

The Etiquette of Iaido

The importance of etiquette in iaido should be obvious. Proficiency in the use of the Japanese sword gives one the power of life and death and should not and can not be abused. Therefore a strict code of ethics has been built up on how it should be handled, and how one should act in the study of such a weapon. One's character and spirit are forged by strict rules of dignity of demeanor and practical manners.

Bow to the dojo (practice area) upon entering it. It is here that you will polish your spirit and forge your body into one weapon. In Japanese it is referred to as ki-ken-tai-ichi; the spirit, sword, and body are one.

Line up quietly opposite the instructor and wait for the class to begin.

The instructor will say 'seiza' and you will sit in the formal position placing your sword to the right side and the edge facing in towards you. The instructor will then say 'Mokuso'. Here you will close your eyes and clear your mind of worldly things to prepare it for practice. The instructor will say 'rei', and you will bow to each other as a sign of mutual respect.

The instructor will then have you rise, leaving the sword behind and begin stretching. After the stretching is completed he will have you return to seiza and retrieve your sword.

Upon rising, he will have you turn toward the front of the dojo, sword in the right hand, and bow to it. This is followed by again sitting in seiza, placing the sword in front of you and bowing to it. Only then can the class begin.

During class the student must be aware at all times that his sword is not a danger to his fellow students. He must stay within his own space. If you perceive yourself to be a threat to another, please move or wait until the person is out of the way before continuing your movement.

If you enter the class after it has already started, step to one side, go through these steps, and wait for the instructor to have you join the class.

At the end of class, the etiquette of the sword is reversed. First you bow to the sword and then to the front of the dojo. This is followed by sitting in seiza and returning your mind to worldly matters.

Upon leaving the dojo, bow to it. It should be considered a sacred place. It is where you train to be a better person. Try to live according to the dojo oath.

The dojo oath: I swear to; Strive for the perfection of character.

Protect the paths of truth.

Foster a spirit of effort.

Honor the principles of etiquette.

Refrain from impetuous courage.

Gordon Fisher: Instructor