



ELWOOD AIKIDO-YOGA DOJO

Dojo Etiquette / Safety Procedures

The Aikido-Yoga *Dojo* is the place where we train to enrich our mind, body, and spirit. A *Dojo* is therefore a place of grace, respect, proper attitude, and positive mutual support. In an Aikido-Yoga *dojo*, the observation of formal policies and basic forms of etiquette is integral to the creation of a respectful and attentive atmosphere, which is conducive to learning and safety. The purpose of formal policies and forms of etiquette is to assist the practitioner of Aikido-Yoga to have a safe, positive, and dynamic training experience. Most basic form of etiquette is a bow, a gesture of respect and gratitude – two fundamental qualities that underpin all of our training. *Rei*, or bowing is performed as a traditional greeting and as a means of demonstrating respect. Bowing in the *dojo* does not have any religious significance. There are two fundamental ways of bowing: from a kneeling position and from a standing position. The kneeling bow is considered more formal.

Etiquette is an important aspect of Aikido-Yoga training, and not just a western attempt to copy the formal politeness of Japanese culture. In Aikido-Yoga, etiquette is an outward expression of your martial arts awareness. By observing *dojo* etiquette, you are demonstrating this awareness, as well as a proper understanding of your relationships with other students and the martial aspects of Aikido-Yoga training.

In Japanese martial art training, the development and demonstration of correct attitude, conduct and etiquette ("*reigi-saho*") are considered to be of equal, if not greater importance than the study of physical techniques. The attitude and demeanor of a martial artist is regarded as a true indicator of his/her understanding and progress in the art. Although new students are not required to know all of the etiquette forms at the outset, each new member is expected to learn them within a reasonable period of time.

It is important to always treat your training environment, and everyone you interact with in or out of the *dojo* with respect, consideration and gratitude. Always be aware of your own physical capabilities and limitations, as well as those of your training partner(s).

Please note that the following should function as an introduction to proper *dojo* etiquette only:

- Please familiarize yourself with the official policies of the *dojo*, as outlined in the downloadable document entitled "Policies, Principles & Practices" on the web site www.aikidoaustralia.com, or obtain a hard copy from the Chief Instructor. Do not hesitate to ask questions, or inform the Chief Instructor of any special needs you may have (even minor ones).
- Keep in mind that *dojo* refers not only to the matted area, but also to the entire area inside and directly outside the building. Please maintain quiet and practice courtesy in and around the *dojo*. The *dojo*, including the area directly outside the building is to be kept clean. Issues related to safety must be communicated immediately to the instructor (even issues you may consider minor).
- The cleanliness and safety of a *dojo* reflects the personal character of the students and teacher. It is therefore everyone's responsibility to keep the *dojo* clean and safe. Shoes and clothes are to be placed neatly in the areas designated. Never walk into the *dojo* or onto the mats in outdoor shoes or slippers.

- In order to minimize any possibility of injury, no one is permitted onto the mat if under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. All injuries / issues must be advised to the instructor prior to the commencement of class (even minor ones). If you have any medical condition, training limitations or pre-existing injury or new injury, which may affect your practice, inform the instructor of this BEFORE the class starts.
- If you are unavoidably late, you should warm up off the mat and formally bow onto the mat - wait until the instructor acknowledges your presence and signals for you to join the class.
- Please mark the attendance sheet against your name prior to commencing class.
- Respect all training tools and equipment. Weapons should be in good condition and in their proper place when not in use. Respect all weapons and treat bokkens (wooden swords) and tantos (wooden knives) as if they are live blades. Never handle other people's weapons without permission. Please practice with respect and awareness at all times. The dojo has a limited number of bokken and jo that you may use within the dojo. If you wish to use them, please treat them with care and respect. When you are finished with them, please place them back on the rack neatly.
- If you are unsure of what to do in a particular situation ask a senior student or simply follow his lead. Although at first there will be many forms of etiquette to remember, they will become natural as you continue to train. Please do not be resentful if you are corrected on a point of etiquette as they are related to proper mental attitude and safety.
- Sit quietly and attentively in *seiza* (kneeling position) when the instructor is demonstrating a technique. After the demonstration, bow to the instructor. When the end of that specific technique practice session is signaled (usually with a loud clap from the instructor), stop immediately, bow to your partner, and line up with the other students for the next instruction.
- Only change partners during class upon the instructor's signal, and acknowledge both the partner you are leaving as well as your new partner with a bow.
- Care should be taken to be aware of the ability of one's partner so that no injuries may occur. *Nage* (defender / one who receives the attack) should always be watchful for signs that *Uke* (attacker / one who takes the fall) is in pain. *Uke's* attacks should always be under his full control and *Nage* should respond likewise. Always train within your own ability, and that of your training partner(s). Do not practice so as to injure yourself or your training partner(s).
- Express care and concern for new students by treating each with understanding, consideration and courtesy.
- Please be aware at all times of those around you as you take *ukemi* (falling), or are throwing your partner. Train to develop awareness in all directions.
- You shall refrain from training if you become physically ill or exhausted during class. Notify your instructor immediately.
- Regardless of rank, it is inappropriate for any student to instruct or correct another student without the direct and specific permission and supervision of the instructor conducting the class.
- The instructor supervises all training in the *dojo* – no activity outside the scope of what is considered acceptable to the instructor is permissible within the *dojo* or any area immediately surrounding the *dojo*. If in doubt, just ask the instructor. Students are encouraged to stay after class to practice what they have worked on in class, and ask questions.

- Aikido-Yoga training involves close body contact. Please keep your *do-gi* (clothes) clean and pressed. All participants will adhere to acceptable levels of personal cleanliness and personal hygiene. It is recommended that all participants shower before class. Maintain fingernails and toenails to ensure safety. Contain long hair with a hair tie and/or headband. If glasses must be worn, they should be held in place with an appropriate device. No contact eye-lenses are to be worn during training. Socks, t-shirts and other personal protective items are permitted. If you perspire heavily, please bring a small towel with you and carry it in the front of your *do-gi*.
- Some **don'ts**: Please do not lie on the mat, lean against the walls, or sit with your legs stretched out, or sit with your back to the front of the dojo / people training. It is preferable to practice with a minimum amount of talk. Always maintain awareness and adhere to common sense politeness and safety practices.
- There should be no eating, drinking (except water), smoking, or chewing gum etc. in the *dojo* at any time.
- No jewellery or watches etc. should be worn during practice.
- Do not leave the mat during practice without first asking for the instructor's permission. Inform the instructor of any injuries / issues immediately (even minor ones).
- Visitors are welcome to sit and observe a class at any time, but the following rules of etiquette should be followed. When observing class, spectators should remain quiet out of respect for the instructor and practicing students:
 - Sit quietly and respectfully.
 - No eating, drinking, or smoking while class is in progress.
 - Do not talk to anyone while that person is on the mat.
 - Do not talk or walk around while the instructor is demonstrating.
 - Turn off all mobile phone ring tones.
- If you will be absent from classes for an extended period of time due to travel, vacation, injury, or other obligations, please inform the Chief Instructor.
- For respect and courtesy, please inform your instructor if you plan to attend an external class, or seminar outside of the *dojo*.
- If you have to leave the class early because of a prior arrangement, notify the instructor of your intention to leave early BEFORE the class starts, stating the exact time that you intend to leave.

Common Japanese Phrases used in the Dojo:

- ONEGAI SHIMASU – Literally - "Thank you for what you are about to do."
- DOMO ARIGATO GOZAIMASU - "Thank you very much."
- DOMO ARIGATO GOZAIMASHITA - "Thank you very much" (past tense, used at end of training session)

