

# Redlands Aikikai

## Etiquette & Dojo Rules

Respect and safety are the cornerstones of our learning environment. We believe that following traditional rules of conduct is conducive to safety in the dojo and enhances our ability to learn the arts practiced at Redlands Aikikai. Please refer frequently to the rules below for specifics. When visiting other dojo, be aware that their rules may be different - observe and follow along. There is one Aikido, but each dojo has its own culture.

Redlands Aikikai conducts a number of different activities in its dojo. Nevertheless, we consider ourselves one family. In general we expect all our students and instructors to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of politeness and consideration for others. Please make it a point to recognize or greet fellow students, instructors or our guests when you meet them - whether in the dojo or outside. This applies both to those who are in your own art, as well as to those who are not but also practice here.

It is imperative that you inform the instructor of any medical conditions affecting your ability to practice safely, including injuries and/or emotional disturbances, as soon as they occur, and before class if possible.

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*Class Roster:* Please enter your dates of attendance at this dojo and elsewhere in the class roster provided for the purpose. For both administrative and insurance purposes it is important that you keep track of your attendance.

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The following is based on the ASU Student Handbook and other sources.

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### Rules of the Dojo

- This dojo follows the traditional rules of proper conduct. Its spirit comes directly from the Founder of Aikido and it is the place of the succession of his teachings. It is the responsibility of each student to act appropriately and to honor those teachings.
  - It is the responsibility of each student to cooperate in creating a positive atmosphere of harmony and respect.
  - Cleaning is an active prayer of thanksgiving. It is each student's responsibility to assist in cleaning the dojo and so to cleanse his or her own mind and heart.
  - The dojo is not to be used for any purpose other than regularly scheduled classes without the direct permission of the head instructor.
  - You cannot buy technique. Membership dues provide a place for training and a way in which to show gratitude for the teaching received. It is each student's responsibility to pay dues on time.
  - Respect the Founder and his teachings as succeeded and handed down by Saotome Sensei and his representatives. Respect the dojo, respect your training tools and respect each other.
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## Rules of Training

- It is necessary to respect the way in which the instructor of the class directs the training. Receive instruction and carry out suggestions for training sincerely and to the best of your ability. There is no room for argument on the mat. Regarding Budo, the student has no opinion, only eagerness to discover.
- It is the moral responsibility of each student never to use Aikido technique to harm another person or as a way to display his or her ego. It is a tool to develop a better society through the character development of the individual.
- There will be no conflicts of ego on the mat. Aikido is not street fighting. You are on the mat to train and purify your aggressive reactions and embody the spirit of the samurai by discovering your social responsibility.
- There will be no competition on the mat. The purpose of Aikido is not to fight and defeat an enemy, but to fight and defeat your own aggressive instincts.
- The strength of Aikido is not in muscular force, but in flexibility, timing, control and modesty. Be aware of your limitations.
- Everyone has different physical abilities and reasons for study. These must be respected. True Aikido is the proper and flexible application of technique appropriate to any changing situation. It is your responsibility to cause no injury to your training partner or yourself.
- There will be no power struggles within the dojo. The dojo membership is one family and the secret of Aikido is harmony.

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## Proper Dojo Etiquette

Aikido is not a religion, but the education and refinement of the spirit. You will not be asked to adhere to any religious doctrine, but only to remain spiritually open. When we bow it is not a religious performance, but a sign of respect for the same spirit of universal creative intelligence within us all.

The opening and closing ceremony of each Aikido practice is a formal bow directed to the shomen, two claps, another bow to the shomen and a bow between the instructor and students. The bows directed to the shomen symbolize respect for the spirit and principles of Aikido, and gratitude to the Founder for developing this system of study. The two claps symbolize unity, musubi. You send out a vibration with the first clap and receive its echo with the second. The vibration you send and the echo you receive are dictated by your own spiritual beliefs and attitudes.

The words spoken at the beginning of practice between the students and instructor are: "Onegai shimasu." Loosely translated it is a request which when spoken by the student means "Please give me your instruction." When spoken by the teacher it means "Please do what is expected of you," or "Please receive my instruction." The words spoken by the student to the instructor at the end of practice are: "Domo arigato gozaimashita: You have my respect and gratitude for what you have just done." This is the most respectful way of saying thank you.

- Upon entering and leaving the dojo, greet Sensei and your fellow students. Upon entering and leaving the practice area of the dojo make a standing bow.
- Always bow when stepping on or off the mat in the direction of the shomen.
- Respect your training tools. Gi should be clean and mended. Weapons should be in good condition and in their proper place when not in use.
- Never use someone else's practice gi or weapons without their permission.
- A few minutes before class time you should be warmed up and formally seated in quiet meditation to rid your mind of the day's problems and prepare for study.
- It is important to be on time for practice and participate in the opening ceremony.
- If you are unavoidably late change clothes immediately and come into the training area. Do not spend time chatting with anyone or signing the attendance roster etc. Your primary focus should be to get to the class as soon as possible. Please wait, formally seated beside the mat

until the instructor signals his or her permission for you to join the class. Quietly perform a simple seated bow and get on the mat.

