morning of your exam, don't go crazy and try to work on everything for which you will be tested; if you don't know something that will be required at this time, there is no way you are going to learn it on the same day. Take it easy and rest as much as possible the night before. However, if you really feel strong about it get a partner to help you walk through techniques and quiz you on terminology.

When you arrive at the dojo on the day of your exam, try to relax and put the test out of your mind for the time being. Practice as you would normally and pay strict attention to what is going on. Remember you will be demonstrating your skill to the Sensei. Focus on that, on what he has shown you in training, what he wants from you at your level.

Make sure you are waiting seated and above all, expect to be called first. If you are not, then be ready to go second. Pay strict attention to what goes on in the test before you and heed any suggestions that be given by Sensei. When it is your turn to be examined, your name will be called, and you should follow basic rules of etiquette:



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### Promotional examinations (cont'd)

- ❖ When your name is called, immediately perform zareii (sitting bow) and then stand and approach the Shomen with your uke plus any weapons you have to use; your uke should take full charge of the weapons.
- ❖ Take a seat in seiza position at the Shomen facing the picture of O-sensei and wait for instructions from the Sensei conducting the exam. (Remember, the way you perform your bow sets the mood and attitude of your test.)
- ❖ Uke should be prepared to follow the lead, don't go any faster or slower than nage. It is a privilege to be uke for someone's test, treat it as part of your test when you are doing it for someone going for the same level as you. If you are a senior uke for a junior nage make sure you are not hindering them for testing at their level when they are capable of it.
- ❖ Once your uke is seated, you can begin your test. First perform zareii to the picture of O-sensei. Remember, this is your test, so you lead this ceremonious bow, your uke will follow that lead.) Next, turn to your Sensei and again perform zareii; now turn to your uke and perform zareii.
- ❖ The examining instructor will then ask for a demonstration of the required techniques. These will be in the order listed on the grading sheet. Be acutely attentive to what your Sensei asks for and then perform what is asked. Do not try to be innovative at this point, but if you make a mistake, you are aware of, fix it up. Do not wait for the examiners; show them that you know you made a mistake. If you are not able to demonstrate the given technique because of the way your uke attacked, then do your best; your Sensei is probably aware of the idiosyncrasy of your partner. Don't ever apologize for any mistake you may make during a test. After all, you can't be expected to be perfect, so why be sorry when you are doing your best?
- ❖ Once the formal test has been given, each of the assisting Senseis will have a chance to ask of you something that may or may not have been on the test that the Sensei thinks you should know. The addition could be something that they would like to see you perform over again if you did not perform it adequately the first time around. Be prepared for anything and attempt, to the best of your ability, anything that may be asked of you. Do not hesitate! The early kyu grades are unlikely to be asked.
- ❖ When all the assisting instructors have had their opportunity to ask anything further of you and you are finished, your test will have been completed.
- ❖ At this point you could be tired, and it is very important to maintain your composure. Adjust your gi to look neat and then take a seat at the Shomen. Face your ukes at this time. Wait for all the ukes to be seated and to have adjusted their gis. When all is ready, perform zareii to them then turn to your Sensei and perform zareii. Finally, turn back to the Shomen and perform zareii to the picture of O-sensei. Stand and return to your seat among the rest of the class.



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### **Promotional examinations (cont'd)**

When all tests have been completed, the results will be announced directly afterwards. In any event, it is not proper to question your Sensei about your test. *Trust in your Sensei at this point is very, very important!*

An important final note about testing: Every student needs to remember the purpose of the examination. The examination is not an attempt to embarrass you, nor is it something to exhibit your extreme superiority over the rest of the student body. The examination is a means for you, as an individual, to become aware of those skills you need to work harder on. It also serves as an indication of the effort that you have been putting into your study.

If by chance you should fail the examination, look at the positive side of the experience. If your Sensei feels that you need more basic work on the techniques, then you should heed this and not think anything negative towards the Sensei. After all, how would you feel in your heart if you knew that you did not deserve the rank, but your Sensei passed you anyway for fear of losing you as a student? If this were the case, what would be the credibility of the exam? What would be the purpose of the exam if you were to be passed without regard to your technical skill? What value would a false assessment of your skill-level be to you and to your peers? Trust your Sensei as your friend and teacher. Have faith that by testing under your Sensei you are still being given a lesson.

Examinations in Aikido are going to vary from dojo to dojo. In any case, when considering the Aikido examination, find out all the details of etiquette and requirements well ahead of time. Do not wait until the day of the exam and experience the embarrassment of having to ask about something that everyone should know!

All Aikido by the Bay black belt certificates are sent from the Hombu dojo in Japan; and are official Aikikai certifications. This certification means that your level is recognized internationally. Every Yudansha student is asked to affiliate with the world headquarters and receives a card bearing a membership number and an Aikido passport in which any Shihan they train with in the future will verify such training by signing or using their seal.



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## Children Program Testing Requirements

### 8th Kyu

Demonstrate understanding of basic footwork including: Left / Right Hanmi

Ukemi: Basic Forward Rolls & Backward Rolls Demonstrate understanding of basic footwork including:

Left / Right Hanmi Irimi Ushiro Tenkan Irimi-tenkan

Demonstrate basic Tai-no-henka move with partner

### 7th Kyu

Demonstrate basic Aikido exercises: Wrist techniques (solo practice) Ikkyo Nikkyo Sankyo Kotegaeshi Front Rolls & Full Back Rolls

Tai-no-Henka Morore Dori Kokyu-nage

Gyaku Hanmi Kotegaeshi Ai Hanmi Katatetori (cross hand)

Ikkyo (omote & ura) Kokyudosa

1st Boken Suburi

### 6th Kyu

Demonstrate control of Ukemi: Small front rolls Large front rolls Roll slapping out/Break falls Tai-no-Henka Morote Dori Kokyu-nage

Ai Hanmi Shomen uchi Iriminage

Gyaku Hanmi Katatetori Shihonage (omote & ura)

Kokyudosa

1st & 2nd Boken Suburi

Happo Giri (Boken)

### Answer These Questions:

- What is Aikido?
- Who is O' Sensei?
- What is a dojo?
- Where should we practice Aikido?
- How do you address the instructor?
- What is dojo etiquette?
- What is a 'Gi' and why should we keep it clean?
- What is the role of the Nage?
- What is the role of Uke?
- What is Ukemi?



