



# COMMUNITY HANDBOOK

A MESSAGE FROM SENSEI  
BEING A MEMBER OF THE COMMUNITY  
LEVELING UP  
YOUTH PROGRAM  
REFERENCE MATERIAL

## **A MESSAGE FROM SENSEI**

Welcome to the Aikido of San Diego community, and welcome to a fresh approach to martial arts practice, embodiment, and personal mastery.

To me, Aikido is (1) a collaborative conflict & contact art form, and (2) a way to embody power, wisdom, and beauty through martial arts. Aikido is premised on the founder's stated realization, "We Are One," and I strive to create a practice that reflects that reality.

What I teach is not rooted in a competitive paradigm that frames life and conflict in terms of winners-losers, offense-defense, fight-flight, etc. I consider our program to be a doorway beyond that limited mold—a doorway to your next level of function, freedom, and wholeness. I'm here to help, through this (r)evolutionary art form and thirty-five+ years of experience, to guide you on this warrior journey into your body, mind, and heart.

I'm not inspired to lead a community based on boundaries of style and lineage, institutional beliefs and assumptions, or Japanese cultural norms. I'm not inspired to rest on those things either. What I'm interested in is the living principle of Aikido, and how each of us can embody it for ourselves.

If you're new to our community but not new to Aikido then this may be different from your previous experience in terms of culture and direction. I understand. Change is challenging. Do your best with a fresh mind and heart regardless of your rank or experience.

Speaking of change, in 2020 I made the difficult decision to give up our beautiful dojo and take training outdoors. Going from a contained space full of symbology to a natural, uncontained space with no traditional symbology truly informed me on the greater organic nature of Aikido. The change was not comfortable, and at the time it was not welcome. But the fact is that it was surprisingly informative and refreshing.

Now we have a new studio, but we still train in the park once a week. But wherever we are or whatever we're practicing, the focus is on the embodied principles of Aiki. Our approach and expression of the art continues to evolve, because as far as I'm concerned, that's the point. The "Covid Era" represents another chapter in that evolution.

I hope you find your experience with us to be powerful, inspiring, and insightful. Most of all, I hope you enjoy the ride!

Sincerely,  
Dave Goldberg  
Founder/Chief Instructor

## **BEING A MEMBER OF THE COMMUNITY**

We're a community that's been dedicated to the practice, principles, and spirit of Aikido since 2000. Membership gains you access to our classes and gatherings, supports our ongoing exploration, and promotes the evolutionary values we share. Please support the spirit in which we all train and gather. When you support the community, you support an ideal and practice that benefits you, and those around you. The following applies for all members, including those in the youth program.

### **Keeping yourself connected...**

The more you stay in the loop, the more you're likely to participate and get the most out of your Aikido of San Diego experience.

Our website is kept current. Visit at [www.aikidosd.com](http://www.aikidosd.com).

Please "like" [our public Facebook page](#). It's also kept up-to-date with schedule, event, and community information. You do not need to have a Facebook account to view it. Follow us on [Instagram](#), too.

Most importantly, we have a [closed group on Facebook that is strictly for current members](#). It's used for all the inside communication and information that the public has no use for. It is the primary communication portal for the dojo community. Please visit the link to request entry into the group.

### **Contacting Sensei...**

The number is 619-993-2454. The email address is [sensei@aikidosd.com](mailto:sensei@aikidosd.com), or just use any email link on our website. Please be sure that Sensei has an email address for you that is regularly checked. It's used for all business and membership matters.

### **Putting us out there...**

If you're excited about what you're doing with us, share it on social media. Posting your own stuff about your experience, and sharing our posts is sincerely appreciated. We have a presence on all the major social media platforms, especially Facebook and Instagram. Putting the community out there really helps promote and perpetuate our work.

Another cool thing you can do is to invite a friend to come watch a class. If they're interested, you can even invite them to train with you one day. Please schedule it with Sensei in advance, and have your friend [complete a registration form](#) before they arrive.

