

# TACOMA AIKIKAI

## Youth Program Handbook



# Welcome to Tacoma Aikikai

*Onegaishimasu*

Congratulations, you've taken the first step on your martial arts and aikido journey. We hope that this guidebook helps give an introduction and overview of training in the youth program at Tacoma Aikikai.

Our goal is to provide a supportive and structured environment that allows every youth to excel to the best of their abilities. In finding their own unique potential, youth also develop leadership skills to help others along the way.

The image displays the Japanese characters for Aikido (合気道) in a bold, black, calligraphic style. The characters are arranged horizontally from left to right: '合' (Ai), '気' (Ki), and '道' (Do). The brushwork is thick and expressive, with long, sweeping strokes that give the characters a sense of movement and energy.

## What is Aikido?

Aikido is a Japanese martial art developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Morihei Ueshiba, commonly known by his students as O-Sensei. Literally translated as the art of peace, aikido focuses on harmonizing with the energy of an opponent. We use large circular movements to blend with an attack. On the mat, we use effective, but defensive, joint locks and throws to neutralize and control without hurting our partner. Training includes lots of rolling and falling so that we can safely receive techniques.

- ***Aikido is peaceful***

Aikido is unique in being a “non-violent” martial art. There is no competition – we train to improve ourselves. We learn to take care of our partners with controlled techniques. By diffusing conflict on the mat, we learn how to diffuse conflict off the mat.

- ***Aikido has many benefits***

The benefits of aikido training are profound and far-reaching. Youth can observe changes in focus, confidence, and self-control almost immediately. Here are a few things you may notice after beginning to train

**Concentration** – aikido, like other martial arts, is proven to boost focus and concentration.

**Fitness and coordination** – aikido offers vigorous physical exercise to improve health and well-being. Aikido movements also promote coordination and skills that translate into other sports and activities.

**Cooperation** – aikido is non-competitive. Techniques do not rely on strength or speed. Students learn to train with everyone in a cooperative manner.

**Community and Leadership** – Tacoma Aikikai fosters a mutually supportive community of lasting friendships. As students progress, they are expected to help others.

**Self-control** – aikido training relies on remaining calm and in the moment. Techniques are executed with care for ourselves and our partner. Safe and focused training teaches self-control.

- ***Training comes with expectations***

**Practice responsibly**

Training is a personal choice based on respect and responsibility. Students are expected to take care of each other, themselves, the dojo, and the instructors to create a safe and respectful training environment.

**Practice sincerely**

Your potential is limitless. In aikido, you'll learn how to fall safely, move with confidence, increase awareness, and develop martial arts skills. Train with a 100% effort to reach your potential and help your classmates reach theirs.

**Be yourself**

Every person is unique, and every person develops a unique way of doing aikido. Be who you are without judging others. Most importantly, enjoy your practice.

## Youth Programs

Tacoma Aikikai's youth program is structured to give every student age-specific opportunities to learn and progress. A tiered approach by age also provides a continuity of training as youth grow into teen and adult practitioners.

Most classes are split by age, with one weekly class for mixed-age groups. Students progress with age from classes focused on games and basic movements to drills and advanced falling to execution and development of techniques. Youth between age brackets can pick the program that best fits their schedule and needs. Youth may attend any class offered for the age group program in which they are enrolled.

## Kids and Youth

Kids and youth programs focus on getting comfortable with physical contact and hitting the mat. A heavy emphasis is placed on exercise, movement, and losing/taking balance. Fun games and drills are used to introduce and train basic aikido footwork, ukemi (falling/rolling), and techniques. Partner practice builds concentration and coordination as youth execute techniques from start to finish.

<b>Kids (ages 6-10)</b>	<b>Youth (age 9-12)</b>
Learning objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consideration for others</li><li>• Cooperation (training with everyone)</li><li>• Showing care for partner</li><li>• Good effort and attention</li><li>• Activity and exercise</li><li>• Basic tumbling and safe falling</li><li>• Basic stances and footwork</li><li>• Hand and foot coordination</li><li>• Japanese culture and phrases</li></ul>	Learning objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supporting other students</li><li>• Developing self-control</li><li>• Responsive falling and rolling</li><li>• Start to finish execution of techniques</li><li>• Facing challenges</li><li>• Building self-confidence</li><li>• Increasing focus and concentration</li><li>• Improving physical conditioning</li><li>• Japanese terms for techniques</li></ul>
Ranks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Yellow (30 hours)</li><li>• Orange (+40 hours)</li><li>• Green (+50 hours)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Blue (+50 hours)</li><li>• Purple (+60 hours)</li><li>• Purple stripe (+60 hours)</li></ul>

## Juniors and Teens

The junior teen and teen programs bridge the youth and adults programs, having elements of both. Drills, partner practices, and ukemi conditioning elevate technical competence and precision of executing and receiving techniques. Self-defense is emphasized through techniques, as well as through concepts of self-development and self-improvement. Randori (multiple attackers) and jiu-waza (free-form techniques) provide students with the opportunity respond naturally and freely in higher pressure situations. Weapons work and weapons disarming techniques are gradually introduced to more advanced students.

