

Etiquette For
BLACK SWORD AIKIDO

V.1.1

1. ENTERING THE DOJO

Perform a standing bow towards the Kamiza upon entering the dojo from either the outside or changing area. The Kamiza is considered the “high point” of the dojo, where traditionally the master of the school sat and a shrine was kept for the guardian spirits and ancestors.

2. RETURN TO THE PRACTICE AREA

Always keep yourself clean and well-groomed with your nails trimmed. Your gi should be clean at all times and well-mended, with the school patch and belt appropriate for your Level. Do not wear jewelry while training. Wedding bands and religious amulets and talismans may be permitted, but check with the Sensei.

The cleanliness of the practice area and changing area should be maintained at all times and everyone is expected to participate in cleaning.

3. THE BOW

Bowing is a physical expression of respect. Done correctly, it demonstrates dignity and humility. Done incorrectly, it demonstrates clumsiness, or worse, an insult or challenge. Accordingly, it is very important to bow properly.

The standing bow performed at Black Sword Aikido is done by first standing naturally with your palms flat on the sides of your thighs, then bending slowly from the hips with your hands falling naturally onto the middle of your thighs. Bow 30 degrees to the Kamiza and Sensei, 15 degrees to your partner.

The other type of bow performed at Black Sword Aikido is a kneeling bow. It is performed by forming your hands in a triangle on the floor in front of your knees, then bowing, keeping your neck and back straight. In this bow, you look at the floor, taking your eyes off your opponent and exposing the back of your neck and head to attack. Consequently, this type of bow demonstrates not only respect, but trust as well.

4. ENTERING THE PRACTICE AREA

Perform a standing bow on the edge of the mat towards the Kamiza.

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5. STARTING CLASS (ALL ETIQUETTE REGARDING THE SENSEI ALSO APPLIES TO HIS APPOINTED INSTRUCTORS)

When Sensei enters the practice area, all members should quickly line up in seiza (sitting position) in order of seniority with the most senior on the right side of the mat (near the door to the changing area) facing the Kamiza.

Upon the senior student saying “Kamiza ni rei,” all perform a kneeling bow with Sensei toward the Kamiza twice. Then, upon the senior student saying “Sensei ni rei,” all bow to Sensei, saying “please let’s practice together” (“Onegaishimasu”). Follow Sensei lead during the warm-up exercises.

6. IF YOU ARRIVE LATE

If the Sensei is demonstrating a technique or the class is performing the opening bow, wait before entering the practice area until the Sensei is finished. Then wait at the edge of the mat until the Sensei invites you onto the mat. Then perform a standing bow at the edge of the mat as above.

7. DURING CLASS

Should you change partners or join others because you come late, perform a standing bow to your old and new partner.

If Sensei should teach you or your partner individually, it is proper to perform a bow in gratitude. While the Sensei is working with your partner, you should kneel on the mat.

When resting, kneel in seiza on the edge of the mat, never with your back to the Kamiza. Except during the warm-up exercises, you should never sit with your legs spread toward the Kamiza or the soles of your feet facing the Kamiza.

8. LEAVING EARLY

Ask the Sensei’s permission to leave the class and follow instructions below concerning leaving the dojo.

9. ENDING CLASS

When indicated by Sensei, line up as in the beginning of class. Upon the senior student saying “Kamiza ni rei,” perform a kneeling bow with Sensei to the Kamiza, then upon the senior student saying “Sensei ni rei” return

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Sensei's bow and say, "Thank you very much" ("Domo arigato gozaimas'ta, Sensei"). After Sensei leaves the mat, upon the senior student again saying "rei," turn to your partner in the same manner as at the start of class and perform a kneeling bow.

10. LEAVING THE DOJO

Before leaving the practice area perform a standing bow towards the Kamiza.

11. CONDUCT

This is a martial arts school, where matters of life and death are taught. You must treat the time you spend here seriously. This does not mean that you must be grim. On the contrary, you should find great joy in training, but you must be sincere.

Talking on the mat should be kept to a minimum. Never stand around idly during the training session. You should always be practicing or, if waiting for your turn, you should be sitting in seiza observing and studying. If you feel you must ask the Sensei a question, you should go to him and quietly wait until he acknowledges you, then bow and politely ask your question, bowing again after the answer is received. Never call out to the Sensei, expecting him to come to you.

Always remember the sempai (senior student)/kohai (junior student) relationship in all manners. Always respect the experience of the senior students. Never argue with them or anyone else about the proper way of performing the techniques. If your partner does not understand even the basic movements of the technique, it is permissible to help guide him through it. However, teaching should be left to those who can teach.

12. TESTING

Sit in seiza while waiting to be called to test. When called, perform together a kneeling bow with your partner, stand, and walk to the center of the mat. Perform together a kneeling bow to the Kamiza, a kneeling bow to Sensei and the testing committee, and a kneeling bow to your partner, the senior student facing away from the Kamiza. After testing, the order of bowing is reversed, as you return together to your original places.

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13. DUES

You must pay for instruction. Dues are due the first of the month, regardless of the date on which you enrolled. If you experience some financial hardship and are unable to pay your tuition on time, discuss your situation with Sensei in order to make some suitable arrangements with Sensei before your tuition is late. Do not train if your tuition is late and you have not obtained Sensei's permission to continue to train.

Again, this is a martial arts school, where matters of life and death are taught. If you cannot manage to remember to pay your tuition on time, or so little value what you are taught here, you do not belong here.

14. ABSENCES

This is not a health club; this is a martial arts school. If you are going to be absent from training for a period of time, or intend to resign your enrollment, have the courtesy to inform Sensei so he is not concerned for your well-being.