- 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, but never with legs outstretched, never reclining, and never leaning against walls or posts. Do not, while sitting, extend your feet towards anyone in the dojo or towards the shomen.
- Do not leave the mat during class except in the case of injury or illness or, if permitted, to drink water. Approach and inform the instructor before leaving the mat.
- During class when the instructor demonstrates a technique for practice, sit quietly and attentively in seiza at the edge of the mat. After the demonstration bow to the instructor, then to a partner and immediately begin to practice.
- When the end of a technique is signaled, stop immediately, bow to your partner and quickly line up with the other students.
- Never stand around idly on the mat. You should be practicing or, if necessary, seated in seiza (near the edge of the mat, if possible) awaiting your turn.
- If it is necessary to ask a question of the instructor go to him or her and bow respectfully (standing bow). Never call the instructor over to you.
- When receiving personal instruction, sit in seiza (at a safe and respectful distance) and watch intently. Bow formally when the instructor has finished. When another group nearby is being instructed you may stop your practice to watch. Always make room for the instructor's work with others.
- Respect those more experienced. Never argue about technique.
- Respect those less experienced. Do not pressure your ideas on others.
- If you understand the movement and are working with someone who does not, you may lead that person through it. Do not attempt to correct or instruct your training partner unless you are authorized to do so.
- Keep talking on the mat to an absolute minimum. Aikido is experience.
- Fingernails and toenails must be short, so as to avoid injury to others or oneself. Feet must be clean. Shoes or sandals are never allowed on the mat.
- If you have to cough or sneeze, try to do so into your armpit or inside your gi: do not use your hands to cover your face.
- No eating, drinking, smoking or gum chewing on or off the mat during practice.
- No jewelry or excessive cosmetics or lotions (that can rub off on another's gi) should be worn during practice. Do not wear strong colognes or perfumes, necklaces or anything that dangles or has sharp edges.
- Clothes must be clean, odorless and presentable. Change clothes only in the designated changing room (wait for any children to finish changing first!). Do not put your hakama on inside or in view of the practice area while class is in session. Do not leave clothes or other personal items (such as water bottles) anywhere in the dojo overnight.
- You may leave your bokken, shinai and jo in the designated weapons racks. It is advisable to have a spare set of weapons for practice at home. Leave your weapons bags open so that there is no delay in retrieving weapons when asked to do so.
- Never drink alcoholic beverages while still wearing practice gi.

**You are welcome to sit and watch a class at any time, but the following rules of etiquette must be followed.**

- Sit respectfully, never with legs propped up on the furniture or in a reclining position.
- No cell phones or any other distraction is allowed. If you cannot watch class quietly and with attention, you are welcome to wait in the front area of the dojo, but do not go into any of the changing rooms.
- Do not talk to anyone while they are on the mat and class is in progress.
- Stand or sit quietly and without movement while the instructor is demonstrating or during the opening and closing ceremony.

Although there seem to be many forms of etiquette to remember, they will come naturally as you continue to train. Please do not resent it if you are corrected on a point of etiquette for each one is important to your safety and to the learning experience.

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## Maintaining the dojo

Students are expected to keep the dojo clean. The mat should be dry-mopped after each session and we appreciate your volunteering for monthly deep-cleaning sessions. If you see full trash cans, remove the trash and dispose of it. If you find the bathroom or carpet dirty, please clean it (you may ask one of the senior students where the cleaning implements are kept and how to use them). If you use the first-aid kit, discard wrappers and return the kit to its place properly repacked.

- In general, make sure you leave the place in the condition you found it, or better. Leave no trace that others would have to take care of.
- When you buy water in the dojo, please take it with you! Water left behind is wasted. Remember to put your name on the bottle with a marker.
- Practice uniforms, including hakama, are to be folded and taken home: do not leave clothes in the dojo overnight. Weapons may be left in the racks provided. The weapons rack near the shomen is for instructor use only. Do not touch anyone else's weapons without permission!
- If it is necessary to remove any items from the shomen or table (e.g. During Kendo or Zazen practice), return those items as you found them. Do not wait for your instructor or someone else to do this. If it is necessary to remove dead flowers, discard them in a covered bin - not an open container.
- Do not post anything on the notice boards or rearrange them without permission. Sensei's office door should be kept closed if no one is in the office.
- Crush cans and bottles before discarding in recycling bins. Volunteer to take the recycling to a Center. Any money thus obtained can be returned to the dojo or given to a legitimate charity.
- Please make every effort to protect the mat surface. No shoes in the training room (unless you are just going to the bathroom). If you wear metal prosthetic braces, please check with the instructor before training on the mat.

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## Note to experienced students joining the dojo

If you have already practiced Aikido or other martial arts elsewhere, we welcome your knowledge as a valuable addition to the dojo. We believe that there is only one "style" of Aikido: O Sensei's vision of it. However, many different schools have evolved their own versions of training. You will, of course, find some things done here differently from what you have become comfortable with elsewhere. We recommend that you look actively for the similarities rather than dwelling on the differences. While differences inevitably widen your knowledge as a martial artist, the commonalities will add to your depth. And please feel free to discuss any concerns you may have with Sensei, the senior students and/or the Business Manager.

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