

Welcome to Prairie Winds Aikido.

We are so glad that you are giving Aikido a try! Whether this is your first martial art or you have been practicing for years, Aikido will meet you where you are at.

Each art has its own peculiar characteristics. Aikido (the way we practice it) is traditional and non-competitive. There are no competitions. There are only two belts, white and black. In Aikido, advanced ranks also wear a black skirt-like garment called a hakama.

We spend a lot of our time learning to counteract several types of attacks...usually this involves putting an attacker in a joint lock and then throwing him/her. So, we spend a lot of our time learning how to fall properly. The act of throwing and being thrown both teach us valuable lessons about how our bodies work. We learn several different joint locks. We talk a lot about blending and harmonizing so that these movements become effortless. Aikido is not about who is strongest.

We do not spend a lot of time learning how to punch or kick. So, that may seem different from other arts. We do spend a lot of time learning how to get out of the way of a punch or kick. We also spend time learning about traditional weapons, like the wooden sword (called a bokken) and a short staff (called a jo). We do this to improve our posture, and our character. It is really hard to cut a sword in a perfect line, but by practicing a "simple" cut, we are reminded that we can learn a lot from something seemingly simple. And it's fun, too.

Our instructor is Eric Buchanan. As a sign of respect, we refer to him as Buchanan Sensei, which means teacher. Buchanan Sensei has been practicing Aikido since 1993 and he holds the rank of sandan (or 3rd degree black belt).

This is our dojo. We are thankful to have a place to practice. And we are thankful you have made time to see if Aikido will be a part of your own personal journey.

What follows is some information you may find useful as you start your training:



- What is Aikido?
- Recommended reading (you like to read, right?).
- Websites for uniforms and other equipment
- Information on Aikido etiquette (you should definitely read this one)
- Aikido vocabulary that you will want to learn
- Aikido links that will help you learn some of the weapons work we practice
- Information on aikido testing (so you can connect what you are learning today to what your instructor hopes you are learning, too)

What is Aikido?

The following definition of Aikido is from Aikikai Foundation World Aikido Headquarters:

Aikido is a Budo (martial art) created by Morihei Ueshiba (O-Sensei). After the Founder's passing in 1969, his son Kisshomaru Ueshiba was inaugurated as Aikido Doshu. At present, Moriteru Ueshiba, grandson of the Founder, has succeeded his father as Aikido Doshu. At Prairie Winds Aikido, we practice under the direction of Rev. Zenko N. Okimura, 7th dan Shihan and head of the World Aikido Aikikai Inc. (WAAI).

At the heart of Aikido is the Eastern concept of Ki --the universal creative principle. Aikido seeks to unite this universal Ki with the Ki (life force or breath) found within each person. Literally, Aikido translates as "the way of harmony with Ki".

A pure budo comes with the unification of technique, body and heart. The budo, which will manifest itself, does not depend upon the technique, but rather upon the heart of the practitioner. The aim of Aikido is a kindness of heart expressed through this spirit of budo.

Here are some thoughts on the spirit of Aikido.

Aiki is love or harmony.

Budo is the path of the warrior. Combined with the spirit of heaven and earth in your heart, you can fulfill your life's destiny with unconditional love.

Aiki seeks to skillfully strike down the ego and inherent insincerity in battling an enemy. Aiki is the path of forgiveness and enlightenment. The martial techniques provide discipline for the journey of uniting the spirit and the body through channeling the laws of nature.

The goal of Aikido training is not perfection of a step or skill, but rather improving one's character according to the rules of nature. One becomes "resilient" inside yet this strength is expressed softly. Movements found in nature are efficient, rational, and soft, while the center is immovable, firm, and stable. This principal of a firm center is universally consistent - - and must be true for each person. The culmination of Aikido is expressed by aligning one's center with the center expressed throughout nature.

Aikido movement maintains this firm and stable center with an emphasis on spherical rotation characterized by flowing, circular, dance-like motions. These pivoting, entering and circling motions are used to control and overcome the opponent. The principle of spherical rotation makes it possible to defend one self from an opponent of superior size, strength, and experience.

Although Aikido movements are soft, rational, and smooth - as in nature - they create non-resistance in the opponent making them martially effective. The gentle quality of Aikido makes it appealing to men and women and children regardless of age. It not only offers spiritual development but also provides exercise and teaches proper etiquette and behavior.

