

# Dojo Culture & Etiquette

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Budo Dojo, 12650 SW Farmington Road, Beaverton, OR 97005 503.520.0864

## From the Founder:

"True Budo is a work of love...not struggling with each other."

- O Sensei  
(Morihei Ueshiba)

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## Welcome to Budo Dojo!

Whether this is your first *dojo*\* experience, or one of many, we welcome you heartily to our *dojo*. Every martial arts *dojo* has a slightly different culture, though there are many similarities. These pages will answer some of the obvious questions you may have about blending with the culture here at Budo Dojo.

This pamphlet provides information on safety, *dojo* etiquette, dues, maintenance, practice weapons, *dogi*\*, seminars and more. Of course, it

can't cover every situation that may arise, and you are always welcome to ask questions. You may ask a black belt (*yudansha*\*), a senior student (*sempai*\*), the teacher (*sensei*\*) or send your questions via email to [sensei@budodojo.com](mailto:sensei@budodojo.com).

Budo Dojo is affiliated with Aikido Schools of Ueshiba (ASU) a federation of more than 100 *dojos* under the guidance of Mitsugi Saitome Shihan. Our chief instructor, Dan Penrod Sensei, has studied under John Messores Sensei for

more than 21 years and John Messores Sensei has been a personal student of Saitome Shihan for more than 30 years.

The ASU Student Handbook is an excellent resource for new students. It's available online at [www.budodojo.com](http://www.budodojo.com), and printed copies are available for you to pick up at the *dojo*.

*\* Definitions for the italicized Japanese terms used in this document can be found in the Glossary of the ASU Student Handbook.*

## Entering the Dojo

Do your best to arrive 10 to 15 minutes before class begins to give yourself time to change, do some gentle stretching and practice *ukemi*.

If the *dojo* is locked when you arrive, please wait by the rear entrance. A senior student or the instructor will arrive shortly and unlock the door.

Upon entering the *dojo* make a standing bow toward the picture of O Sensei at the front of the *dojo* (*shomen*).

Please remove your shoes and place them on the shelves provided, then step around the edge of the mats to get to the changing rooms.

Use your changing time to prepare mentally and physically for class. This is not a time for chit chat or catching up with friends. Greet friends politely, but if you plan to take class, change quickly, and get on the mat.

Voices carry far in the *dojo*. Therefore talk in a low

voice while changing or when you are off the mat.

**Note:** For security purposes keys and other valuables should not be left in or near your shoes.

If you are new and do not yet own a *dogi* (training uniform) wear stretchy long pants, and a t-shirt or other comfortable shirt for practice. Short pants are not recommended because we often practice techniques in *suwariwaza* (on our knees) or practice *shikko* (knee walking).

# Keeping Our Dojo Clean

This dojo is our practice space, not *sensei's*. Therefore it is our responsibility as *dojo* members to keep it clean, beautiful and magnetic.

We should take care of the dojo before and after class every day. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Dusting
- Checking and watering plants
- Emptying the trash
- Replacing toilet paper and paper towels in restrooms
- Sweeping the mats after class (and before class if needed)
- Vacuuming the rugs

Sweeping the mats after class is a task traditionally done by the lowest ranked students practicing. It is usually done by a coordinated PAIR of sweepers. We use small, reusable towels and Swiffer-type sweepers to sweep the mats. Be sure to use each towel twice, once on each

side, before placing it in the dirty towel receptacle. If there are no towels, or you prefer to use a push broom, discard the dust you've gathered in the trash bin.

Trash in the small trash receptacles should be dumped daily in the larger trash bin near the rear door.

If you notice the trash bin in a restroom, *sensei's* office or the one near the rear entrance is full, please seal the bag and place it into the dumpster. Additional waste basket liners can be found in the bottom of each wastebasket or on the closet shelves near the back door.

Nail polish will stain our mats and is difficult to clean. If you wear nail polish, especially toe nail polish; please cover your toes either with socks or shoes specifically designed to be worn only on the mats.



