

Aikido of San Diego Membership Handbook

Required Reading for New Members



Includes the following useful information:

1. Being an Aikido Student
2. Being a Dojo Member
3. Dojo Etiquette
4. Procedures and Policies
5. Ranking and the Road to Black Belt
6. Exam Content Requirements
7. Reference and Terminology

BEING AN AIKIDO STUDENT

Train with a beginner's mind.

Most of what you are about to learn will probably be new to you. If you have a glass full of water and you try to add more, the excess simply spills off. Likewise, if you come to Aikido with a head full of ideas and fixed beliefs, you may find it difficult to accept new ones. Aikido is a very natural art. Like any new discipline, it may not feel that way at first. The practice, however, is more likely to come naturally if you show up with a spirit of exploration, and a mind and body willing to be challenged.

Get the most out of your training.

Aikido is as much a way of being and principle as it is a form. Form is a necessary element of our practice, because it's the vehicle in which we develop an understanding of the art. It is only through direct experience of Aikido's inner principles, though, that a true personal transformation can arise. And so it must be understood that the spirit of Aikido won't be found in our "normal" and mundane consciousness—a state dominated and driven by calculated thought, desires, fears, and conditioned behavior. Remember that you are here to learn and become an expression of Aikido, not to learn *about* Aikido. The best way to start is by focusing on characteristics that are receptive in nature—like listening, feeling, and observing. Fixating on more active qualities like asserting and throwing is putting the cart before the horse. It requires some awareness and discipline, but that's one of the "secrets" to effective Aikido training—that quality *action* comes out of quality *being*.

Understand Ukemi—the art of receiving.

Uke (literally, "one who receives") and *Nage* ("one who throws") have a very special relationship. Unlike many martial arts that learn to train AGAINST an opponent, Aikido teaches to train WITH a partner. There is no competition in Aikido—no pitting of one person against another. Instead, each partner is half of a whole and each accepts responsibility for the learning experience. It is helpful to remember that as *Uke*, your primary responsibility is to receive technique, tap into the common unfolding direction between you, and serve the relationship with your partner (*Nage*) in a way that brings out the best in both of you. In Aikido, both *Uke* and *Nage* are doing Aikido—not just the one who's executing the technique. The better you understand the Uke-Nage relationship, which is to say *Yin* and *Yang*, the more effective and dimensional your Aikido will become. Indeed, the more effective and dimensional YOU will become.

Practice with both confidence and humility.

Trust yourself and be willing to step into the unknown. It's where the good stuff is. Be mindful, though, of confidence that comes out of arrogance. It's also a good practice in humility to stay away from "correcting" your training partners. As a newer student, it shouldn't even be a consideration to do so. As a more experienced student of any rank, it should only be done on an as-needed basis. Training partners should focus more on serving as the best models they can possibly be for one another, and leaving corrections to the instructor.

Have fun.

Aikido practice most of the time should be a joyful and playful experience. If you aren't having fun, you may be treating yourself too seriously. Don't be in a hurry to master anything. You have the rest of your life to enjoy your training, benefit by it, discover, and grow.

Be safety conscious.

Respect your body and the bodies of others. Protect it from injury. In time you will learn to receive technique and fall beautifully. However, if you choose to be impatient, you're inviting injury, and a loss of training time. Never try to force a technique on your training partner. It's dangerous and unproductive. Remember, also, that excessive pain is a sign that something is wrong. If you're injured, stop practice and consult with the instructor immediately. In the rare occurrence of bleeding, leave the mat right away to take care of yourself. Your training partner will keep others away from the blood while someone else brings cleaning supplies.

BEING A DOJO MEMBER

A dojo is more than a physical space. It is a community of people. When you join the dojo you are a member of this community, and a very large family of Aikidoists all over the world. The dojo exists so we may develop well—with support, care, and guidance. Its quality depends on all of us. Please make yourself available for help in the dojo when it's needed, be sure your membership billing information is up-to-date, support the spirited atmosphere in which we all train, and pass the good news of our dojo community on to your friends. Unlike a spa or gym, the dojo is an extension of our intent to develop a path of mastery, and generate peace in our lives. Your support of the dojo is your support of an ideal in practice that benefits you, and those around you.

