

Kettering Aikikai

Aikido information for beginners

When we turn up to our first Aikido practice it can all seem a bit daunting; what with all the different movements, techniques and names. Well, it doesn't have to seem so complicated. Here is an introduction to some of the practice formalities (etiquette), names and translations of movements and techniques, along with a couple of other helpful things. Also, it isn't important that you learn all of this information straight away. Use it alongside your training to help you develop your knowledge.

General information

You may have read a little about Aikido or trained in it before but each club may have a slightly different approach and emphasis. At Kettering Aikikai we see Aikido as a non-aggressive, non-competitive martial art that offers individuals the opportunity to explore themselves and how they connect with others through the practice of self-defence. Students learn at their own pace and to their own depth in an informal and friendly environment where the emphasis is on looking after each other whilst absorbing effective technique. The Aikido practised here is not a 'fighting' system: the aim is to create harmony and control of self and events that impact on us. It is about *not* fighting.

If you want to know anything more or want advice on buying a gi or other Aikido learning material please speak to one of the instructors.

Etiquette

By following a few basic rules we ensure that we show respect for one another and the Dojo (practice hall). When attending it is important that we maintain good hygiene, as many of the techniques will be done in pairs and will involve physical contact. This includes the clothing we wear, which can be loose fitting, i.e. tracksuit bottoms and a t-shirt at first or a gi if/when you decide to stay. You are welcome to buy a gi yourself or you can get one from the club (please speak to an instructor for more details).

There are times when we encourage people to rei (bow). This is done as a sign of respect for the training hall (dojo), the instruction or our training partner. These are:

- On entering or leaving the dojo.
- Before walking onto or off the mat.
- After being shown a technique by the instructor.
- Before and after training with a partner.

Showing respect for each other also means that whilst this is a martial art we should look after one another and be safe. It is also important to keep noise and disturbances to a minimum for others using the facilities and we should all show respect in our behaviour and language for the same reason. Also, if you are ever unsure about something that has been demonstrated it is ok to call the instructor over to go through it with you in more detail.

Movement

Aikido involves a lot of movement, which is often referred to as tai sabaki. Tai sabaki is the Japanese term for body movement. This is often demonstrated with foot movements but in reality includes the whole body, which you will pick up over time.

Movement can also include what we call 'ukemi'. You will often hear people refer to ukemi as 'breakfalls' but in reality we try to roll more than just fall to make it more comfortable and safe. Ukemi can take time to learn but it will be done at your pace. This is usually practised after the warm up and alongside general practice.

Techniques

There appear to be a large number of techniques in Aikido due to the many different attacks we deal with. However, in reality the majority of the techniques we apply are just variations of only 9 basic techniques. These are:

Ikkyo	(ee-kyoh)	1 st immobilisation
Nikkyo	(nee-kyoh)	2 nd immobilisation
Sankyo	(san-kyoh)	3 rd immobilisation
Yonkyo	(yon-kyoh)	4 th immobilisation
Shiho Nage	(shee-ho nah-gay)	4 direction throw
Kote Gaeshi	(koh-tah-guy-shee)	Wrist turn
Irimi Nage	(ee-rim-ee nah-gay)	Entry throw
Tenchi Nage	(ten-chee nah-gay)	Heaven and Earth throw
Kaiten Nage	(kie-ten nah-gay)	Rotary throw

Techniques are co-ordinated between Tori (person doing the technique – often the defender) and Uke (receiver of the technique – often the attacker). Being a martial art, some of these can be uncomfortable. If/when they become very uncomfortable you should tap yourself or the mat with your hand to let your training partner know to ease off or stop. To help with this it is important that we learn to go with the movement initially and try not to test. If you have an injury or are liable to injury, tell your partner before you begin to practise so that technique can be moderated. Practising Aikido with an injury or fragility is possible so long as everyone involved takes care of each other.

Attacks

These techniques and many others will be shown from a variety of attacks, which may appear in any order. They are not always taught in the order above as we try to develop a more spontaneous 'second nature' feeling to doing and receiving technique. The attacks used at Kettering Aikikai are as follows (and in approximate order of complexity):

Gyaku Katate Tori	(gyah-koo kah-tah-tay toh-ree)	cross-hand grab, e.g. left to left
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Katate Tori	(kah-tah-tay toh-ree)	same side wrist grab, e.g. right to left
Shomen Uchi	(shoh-men oo-chee)	edge of hand strike to top of the head
Yokomen Uchi	(yo-ko-men oo-chee)	angled strike to the side of the head
Mune Tsuki	(moo-neh tskee)	punch to the abdomen
Ryote Dori	(ree-oh-tay doh-ree)	two hands grab both wrists
Ryote Muchi	(ree-oh-tay moo-chee)	two hands grab one wrist
Ushiro Ryote Dori	(oo-shee-roh ree-oh-tay)	two hands grab both wrists (behind)
Ryote Hiji Dori	(ree-oh-tay hee-jee doh-ree)	two hands grab both elbows
Ushiro Ryote Hiji Dori	(oo-shee-roh ree-oh-tay hee-jee doh-ree)	two hands grab both elbows (behind)
Mune Dori	(moo-neh doh-ree)	grab to stomach area
Eri Dori	(eh-ree doh-ree)	lapel grab
Ryote Eri Dori	(ree-oh-tay doh-ree)	two hands lapel grab
Kata Dori	(kah-tah doh-ree)	shoulder grab (same side)
Kata Dori (with a blow)	(kah-tah doh-ree)	shoulder grab (same side) + head strike
Ushiro Ryote Kata Dori	(oo-shee-roh ree-oh-tay kah-tah doh-ree)	two hands shoulder grab (behind)
Ushiro Kubi Shime	(oo-shee-roh coo-bee she-me)	wrist grab and choke (behind)
Ushiro Eri Dori	(oo-shee-roh eh-ree doh-ree)	collar grab (behind)

Grades

When you first start you may choose to wear loose fitting clothing or a gi. Either way you will not have a grade. Grades are not seen as the main aim in Aikido with more emphasis on improving your Aikido. However, grades are a way of identifying people with more experience, so you know who to turn to if you need some help. Also, we do not charge for belts or gradings as it is more about the enjoyment and practice of Aikido rather than the money. The grades and coloured belts usually used in Aikido are:

Beginner	Red belt (or no belt if wearing casual clothing)
6 th Kyu	White belt
5 th Kyu	Yellow belt
4 th Kyu	Orange belt
3 rd Kyu	Green belt
2 nd Kyu	Blue belt
1 st Kyu	Brown belt
1 st Dan -10 th Dan	Black belt

This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of information so please feel free to ask if you are not sure of anything.