



British Aikido Federation

Technical Director, Minoru Kanetsuka 7th Dan, Aikikai Foundation, Tokyo

IMPORTANT ELEMENTS FOR GRADING

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Knowledge of technique | 5. Maai & Zanshin |
| 2. Contact (Ki) | 6. Ukemi |
| 3. Posture | 7. Spirit |
| 4. Flow & Flexibility | 8. Manner and Attitude |

Candidates for kyu grades, below Ikkyu, should complete BAF Form 1(Application for Kyu Grade Examination) and Form 2 (Grading Result Form)

Candidates for Ikkyu and all Yudansha grades should complete Form 1A (part 1) (Application for Ikkyu / Yudansha Examination), Form 1A (part 2) (Instructors Comments) and Form 2 (Grading Result Form).

- 1. Knowledge of technique.** The candidate should show full understanding of the techniques specifically required for the grade being taken, as prescribed by the grading syllabus. They should, however, also be prepared to demonstrate techniques and understanding outside the range of the grading syllabus if required (e.g. if particular emphasis has been made during a class at Summer School). It is advisable to study the contents of the Teaching Syllabus as well as the Grading Syllabus. Yudansha should have full knowledge of all aspects of Aikido relevant to their grade (e.g. multiple attacks, weapons, jiyuwaza, etc.)
- 2. Contact (Ki.)** (also called Kokyu Ryoku) is the natural power that can be produced when body and consciousness (mind) are unified. In the higher state of Aikido, kokyu ryoku is understood as spiritual energy that transforms into physical energy. Certain techniques of breathing also stimulate this process of transformation, (kokyu: breath ryoku: power). In Aikido, training to cultivate or to discover this kokyu ryoku is especially important because its discovery is necessary for the realisation of the potential that every person has within his or her consciousness. This power is not usually fully realised and is therefore only partly used.
- 3. Posture.** Correct posture is essential to good Aikido practice. The candidate should demonstrate strong posture, which is stable in motion and not liable to collapse when projecting or controlling an uke.
- 4. Flow & Flexibility.** Aikido techniques should, ideally, be smooth and fully control one's uke. There should be no clash when receiving an attack and uke's balance should be controlled by tori throughout the technique Kansetsu waza (controlling techniques e.g. nikkyo, sankyo etc.) should be applied with the minimum of force necessary to make them work. The techniques of Aikido should be subtle and free of inappropriate force or strength. Techniques should be executed with a relaxed body and mind. I.e. harmony.
- 5. Maai & Zanshin.** **Maai** is a very important element in any martial art training. It means tactical distance in relation to one's uke. In judging correct maai many factors come into play, for instance: the relative size of the people involved, whether there is one uke or many, the nature of the surrounding space, the type of weapons one is facing (e.g. the difference in length between a sword and a knife) Furthermore, maai is constantly changing by the action created by attack and defence. The moment an uke moves, maai begins to change. When tori takes the initiative using one's subjectivity to gain control, the result of the motion is to affect maai.

Because of the many variables involved, and most importantly because of the dynamic character of maai, its exact distance cannot be measured or taught in a fixed form. Nor can it be learned in theory: the "sense" of maai is a matter of practical experience and can be learned only through practice.

Zanshin is the awareness of one's uke before, during the execution of and after the completion of a technique. It is also the ability to react appropriately to a situation in order to achieve and maintain control. Zanshin incorporates spatial awareness, use of peripheral vision and sensitivity. Although physical technique finishes when tori executes the technique action continues in consciousness, which allows the correct maai to be calculated for the next technique, if necessary. However, the meaning of zanshin is not limited to the practical point of view, in a deeper sense zanshin denotes continuity and flow of ki (energy of consciousness), the bridge between one action and another.

