

DOJO ETIQUETTE

Introduction

Karate-do is a martial art which has always stressed the importance of courtesy, discipline, and proper etiquette. In keeping with this traditional code of conduct, this information has been prepared to ease the transition period of students beginning karate training for the first time, and for experienced students who are transferring from another style of martial arts training.

The Dojo

The training area where we practice our art of karate-do is called a **Dojo**. A dojo may be located just about any where and usually consists of a large area with a level surface that will be safe for practicing with your bare feet. The room that we are practicing in is our dojo! The ideal dojo is one that is indoors and has shock absorbing hardwood floors. Equipment found in some dojos might include a **Makiwara** (a padded striking post), which is used to study impact. When you execute a technique against the makiwara it hits you back (action-reaction). This process helps you to develop your maximum hitting power or **Kime**, while conditioning your body to deliver that power to the target. Other equipment might include punching and kicking bags of various sizes, stretching bars, mirrors and other tools to help you evaluate and develop your skills.

Proper etiquette in a dojo is important, and thus it is customary for all **Karate-ka** (one who practices karate) to execute a standing bow upon entering the dojo.

Inside the dojo, the **Sensei** (teacher) represents the ultimate authority, and all of his or her instructions should be followed explicitly without question.

The Uniform

When practicing karate, students wear a white uniform called a **Gi**. The gi is a simple uniform that combines the look of other Japanese **Bujutsu** (Arts of War) and the comfort necessary for the body to move freely. The color White is symbolic of the purity of the intent of the student that is seeking to achieve their maximum potential. The gi jacket reaches just below the waist with the left side overlapping the right. Straps are provided on both sides of the jacket to secure it in place. An **Obi** (belt) is worn around the waist and tied in the front in a reef knot so that the jacket remains securely in place during training. There are no buckles, buttons or zippers to cause injury. The pants are provided with a drawstring, which is pulled around the waist and tied at the center to conform to the person's body. The pants are worn with ankles exposed about 1 to 2 inches at the bottom. Ladies should wear a white tee shirt or sports bra underneath their jacket. The whole uniform is typically made of crisp white cotton, which gives a sharp cracking sound when karate-ka executes an explosive movement. The belt that secures the jacket is colored to denote the rank of the wearer. The following table lists the ranks and associated color belts and symbols that are earned by examination at the Bay Area Karate Club.

**Please note that the as of January 1, 2006 Yellow, Orange, Blue and Purple Belts or for Junior (Kid's) Ranks only!*

<u>RANK</u>	<u>LEVEL</u>	<u>BELT COLOR</u> (Traditional/Modern/Club)
10 th Kyu	New Student	White/White/Red Iron-on Star
9 th Kyu	New Student	White/White/White Iron-on 9
8 th Kyu	Beginner	White/Yellow/Yellow Iron-on 8
7 th Kyu	Beginner	White/Orange/Orange Iron-on 7
6 th Kyu	Intermediate	Green/Same/Green Iron-on 6
5 th Kyu	Intermediate	Green/Blue/Blue Iron-on 5
4 th Kyu	Intermediate	Green/Purple/Purple Iron-on 4
3 rd Kyu	Advanced	Brown/Brown/Brown
2 nd Kyu	Advanced	Brown/Brown/Brown
1 st Kyu	Advanced	Brown/Brown/Brown
1 st -10 th Dan	Advanced	Black/Black/Black

Courtesy

“The spirit of karate-do is lost without courtesy.” **Gichin Funakoshi** (the founder of Shotokan style karate), often reminded his students. “In karate-do, courtesy comes first. Start with a bow and finish with a bow.” One example of this is the standing bow. The standing bow should be performed under the following conditions:

- Whenever a student enters or leaves the dojo.
- Before and after practice, to your partner.
- Before and after a contest, to your opponent.
- To the Sensei, when you ask a question during class. Bow before asking, and after the answer is given.
- To the Sensei, when asked to assist them during class.
- To a **Sempai** (senior student) when you ask a question before or after class.
- At the beginning and end of any **Kata** (formal exercise). If more than one kata is performed in succession, bow at the beginning of the first kata and at the end of the last kata.
- In general, when in doubt, bow!



