

## ADULT PROGRAM - INTRODUCTION

Aikido looks like a dance: it's intense, fun, energetic, alive. It works with big themes like bravery, intensity, self-responsibility and potential violence.

In Aikido, we're not training to defeat others. We're training not to fight at all! (Apparent contradiction is the engine that runs all deep disciplines.) That way, no one is defeated, and the overall violence level goes down. We're training to hold boundaries, to be generous, and to ground out aggression: in other words, we're training to love other human beings - even if we might not like what they are doing.

### Class Levels and Experience

Students of different levels of experience should train together in Aikido. Younger (newer) students can learn things from older (longer-training) students they will not learn from the teacher. More experienced students will learn things they didn't know they knew in teaching other students.

In addition, it's important to train at a level that challenges you to develop in an ongoing way. To support this experience, we have different course levels:

**Basics** - Classes focused on the basics of Aikido: falling, stance, etiquette, basic technique, overcoming fear.

**Ongoing** - Each student should work on the Aikido that's presented in a way appropriate to their experience level: newer students should focus on basics, more advanced students should train at the edge of their own and their partners' skill levels.

**Yudansha** - These classes are reserved for Living Aikido's Black Belts.

### Training, Rank, Love

Aikido training gives us the chance to practice the basic Aikido virtues: groundedness, centeredness, and generosity. All of these are a way to express loving kindness to our partners in class and then, because we have practiced, to those people we have intensity (apparent difficulty) with in the world.

In order to give us focus, we break up training into a series of belts: each colored to represent a positive quality we want to embody, and is tied to an Aikido technique.

We have celebrations at the end of each round of training to gather together, be seen in our training, and have fun. This is the time when students who are ready advance in rank to another belt.

## Celebrations

Our training is divided up into 6-month “rounds”.

In the middle of each round, we have a celebration practice where every student is invited to show what they’ve been working on, getting feedback from fellow students.

At the end of each **6-month round** (the ends of May and November), every student attends the special celebration class, where we gather to witness their excellence and beautiful hearts. Students are given the opportunity to demonstrate technique, and give a themed presentation.

If the student has attended the required number of classes for that round and both sensei and student feel the student is ready to progress, a new belt is gained.

Kyu	Hrs	Quality	Ukemi	Technique	Weapons	Themes	Presenting
8	16	The Unknown	Backward Roll	Sumiotoshi	Ken & Jo: Give/Receive	Randori, Mushin	Randori Face-Slap Sumiotoshi
7	32	Generous	Grabbing Attacks	Ikkyo, Shihonage	Kaiten Jo	Tenkan, Moving	Aikido Talk
6	40	Centered	Forward Rolls	Kotegaishi, Iriminage	Sancho 1	Omote, Entering	Ukemi
5	40	Sincerity	Iriminage	Kaitennage, Tenchinage	Ken Ikkyo	Receiving, Ukemi, Ura	Technique Demo
4	45	Harmony	Constant Connection	Nikkyo	Ken Shihonage	Zanshin, Jiyuwaza	Aikido Talk
3	50	Grounded	Slap Falls	Sankyo	Sancho 2	Pins, Finishing	3 Pins
2	55	Ki	Big ukemi	Kokyunage	Weapon Take-Aways	Sake no Sake no Sake	Flowing techniques Ki-waza
1	60	Gashuku	High Rolls	Yonkyo, Kotegaishi	Sancho 3	Yo-Waza, Strikes	Yo-waza Randori

## Practicalities

**Membership** is due by the 3rd of each month, unless you have already informed sensei you will not be training (no exceptions).

There is a **tuition box** at the front of the dojo - if you are paying in cash, put it in an envelope (provided) with your name on it.

Students can change their clothes and leave their shoes in the **change rooms** at the back of the dojo. Entering through the back makes this easier.

Please review the **Etiquette** and **Safety** guidelines for the dojo to make sure you understand what will be asked of you.

If you ever experience difficulty in paying your tuition - **do not stop training!** Speak with sensei about exchanging service to the dojo for tuition.

## PRACTICE SAFETY

- This training space (dojo) is for the practice of Aikido, the Way of Peace. Out of respect for Aikido, please reserve the practice of other martial arts for elsewhere.
- Especially when starting out in Aikido, all Aikido practice should be supervised by a certified Instructor, for your safety.
- There are three characteristics for all Aikido practice: Non-violence, Non-injury, Non-resistance; observe these always.
- Aikido is the way of Unity, and includes no competition or sparring. Cooperation is at the heart of all Aikido practice.
- You reserve the right to decline practice with anyone who exceeds your safety level.
- Keep your nails short and do not wear jewelry or watches on the mat.
- Use of the boken, jo and tanto is permitted only with the approval of an instructor.
- No rough play at any time in the dojo.
- To reduce the possibility of injury please be aware of your surroundings at all times.
- For reasons of safety, respect, and courtesy, please follow the sensei's (teacher's) instructions closely. Many Aikido techniques can be dangerous if not practiced properly. Emphasis should be placed on learning as much as possible through intent, observation, and sincere practice.
- If there is any doubt about the safety of any activity, don't do it! Ask the instructor!
- Please inform your sensei of any injuries that occur during practice.

