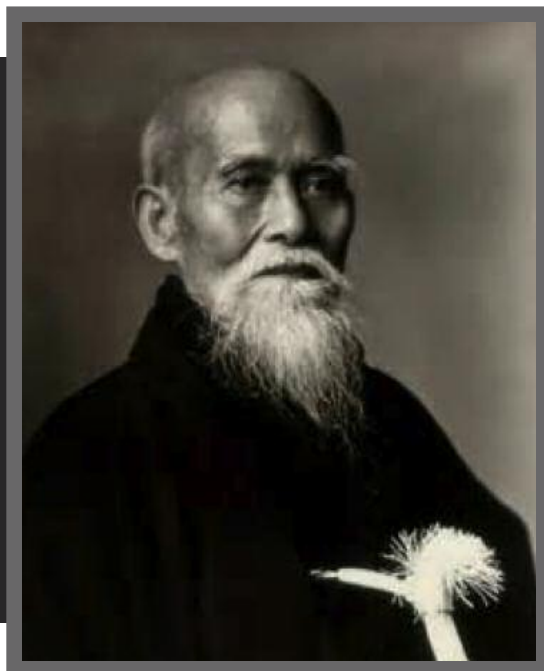


合 氣 道  
ai ki do

The Way of Harmony



Morihei Ueshiba, 1883 - 1969  
Founder of Aikido

Morihei Ueshiba was born in 1883 in a Japan that had not fully emerged into the modern world and where many of the martial arts were taught by masters in the old tradition. In his early years he mastered several martial arts including swordsmanship and various forms of unarmed combat. At the same time he developed into a deeply religious person and envisaged a new system of budo (the way of the warrior) which would provide a basis for physical and spiritual development. This he named Aikido: the way (do) of harmonizing (ai) the spirit (ki). By ki is meant the creative, life spirit of the universe; one's own life energy. "True budo is the way of great harmony and love for all beings" wrote Ueshiba. That he meant Aikido to be much more than a method of self-defense is conveyed in his words "I want considerate people to listen to the voice of Aikido. It is not for correcting others; it is for correcting your own mind".

## The Principles of Aikido

Aikido is a system designed solely for self-defense. It is essentially non-violent and, as conceived by its creator, non-competitive. Force is never opposed by force. By means of spherical movements an attacker's force is diverted and turned back on them. In addition to throws to bring the assailant to the ground there is also a variety of locks for controlling an attacker. While these can be painful and induce immediate submission, they are applied so as not to cause injury. Aikido is perhaps the most subtle and graceful of the martial arts. As Aikido techniques do not demand physical strength or an aggressive spirit, Aikido is practiced by people of all ages and physical make-up, by women just as well as by men.

## The Benefits of Aikido Practice

As Aikido is based on full and natural body movement it exercises every limb and joint of the body. Flexibility, muscle tone, coordination, and quick reactions are all developed. It does not demand unnatural body-building preparation and is an absorbing way to keep fit along natural lines within a framework of aesthetic movement.

As we get older we lose the flexibility of our joints. Aikido is an excellent way of restoring and preserving a supple, healthy body. Moreover, there should be enough expenditure of energy in an Aikido practice to stimulate the heart and give it plenty of exercise.

Aikido is essentially a method of self-defense, so that through regular practice one will acquire a sound basis of agile movement and speed of reaction which should prove useful if the occasion ever demanded it.

In common with other oriental philosophies (and indeed with modern science) Aikido holds that there is no real separation between body and mind. In subjecting our bodies to the precise discipline of Aikido, we may eventually influence our minds for the good, and achieve an inner calm and balance that may be carried into our daily lives, helping us become better people.

