



## Two Rivers Aikikai

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# Children's Aikido

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Welcome,

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to Two Rivers Aikikai!

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We are so glad to have you as part of our dojo! This guide will help you know what to expect in class, and how to get off to a great start.


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## WHAT IS AIKIDO?

The literal translation of aikido is, “the way of harmonizing with life energy.” Aikido is a Japanese martial art which seeks to resolve conflict through compassionate action.

 Ai = harmony

 Ki = energy

 Do = way, or practice

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## Origins

Aikido was created by Morihei Ueshiba (1883-1969), who was an expert martial artist living in Japan. He is referred to by the title “O Sensei,” which means “great teacher.” O Sensei founded the first Aikikai Hombu Dojo (home dojo) in Tokyo in 1926 not long after realizing the following: “*Budō* is not the felling of an opponent by force; nor is it a tool to lead the world to destruction with arms. True *Budō* is to accept the spirit of the universe, keep the peace of the world, correctly produce, protect and cultivate all beings in nature.”

O Sensei had many students over the years. Some of these students moved away from Japan and started dojos in different countries around the world. Among the last of these students was Kanai Sensei, who founded New England Aikikai in the Boston area.

Our own Senseis, Spiros and Lynn, were both students in Kanai Sensei’s dojo. The Aikido we practice at Two Rivers Aikikai follows the style taught by Kanai Sensei and has a direct link with O Sensei.

## OUR MISSION

The purpose of our Children’s Aikido program is to help children develop into confident and compassionate individuals through the practice of Aikido. Our instructors recognize the strengths and weaknesses of each child and help them develop as confident individuals who can actively participate with others. The cooperative atmosphere in our dojo gives children a

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chance to have fun while they learn the value of respect for others.

## WHAT WILL YOU LEARN?

### Respect

Aikido techniques are powerful and can cause pain and injury. For this reason, Aikido practice must always be conducted in a spirit of mutual respect and cooperation. In class you will practice respecting yourself, your surroundings, your fellow students, and your instructors.

Respect means to see the goodness in something and to take care of it accordingly. You will find that by giving respect, you will earn the respect of others.

### Cooperation

Aikido is practiced with a partner -- your partner is *not* your opponent. Instead, you and your partner will help each other learn techniques and *ukemi* (receiving techniques). You will also be teaching each other patience, respect, and the ability to work together.

### Self Discipline

It is not easy to stay calm, relaxed, and respectful when we are upset. Part of Aikido training is learning how to keep our balance, both physically and emotionally. When we have our balance, we can act from a place of control and compassion.

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## Focus

Aikido takes a lot of concentration. You will find that the more you work on staying focused, the easier it will become. By demanding that we stay in the present moment, Aikido can help us increase our powers of concentration.

## Safety

Our goal is always to keep ourselves safe, and Aikido is an effective method of self-defense. However, perhaps the most important aspect of your Aikido practice is that it will help you learn to stay aware of your surroundings and to resolve conflicts as peacefully as possible.

Sometimes self-defense means defense against yourself. You are probably more likely to get hurt by tripping over something than by being attacked, so learning to fall gracefully and safely is an important part of self-defense.

## Fitness

Another aspect of taking care of ourselves is staying fit. Fitness means having good balance, flexibility, strength, endurance, and physical coordination. Your Aikido training will improve all of these aspects of fitness, as long as you apply yourself during class.

