



## Conduct on the Mat

### Attitude toward Instructors

The attitude of the student toward judo and the judo instructor is very important. It should be one of respect for the hard work the instructor has gone through to gain and possess the knowledge of the sport.

### Discipline in the Dojo

The finest sports clubs and teams have the finest discipline. That is a proven fact. This discipline shows in the way the students pay attention both to their efforts and to the instructor, and in the way they sit stand, and practice. To make sure that students are started right in learning judo, they should know the rules of discipline.

1. Conduct in the Dojo. The judo practice hall, or area, is called the dojo (literally: “a place for learning the way”). The students must maintain good posture, attitude, and courtesy in the dojo. No loud yelling, running about, horseplay, or lying on the mat is to be permitted.
2. Sitting in the Dojo. Students should sit in either the cross-legged (anza) or legs doubled under (seiza) position when on the mat.
3. Safety on the Mat. Students must be alert when on the mat in order to avoid getting in the way of other students, or pushing or throwing their opponents into other students. When a student goes to the edge of the mat to rest or rearrange his uniform, he will always sit or stand facing the center of the mat so that he can see the other players and not be injured. When playing, keep in mind the second principle of judo, “**mutual benefit and welfare.**” Try never to injure another player, and you will not be injured. Accidents and injuries come primarily from carelessness, not from judo techniques.
4. Personal Hygiene. Zori (sandals) should be worn off the mat. Keep your finger and toenails clean and cut short. Make sure the toenails are cut straight across so that they cannot cut the opponent’s feet. The feet, hands, hair and the entire body should be clean. The judo uniform should be clean at all times. All players should wear their hair in such a way that it is not loose. Braids are very proper, as are hair ties without metal pieces to keep the hair gathered and close to the head. Women should wear a plain white T-shirt or leotard under the judo jacket. V-neck T-shirts or V-neck leotard are not allowed to be worn.
5. Courtesy to the Instructor. All students should pay close attention to the instructor and should never talk when the instructor is talking or demonstrating a technique. The greatest courtesy the student can show an instructor is to work very hard at what he/she is being taught.
6. Respect Among Students. All students must seek ways to help fellow students learn judo. Advice and help are in order at all times. The way to win the respect of one’s fellow students is to earn it by doing one’s very best at all times. No matter what his or her rank or skill level is, the student who does his or her very best earns the respect and admiration of all.



7. Learn Attitudes as Well as Techniques. The way of judo is to learn proper habits of efficiency and kindness to others. The goal of judo is the perfection of human character, to be achieved by following the two principles of judo;
- (1) Maximum efficiency with minimum effort, and
  - (2) Mutual benefit and welfare.
- The practice of good habits brings about changes in the attitudes of students and helps them attain the true goals of judo.

### **Formal Etiquette**

The observation of correct etiquette (formal manners) is an important part of judo training. This helps bring about a feeling of respect not only for others but also of one's self.

### **The Physical Dojo**

By tradition, the four sides of the dojo are called the kamiza, the shimoseki, the shimoza and the joseki. The formal arrangement is with the students on the shimoza and the instructors on the kamiza during the opening and closing procedures. Sometimes the josaki, instead of kamiza, is used as the place of honor in some dojos. In many dojos, there is a picture of Dr. Jigoro Kano (the founder of judo) or a small shrine on the side of the kamiza or joseki. In the United States, the American flag or the club emblem is also displayed. Also, to one side of the mat, often there is a name board (nafuda kake) containing the names of the members, arranged according to rank. It is the responsibility of all the students to see that the dojo is properly maintained and cleaned. No individual is assigned this task; it is shared equally by all. If mats are to be set up, the students are to see that they are set up properly prior to the start of class. It is also the students' responsibility to help put the mats away if necessary after the close of class.

### **Bowing**

The custom of bowing is prevalent in most martial arts. In judo, it can have two meanings. It will be an expression of gratitude or respect.

### **How to Bow**

Start your standing bow by facing your opponent. Stand upright in natural posture with your hands loose at your sides. Bow by bending forward approximately 45 degrees and placing your hands on your thighs. Keep your back straight and your heels close together. Complete your bow by rising and resuming the natural posture. Kneel on the mat, for a kneeling bow, by stepping back with your left foot and slowly kneeling on the left knee. Kneel on the right knee and rest your body on your heels with your hands on your thighs. Face your opponent (or instructor) and bow by first sitting upright (at the call for "attention," if given), then by leaning the upper body forward (horizontal with the mat) and placing your hands on the mat in front of you.