## Video clips

1. Video of a typical training session at the Aikido headquarters dojo (training hall)  
in Tokyo, Japan  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FXouiACaMRI>
2. Aikido demonstration by Yoshinobu Takeda 8th Dan  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66eDgHo1cKE>
3. Aikido demonstration by Lia Suzuki sensei  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZoJ-bQfYzA>
4. Pat Hendricks 7th Dan teaching  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ETEXGiQcTEA>

## Aikido Terminology

The amount of Japanese used in teaching Aikido varies greatly. In some clubs all the instructions will be formal and given in Japanese. In many clubs Japanese is mainly used for the names of moves rather than instructions. The following explains some of the Japanese terms that you may come across in practice.

'**Aikido**' (eye-key-doe)' is written in Japanese in the form of three characters or **kanji** (can-gee).



**AI**

The first 'Ai' means 'to meet, to come together, to harmonise'.



**KI**

The second 'Ki' (kee) translates as 'steam or vapour', but in modern Japanese has come to mean 'the mind, soul, spirit'. In the larger context 'Ki' means the 'spirit of the Universe'.



**DO**

The last symbol 'Do' means the way - Aikido can involve more than learning physical technique, it can also be a way to personal development. Aikido may therefore be translated as 'the way of harmony with the spirit of the universe'

### The dojo

The room in which Aikido training takes place is known as the **Dojo** (doe-joe). When entering or leaving the dojo, and when stepping onto or off the mats the students, perform a standing bow, in the direction of the front of the dojo. At the front of the dojo, there is usually a picture of **Morihei Ueshiba**, the Founder of aikido, this is known as the kamiza (kam-ee-za). Morihei Ueshiba is normally referred to as O Sensei - great teacher.

At the beginning of class, the students sit in kneeling posture, seiza (say-zar), in grade order at the right hand side of the dojo, facing the kamiza. Practice begins with a series of kneeling bows, **zare**i (zar-ray) led by the instructor, Sensei (sen-say), who sits at the front or 'head' of the dojo in front of the kamiza. Students who arrive late for practice wait at the edge of the mats until Sensei gives them permission to join the practice. In some dojo, students say "**Onegaishimasu Sensei**" (o-nay-gay-ishi-mass-sen-say) when bowing to the instructor at the beginning of practice - "please teach me".

At the end they may say "**Domo Arigato Gozaimashita**" (doe-mow-ary-garto-go-sigh-ee-mash-ta) - "thank you for teaching me". At the BAB clubs, students often simply say "thank you Sensei" at the end of practice. In either case, etiquette and politeness are an important part of Aikido training.

The practice uniform for aikido consists of a **gi** (gee), loose trousers and top fastened with a cloth belt **obi** (oh-bee). This clothing is based on traditional Japanese garments. When not on the mat, sandals zori (zorry) should be worn. Ranks in the Institute of Aikido are divided into **Kyu** (kew) and **Dan** (dan) grades.

Dan grades wear black belt and also wear a black divided skirt known as a **hakama** (hak-am-ar). Kyu grades wear coloured belts, beginning at 6th kyu with a white belt and passing through yellow, orange, green and blue to brown belt (1st kyu). Dan grades begin at 1st dan, **shodan**.

## Counting in Japanese

One	Ichi (each)
Two	Ni (nee)
Three	San (son)
Four	Shi (she)
Five	Go (go)
Six	Roku (rock)
Seven	Sichi (seech)

Eight	Hachii (hatch)
Nine	Ku (coo)
Ten	Ju (jew)
Eleven	Ju-Ichi (jew-each)
Twelve	Ju-Ni (jew-nee)
Twenty	Ni-ju (nee-jew)
Twenty one	Ni ju ichi (nee-jew-each)

.....*and so on.*

## Aikido training

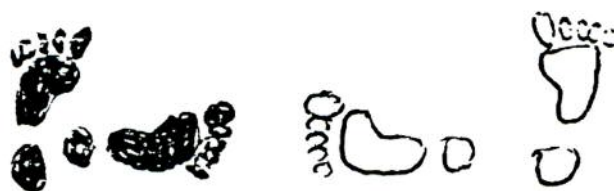
Most Aikido training takes place in pairs. In **tai jutsu** (tie-jut-soo), body techniques, the person executing the technique (i.e. the defender or 'thrower') is **nage** (nag-ee) but is also sometimes known as **tori** (torry) or **shite** (she-tay). The person receiving the technique (i.e. the receiving the attack) is **uke** (oo-kay) and the trained, safe response to technique is **ukemi** (oo-kem-ee). This usually takes the form of a forwards roll, mae ukemi (my-oo-kem-ee) or backwards roll, **ushiro ukemi** (oo-sheer-o-oo-kem-ee).

