



AIKIDO VOCABULARY

Useful; not required

The vocabulary terms in this packet are organized around the area of practice. For example, a term you heard during the bow-in or bow-out protocols – such as Onegaishimasu – can be found in the “Protocol” section.

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GENERAL VOCABULARY

Aikido	<i>The martial art founded in Japan by Morihei Ueshiba</i>
Aikidoka	<i>A practitioner of aikido.</i>
Aikikai	<i>"Aiki association." A term used to designate the organization created by the founder for the dissemination of aikido.</i>
Dojo	<i>Literally "place of the Way." Also "place of enlightenment." The place where we practice aikido. Traditional etiquette prescribes bowing in the direction of the shrine (KAMIZA) or the designated front of the dojo (SHOMEN) whenever entering or leaving the dojo.</i>
Doshu	<i>Head of the way (currently Moriteru Ueshiba, grandson of aikido's founder, Morihei Ueshiba). The highest official authority in IAF aikido.</i>
Hombu Dojo	<i>A term used to refer to the central dojo of an organization. Thus this usually designates Aikido World Headquarters. (see Aikikai)</i>
Kami	<i>A divinity, living force, or spirit. According to SHINTO, the natural world is full of KAMI, which are often sensitive or responsive to the actions of human beings.</i>
Kamiza	<i>A small shrine, especially in an aikido, generally located the the front of the dojo, and often housing a picture of the founder, or some calligraphy. One generally bows in the direction of the KAMIZA when entering or leaving the dojo, or the mat.</i>
Keiko	<i>Training. The only secret to success in aikido.</i>
O-sensei	<i>Literally, "Great Teacher," i.e., Morihei Ueshiba, the founder of aikido.</i>
Sensei	<i>the teacher (we're a casual group, and I go by first name.)</i>
Shihan	<i>A formal title meaning, approximately, "master instructor." A "teacher of teachers." I am absolutely NOT a Shihan, for example</i>
Waza	<i>Techniques. Although in aikido we have to practice specific techniques, aikido as it might manifest itself in self-defense may not resemble any particular, standard aikido technique. This is because aikido techniques encode strategies and types of movement which are modified in accordance with changing conditions. (see KIHON)</i>



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UNIFORM VOCABULARY

Dan	<i>Black belt rank. In IAF aikido, the highest rank it is now possible to obtain is 9th dan. There are some aikidoists who hold ranks of 10th dan. These ranks were awarded by the founder prior to his death, and cannot be rescinded. White belt ranks are called KYU ranks.</i>
Gi/Dogi/Keiko Gi	<i>Training costume. Either judo-style or karate-style GI are acceptable in most DOJO, but they must be white and cotton. (No black satin GI with embroidered dragons. Please.)</i>
Hakama	<i>Divided skirt usually worn by black-belt ranks. In some DOJO, the HAKAMA is also worn by all practitioners.</i>
Kyu	<i>White belt rank. (Or any rank below SHODAN)</i>
Mudansha	<i>Students without black-belt ranking.</i>
Obi	<i>A belt.</i>
Shodan	<i>First degree black belt.</i>
Yudansha	<i>Black belt holder (any rank).</i>



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PROTOCOL VOCABULARY

Onegai shimasu	<i>"I welcome you to train with me," or literally, "I make a request." This is said to one's partner when initiating practice.</i>
Reiho	<i>the bowing ceremony or protocol. For example, "shomen-ni-rei" is bow to the shomen or "O'sensei-ni-rei" is bow to O'sensei</i>
Shomen	<i>a person's head or the front of the dojo</i>
Mokuso	<i>Meditation. Practice often begins or ends with a brief period of meditation. The purpose of meditation is to clear one's mind and to develop cognitive equanimity. Perhaps more importantly, meditation is an opportunity to become aware of conditioned patterns of thought and behavior so that such patterns can be modified, eliminated or more efficiently put to use. In addition, meditation may occasion experiences of insight into various aspects of aikido (or, if one accepts certain buddhist claims, into the very structure of reality). Ideally, the sort of cognitive awareness and focus that one cultivates in meditation should carry over into the rest of one's practice, so that the distinction between the "meditative mind" and the "normal mind" collapses.</i>



