

Riai Wellington Aikido Inc.

Belmont Dojo Etiquette

(This etiquette information here is a guide and is additional to that listed in the Riai Aikido Training Manual)

Aikido is a traditional Japanese martial art. At Belmont Memorial Hall we treat our training space as a Dojo (place of the way) and as such we embrace Japanese cultural and Budo (the martial ways of Japan) etiquettes.

It is our belief that Dojo Etiquette is an integral part of training in Aikido. For the most part it is a system of respect and courtesy. It helps forge respect, discipline, and awareness in aikidokas (practitioners), as well as contributing to a safe training environment for all to enjoy.

Anyone that wishes to train at the Belmont Dojo is expected to adhere to the following Dojo Etiquette.

Please ask the Dojo Cho (head of the Dojo) or Sempai (senior students) if you require further clarification.

Your Aikido training starts when you arrive at the Dojo. At this time you acknowledge that you have come to train and as such set aside all your daily concerns and preoccupations for a short period while you focus on your training.

- When entering or exiting the dojo please bow (shallow standing bow) to the Kamiza area (When we bow it is not a religious performance, but a sign of respect, welcome, invitation or to thank someone)
- Please arrive 10 minutes before class starts. If the mats or Kamiza are not out you should help with these tasks before changing.
- If you are late for class, you should wait kneeling in seiza at the side of the mat quietly until the Sensei invites you to join in. If you know you can't be at a class telling Sensei in advance is always appreciated.
- When coming onto or leaving the practice area, bow to the front of the dojo.
- When the class is about to begin, and before the teacher kneels, all students should line up sitting in seiza in a straight line. The person to your right should be of equal or higher rank; the person to your left, equal or lower rank.
- When Sensei is instructing the class, or if you wish to listen to an explanation given to another student during the practice, you should kneel politely in seiza. You should bow and say, "Thank you" after listening to an explanation (In English or in Japanese - *Domo Arigato Gozaimashita* or *Domo Arigato Gozaimasu*", pronounced "*Domo-aree-gahto-gozai-muss*")
- When corrected by Sensei bow and say, "Thank you".
- To find a practice partner bow to anyone nearby and say *onegaishimasu* (*oh-nay-guy-shee-muss*). You can, and should, train with anyone irrespective of rank.
- During the class, any student wishing to leave the mat must first ask the permission of the instructor.
- Do not engage in rough-housing or needless contests of strength during class. Calm your ego.
- Always begin and end your training with your partner by bowing to each other.
- Never shout, curse, or become angry on the mat. If you need to "cool off" excuse yourself and sit in seiza.

- When the instructor stops class to teach or demonstrate you should quickly and quietly move to line up (rank positioning is not important). Likewise, you should quickly line up at the end of class and remain kneeling until your instructor has indicated you may move.
- After the class is over you should find all your training partners and bow to each of them, thanking them for training with you.
- Do not ask questions during class unless invited to do so by Sensei.
- Never argue about the technique. If there is a problem that cannot be resolved, ask the instructor for help.
- The only proper way to sit on the mat is in seiza (formal sitting position). If you have a knee injury you may sit cross-legged. Avoid having legs outstretched, reclining, or leaning against walls or posts.
- If you understand the movement and are working with someone who does not, you may lead that person through it. Do not attempt to instruct your training partner (even if you are a black belt) unless you have been told to do so by Sensei.
- Keep talking on the mat to an absolute minimum. Aikido should be experienced through training not talking.
- Fingernails and toenails must be short. Feet must be clean. Shoes or sandals are never allowed on the mat.
- Long hair needs to be restrained.
- No eating, alcohol or drug consumption, smoking or gum chewing on or off the mat during practice. No jewellery should be worn during practice, including rings and pierced earrings.
- Be aware of your body language during training and avoid standing with hands on hips or arms crossed in front of you (both are considered aggressive and challenging).
- Do not sit on the mat with your legs outstretched and soles of your feet pointed at O'Sensei nor sit on the mat with your back to O'Sensei.
- Observe the instructor who will demonstrate a technique with a selected uke. There may be some or no explanation. Observe the instructor's movement carefully. Do your best to repeat the demonstration. Part of your journey is to learn effective observation which takes practice.
- Practice what was demonstrated by the instructor and nothing else.
- The more senior student will execute the technique first. In groups, the training order remains from senior graded student to the junior graded student in both executing the technique (nage) and receiving the technique (uke). This will allow you to observe others doing the technique before it is your turn. Watch carefully.
- To indicate discomfort or pain, uke should slap/tap the mat or body. On hearing/feeling the slap/tap, the nage must immediately stop the technique.
- If you have an injury or medical condition make Sensei aware of this and if required put red tape on the area injured as a reminder to those training with you.

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