Recommended reading

The Spirit of Aikido by Kisshomaru Ueshiba

Aikido and the Harmony of Nature by Mitsugi Saotome

Aikido and the New Warrior by Richard Strozzi Heckler

Dueling with O-Sensei by Ellis Amdur

On the web

<http://www.worldaikido.org>

<http://www.aikidojournal.com>

<http://www.aikiweb.com>

<http://www.aikidoonline.com>

Aikido Uniforms (Dogi) and other equipment

<http://www.e-bogu.com>

<http://www.ninecirclesusa.com/>

<http://www.kingfisherwoodworks.com/>

Aikido Etiquette for Newcomers (from Aikido of Minnesota.org)

Aikido follows a system of etiquette, part of the Japanese cultural enrichment we wish to learn, which is a set of guidelines for how to behave when you are in the dojo (practice hall). We observe etiquette for many reasons: to show respect for our partners and teachers, to maintain our dojo, to keep our classes safe and running smoothly, and to help us focus mentally on practice.

We consider etiquette an important part of training, so we ask that you begin following these guidelines as soon as you start aikido:

Cleanliness

- Come to practice with a clean body and clean gi (uniform). If you don't have a gi, you can wear loose-fitting clothing (sweat pants and a T-shirt are best). There is a lot of contact in aikido, which is more pleasant when we and our partners are clean. Pay special attention to your hands, which make a lot of contact with your partners, and your feet, which make a lot of contact with the mat.
- To prevent tracking on the mat, please wear zori (sandals or thongs) from the dressing room to the mat. If you don't have zori, wear shoes.
- If possible, do not wear heavy perfume or cologne when practicing. Some people are allergic; others simply don't like it. Also, do not wear a lot of makeup on the mat. If you wear makeup during practice, you will soon find it on the mat and other people.

Safety

- Please take jewelry off before practicing. This includes earrings, necklaces, watches, rings, etc. All foreign objects have the potential of hurting you or someone else.
- Please keep your fingernails and toenails trimmed.

- Always strive to avoid accidents. Pay attention to your surroundings so you can avoid colliding with other students. If you or your partner accidentally collide with another student during practice, bow to the student and his or her partner and say “excuse me.”
- When practicing aikido, always take into account you and your partner’s ability and practice at a level that is comfortable for BOTH of you.
- As much as possible, practice in a steady, smooth manner. Quick, jerky techniques can be unpleasant and possibly dangerous to a beginning student who is not yet able to receive them.

Bowing

- Bowing in seated posture (seiza) is the most formal and common way to bow when on the mat. When you are off the mat, bow from a standing position.
- Bow toward the front of the dojo (shomen) where the picture of O-Sensei (the founder of Aikido) hangs before entering or leaving the mat area (standing bow).
- Bow toward the shomen as soon as you get on the mat and before you step off the mat.
- Before and after practice, line up facing the shomen (higher ranks to the right, lower ranks to the left). Following the Sensei’s lead, bow (as a group) to the shomen, then to the Sensei.
- Bow to each new partner before you start practicing.
- After the Sensei instructs you or your partner individually, bow and say “thank you, Sensei.”
- At the end of class after the final bow to the Sensei, form a circle that includes the shomen, then following the Sensei’s lead bow as a group to each other.

Other Important Points

- If you have a question while a technique is being demonstrated, raise your hand when there is an appropriate pause, and wait until the Sensei acknowledges that you have a question, then bow and ask your question.

- If you have a question while practicing, wait until the Sensei comes to your area of the mat, then sit in seiza, raise your hand, and wait for your question to be acknowledged. Then bow and ask your question.
- If you arrive late for class, you must get the instructor's permission to practice. To do this, sit in seiza on the edge of the mat and bow toward the shomen. Wait for the instructor to motion you onto the mat. Then bow again and join the class.
- If you want to leave the mat, please first ask permission of the Sensei, even if he/she knows you are leaving early. When you get permission, bow to the Sensei. Then bow to the picture of O-Sensei before leaving the mat. If you have a physical emergency (bloody nose, nausea, injury, etc.) and need to leave the mat quickly, just leave. When the emergency is over, you can tell the Sensei why you left.
- Avoid sitting with your back to the shomen, or between the Sensei and the shomen.
- If your belt or pants loosen during practice, turn away from the shomen and your practice partner and re-tie your practice clothing. Bow to your partner to begin practice again.

This seems like a lot of rules to remember, but they should come naturally to you in time. Keep in mind that etiquette means more than just having good manners, or just a set of restrictions, or ensuring class is free from distractions. It means caring for your fellow students, your teachers, and your dojo. In every aspect of your aikido practice, try to show respect, courtesy, and good sense. If you practice with a positive and willing attitude, you will learn quickly. **If you have any questions about etiquette or other aspects of aikido practice, please feel free to ask Buchanan Sensei.**

JAPANESE PHRASES THAT ARE USED IN THE DOJO

arigato gozaimasu (Ah-ree-gah-toh Goh-zah-ee-mahss): Thank you

arigato gozaimashita (Ah-ree-Gah-Tow Goh-zah-ee-mah-shee-tah):

Thank you very much for what you have done.

