

## Where to Practice Aikido

Aikido is the modern Japanese martial art developed between the 1920 to 1960 by Morihei Ueshiba who was said to have been influenced by Omoto-kyo. It is the pacifist nature of Omoto-kyo that is said to be the fundamental principle of this "art of peace" martial art form.

This particular martial art espouses relaxation and peace to be able to execute the Aikido techniques and moves properly. Through authentic Aikido training, the practitioner is expected to develop spiritually and philosophically and this should reflect in their ability to employ Aikido martial art techniques in an Aikido dojo.

Dojo is the Japanese term for a formal training structure for martial arts. A truly authentic and traditional Aikido dojo is used only as a place for formal and symbolic gatherings, and is rarely used a place to actually train. The actual Aikido training from a traditional dojo is done outdoors in a less formal setting.

A modern day Aikido dojo however loses most of its formality. Most of the time, there is no distinction from an Aikido dojo to the actual place of training and practice. In fact, in most cases, the two are one and the same.

Some of the modern Aikido dojo that are run by small groups of individuals who want to remain authentic to the spirit of the traditional dojo, students conduct a cleaning ritual after each training session. This is done not just for hygienic purposes but it is done also to reinforce that the dojo is made up and run by the Aikido students rather than the institutions that put them up.

Most traditional dojo observes a set pattern of precise entrances that need to be adhered to by the students depending on their rank. Students will commonly enter the dojo from the lower left corner while instructors will enter from the upper right corner. The traditional dojo also contain certain artifacts and objects to enhance the formal gatherings. For instance, a traditional dojo may have a place for a Shinto shrine and a spectator area for special visitors.

These traditional practices however may only be found in Japan in a few remaining Aikido dojo. Today, to learn and be a student of Aikido, one must find an Aikido dojo conveniently near you to be able to attend practice regularly.

More than the actual structure of the Aikido dojo however, you must choose the right one to attend to be able to suite your needs. It is also probably important to note and find out whether the Aikido dojo you are planning to

attend remains true to the authentic teachings of Aikido, which lies in the principle of peace and relaxation to enable to ki to flow.

Aikido is a martial art form that paradoxically promotes a peaceful end to aggression through various Aikido techniques. It might be prudent to find an Aikido dojo that will continue to uphold its spirituality and philosophy. A relaxed demeanor is key to being able to perform advance Aikido techniques.

The relaxed manner is not something one can build through exercise like muscles. It is something that must be cultivated from within and maintained without. For this purpose, it would probably be good to keep the Aikido spirit in mind when find an Aikido dojo to join and learn Aikido martial arts from.