**Senior Grading Syllabus**

**5<sup>th</sup> Kyu** (Minimum requirement: over 30 days' training)

Shomen uchi ikkyo	Omote & Ura
Shomen uchi iriminage	Omote & Ura
Katate dori Kaiten nage	Uchi mawari & soto mawari
Katate dori shiho nage	Omote & Ura
Suwari waza kokyu ho	

**4<sup>th</sup> Kyu** (minimum requirement: 5<sup>th</sup> Kyu plus 40 days' training)

Shomen uchi ikkyo	Omote & Ura
Shomen uchi nikyo	Omote & Ura
Yokomen uchi iriminage	3 ways
Yokomen uchi shiho nage	Omote & Ura
Suwari waza kokyu ho	Omote & Ura
<i>Boken: 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Suburi</i>	<i>Jo: tsuki group</i>

**3<sup>rd</sup> Kyu** (Minimum requirement 4<sup>th</sup> kyu plus 50 days' training)

Yokomen uchi (Ikkyo to Yonkyo)	Omote & Ura
Tsuki kote gaeshi	
Ryote dori shiho nage	Omote & Ura
Tanken dori - Tachi dori - Jo dori	1 way each
Suwari waza kokyu ho	
<i>Boken: 4<sup>th</sup> suburi</i>	<i>Jo: uchi komi group</i>





<b>Senior Grading Syllabus</b> <b>2<sup>nd</sup> Kyu</b> (Minimum requirement 3 <sup>rd</sup> kyu plus 50 days' training)	
Shomen uchi ikkyo to yonkyo	Omote & Ura Tachi waza or Suwari waza
Kata dori ikkyo to yonkyo	Omote & Ura Tachi waza and suwari waza
Shomen uchi Kaiten nage	Uchi mawari & soto mawari
Katate dori irimi nage	
Katate dori kote gaeshi	
Katate dori kaiten nage	
Ryote dori ikkyo to yonkyo	Omote & Ura
Ryote dori kote gaeshi Ryote dori irimi nage Yokomen uchi ikkyo to yonkyo Yokomen uchi kote gaeshi Yokomen uchi irimi nage	Omote & Ura
Tanken dori	2 ways
Tachi dori	2 ways
Jo dori	2 ways
Suwari waza kokyu ho	
<i>Boken</i> : 5 <sup>th</sup> Suburi	<i>Jo</i> : Katate group suburi



<b>Senior Grading Syllabus</b>	
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Kyu</b> (Minimum requirement 2 <sup>nd</sup> kyu plus 60 days' training)	
Shomen uchi (ikkyo to yonkyo)	Omote & Ura Tachi waza or Suwari waza
Kata dori (ikkyo to yonkyo)	Omote & Ura Tachi waza and suwari waza
Ushiro ryote dori (ikkyo to yonkyo)	Omote & Ura Tachi waza
Shomen uchi kote gaeshi	
Tsuki kote gaeshi	
Tsuki kaiten nage	
Yokomen uchi kote gaeshi	
Ryote dori kote (ikkyo- yonkyo) Katate dori (ikkyo-yonkyo) Katate dori kote gaeshi Morote dori (ikkyo-yonkyo) Morote dori shiho nage Morote dori kote gaeshi Morote dori irimi nage	
Tachi waza kokyu hoo	3 ways
Tanken dori	2 ways
Jo dori	2 ways
Suwari waza kokyu ho	3 ways
<i>Boken: 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Suburi</i>	<i>Jo: hasso gaeshi group</i>



<b>Senior Grading Syllabus</b>	
<b>Shodan</b> (Minimum requirement 1 <sup>st</sup> kyu plus 1 year training)	
Yokomen uchi (ikkyo - gokyo)	Tachi waza and suwari waza
Kata dori (ikkyo - yonkyo)	
Kata dori men uchi (ikkyo - yonkyo)	
Hamni handachi	3 ways
Men tsuki	3 ways
Irimi nage	3 ways
Kokyu nage	3 ways
Shiho nage	3 ways
Kote gaeshi	3 ways
Koshi nage	3 ways
Ushiro waza	3 ways
Ryote dori tenchi nage	Omote & Ura
Tanken Dori	3 ways
Tachi dori	3 ways
Jo dori	3 ways
Jo: 31 no jo kata & flowing suburi group	
Jiyu waza (2-man attack) taijutsu	
Suwari waza kokyu ho	5 ways



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## CHAPTER 10

### Aikido in Perspective

When you become an Aikido student, you also become a member of an international community. This community extends to dojos throughout the world; it consists of thousands of your fellow students. Because we have chosen to study Aikido, we have much in common with other members of this community. As a group, these commonalities set us apart from practitioners of other martial arts. These differences will become increasingly apparent to you in the areas of attitude, purpose, and method. Of course, we believe our ways are superior that is why we remain Aikidoka. In spite of our commonality, they are within the Aikido community great differences of opinion, attitude and interpretation. It is important that we recognize these differences and make every attempt to understand them and to learn from them. It is also very important that we keep a sense of perspective. We are talking about differences between people, all of whom are attempting to follow the path of O-sensei. This means that the greatest of all differences should be accepted tolerance and good faith reserved for family and close friends. For the beginner, the question arising from the differences within Aikido are often most perplexing and difficult to answer. In order to better understand this problem, we must begin by looking at Aikido from the outside.

In our society, Aikido is one of a large variety of Eastern martial arts. For the most part, these martial arts are known almost generically, although quite incorrectly, as karate or kung fu. Movies featuring martial arts of any type are commonly referred to as *karate movies*. For example, how many people know that the character of Billy Jack, a movie that helped popularize Oriental martial arts in the US, actually employed the Korean art of Hapkido not karate? Not many, probably. The point there is that this general identification with karate tends to make Aikido look small and exotic. The name, the rather strict adherence to Japanese custom in dress, language and protocol, all act to reinforce this exotic nature. Statements such as "Aikido utilizes no blocks, punches, or kicks," tend to add to the mystery and confusion surrounding the art. Ask around and you will find that many people have heard the name Aikido, but few will have real knowledge about it. Outsiders see Aikido as small and cohesive, while insiders (students) see it as large and diverse. This dichotomy is a fundamental cause of confusion and questioning for new Aikido students.

A major barrier to understanding comes when students try to reconcile the two aspects of Aikido into one comprehensive view. This process does not yield successful results in this instance because both viewpoints are different, and both are true. One is not more correct Aikido in Perspective than the other, and neither can be subverted. Understanding can only come when the student's awareness grows large enough to encompass and accept all aspects of Aikido. This is a learning process. It is difficult, takes a great deal of time and requires enormous effort on our part. Remember, if Aikido was easy to learn, easy to do, and easy to understand, it would be its own nature be of limited value. It is precisely because of its complexity and the resulting difficulty in learning even the most fundamental precepts that we find it to be of such profound importance in our lives.



