

Reminder, Clarification and Update on Dojo Etiquette

Please take a moment to read this carefully. It is important on many levels.

Why is etiquette important?

1. Aikido is a martial art and adhering to etiquette helps to avoid misunderstandings, and, due to the physical nature of Aikido, may help avoid injury. Remember that Etiquette is a code of behaviour.
2. Etiquette is adhered to in a similar fashion in dojos all around the world – learning the etiquette in one place means we can feel confident in the every other dojo we visit, including courses.
3. It helps us deepen our understanding of the specific cultural and spiritual setting of Aikido.
4. Please remember that etiquette is the first thing our visitors (and spectators) notice – even more so than the general standard of aikido or the number or *hakamas* on the mat. It is a reflection of yourself, the sensei and the dojo, and therefore a collective responsibility.

Etiquette outlined in KAA membership Book

For the regular practitioners who already have a KAA membership book, there is one section entitled **Traditional Aikido: Manner & Attitude** and another one entitled **Dojo Awareness: Bowing & Etiquette**. Please read these at regular intervals. An internet search on Aikido Etiquette will provide further information. For new students, the latter is the best source, and old hands should help guide our newer members when appropriate. See a scan of relevant pages at the end of this document.

Practice Notes

Aside from the more formal aspects of dojo etiquette, please note a few points about our practice:

1. We are blessed with a number of senior and experienced aikidoka who take different classes, or parts of classes, from time to time. The person at the front of the mat is ‘Sensei’ (“teacher”) – regardless of whether there is a more senior rank in the dojo at the time.
2. If, due to unforeseen circumstances, you arrive late for class, please enter the dojo quietly, and wait at the side until the Sensei signals you onto the mat. The same applies if you wish to leave the mat for any reason.
3. Please regularly cut your finger and toe nails. This is to protect your practice partners as well as yourself (e.g. catching a toe on the mat). Please also remove all jewellery, for the same reason.
4. You will hear the word ‘zanshin’ referred to regularly during practice. Zanshin is both very important, and an interesting concept (google it!). Its meaning can range from 100% concentration,

effort and alertness, to 'without hesitation' or 'complete follow through'. Applied in practice with your dojo partner, it will, without fail, improve your aikido and it will help reduce risk of injury. But it also applies to moments when you are not practicing, but listening to the sensei's instruction. Zanshin is, therefore, important for learning and absorbing instruction.

5. It is customary to sit in seiza if the teacher talks to your partner / demonstrates to your partner. Due to often crowded mats, safety comes first – so if there is a lot of activity going on around you, it may be better to watch your partner & the sensei while standing up.

The role of the instructor (sensei)

An important role of the instructor is to ensure adherence to etiquette. We tend to be polite in our dojo and do not single out people in front of everyone (as done in other places). Occasionally the instructor may say something about behaviour and etiquette in general: in this case - in the words of Terry Ezra - "always assume it is you". The instructor may also tell you privately. If there is a strong breach of etiquette the instructor may exclude students from training

Children's and young people's class (Tuesdays)

Adults should not be training with children unless agreed with the instructor. No adults should be on the mat during the children's class unless particularly requested to be there to help as uke in the demonstrating of techniques. This is because of child protection, to give the children a safe environment to train – and also enough space. Remember too that adults should behave as role models in the presence of younger dojo members.

1. Traditional Aikido: Manner & Attitude

Aikido is a modern budo: at its core is the personal growth and development of the individual - physically, mentally, socially, morally, emotionally and spiritually. The Founder said:

“ I want considerate people to listen to the voice of Aikido. It is not for correcting others.

It is for correcting your own mind.”

The spirit of Aikido comes directly from the Founder and the dojo is a special place for the succession of his teachings.

- It is the responsibility of each student to honour and sincerely follow and respect the Founder and his teachings, as understood and passed on by our Senseis.
- The Dojos/Clubs in our Association aim to operate in a strict manner, following the traditional rules of proper conduct.
- Aikido's ethical basis is the resolution of conflict through the development of harmony, both on the mat and in the conduct of every day human affairs.
- It is the responsibility of each student to co-operate in creating a positive atmosphere of harmony and respect. We also respect each other, the dojo, training equipment and our Komyokan Aikido Association.
- Although every Aikido participant is accorded equal respect, on the mat there will always be those with more experience; following the formal tradition of Aikido, this sempai/kohai relationship requires sincere respect for the more senior person.

“ In Aikido the ki of the individual self becomes unified with the ki of the entire universe.

We ourselves must ceaselessly work to realise this union.”

Founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba, 1883–April 26, 1969

3. Dojo Awareness & Bowing Etiquette

Aikido is a martial art made up of hundreds of small points; each of which could traditionally make the difference between life and death. Attention to small points of etiquette is a valuable part of training and heightens awareness at all times in the dojo, leading to greater safety for all and sharp focus on personal development.

- When entering and leaving the dojo, perform a standing bow, facing O Sensei's picture at the **kamiza**.
- After stepping on to the mat, and before leaving the mat, first perform a kneeling bow, **rei**.
- Before Sensei enters the dojo to start the class, all students should quietly prepare mentally, lining up in kneeling position (**seiza**), in order of experience, new starters to the left.
- At the beginning of class all students should be alert, bowing with Sensei towards the **kamiza**, then returning Sensei's bow, saying “**Onegai shimas(u) ” おねがい します**”. Essentially, it means “please”, and it is a widely used polite greeting, (for example, when first bowing to the instructor or to each other).
- During class, partners bow to each other respectfully. If the instructor teaches you and your partner individually, kneel whilst watching your partner and both bow afterwards.
- If arriving late or leaving class early, wait until Sensei is no longer demonstrating and acknowledges you, then bow correctly.
- For your practice, make sure your **keikogi** stays correctly tied. Keep it clean and in good repair. Do not wear jewellery, tie back long hair, keep nails short and clean. To keep feet & mat clean, wear **zori** to and from the mat, neatly placing zori beside the mat.
- At the end of class, line up as at the start, bow with Sensei; then bow to Sensei, all saying “**Domo arigato gozaimashita**” (i.e. thank you, most politely). Finally, bow & thank each other.
- Please help to maintain and improve your dojo.

The Founder encouraged us to practise with enjoyment.