## Dojo Etiquette

## There is quite a lot of etiquette in aikido and a certain amount of ritual. But there is a certain beauty and often very practical reasons for it. There is something to be said for guidelines that make your practice safer and more pleasant for you and those around you. Some of it may seem petty, but in short, if you take care to observe the little niceties in life, often the big things will take care of themselves. You aren’t expected to know it all when you first arrive on the mat, but to keep you ahead of the game, here are some basics:

1. Remove your jewellery before practice.
2. Try to ensure that you and your kit are clean.
3. It is best not to practice with long nails, and if you have them and don’t wish to cut them, it may be best to tape them up, to prevent scratching others.
4. When entering and leaving the dojo, students bow in the direction of the signs at the head of the dojo, as a sign of gratitude for having the chance to practise
5. Ideally get some sandals, but take them off before you step on the mat and place them neatly in a row.
6. Students ideally should assemble quietly at least five minutes before the class is scheduled to start. It is recommended that all students kneel (sit seiza) in meditation and await the instructor's arrival on the mat. Meditation calms the mind, and it is desirable that everyone, students and spectators alike, in the dojo be silent during meditation.
7. When the instructor comes onto the mat, he/she and the students bow to the signs as above and then to each other. The class finishes in similar fashion. Similarly you start and finish your practice with any partner with a bow.
8. It is proper to ask the instructor for permission to come on the mat when arriving late for class, or for permission to leave early.
9. Once engaged in the practice of aikido, clear your mind of everything but the lessons given and the principles of aikido. Practice with unity of mind and body.
10. When the instructor is teaching a pair of students, it is not necessary for others to sit down and watch unless he/ she says to. It is preferable to keep practicing.
11. Your partner is not an opponent. Techniques are learned through him/her and with him/her. It should be a pleasure to be thrown as well as to throw. Each movement in aikido teaches the principles and spirit of aikido and should be practiced sincerely.
12. Care should be taken to be aware of the ability of your partner so that no injuries occur.
13. A few more no nos- Don’t: lean against the walls and don’t eat or drink on the mat.