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The learning process begins with the students trying to fit themselves into the Aikido world and to fit Aikido into the rest of the world. This produces some very important questions for which we shall attempt to provide at least partial answers. These questions we often verbalize in many different ways. However, most of them are variations of the three basic questions. The first is: "Is there more than one Aikido?" The answer to this question is, "No." Aikido, in its fullest sense, is the product of the life experiences and teachings of the Founder, Morihei Ueshiba. It represents the culmination of the life's work of the most remarkable warrior, philosopher and priest. Aikido is the legacy of O-sensei and is as singular and unique as a fingerprint.

The second question is: "Is there more than one way to practice Aikido?" The answer to this question is "Yes!" O-sensei lived a long and fruitful lifetime, during which he taught many students. The best of these personal students was "graduated." This means that they achieved the rank of Rokudan (sixth Dan) and were awarded the title Shihan, or master teacher. As "graduated" students, they were permitted to take students of their own and encouraged to continue to develop themselves and their art. Many of these masters did just that and since the passing of O-sensei in 1969, they have continued to follow this path.

These original students have been instrumental in spreading Aikido throughout the world and are recognized for their achievements and contributions to the art. Each knew the Founder at a different point in the development of Aikido and each has taken his teachings and gone on to develop *their* art in their own unique and special way. Consequently, today we have many different attitudes affecting the way Aikido is practiced from dojo to dojo. As part of this second basic question you might ask, "So which way should I study?"

The true answer to either of these questions can only be found within yourself. Beyond its physical manifestations, Aikido is essentially and intensely personal experience. Therefore, the style that is best for you is quite simply the one that feels best to you, the one that provides you with the most personal satisfaction.

To find your way, we suggest the following three steps:

- ❖ Train earnestly a minimum of from *your* Sensei.
- ❖ After becoming a Shodan (first degree black belt), as your skill and confidence levels increase, and with your Sensei's permission, attend seminars, visit dojos, and train with everyone. Above all, keep an open mind!
- ❖ When you find that special teacher, follow your heart. Do what you feel to be right. Train yourself first! To do less is to be dishonest with yourself and your fellow students.
- ❖ twice weekly to begin with, concentrating on the basics. Condition your mind and body. Absorb everything you can the third basic question is: "Are there other kinds of Aikido-like arts?" "Yes!" Why? Because the martial aspects of Aikido rest upon a thousand years of Japanese warrior tradition. O-sensei did not invent Aikido out of thin air. Rather, he developed and modified the ancient and time-tested battle techniques of the elite Samurai warriors into a unique Budo, designed for the modern world. Historically, the combat disciplines within the general philosophy of "Aiki" can be traced directly back



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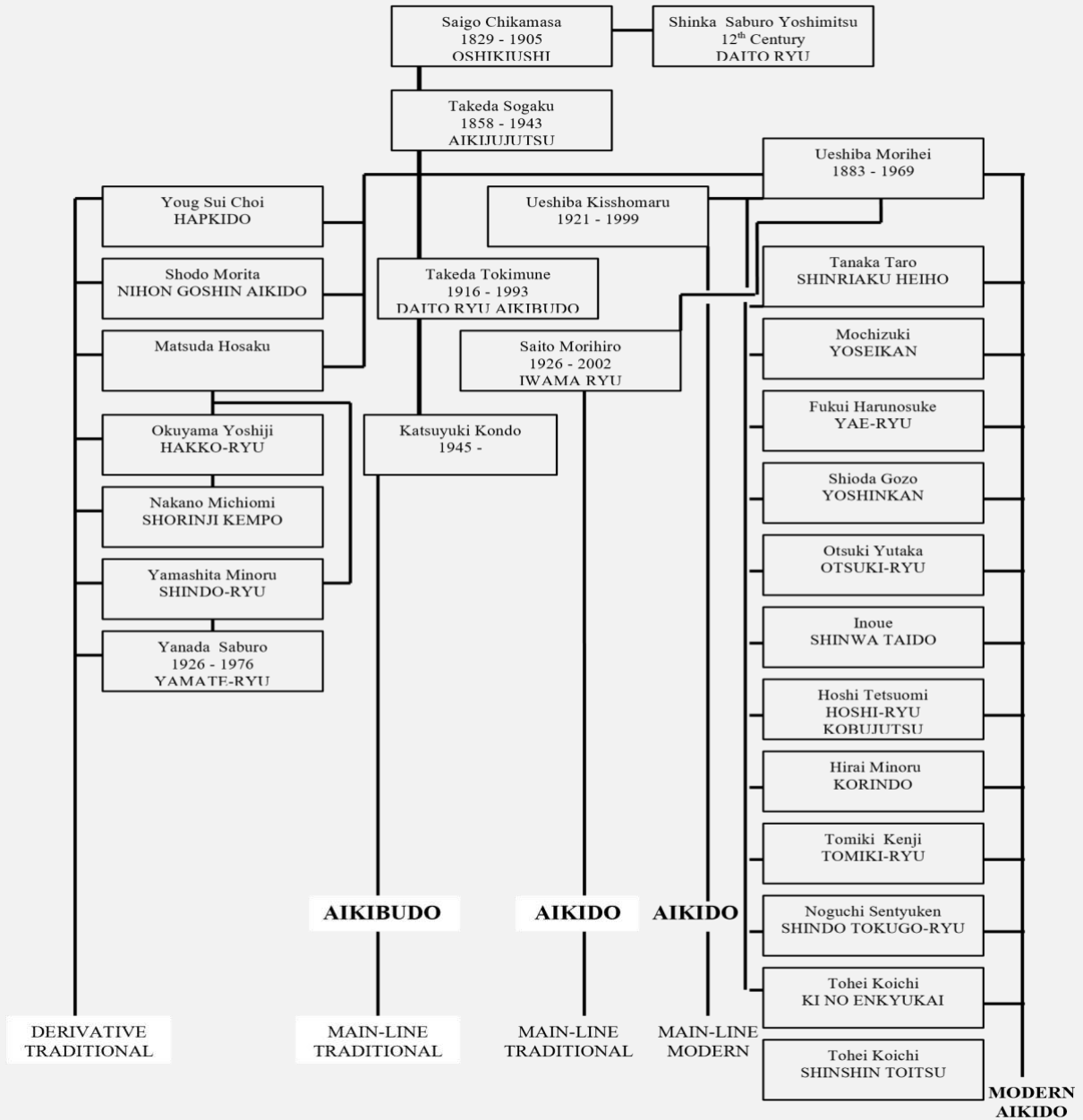
to the earliest days of Japanese society. Known practitioners include the earliest Shoguns themselves. Therefore, Aikido is directly related to all of the classical warrior arts of Japan. These abundant similarities and subtle differences concerning Aikido become increasingly obvious and meaningful as one's knowledge and understanding of the art increases.

