

Redlands Aikikai

Description of Aikido Classes

Redlands Aikikai offers a training program with instructors of the up to the sixth-degree black belt level, with a variety of classes at different levels:

Aikido Fundamentals: Provided for brand new as well as continuing students. You will be given detailed instruction in basic aikido posture, movement and technique, including weapons handling at Weapons Level 1 (see below). Also, you will learn how to develop flexibility and sensitivity so as to safely receive techniques when rolling or being pinned – a skill very useful in daily life! You will have the opportunity to train with more experienced students in a safe and helpful atmosphere. Most students like to continue to work on their basics by attending this class even after becoming eligible for more advanced classes, so helpful seniors will be in attendance. The Fundamentals class also gives students practice in the technical requirements for the first three white belt (*kyu*) rank tests.

Equipment for Beginners: Loose, comfortable clothing (and a 4-foot wooden dowel as a training tool) is acceptable for your first few days, but do acquire a training uniform (*dogi*) and Aikido weapons (*bokken* and *jo*, the wooden sword and staff), as soon as possible.

Emergent Aikido: This is an explorative class. See description at the end of this document.

Open Class: Students who have had 8 hours of training, or are no longer in need of beginning rolling training, are welcome to take this class. The hour will be conducted at either of two levels of empty-hand training (intermediate and keiko) or two levels of weapons training (levels 2 and 3), based on who is attending, so that students can have a rich experience of Aikido. This is the next level up from Fundamentals class and covers all techniques through 2nd kyu white belt. It is an introduction to more vigorous practice (as always, self-paced!).

Keiko: This is traditional, sincere Aikido practice, with the highest, consistent level of training in both empty-hand and weapons work and including multiple person attacks and other scenarios. The emphasis is on Aikido principle and on forging the spirit, not just technique. Taught by Prakash Sensei or a senior assistant. Students at all levels from 6th kyu on are welcome and strongly encouraged to attend. [Techniques practiced include the requirements of all white- and black-belt ranks.]

Weapons Level 1: Basic weapons *suburi* (solo practice) and *awase* (partner blending practice) and deflections. All techniques required for 6th and 5th kyu are covered here.

Weapons Level 2: Basic weapons *kumitachi*, *kumijo* (partner practice with wooden sword and staff) and other movements. All techniques required for 4th through 2nd kyu are covered here.

Weapons Level 3: Students who have learned the basic movements in the first five Kumitachi and first four Kumijo are welcome to learn more advanced forms involving two-sword kumitachi, the “patrol” *kata* and attack *jo* in Saotome Sensei’s system. Also included are knife, sword and staff takeaways.

Test Prep: This is an opportunity for students to work more freely on their Aikido. The senior person present (ranked 1st kyu or above) will supervise, and students will either work on test preparation with a partner or on what the senior demonstrates. Students are welcome to make requests on what is to be covered.

You are not required to attend all classes you are eligible for but are welcome to attend as many as you can

At the passing your 6th kyu test, you will become a member of our national affiliate, [Aikido Schools of Ueshiba](#), which certifies our ranks as an overseas organization of the [Aikido World Headquarters](#).

Seminars

Students are highly encouraged to attend seminars, as the interaction with new instructors and students from other dojos can greatly enhance one’s knowledge and skill – and it’s a lot of fun! There is an extra charge for seminars, which are of two types:

4- to 5-hour one-day seminars are held periodically on weekends, TBA. Each has a previously announced theme, and beginning students may be invited to train for all or a part of the seminar. Weekend seminars (usually Friday through Sunday) with leading teachers of international standing are held a number of times a year: all students are welcome and encouraged to attend. Western Fall Camp is held annually. This is one of three national ASU intensive training camps, all of which are highly recommended as ways to accelerate your skill as well as to connect with the larger Aikido community.

Emergent Aikido

Clothing: Aikido *Dogi* without hakama; or street clothes with no protruding metal parts.

Class Description: We will explore ways in which principled Aikido practice can emerge in unpredictable scenarios. We will recognize our habitual reactions to conflict, as well as the psychological predispositions that support those habits. Having recognized and acknowledge ourselves in this way, we can see how releasing the tensions inherent in those reactions may lead, in combat or daily life, to deeper connection and presence and therefore with an increased capacity to protect and preserve both oneself and one's attackers. This class partially flips the usual model in which prescribed techniques are practiced uniformly by all students after being demonstrated by the teacher. Instead, without pre-determination we observe our mind/body impulses and explore ways to refine them into new appropriate patterns of behavior which can then *emerge* as Aikido technique.

The class will start with conditioning: *kokyu* and *ukemi* practice, both solo and with partners. We will devote some time to the practice of *atemi*, both in applying strikes and in receiving and dissipating their effect when struck. Then we will practice combat scenarios in a *jiyu*, *henka*, *randori* or *kaeshi waza* setting, with or without weapons. Class will end with restorative movements, as well as discussion.

Level of Students: All students, even beginners, are invited to attend. All levels are possible because the pace of practice in this class will be individual: in order to be aware of one's own feeling and the emergence of Aikido principle, we mostly need to pace ourselves by staying below a certain level of psychic excitement - and above a certain level of mental torpor! That level is highly variable and indeed varies from day to day for each person. Students will be given tools to stay aware of themselves and we will help each other maintain an acceptable range of mental stimulation. Thus learning will take place in an optimal and a mutually beneficial way.

FAQ

- *Is this class enough to learn all of Aikido?* No. One of the benefits of this class is that one swiftly becomes aware of the need to continue the study of basic skills. At the same time, the kind of free training practiced here can enhance the ability to spontaneously use those basic skills in actual practice. Free practice and technique practice are both necessary in the study of *Budo*.
- *You say that this class is kept at a certain pace. Is there any place for full and realistic speeds of training?* Definitely. During our other *keiko*-level classes, or whenever the student is ready, we will have ample opportunity to apply, at realistic speeds, the understanding gained in this and other classes.

Glossary

Atemi: Strikes designed to affect another person's *energetic* structure and balance, as against blunt-force trauma (known as *dageki*) designed to break or hurt.

Budo: The "Way of Peace" through ending war; Warriors Art, often translated as "martial art".

Dogi: traditional practice uniform (white in Aikido).

Henka waza: "free" technique that starts with a particular basic technique but changes as the occasion does.

Jiyu waza: the free use of different techniques, usually applied in response to one type of attack.

Kaeshi waza: "reversal" technique: the practice of working in harmony with one person's attempted move so as to reverse its original intention back to that person.

Kokyu: breath; breath-work.

Randori: practice with continued, not pre-planned, attack by one or more persons.

Ukemi: the art of flowing with the forces resulting from the consequences of one's own actions (e.g., safely receiving the response of someone one has attacked, or the force of gravity as one falls towards the ground, or a wall, or running into other seeming "obstacles"). Also, the art of attacking sincerely so as to help one's partner develop a skill that may save lives.