### **Keeping your membership current...**

In the unusual occasion that there's an issue with your account, please do us the favor of resolving it as quickly as possible. All policies regarding fees and billing are clearly outlined in our [membership agreement](#), and are administered "by the book." The policies are deliberately very simple and transparent.

## **Dealing with COVID...**

Masking is now optional. Because we train in such close proximity, personal responsibility for what you bring to the community is critical. If you are experiencing symptoms of anything transmissible (Covid, flu, rash, fever, cold, etc.), stay off the mat until you are well again or cleared by a doctor to be in close proximity with others. If you know there's a good chance you were exposed to Covid, then please mask on the mat (N95 or KN95) for 5 days. We reserve the right to return to mandatory masking if Covid numbers and severity worsen in the future.

Vaccination is expected among community members. That includes our youth members. We currently have a 100% covid vaccination rate. If you intend to join us and you're not vaccinated, please be honest with us about your circumstances. We understand there are reasonable exceptions.

We are following CDC guidelines for returning to practice after having covid. Here it is in a nutshell. Stay away for at least 5 full days, and until you are symptom/fever-free. Wear a mask until at least day 10, or until you take 2 consecutive antigen tests that are negative.

## **OTHER IMPORTANT GUIDELINES AND POLICIES**

**In the Budo tradition, we use a simple bow during training to acknowledge important things.**

Gratitude. Inclusion. Respect. Appreciation. Recognition. These are all things that are extended by a simple, heartfelt bow. If a bow is too challenging for your belief system then please just be traditionally considerate with supportive body language until you get over it.

**Please train with a clean, perfume-free body, and short nails.**

It's respectful and it simply makes it more pleasant and safe for everyone. Please also wash your hands and check your feet before you get on the mat. It's also a good idea to tie back long hair.

**Don't leave anything at the studio after training, please.**

That includes your uniform, sticks, water bottles, glasses, shoes, clothes, children, mind, etc. Take everything home with you every day.

**Minors must be fully supported. Here's what that means to us.**

Whether it's in our youth class or adult program, minors must be supported in the following ways:

- They are in class dressed and on time, and picked up when class ends.
- Billing/membership issues on their behalf are taken care of promptly.
- If you're watching class, it's as an observer. Coaching from the sideline is prohibited.

## **LEVELING UP (ADULT PROGRAM)**

We use a traditional Japanese system of “Kyu” and “Dan” ranks. Our ranking system focuses on your success in the most important way of all. It supports your efforts in becoming your own expression of what the art is all about. Ranks should be considered levels of invested commitment, and not necessarily objective levels of performance. Leveling up is about *your* personal best.

### **Structure**

Once you reach the number of training days for promotion, a demo opportunity is considered. You don’t need to ask. A formal offer and process will be forthcoming. Here are the basics:

<b>6 Kyu</b>	<b>5 Kyu</b>	<b>4 Kyu</b>	<b>3 Kyu</b>	<b>2 Kyu</b>	<b>1 Kyu</b>	<b>1 Dan</b>
15 classes Demo Inquiry	+30 classes Demo Inquiry	+40 classes Demo Inquiry	+50 classes Demo Inquiry	+60 classes Demo Inquiry	+80 classes Demo Inquiry	+80 classes Demo Inquiry

### **Process**

Once you’re in formal process for promotion, ask someone more experienced to help you through it. This “mentor” will also be your primary partner on your demo. Mentors assume a shared responsibility for your preparedness and success. Don’t be shy about asking someone to fill that role for you. It’s a welcome question that is built into the system.

The basic guidelines for each level are on the following page.

Apart from preparing for your demo, a short inquiry statement is also required each time you level up. It could be on anything related to your experience with the art, so pay attention to what comes up for you and aim for your statement to connect. It should be posted on our private Facebook group page the week of your demo. If you’re not on Facebook, email it to Sensei and he’ll post it on your behalf. Some possibilities to get you started are listed below:

- \* Reflecting on your training so far, describe any “ah-ha!” or “yes!” moments you’ve had.
- \* Reflecting on your training so far, what has challenged you the most?
- \* What top 5 things do you appreciate about Aikido / training / community / etc.?
- \* What does Aikido mean to you?
- \* What does it mean to be a student of this art?
- \* Where/how has it been beneficial to be an “uke” or “nage” outside of class?
- \* Describe the effect Aikido has had on your life, or how it has facilitated change for you.
- \* Describe how you see Aikido from the perspectives of a body, a mind, or a heart.
- \* Aikido is like...