# DOJO ETIQUETTE (REI)

**Purpose:** to build a history of right relationship; to embody an attitude of respect and enthusiasm.

- Please be on the mat, ready to train, **5 to 10 minutes prior to class.**
  - When you come into the *dojo* (Place of the way - our school):
    - bow toward the *shomen* (front of the dojo, where the calligraphy is)
    - say a big hello to sensei!
    - put your shoes in the shoe rack
    - take care of any personal needs (phone calls, restroom, water, etc.)
    - put on your *keiko gi* (training uniform) - left side folded over right, and make sure it's clean and in good condition. If you wear an undershirt, simple colors or inside-out is best
- Please don't bring food to the dojo.
- Please bring your own cup for water at the dojo - it helps us conserve paper.
- Before you go onto or off of the mat, bow once toward the shomen .
- Class begins and ends with all students in seiza (formal seated position), facing the shomen. Sensei will lead you in a bowing ceremony which consists of 1 bow (unity), 2 claps (earth/sky - the world), and 1 bow (gratitude). Then we say "onegaishimasu" (I'm in your hands) to start class or "domo arigatoo gozaimasu" (thank you very much) when ending class.
- Students should try to be early to the dojo; however, if lateness happens, the student should wait off the mat for sensei's attention and then do the bow-in ceremony quietly at the edge of the mat.
- When beginning or ending practice with *aite* (a partner), be grateful for the fun and learning by bowing and saying "onegaishimasu" or "arigato".
- In order to observe the clear roles of Aikido practice, please address the instructor of a class as "Sensei", even if that instructor is not Sensei Pól.
- When sensei gives you some help or suggestions, respond with "yes, sensei", or "thank you, sensei" as a way of being grateful to your teacher.
- Students should refrain from sitting within the area surrounding the shomen. Traditionally this is the place for the instructor to sit while watching class.
- When your uniform or your belt need to be put back in order, please turn away from the shomen to adjust your attire.
- Tuition does not buy training. It helps maintain a beautiful Dojo and support a staff of professional Aikido instructors. It's also a chance to affirm the abundance of life. Please be sure to pay tuition on time or speak to sensei if there's a need to do some work trade instead of paying tuition directly
- Cleaning the dojo is part of training - it helps us all maintain the space that holds us. Participate in all dojo cleanings as possible.

# WHITE BELT - BEGINNING

White Belt is an amazing place. In our adult lives, it is a time when we are not expected to know what we are doing. **Embrace not knowing!** This introductory/beginner experience is a place where you can be free of expectation, experience, and having to know what is going on! Can you imagine a better present to give yourself?

Aikido, like any true martial art, exists in the tension of seeming opposites. (If that doesn't mean anything too you, just leave it be - (a) sensei spent waaaaay too much time reading philosophy, and (b) remember you're not supposed to know anything yet!). The **two main things** you will be working on throughout Aikido are: *relaxing* and *internal structure*. It's like when a golf pro tells you 17 ways to hold your body, and then says, "Now, relax."

Every belt in Aikido has 4 things to prepare to demonstrate at the end of the round:

Belt	Quality	Technique	Ukemi	Themes
WHITE	The Unknown	Sumiotoshi	Backward Roll	Randori

- **Quality:** a way of being, something to hold in your heart and mind as you practice. The Quality for white belt is **The Unknown** or another way to put it is: **Wonder**. A sense of freedom from pre-conceived notions.
- **Technique:** One of the formal techniques of Aikido - a way to work with incoming energy to resolve it in harmony. The technique for White Belt is: **Sumiotoshi** (corner drop).
- **Ukemi:** Ukemi means receiving. In Aikido, it's the various rolls and falls we use to keep ourselves safe - and the attacks we use (like punches and grabs) that we use to give our partner something to work with.
- **Theme:** An Aikido exercise that will help you practice your Quality, Technique and Ukemi. The Theme for White Belt is **Randori**: 'ritual dance of chaos'. Every student performs a Randori during our Celebrations. The student takes the center of the mat, and gets 3 partners who will attack over and over again while the student throws them using **sumiotoshi**.

Keep this writeup handy - on your fridge, in your bathroom, on a poster in your room, so you can check in regularly with what you're working on in Aikido.

Last but not least, **Aikido is: grounded, centered, generous, non-violent, non-resistant, non-injurious right action.** Anything that embodies these qualities is good Aikido.