The basic posture, **kamae** (kam-eye) in Aikido is **hanmi** (han-me), front knee bent, back leg straight, balls of the feet in line, weight slightly forward and hands extended naturally to protect the body. A posture with the left foot forward is **hidari** (hid-ar-ree) hanmi and with the right foot forward is **migi** (me-gee) hanmi. When both partners start with the same foot forward they are in **ai hanmi** (eye-han-me) and when they start with different feet forward they are in **gyaku hanmi** (guy-aku-han-me).

### Ai hanmi foot position picture



### Gyaku hanmi foot position picture



Practices generally start with a series of solo movement exercises. These include: **taisabaki** (tie-sa-back-ee) which literally translates as 'body movement', but in the Institute is used to refer to an exercise involving a 'step-turn-step back' movement; **irimi** (ee-ree-mee) an entering movement (usually a sliding forward step); a 'rowing' exercise and **lkkyo undo** (ik-yo-un-doe) a body exercise which can be performed in eight directions.

Most practices begin with (or at least include) **tainohenko** (tie-no-hen-co), a turning exercise when attacked in 2nd form (see below). These exercises develop correct posture and movement which are important in all aikido techniques. Other important factors common to all techniques are: the development of **zanshin** (zan-shin), a calm state of ready, awareness; **mai ai** (my-eye), the correct distance from a partner when practising; the use of **tegetana** (tay-gat-an-a), the cutting blade of the hand and **atemi** (a-tem-ee), strikes, punches or kicks, used mainly to distract an attacker or to encourage them to move in a required direction.

## Names of attacks and techniques

The Institute of Aikido uses a numbering system to describe 16 basic forms of attacks. The numbering system was developed when Aikido was first introduced into Europe. The first seven of these attack forms are described below:

- 1st form      **Ai Hanmi Katatedori** (kat-at-a-door-ee): right hand grasps partner's right wrist (or left to left)
- 2nd form      **Gyaku Hanmi Katatedori**: right hand grasps partner's left wrist (or left to right).
- 3rd form      **Katadori** (kat-a-door-ee): right hand grasps partner's clothing at the left shoulder (or left to right). **Katadori Menuchi** (kat-a-door-ee men-oo-chee): one hand holding shoulder from front, the other hand striking down through centre of head).
- 4th form      **Munedori** (moon-ay-door-ee): either hand grasps partner's clothing at the centre of the chest.
- 5th form      **Shomen Uchi** (show-men-oo-chee): open handed strike to the top of the head.
- 6th form      **Yokomen Uchi** (yo-ko-men-oo-chee): open handed strike to the side of the head.
- 7th form      **Tsuki** (ski): punch, usually to the partner's stomach **Chudan** (chew-dan) tsuki.
- 8th form      **Ushiro Eridori** (oo-sheer-o ery-door-ee): one hand holding the collar from behind.
- 9th form      **Gyaku Hanmi Hijidori** (he-gee-door-ee): left hand holding partner's right elbow from the front (or right to left).
- 10th form     **Morotedori** (moro-tay-door-ee): two hands holding one wrist.
- 11th form     **Ryotedori** (reo-tay-door-ee): holding both wrists from the front.
- 12th form     **Ryokatadori** (reo-kat-a-door-ee): two hands holding shoulders from the front.
- 13th form     **Ushiro tekubidori** (tee-koo-bee-door-ee): holding both wrists from behind.
- 14th form     **Ushiro Hijidori**: holding both elbows from behind.
- 15th form     **Ushiro Ryokatadori**: holding both shoulders held from behind.
- 16th form     **Ushiro Kubishimi** (koo-bee-jee-me): Hold wrist and strangle from behind.