<p><b>6 Kyu — white belt</b> Minimum 15 training days</p> <p><u>Formal Techniques:</u> Tai-no-henko Shomen-uchi Ikkyo (omote/ura) Katate-dori Sumi-otoshi Kokyu-dosa</p>	<p><b>5 Kyu — white belt</b> Minimum 30 training days after 6 kyu</p> <p><u>Formal Techniques</u> Kata-dori Nikkyo (omote/ura) Katate-dori Shiho-nage (omote/ura) Gyakute-dori Kokyu-nage / Kokyu-ho</p> <p><u>Freestyle</u> Basic grabs (1 uke)</p>
<p><b>4 Kyu — blue belt</b> Minimum 40 training days after 5 kyu</p> <p><u>Formal Techniques:</u> Shomen-uchi Sankyo (omote/ura) Ryote-dori Tenshi-nage Gyakute-dori Kote-gaeshi Shomen-uchi Irimi-nage</p> <p><u>Freestyle</u> Grabs/strikes (1 uke)</p>	<p><b>3 Kyu — blue belt</b> Minimum 50 training days after 4 kyu</p> <p><u>Formal Techniques:</u> Shomen-uchi Yonkyo (omote/ura) Yokomen-uchi Shiho-nage (omote/ura) Tsuki Kote-gaeshi Katate-dori Kaiten-nage (uchi/soto)</p> <p><u>Freestyle</u> Jo-nage (1 uke) Grabs/strikes (1 uke)</p>
<p><b>2 Kyu — brown belt</b> Minimum 60 training days after 3 kyu</p> <p><u>Formal Techniques:</u> Ikkyo: Shomen/Yokomen/Kata/Ushiro-ryote Tsuki Irimi-nage / Kaiten-nage Yokomen-uchi Kote-gaeshi / Irimi-nage Morote-dori Kokyu-ho / Kokyu-nage Shomen-uchi Kokyu-ho / Kokyu-nage Ushiro-ryote-dori Kokyu-nage / Kote-gaeshi Jo-dori Ikkyo / Kokyu-nage / Shiho-nage</p> <p><u>Freestyle</u> Emphasize “Earth” (1 uke) Emphasize “Water” (1 uke) Grabs/strikes (1-2 ukes)</p>	<p><b>1 Kyu — brown belt</b> Minimum 80 training days after 2 kyu</p> <p><u>Formal Techniques:</u> Ikkyo-Yonkyo: A selection from Shomen/ Yokomen/Kata/Ushiro-ryote. 3 different attacks for each of the following: Kokyu-nage, Kokyu-ho, Irimi-nage, Kote- gaeshi, Shiho-nage, Kaiten-nage. Choose from the following attacks: Katate, Gyakute, Morote, Ryote, Kata, Kata- menuchi, Ryo-kata, Tsuki, Yokomen, Shomen, Ushiro-ryote, Ushiro-ryokata.</p> <p><u>Freestyle</u> Jo-nage / Jo-dori Emphasize “Earth” (1 uke) Emphasize “Water” (1 uke) Emphasize “Fire” (1 uke) Emphasize “Air” (1 uke) Randori (1-2-3 ukes)</p>

## **YOUTH PROGRAM**

After a long hiatus initiated by the pandemic, our youth program is now back!

Jay Palm and Maru Melcon co-direct and instruct this class for children 6-12 years old. Kids will learn basic principles and techniques of Aikido, and combine them with games that develop skills for awareness, self-confidence, coordination, responsiveness, empathy and responsibility. Activities are centered around improved embodiment, and working *with* people and challenges, not *against* them.

