



# 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 Japanese teaching methodology. For the most part, it is a system of respect and courtesy, something not to be taken lightly in Aikido training. At first, etiquette will seem strange and somewhat complex. It is best to develop your sense of etiquette as 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

- When entering the dojo, take off your hat and shoes, put out any cigarettes, dispose of chewing gum, turn off radios, and stop any other distracting practices that might interfere with Aikido training. Visitors are also expected to observe these guidelines for conduct.
- At the dojo, change from your street clothes and put on a training uniform (a *dogi* if possible). This will help you shed outside concerns and focus on the current task - Aikido training.
- When you greet a fellow student or an instructor, greet them by bowing and saying "*Osu!*" This is customary in the practice of Japanese Budo.
- 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 sitting in *seiza* in a straight line. The person sitting to your right should be of equal or higher rank; 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 Sensei).
- If you arrive for class late (a practice that is not encouraged), it is proper etiquette to wait standing just outside the mat quietly, until Sensei invites you to join in. Once you enter onto the mat, you should kneel at the back of 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 in the warm-up. This is an excellent way of warming up quickly, and helps you to remind yourself to be on time in the future.
- If you arrive late for line-up, but before Sensei has come onto the mat, you should take your place in line after the white belts so as not to disturb the class.



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- When Sensei is instructing the class, or if you wish to listen to an explanation given to another student in practice, you should kneel politely in *seiza*. When corrected by Sensei or another 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 practising, 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 a teacher's or senior's authority or technical knowledge, and especially so during a class. If you are confused about something, ask respectfully. Don't insist on your point of view.
- When the class is ending, you should quickly line up and kneel before the instructor sits. Remain kneeling until the instructor has left the mat.
- After the 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 work 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 will be revoked and Membership Fees will not be refunded.

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

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