

# JAPANESE PHRASES & COURTESY ON THE MAT

As a **Japanese martial art**, bowing is an essential part of aikido. Understanding and using certain Japanese phrases is also important. This page explains some of the most common and important etiquette practices during aikido classes. Japanese words and phrases are shown in *italics*.

Please keep in mind that the rules suggested here are our usual practices at Aikido of Hilo. When you visit another *dojo* (practice hall) or train with members from elsewhere, you should remain aware of differences that may exist. Some *dojos* are extremely formal while others are more casual. Always try to conform to polite practices around you. When in doubt, it's better to be more formal.

A **seated bow** should be performed when first getting on to the mat before training and when leaving the mat at the conclusion of your final practice for the day.

**If you must leave class** between the start and end of your session, you should bow each time you leave and re-enter the mat. At these times, you may bow seated or standing.

**Students line up** before class in *seiza* (kneeling) and await the instructor's arrival on the mat. *Sempai* (senior students) sit to the right and *kohai* (junior members) sit to the left side. If you're uncertain where you belong, move to the left.

**When Sensei (Teacher) bows**, the *sempai* member says *rei* (bow) and all members bow along with *Sensei*. Once *Sensei* turns to face the class, the *sempai* again says *rei*. Students bow first to the *sensei*, saying *onegai shimasu* (see below). The *sensei* returns the bow.

**If you arrive late** for class, wait attentively at the edge of the mat. When *Sensei* signals you to join class, you should bow in and do stretches in preparation for practice. While you are stretching, if the class stops for a demonstration, you should also stop, sit in *seiza* and watch.

**After Sensei demonstrates** and you find a partner, you should bow to one another and say *onegai shimasu*. This phrase is a polite request and can be used in many situations. Say *onegai shimasu* when bowing to *Sensei* after a technique is shown, when bowing to your partner before training, when requesting assistance from the instructor, etc.

**When two members practice**, the *sempai* student should throw first while the *kohai* is thrown.

**If you bump into someone** during class, everyone involved should stop, do a seated bow, and apologize, saying *gomen nasai*. Both partners of both pairs should bow, because all had some part in failing to prevent the collision. Always remain aware of those around you on the mat and practice harmoniously to keep you, your partner and the others in class safe from injury.

**At the conclusion of class**, members line up again. *Sensei* and students bow together to the *shomen* (front of the dojo).

**When students bow to the sensei**, they should say *doomo arigatoo gozaimashita* (thank you very much). If this phrase is too difficult, you may say in English "thank you *Sensei*".

After that, students are to **remain in the formal sitting position** until the *sensei* leaves the mat area. The *sempai* member will bow and all members should follow. Then members should find each of their partners from the class, bow to them and thank them.

After class, every member should **spend a few minutes cleaning the dojo**. This includes sweeping and vacuuming the mat, dusting all around, cleaning the *tatami*, cleaning in the hallway around the entrance, etc. While keeping the dojo clean, this is also an important exercise in self-purification.