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## Japanese Culture

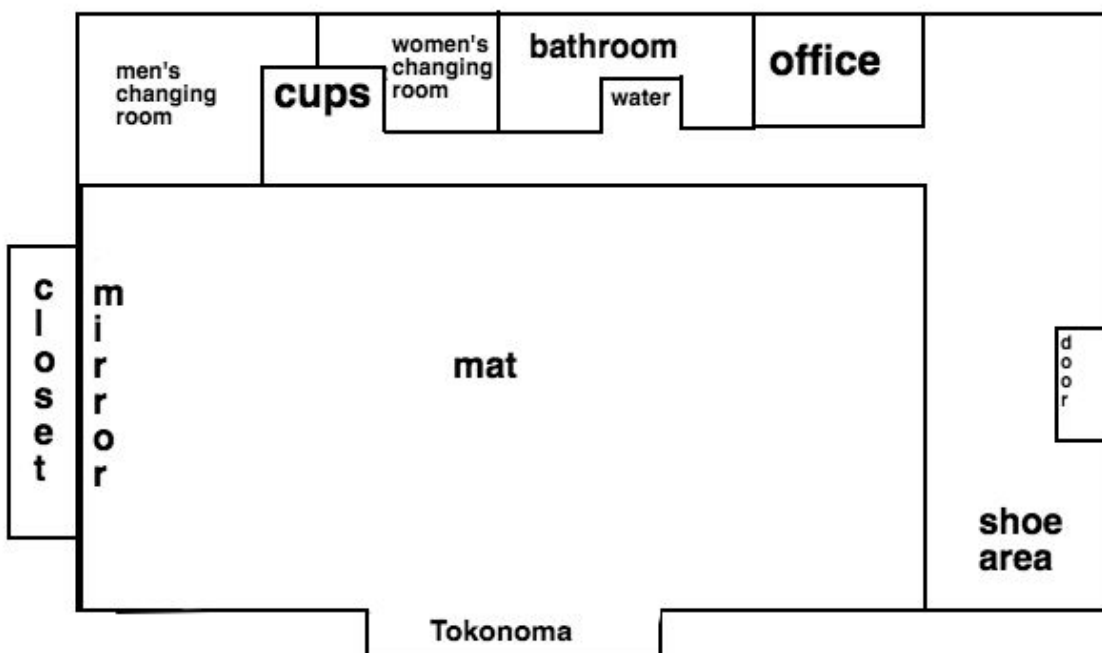
By training in a Japanese martial art, you will be learning something about Japanese customs, etiquette, tradition, clothing, and language. It is a very small piece of the culture, but it is a good introduction.

## INSIDE OUR DOJO

### Map

Below is a map of the inside of the dojo. Can you find where to:

- Remove your shoes and put on *zori*?
- Change into your *gi*?
- Use the restroom?
- Wash your hands?
- Enter and leave the mat?
- Return your cup?



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## HOW DO WE BEHAVE?

### Bowing

Bowing is an outward display of respect to the dojo, instructor, fellow students, and ourselves. Acting with respect and compassion takes practice, and our practice begins with bowing as we enter the dojo. We bow on many occasions during practice:

- Entering and leaving the dojo (standing bow)
- Entering and leaving the mat (kneeling bow)
- Beginning and end of class (kneeling bow to the instructor and the *tokonoma*)
- Before and after training with a partner (kneeling bow)
- After the instructor has given you instruction, as a group or individual (kneeling bow)

Bowing is easy to learn, and your fellow students and instructors will show you how. When doing a kneeling bow, your hands will make a triangle in front of you where you briefly touch your forehead.

Generally, you will put both your hands on the mat at the same time, but when bowing to another person it is customary to first place your left hand on the mat, followed by your right hand.

### Uniform

Your Aikido uniform is called a “gi” (GEE). It helps to:

- Keep our skin safe while allowing freedom of movement.



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- Remind us of where we are and what we are doing.
  - Keep the mat clean.

Changing rooms are available at the dojo. You may arrive already dressed in your gi, but take care to keep it clean outside the dojo. If you forget your gi, a loaner might be available.

To put on your gi pants, first thread the drawstrings through the loops, and tie them like a shoelace. Then put on the gi top with the left side overlapping on top of the right side. Then tie the belt by holding it at the middle in front of you, then crossing it behind your back, then tying it in front with a square knot. Your instructors can help you learn how.

## Cleanliness

We all must work together to keep the dojo clean so that it is a safe and enjoyable place to practice. This means:

- Remove your shoes when you enter the dojo (kids and parents, too). You can put on *zori* (slippers) for walking around the dojo.
- Wash your hands and feet before practice if they are dirty. Washcloths are available if needed.
- Keep your fingernails and toenails trimmed and clean.
- Wash your *gi* periodically. Don't wash your belt as it will shrink.
- Cover any cuts and scrapes with bandages before class begins.

