

Aikido Etiquette

Aikido Suit

You are expected to wear an Aikido/Judo suit which we call a “gi”. Please purchase one of these as soon as you can. These range in price from around £30 to around £50.

Please only purchase a white suit with no additional patterns or colours. Unfortunately, if you wear a coloured suit or one with large designs or brands you will be asked to change to an all white suit.

More information about getting a new suit can be found here: <http://aikidoforglasgow.com/students>

For men, the hakama is worn for black belts and above. It is customary for women to be welcome to wear the hakama from white belt. The hakama is quite complicated to tie, make sure you are happy to commit to the practise before making the decision to purchase one.

As part of our etiquette we aim to keep our feet clean for the mats. In the changing room, we aim to not allow our bare feet to touch the floor and instead wear sandals which we remove prior to walking onto the mat. This is an additional sign of courtesy and respect to the dojo and your fellow training partners.

Jewellery

Please remove ALL jewellery prior to the class. If you have jewellery that can not be removed, please speak to your teacher about this.

Personal Hygiene

Please keep your nails and toe nails trimmed. Maintain a good standard of personal hygiene and wash your gi regularly.

Weapons

We practise using the Bokken (wooden sword), the Jo (Staff) and the Tanto (knife). We will not begin to use these until after yellow belt but you can purchase these if you wish.

Aikido UK Etiquette

The etiquette that goes along with training is an important part of creating the correct atmosphere for a successful class. It may seem that the etiquette is simply a set of rituals with no real purpose but in reality they contribute to having a safe, productive and valuable practise. When the etiquette degrades in a class it often leads to the atmosphere and spirit of the class starting to diminish over time and the practise suffers.

Here are some basic etiquettes.

1. Please arrive early taking into account time to change in the dressing room.
2. Please wear sandals to cover your feet in the changing room and on your walk from the changing room to the dojo and try not to allow your bare feet to touch the floor of the changing room. Remove all jewellery (or cover with tape).
3. As you enter the dojo perform a small standing bow. Please make an effort to leave the stresses, negativities and resentments of the day behind. Do not bring the problems of your life onto the mat with you or take your own problems or resentments out on others.
4. Leave negative and unconstructive language behind as much as possible. Swearing and insulting language are not allowed in the changing room, on the mat or at any of our social gatherings.
5. Approach the class with the attitude of a beginner. Practice with humility and gratitude. Be open to learn, whoever you happen to be practising with.

6. If you arrive late, enter the dojo but do not walk onto the mat until invited by the Sensei. We should aim to remain on the mat during practise. Please indicate to Sensei if you are going to leave the mat for any reason. It should not be a regular habit to leave the mat to drink water or use the toilet (unless there is a medical reason). Please be prepared to for the duration of the class. Please feel free to leave immediately without indicating for any emergency or medical situations.

7. We use the Japanese word Sensei to refer to the teacher of the class at all times. The literal translation of the word is “one who comes before” but in the martial arts context it simply means teacher. If for whatever reason someone else has been brought in to teach a class you should also refer to them as Sensei. If you attend another class the teacher should be referred to as Sensei.

You will have your main Sensei, who should always be referred to as Sensei at any dojo in our group and also at social events for the group. Your teacher may also indicate other teachers that should be referred to as Sensei within a class or at a course.

8. Only The Sensei Teaches On The Mat. Unless otherwise indicated, there is only one teacher on the mat. Do not attempt to teach others unless you are specifically directed to. When practising with others we can help make small corrections and adjustments to help our partner but we are not there to give instruction to each other.

Try to train with as little talking as is necessary. If something is not working, just try again. Talking and over thinking often break down a good flow of practise. We are aiming to develop a non resistant mind.

Please ask the Sensei if something is not clear and you need help.

9. If you are working with a group, the highest grade in the group has authority. If the Sensei is not available to help then the highest grade may help with making small corrections. A lower grade should never try to teach in a group where a higher grade is present.

10. The Start Of The Class - Before class, feel free to go onto the mat and warm up, stretch or practise techniques. We perform a seated bow as we go onto the mat towards the ki sign. The Ki Federation of Great Britain says this about bowing to the Ki sign: “This represents the universe, or nature herself. If we bow with the correct attitude we will remind ourselves that we are not above nature, but a small part of something infinitely greater than ourselves. But do not make the mistake of thinking that we are worshipping the Ki sign in any way.”

When the Sensei claps, this is an indication to line out. We line out by grading with the lowest grade sitting at the very left of the line and the highest grade at the right hand side. If there are too many students for one line, we form 2 lines with the higher grades in the front line. The centre of the line should be in line with the Ki sign.

Black belts sit one row ahead of kyu grades (a word for white and colour belts). 2nd Dan sit one row ahead of first dan, and 3rd dan sit closest to the teacher. 4th Dans sit on the left flank of the dojo during the line out and are invited to wear the black gi during. 5th Dans and above sit on the right side of the dojo and are invited to wear the white hakama during courses and gradings.

Different Aikido clubs around the world will start in different ways. If you attend those clubs please follow their etiquette as much as possible. The Sensei will lead the class in bowing to the Ki Sign. Then they will turn to the class and we bow to each other. The Sensei will say “good evening” to which we respond “Good evening Sensei” or at the end “Thank you” to which we respond “Thank you Sensei”.

We go into a short warm up before we begin practise. Please aim to follow along with the rhythm and direction of the Sensei.

11. As we begin practise, we sit down to listen when the Sensei claps their hands. It is important we sit down so that all can see. Generally we sit on our knees in “seiza”. Please feel free to sit cross legged if you can not do this comfortably.

12. At the start of practise we bow to our first partner or group. We must always be grateful and respectful that our partner is there to help us to practise and develop. One of our principles is to “respect your partners Ki” which in this context means to train with our partner to a level that is safe for them. We should not aim to take advantage of or hurt our training partner.

13. If a Sensei brings you up to show a technique for the class or helps out at a group it is often customary to bow afterwards to acknowledge gratitude before returning to your seat or group.

14. End of class - At the end, the class the Sensei will lead you to form a circle and bows to each other. The class will then line out once again at the end. We bow towards the ki sign and then bow towards each other. At the end, please thank all of your partners individually before leaving the mat. We perform a seated bow towards the ki sign on leaving the mat and a standing bow when leaving the room.

Gradings

We actively train for grading as it is a great way to gauge your progression, though they are not compulsory. We usually have 2 gradings per year. People often ask how long it could take them to reach black belt. The minimum time is 3.5 to 5 years depending on commitment.