

Karate Etiquette

Whether you are a beginner or an advanced student, you are equally responsible for following these simple dojo rules (Reigi-saho).

- The dojo is a sacred place.
- As respect and practice for Karate we must keep it clean and tidy.

A dojo is a building in which some sort of Japanese martial arts training occurs. The word **Do** means way, road, or path. The word **Jo** means place. Therefore, **Do Jo** means the place of the way. Some people refer to their karate club as a dojo, but a dojo and club are two different things. The word dojo only refers to the actual physical building in which the Karate training occurs. The word does not refer to the people practicing the Karate.

- Be in the dojo before class commences! **Never be late!**
- Bow and saying **OSS** on entering and leaving the Dojo.

OSS ! What does this mean?

OSS (actually OSU!) is a phonetic expression, formed out of two characters. The first character OSU means literally push or control and determines the pronunciation of the whole term. The second character SHINOBU has the literal meaning of bear, endure, or suffer. The expression OSS was created in the Japanese Naval School and is universally used for everyday expressions such as please, thank you, I understand, sorry, greeting someone, etc., as well as inside the world of karate nearly any time a response is required. OSS must not be said loosely and it should be spoken by using the hara (tanden) in the lower abdomen and spoken while performing a bow with the upper third of the body. The word OSS, expresses respect, sympathy and confidence in the partner and it also tells the sensei that the instructions were understood and that the student will do his/her best to follow them.

In the following situations **OSS** must be used:

- When bowing at the start and finish of the class.
- Upon receiving any advice or command from the Instructor, the student must reply by answering **OSS** .
- Before and after **Kumite** or **Kata**.
- Upon receiving **OSS** from Instructors or students.
- **Students address all Instructors as Sensei.**

SENSEI

An Instructor must not introduce themselves as Sensei or print business cards that say Sensei. It would be referring to them using an honorific expression, and in the Japanese Culture that is considered very rude!

An Instructor can say that they are a Sensei of karate but not they are a Sensei.

The Instructor could also use the word **Kyoshi** towards themselves, because it is a generic word meaning **teacher**. The word Sensei is composed of two characters. The first is SEN, which means before or

ahead. The next character is SEI, which means to be born or to be alive. Literally, sensei means that someone is born before us or lives ahead of us, so a better literal translation than teacher would be the word **mentor**. Sensei refers to a particular person as an expression of respect. Kyoshi is a job. To refer to yourself as Sensei is incorrect in terms of politeness, and to refer to your teacher at school by their name followed by kyoshi is not customary either.

RESPECT must be given to all Instructors and students, and any other high grade student which the Sensei's have appointed to teach.

- In karate **SENIORS** must be always respected.
- Seniority **does not** always mean having a higher grade.

Seniority comes with years of training, age and a higher grade. Note that during photo session, students should always stay one step behind the sensei, unless you have been asked by the sensei to stay on the same line.

Entering the Dojo saying **OSS** , then greet your fellow students quietly, warm up, practice Kihon or Kata until the lesson begins but never do Kumite (sparring) without the Sensei's permission!

Members arriving late must take a Seiza (kneeling) position at the back of the Dojo and wait for the instructor's permission before joining the class. On receiving permission, bow and say **OSS** and then join the class. If you have to leave the dojo before class is over (because of another commitment or a problem) it is best to inform the Instructor.

Always wear clean Karate-Gi (Suit) – there are no excuses for a dirty Gi, and make sure your Obi (Belt) is correctly tied. When you secure the knot in your Obi this symbolizes that you are willing to train with your heart as well as with your body.

During class, students should not converse with each other. Questions should be kept to a minimum to avoid interrupting the flow of the class.

If it becomes necessary to adjust the Gi, or belt, students should turn away from the front of class. Normally, this should only be done during a break in training.

Keep your fingernails and toenails short and clean.

For **safety** reason jewelry or similar things must not be worn during training; if you cannot remove jewelry then it must be covered with a tape.

No smoking, drinking, eating, chewing gum, spitting, silly behavior or idle chat. This will not be tolerated during the lesson or committing any other act likely to offending the Dojo etiquette. It is considered very disrespectful to yawn during class, lean against walls, stand with crossed arms, or be prone to undue restlessness and distraction such as looking at the clock or out the windows, as this suggests boredom.

A big part of your training is learning to stay focused regardless of distractions. This training will also be a useful skill in situations outside the dojo.

The class commences and finishes with two ceremonies, all students line up in order of **Seniority**, facing the front (shomen). Students line up in one row (space permitting), from right to left, in order of rank! Within each rank, students also line up from right to left, in order of seniority.

Note- During **certain** classes at the discretion of the instructor or the Senpai (the most senior student) ask or may offer the student /guest to line up in a different order of rank!

The line should be centered behind the Instructor. After lining up First instructor will kneel, then the Sempai or the most senior student will announces Seiza (kneeling) then students kneel down together, and Mokuso will be announced.

This is a brief period of meditation. Yame (stop) is announced first, and then Dojo Kun will be repeated by all the students. Dojo Kun should be read at the end of each training section.

Following Dojo Kun there will be three salutes (etiquette).

1- Shomen-ni-rie , the shomen is the front wall of the dojo. The word **sho** means true while **men** means face. The shomen is to be a sacred zone in the dojo for Japanese, but not felt by some none Japanese to be a sacred zone in the dojo. However, it is simply the wall that everyone faces during class .Some clubs will hang the county's flag together with pictures of instructors and some awards on the shomen.

This salutation is to the front of the dojo and there is no **OSS** during this salutation. Only a silent bow is done but not in Japan.

2- Sensei-ni-rei, salutation to the Instructor.

3- Otagani-ni-rei , salutation to each other.

At the end of the salutes, Sensei stands up for training to commence or finish. Students then stand, one at a time, from right to left, in order of seniority. This should proceed quickly and appear like a wave rolling from right to left. At the end of training students stand up one at time from right to left, in order of seniority and leave the line. During **certain** classes at the discretion of the instructor students may be asked just to line up and bow in while standing at the start of class or finish. This is known as an informal bow in/out.

Note – Rei is not a religious bow, just a mark of respect.

- Members **MUST NOT** use their karate skills in any **OFFENSIVE** way outside the Dojo!
- A Karate-ka most never lose sight of what karate is in the first place - it has no place for arrogance or ignorance.
- **BULLYING** of any kind (physical or verbal) by students to anyone will not be tolerated at all and could lead to expulsion from the club!
- **When in doubt, think back to the Dojo Kun.**
- Questions must be addressed to the Instructor only! If you have any questions at all please do not hesitate to ask!
- Sensei is here to help you succeed and achieve your individual potential.
- If you have any medical problem, or are not able to attend the class, please make sure your Instructor is aware of this.
- If you become ill or injured during the class, do not hesitate to inform the Instructor immediately so the appropriate action can be taken.