Complete the bow by returning to the first position, sitting upright. To stand, rise on your knees and toes, then step forward with your right foot and finally stand up in a natural posture.

### **When to Bow (Examples)**

Bow when you enter or leave the dojo. When you enter, take one step in, then bow before proceeding into the room. When you leave, go to the door, face the room and bow, then turn and exit.

Bow when you step onto or leaving the mat area in the dojo. When you come onto the mat, step forward onto the mat with the left foot first.

Bow in the direction of kamiza or the sensei when you are ready to leave the mat area. From the edge of the mat, face kamiza or sensei and bow, then step backward off the mat right foot first. Your footwear should be just off the mat where you bow. It is improper to be barefoot anywhere in the dojo except the mat itself. By the same token, do not step onto the mat with anything on feet.

Bow before and after working out with someone. Arrange your judogi and belt if necessary prior to bowing to your partner.

Bow when you receive an award or promotion. This will be explained in detail later.

Bow before and after addressing an instructor. During class, follow the directions of your instructor. He or she may not desire for you to bow each time you address them or another higher ranking black belt.

### **Class Opening**

The usual judo class starts with all of the students sitting on seiza (legs doubled under) in a row or rows facing the instructor(s). Normally there is no audible signal. The highest-ranking students sit on the right end of the row, as they face the instructor. If there are several instructors, they sit in order of rank with the higher ranks to their own right, in a row facing the students. They line up on the side of the dojo known as the joseki. The highest-ranking member of this group sits on the right end. When all coaches and students are properly seated, the head instructor gives the senior ranking student a nod or word, and the head student calls out “kiyotsuke” (meaning, “discipline your spirit” or “attention”), and then “rei” (meaning, “bow”) together to open the class.

### **Class Closing**

The end of class is normally signaled by the verbal command “sore made.” The members will arrange themselves in seiza as in the class opening. The senior ranking student will call everyone to attention with the verbal command “kiyotsuke.” The



senior ranking student will again signal the students to bow to the instructor(s) with the verbal command “sensei ni, rei.” If there is a formal kamiza, everyone will turn to it, and the senior ranking student will again signal everyone to bow with the verbal command “rei.” The students will remain seated while the assistant instructor(s) along the kamiza, if any, make a final bow to the senior/head instructor.

### **Receiving an award**

It has been observed that most students are unfamiliar with the protocol for receiving an award like a trophy, medal or certificate. The procedure described herein is the most widely accepted one. Face the person who is presenting you with the award, at attention, at about six feet in front of him/her. Do a standing bow. Step forward (left foot then right) and receive the award with your left hand then shank hands with the presenter with your right. Step back (right foot then left) and bow.

### **Visiting Another Dojo**

Generally, most instructors encourage their students to work out at other dojos on their “off” days. Before visiting another dojo however, you should get permission of your regular instructor. The same would be true if you are changing dojos permanently. Arrive at the visiting dojo before the start of class. Do not come in late. Introduce yourself to the instructor or have a student introduce you to him. On occasion, you might need a letter of introduction from your regular instructor. Once you are introduced, obtain the permission of the head instructor to work out with the class. At the end of the class, thank the instructors again for their hospitality. Help put away any training equipment such as mats. If a visitor comes to your dojo, introduce yourself and make him/her feel welcome. Offer to introduce the guest to the instructor.

### **Termination of Practice**

If you are leaving the dojo for an extended period of time (i.e. quitting, moving, transferring to another dojo, vacation, sickness, injury, conflicts with school or work, personal reasons, etc.), you should notify the instructor of this fact. The instructors care a great deal about you.

### **Some Final Words on Etiquette**

These items are by no means a complete description of the etiquette for martial artists, but the items focused on here are the ones that seem to give beginners the most difficulty. As you progress further in your martial studies, you will learn more of the formalities and of the code of bushiho. As a rule of thumb, always be courteous and humble. It is the true reflection of your training.

Reference: USJA Jr. Handbook pgs 12-14