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WEAPONS VOCABULARY

Bokken	<i>a wooden sword</i>
Iaito	<i>Practice sword (unsharpened)</i>
Jo	<i>a wooden staff</i>
Jotori	<i>staff techniques</i>
Ken	<i>Sword</i>
Kumijo	<i>JO matching exercise (partner practice).</i>
Kumitachi	<i>Sword matching exercise (partner practice).</i>
Shinken	<i>Pure sword (sharpened)</i>
Suburi	<i>Basic JO or BOKKEN practice in striking and thrusting.</i>
Tachi	<i>A type of Japanese sword (thus TACHI-TORI = sword-taking).</i>
Tachitori	<i>attack with sword</i>
Tanto	<i>a wooden knife</i>
Tantotori	<i>attack with knife / dagger</i>
Tegatana	<i>"Hand sword", i.e. the edge of the hand. Many aikido movements emphasize extension and alignment "through" one's tegatana. Also, there are important similarities obtaining between aikido sword techniques, and the principles of tegatana application.</i>
Furi Kaburi	<i>Sword-raising movement. This movement is found especially in IKKYO, IRIMI-NAGE, and SHIHO-NAGE.</i>



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AIKIDO PRACTICE TERMS

Kiai	<i>A shout delivered for the purpose of focussing all of one's energy into a single movement. Even when audible KIAI are absent, one should try to preserve the feeling of KIAI at certain crucial points within aikido techniques.</i>
Kihon	<i>(Something which is) fundamental. There are often many seemingly very different ways of performing the same technique in aikido. To see beneath the surface features of the technique and grasp the core common is to comprehend the KIHON.</i>
Kokyū	<i>Breath. Part of aikido is the development of "KOKYU RYOKU", or "breath power." This is the coordination of breath with movement. A prosaic example: When lifting a heavy object, it is generally easier when breathing out. Also breath control may facilitate greater concentration and the elimination of stress. In many traditional forms of meditation, focus on the breath is used as a method for developing heightened concentration or mental equanimity. This is also the case in aikido. A number of exercises in aikido are called "KOKYU HO," or "breath exercises." These exercises are meant to help one develop KOKYU RYOKU.</i>
Ku	<i>Emptiness. According to Buddhism, the fundamental character of things is absence (or emptiness) of individual unchanging essences. The realization of the essencelessness of things is what permits the cultivation of psychological non-attachment, and thus cognitive equanimity. The direct realization of (or experience of insight into) emptiness is enlightenment. This shows up in aikido in the ideal of developing a state of cognitive openness, permitting one to respond immediately and intuitively to changing circumstances (see MOKUSO).</i>
Kuzushi	<i>The principle of destroying one's partner's balance. In aikido, a technique cannot be properly applied unless one first unbalances one's partner. To achieve proper KUZUSHI, in aikido, one should rely primarily on position and timing, rather than merely on physical force.</i>
Ma Ai	<i>Proper distancing or timing with respect to one's partner. Since aikido techniques always vary according to circumstances, it is important to understand how differences in initial position affect the timing and application of techniques.</i>
Mushin	<i>Literally "no mind". A state of cognitive awareness characterized by the absence of discursive thought. A state of mind in which the mind acts/reacts without hypostatization of concepts. MUSHIN is often erroneously taken to be a state of mere spontaneity. Although spontaneity is a feature of MUSHIN, it is not straightforwardly identical with it. It might be said that when in a state of MUSHIN, one is free to use concepts and distinctions without being used by them.</i>
Nagare	<i>Flowing. One goal of aikido practice is to learn not to oppose physical force with physical force. Rather, one strives to flow along with physical force, redirecting it to one's advantage.</i>
Nage	<i>the person who is attacked and who does the technique (also, to throw)</i>
Sukashiwaza	<i>Techniques performed without allowing the attacker to complete a grab or to initiate a strike. Ideally, one should be sensitive enough to the posture and movements of an attacker (or would-be attacker) that the attack is neutralized before it is fully executed. A great deal of both physical and cognitive training is required in order to attain this ideal.</i>