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## Talking

By keeping conversation to a minimum during class, you will help yourself and others focus on the class.

- If you have a question or comment, consider if it is directly related to practice, or if it should wait until after class.
- Raise your hand and wait to be called on by the instructor.

## Practice

Aikido can be fun, but it also takes hard work and focus to improve your ability. To get the most out of your practice time:

- Watch the instructor carefully and try to imagine yourself doing what is being demonstrated.
- Pay attention to your partner during practice.
- As *uke* (the receiver of the technique), help your partner learn by giving the correct attack at a speed that your partner can manage.
- As *nage*, do your best to perform the technique. Take care of your partner just as you want them to take care of you.
- If you are confused, ask for help when the instructor is available.

## Physical contact

Always remain respectful of your practice partner. By allowing themselves to be attacked or thrown, they are giving you a gift. Receive this gift with care and appreciation.

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- Give careful attacks. Think about what your partner needs to learn. How will you want to be attacked when it is your turn?
  - Keep your hands to yourself when you are not practicing with a partner.
  - Avoid touching the walls, mirrors, or tokonoma. This helps keep the dojo clean and shows respect for your surroundings.

## Water / restroom breaks

- Drink water before class begins so that you aren't thirsty during warm-ups.
- Use the restroom before class if needed, and be sure to wash your hands.
- Ask an instructor for permission to leave the mat for water or other reasons.
- When you come back to the mat, bow and wait in seiza (kneeling) until the instructor acknowledges you.

## Time out

Practicing with others can sometimes lead to strong emotions and difficult interactions. Part of our Aikido training is learning to deal with these emotions. Your instructors will support you in various ways, including helping you talk through problems constructively, or if necessary, by asking you to take a break from class to regain your composure.

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## PARENT PARTICIPATION

Some children find it helpful to have their parent on the mat during class, and this can be an enjoyable way for parents to spend time with their children. Parents must first obtain permission from the dojo's Chief Instructor, and should understand that while on the mat they are students, and should not take on a supervisory role for their children or other children unless asked to by the instructor.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Because Aikido is from Japan, we use Japanese names for many things, including the place we practice, the teachers, our uniform, as well as the attacks and techniques that we practice. It is challenging and fun to learn a new language! You don't have to learn it all at once, but by listening and trying out some words, you'll get the hang of it.

### General terms

**Ai** is harmony. **Ki** is energy. **Do** is the way.

**Budō** is “the martial way” or “the way of the warrior.”

**Dojo** is the place where we practice finding the way.

“**Domo Arigato Gozaimashita**” is how to say “thank you” in Japanese. We say this as we bow to each partner at the end of class.

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**Gi** is the uniform that we wear during practice.

**Nage** is the partner who performs the technique.

**Obi** is the belt.

**“Onegaeshimasu”** is what we say when we first bow to our partner. It means “Please practice with me.” If you have trouble remembering it, think of “oh my gosh, a mouse” which sounds kind of similar!

**O Sensei** is Morehei Ueshiba, the founder of Aikido. O = great and sensei = teacher.

**Sensei** (SENSAY) is how we address our head instructors.

**Sempai** (SEMPI) is how we address instructors of the children’s classes.

**Seiza** is sitting up straight on your knees with the tops of your feet flat on the mat.

**Tokonoma** is the alcove at the front of the dojo.

**Uke** is the partner who takes the fall or the ukemi.

**Ukemi** is the practice of receiving techniques.

**Zori** are the flip-flops or slippers worn indoors.

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## Counting

|            |             |             |            |          |
|------------|-------------|-------------|------------|----------|
| 1 ichi     | 2 ni        | 3 san       | 4 shi      | 5 go     |
| 6 roku     | 7 shichi    | 8 hachi     | 9 kyu      | 10 jyu   |
| 11 jyuichi | 12 jyuni    | 13 jyusan   | 14 jyuyon* | 15 jyugo |
| 16 jyuroku | 17 jyunana* | 18 jyuhachi | 19 jyukyu  | 20 nijyu |

\* jyushi and jyushichi are also correct ways of saying the numbers 14 and 17

## Parts of the body

| Japanese | English       |
|----------|---------------|
| tai      | body          |
| men      | head          |
| kubi     | neck          |
| kata     | shoulders     |
| mune     | chest         |
| ude      | arm           |
| hiji     | elbow         |
| te       | hand          |
| tegatana | blade of hand |
| tekubi   | wrist         |
| hiza     | knees         |
| ashi     | feet          |

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## Techniques

**Shikko Ho** is knee walking which can be tricky. Keep your feet together.

**Zenpo Kaiten** are forward rolls.

**Koho Kaiten** are backward rolls.

**Ai Hanmi** means *nage* and *uke* have same stance, ie, both right foot forward or both left foot forward.

**Gyaku Hanmi** means *nage* and *uke* have an opposite stance. If *nage* has the right foot forward, *uke* has the left foot forward.

**Omote** means *nage* moves in front of *uke*.

**Ura** means *nage* moves behind *uke*.

Attacks: **Shomen uchi** (strike front of the head), **Yokomen uchi** (strike side of the head), **Tsuki** (punch to the solar plexus), **Katate tori** (grab wrist) **Ryote tori** (grab both wrists), **Morotetori** (grab one of nage's wrists with both hands).

The names of aikido techniques include the stance and attack followed by the technique and the direction of movement (*omote* or *ura*):

**Ai Hanmi Katate Tori Ikkyo Omote.** Ikkyo is the first pinning technique. This means “from same-stance wrist grab, do the first pinning technique from the front.”

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**Ai Hanmi Katate Tori Ikkyo Ura.** This means “from same-stance wrist grab, do the first pinning technique from behind.”

**Gyaku Hanmi Katate Tori Ikkyo Omote.** This means “from opposite-stance single hand grab of wrist, perform the first pinning technique with front entry.

**Gyaku Hanmi Katate Tori Ikkyo Ura.** Opposite stance single hand grab of wrist first pinning technique with back entry.

**Morotetori Kokyu Ho.** Kokyu ho is a “breath exercise”, done by extending from your center.

**Ryotetori Tenchinage.** Translates to “heaven and earth throw”. *Nage* drops one hand low and the other hand high to take *uke*’s balance.

**Suwari Waza Kokyu Ho.** Suwari waza means both *nage* and *uke* are on their knees. This exercise is done from *ryotetori*, and helps to focus on moving from your center.

**Tachi waza** are techniques that begin with *nage* and *uke* start out standing up.

**Hanmi handachi waza** are techniques that begin with *nage* kneeling and *uke* standing.

**Tai Sabaki** are various types of body movements practiced in Aikido including irimi, tenshin and tenkan.



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**Tenkan** Pivot on your front foot turning toward your back foot.

**Irimi** Slide in with both feet. Keep your front foot in front. Do not step forward.

**Tenshin** Step back with your front foot. Keep your extension going forward.

## TESTING

Testing is not mandatory, but is encouraged as it provides a goal to work towards, gives you a sense of accomplishment, and allows your peers and parents to appreciate the hard work you have put into your training. Children who are not testing are encouraged to attend class that day, and to support their fellow students during the tests.

### What is on the test?

During a test your instructors will ask you to demonstrate techniques and skills that you learned in class, including bowing, vocabulary, attacks, throws, and pins. A list of requirements for each rank is available on the website and in the dojo.

### When do we test?

Tests are held during regular class times about twice a year, and are announced by the instructors by both email and during class.

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## **Who can test?**

A minimum number of practice hours is required before you are allowed to test for your next rank. Also, the instructors must agree that you are ready to test. A list of eligible students will be sent out at the time the testing day is announced.

## **What about colored belts?**

All students in the children's class, regardless of rank, wear white belts so that they treat one another as equals. Two Rivers Aikikai is one of the few select dojos in the country that does not use a colored belt system.