### **Qualifications for Enrollment:**

- Your child is at least 6 years old, and he/she has visited the class with you already. If you haven't done this yet, [please reach out to us here](#).
- You have completed the [registration form](#) on behalf of your child.
- You have completed the [membership agreement](#) on behalf of your child.
- Student(s) (+parents staying at the studio) are aligned with the community's general COVID policies. If you haven't read them yet, please go back and do so. We take it seriously.

### **Expectations of Parents:**

- We need parents to help us put mats down on the floor before class begins at 5:00. Please lend us a hand with that whenever you can. Thanks.
- Please have your child in their uniform before class. Best to do it at home, but if you can't, there are bathrooms on the premises. Staff can help tie their belts.
- If you are dropping off and not staying, please don't do so before 4:50. You're expected to be back for pick up at 6:00.
- If you're staying for class, the studio opens at 4:40. Please know it's quiet time there until 5:00.
- Make sure your child's hands and feet are clean before getting on the mat. They should also have short nails, and be free of jewelry, cosmetics, fragrances, face paint, glitter, etc.
- Parents are welcomed to quietly observe. Please silence your phone and take any calls outdoors. Please also do not unnecessarily communicate with your child(ren) while they are in session. It's distracting. There's a nice gazebo sitting area downstairs if you need a timeout ;-)
- Bring a drink for your child, especially in the warmer months. We do take water breaks.

### **Expectations of Children:**

- The main requirement of all participants in the youth program is appropriate attention and behavior. If your child generally has challenges with this then please share details with us.
- If inappropriate behavior or attention becomes a problematic pattern, the instructors will let you know and make an actionable request for improvement. If sufficient progress isn't made after a few weeks then, sadly, we'll have to say, "Thank you, but it's not a fit." It happens very rarely, but it has happened.

### **More About Appropriate Attention and Behavior:**

- When bowing in or out of class, or when the instructors are demonstrating or explaining, kids are expected to have their attention on the topic.
- While practicing, kids should generally be doing what they were asked to do, and not lost in unrelated activity or conversation.
- Kids are expected to have awareness on the mat that extends beyond themselves. That means sharing space, being attentive if/when they are waiting for a turn, and displaying a cooperative interest in group activities.

- Children are expected to treat one another kindly. Speaking negatively of a classmate, bullying a classmate, or forcing a technique on a classmate are examples of unkind behavior. Thanking a training partner after practicing, speaking with classmates in supportive ways, and treating the bodies of each other respectfully are examples of kind behavior.
- Children may not be argumentative with the instructors. Their word on any matter during class is final and needs to be accepted willingly.

## LEVELING UP!

### Children are offered exams for promotion once they have:

- Reached the minimal amount of training days required.
- Shown they can demonstrate (1) the content, and (2) a positive training spirit.

**After receiving an exam date, your child’s attendance is expected to be consistent.** We will not administer an exam, even if it was initially offered, if your child was not around enough to prepare.

**Exams are scheduled either on Saturdays when we have dojo-wide exams, or during youth class hours.** The dates are announced well in advance. Certificates and belts are presented after exams are completed. There is a \$25 fee for each youth exam administered. You’ll be invoiced via email for the fee.

## EXAM CONTENT

<p><b>YELLOW BELT</b> Minimum 20 training days</p> <p>Challenge course: Balance Katate-dori: Tai-no-henko, Sumi-otoshi Gyakute-dori: Kokyu-nage Kokyu-dosa</p>	<p><b>ORANGE BELT</b> Minimum 40 training days after yellow belt</p> <p>Challenge course: Blending Katate-dori: Kokyu-nage Gyakute-dori: Kokyu-ho Ryote-dori: Tenshi-nage</p>
<p><b>GREEN BELT</b> Minimum 50 training days after orange belt</p> <p>Challenge course: Footwork Katate-dori: Kokyu-ho Gyakute-dori: Shiho-nage Shomen-uchi: Ikkyo</p>	<p><b>PURPLE BELT</b> Minimum 50 training days after green belt</p> <p>Challenge course: Agility Katate-dori: Shiho-nage Gyakute-dori: Irimi-nage Kata-dori: Ikkyo Morote-dori: Kokyu-nage Jiyu-waza: ukemi demonstration</p>

## **BLUE BELT**

Minimum 50 training days after purple belt

Challenge course: Cooperation

Kata-dori: Nikkyo

Ryote-dori : Shiho-nage

Morote-dori: Kokyu-ho

Shomen-uchi: Kokyu-nage

Jiyu-waza: grabs, ukemi demonstration

## **GRADUATING**

At some point, your child might get too old for the class, or outgrow it.