The 1980s-90s has seen a growing interest in the historical and technical relationship between Aikido and other arts. A great deal of research, much discussion, and a lot of controversy has thus far resulted. Much is yet to be learned from this process, but two things are certainly true: Aikido is a living, growing Budo designed for the modern world, and the physical aspects of Aikido, as beautiful and awesome as they can be, are only the outward manifestation of what is most importantly a real and direct way to improve the quality of our lives.

*The diagram on the next page is a chronological listing of the historical antecedents of modern Aikido and the major recognized schools of Aikido.*



## Aikido & Aikijujutsu Family Tree





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## Appendix A

### From "Student Guide to Aikido" Ki Society Australia

"Those who wish to learn Aikido must first study its spirit. If one's heart is not true, the way will never be attained."

Aikido means: "The way to union with ki" or "The way to harmony of the spirit."

Aikido was developed in this century as an art of self-defense and spiritual training. Unlike some martial arts, Aikido requires no particular advantage in age, size, strength or speed in order to perform well.

However, Aikido is not merely an art of self-defense: into its techniques are woven elements of philosophy, psychology and dynamics. As you learn the various arts, you will at the same time train the mind, improve health and develop self-confidence. The movements of Aikido are circular and flowing. They are designed on the principles of nature and move in circles and spirals following paths of ki. When performed well, that is with mind and body coordinated, there is a great beauty and composure in the movements of both partners.

Aikido requires you to put aside much of what you have learned in life and open yourself to new and better ways. You must relearn your most basic skills of breathing, moving and seeing. You will explore balance, relaxation and natural concentration. You will enhance those communication skills, which allow you to discover what you want in life and how to achieve it elegantly and powerfully. Nothing could be more challenging or more rewarding.

The most unusual aspect of Aikido is that it takes the basis of its philosophy, the idea of being in harmony with your opponents, rather than in conflict with them. Accepting the natural way that people's bodies move and energies flow, results in successful Aikido.

Real training begins when students learn to maintain mind and body coordination under the stress of rapid movement and coordinated attack. The non-competitive nature of Aikido training adds a dimension of mutual trust and protection. This attitude of trusting care becomes an integral part of the developmental process of your interaction with the environment.

Aikido was born as a way to divert harm to oneself while not inflicting permanent injury on an aggressor. As Aikido developed, it became clear that it was not only an effective means of self-defense, but truly a way to understand earthly life through the study of energy flow of the universe. It is not an art about minimizing or avoiding stress. Rather, it is about dealing with crises and conflicts in such a way as to maintain stability and poise during a challenge. Aikido is not merely an intellectual undertaking; it is learned and expressed through techniques.





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The philosophy of Aikido comes to life only when you practice and live it. Through daily training, clear insights into areas of form, motion, attitudes, habits, spiritual ideals and human relations develop.

The goals of Aikido are there for all to achieve - to become a person in harmony with others, an integrated and balanced individual and to explore our full human potential.

The central theme of Aikido is to be in "harmony" with one's circumstance. There is no clash or conflict in Aikido technique. As a physical study, it is purely a self-defense art which teaches the student to respond, avoid and move in accord with the attacker, such that the two become one. The exponent simply "leads" and "blends" with his opponent, such that, through technique, the commitment ("ki") of the attacker is turned against him to such a degree that he is completely overwhelmed and frustrated in his attempt at attack. The exponent's technique will, in the main, reflect the severity of attack; a 'small' attack would draw a response technique that permitted a takedown, or simple control. On the other hand, an attack that would maim or kill is met with an equal technique, not necessarily by calculated design, but through the "harmony" of the response. If the exponent is confronted with a potentially aggressive situation, then until the aggressor commits himself, he (the aggressor) has "a thousand attacks," i.e. his mind, up until that point was "open" or un-committed. But the moment an action is initiated, the "open mind" is immediately narrowed to that one action. Consequently, the Aikido exponent, in maintaining his or her own "open mind" (by not initiating any attacks), has the advantage of being able to redirect any attack using limitless Aikido resourcefulness and variety. It also follows that, so long as an attack is being made, the exponent has only it to deal with, hence, no "blocking" or other interruption of the attacker's commitment, forms part of Aikido technique.

This principle of "open mind" is one of the main reasons why Aikido is a defense art in which competition can play no part. The fundamental ethic of Aikido is clear. Aikido embodies the principle that there is no "right" against which an attack may be initiated or justified. There is, of course, an acknowledged right to response and defend.

Aikido thus becomes a way of living as much as a method of physical self-defense, and the students are encouraged to recognize the opportunities for the practice of Aikido self-discipline and ethics, in their daily lives.

The basic principles of "harmony" and non-aggression, blatant in the physical study, may be taken into the "outside world" and directly applied to our relationships with those around us. Ueshiba tells us that Aikido is not a technique to fight with, but rather, is a way to self-understanding, the understanding of others, and hence, to reconcile the world.



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### **Takemusu Aiki**

A literal translation of "Takemusu Aiki" is not straightforward; however, it may be best understood as being the unlimited proliferation of Aiki (do) techniques by virtue of their fundamental origins, hence their integration, resulting in boundless variations, using the basic forms of attack (katate dori, shomen uchi, tsuki etc.) as primers. For example, dai ikkyo, in its varied forms may be practiced from shomen uchi, yokomen uchi, katate dori, sod-dori, kata dori, ryo-kata tori, ryote dori, morote dori, eri dori, mune dori, tsuki, ushiro ryote-dori, kube sime, and so on. This is "Takemusu Aiki". According to Morihei Ueshiba and understanding and practice of Takemusu Aiki is vital to Aikido. Without it, Aikido is nothing.

Takemusu Aiki, also embraces the integration of separate techniques. For instance, an initial response to a shomen-uchi attack might well be an irimi movement leading to dai ikkyo, but may, without loss of balance or advantage, be "changed" to finish in koshinage.

Students are encouraged to recognize and practice the concept of Takemusu Aiki, for it is training of this kind that produces an exponent of "open mind" who is capable of rabid execution of techniques welling up from within, that ordinarily would be beyond perception.



