



Dojo Etiquette (Reiho)

A dojo is a place where we cleanse and enrich our mind, body, and spirit. A dojo offers effective use only when it is filled with feelings of grace, respect, proper attitude, and positive mutual support. When you enter the dojo, you will notice that everyone works very hard and sincerely to maintain these feelings, therefore feelings to the contrary should be left outside of the dojo. To ensure a safe and rewarding environment our dojo has implemented the following Rules of Etiquette.

Please note, some of these may be more restrictive than other Aikido schools. They have been adopted either to address safety concerns or to further enhance the unique training environment that Aikido of Charlotte provides as well as to embrace the Japanese culture in which our art originates.

Furthermore, in an effort to truly show respect for one another, we at Aikido of Charlotte take etiquette very seriously and are always striving to improve whether it be in our training habits, how we speak to each other, and our attitudes expressed in both verbally and non-verbally. It shall be every student's responsibility to inform new students of the rules and etiquette of our dojo.

Entering the Dojo Etiquette

- Upon entering the dojo, ritsurei (standing bow).
- It is also very good etiquette to bow & greet the teacher &/or fellow students appropriately. E.g. Good morning or Good Afternoon followed by *honorific. Never just, 'Hi', 'Hey', 'Howdy, etc.' Rather, "Good morning, Sensei"
- Remove outdoor shoes & put on Zori's (sandals).
- Do not lean weapons case against the wall or any door.
- Keep the sliding door area open in front of Sensei's office clear of shoes, bags, etc.

Senpai = Senior

Kohai = Junior

- It is your honor to care for the instructors' well-being. Your instructors shall be treated with respect at all times.
- The proper address either verbally or in writing for the Chief Instructor is 'Sensei' or if referring to in the 3rd person by 'Family Name Sensei' e.g. 'Weiner Sensei' (in today's social media climate this is also applicable to Aikido Facebook Pages, Groups, Instagram, etc.)
- Learn from your senpai the proper method of folding the instructors' hakama and the placement of other personal items of your instructors.
- It shall be every student's responsibility to inform new students of the rules and etiquette of our dojo.
- Senpai will remember that they have a responsibility to help and guide their Kohai. Senpai will not take advantage of their position in any way.

Honorific Etiquette

Our dojo places a lot of emphasis on etiquette, and everyone puts an extraordinary effort to follow that. It's also important to distinguish between New Instructors, Junior Instructors, Assistant Instructors, Senior Instructors, and Master Instructors.

However, there may be some confusion regarding when it is appropriate to refer to someone with the honorifics San, Senpai, and Sensei.

- The proper address for the Chief Instructor is 'Sensei' in every context (*email, text, verbal, social media, etc.*)
- During class, whoever is teaching the class should be referred to as Sensei if they are Dan rank and Senpai if they are kyu rank. A Dan rank (or a higher Kyu rank) taking a Kyu rank taught class, which would likely be rare, would refer to the Kyu rank as "San", i.e. Jim-San.

- If a Chief Instructor (5th Dan & senior) is attending one of our seminars but not teaching, he/she should be greeted & addressed with “Last Name” Sensei. It is always better to err towards more respect, especially if they are connected to our dojo.
- When speaking directly to someone who is Sensei, the honorific 'Sensei' alone is proper etiquette. When referring to an Instructor by Sensei in the third person, it should be the Last name followed by the honorific, i.e. Weiner Sensei. Not Sensei Weiner, nor Jonathan Sensei, nor Sensei Jonathan. If multiple Sensei's are present, using Last Name Sensei would be appropriate to distinguish.
- When speaking directly to someone that is senior to you, use their first or last name followed by san. E.g. Jim-san or Hyde-san.
- Senpai is used when a Kyu Rank is leading a class or the address used by a junior to a senior who is in a mentorship relationship. E.g. a 2nd Kyu Soto Deshi addressing a senior (Kyu or Dan Rank) in the same dojo. It is always by itself, “Senpai” not First Name-Senpai (Jim-Senpai) nor Last Name-Senpai.
- Senpai will remember that they have a responsibility to help and guide their Kohai. Senpai will not take advantage of their position in any way.