SERVICE TO THE DOJO

We are always grateful when you show up to train in good spirits. If everyone did only that, though, it wouldn't be enough to serve the needs of the dojo at large. The facility needs to be kept clean and presentable, new people need to be introduced to our community, and projects and events need to be supported. These things don't happen by themselves. Sensei can and does do much, but he cannot maintain the community by himself. While it starts with him, the fact is that WE are the dojo—WE are the community.

There are several simple ways in which you could serve the dojo regularly.

Introduce a friend or family member to the dojo.

That doesn't mean you need to "sell" anything. If you're excited about what you're doing at ASD, bring it up in conversation with a friend. Invite him or her to watch class one evening. We also have no-cost, no-obligation promotions that members could extend to friends. They are unadvertised members-only benefits (not offered to the general public), and an easy way to help create a path to us. If you already used the one included in your membership folder, just ask for another one. This is one of the most valued things you could do for the dojo since it helps perpetuate our good work, and ensure our security as we move forward.

Help out with our daily cleaning and maintenance.

Each and every training day the dojo needs to be swept and vacuumed at minimum. Some days there will be more to do. There may be some mopping, bathroom cleaning, dusting, etcetera. Please feel free to take initiative with it. If it looks like something needs to be done, announce it, solicit some help if it's needed, and just get on it. The bar for cleanliness in the dojo should be high. Think of it as your home and ask yourself, "Is it presentable to guests?"

“Would I send my own mother to the bathroom in its present condition?” If you’re not sure then the answer is “No.”

Help out in the children’s class

If you have at least 6 kyu experience and you’re ever available on Mondays and Wednesdays between the hours of 4:45 and 5:45, assistance in the children’s class is appreciated. It’s helpful to the class and gives you the opportunity to practice clarity and sensitivity in your technique, and patience and understanding in your manner. It’s also pretty fun.

Volunteer and participate.

True to being a community, the dojo does all kinds of things apart from training. We host seminars, we have parties, we do service activities, we do projects to upgrade things in the facility, etcetera. Please offer your help in making these events and projects easier and successful.

RULES OF ETIQUETTE

The use of bowing.

Bowing is a non-religious practice which is meant to pay respect and thanks to the art, to O’Sensei (the founder), the dojo, Sensei (your teacher), and your training partners. It’s an important cultural tradition that goes back to the very roots of martial arts study. Alone, a bow is hollow. The spirit in which it’s done gives it meaning. If bowing is too challenging for your belief system then please just use traditionally clear and considerate language like, “Please...” and “Thank you very much” along with supportive body language.

1. Bow as your teacher does when beginning and ending class. At the beginning of class, teacher and class exchange the word "**Onegae-shimasu**," which means "Please" (as in “Please do me the favor of...”). At the end of class, the same is done with the words "**Domo-ariqato-qozai-masu**" (Thank you very much).
2. If you are late for class, simply wait for the instructor to invite you on the mat. Get dressed, return to the mat and do a seated bow towards the Shomen (the front of the dojo where O’Sensei’s picture hangs).
3. Bow toward your partner before engaging in practice. When you’re finished practicing, bow again and thank him/her.
4. If you receive individual instruction during class, it’s polite to bow and thank your instructor.

What to wear, and not wear.

A plain white training uniform (a "*dogi*" or "*gi*" for short) and appropriately designated belt is worn in class. Your training uniform should be kept clean. Be careful of over-shrinking when you wash it. It’s recommended that you use cold water and air dry. Use a graduating amount of heat in your washes in order to shrink to size. No jewelry should be worn and long hair should be contained with a hair tie. Hakama are worn by those of Dan ranks (blackbelts).

Cleanliness.

Train with a clean body. It's respectful and it simply makes it more pleasant for everyone. It's also important to make sure that your feet are clean before you train on the mat. Shoes should never be worn on the mat area or beyond the lobby of the dojo. Please also keep your fingernails short and your body free of any perfumed products.

INFORMATION, PROCEDURES, AND POLICIES

Up-to-date dojo information having to do with schedule, events, and exam information is available on our website at: www.aikidosd.com

Please mark the days you train on the roster. It's Sensei's only way of tracking your time on the mat, which is used for deciding when an exam for promotion is appropriate. Mark an "X" for one complete class, and a "2" for two complete classes trained per day. By association rule, time on the mat must be counted by training days—not hours or classes. Sensei does, however, take into consideration the hours a person spends training when he's considering promotions.

