

DOJO ETIQUETTE

Central Illinois Aikikai

1. When entering or leaving the dojo, bow in the direction of the shrine. Also do this when stepping on and off the mat.

There is a picture of O'Sensei which is the focal point of the dojo. This is a traditional manner of showing respect to the founder. If you are uncomfortable with bowing for any reason, please sit quietly while other members bow.

2. Shoes must be removed before stepping onto the wooden floor and practice mat

Zoris (sandals etc.) may be worn inside the dojo. When stepping onto the mat, place zoris neatly at the edge of the mat.

3. Students should arrive before the start of practice, arrange themselves in a straight line in proper order of rank with the higher rank(s) to the right, and wait for the instructor to signal the beginning of class.

This should be a time of quiet meditation. It is suggested that students sit seiza. Those with knee injuries etc. may sit with legs crossed.

4. At the start of class the instructor and the students bow to the shrine. The students and the instructor then exchange bows and class is formally opened.

5. It is proper to ask the instructor for permission to practice when arriving late for class or leaving early.

If you are late, sit at the edge of the mat and wait to be invited to join by the instructor.

6. When the instructor claps, students should sit down promptly and observe attentively as the instructor demonstrates the next technique or exercise. When the instructor indicates that practice is to resume, students bow to the instructor and promptly resume practicing.

Almost all questions should be reserved for practice with your partner as the instructor comes around. In this dojo we usually change partners for each technique, which may differ from other dojos.

7. Practice with a minimum amount of talk and be aware of those practicing around you.

Unlike seminars, when the instructor is teaching nearby, it is not necessary to sit down and watch them unless the instructor says to watch.

8. Once engaged in practice, clear the mind of everything but the lesson at hand and the principles of Aikido. Strive to practice with unity of mind-body.

9. Acknowledge former and new practice partners with a bow/thank you.

10. Partners are not opponents. Technique is learned through and with your partner. It should be a pleasure to be thrown as well as to throw. Each movement/technique teaches the principles of Aikido and should be practiced sincerely. If your partner applies a technique or throw with unnecessary roughness please let them know immediately, and they should adjust.

***Safety note:** tapping your body or the mat is a universal communication to the other person to stop immediately. If something hurts or you have had enough, tap right away. If someone you are working with taps, you must stop what you are doing.

11. Be aware of the ability of your partner so that injuries are avoided.

Nage should always be watchful for signs that uke is in pain or discomfort; uke should always be in control of their attack. Uke may slow their attack to show they should be treated gently.

12. At the end of class students should straighten up their uniforms/clothes and line up in (approximate) order of rank. The instructor and students bow to the shrine and then the students thank the instructor and they exchange bows.

In seminars students should remain in seiza until the instructor leaves the mat or permits the students to leave. Then, students should bow to each practice partner. In our dojo after class, we do this part "country style" by sitting in a semi circle (no backs towards the shrine) and bowing simultaneously.

13. After every class, all participants are expected to clean.

Cleanness of the dojo is the responsibility of everyone who practices in it. If you do not know what tasks need to be done, ask a senior student.

14. Hygiene and miscellaneous: Keep your gi clean. Keep finger and toe nails trimmed and clean. Mark injuries with red tape. Do not wear jewelry on the mat. Do not chew gum in the dojo. Do not eat on or near the mat. Do not lie on the mat or sit with legs stretched out.

It is the responsibility of the higher ranked members to see that rules of etiquette are understood and followed. The senior students should assist beginners in learning proper etiquette, Aikido exercises, and ukemi.

Use common sense and basic courtesy. Be respectful of the dojo, the instructor, fellow dojo members, and guests.

Individual instructors may differ in terms of what they expect in the way of adherence to the above. As a baseline, remember that simple politeness is the most basic rule. In the words of O'Sensei:

"Martial arts begin and end with courtesy."