



合気道

INTRODUCTION TO AIKIDO

WHAT IS AIKIDO?

The Japanese word *Aikido* is written with three characters which translate as "the way of unity with the fundamental force of the universe".

Aikido is a true *budo* or Martial Way that evolved in the historic tradition of Japanese warrior arts. Studied in earnest, *budo* is more than a science of tactics and self-defense - it is a discipline for perfecting the spirit.

Aikido was developed by Morihei Ueshiba, known as *O-Sensei* (Great Teacher) to more than one million students of Aikido throughout the world. Even as a young man, he was an extraordinary martial artist, a master of the sword, the staff, the spear, and the art of ju-jitsu. But O-Sensei also had a strong spiritual drive, and brooded over the futility of a path based on victory over others.

Leading a life of austerity and rigorous training, he struggled with this dilemma. It was resolved in a moment of profound awakening. Transformed by his spiritual insights, Ueshiba's technical mastery evolved into a martial art of refinement and astonishing power, fundamentally different from those that preceded it.

"The secret of Aikido," he wrote, "is to harmonize with the movement of the universe and bring ourselves into accord with the universe itself." O-Sensei maintained that *budo* is a work of love, a path to overcome discord in ourselves and bring peace to the world, "to make the heart of the universe one's own heart."

There have always been visionaries of remarkable insight, but O-Sensei taught that true awareness is not grasped by intellect alone. "This is not mere theory," he said. "You must practice it."

DYNAMICS OF AIKIDO

The essence of all Aikido techniques is spherical motion around a stable, energized center. Even when the direction appears to be straight forward or backward, close observation reveals the Aikidoist's movements are in fact circular.

Properly executed, some techniques are spectacular, sending an opponent flying through the air. Others are like sleight-of-hand: small, deft movements that immobilize the aggressor. Both results are achieved through precise use of leverage, inertia, gravity, and the action of centrifugal and centripetal forces. Ultimately, it is the energy of the attack itself which brings down the attacker.

Increased stamina, flexibility, and muscle development occur naturally as a result of training, but the techniques themselves do not depend on strength for effectiveness; Aikido can be practiced by men and women of all ages.

AIKIDO TRAINING

The final aim of *budo* is personal transformation, the creation of an integrated human being. Yet philosophical discussion is rare in the *dojo*, or training hall. The focus is highly practical: constant repetition to master the fundamentals of movement, timing and breathing.

Students train themselves to capture the opponent's action and redirect it with techniques of martial efficiency and power. At the same time, they become aware of the tendency to overreact to opposition, and learn to remain centered under all conditions.

Most practice is done with a partner; each works at his or her own level of ability, alternating as *uke* (the attacker), and *nage* (the one who receives the attack). Both roles are stressed: each contributes skills that enhance overall sensitivity and control.

CENTERING

The Aikidoist acquires a relaxed posture in which the weight of the body is directed towards its physiologic center in the lower abdomen. Gravity, no longer a force to be overcome, serves to support and stabilize posture. As a result, ordinary movement assumes an appearance of grace and economy.

The effects of centering are mental as well as physical: vitality increases, the senses are sharpened, and one is less affected by everyday irritations and annoyances. This state is referred to in Japan as having *hara*, or strong *ki*, the inner quality which aids the student of Aikido to develop to his or her fullest potential in every area of life.

OUR DOJO

We are a United States Aikido Federation (USAF - <http://www.usaikifed.com>) affiliated aikido dojo in Memphis, TN.

For current information about class times please check our Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/aikidosocietyofmemphis>

USAF TEST REQUIREMENTS

Testing requirements can be viewed on the Membership Benefits page on the USAF website:
<http://www.usaikifed.com/about/membership/>

DOJO ETIQUETTE

The following etiquette guidelines will apply to most Aikido Dojos that you might visit. If you are at another dojo, ask about their individual rules, as they might differ from ours. Etiquette is an important aspect of Aikido training. Dojo etiquette is not an attempt to copy the formal politeness of Japanese culture. In Aikido, etiquette is an outward expression of your martial arts awareness. By observing good dojo etiquette, you will be demonstrating proper understanding of your relationships with other students and the martial aspects of Aikido training.