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Suki	<i>An opening or gap where one is vulnerable to attack or application of a technique, or where one's technique is otherwise flawed. SUKI may be either physical or psychological. One goal of training is to be sensitive to SUKI within one's own movement or position, as well as to detect SUKI in the movement or position of one's partner. Ideally, a master of aikido will have developed his/her skill to such an extent that he/she no longer has any true SUKI.</i>
Takemusu Aiki	<i>A "slogan" of the founder's meaning "infinitely generative martial art of aiki." Thus, a synonym for aikido. The scope of aikido is not limited only to the standard, named techniques one studies regularly in practice. Rather, these standard techniques serve as repositories of more fundamental principles (KIHON). Once one has internalized the KIHON, it is possible to generate a virtually infinite variety of new aikido techniques in accordance with novel conditions.</i>
Uke	<i>the person who is attacking (receiving the technique). At high levels of practice, the distinction between UKE and NAGE becomes blurred. In part, this is because it becomes unclear who initiates the technique, and also because, from a certain perspective, UKE and NAGE are thoroughly interdependent.</i>
Ukemi	<i>Literally "receiving [with/through] the body," thus, the art of falling in response to a technique. MAE UKEMI are front roll-falls, USHIRO UKEMI are back roll-falls. Ideally, one should be able to execute UKEMI from any position and in any direction. The development of proper ukemi skills is just as important as the development of throwing skills and is no less deserving of attention and effort. In the course of practicing UKEMI, one has the opportunity to monitor the way one is being moved so as to gain a clearer understanding of the principles of aikido techniques. Just as standard aikido techniques provide strategies for defending against physical attacks, so does UKEMI practice provide strategies for defending against falling (or even against the application of an aikido or aikido-like technique!).</i>
Zanshin	<i>Awareness of surroundings</i>



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STANCE VOCABULARY

Ai Hanmi	<i>Mutual stance where UKE and NAGE each have the same foot forward (right-right, left-left).</i>
Chudan	<i>"Middle position." Thus CHUDAN NO KAMAE = a stance characterized by having one's hands/sword in a central position with respect to one's body.</i>
Gedan	<i>Lower position. GEDAN NO KAMAE is thus a stance with the hands or a weapon held in a lower position.</i>
Gyaku Hanmi	<i>Opposing stance (if UKE has the right foot forward, NAGE has the left foot forward, if UKE has the left foot forward, NAGE has the right foot forward).</i>
Hanmi	<i>Triangular stance. Most often aikido techniques are practiced with UKE and NAGE in pre-determined stances. This is to facilitate learning the techniques and certain principles of positioning with respect to an attack. At higher levels, specific HANMI cease to be of much importance.</i>
Hanmi Handachi	<i>uke standing, nage sitting</i>
Hasso no Kamae	<i>"Figure-eight" stance. The figure eight does not correspond to the arabic numeral "8", but rather to the Chinese/Japanese character which looks more like the roof of a house. In HASSO NO KAMAE, the sword is held up beside one's head, so that the elbows spread down and out from the sword in a pattern resembling this figure-eight character.</i>
Jodan	<i>Upper position. JODAN NO KAMAE is thus a stance with the hands or a weapon held in a high position.</i>
Kamae	<i>A posture or stance either with or without a weapon. KAMAE may also connote proper distance (MA AI) with respect to one's partner. Although "KAMAE" generally refers to a physical stance, there is an important parallel in aikido between one's physical and one's psychological bearing. Adopting a strong physical stance helps to promote the correlative adoption of a strong psychological attitude. It is important to try so far as possible to maintain a positive and strong mental bearing in aikido.</i>
Seiza	<i>Sitting on one's knees. Sitting this way requires acclimatization, but provides both a stable base and greater ease of movement than sitting cross-legged.</i>
Shikko	<i>knee-walking</i>
Suwari waza	<i>techniques from sitting</i>
Tachi Waza	<i>Standing techniques.</i>



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BASIC EXERCISES VOCABULARY

Funekogi undo	<i>rowing exercise</i>
Happo	<i>8 directions; as in HAPPO-UNDO (8 direction exercise) or HAPPO-GIRI (8 direction cutting with the sword). The connotation here is really movement in all directions. In aikido, one must be prepared to turn in any direction in an instant.</i>
Ikkyo undo	<i>an exercise in which you raise your hands in front of you</i>
Kokyu dosa	<i>a ryotetori exercise practiced from a sitting position</i>
Randori	<i>freestyle (any defense)</i>
Tai no henko	<i>turning tenkan while being grabbed by a partner</i>
Tai Sabaki	<i>Body movement.</i>
Tenkan	<i>turning around your wrist</i>
Undo	<i>an exercise</i>
Zengo undo	<i>ikkyo undo in two directions</i>



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DIRECTION or MOVEMENT VOCABULARY