If you ever need to contact Sensei, the number is 619-993-2454. To contact the facility during class hours (you may want to pass on to spouses, etc.), the number is 619-977-2454.

Water is made available at the dojo for those who don't bring their own. A \$1 donation is expected if you need bottled water. Drop your donation in the white box next to the water. Checks for events and exam fees may also be left there when Sensei is not available.

Please do not leave anything at the dojo after training. That includes your uniform, water bottles, glasses, shoes, clothes, etc. Take everything home with you.

Minors must be picked up at class ending times. Please do not adjust your pick up time at all. Rides are expected to be there when class ends—no exceptions.

It is each student's responsibility to know what material is on their exams and how much their exam fee is. The up-to-date information is always available on our website. It's also posted on the dojo bulletin board. Exam content is also in this handbook.

Membership fees are not refundable. Aikido should be viewed as a commitment no matter how often you choose to train. When you pay for your initial membership or month-to-month membership fees, you are "putting your money where your mouth is." All policies regarding fees and billing are clearly outlined on the receipts in your membership folder. The policies are intentionally simple, and set up to protect each individual member and the dojo entity. They are not negotiable.

RANKING (ADULT PROGRAM)

Plainly said, you should not be preoccupied or obsessed with rank. If you're practicing Aikido specifically for the accumulation of rank, you may want to reevaluate your motivations. With that said, a traditional system of rank does exist in order to maintain high standards, and offer a process with which every student can demonstrate their growth. Participation in the ranking system is voluntary. If you don't want to participate, just respectfully offer an explanation if/when an opportunity for promotion is offered. It will be respected.

THE ROAD TO BLACK BELT

A black belt does not mean that you are now a “master” of the art in any absolute sense. It also does not mean that you are now a qualified teacher. What it does mean is that you may now be considered a serious student of the art. It's a rite of passage that formally declares you as such, and your intention to begin anew—with a well-developed foundation and perspective. The word “Sho-dan” (name of first black belt level) actually translates as “Beginning Rank.” With that said, getting there is most certainly a highly respected accomplishment.

A black belt from Aikido of San Diego means that you not only have developed a strong elemental foundation in Aikido, but you also understand it in the greater context of life and can apply it appropriately in such ways. An Aikido of San Diego black belt is the gold standard for martial arts students who want to develop a path of personal mastery that is both peaceful in nature, and effective in relating to any realm of life.

Aikido of San Diego is a member of the California Aikido Association, which is an affiliate of the Aikikai (the Aikido world headquarters in Japan). The CAA's minimum exam requirements towards black belt meet and exceed the Aikikai requirements. Aikido of San Diego's requirements towards black belt meet and exceed those of the CAA. Our program is for people serious about their development in the art, and in how they apply it in their lives.

The road to black belt and beyond is self-paced. Sensei always reserves the right to time your promotions according to how he sees your growth. However, the more you train and participate at the dojo the sooner promotions are likely to find you. Below is a simple table outlining each rank along the path, and the minimum amount of training days between ranks as prescribed by our association.

Rank	Unranked	6 Kyu	5 Kyu	4 Kyu	3 Kyu	2 Kyu	1 Kyu	1 Dan
Belt	White	White	White	Blue	Blue	Brown	Brown	Black
Min time	---	20 days	40 days	60 days	80 days	100 days	150 days	200 days

In addition to the association guidelines above, Aikido of San Diego also requires fulfillment of the following elements before a person is promoted to the first black belt level.

Participation in at least eight dojo-sponsored special seminars. Those include:

1. Any of the major seminars at ASD when we are hosting a senior guest instructor.
2. The dojo's annual training retreat.
3. The Aiki Summer Retreat in the Bay area.

Completion of a black belt project.

This is a special project undertaken at the brown belt level. It's an opportunity for the advancing student to express Aikido principles in a form of their choice. The goals and process should be a reflection of the ideals expressed by Aikido.

Some possible endeavors could be a community service project, an artistic expression/project, a media project, a literary work, an academic/research project/paper, a work-related or business venture, an athletic challenge, etcetera. The tentacles of Aikido principles and practice reach deep into life, so the sky's the limits. The size and scope of a project is up to the student. What's important is the thoughtfulness, spirit, depth, and authenticity in which the project is conducted.