If and when a time comes for them to enter the regular adult program, the board of instructors will determine the adult rank they will test into.

When they enter the class, they begin preparing for the exam with a team of mentors. We consider this exam, and the process, to be a community rite of passage.

## **REFERENCE MATERIAL**

It should be understood that no one at Aikido of San Diego is expected to perfect the use of Japanese language in their training. With that said, they're just names, as good as any English names, and we do use them. "Aikido-ese" is widely understood worldwide. People seem to pick it up quite easily simply by being around. The following is not meant to be something memorized. It is simply available for your reference:

### **Names of Basic Techniques**

Ikkyo: 1st systemic technique.

Nikkyo: 2nd systemic technique.

Sankyo: 3rd systemic technique.

Yonkyo: 4th systemic technique.

Gokkyo: 5th systemic technique.

Irimi-nage: Entering throw.

Kaiten-nage: Rotary throw.

Kokyu-ho: "The way of breath" technique

Kokyu-nage: "Breath" throw

Kote-gaeshi: Wrist turning technique.

Shiho-nage: Four direction throw.

Tenshi-nage: Heaven and earth throw.

### **Names of Basic Attacks**

#### **STRIKES**

Jodan-tsuki: Thrusting strike to face/head.

Mune-tsuki: Straight strike to center of body.

Shomen-uchi: Strike to the front of head.

Tsuki: Thrusting strike.

Yokomen-uchi: Strike to the side of the head.

#### **GRABS**

Gyakute-dori: Cross-hand grab

Kata-dori: Shoulder grab.

Katate-dori: Wrist grab (mirror image).

Morote-dori: Wrist held with both hands.

Ryokata-dori: Both shoulders held.

Ryote-dori: Both wrists are held.

Ushiro-ryote-dori: Wrists grabbed behind.

## Understanding Technique Names

Traditional techniques are named in the following way:

ATTACK + TECHNIQUE + OMOTE/URA IF RELEVANT (front/rear) = Full Technique Name

For instance: "Kata-dori Nikkyo Ura-waza" means, Shoulder grab, 2<sup>nd</sup> technique, Rear side.

## Names of the 20 Jo Suburi

### *Japanese Term:*

### *English Translation:*

- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. Choku-tsuki                 | Straight - thrust                                |
| 2. Kaeshi-tsuki                | Reverse - thrust                                 |
| 3. Ushiro-tsuki                | Rear - thrust                                    |
| 4. Tsuki-gedan-gaeshi          | Thrust - low position - turning                  |
| 5. Tsuki-jodan-gaeshi-uchi     | Thrust - high position - turning - strike        |
| 6. Shomen-uchi-komi            | Front - striking practice                        |
| 7. Renzoku-uchi-komi           | Repeating - striking practice                    |
| 8. Menuchi-gedan-gaeshi        | Strike to the head - low position - turning      |
| 9. Menuchi-ushiro-tsuki        | Strike to the head - rear - thrust               |
| 10. Gyaku-yokomen-ushiro-tsuki | Opposite side - side of the head - rear - thrust |
| 11. Katate-gedan-gaeshi        | One hand - low position - turning                |
| 12. Katate-toma-uchi           | One hand - far reaching - strike                 |
| 13. Katate-hachi-no-ji-gaeshi  | One hand - the character 8 - turning             |
| 14. Hasso-gaeshi-uchi          | Turning - strike                                 |
| 15. Hasso-gaeshi-tsuki         | Turning - thrust                                 |
| 16. Hasso-gaeshi-ushiro-tsuki  | Turning - rear - thrust                          |
| 17. Hasso-gaeshi-ushiro-uchi   | Turning - rear - strike                          |
| 18. Hasso-gaeshi-ushiro-barai  | Turning - rear - low center                      |
| 19. Hidari-nagare-gaeshi-uchi  | Left - flowing - turning - strike                |
| 20. Migi-nagare-gaeshi-tsuki   | Right - flowing - turning - thrust               |

