

COURTESY IN THE DOJO

Courtesy in the Dojo is an important part of Aikido. The Aikido Dojo is the place where we cleanse and enrich our mind/body. Such a place offers effective use only when it is filled with feelings of respect, gratitude, right attitude, and positive mutual support. When you come into the dojo, you will notice that every one works very hard and sincerely to maintain these feelings because it creates a harmonious atmosphere, and it is an excellent means of self-improvement. Any feelings to the contrary should be left outside the dojo. Following traditional forms of etiquette in the dojo is an essential aspect of our training and should be practiced with sincerity.

Courtesy in the Dojo, as anywhere else, basically means thinking of other fellow before you think of yourself. There are, however, a few signs of good manners which are particular to a Dojo alone. They are very simple, but you should check yourself to make sure you don't forget to do the following:

1. Bow, upon entering and exiting the dojo.
2. Bow, when stepping on and off the training mat.
3. All participants should be sitting in attentive meditation at least five minutes before class is scheduled to start and await the instructor's arrival on the mat. Meditation calms the mind, and it is desirable that everyone, students and spectators alike, in the dojo be silent during meditation.
4. Before each training session, "Shomen ni Rei" bow to the Shomen, and then "Sensei ni Rei" to the instructor, saying "onegai shimasu," which translates as "I place myself under your teaching."
5. After each training session, "Shomen ni Rei" bow again to the Shomen, and "Sensei ni Rei" to the instructor, saying "Thank you, sensei." or "Domo arigato gozaimashita, Sensei," then "Otagai ni Rei" bow to your partners.
6. It is proper to let the instructor know if you are not able to stay the whole class period before class and to ask the instructor permission when you are ready to leave or if you are late for class. Wait at the side of the mat until the instructor signals that you may join the class.
7. Remember to show respect to each partner with a bow at the beginning and end of each practice session. Thanking him/her for practicing with you. Your partner is not your opponent. Techniques are learned through him/her and with him/her. It should be a pleasure to be thrown as well as to throw. Each movement in Aikido teaches the principles and spirit of Aikido and should be practiced sincerely. Remember at all times that you are practicing with your partner for mutual self-improvement and that, regardless of rank, you should be able to learn something from each other.
8. Once engaged in the practice of Aikido, clear your mind of everything but the lessons given and the principles of Aikido. Practice with unity of mind and body. Keep talking on the mat to an absolute minimum. Aikido is experience.
9. Care should be taken to be aware of the ability of your partner so that no injuries occur. It is never necessary to demonstrate or prove your physical strength while practicing with your partner. Doing so is apt to result in injury and resentment on

the part of your partner who is here to learn mind-body unification and participate in a harmonious experience.

10. When approaching an instructor on the mat, whether you ask him, or he calls you, bow first and at the end. Never yell out “Sensei” and/or beckon for instruction – go up to him or her and bow.
11. It is inappropriate for a student (including black belts) to offer instruction when he or she is not formally teaching the class, or has not been specifically requested to assist by the instructor. This is an essential point of your personal development, and should be followed carefully, particularly among those who, perhaps, assist or teach in others classes.
12. Do Not: sit on the mat with their back to the Shomen, sit with legs stretched out, lie on the mat, lean against a wall, wear rings or watches, chew gum, have long finger or toenails, wear dirty or torn uniform, leave the mat for water, etc.
13. Keep in mind that Dojo refers not only to the mat, but to the entire area inside the building. Maintaining quiet and practicing courtesy in the dojo pertain to all areas in the building.
14. When observing class, spectators should remain quiet out of respect for the instructor and practicing students.
15. Take time to greet new students or visitors. Remember how you felt when you were new in any group and how it feels to left out. Aikido does not recognize any difference between the sexes; or any other ‘difference’; we are aiming toward mind-body unification and we must learn to extend it to all of life, not just for use on the mat.
16. Always try to out-do yourself in showing respect and gratitude to each other. At all times --- show respect and gratitude to your fellow men.