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## Appendix B

### Shihan Mitsunari Kanai 'A Thought on Reigisaho'

*Kanai Sensei was the Chief Instructor at the New England Aikikai, located in Cambridge Massachusetts. Kanai Sensei was uchi deshi of O-sensei for many years and is presently ranked seventh dan. Kanai Sensei is not only an expert in Aikido but is also an expert in the art of laido (sword drawing).*

#### **Fundamental Philosophy of Reigi**

*Translated by Taitetsu Unno*

The motivating principle of human survival, based upon the instinctual need of food and sex, is power. The ability to effectively use power is crucial for the sustenance of life itself. The technology of fighting, premodern and modern, is an expression of this power, and the human race has survived to this point in history because of the ability to properly use this power. Power, in fact, advances civilization and culture. The basic principle of power is deeply rooted in life itself, and it is still the basis of human society, as we know it today.

The student of Aikido, regardless of the reason, has chosen this particular form of martial art as his or her path, seeking to integrate it into daily life and undertaking the practice with dedication and constancy. Some people get enjoyment out of the Aikido training while some others get lost and fall into confusion. Some approach the training selfishly while others approach with modesty. Each person's approach to the training is a personal expression of his or her sufferings and conflicts as a human being. Thus, a person applies his or her own judgment to Aikido and tries to give his or her own meaning to Aikido. The significance of Aikido, first of all, is that it is a martial art, but it also has meanings (in) the manifestation of natural laws and as a psychological, sociological, physiological, and ethical and religious phenomenon. All of these are overlapping, although each has its own unique identity and together, they constitute what we call Aikido.

If we pursue the combative aspect of Aikido in our training, we can find an extremely lethal and destructive power in Aikido. Therefore, if Aikido is misused, it can become a martial art of incomparable danger. Originally, martial arts meant this dangerous aspect. Aikido is no exception. Thus, any combative art unaccompanied by a strict philosophical discipline of life "A Thought on Reigisaho" and death is nothing but a competitive sport. While sports do not deal directly with life-or-death situations, they nevertheless advocate certain values necessary for the building of character: for example, the observance of rules, respect for others, sportsmanship, proper dress and manners. This should be even more true and essential in the art of Aikido because Aikido deals with the question of life or death and insists on the preservation of life. In such an art, is it not unquestionably appropriate to emphasize the need of dignified Rei in human interactions? Therefore, it is said that Rei is the origin and final goal of Budo.

Some people may react negatively to this emphasis on etiquette as old-fashioned, conservative and even feudalistic in some societies, and this is quite understandable. But we must never lose sight of the essence of Rei. Students of Aikido are especially required to appreciate the reason for the meaning of Reigisaho, for it becomes an important step toward misgoi, which is at the heart of Aikido practice.



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## Fundamental Philosophy of Reigi (cont'd)

At any rate, people working in martial arts tend to become attached to technical strength. They become arrogant and boorish, bragging of their accomplishments. They tend to make unpolished statements based on egoism. They immerse themselves in self-satisfaction. They not only fail to contribute anything to society but, as human beings, their attitudes are underdeveloped, and their actions are childish. What is important about Reigisaho is that it is not simply a matter of bowing properly. The basis of Reigisaho is the accomplishment of the purified inner self and the personal dignity essential to the martial artist.

If we advance this way of thinking, the matter of Reigisaho becomes the question of how one should live life itself. It determines that one's mental frame and physical posture should be prior to any conflict situation. Furthermore, in the actual conflict situation, the guard-posture must have no openings. Thus, Reigisaho originates in a sincere and serious confrontation with life and death. Above all, Reigisaho is an expression of mutual respect in person-to-person encounters, a respect of each other's personalities, a respect with results from the martial artist's confrontations with life-or-death situations. The culmination of the martial artist's experience is the expression of love for all humanity. This expression of love for all humanity is Reigisaho.

The martial artist's respect for the self and for others only tends to become coarse and unpolished. So the idea of Reigisaho, that each person is important, functions as a filter to purify and sublimate the martial artist's personality and dignity. Reigisaho thus melts into a harmonious whole with the personal power and confidence that the martial artist possesses. This coming together establishes a peaceful, secure and stable inner-self, which appears externally as the martial artist's personal dignity. Hence, a respectful personality with strength and independence is actualized. Therefore, Reigisaho is a form of self-expression. The formalized actions of Reigisaho reveal the total knowledge and personality of the martial artist.

We, who are trying to actualize ourselves through Aikido, should recognize that we are each independent. Only with such deep awareness of the self, can we carry out a highly polished Rei with confidence.

In short, Reigisaho is to sit and bow perfectly and with dignity. In this formalized expression of Rei, there exists the martial artist's expression of self-resulting from his or her philosophy of life and death. For this reason, the martial artist shows merciful care and concern for those who walk on the same path. The martial artist shows merciful care and concern for all who seek to develop themselves in mind, body and spirit, with sincere respect for other human lives.

In order for any external, physical act to be complete, it must be an expression of the total person. Abstractly, the external form includes the inside. This is a complete form. For Reigisaho, that means that the external act was from the deep heart or mind. Also, the heart or mind was using the external act for its expression. This is (a) complete act. The formalized expression of the inner and outer person harmonized in the Saho of the Reigi.



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## Saho - formalized expression of Rei

Reigisaho thus contains varied implications regarding the inner life, but the observable form is a straightforward expression of respect for others, eliminating all unnecessary motions and leaving no trace of inattention. In the handling of martial art weapons, the safest and most rational procedure has been formalized so that injury will not fall upon others as well as on oneself. Ultimately, the formalized movements become a natural movement of the martial artist who has become one with the particular weapon. Below is an outline of the basics of Saho which I consider necessary knowledge for the martial artist.

✦ Seiza - formal Japanese-style sitting.

From your natural standing position, draw your left leg slightly backwards (in some cases the right leg), kneel down on your left knee while staying on your toes. Then kneel on your right knee, lining up both feet while on your toes. Sit down slowly on both heels, as you straighten your toes, placing them flat on the floor so that you sit on the soles of your feet. Place either your left big toe on your right big toe, or have both big toes lightly touch each other side by side.

Next, place both hands on your thighs and fingers pointing slightly inward. Spread out both elbows very slightly but naturally, dropping the tension in your shoulders into the tanden or the pit of the stomach. Raise your sternum, which will naturally straighten your back (do not stiffen your back), look straight ahead of you, and calm your body and mind for proper breathing. The space between the knees on the floor should be about the width of two or three fists.