合氣道

## Monthly & Ongoing Dojo Maintenance

### Monthly Maintenance

Once a month we do a more extensive *dojo* cleaning, including cleaning the restrooms and disinfecting the mats. All students are expected to help with the monthly clean up. It generally takes only 45 minutes when all hands are busy.

### Ongoing Maintenance

If you are willing and able, there are a number of more formal volunteer roles you can accept.

These roles are listed on the bulletin board along with the names of the current volunteers. Write your name next to the role you're interested in filling, and then inform the *dojo* volunteer coordinator (their name is shown at the bottom of the posted list.)

Or, of course, feel free to take the initiative at any time. If you see something that needs to be done, inform one of the instructors that you intend to take care of it, and then make it happen.

## Social Events

**Monday evenings** after class is the traditional time to go out for a beer (or lemonade, or soda) and socialize with classmates off the mat. All are welcome, friends and family, too, if they wish to join us!

There is generally a **Holiday Party** sometime between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

And, during **weekend seminars** we usually have a **social gathering on Saturday night**, either at a restaurant or a *dojo* member's home. These events are open to *dojo* members, their families and significant others.

Social events are announced during after-class circle, via email and often a flyer is posted as well.



## Uniforms

The *dojo* generally keeps a stock of basic *dogi* for students to purchase. They are kept in *sensei's* office and the price is posted near them.

Pick up the *dogi* you need, and then leave your payment in an envelope in the mailbox on the office door. And, as always, state

on the envelope what the payment is for. Also, include your name if the payment is in cash.

All students are invited to wear a *hakama* after achieving 6<sup>th</sup> *kyu* which is the first tested rank.

Keep your *dogi* and *hakama* neat and clean.

## Begin with Respect

Every time we step onto or off the mat we make a respectful, standing bow toward the *kamidana* (front of the dojo). This symbolizes our respect for the spirit and principles of Aikido, and our gratitude to the Founder for developing this system of study.

Please make every effort to arrive on time for class. If possible, please be on the mat 5 minutes before class, quiet and ready to begin training.

If you arrive late, here's the procedure to follow before joining class:

- Warm up on your own as necessary, and when you feel ready to join the group, bow toward the *kamidana* then sit quietly next to the mat in *seiza*.
- Wait for *sensei* to invite you to join class.
- When you are signaled to join the class, get on the mat and complete a silent formal bow in.
- Then if class is warming up, join the group.
- Or, if class has begun practicing techniques find a partner and begin working together.

## Practicing Safely

Be sure to fill out an emergency contact card and keep the information on it up to date. These are 4x6" cards located in a file box near the Attendance sheets. File the card in the box under your first name so that we can quickly find your card if needed.

Remove all jewelry before getting on the mat, with the possible exception of wedding rings.

Keep toenails and fingernails trimmed. Long nails can easily cause cuts during practice.

If you have an injured or recovering body part, put colored tape on your *gi* or your skin where the injury is located. This will serve as a signal to other students that you are injured and they need to be gentle in the area(s) indicated by the tape.

If you see your practice partner wearing colored tape, handle the taped part of their body carefully. It is probably injured.

Be considerate of your dojo mates and stay off the mat if you have a cold or flu.

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## Practicing Safely – Continued from Page 3

If you find blood on the mat, immediately inform your partner and *sensei*, and then excuse yourself to clean it up. To clean the mats wear gloves and use paper towels and hydrogen peroxide (located by the first aid kit).

If it is your blood, clean your wound and bandage it before returning to practice. You'll find band-aids and other first aid supplies in the First Aid kit.

If for any reason you do not feel safe with your training partner, feel free to ask them to be slow or gentler with you. If you still do not

feel safe, bow to your partner and let them know you are choosing to sit out. If this is recurring, speak with the instructor of the class or Penrod *Sensei*. Safety is always our number one priority.

