

Basics of Aikido for the New Practitioner

This handout is intended for people who are new to aikido to help them get oriented. Aikido is “huge”, and there are many, many more things to learn. Please refer to the student handbook on the website (www.alamoareaaikikai.org) for more detailed and comprehensive information.

What is Aikido?

- The common translation of “aikido” is “the way (do) of harmonizing (ai) energy/spirit (ki)”.
- Japanese martial arts master, Morihei Ueshiba, was the founder of Aikido. He is also known as **O Sensei** (Great Teacher). Through his study of martial arts, he came to believe that winning at someone else’s expense is no true victory, and the only true victory is victory over oneself. Thus, **aikidoka** (students of aikido) view physical practice as the outwardly visible manifestation of an inner practice, which involves learning to be calm in the face of aggression, and to turn that aggression into harmonious reconciliation. (Please refer to O Sensei’s dojo rules on our website for more information about the proper spirit of practice).
- Aikido is not a sport. It is fundamentally non-competitive, and unlike most other martial arts, all students wear white belts until they reach the rank of **shodan** (first degree black belt, which requires 6 or 7 years of serious practice to achieve).

Etiquette Basics

Hygiene:

- Because aikido involves close physical contact, all jewelry should be removed, makeup kept to a minimum (it can stain your partner’s gi), and long hair should be tied back.
- Keep finger and toenails closely trimmed.
- Students should wear a freshly laundered **gi**(uniform) to each practice.

Respect:

- Upon entering the dojo, show respect to the **shomen** (the front of the classroom where a picture of O Sensei hangs).
- Bow each time you step on or off the mat.
- When receiving general class instruction, sit without talking in **seiza** (sitting on knees, buttocks resting on heels).
- It is okay to stand when receiving individual instruction, and it is customary to bow when Sensei finishes in order to show respect and gratitude for the teaching.
- Inform Sensei if you need to leave the mat during class.
- Every practitioner should “take care of” their partner, for example, not throwing your partner harder than they are comfortable being thrown.

A Typical Class

At the beginning of class, students line up sitting in **seiza** (on their knees), according to rank (the most senior students sit closest to the door), facing the **shomen** (picture of **O Sensei**). The instructor comes to the front. As sensei bows to the shomen, the students follow. Then the instructor turns to the students, and the instructor and students bow to each other, while saying **Onegaishimasu** (“I request this favor”).

After the ritual of bowing in, there is a warm up, which includes stretching and practice of fundamental aikido movements. Next, the instructor selects a partner, and demonstrates, giving instruction about a technique. Then, students select a partner (or sometimes Sensei will assign partners), and everyone takes turns practicing the technique with each other, while sensei walks around giving individual help. When Sensei claps, this is the signal to sit down to receive the next instruction. Usually, 2-5 techniques will be covered in any given class.

At the end, everyone lines up as they did in the beginning of class. First, they bow to the shomen and then bow to the instructor while saying “**domo arigato gozaimashita**” (thank you for what you’ve done) or “thank you sensei.” Students wait for sensei to leave the mat and the highest ranking **sempai** (senior student) leads a closing bow. After all bow, students find those they practiced with and say “thank you” or “domo arigato” to each one individually, accompanied with another bow.

Useful terms

hara - center of the body; the lower belly

uke - the “attacker;” the person who receives the technique (who gets “thrown”/pinned)

ukemi - the art of attacking and being thrown

nage - the “defender” or person who is attacked, and who therefore performs the technique; the goal is to neutralize the attack without harming the attacker

hanmi - triangular stance with your front foot pointing forward and your backfoot perpendicular to the front foot

gyaku hanmi - facing your opponent as if seeing yourself reflected in a mirror (literally)

ai hanmi - opposite gyaku hanmi; sometimes referred to as “criss-cross,” facing your opponent in a mutual stance (both nage and uke have same foot forward)

Directional Vocabulary

omote - moving to the front side of uke's body

ura - moving to the back side of uke's body

irimi - entering into or past uke

tai no henko - sliding in and pivoting, just off line of attack

tenkan - slide in, pivot 180 degrees, and step back

tenshin - retreating obliquely off the line of attack

Grabbing Attacks

katatetori - one handed wrist grab

morotetori - two handed grab on one forearm (gyaku hanmi)

ryotetori - grab both wrists of nage (gyaku hanmi)

katatori - shoulder grab (gyaku hanmi)

ryokatatori - double shoulder grab (gyaku hanmi)

ushiro ryotetori - grabbing both wrists from behind

Striking attacks

shomenuchi - vertical strike along mid-line to middle of forehead (gyaku hanmi)

yokomenuchi - side strike to the head on an oblique angle (ai hanmi)

tsuki - thrust or punch at nage's mid-section. (ai hanmi)

Joint Locks

ikkyo, nikkyo, sankyo, gyaku sankyo, yonkyo, gokyo; kotegaeshi

For example, the technique might be: katatetori ai hanmi ikkyo, which would mean that uke uses the criss-cross wrist grab attack, and nage performs the technique of ikkyo in response.

Even though the movements are profoundly natural, they are typically unaccustomed; strength and coordination come with time and practice. Also, Japanese terminology gradually becomes second nature. **Please be patient with yourself!** Remember that every person on the mat either is or has been a beginner. You will be supported and taught at your own rate.