BOWING

When entering or leaving the dojo, bow in the direction of the kamiza (the small shrine at the front of the dojo). Bow when stepping on or off the mat. Bow to your partner at the beginning and end of your practice together. At the start of class, we line up (by rank and seniority—more senior students sit to the left) and bow once towards the kamiza and once towards Sensei. (Some dojos add a clapping ritual; as ours is not a Shinto shrine, we do not.)

Try not to be late for class. If you are late, kneel by the side of the mat and wait until Sensei invites you to join class. Thank Sensei with a bow and join the class. If you have missed the warm ups, take time to stretch out at the back of the mat. Then approach any group of students and ask to join them.

Should you need to fix your gi during class, first bow to your partner to indicate the interruption in practice. Then face away from both your partner and the kamiza while straightening your gi. When you are done, face your partner and indicate your readiness with a bow.

SAFETY AND CLEANLINESS

Please practice good hygiene for your own self-respect and safety and for that of others in the dojo. Pay particular attention to your hands and feet.

- Bathe self and wash uniform
- Trim nails
- Avoid wearing strong cologne or perfume

Make your body safe for training. While on the mat, you must have none of the following:

- Chewing gum, candy, or other loose objects in your mouth
- Long and jagged fingernails and toenails
- Jewelry, particularly: earrings, bracelets, necklaces, and heavy rings

There is no shame in taking a rest if you are tired. Please rest at the edge of the mat in seiza, but do not sit with your back to the Kamiza. If sitting in seiza is uncomfortable, sit cross-legged or bow and walk out into the hallway after asking Sensei. Never leave or re-enter the mat area without asking first.

Before and after class, everyone must assist in lying down and taking up mats.

PRACTICE

Aikido is a cooperative practice with both partners contributing to the learning process. As the attacker, use the amount of force and speed appropriate to the level of your partner.

Avoid teaching your partner; that's Sensei's job. If you feel that you are in danger from your partner, you can bow to them and go and sit to the side. As nage, allow your partner to choose the level of ukemi that they feel comfortable with; don't force them to go faster or harder. Remember, they are lending you their bodies and, just like when you borrow a neighbor's lawn mower, you should return it in the condition you got it.

Your partner is the mirror of yourself. Ignoring your partner's individuality and self-esteem is against the spirit of aikido. Your partner is not someone you compete against, but a person to train with and improve with. Show respect to and consideration of your fellow practitioners in every aspect of the practice.

Monthly dues should be paid at the beginning of the month.

AIKIDO SOCIETY OF MEMPHIS

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY THE FOLLOWING LEGALLY BINDING DOCUMENT.

IT LIMITS OUR LIABILITY.

I, the undersigned applicant to Aikido Society of Memphis (hereinafter called "the Dojo"), understand and acknowledge that I am applying for instruction in Aikido, a martial art, which involves strenuous exercise and body contact. I further understand and acknowledge the Dojo carries no insurance against injury to any of its students.

As a condition to the privilege of being admitted as a student to the Dojo, of receiving instruction in Aikido, and of receiving the permission of the Dojo to use its facilities, I hereby agree and promise to assume the risk and responsibility for any and all injuries (or damages due to injuries), suffered by me or caused by third parties to me, arising out of participation in Aikido in the Dojo, in activities involving the use of facilities or equipment of the Dojo, whether occurring on the premises of the Dojo or at any other location, and whether consisting of classes, demonstrations, practices, or the use of facilities or equipment of the Dojo at any location that said Dojo may be located (including Rhodes College) at any given time.

I hereby release, indemnify, and forever discharge and hold harmless, the Dojo, its director, employees, students, agents, servants, and any of the Dojo's possible host facilities (including Rhodes College) from any responsibility, liability, claims for personal injury, legal actions or suits, and damages or losses of any kind or description, both at law or in equity, arising out of, or in any way connected with any of the above-mentioned acts and activities.

I hereby agree and covenant for myself, and my successor and assignees, never to sue, either at law or in equity, the Dojo, its director, employees, agents, servants, or any of the Dojo's possible host facilities (including Rhodes College) for an account of any such claim, demand, liability, damage, injury, or loss.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have set my hand and seal to this document which I intend to be a legally binding document, on the day and year below written; and understand it fully.

Date

Print Name

Signature

Print Street

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Print City, State, ZIP Code

Witness

Phone

Email