Hara	<i>One's center of mass, located about 2" below the navel. Traditionally this was thought to be the location of the spirit/mind/(source of Ki). Aikido techniques should be executed as much as possible from or through one's HARA.</i>
Hidari	<i>Left.</i>
Irimi	<i>(lit. "Entering the Body") Entering movement. Many aikidoists think that the IRIMI movement expresses the very essence of aikido. The idea behind IRIMI is to place oneself in relation to an attacker in such a way that the attacker is unable to continue to attack effectively, and in such a way that one is able to control effectively the attacker's balance. (See SHIKAKU).</i>
Kata	<i>the shoulder (also, a set of movements as in karate forms)</i>
Katate	<i>the wrist</i>
Mae	<i>Front. Thus MAE UKEMI = "forward fall/roll".</i>
Migi	<i>Right.</i>
Omote	<i>to the front (see also ura)</i>
Shomen	<i>Head / top of head</i>
Soto Mawari	<i>out-side movements</i>
Tenshin	<i>A movement where NAGE retreats 45 degrees away from the attack (esp. to UKE's open side).</i>
Uchi Mawari	<i>inside movements</i>
Ura	<i>to the back (see also omote)</i>
Ura	<i>"Rear." A class of aikido techniques executed by moving behind the attacker and turning. Sometimes URA techniques are called TENKAN (turning) techniques.</i>
Ushiro Waza	<i>any attack from behind</i>
Yoko	<i>Side.</i>
Yokomen	<i>Side of the head.</i>



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OFFENSIVE TECHNIQUES

Katatekosatori	<i>cross-hand grab to the wrist (e.g. right to right, ai-hanmi)</i>
Katatetori	<i>one hand grab to wrist</i>
Katatori	<i>one hand grab to the collar</i>
Morotetori	<i>two hands on one</i>
Ryotetori	<i>both wrists grabbed from the front (two on two)</i>
Shomenuchi	<i>strike to forehead</i>
Tori	<i>a grab</i>
Tsuki	<i>thrust or punch</i>
Ushiro Kubishime	<i>choke from behind with free hand grabbing wrist</i>
Ushiro Ryokatatori	<i>both shoulders grabbed from behind</i>
Ushiro Tekubitori	<i>both wrists grabbed from behind</i>



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DEFENSIVE TECHNIQUES

Ai Nuke	<i>"Mutual escape." An outcome of a duel where each participant escapes harm. This corresponds to the ideal of aikido according to which a conflict is resolved without injury to any party involved.</i>
Ai Uchi	<i>"Mutual kill." An outcome of a duel where each participant kills the other. In classical Japanese swordmanship, practitioners were often encouraged to enter a duel with the goal of achieving at least an AI UCHI. The resolution to win the duel even at the cost of one's own life was thought to aid in cultivating an attitude of single-minded focus on the task of cutting down one's opponent. This single-minded focus is exemplified in aikido in the technique, IKKYO, where one enters into an attacker's range in order to effect the technique.</i>
Atemi	<i>(lit. Striking the Body) Strike directed at the attacker for purposes of unbalancing or distraction. Atemi is often vital for bypassing or "short-circuiting" an attacker's natural responses to aikido techniques. The first thing most people will do when they feel their body being manipulated in an unfamiliar way is to retract their limbs and drop their center of mass down and away from the person performing the technique. By judicious application of atemi, it is possible to create a "window of opportunity" in the attacker's natural defenses, facilitating the application of an aikido technique.</i>
Henkawaza	<i>switching from one technique to another.</i>
Ikkyo	<i>wrist lock (first technique)</i>
Iriminage	<i>a throw using an entering movement</i>
Kaeshi Waza	<i>Technique reversal. (UKE becomes NAGE and vice-versa). This is usually a very advanced form of practice. KAESHI WAZA practice helps to instill a sensitivity to shifts in resistance or direction in the movements of one's partner. Training so as to anticipate and prevent the application of KAESHI WAZA against one's own techniques greatly sharpens aikido skills.</i>
Kaeshiwaza	<i>counter techniques</i>
Katame waza	<i>"Hold-down" (pinning) techniques.</i>
Kokyuho	<i>another name for kokyunage</i>
Kokyunage	<i>describes many throws with no pressure on the joints</i>
Kotegaeshi	<i>a technique in which pressure is applied to the wrist by turning it outward</i>
Nikkyo	<i>wrist lock (second technique)</i>
Sankyo	<i>wrist lock (third technique)</i>
Shihonage	<i>four-directions throw</i>
Yonkyo	<i>wrist lock (fourth technique)</i>