When a technique isn't working for you, resist the urge to crank harder to make it work. As Penrod *Sensei* often says, "Your partner is more important than the technique." Cranking harder will only frustrate you and may lead to injuries. Instead mentally examine what movements you made just before the

technique stopped working. There you will find the mistake you can correct.

Do your best to be prepared for a full hour of training. That is, make sure you are adequately hydrated and have taken care of your personal needs before class begins.

However, your safety and comfort are important – if you need to use the restroom, take a drink of water or do anything else to maintain safe training, please do so after letting *sensei* know why you are leaving the mat.

*"One of Aikido's most important principles is musubi, the principle of connection, unification, and harmonious interaction."*

Saotome Shihan

## Class Format

When class begins, all students line up and sit in *seiza* facing the *shomen*. Students line up according to rank, most senior to least senior from right to left. This is the only time during practice that we sit in rank.

*Sensei* will come to the center of the *dojo*, bow to O *Sensei*, clap twice, bow again, and turn to bow to the students saying "*Onegai shimasu*," (which, roughly translated, means 'thank you for what we are about to do.'). At that point, the students bow and respond by saying back to *sensei* "*Onegai shimasu*" (pronounced 'oh-ney-guy-she-masoo.')

*Sensei* will then lead the class in warm-up exercises for about 10 to 15 minutes. If the instructor is late, one of the senior students will lead the warm-ups.

After warm-ups *Sensei* will demonstrate a technique. Observe the demonstration diligently. You are expected to practice the technique as it was shown when *sensei* indicates it is time to practice. At which point you will turn to a partner near you, bow and say "*Onegai shimasu*."

Quickly find a space on the mat and practice the technique four times beginning with the senior student as *nage* and junior student as *uke*. Then switch roles for four repetitions of the same attack and technique.

When the end of a technique practice session is signaled by *sensei*, immediately bow to your partner, thank them, then line up and sit in *seiza* as quickly as possible.

It is preferable to sit in *seiza* whenever you are sitting on the mat. Sit in *seiza* as long as you can, and switch to sitting cross legged if you need to relieve the pressure on your knees and ankles. Never lounge against a wall, or stretch your legs out in front of you. Endeavor to keep your spine straight whenever you are seated.

If there are an odd number of students in the class you may find yourself without a training partner. In this situation, choose a pair who are working together and sit in *seiza* facing them. The pair practicing is then responsible for noticing and practicing the technique just two times each instead of four times each. After each partner has practiced twice, the person who was just *uke* will rotate out. That is your cue to rotate in beginning as *uke*.

"Aikido's basic purpose is to help people live better lives, to make their spirits blossom, and so to improve the world."

Saotome Shihan

## Talking on the Mat

*Sensei* means teacher or instructor and whoever is teaching class is addressed formally as *sensei*. We use this term, in part, to remind ourselves that this is a practice that begins and ends with respect (*rei*).

If you need assistance with a technique, approach *sensei* and politely ask for instruction. Do not call the instructor over to you from across the room.

Remember *sensei* is the only teacher on the mat. There is no need for other teachers therefore talking during training should be kept to a minimum.

As the ASU Handbook states, "Do not attempt to

correct or instruct your training partner unless you are authorized to do so." Here are a few reasons why:

Each student contains the principles of *Aiki* within. Our partner does not need our instruction.

We may need to work on trusting that our partner will figure out a move for themselves, or we may need to work on our humility by considering that they could be working on something we are unaware of. Every time we want to speak, we could benefit by inquiring into what lesson we can learn by keeping our own counsel.

And last but not least, we might just be plain wrong. We would not want to lead our partner astray.

We do not offer advice or criticism to our *sempai*. *Sempai* means "senior student," that is, senior compared to you.

*Kohai* means "junior student," again, compared to you. We might occasionally offer small comments to our *kohai*, even though we should try to refrain from these comments.