Although kicks are not generally a part of Aikido movements, defences against straight kicks, **mae geri** (my-gery) and round kicks, **Mawashi geri** (ma-wash-ee-gery) are taught.

Three 'heights or levels' of attack are sometimes referred to: **Jodan** (joe-dan) - upper (throat, neck, head); **Chudan** (chew-dan) - Middle (waist level and above) and **Gedan** (gay-dan) - lower (below the waist).

Below are a series of illustrations of some of the most common Aikido techniques. Most techniques may be performed with a turning entrance or movement, Ura waza (oo-ra-waz-a) or with a direct entrance, Omote waza (oh-mote-ay-waz-a)



Other techniques commonly used include **gokyo** (go-key-o), the 'fifth principle', a technique that is usually performed against knife attacks from sixth form, **koshi nage** (ko-she-nag-ee), a throw which takes a partner across the hips and **jujigaraminage** (jew-gee-ga-rah-me-nag-ee), a cross arm, elbow locking throw.

There are an almost infinite number of variations on these techniques. The technique often varies depending on the level, strength and speed of the attack. Most techniques are initially taught from a basic or static attack **kihon waza** (key-hon-was-a), later they may be taught with the attacker taking one-step and finally from a moving attack, **ki no nagare** (key-no-na-ga-ree).

**Tachi waza** (tat-che-waz-a) are techniques performed with both partners standing, **Suwari waza** (soo-wah-ree-waz-a) are techniques performed with both partners in seiza and **Hanmihandachi waza** (Hian-me-han-dat-chee-waz-a) are techniques performed with nage in seiza and uke standing. The method of moving around while kneeling is known as **shikko** (shee-ko). Other terms you may come across are **Henka waza** (hen-ka-lvaz-a) which is a free flowing exercise, changing from one technique to another and **Kaeshi waza** (kai-she-waz-a) which are counter techniques. Gradings for higher belts may also involve 2 or more attackers.

There are two main forms of practice which involve multiple attackers. These are **randori** (ran-door-ee) which is the free use of the above techniques and **kokyu nage** (coke-you-nag-ee) a free flowing throwing exercise which is described in more detail below.



## Kokyu and Ki

Although it is a physical martial art, Aikido has a deep philosophical basis. The perception and understanding of this depends very much on the individual Aikidoka. Some techniques are designed to emphasise the use of 'breath power', **kokyu** (co-cue). These involve throwing with an inner feeling derived from correct breathing. **Kokyu ho** (coke-you-ho) is a throwing exercise usually performed from **morote dori** (moro-tay-door-ee) or 10th form, with uke holding one wrist with both hands. **Kokyu dosa** (coke-you-doe-sa) is a throwing exercise with both partners kneeling and often performed at the end of practice. Kokyu nage is an exercise with multiple attackers where the attacker is generally not gripped by the defender but led and thrown using this 'breath power'.

A more complex concept is that of **ki** (key). This is considered to be an inner energy or spirit that flows from the **randen** (tan-den), centre, of a person (situated 1/4 inches below the navel). This energy is part of the ki of the universe, as with the ki in Aikido, and can be extended, manipulated and controlled by aikidoka to increase the effectiveness of their technique. Particularly effective is the use of **kiai** (key-ay) - a shout used to focus will or impact. To some people ki is a mental concept that enables them to use latent physical powers, others perceive it as a real energy. Some styles of Aikido, such as Ki Aikido, emphasise the teaching of ki from the start, while other styles may introduce the idea gradually or make no direct mention of it.

## Weapons training

The weapons techniques taught in the Institute of Aikido are based mainly on those taught by **Saito** (sigh-toe) Sensei in the **Iwama** (ee-war-mar) style of Aikido. The weapons used are usually made of wood but represent real weapons and should always be treated with care and respect.