Juniors and teens can attend program-specific classes. Teens are welcomed in any adult classes. Juniors are encouraged to focus on age-specific classes, but may attend some adults classes with instructor permission.

At the level of green belt, juniors and teens can also apply to become junior instructors in the kids and youth programs, earning hours to work towards their rank promotion. Dedication, integrity, and leadership are some of the expectations of junior instructors.

<b>Juniors (age 12-14)</b>	<b>Teens (age 14+)</b>
<p>Learning objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrity and character</li> <li>• Exhibiting leadership</li> <li>• Dynamic throwing and falling</li> <li>• Responsiveness to multiple attacks</li> <li>• Spatial awareness</li> <li>• Technical development</li> <li>• Pushing physical endurance</li> <li>• Taking care of dojo</li> </ul>	<p>Learning objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maturity and independence</li> <li>• Exhibiting leadership</li> <li>• Developing teaching skills</li> <li>• Advanced falling and rolling</li> <li>• Technical development</li> <li>• Jui-waza and free practice</li> <li>• Pushing physical endurance</li> <li>• Taking care of students and sensei</li> </ul>
<p>Ranks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Red (40 hours)</li> <li>• Green (+50 hours)</li> <li>• Blue (+60 hours)</li> <li>• Purple (+70 hours)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purple stripe (+70 hours) – 5<sup>th</sup> kyu</li> <li>• Brown (+100 hrs) – 4<sup>rd</sup> kyu</li> <li>• Brown stripe (+100 hours) – 3<sup>nd</sup> kyu</li> <li>• Junior Black Belt (+150 hours) – 2<sup>nd</sup> kyu</li> </ul>

## Testing

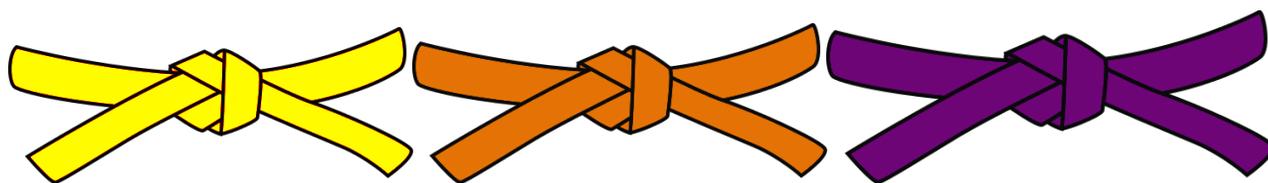
While not the reason for training, testing helps set milestones and recognizes youth accomplishments.

Students test when they and Sensei feel they are ready to progress to the next level. Sensei will let students know when they are eligible to test. Each rank has minimum hour requirement, as well as a set of skills needed for promotion. Accomplishment of individual skills may be recognized by awarding stripes within each level.

Testing requirements are specific to each rank and age group.

The following guidelines are important to consider:

- The cornerstone of training is regular attendance. Time on the mat is the most important factor in promotion. The minimum hour requirements are a guideline for when testing is appropriate.
- Focus and concentration are critical for progression and testing. Expectations increase with rank and age
- Testing is not the reason for training
- Promotion does not mean mastery. We train to constantly polish our form and techniques



## Attendance

Students track attendance by stamping their personal attendance card. Attendance cards list the class expectations for each rank and age. If behavior expectations are not met in class, the student may not receive a stamp.

## Dojo Membership

Monthly membership dues support the dojo community and give access to unlimited program-specific classes. Students choose their membership in kids (6-10 y.o.), youth (9-12 y.o), juniors (12-14 y.o.), or teens (12-14 y.o.) based on age.

Tacoma Aikikai's youth program is offered by the semester term. Students sign up for the entire term of classes; although, dues are paid on a monthly basis. New student orientations are held at the beginning of fall and spring semesters. Classes are cancelled on most national holidays and for the last week of December.