Use your body, rather than words, to help your training partner discover proper movements. **Practice is the best instructor.**

## Rank Testing

The examination system in Aikido is not structured on competition. Instead you are expected to demonstrate your understanding of the techniques by testing for rank.

Testing generally occurs every four months, with a pre-test approximately one month prior to the test date. A test fee of \$35 goes directly to the Aikido Schools of Ueshiba to cover testing administrative expenses. It must be paid prior to the test date.

Refer to the ASU Handbook for the time and technique requirements for each rank.

You are responsible for tracking your own practice hours on the attendance sheet, memorizing the Japanese names of the techniques, as well as learning to demonstrate all the techniques for the rank at which you will be tested.

If you meet the time requirements, believe you can successfully demonstrate the required techniques and are interested in testing, speak with one of the instructors and seek help from your *sempai* with your test preparation.

Video demonstrations of each of the required

techniques for each rank are on our web site. To view the techniques, select 'Aikido in Motion,' and then select 'Taijutsu – Empty Hand Practice.'



## At the End of Class

When class ends, all students line up and quickly sit in *seiza*. *Sensei* will bow to O Sensei, clap twice, bow again, and turn to bow to the students. At that point the students bow and say "*Domo arigato gozaimashita*" (pronounced "Doe-moe ah-ree-gah-toe go-zie-mash-tah.) This is a very polite form of thank you.

*Sensei* will then indicate that the students should circle up. This circle time is your opportunity to ask questions, hear announcements, and get more details about the techniques that were practiced.

When circle time is over, if there is another class, leave the mat promptly and keep your voice low as you change back into street clothes.

## Seminars

There will be ongoing announcements and notices posted about aikido seminars being offered at various *dojos* in our general area. You are strongly encouraged to attend seminars, no matter the level of your training, if your time and resources allow.

Always be sensitive to local etiquette and customs when practicing away from Budo Dojo.

Budo Dojo hosts an annual seminar with Penrod Sensei's teacher, John Messores Sensei from Florida. As a Budo Dojo member you are highly encouraged to attend as much of this weekend seminar as possible.

## Weapons

Weapons are provided by the *dojo* for Saturday weapons class. **Dojo**

### weapons are stored in the middle weapons rack

across the room from the *shomen* (*kamidana*). These weapons are for beginners and for times when you've forgotten your own practice weapons. Do NOT use someone else's weapons unless they have given you direct permission to do so.

If you are serious about continuing your practice, and you have practiced a year or more, we **strongly** encourage you to purchase your own *bokken*, *jo*, and *tanto*.

Your personal practice weapons can be stored in your bag and hung on a peg on the rack near the changing rooms. Or, you can place your *bokken* and *jo* on the left and right most weapons racks across from the *shomen*.

Weapons practice is an important part of Aikido training at all ranks.



### Budo Dojo

#### Studio of Aikido

12650 SW Farmington Rd  
Beaverton, OR 97005

#### Phone

(503) 520-0864

#### E-mail

sensei@budodojo.com

We love this dojo and the fun and challenging times we experience together while training. Thank you for joining us.

### Welcome!

From all Budo Dojo  
Members and Instructors.

## Dues and Expenses

Budo Dojo does not have student contracts. However, we do require that you set up a monthly auto-payment plan. You can pay your dues and other fees by check or cash until the auto-payment plan is in place.

For all check and cash payments use the pre-printed envelopes located on the office door. Clearly

mark on the envelope the exact breakdown of your payment (for example, \$5.00 water donation, \$35 testing fee, \$75 monthly dues) then place the envelope in the mailbox also located on the office door.

You are always invited to make a donation toward the drinking water expenses. You can place

your cash in the container near the water cooler or put it in an envelope and place the envelope in the mailbox on the office door. Be sure to indicate that the money goes toward the water expenses.

For more details on the fees and various discount rates, please see the Dojo Weekly Schedule flyer.

### We're on the Web!

See us at:  
[www.budodojo.com](http://www.budodojo.com)