This is said to the teacher by all the students at the end of each class.

onegai shimasu (Oh-nay-guy-ee Shee-mahss): I request your favor. i.e.

Would you practice with me?

Spoken when one wishes to practice with another student.

hajime (Hah-jee-may): Begin! Start, execute (imperative)

yame (yah-may): Stop!, Cease! (imperative)

DIRECTIONS OF AIKIDO TECHNIQUES

irimi (Ee-ree-mee): Entering (common in Omote Waza)

tenkan (Ten-kahn): Turning (common in Ura Waza)

omote waza (Oh-moh-tay Wah-zah): any technique which goes in front of uke.

ura waza (Oo-rah Wah-zah): any technique which goes behind uke.

BASIC AIKIDO TECHNIQUES - Movements for the 'Nage' (thrower) Side

ikkyo (Eek-kyoh): "1st technique" Basic pinning technique of rolling the arm over forward from below to the front, pinning uke face down.

nikyo (Nee-kyoh): "2nd technique" Bending uke's wrist outward and horizontally against inside of forearm.

sankyo (Sahn-kyoh): "3rd technique" Technique that twists uke's wrist and arm along the central axis of the arm.

yonkyo (Yoh-n-kyoh): "4th technique" Arm pin accomplished by pressure on nerves on the inside of uke's wrist.

gokyo (Goh-kyoh): "5th technique" Defense against an overhead knife attack. Similar to Ikkyo.

juji nage (Joo-jee Nah-gay): A throw done by crossing uke's arms in an 'x' and then throwing.

kaiten nage (Kah-ee-ten Nah-gay): Technique where uke's arm and body is revolved for a throw.

kokyu dosa (Koh-kyou Doh-sah): Seated exercise used to develop ki extension and body coordination.

kokyu nage (Koh-kyou Nah-gay): A class of timing throws involving little or no pressure to uke's joints.

koshi nage (Koh-she Nah-gay): Hip throw; a judo-like throw using the hip as a fulcrum.

kotegaeshi (Koh-tay-Gah-ee-shee): Throw accomplished bending uke's wrist inward, vertically against inside of forearm.

shiho-nage (Shee-hoh Nah-gay): The "four way throw". Nage leads uke's arm up over his head, taking uke's hand back to his shoulder for the throw or pin.

tai no henko (Tie Noh Hen-koh): "Body Changing", turning exercise, basic blending practice.

tenchi nage (Ten-chee Nah-gay): Heaven and Earth throw. Nage takes one hand downward as the other moves up to throw uke in a manner similar to Irimi Nage.

AIKIDO TRAINING ATTACKS - Movements from the 'Uke' (receiver) Side

ai-hanmi katate-tori (Ah-ee Hahn-mee Kah-tah-tay Tow-Lee): one wrist grasped from matching stance,

i.e. uke's left grasping nage's right or visa versa [see *kosa tori*]

kata tori (Kah-tah Tow-lee): shoulder grab

katate tori (Kah-tah-tay Tow-lee): one hand grab; left hand grasping right wrist or visa versa

kosa tori (Koh-sah Tow-lee): cross hand grab; left hand grasping left wrist or visa versa

[see *ai-hanmi katate-tori*]

morote tori (Moh-row-tay Tow-lee): both hands grasping; uke grabs one wrist with both hands

mune tsuki (Moo-neh Tsue-key): strike with fist to nage's abdomen; also sometimes simply *tsuki*

muna dori (Moon-ah Doh-lee): lapel grab

ryote tori (Ree-yoh-tay Tow-lee): both hands grasped; uke takes one of nage's wrists in each hand

shomen uchi (Sho-men Oo-chee): front strike to top of nage's head

ushiro kubi-shime (Oo-shee-row Koo-bee She-may): choking with one arm around the neck from the rear, and the other hand usually grasping a wrist

ushiro ryokata tori (Oo-shee-row Lee-yoh-kah-tah Tow-lee): both shoulders grabbed from the rear

ushiro ryote tori (Oo-shee-row Lee-yoh-tay Tow-lee): both wrists grabbed from the rear

ushiro tori (Oo-shee-row Tow-Lee): grasping from the rear; also rear bear hug

yokomen-uchi (Yoh-koh-men Oo-Chee): oblique strike to the side of nage's head

Some links that may be useful as you learn about weapons:

The 13-count jo kata performed by Saito Sensei:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j1TxOYUellc&feature=related>

The 31-count jo kata performed by Saito Sensei:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKxZz2g0Gow>

The 20 jo suburi performed by Saito Sensei:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8R9XqrT8UMA>

The 7 bokken suburi performed by Saito Sensei:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Y1iXm89jI0>