The Japanese sword, **katana** (cat-anna), is represented by a solid wooden sword, a **bokken** (bo-ken) often referred to simply as **ken**, as in 'ken awase'. The short staff (~ 1.27m , 4' 2") is called a **jo** (joe) and the knife (usually wooden or rubber, but sometimes a 'live' blade) is called a **tanto** (tan-toe). Weapons practice includes:

- **Suburi** (sub-oo-ree)- basic jo and bokken exercises performed without a partner
- **Awase** (ah-was-ee) - blending, an exercise with jo or bokken, equally important in body technique
- **Kata** (kat-a) - series of weapons movements (31 jo kata, 13 jo kata)
- **Ki musubi no tachi** (kee-moo-soo-bee-no-ta-chee)- blending exercise with a partner, using bokken
- **Kumijo** (koo-me-joe) - advanced partner practice using a jo
- **Kumitachi** (koo-me-ta-chee)- advanced partner practice with bokken
- **Tachidori / jodori / tantodori** (.....-door-ee)- techniques for taking weapons away from an attacker
- **Happo giri** (hap-po-gear-ee) - 8 direction bokken exercise
- **Renzoku uchikomi** (ren-zoo-koo-oo-chee-ko-mee)- a bokken exercise (also the 5th bokken suburi)
- **Tsuki** (ski) - an attack with a weapon involving a thrusting action rather than a cut or strike



## The 21 Jo Suburi

### Five thrusting suburi

1. Choku Tsuki
2. Gaeshi Tsuki
3. Ushiro Tsuki
4. Tsuki Gedan Gaeshi
5. Tsuki Jodan Gaeshi

### Five cutting suburi

6. Shomen Uchikomi
7. Renzoku Uchikomi
8. Menuchi Gedan Gaeshi
9. Men Uchi Ushiro Tsuki
10. Gyaku Yokomen Ushiro Tsuki

### Three striking suburi

11. Katate Gedan Gaeshi
12. Toma Katate Uchi
13. Katate Hachi-No-Ji-Gaeshi

### Five 'hasso' suburi

14. Hasso Gaeshi Uchi
15. Hasso Gaeshi Tsuki
16. Hasso Gaeshi Ushiro Tsuki
17. Hasso Gaeshi Ushiro Uchi
18. Hasso Gaeshi Ushiro Harai

### Three more complicated suburi (flowing)

19. Hidari Nagare Gaeshi Uchi | 20 Migi Nagare Gaeshi Tsuki | 21. Combine moves 19 and 20.

## Resistance

A common response is to resist from the moment of initial contact to the end of the technique on the basis of 'what's the point in doing the technique if it can't be made to work in all circumstances, irrespective of the strength/size/skill equation?' Obviously the correct response to technique is somewhere in between these extremes and it's worth considering the basis on which we do practise, to gain a better understanding of this.

The dojo is a very false environment in which to test technique. The strengths and weaknesses of the two 'combatants' are well known to each other; the form of attack, the technique and the direction of the technique (omote/ura) are usually well known in advance and ultimately the uke knows that, however much they may choose to resist, they are in a protected environment and reasonably safe from the possibility of serious injury.

The purpose of practice is improvement. Nothing is gained by either partner during a practice, in which both resist the technique to the extent that either one or both of them can never perform it in its basic form.

Aikido is a dynamic art, which in its most advanced forms permits the practitioner to adapt every aspect of a technique, or to change to a different technique as dictated by the prevailing circumstances. However, practising this way all the time would never permit the important basics of techniques to be learnt and practised. This may suggest that techniques should never be resisted, but this is not so. Indeed resistance can be invaluable in improving and refining techniques

*It's also worth remembering that we are all improving each time that we practise, and even O Sensei kept on practising and trying to improve himself up to his death. Therefore, it is unreasonable to suppose that a higher grade should always be able to throw a more junior grade and it is quite acceptable to request less resistance, so that the technique may be practised and improved.*