- ✦ Rei before the Shomen - from the seiza position, slide both palms of your hands forward to the floor about a foot in front of you, forming a triangle, and then bow by lowering your face slowly and quietly towards the center of the triangle. Do not raise your hip or round your back as you do so; 'A Thought on Reigisaho' it is important to bend your body at the waist, keeping the back straight as possible. After a brief pause, gradually raise your bowed head pulling up both hands at the same time. Return both hands to the original seiza position and look straightforward.
- ✦ Rei towards fellow students - From the position of seiza, slide your left hand forward slowly, followed by the right hand, and place them on the floor about a foot in front of you, forming a triangle, identical to the procedures described above. Follow the bow; pull back your right hand while raising our body, followed by the left hand, and return to the original seiza position.
- ✦ Rei towards teachers - The same etiquette as above is observed for bowing to your teacher, but the student should remember to lower his or her head in a bow before the teacher does, and to raise his or her own head after the teacher raises his or hers. Please remember that your bow shows your mental readiness.
- ✦ Standing from the seiza position - First get on your toes, then begin to stand as you move your right foot (or left foot) half a step forward. Stand up slowly and quietly and pull back the right (or left) foot so that you are standing naturally.
- ✦ Saho when holding sword (and other weapons) - The sword is normally placed on the sword stand with the handle to the left of you and the blade facing upward. (The side of the sword thus seen is called the front of the sword). The placement of the sword is reserved for self-protection in cases of emergencies and when retiring at night.
- ✦ Rei to the Shomen - Standing - The sword should be held up at eye level and the bow should be made slowly from the waist with the back kept straight. The sword is raised slightly during the bow.
- ✦ Rei in front of Shomen – Sitting  
Sit in seiza. Place the sword on the floor in front of your body with the blade pointing towards you. The sword should be parallel to your body. Slide both hands simultaneously down from your thighs to the floor and bow to the Shomen.
- ✦ Rei towards fellow students and teachers – Sitting.  
The sword should be alongside the left side of your body, blade towards you. Put down your left hand on the floor first when bowing and pull up your right hand first when rising from the bowing position.

This concludes the description of the minimally required basics of Reigisaho. The brevity of the explanations was intended to avoid possible confusion but may also have led to lack of clarity and thoroughness of explanation concerning certain procedures. If I have not been generous enough in writing my description of Reigisaho, then I hope that you will forgive me and give others and me the chance to teach you more in the future.



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## Appendix C

### Shihan Mitsugi Saotome Philosophy of Aikido

*Saotome Sensei is Chief Instructor of the Washington, DC Aikikai. He also heads the organization known as Ueshiba Schools of Aikido. Saotome Sensei was a personal student of O-sensei for many years and is presently ranked seventh dan.*

When you read about O-sensei's life and then go to the dojo, you may wonder if you'll ever accomplish a good forward roll. How very difficult it seems to merge such a wonderful philosophy with your aching body! The words seem lovely, but the reality often seems to be confusion and sometimes pain. It is at these very moments that the teachings of O-sensei can speak directly to your heart and mind. What you have been given is a wondrous mirror that presents you with yourself at this very moment. The competition, the goals, the conflicts, the joys are yours. They are occurring right now. You need not worry about your future, including the attack you may be caught with on a dark street. Aikido has given you a moment in your life that tells you exactly how you see yourself with others. The more you practice, the more you have the opportunity to develop a mind and body that integrates the greatness of O-sensei's teachings.

When we come to the dojo, we are taking time to learn how to reconcile the conflicts within our lives; perhaps this is what attracted you to Aikido in the first place. The philosophy of Takemusu Aiki - love and protection for all living things - is really not just some nice words. As you learn more about how Aikido is practiced, as you gain, in time, and understanding of how the movements are done, as you develop clarity for the motivations and responses of uke and nage, the philosophy becomes an active part of your training. Harmony with nature begins with you. It extends to your interactions with your partner, your classmates, your instructors, and to all levels of your life. Aikido is a way of life!

What you are engaging in is a process. Through this process, you come to moments in which you must decide in what manner to choose to live your life, how you choose to live with others in the world. The skills you develop over the years will alter your image of yourself. With added confidence, experience, integration of your feelings and thoughts with your body, and social interaction of Aikido training, the values in your life make adjustments.

#### **Philosophy of Aikido:**

Now the techniques you've been practicing for years become more expressive, they come to mean something personal to you. This is the time in your training to reflect on O-sensei's message and begin to incorporate it into your practice.

In the meantime, it is good to remember, no matter what your level, why O-sensei called his art Ai-Ki-Do:



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As the words for 'harmony' and "love" can both be pronounced ai, I decided to name my unique Budo Aikido, although the word Aiki is an old one - Aiki is not a technique to fight with or defeat an enemy. It is the way to reconcile the world and make human beings one family.

We are training in skills, which can serve to protect our loved ones and ourselves, and these skills are meant to turn our enemies into friends and our hearts away from fighting. Aikido's language is an international language. The result of our training can be a peaceful world.

One last thing to remember: The body learns slowly compared to the mind. The process of learning Aikido includes many repetitions of the same movements, many errors, many new things to learn. Each class you attend will bring out a detail you may have never noticed before. Just when you think you've accomplished something, something else will happen that makes you feel as if you've gone back to zero. Try not judging yourself (or your classmates) at this time. To study an art is to undertake a process of learning that has numerous ups and downs. Remind yourself of your commitment. Reflect on O-sensei's words. Surrender a little more to the expansiveness of life. Take each class a day at a time - then the sweat, the joys, the disappointments and the rewards you experience can develop into an art you can love and call your own.



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## Appendix D

### Vocabulary and Terminology

This appendix consists of five parts: basic terminology, common dojo phrases, words of attack, parts of the body, and counting to ten. By studying the definitions, you will discover many different facets of Aikido philosophy. It is important to your practice of Aikido that you have a basic understanding of these words and be able to use them in practice. Quotation marks indicate the words of the Founder. The Japanese word or term is in bold, followed by the basic definition.

Note: The definition given may not be the only way to define a word or term; especially since some Japanese terms cannot be translated literally into the English language.

#### Basic Terminology Japanese word or term definition

**Ai** - Harmony, unity, to join or become one with. The word carries the feeling of the strength and power of natural forces.

**Ki** - Spirit; life force or vital energy; the essence of universal creative energy.

**Do** - The way or Path. "The Way" means to be one with the will of the universe and embody its function. If you are even slightly apart from it; it is no longer the "Way".

**Atemi waza** - Striking techniques, blows.

**Boken** - Wooden sword used in practice.

**Budo** - Literally, the Way of the Warrior arts; but the deeper meaning is, the Way of the protection of society, of strength and honor in peace. "A mind to serve for the peace of all human beings in the world is need in Aikido and not the mind who wishes to be strong and practices only to fell an opponent. There are neither opponents nor enemies for true Budo. Therefore, to compete in techniques, winning and losing is not true Budo. True Budo knows no defeat. 'Never defeated' means never fighting."