6. **Ukemi** is the method of receiving techniques to protect oneself from serious injury, although in general terms ukemi equates to forward, backward or side break fall. There are various ways of ukemi according to the technique and circumstances of practice. To master ukemi is one of the most important aspects in learning Aikido, not only from the point of view of safety but also for the confidence it gives in practice, necessary for the real enjoyment of the art. Good ukemi should end with the person being projected in a stable posture and fully prepared to receive the next technique. However, the idea of ukemi in Aikido should be understood more deeply. Ideal Aikido has neither winner nor loser, just pure action. One person executes the action and the other takes ukemi. Therefore, there is no difference between technique and ukemi in Aikido. It is important to understand that ukemi is as important as technique.
6. **Spirit** The candidate should always show good and positive spirit at all times, even in circumstances where it is difficult to do so (e.g. if suffering an injury or having failed a grading). Aikido is a martial art and good martial spirit is essential. Although one should enjoy practicing and always have consideration for a partner, correct positive spirit is important to enable control of oneself and ensure a safe attitude to others. Positive spirit breeds confidence and allows one to relax and enjoy the practice of Aikido at its higher levels with full movement, control and power.
7. **Manner & Attitude.** All Aikidoka should have correct manner and attitude at all times. Respect for fellow students and, particularly, seniors is an important aspect of one's development. One should be prepared to practice with any other student, regardless of age, sex, colour, nationality or creed. Correct etiquette should always be observed in the dojo, with rei being made to the kamiza before and after practice, and to seniors and others students during practice. Instructors and seniors should be addressed as "Sensei" at all times during practice. Remember that you are always responsible for the safety of others, particularly juniors and less experienced students, even if you are a low grade. Always try to help people who do not understand the practice and etiquette of Aikido. Involvement in club, area or Federation activities can show commitment to the development of Aikido. Even the lowest grade can contribute to spreading the word and practice of Aikido and can assist in the teaching process. Try not to be too humble or self-effacing. Be positive about your Aikido. Take your practice seriously but not yourself!

GRADING ADVICE

- (i) Ensure that your all grading forms are correctly completed and handed in on time Form 1 should be signed by your club Instructor (and for Yudansha Form 1A countersigned by either the Technical Director or a current BAF Shidojin), it should be accompanied by your membership card and grading fee (Yudansha should also present their Hombu Yudansha Book).
- (ii) Ensure that the keikogi you wear for your grading is clean and in a good state of repair. If you have a keikogi top with your name clearly written in Japanese on the sleeve you should wear this. Otherwise it is necessary to have your name written on your sleeve, in Japanese, prior to the grading.
- (iii) If taking a senior grade (Ikkyu / Yudansha) make sure that you have tanto, bokken and jo ready in case weapons techniques are required. (When executing weapon techniques, always observe correct etiquette and never throw a weapon across the dojo floor or to your partner. Hand the weapon back properly or place it carefully on the tatami.
- (iv) **TAKE YOUR TIME.** A grading is not a race. It is far better to demonstrate techniques at a measured pace and correctly rather than at a frantic speed, which is more likely to result in errors and exhaustion. Listen carefully to the examiner calling out the techniques required and any other instructions. If you do not understand or do not hear, ask for the instruction to be repeated. © 2003 sdp/baf

- (v) Always be aware of activity going on around you on the tatami. Do not become so focused on yourself that you endanger others.

ORDER OF GRADING:

- 1) Line up in seiza facing Sensei and the Grading Committee.
- 2) The grade being taken will be announced.
- 3) Your name will be announced.
- 4) When your name is announced stand up and answer **“HAI”**
- 5) If by some chance your name is not called out you should advise the grading administrator immediately.
- 6) In Shikko, either proceed to the centre of the tatami (if your name is already on your keikogi sleeve) or to the edge of the tatami to have your name written on your sleeve.
- 7) Take up position in the centre of the tatami, facing Sensei and the Grading Committee. Make sure that there is a correct space between you and the person next to you. Your partner will be the person to your immediate left. If there are an odd number of people taking a grade, an uke will be designated.

TERMINOLOGY:

The correct order of bowing (Rei) both before and after grading:

- a) **SHOMEN NI REI** = Bow to the kamiza at the front of the dojo.
- b) **SENSEI NI REI** = Bow to Sensei and the examining committee.
- c) **O TA GAI NI REI** = Bow to your partner.

During the grading:

HAJIME = start.

YAME = stop.

KOTAI = change.

SUWATTE = sitting techniques.

TATTE = standing techniques.

SEIZA = sit down.

AFTER THE GRADING:

- 8) When your name is announced stand up and answer **“HAI”**. Remain where you are.
- 9) The result of the grading will be announced. Pass or fail you will receive a round of applause after this resume seiza.
- 10) Collect your membership book and grading result form from the Summer School office. These will be available on the morning after the grading. If you have been successful you will need to pay the registration fee. (Yudansha will also need to complete the Hombu registration forms)

Whatever the result of your grading, it is considered good manners and correct etiquette to thank your Instructor for their help in preparing you for the grading. Remember that all of the Grading Committee have been through the same grading process, so they really do know how you feel and are sympathetic to the stresses you experience. Also remember that there is no shame in failing a grade and many seniors, including members of the Grading Committee, have failed a grading at some time.