



Dojo Etiquette

The observance of etiquette in Aikido is essential to training. It draws us towards a cultural understanding of Japan and the principles of the Japanese teaching methodology. For the most part, it is a system of respect and courtesy, something not taken lightly in Aikido training. At first, etiquette will seem strange and somewhat complex. It is best to develop your sense of etiquette while you train. While some of the procedures of etiquette may not make sense at first, it is important to realize they are a part of a highly developed social system of values and samurai traditions. As you train and develop, you will come to understand etiquette in a much larger sense. Many students, in fact, eventually adopt many of the principles and precepts of etiquette into their everyday lives.

Key Points

Entering the Dojo

- Take off your hat and shoes, dispose of chewing gum and turn off any devices
- Change from your street clothes into a training uniform (a dogi if possible). This will help you to shed your outside concerns and focus on the current task- Aikido training.
- When you greet your fellow students or an instructor, greet them by bowing and saying “Osu!” This is customary in the practice of Yoshinkan Aikido.
- When coming onto or leaving the practice mat, bow to the front of the dojo. This expresses your intent to concentrate fully on Aikido training, and provides an opportunity to remind yourself to be grateful for the chance to train in Aikido.
- When the class is ready to begin, before the teacher sits, all students should line up in seiza in a straight line. The person to your right should be of equal or higher rank than the person to your left, equal or lower rank.
- The highest ranking student will command “Moku So.” This means to close your eyes and prepare yourself mentally for class. The same student will then say “Moku So Yame” (open your eyes) and “Shomen ni rei” (bow to the front), and then “Sensei ni rei” (bow to the Sensei). If, however, the person instructing the class is 2nd degree or lower the phrase “Otagai ni rei” (bow to each other) is used.
- If you arrive late to class (a practice that is not encouraged), it is proper etiquette to wait just outside the mat quietly, until sensei invites you to join in. Once you enter the class, you should sit at the back of the class, close your eyes and meditate for a few moments to calm your mind to prepare for class.

Then, do 30 push-ups before joining the warm up. This is an excellent way of warming up quickly, and helps you remind yourself to be on time in the future.

- If you arrive late for the line-up, but before Sensei has come onto the mat, you should take your place at the end of the line so as not to disturb the class.
- When Sensei is instructing the class, or if you wish to listen to an explanation being given to another student during the practice, you should kneel politely in seiza. When being corrected by Sensei or a senior student, bow and say "Osu!"
- During the class, any student wishing to leave the mat or to practice something other than what the class is practicing, must first ask the permission of the instructor.
- Always begin and end your training with your partner by bowing to each other
- Never shout, curse, or become angry on the mat
- Talking on the mat during class is impolite and interferes with the concentration of other students. When discussion is necessary, keep it brief and quiet.
- It is very poor etiquette to question the teacher's or senior's authority or technical knowledge, and especially so during class. If you are confused about something, ask respectfully. Don't insist upon your point of view.
- When class is ending, you should quickly line up and kneel before the instructor sits. Remain kneeling until the instructor has left the mat.
- After class is over, you should find your partners and bow to each of them, thanking them for training with you.
- Other important aspects of etiquette deal with more commonplace concerns. ***Please remember to pay your dues by the first of each month.*** It is easy in our enjoyment of Aikido to sometimes forget our responsibilities to Aikido, and to our instructors.
- In Aikido we work with partners, therefore there will be a certain amount of physical contact. It is your responsibility to respect the personal boundaries of everyone you train with. If you have concerns please bring them to the attention of Sensei.
- Serious or consistent defiance of dojo etiquette is grounds for the removal of your membership. If this is necessary the following steps will be taken.
 1. **After the first incident:** a verbal warning will be given from Sensei or the acting teacher.
 2. **After the second incident:** a Letter of Warning will be given from Sensei.
 3. **After the third incident:** the member will be asked to leave the dojo immediately. Membership fees will not be refunded.

If any occurrence is serious enough **Sensei may proceed directly to step 3.**

In short, our practice of correct etiquette may be thought of as a courtesy or kindness, and an extension of our Aikido training not to be overlooked.