**Bushido** - Warrior's code, "Way of the Warrior"/ Dan

- Aikido rank, grade holder, black belt rank.

**Deshi** - Student, pupil, disciple

**Dojo** - The place where the "Way" is revealed. A place for strengthening and refinement of the body, mind, and spirit. (Formally a term used by Buddhist priests in reference to the place of worship.) **Dojo cho** - Term used for the head of the dojo; dojo leader.

**Doshu** - Honorary title for the master of the Art. The present Doshu is Moriteru Ueshiba, the grandson of the late O-sensei, Morihei Ueshiba.

**Fuku Shidoin** - Title used for assistant instructor; usually second dan and below.

**Gaeshi** - To reverse.

**Gi** - Training uniform.

**Hakama** - Wide-skirted pants worn over the gi. Symbol of a Samurai culture and an important part of the Aikido training uniform. Typically worn by Yudansha.





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Hanmi - The relaxed triangle stance of Aikido, stable yet flexible enough to move quickly in any direction.

Hanmi handachi Nage - is kneeling and opponent attacks from a standing position.

Hantai - In reverse order.

Hara - The lower abdomen; the center of life energy, physical and spiritual. Often used as a synonym for "guts", courage.

Hidari - Left (direction)

Irimi - Moving into and through the line of attack with no thought of escape. Technique of entering and choosing death.

Jo - Wooden training staff about 50" long and 3/4" to 1" thick.

Joseki - Upper side of the mat opposite the shimoseki.

Jumbi taiso - Aikido exercises.

Kaiten - To revolve or rotate.

Kamae - A posture or stance of readiness. There are many different stances, and within each stance there are different positions for the hands or weapon: jodan - high position, chudan- middle position, gedan - lower position.

Kamiza - Upper seat on the mat, opposite the shimoza.

Kannagara - The stream of God. The flow of creative energy which reaches from the past into the future.

Kata - Shoulder.

Katana - Japanese sword; blade.

Keiko - Study or practice. The deeper meaning is reflection and refinement; to return to the origin and discover reality. Only through the study of the past, and an appreciation for its experience, can we understand the present and refine our spirit.

Ken - Japanese sword

Kenkyo - Confidence with modesty.

Kiai - The release of spiritual and physical power in the form of a piercing scream originating in the hara. Literally, a meeting of the spirits.

Kohai - Junior student. Anyone who begins the study of Aikido. You owe them your help and support.

Kokyu - Power of breath and life force; the coordination of ki flow and breathing.

Kotodama - The spiritual function of sound. Every one syllable sound has its own spiritual vibration.

Kyu - White belt grade; a mudansha (shoshinsha) or undergraduate.

Ma-ai - The distance of time and space between uke and nage; the movement of mind, the stream of spirit and the direction in which mind and spirit move, along with physical distance, determines the balance and proper use of space. This is discussed in more detail in this chapter.

Migi - Right (direction).

Misogi - Purification of mind, body and spirit. Sweating is misogi; cleaning is misogi; fasting is misogi; keiko is misogi.

Mushin - No mind; a mind without ego. A mind like a warrior which reflects and does not judge.

Musubi - Opposites are but different images of the same reality. Musubi is the process of their unification. It is the movement of the spiral.

Nage - To throw; the person who throws.

Nai kan gyo - Silence and action; training which teaches us to still the mind and see inside.



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Obi - Belt (part of the gi).

Omoiyari - A mind of concern for others feeling, safety and situation.

Omote - To the front.

O-sensei - Great teacher - The title used for the Founder of Aikido.

Randori - Freestyle against multiple attack.

Rei - To bow; salutation.

Reigi Rei - also translates as Holy Spirit; gi as manifestation. Combined, it means proper etiquette, to respect the creative force and spirit which is the same in all of us. In essence - we are different, but one in origin; our bodies are different, but our spirits are the same; our functions are different, yet we share the same responsibility to God.

Ryote - Both hands.

Samurai Originally came from the verb "to serve." Noble and honorable, one who has the duty and responsibility of protecting society.

Sempai Senior student. Anyone who began the study of Aikido before you. You should respect this person's experience.

Seiza - Formal sitting position, the only proper way to sit on the mat.

Senshin - A purified and cleansed heart and spirit; enlightened attitude.

Sensei - Teacher; one who gives guidance along the way. Literally means "borne before." Shido-in  
- Title for Aikido teacher with typically the rank of third dan.

Shihan - Title for a master teacher who has been ranked at least to the grade of sixth dan.

Shimoseki - The lower side of the mat, opposite the joseki.

Shimoza - The lower seat on the mat, opposite the Shomen.

Shinai - A split bamboo practice sword

Shomen - The upper seat, the shrine which houses the picture of the Founder and the spirit of Aikido. Not a religious symbol, but a spiritual one.

Shugyo - The day-to-day struggle; the work of education to refine and purify the quality of life.

Suburi - Training. Suburi is training as opposed to kumi tachi, which is study (keiko).

Suwari waza - Techniques beginning with both attacker and defender in formal sitting position, executed from the knees.

Tachi - Japanese long sword; can also mean "from the standing position." Taijutsu Empty-handed techniques.

Takemusu Aiki - Enlightened Aikido. "Aiki has a form, and does not have a form. Aiki is a life which has a form and still flows with change; it expresses itself by changing itself. A form with a form is a word and a poem that expresses the universe limitlessly."

Vocabulary and Terminology

Tanden - The center; your center of being.

Tanren - Striking practice with a sword or boken. The same cut is practiced over and over again. Tanto  
- Wooden practice knife.

Tenkan - Turning to dissipate force.



Uchi deshi - Live-in student; personal student or disciple.

Uke One who receives; the person being thrown.

Ukemi - Techniques of falling. The art of protecting oneself from injury. The first and most important step to developing good Aikido technique is learning to take ukemi well.

Ura - To the rear.

Waza - Technique. Way of...

Yudansha - Black belt rank holders.

Zanshin - Continuity; remaining aware and prepared for the next attack.

### Common dojo phrases

Abunai - Watch out! Be careful.

Arigato gozaimasita - Thank you for what you did. (spoken at the end of practice) Do

itashimashite - You're welcome; Don't mention it.

Doozo - Please; as in go ahead. (This may be an instruction from your teacher when he wants you to begin practice after demonstrating a technique.) Gomen Nasai - I'm sorry; forgive me.

Hai yame! - Please stop! (This will be said by your instructor during keiko when he wants you to stop.)

Hajime! - Please start. (This will be said by your instructor when he wants you to begin; often said with emphasis.)

Konban wa - Good evening.

Konnichi wa - Good afternoon.

