

## **IrAF Proper Conduct During Aikido Training**

### **General Principles**

Aikido as a Budo (martial Way of Japan) is a means of personal development, a private study - training the body, mind and spirit.

Each person's purpose for training, perspective of the training and progress within the training are of necessity subjective, personal and generally private. The practice is also a cooperative process, with a partner or a number of partners. In order to properly allow everyone training with you to have a constructive practice it is important to always conduct oneself with an attitude of respect, sincerity and modesty.

In Japan the position of 'Sensei', or Teacher is one of (great) honour. Our teachers and seniors are not selling techniques, but are handing down the teachings of the Founder, the Ueshiba family and Aikikai Hombu dojo, they should be treated with proper respect at all times.

Also unique to Japan, is the *sempai/kohai* (senior/junior) system, senior students (both in rank and in age) should also be dealt with respectfully and modestly, never put yourself above a senior student.

It is equally important that the instructors and seniors (of all ranks) have sufficient discipline to maintain these characteristics throughout/within practice both as Uke and Tori.

Aikido is founded on a philosophy of harmony. There should never be any fighting or competition in the training area, nor is training a time to display your strength, knowledge, technical prowess or flaunt your ego. Always train in a spirit of cooperation and modesty. In every class there are people of different gender, age and physical abilities so while it is ideal is to always train as vigorously as possible, the physical ability and training goals of each Partner must be taken into consideration, case by case.

Whenever a Sensei gives instructions or advice, always watch & listen carefully and try to follow as best as possible. Never argue with a teacher, even if another teacher has said something different. There are many ways of performing techniques and you should follow each teacher's instructions, in every class, to the best of your ability.

There are different items of etiquette derived from Japanese (Aikido training) culture which are particular to Aikido training that should be learned as quickly as possible. Some are obvious (in purpose/benefit) and some are not - but they contribute to various aspects of Aikido training. Always observe the behaviour of others so that you can continue to learn the proper etiquette. If at any time you are unsure of the proper behaviour or way of doing, politely ask a senior student & follow the senior's lead.

In spite of these rules & the rigorous discipline of training, the practice of Aikido should always be a joyful activity. Constructive and enjoyable practice sessions will be assured if each student brings a positive and open minded attitude coupled with goodwill and a respect for others as a fundamental.

After that the most important contribution is to develop skill as 'UKE' – good posture, clear attacks, physical confidence & real attention to following the movement of the techniques. Do not interrupt, obstruct or resist your partner's efforts to practice. Rather, observe their movement and intention closely.

## Dojo Etiquette

1. Upon entering the dojo, bow. Prepare yourself, do not sit around chitchatting.
2. Maintaining cleanliness is a health benefit and a good training discipline. Always keep yourself tidy, clean and well groomed. Training suits {keikogi} should be clean at all times and well mended. Never wear jewellery while training for this is dangerous both to one's partner and oneself.
3. All students should arrive sufficiently early to allow for stretching and warming up before class begins. 5 minutes before the starting time, everyone should be sitting quietly, practice *tanden kokyuhō* while waiting for the appearance of the teacher.
4. The formal opening and closing of each class is an important ceremony. Every student should be on time to participate. If late, never enter the practice area at the same time as the instructing sensei - wait until a time when you will not disturb others and quietly join the class. Do not leave the class during practice except in the cases of illness or injury and never leave without consulting with the Sensei.
5. It is proper etiquette to sit in seiza at all times when in the practice area. This is also the correct position to sit in while waiting for your turn for testing or when observing the tests. Cross-legged or other forms of sitting are only permissible in the case of injuries, when necessary sit to the back of the class. One should never sit in a casual or disrespectful manner, & never sit in front ie with your back to the Shomen (front of the training area).
6. When the Sensei is demonstrating a technique to the class as a whole, sit at the side of the practice area and pay close attention. This is not a time to be talking, wiping your face or adjusting your clothing. When the Sensei signals the end of a technique stop immediately and go quickly to the edge of the mat area. If during the practice period, the Sensei goes to an individual student to demonstrate or explain something, those students in the immediate area may stop practising and sit to watch the explanation. It is important to give the Sensei sufficient space if the tatami area is crowded. After the individual explanation is finished you then bow to the Sensei and continue on with the practice.
7. Knowledge in Aikido is gained through constant and repetitive practice and not through talking. Talking on the mat especially during practice should be kept to a minimum. Never instruct your partner during the training session. You should always concentrate on practice, if waiting for a turn, you should be sitting in seiza watching your other partners.
8. If your partner does not understand even the basic movements of the technique it is permissible to help guide him through it by skilful 'leading' as UKE. **NB.** Only senior black belt students (4dan+) should attempt to teach or correct junior partners and even those non-verbal corrections should be kept to a minimum.
9. The Sensei is responsible for the overall progress of the class and should not be interrupted without good cause. If you feel that you must ask a question you should wait until he is going by, then bow, wait for acknowledgement and politely ask your question, bowing again after the answer is received: never call out or wave to the Sensei expecting him to come to you.
10. Aikido should never be practiced after having consumed alcohol or drugs.