Standing bow (Fig. 1)

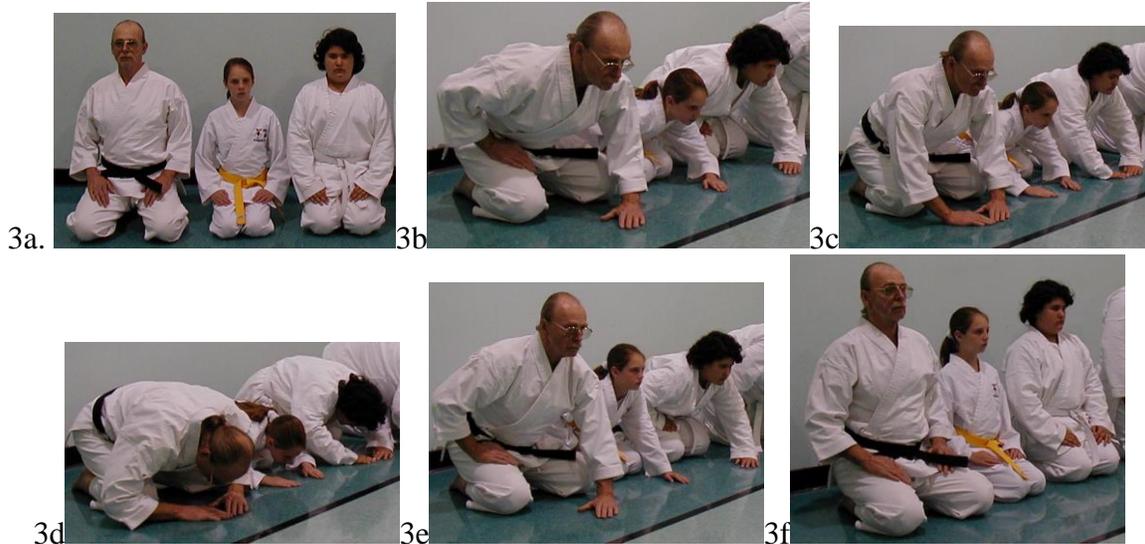
Another way that courtesy is shown is by the kneeling bow. The kneeling bow is performed in the following manner.

- First a student must be in **Seiza** (kneeling position).
- Start by standing at attention with your hands at your side.
- Keeping your posture erect, & go down on to your right knee.
- Then bring your left knee down with your feet behind you so that the tops of the toes and the instep are in contact with the floor. Do not sit heavily on your legs. Maintain springiness in your legs so that you can react quickly if necessary.
- Now you are ready to perform the kneeling bow by bending your body forward and placing your left hand on the floor in front of you.
- Follow soon by placing your right hand on the floor next to your left hand while keeping your elbows inside of your own body frame at an angle of approximately 45 degrees.
- The palms should be a few inches apart and flat on the floor.
- From this position, lower the head so that the top of the skull is shown in the direction of the bow.
- To return to seiza reverse the sequence. Raise your head, bring your right hand back to the top of your right leg, bring your left hand back to your left leg and remain kneeling erect. Please note that when you are bowing that both hands should **never** be in the air between the floor and your legs at the same time. This puts the student into the position of **Kyo** (stop or not ready), and makes you vulnerable to an attack. *It is very important to get into the habit of maintaining your **Zanshin** (continuing mind or readiness) at all times.*

Standing to Kneeling Procedure (left to right)



Kneeling Bow Procedure (left to right)



Both the kneeling and the standing bow should always be made with due thought to their meaning and with dignity and truth. Therefore, proper use of the bows is important!

A Typical Training Session

For those of you that are new to the world of karate-do, the first training sessions can be very awkward because you are not familiar with what's going to happen, or what you're supposed to be doing when it does. For that reason the following has been written so that you will have an idea of what to expect during a typical class.

When the Sensei is ready to start, he will command everyone to line up. At this point, all students will quickly move to form a line in front of, and facing, the Sensei. When forming the line, all students will line up with their heels together and shoulder touching the person on the right in order by rank (senior students to the right).

The instructor, facing the class, kneels first, and then the students kneel (see 2a-2d) in order of their rank. Always keep the formation of the line straight by lining up your knees with student on your right as you kneel down. Sensei or the most senior student of the class will give the command **Mokuso** (meditate). At this point, the students should softly close their eyes and keep a calm and stable emotional state of mind by inhaling slowly and deeply through your nose feeling that the air is rising up in to your skull and flowing down your erect spine and coiling into lower abdomen and then slowly uncoiling your air by exhaling through your mouth. This ceremony helps the student to focus and concentrate on the upcoming class. Mokuso should last approximately one minute, at the end of which the Sensei or senior student will give the command **Yame** (stop and remain

prepared). Everyone will then face toward the front of the class and execute a kneeling bow (see 3a-3f) when the command **Shomen ni rei** (bow to the front) is barked out. When the instructor turns to face the class, a second kneeling bow (see 3a-3f) is performed upon the command, **Sensei ni rei** at which the students will respond with spirited **Ousu** (positive military response) at the lowest position of the bow.