When a student is ready to begin, he/she submits a proposal form to Sensei. The form is acquired from Sensei. The proposal is discussed and sharpened until there is sufficient clarity on process and goals. Projects should be done with Aikido in mind and express the principles as they're understood. They should also be consistent in form and process with a policy of PEACE:

Power—Excellence—Awareness—Compassion—Evolution

Whatever form a project takes, a short written abstract that describes the project, how it unfolded, and offers interpretation of its relationships to Aikido must accompany it in its finality. Students have the opportunity to present their project to the dojo community.

Preparing for an exam of any level

Qualification for any rank is based on:

1. Amount of training days since receiving your previous rank.
2. History of participation in dojo-sponsored seminars and events.
3. Quality of practice and spirit, and congruence with dojo etiquette and policy.

Once you fulfill the requirements of your next level of rank, Sensei will approach you with an offer for an exam. Please do not ask for an exam. Everyone who fulfills the requirements gets exams in an appropriate and timely manner. Exams are administered quarterly (every three months or so), and dates are announced well in advance. After accepting a test date, you are expected in the weeks preceding your exam to attend classes frequently.

After receiving a date, you must ask someone to mentor you through the process of preparing. They will also be your primary partner on your exam (be sure to run it by Sensei). Your mentor shares responsibility for your preparedness and success, and likewise, also has the responsibility of informing Sensei of any issues that may warrant a postponement. A mentor normally works with only one examinee per test period, so please arrange for a mentor as early as possible. Here is the examinee's guideline for selecting a mentor:

If you are testing for 6 Kyu.....You should ask 4 Kyu—1 Dan
If you are testing for 5 Kyu..... You should ask 3 Kyu—1 Dan
If you are testing for 4-3 Kyu.....You should ask 2 Kyu—2 Dan
If you are testing for 2-1 Kyu.....You should ask 1 Dan+
If you are testing for 1 Dan.....You should ask 1 Dan+

There is a fee for each exam administered, and is due before your exam date. Check our website or dojo bulletin board for the current fee structure.

EXAM CONTENT—ADULT PROGRAM

6th Kyu (White Belt) Minimum -- 20 practice days	
Ukemi	forward & back roll
Katate-dori	tai no henko shihonage (omote & ura)
Shomen-uchi	tenkan/irimi ikkyo (omote & ura)
Jiyuwaza	Grabs
Suwariwaza	kokyu dosa

5th Kyu (White Belt) Minimum -- 40 practice days after 6th kyu	
Katate-dori	kokyuho or kokyunage
Kata-dori	nikkyo (omote & ura)
Munetsuki	Kotegaeshi
Shomen-uchi	ikkyo (omote & ura) iriminage
Gyakute-dori	kokyuho or kokyunage shihonage (omote & ura)
Jiyuwaza	Grabs
Ukemi	receiving jiyuwaza
Bokken	1 st suburi
Jo	1 st suburi (choku-tsuki)

4th Kyu (Blue Belt) Minimum -- 60 practice days after 5th kyu	
Suwariwaza	shomen-uchi ikkyo
Shomen-uchi	ikkyo—nikkyo (omote & ura) kotegaeshi iriminage
Yokomen-uchi	shihonage (omote & ura)
Gyakute-dori	kotegaeshi iriminage kokyunage or kokyuho
Ryote-dori	tenchinage
Katate-dori	kokyunage or kokyuho shihonage (omote & ura)
Jiyuwaza	any attack
Ukemi	receiving jiyuwaza
Bokken	1-5 suburi
Jo	1-5 suburi

3rd Kyu (Blue Belt) Minimum -- 80 practice days after 4th kyu	
Suwariwaza	shomen-uchi Ikkyo—sankyo (omote/ura)
Shomen-uchi	ikkyo— sankyo (omote & ura) kotegaeshi iriminage
Yokomen-uchi	shihonage (omote & ura) 1 variation
Katate-dori	kaiten nage (uchi & soto) shihonage (omote & ura)
Ryote-dori	shihonage (omote & ura) 1 variation
Munetsuki	iriminage kotegaeshi
Morote-dori	kokyuhō
Jiyuwaza	any attack
Ukemi	receiving jiyuwaza
Bokken	1-7 suburi
Jo	1-10 suburi