Testing Etiquette

- Rank Advancement and Promotion are at the discretion of the Chief Instructor.
- There are (3) things that are evaluated (in this order):
 1. Attitude
 2. USAF Time Requirements
 3. Proficiency

Attitude

- It is inappropriate to request to be promoted or tested.
- It is also considered poor etiquette to verbalize a non-interest in testing or advancement.
- If requested to prepare for testing, one should.
- If a testing student feels he/she needs more time, at the time of request and only then should the student request more time.
- Do not request feedback on your test, if there is feedback, your teacher will offer it.
- Do not compare your test to others especially if testing at the same time.

Bowing Etiquette during Testing

- When the test begins, zarei to O'Sensei, then the Examiner(s), then to your uke.
- When the test concludes, zarei to your uke, then the Examiner(s), then to O'Sensei & then one final to your fellow students.

Bowing Etiquette

- Ritsurei (Standing Bow), hands to your side, heels touching, feet pointing outwards in a triangle, bend from the waist with butt going backwards & attempt to achieve about a 30 degree angle with eyes gazing forward about 4-6 feet in front of you. Do not look down and there is no need to look into your opponents' eyes.

- Zarei (Kneeling bow), from seiza, bend down, hands come together to form a triangle together (for bows to O'Sensei or Main Sensei's photo) OR left hand down first, then right hand down second, form a triangle, then with a bow with a straight back (parallel to the ground if possible) neck not up or down, while keeping butt from rising up, pause, and then rise after your senpai or sensei.
- Always match your senpai or sensei as to which bow to perform together.
- Do not rush any bows. Take your time to complete it properly every time.
- Kohai should initiate all bows and remain in bowing position until their senpai or sensei completes.
- Kohai should not rise (e.g. complete bow) before their Senpai or Sensei.
- When bowing at the beginning or the end of class in seiza, try to be seated a little bit behind your senpai (person to your right), and do not rise above him/her at the end of each zarei. Note: It should be very quick without a large gap in regards to the rise from the zarei.
- When receiving instruction in class in a pair or group, after the teacher has concluded his/her comments, it is appropriate to perform a bow as to acknowledge the instruction.

General Etiquette

- Food and drinks shall not be brought into the mat area.
- If you appear to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol while on Dojo property, even if you are not training, you will be asked to leave.
- If you or your uniform smells of food, excessive body odor, tobacco, or alcohol, you will not be permitted to train.
- Your training uniform shall be clean and mended at all times.
- When exiting a changing room for practice, you are required to wear appropriate undergarments under your complete uniform.
- Personal hygiene of hair, nails, and body odor shall be conscientiously attended to. Be especially attentive to long fingernails and toenails to minimize injury to oneself or others. If you have long, dangerous nails you will be asked to leave the dojo until they are attended to.
- Every student shall participate in keeping our dojo (inside and out) facilities clean and safe at all times. The cleanliness and safety of our dojo reflects the personal character of the dojo students as well as the dojo instructors.

Training Etiquette

- Always bow when entering or leaving the dojo, in the direction of the Shomen.
- When bowing, take your time. Bow deeply, Back straight & do not rise ahead of your teacher or senpai.
- Each class starts with a bow towards the Shomen. Then, a bow to our Founding Instructor picture on the Shomen, then there is a bow between the instructor and the students. Classes are closed in the same fashion.
- Be on the mat a few minutes before class starts to warm up and then be quietly seated in seiza (seated) 3-5 minutes before the instructor begins. The instructor may begin training immediately, but not with a warm-up first, so be sure to stretch beforehand. You are responsible for your warm-up.
- When you arrive and class has already started, quickly change into your uniform, then wait patiently on the edge of the mat in seiza. Wait until the instructor signals permission for you to join the class before entering the mat.
- The proper sitting position on the mat is in seiza. If you have a leg injury you may sit cross-legged (anza), but never with legs outstretched.
- If you are waiting your turn to train, be seated in seiza. Never stand idly on the mat during class unless in group practice (3 or more).
- Never lean against the walls, columns, or door of the dojo.
- If your dogi becomes disarranged during training, bow to your partner, then sit facing away from the shomen to arrange your dogi. Stand, bow to your partner and resume training.
- No one shall leave the dojo when a class is in session, except in the case of injury or illness. You shall first ask permission from the instructor before leaving the mat.
- If you become physically ill or exhausted during class you shall refrain from training.