New students can join at any time. Students signing up after a term has started commit for the duration of the term. New members can take advantage of the Beginner's special, which includes one month of training and a uniform.

Tacoma Aikikai is dedicated to sharing aikido to empower youth. Please speak with us if you have financial obstacles to membership. Financial accommodation for low-income students is available.

Families receive a 10% discount for 2 members, 15% discount for 3 members, and a 20% discount for 4 members. An additional 5% discount is available for autodraw EFT (electronic check) payment.

**Fall Semester:** September – December

**Spring Semester:** January – April

**Summer half term:** May – June

**Summer half term:** July - August



# Guide to Training



# Welcome to the Dojo

The dojo is the place where we practice martial arts. When we enter the dojo, we start to practice awareness of the space and other people around us. Martial arts practice is special part of our lives, so the place where we practice is treated as a special place.

## Places in the Dojo

**Dojo** – means the place where we practice “the way” (aikido)

**Kamiza** – the altar or shrine at the front of the dojo. Make a standing bow towards the kamiza when entering or exiting the dojo, and a seated bow when getting on or off the mat. When class starts or ends, we line up facing the kamiza to do a seated bow

**Tatami** – tatami are traditional rice mats used as a surface for training. Today we use padded vinyl tatami as our training mat

**Genkan** – the genkan is the entryway of the dojo. Shoes are removed in the genkan before stepping into the dojo

**Weapons rack** – holds tanto (wooden knife), bokken (wooden sword), and jyo (wooden staff) used for advanced aikido training

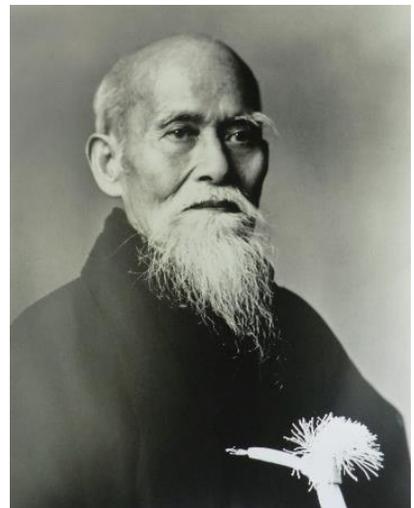
## People in the Dojo

**O-sensei** – a photo of O-sensei, the founder of aikido, hangs above the kamiza. We bow to O-sensei when starting or ending class to show our respect to the lineage of aikido.

**Sensei** – sensei is the Japanese word for teacher. It is polite to address the teacher as sensei when in the dojo.

**Sempai** – sempai are more senior students in the dojo. A sempai’s job is to take care of all the junior students.

**Kohai** – kohai are the more junior students in the dojo. Kohai follow the direction of sempai and Sensei to learn aikido.



## Dojo Etiquette and Expectations

As a traditional dojo, Tacoma Aikikai practices common Japanese dojo etiquette, most of which you will pick up as you go along. Here are a few of the basics:

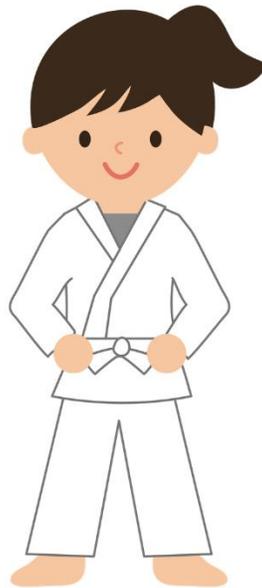
- **Entering and Leaving the dojo** – To show respect for the dojo, make a standing bow when entering or leaving.
- **No shoes** – We want to train in a clean and comfortable space. Please take off your shoes off when entering the dojo and line them up neatly on the shelves by the door.
- **Getting on and off the mat** – Make a seated bow when first getting on the mat. Except in an emergency, get permission before leaving the mat during class. Do a standing bow when stepping on and off the mat during class.
- **On-time** – Do your best to arrive on time and prepared for class. If you arrive late, sit by the edge of the mat and wait for Sensei's permission to join class.
- **Remove jewelry, watches, and socks** – For safe training, please remove jewelry, watches, and socks before getting on the mat.
- **Practice courtesy and respect** – Show respect to fellow students and teachers. Do not talk when Sensei is instructing and keep talking to a minimum while practicing. Do not criticize other students - we are all doing our best.
- **Pay attention** – Be aware of your surroundings at all times. No laying on the mat or leaning on the columns/walls is allowed.
- **Follow instructions** – For safety, it is essential that you follow Sensei's instructions at all times. Unexpected or erratic behavior is dangerous to yourself and other students when practicing martial arts.
- **Train safely** – Always take care of yourself and your partner to make sure no one is hurt while training. Let Sensei know if you are injured or feel uncomfortable in any way.