## Counting in Japanese

Sometimes you'll hear technical work counted in Japanese. Just memorize one through ten:

1	2	3	4	5	5	7	8	9	10
ICHI	NI	SAN	SHI (yon)	GO	ROKU	SHICHI (nana)	HACHI	KYU	JYU

Ten through nineteen becomes 10+, so 11 is jyu-ichi, 12 is jyu-ni, etc. Twenty through twenty-nine becomes 2x10+, so 20 is ni-jyu, 21 is ni-jyu-ichi, etc.

Aikido of San Diego 4-Elements Reference Chart

EARTH	WATER	FIRE	AIR
<p><b>Speaks To:</b> stability, integrity, control, form, practicality, correctness, balance, reliability, support, steadiness, organization, confidence, pattern, alignment</p> <p><b>Directional Tendency:</b> Down</p> <p><b>Energetic Body:</b> Bones</p> <p><b>Primary Virtue:</b> Knowledge</p> <p><b>Primary Contemplation:</b> What do I know?</p> <p><b>Related Inquiries:</b> What are the facts? What can I count on? What are my patterns? What is essential/fundamental?</p>	<p><b>Speaks To:</b> fluidity, relations, receptivity, flow, taking in, relaxation, acceptance, empathy, feeling, connection, compassion, seamlessness, inclusion, adaptability</p> <p><b>Directional Tendency:</b> Down / Inward</p> <p><b>Energetic Body:</b> Soft Tissue / Heart (receptive)</p> <p><b>Primary Virtue:</b> Grace</p> <p><b>Primary Contemplation:</b> What do I feel?</p> <p><b>Related Inquiries:</b> What do I need to accept? How am I caring for myself? How am I caring for others? How do I feel about...?</p>	<p><b>Speaks To:</b> drive, doing, action, passion, results, achievement, courage, purpose, power, inspiration, intention, effort, directness, perseverance, goals</p> <p><b>Directional Tendency:</b> Forward / Out</p> <p><b>Energetic Body:</b> Blood / Heart (active)</p> <p><b>Primary Virtue:</b> Purpose</p> <p><b>Primary Contemplation:</b> Why am I here?</p> <p><b>Related Inquiries:</b> What "lights" me up? What needs to be done? How do I/we move forward? What's the point?</p>	<p><b>Speaks To:</b> vision, creativity, lightness, play, patience, possibility, spontaneity, spaciousness, non-attachment, intuition, insight, joy, levity, effortlessness</p> <p><b>Directional Tendency:</b> Up / Out</p> <p><b>Energetic Body:</b> Breath</p> <p><b>Primary Virtue:</b> Appreciation</p> <p><b>Primary Contemplation:</b> What am I grateful for?</p> <p><b>Related Inquiries:</b> How/where can I lighten up? What do I need to let go? What's possible? Where's the joy?</p>
<b>Sample Attitudes</b>			
<p>"The secret to Aikido is regular training, and focus on basics."</p> <p>"You know, Ikkyo is considered Aikido's root technique."</p> <p>"This room has everything we need for the week."</p>	<p>"Sure, but Aikido is relational. Feeling is the secret sauce."</p> <p>"I did know. And I love the feeling of its waves and spirals."</p> <p>"It feels so open and welcoming! Just take it in. Oh, and a jacuzzi!"</p>	<p>"Aikido is what the world needs! The spirit of Irimi is the secret."</p> <p>"And the way it just connects right into center. Bam! Oh ya."</p> <p>"Hey, we do only have it for the week, so I'm getting to work."</p>	<p>"The real secret to Aikido is in your willingness to let go and BE it."</p> <p>"The only good Ikkyo is the one that appears. Pass the wine."</p> <p>"Wow, this room would make a beautiful dojo. Maybe one day."</p>