USAF | Kyu/Dan Test Requirements | 2012



6th Kyu (Rokukyu) 20 practice days since beginning

Seiza (a) **Bowing/Rei** (b) **Rise from seiza**
Shikko*

Hanmi (a) **Migi hanmi** (b) **Hidari hanmi**

Ukemi (a) **Ushiro ukemi** (1) **back fall** (2) **back roll***
(b) **Mae ukemi***

Kokyu undo (a) **Funakogi undo** (b) **Ikkyo undo**

Tai sabaki (a) **Tenkan** (b) **Irimi** (c) **Irimi tenkan**
(d) **Tenshin**

Hanmi (w/partner) (a) **Ai hanmi** (b) **Gyaku hanmi**

Atemi (w/partner) (a) **Tsuki** (b) **Yokomenuchi**
(c) **Shomenuchi**

Tai no henko (w/partner) as both uke and nage
Kokyudosa – Zagi Kokyuho (sitting) (w/partner)

5th Kyu (Gokyu) 40 practice days after 6th Kyu

Shomenuchi Ikkyo (omote & ura)

Shomenuchi Iriminage

Katatetori Shihonage (omote & ura)

Ryotetori Tenchinage (omote & ura)

Tsuki Kotegaeshi

Ushiro Tekubitori Kotegaeshi (omote & ura)

Morotetori Kokyuho (omote & ura)

4th Kyu (Yonkyu) 80 practice days after 5th Kyu

Shomenuchi Nikyo (omote & ura)

Yokomenuchi Shihonage (omote & ura)

Tsuki Iriminage

Ushiro Tekubitori Sankyo (omote & ura)

Ushiro Ryokatatori Kotegaeshi (omote & ura)

Suwari waza:

Shomenuchi Ikkyo (omote & ura)

Katatori Nikyo (omote & ura)

Katatori Sankyo (omote & ura)

3rd Kyu (Sankyu) 100 practice days after 4th Kyu

Yokomenuchi Iriminage (2 variations)

Yokomenuchi Kotegaeshi (omote & ura)

Tsuki Kaitennage (omote & ura)

Ushiro Ryokatatori Sankyo (omote & ura)

Morotetori Iriminage (2 variations)

Shomenuchi Sankyo (omote & ura)

Suwari waza:

Shomenuchi Iriminage

Shomenuchi Nikyo (omote & ura)

Hanmi handachi:

Katatetori Shihonage (omote & ura)

Katatetori Kaitennage (uchi & soto mawari**)

2nd Kyu (Nikyu) 200 practice days after 3rd Kyu

Seminar attendance is encouraged

Shomenuchi Shihonage (omote & ura)

Shomenuchi Kaitennage (omote & ura)

Yokomenuchi Gokyo (omote & ura)

Ushiro Tekubitori Shihonage (omote & ura)

Ushiro Kubishime Koshinage

Ushiro Tekubitori Jujinage (omote & ura)

Morotetori Nikyo (omote & ura)

Hanmi handachi:

Shomenuchi Iriminage

Katatetori Nikyo (omote & ura)

Yokomenuchi Kotegaeshi (omote & ura)

Randori (2 attackers)

1st Kyu (Ikkyu) 300 practice days after 2nd Kyu

Seminar attendance is strongly encouraged

Katatori Menuchi – 5 Techniques

Yokomenuchi – 5 Techniques

Morotetori – 5 Techniques

Shomenuchi – 5 Techniques

Ryotetori – 5 Techniques

Koshinage – 5 Techniques

Hanmi handachi:

Ushiro waza – 5 Techniques

Tanto tori

Randori (3 attackers)

Shodan 300 practice days after 1st Kyu

Must attend one seminar per year

All 1st Kyu Requirements

Tachi tori

Jo tori and Jo waza

Henka waza***

Randori (4 attackers)

Nidan 600 practice days after Shodan/Not<2 years

Must attend two seminars per year

All Shodan Requirements

Tachi tori (2 attackers)

Kaeshi waza****

Randori (5 attackers)

Sandan 700 practice days after Nidan/Not<3 years

Must attend two seminars per year

**Subject of examination to be determined by
examiner at the time of examination**

Nomenclature

Hanmi handachi

Uke standing
and Nage sitting

Jiyu waza

Interval attacks w/hage
varying techniques

Jo tori

Disarm attacker of jo

Jo waza

Techniques performed
with jo

Katatetori

One hand grab to wrist

Katatori

One hand grab
to shoulder

Katatori Menuchi

Grab to shoulder
with strike to head

Morotetori

Two hands grab
to one wrist

Randori

Freestyle-rapid "all-out"
simultaneous attacks

Ryotetori

Both wrists held
from the front

Seiza

Sitting-meditative posture

Shomenuchi

Strike to forehead

Suwari waza

Techniques performed
while sitting

Tai sabaki

Body movement

Tachi tori

Disarm attacker of bokken

Tanto tori

Disarm attacker of tanto

Tsuki

Thrust or punch
with closed fist

Undo

Exercise

Ushiro Kubishime

Choke from behind
with wrist grab

Ushiro Ryokatatori

Both shoulders held
from behind

Ushiro Tekubitori

Both wrists held
from behind

Waza

Technique

Yokomenuchi

Strike to side of head

Zagi

Sitting-active posture

*Instructor's option depending on age and ability.

**Uchi & Soto mawari-Both inside (Uchi)
and outside (Soto) movements.

***Henka waza-Switching from one technique to another.
Examiner will call the first technique.

****Kaeshi waza-Counter techniques. Uke applies the
technique to Nage. Original technique will be called by examiner.
(e.g., to apply Sankyo against Nikyo).