2nd Kyu (Brown Belt) Minimum -- 100 practice days after 3rd kyu	
Suwariwaza	shomen-uchi Ikkyo-- yonkyo (omote/ura)
Hanmi handachi	katate-dori & ryote-dori shihonage
Shomen-uchi	ikkyo— yonkyo (omote/ura) kotegaeshi iriminage kokyunage or kokyuhō kaeten nage
Munetsuki	kotegaeshi iriminage kokyunage or kokyuhō kaeten nage
Gyakute-dori	kotegaeshi Iriminage kokyunage or kokyuhō
Katate-dori	iriminage kaeten nage (uchi/soto) kotegaeshi
Hiji-dori	3 variations
Ryote-dori	3 variations
Morote-dori	3 variations
Ushiroryote-dori	shihonage kotegaeshi kokyunage or kokyuhō
Jiyuwaza	1 then 2 attackers
Ukemi	receiving jiyuwaza
Bokken	happo-giri & right/left awase
Jo	31 jo kata

1st Kyu (Brown Belt) Minimum -- 150 practice days after 2nd kyu	
Suwariwaza	variety of attacks ikkyo—yonkyo (omote/ura)
Hanmi handachi	katate-dori shihonage ryote-dori shihonage shomen-uchi kotegaeshi shomen-uchi iriminage shomen-uchi kaiten nage ushiro waza (5)
Ikkyo—Yonkyo	shomen, yokomen, kata, ushiro
Shomen-uchi	kotegaeshi, iriminage, kokyunage, kokyuho, kaeten nage
Munetsuki	kotegaeshi, iriminage, kokyunage, kokyuho, kaeten nage
Yokomen-uchi	kotegaeshi, iriminage, kokyunage, kokyuho, kaeten nage, gokyo
Gyakute-dori	3 variations
Katate-dori	3 variations
Morote-dori	3 variations
Ryote-dori	3 variations
Kata-menuchi	3 variations
Ushiro ryote	3 variations
Ushiro ryokata	3 variations
Koshinage	3 variations
Jiyuwaza	1 then 2 attackers
Ukemi	receiving jiyuwaza
Tanto-dori	tsuki & yokomen-uchi
Bokken	tachi-dori (3) 5 th and 7 th awase
Jo	jo-dori (3) 20 suburi

Sho-Dan (Black Belt) Minimum -- 200 practice days after 1st kyu	
Suwariwaza	variety of attacks ikkyo—gonkyo (omote/ura)
Hanmi handachi	katate-dori shihonage, ryote-dori shihonage, shomen-uchi kotegaeshi, iriminage, kaiten-nage, ushiro waza (5)
Ikkyo—Yonkyo	shomen, yokomen, kata, ushiro
5 techniques from each of the following attacks. Must include a variety of Koshi-nage.	shomen, yokomen, tsuki, katate, gyakute, morote, ryote, kata-menuchi, ushiro-ryote, ushiro-ryokata
Jiyuwaza	1 attacker
Randori	3 attackers
Tanto-dori	tsuki, shomen, yokomen, slash, at back/throat
Bokken	tachi-dori (3), 1 solo or partner practice
Jo	jo-dori (3), 1 solo or partner practice

REFERENCE

It should be understood that no one at Aikido of San Diego is tested on Japanese language or expected to perfect the use of Japanese in their training. With that said, it is used often. People seem to pick it up quite easily—simply by being around. The following is not meant to be something memorized. It is simply available for your reference.

Understanding Technique Names

Techniques are named in the following way:

ATTACK + TECHNIQUE + DIRECTION (if it's relevant) = Full Technique Name

For instance: "Shomen-uchi Ikkyo Omote-waza" means... Frontal strike, 1st pinning technique, to the front side.

Names of Basic Techniques

Gokkyo: 5th pinning technique.

Ikkyo: 1st pinning technique.

Iriminage: Entering throw.

Jujinage: Crossed arm throw.

Kaiten nage: Rotary throw.

Kokyunage: "Breath" throw (used for a wide variety of throwing techniques).

Koshinage: Hip throw.

Kotegaeshi: Wrist turning technique.

Nikkyo: 2nd pinning technique.

Sankyo: 3rd pinning technique.

Shihonage: Four direction throw.

Tenchinage: Heaven and earth throw.

Yonkyo: 4th pinning technique.