Mokuso! - Please come to attention; make yourself ready for keiko. Meditate! (This will be said in the form of a command by your Sensei or Sempai at the beginning of class and the end of class just before the ceremonial opening and closing bow, respectively.) Ogenki desu ka? - How are you?

Ohaiyoo gozaimasu - Good morning.

Onegai shimasu - Thank you for what we are about to do. Thank you for your help.

Oyasumi nasai - Good night. (when leaving.) Sayonara - Goodbye.

### Words of Attack

Hanmi handachi - Uke standing, nage sitting Jo tori - jo taking techniques.

Kao tsuki - Punch to the face.

Katate tori - One hand grab to wrist.

Kata tori - One hand grab to shoulder.

Kete tsuji - Kick to the gut.

Vocabulary and Terminology

Morote tori - Two hands on one.

Mune tori - One-lapel grab from the front.

Mune tsuki - Thrust or punch to the gut.

Ryokata tori - Front two-shoulder grab.

Shomen uchi - Strike to the forehead.

Suwari waza - Techniques from sitting.

Tachi tori - Sword-taking techniques.

Tanto tori - Knife-taking techniques.

Ushiro kubishime - Back choke.

Ushiro ryokata tori - Shoulders grabbed from behind. Ushiro tekubi tori - Both wrists grabbed from behind.

Yoko men uchi - Strike to the side of the head.



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### **Parts of the body**

Ashi Foot

Hara Stomach

Hiji Elbow

Hiza Knee

Kata Shoulder

Koshi Hip

Kubi Neck

Kuchi Mouth

Me Eye

Men Head

Mune Chest

Rokkutsu Rib

Senaka

Back Te

Hand

Tekubi Wrist

Yubi Fingers

Counting to ten

(usually called out by the instructor)

Ichi One

Ni Two

San Three

Shi or Yon Four

Go Five

Roku Six

Shichi Seven

Hatchi Eight

Ku Nine

Ju Ten

Niju Twenty

Nijuichi Twenty-one

Sanju Thirty



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## Appendix E

### From Eric Sotnak's "Aikido Primer"

It must be emphasized that there are no shortcuts to proficiency in Aikido. Consequently, attaining proficiency in Aikido is simply a matter of sustained and dedicated training. No one becomes an expert in just a few months or years. In so far as Aikido provides a way of cultivating self-discipline, such self-discipline begins with regular attendance.

Answers to some common questions:

**Q: *What if I can't throw my partner?***

A: This is a common question in Aikido. There are several answers. First, ask the instructor. Perhaps there is something you are doing incorrectly. Second, Aikido techniques, as we practice them in the dojo, are idealizations. No Aikido technique works all the time. Remember, Aikido techniques are meant to be sensitive to the specific conditions of an attack. However, since it is often too difficult to cover all the possible condition-dependent variations for a technique, we adopt a general type of attack and learn to respond to it. At more advanced levels of training we may try to see how generalized strategies may be applied to more specific cases. Third, Aikido techniques often take a while to learn to perform correctly. Ask your partner to offer less resistance until you have learned to perform the technique a little better. Fourth, many Aikido techniques cannot be performed effectively without the concomitant application of atemi (a strike delivered to the attacker for the purpose of facilitating the subsequent application of the technique). For safety's sake, atemi is often omitted during practice. Again, ask your partner's cooperation.

*Q: How would an Aikidoist far against someone trained in karate, judo, tae kwon do, ninjutsu, kickboxing.*

A1: It depends on the specific capabilities of the individuals involved.

A2: Who cares? The purpose of Aikido isn't to learn to defeat other martial artists.

A3: Offence calls for offensive strategies. Defense calls for defensive strategies. (slightly cryptic - think about it)

*Q: How often should I practice?*

A: As often or as seldom as you wish. However, a minimum of two practices per week is advised.

**Q: *How can I practice by myself?***

A: Naturally, Aikido is best learned with a partner. However, there are a number of ways to pursue solo training in Aikido. First, one can practice solo forms (kata) with a jo or boken. Second, one can "shadow" techniques by simply performing the movements of Aikido techniques with an imaginary partner. Even purely mental rehearsal of Aikido techniques can serve as an effective form of solo training.



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## Appendix F

### Training the Mind of Aikido

The founder (Morihei Ueshiba) intended Aikido to be far more than a system of techniques for self-defense. His intention was to fuse his martial art to a set of ethical, social, and dispositional ideals. Ueshiba hoped that by training in Aikido, people would perfect themselves spiritually as well as physically.

It is not immediately obvious; however, just how practicing Aikido is supposed to result in any spiritual (= psycho-physical) transformation. Furthermore, many other arts have claimed to be vehicles for carrying their practitioners to enlightenment or psychophysical transformation. We may legitimately wonder, then, whether, or how, Aikido differs from other arts in respect of transformative effect.

It should be clear that any transformative power of Aikido, if such exist at all, must not reside in the performance of physical techniques alone. Rather, if Aikido is to provide a vehicle for self-improvement and psycho-physical transformation along to the lines envisioned by the Founder, the practitioner of Aikido must adopt certain attitudes toward Aikido training and must strive to cultivate certain sorts of cognitive dispositions.

Classically, those arts which claim to provide a transformative framework for their practitioners are rooted in religious and philosophical traditions such as Buddhism and Taoism and Zen then by the "new religion", Omotokyo, it is certainly possible to incorporate aspects of Zen and Taoist philosophy and practice into Aikido. Moreover, Omotokyo is largely rooted in a complex structure of neo-Shinto mystical concepts and beliefs. It would be implausible to suppose that adoption of this structure is a necessary condition for psychophysical transformation through Aikido.

So far as the incorporation of Zen and Taoist practices and philosophies into Aikido is concerned, psychophysical transformation through the practice of Aikido will be little different from psychophysical transformation through the practice of arts such as karate, kyudo, and tea ceremony. All these arts have in common the goal of instilling in their practitioners' cognitive equanimity, spontaneity of action/response, and receptivity to the character of things just as they are (shinnyo). The primary means for producing these sorts of dispositions in trainees is a two-fold focus on repetition of the fundamental movements and positions of the art, and on preserving mindfulness in practice.



The fact that Aikido training is cooperative provides another locus for construing personal transformation through Aikido. Cooperative training facilitates the abandonment of a competitive mind-set, which reinforces the perception of self/other dichotomies. Cooperative training also instills a regard for the safety and wellbeing of one's partner. This attitude of concern for others is then to be extended to other situations than the practice of Aikido. In other words, the cooperative framework for Aikido practice is supposed to translate directly into a framework for ethical behavior in one's daily life.

### MISC...

#### How to Tie Your Belt:

