

Reigisaho - Etiquette

Aikido is deeply influenced by traditional Japanese values. A centerpiece is Rei, which means "appreciation and respect" and the manner by which it is expressed (Reigi saho) to O Sensei, your instructors, your partners, the dojo and yourself. If you have questions about proper dojo etiquette, please ask an instructor. If you have questions about terminology consult an instructor or the glossary on the website. When you visit other dojos, abide by their rules of bowing and etiquette.

Proper Dojo Etiquette:

- When you enter or leave the dojo proper, either through the front door or from the dressing area, make a standing bow toward the Tokonoma and wipe your mind clean so that you find yourself in the moment.
- Before stepping onto the mat, make sure that your body and your dogi are clean. Your dogi should be closed (left side over the right) and your belt should be tied tightly. For your safety and that of your partner, do not wear any jewelry on the mat during practice. Wash your hands and feet before class and keep your fingernails and toenails trimmed.
- Whenever you step on or off the mat, make a kneeling bow to the Tokonoma. At Two Rivers Aikikai, bow to the Tokonoma by simultaneously placing both hands on the mat in front of you. Keep your back and neck straight as you bow. When you complete your bow, remove both hands from the mat at the same time. For all other kneeling bows, place your left hand on the mat first and then your right hand. To complete your bow, remove your right hand from the mat and then your left hand.
- Except for the instructor, all bows on the mat should be made from a kneeling position.
- Three to five minutes before class begins, line up with other students. Sit silently in seiza (on your knees) or anza (cross-legged). Focus on your tanden and your breathing.
- Class begins and ends with a bowing ceremony. Students should make all effort to be on time for class to clear their mind and take part in the ceremony.
- When the instructor starts the ceremony to begin class, bow along with the instructor toward the Tokonoma. Just before the instructor bows to you, bow and say, "Onegaishimasu." Please wait in seiza for instructions from the instructor.
- If the instructor calls upon you to help in the demonstration of a technique, make a kneeling bow to the instructor and focus on the instructor's direction.
- While the instructor demonstrates a technique for the class, sit silently in seiza or anza and focus your attention on the instructor. Do not sit with your back to the Tokonoma. When the instructor finishes the demonstration and asks you to practice, bow to the instructor then turn and bow to a partner.
- When the next technique is signaled by the instructor, stop practicing in a safe manner, thank your partner, line up quickly (do not sit with your back to the Tokonoma) and sit silently in seiza or anza. Focus on the instructor.
- When the instructor asks you to resume practice, bow to the instructor. Change partners unless the instructor has asked you not to. Bow to your new partner and practice.

- Do not leave the mat without first receiving permission from the instructor. Your partner can inform the instructor if you are bleeding and need to get off the mat quickly. Before you leave the mat, make a kneeling bow toward the Tokonoma, unless you need to get off the mat quickly. To rejoin the class, make a kneeling bow on the edge of the mat and wait for the instructor's acknowledgement to rejoin the class.
- If you are late to class, do not walk past the mat during the opening ceremony or if the instructor is demonstrating a technique. Silently, watch the demonstration. When the demonstration is finished, proceed to the dressing rooms.
- When you step onto the mat after a class has started, make a kneeling bow toward the Tokonoma and wait silently in seiza for the instructor's acknowledgement to join the class. After the acknowledgement, make a kneeling bow to the instructor and join the class carefully.
- If you have a question for the instructor during practice, do not call him or her over. Either wait for the instructor to move to your area or sit in seiza in a safe spot at the edge of the mat, and watch what other students are doing.
- When you receive personal instruction during practice, sit in seiza and watch. If you are asked to take ukemi by the instructor, make a kneeling bow if you are not standing, and focus on the instructor. When the instructor is finished, make a kneeling bow and say, "Thank you."
- When the instructor is giving instruction to another student, you and your partner may stop practicing and watch. You should sit silently in seiza during the instruction (be careful not to sit in the path of those still practicing nor with your back to the Tokonoma). Bow to the instructor when he or she is finished.
- During class, keep talking to a minimum. Do not make loud noises that could distract other students. At Two Rivers Aikikai, we practice in a vibrant and joyful manner. Smiling is encouraged. Laughing or talking out loud is not. Inner joy permeates the dojo.
- If your gi should come open during class, turn away from the Tokonoma and the practice area, close your gi and retie your belt tightly. Turn to face your partner and make a standing bow to thank your partner for waiting for you and resume practice.
- If you should get winded during class, you may sit in seiza or anza at the side of the mat. Although leaving the mat during class is discouraged, you may ask for the instructor's permission to get water. To rejoin the class, make a kneeling bow on the edge of the mat and wait for the instructor's acknowledgement to rejoin the class.
- During practice with less experienced students, adjust your ukemi and your technique so that you and your partners will be able to learn. You may lead them through a technique, but do not force your ideas on them or restrict their practice.
- When an instructor demonstrates a variation of a technique that is unfamiliar to you, pay attention to the differences that may be pointed out. Always try to practice the variation that was demonstrated by the instructor. Develop your powers of observation.
- When the instructor asks you to line up to end class, line up silently in seiza or anza. Bow with the instructor toward the Tokonoma. When the instructor turns to face the students, bow to him or her and say "Domo Arigato Gozaimashita" Sensei or Sempai. Wait for the instructor's direction to thank each other, bow once more toward the Tokonoma and then proceed to thank all students in the class.