## Uniforms

We train in a white uniform, known as a dogi. It's best to change into your uniform in the dojo, so it stays clean and fresh.

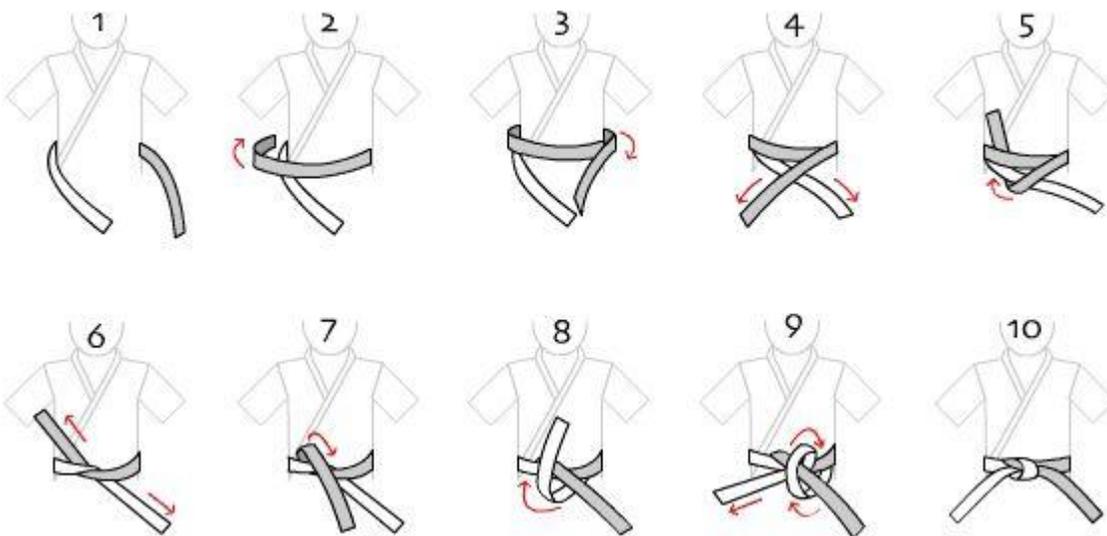
Senior students and all yudansha (black belts) wear a pleated skirt known as a hakama. We fold the hakama after class to maintain the pleats.

Wear the dogi with the left side of the jacket over the right. The belt loops on the pants go in the front, with the drawstring pulled through in a bow.



## Tying the Belt

Tie the belt with a square knot that lays flat in the front.



## Starting and ending class

Students line up sitting in seiza in a straight line facing Sensei to begin class. We bow to the shomen to show respect for the art of aikido and the founder. Sensei then turns around and we bow to each other and say “*onegaishimasu*”.

At the end of class we line up again and repeat the same bows. This time we say “*arigatou gozaimashita*” (*thank you*) when we bow to each other.

Lining up for class is your chance to calm and center yourself before practice.

## Seiza

Seiza is a traditional seated posture. We sit on our heels, with knees facing the front. Sit in seiza when bowing for class, during demonstrations, and when sensei is showing you something to show you are paying attention



## Bowing (Rei)

We bow to show respect and thanks to ourselves, the art of aikido, and each other for the practice.

Bow when entering/leaving the dojo, before/after class, and before/after training with your partner

### *Standing bow*

With the hands hanging naturally at the sides, bend at the waist with a straight spine.

### *Seated bow*

In seiza, place the left, then the right hand on the mat in front of you. Bend at the waist, keeping the spine straight with the hips on the heels.

## Shikko (Knee walking)

We use shikko, or knee-walking, to move on the ground in aikido. Starting in seiza, bring your toes to stand. Move forward by keeping the heels together and moving one, then the other, knee to the front.



## Hamni

The stance in aikido is called hamni. One foot is in forward, in line with the back foot. The front knee is bent. Both feet are on the mat for stability. When grabbing or attacking, use the front hand with the front foot.