Instruction Etiquette

- There shall be no conversation of any kind while the instructor is demonstrating or explaining to the class.
- During class, when the instructor demonstrates a technique to the class or to you personally, sit quietly and attentively in seiza. After the demonstration bow then immediately resume your training.
- Keep your conversation on the mat to an absolute minimum during your training. Aikido training is to be a meditative experience for yourself and your partners.
- When the instructor is teaching a lesson with the class, you shall follow in accord. You shall not attempt to move ahead to another point, assuming that you know the present lesson.
- When a technique is signaled to end, complete the technique safely. Your partner has committed to the attack and you should not leave them hanging or dramatically alter the technique unexpectedly. Then bow to your partner and quickly line up with the other students.
- Students shall not argue or discuss the technique to be practiced. Immediately request for the instructor to solve the difficulty.
- If it is necessary to ask a question of the instructor, you shall go to the instructor and bow, then request personal instructions. Never call the instructor from across the dojo.
- When another student nearby is being instructed, you MAY stop your practice and sit in seiza to learn. Bow to acknowledge the instruction and resume your training. Never interrupt another student's instruction.
- Students shall not compare an instructor's teachings with another's for any purpose. Every instructor has some unique lesson to share. Respect those more experienced in Aikido.
- It is inappropriate for any student (of any rank) to offer instructions or corrections when not formally conducting the class. During free practice all instruction should be limited unless with the direct and specific permission and supervision of the instructor. This is an essential lesson for your personal development, and shall be followed particularly among those who assist or instruct other classes.
- Students of any rank may train with each other. Beginner students should be eager and are encouraged to seek out and train with advanced students.

Equipment Etiquette

- After every class your uniform and weapons shall be taken home unless otherwise authorized. No personal articles should be left at the dojo.
- All training weapons shall be treated with respect. Your weapons shall be in good condition and in their proper place when not in use. During class weapons are to be stored on the weapons rack and weapons bags are not to be left on the mat.
- Never move or use another person's weapon without their permission.
- Always respect every weapon as a dangerous instrument, even if it is made of wood.
- When removing a weapon from the rack for use you should turn and raise the weapon and bow to the shomen before using it. You should also bow again when you conclude your use of the weapon.
- If you need to set a weapon down during training you should lay it flat on the floor next to the wall. Never lean the weapon against the wall.

In-House Hakama Etiquette

In the Martial Art of Aikido, and in the United States Aikido Federation, it is required that ALL Yudansha (Black Belt Ranks) wear either an Indigo or Black Hakama over their uniform. The Hakama signifies committed practice & skill.

At Aikido of Charlotte, we have an In-House Hakama program that goes as follows:

When a student achieves the following:

- Minimum of 3 years continued practice
- Minimum of 2nd Kyu
- Ukemi ability at a higher level (e.g. break fall, advanced mae/ushiro kaiten, etc.)
- Has been identified as a committed student following the path to Shodan
- Has a Shodan attitude on and off the mat
- Embraces and exudes the Sempai/Kohai relationships i.e. folding of teacher and senior's hakamas
- Has superior etiquette

Upon being identified from the above list, it is the complete discretion of the Chief Instructor to invite the individual to wear a hakama In Class Only. (Not to be worn at Seminars, other dojos, etc.). Please note the following:

- It is inappropriate to request to wear a hakama.
- It is considered poor etiquette to purchase a hakama prior to being asked to wear one.
- It is considered poor etiquette and inappropriate to verbalize a non-interest in wearing a hakama.
- It is proper etiquette to get guidance on purchasing, folding, wearing, color, and style of hakama from any of the Yudansha.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the dojo please bring them to the attention of the Chief Instructor.

I have received and read a copy of the Aikido of Charlotte Etiquette Guide. I understand that the rules contained in the Aikido of Charlotte Etiquette Guide are designed to ensure that the Dojo remains a safe, productive, and enjoyable training environment for all members. I agree to adhere to the policies and procedures contained in the Aikido of Charlotte Etiquette Guide and I understand that my failure to do so may result in my dismissal from the Dojo.

Print Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Signature: _____