To begin training, the Sensei will command everyone to spread out. At this point everyone will jump to their feet and form an appropriate number of rows in an orderly manner. A senior student or the Sensei will lead warm-ups and stretching exercises. At the conclusion of the warm-ups anyone whose uniform or belt is out of place should turn away from the front and quickly adjust their uniform, making for the best possible conditions for training. The leader of the warm-ups then commands the students to assume the position of **Yoi** (ready and prepared). The class then stands in **Shizen tai** (natural stance) with the feet approximately one-shoulder length apart and the hands in front of the body in a closed fist position. Formal instruction will then begin under the guidance of the Sensei. Unless instructed, never touch or lean against the walls or handrails between instruction periods. Also, never stand with your hands on your hips, with your arms or feet crossed or yawn during class. If you're caught in any of these unprepared positions you will be given various tasks such as push-ups or knee lifts. Starting with 10 the first time, 20 the second time, 40 for the third time with the amount doubling each time you are caught during a single class. The tasks are *not* a punishment but a reminder that one should be in complete control of themselves at all times. How can you ever expect to control an attacker when you can't even control your self?

The end of formal instruction is signified by the Sensei's command to execute a standing bow (see Fig. 1) to him. The class will then quickly line up and repeat the same procedure as at the beginning of class. During mokuso, the student should reflect on the class they just experienced while making the transition back into their daily life. After bowing to the Sensei, the class will remain in the kneeling position until the senior students stand up.

Maintaining discipline is also a very important part of a typical training session. When the Sensei gives a command, such as, "line up," "yoi," etc., all responses should be performed in a brisk manner. When you are instructed to seiza, always assume the formal kneeling position first until instructed to relax. At this point you may relax your position by sitting cross-legged or in another way that keeps your feet and legs close to your body. **Never** sit with your legs and feet extended straight forward.

When you're late for class

A karate-ka should make every effort to show up on time for each training session since coming in late tends to distract students who have already begun training. However, there are circumstances which make being late unavoidable. That's okay! It's better to arrive late than not at all! When you do arrive late, the following procedure should be followed to join the class that is already in session: Enter the dojo quietly and remember to execute a standing bow (Fig.1) before you enter and move to an area away from the

rest of the class and in full view of the Sensei. Assume the kneeling position (2a-2d) and execute a kneeling bow (3a-3f) toward the front of the dojo. Engage in a few moments of mokuso to clear your mind and prepare for class. When you're done, execute another kneeling bow and attempt to make eye contact with Sensei or a Sempai. Remain in the kneeling position until the Sensei or Sempai acknowledge your presence. When they do, you may stand up and join the rest of the class.

If the class has already completed their warm-ups, you should take a few moments to do some of your own before you join the rest of the class.

When You Need to Leave Class Early

If circumstances arise during class where you need to leave early, discretely gain the attention of the Sensei or a Sempai and let them know that you need to exit the class. Move quietly to back of the class and execute a standing bow (Fig. 1) toward the front of the dojo. You may now leave. If you are able to return to the class, stand at the back of the class in shizen tai and discretely gain the attention of the Sensei or a Sempai. After they acknowledge your presence, execute a standing bow (Fig. 1) and re-enter the class with a minimum of disruption.

General Conduct

Only the Bay Area Karate Club specifically uses some of the rules of conduct I have outlined here. Like the tasks for being in an unprepared position. Other dojos may invoke rules that are specific to a location or because the facility is subleased from another party. Please abide by the following rules of conduct while training with the Bay Area Karate Club:

- Do not bring food into the dojo unless it is medically necessary.
- Do not leave children unattended or allow them to disrupt the class.
- Do not ***play*** on any of the equipment in the dojo unless instructed to do so.
- Remove all of your jewelry. If you must wear a ring because of a promise ***only*** a wedding band style ring without any jewels protruding will be allowed. Post style pierced earrings will only be allowed during that time when a new ear piercing is healing. Jewelry in a body piercing is very dangerous. Many of them are through or near vital points and can be used against you during an attack.
- Be sure to put your personal belongings against in the appropriate place in an orderly manner.
- If you have time before class begins, practice your kata or work on techniques that your Sensei says needs work.
- Always clean up after yourself.
- It is recommended that you bring water to keep yourself hydrated during class.
- It is also okay to bring a note pad for jotting down notes during class.

Remember that your conduct is a reflection on all club members, so let us maintain proper etiquette at **ALL** times!