Names of Basic Attacks

Gyakute-dori: Cross-hand grab (right to right, left to left).

Hiji-dori: Elbow grab.

Kata-dori: Shoulder grab.

Kata-menuchi: One shoulder held with a frontal head strike.

Katate-dori: Wrist grab (mirror image).

Morote-dori: Forearm/wrist held with both hands.

Munetsuki: Chest or stomach thrusting strike (punch).

Mune-dori: Lapel grab (at the chest).

Ryokata-dori: Both shoulders held.

Ryote-dori: Attack in which both wrists are held.

Shomen-uchi: Strike to the top of the head.

Ushiro ryokata-dori: Both shoulders grabbed from behind.

Ushiro ryote-dori: Both wrists grabbed from behind.

Yokomen-uchi: Strike to the side of the head.

Counting in Japanese

Often we count in Japanese in order to maintain a connection to the art's cultural background. It's not difficult to count in Japanese. Just memorize one through ten and the rest will fall in place:

- 1.....ICHI
- 2.....NI
- 3.....SAN
- 4.....SHI / YON
- 5.....GO
- 6.....ROKU
- 7.....SHICHI
- 8.....HACHI
- 9.....KYU
- 10.....JYU

Ten through nineteen becomes 10+1, etc. Therefore, 11 is jyu-ichi...12 is jyu-ni, etc... Twenty through twenty-nine becomes 2x10+...Therefore, 20 is ni-jyu...21 is ni-jyu-ichi, 22 is ni-jyu-ni, etc...

Names of the 20 Jo Suburi

1. Choku tsuki
2. Kaeshi tsuki
3. Ushiro tsuki
4. Tsuki gedan gaeshi
5. Tsuki jodan gaeshi uchi
6. Shomen uchi komi
7. Renzoku uchi komi
8. Menuchi gedan gaeshi
9. Menuchi ushiro tsuki
10. Gyaku yokomen ushiro tsuki
11. Katate gedan gaeshi
12. Katate toma uchi
13. Katate hachi noji gaeshi
14. Hasso gaeshi uchi
15. Hasso gaeshi tsuki
16. Hasso gaeshi ushiro tsuki
17. Hasso gaeshi ushiro uchi
18. Hasso gaeshi ushiro barai
19. Hidari nagare gaeshi uchi
20. Migi nagare gaeshi tsuki

Glossary of Common Aikido Terms

Ai-hanmi: Mutual stance. Partners stand facing one another with the same foot forward.

Atemi: A strike or striking technique.

Bokken: Wooden sword.

Budo: Warrior way. The group of arts that teach martial technique and spiritual development.

Dan: Blackbelt rank.

Deshi: Student, pupil, disciple.

Dojo: Training hall

Gi: Training uniform.

Gyaku-hanmi: Opposite stance. Partners stand with opposite feet forward.

Hakama: A divided, pant-like skirt. It's worn by those of Dan rank.

Hanmi: Triangular stance.

Hanmi Handachi: Nage (thrower) is kneeling and Uke (attacker) is standing.

Irimi: Entry.

Jiyuwaza: Freestyle practice.

Jo: Wooden staff

Kamae: Stance.

Kata: Shoulder

Kata: Form (different character from "Kata" meaning shoulder).

Keiko: Practice or training session.

Ken: Japanese sword.

Kiai: A piercing scream.

Kihon: Basic form of a technique, usually static.

Ki-no-nagare: Fluid form of a technique.

Kohai: Junior student.

Kumijo: Partner practices with jo.

Kumitachi: Partner practices with swords.

Nage: To throw. The person who throws.

Omote: Front

Randori: Multiple person freestyle practice.

Rei: Bow.

Sempai: Senior student.

Seiza: Formal sitting posture. Knees underside.

Shomen: Front. Head of the dojo where a picture of the founder is kept.

Suburi: A basic ken or jo strike.

Suwariwaza: Sitting techniques.

Tachi-dori: Sword take-aways.

Tai-jutsu: Body arts. Techniques done without weapons.

Tanto: Knife.

Tsuki: Thrust, punch.

Uchi: To strike.

Uke: To receive. The person who attacks, receives a technique, and falls.

Ukemi: The art of falling and receiving.

Ura: Rear direction.

Ushiro: Back, behind, rear.

Waza: Technique.

Yudansha: Person holding a Dan rank.