## Ai hamni

Partners face each other with the same foot forward. When grabbing, this looks like a cross-hand position

## Gyaku hamni

Partners face each other with the opposite foot forward. When grabbing, this looks like a mirror position

## Useful phrases

### General

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<b>Ai</b>	blend, harmonize, unify	<b>Shikaku</b>	penetrating to blind spot
<b>Ki</b>	energy, spirit, breath	<b>Atemi</b>	strike
<b>Do</b>	path, way	<b>Ukemi</b>	falling, receiving
<b>Dojo</b>	school, "way place"	<b>Dogi</b>	uniform
<b>Kamiza</b>	honorary place in dojo	<b>Obi</b>	belt
<b>Shomen</b>	front of dojo	<b>Hakama</b>	divided skirt
<b>Hara,</b>		<b>Bokken</b>	wooden sword
<b>Tanden</b>	physical center (lower abdomen)	<b>Jyo</b>	wooden staff
<b>Kokyu</b>	breath power	<b>Tanto</b>	wooden knife
<b>Musubi</b>	uniting, "sticky contact"	<b>Dan</b>	black belt rank
<b>Zanshin</b>	continuing awareness	<b>Kyu</b>	white belt rank
<b>Ma ai</b>	harmony of distance, space	<b>Keiko</b>	practice, training
<b>Kazushi</b>	imbalancing		

### People

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<b>O-Sensei</b>	Morihei Ueshiba, founder of Aikido	<b>Yudansha</b>	black belt student
<b>Sensei</b>	teacher	<b>Sempai</b>	senior student
<b>Shihan</b>	master teacher	<b>Kohai</b>	junior student
<b>Shidoi</b>	certified instructor	<b>Uke</b>	one who receives technique
		<b>Nage</b>	one who executes technique

### Body Movement/Footwork

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<b>Tai sabaki</b>	body movement	<b>Soto</b>	outside
<b>Irimi</b>	entering	<b>Ushiro tenkan</b>	stepping back (and off-line)
<b>Tenkan</b>	turning, pivot	<b>Shikko</b>	knee walking
<b>Omote</b>	in front of partner	<b>Aiyumi ashi</b>	alternating step
<b>Ura</b>	behind partner	<b>Sugi</b>	sliding step
<b>Kaiten</b>	pivot, rotate	<b>ashi/Okuri</b>	
<b>Uchi</b>	inside	<b>ashi</b>	

### Positions

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<b>Seiza</b>	formal kneeling	<b>Ai hamni</b>	cross-hand relationship
<b>Suwari waza</b>	kneeling technique	<b>Gyaku hamni</b>	opposite-side relationship (mirror stance)
<b>Tachi waza</b>	standing technique	<b>Hamni</b>	nage sitting, uke standing
<b>Hamni</b>	"half body", triangular stance	<b>handachi</b>	

## Attacks

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<b>Katate dori</b>	wrist grab	<b>Tsuki</b>	straight thrust
<b>Kata dori</b>	shoulder grab	<b>Ushiro</b>	going behind to grab
<b>Ryote dori</b>	double wrist grab	<b>Jodan</b>	upper aspect
<b>Ryokata dori</b>	double shoulder grab	<b>Chudan</b>	middle aspect
<b>Morote dori</b>	forearm grab with both hands	<b>Gedan</b>	lower aspect
<b>Shomen uchi</b>	strike to the front of head	<b>Tegatana</b>	"knife edge" blade of hand
<b>Yokomen uchi</b>	diagonal strike (kesa) to side of head		

## Techniques

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<b>Ikkyo</b>	1st technique	<b>Kotegaeshi</b>	wrist-twisting throw
<b>Nikkyo</b>	2nd technique	<b>Kaitenage</b>	rotating "windmill" throw
<b>Sankyo</b>	3rd technique	<b>Tenchinage</b>	heaven/earth throw
<b>Yonkyo</b>	4th technique	<b>Sumiotoshi</b>	corner drop
<b>Gokkyo</b>	5th technique	<b>Jujinage</b>	crossed-arm throw
<b>Rokkyo</b>	6th technique	<b>Katagatame</b>	shoulder control
<b>Shihonage</b>	four-direction throw	<b>Kokyunage</b>	breath power throw
<b>Iriminage</b>	entering throw	<b>Kokyuhō</b>	breath power exercise

## Numbers

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<b>ichi</b>	1	<b>roku</b>	6
<b>ni</b>	2	<b>shhichi</b>	7
<b>san</b>	3	<b>hachi</b>	8
<b>shi</b>	4	<b>ku</b>	9
<b>go</b>	5	<b>ju</b>	10

## Phrases

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Onegaishimasu	"if you would be so kind..." (invitation to practice)
Arigatou gozaimashita	"thank you very much"
Sumimasen	"excuse me"
Gomenasai	"my apologies"
Konnichiwa	"Good-day"
Ohayo gozaimasu	"Good morning"
Konbanwa	"Good evening"