



shu

Dojo Etiquette

Governing one's own behavior is a central concept in all of Japanese culture, and especially in the martial arts. The root character, *shū* (or *osa*), shown above, means to conduct one's self well, or to govern one's behavior. It can also mean to order one's life, or to study and master a subject. In combination with various second characters it makes important two-character words along these same lines, for example *Shūshi* (Master of Arts), *shūgyō* (training, practice, discipline, pursuit of knowledge), *shūshin* (morals, ethics), *shūkai* (personal reformation), *shūren* (drilling, practicing, training) and *shūtoku* (learning). In the martial arts, however, *shū* refers to the **etiquette** of the martial way.

Proper dojo etiquette is one of the essential aspects of karate training, not just in our style but in every other kind of Asian martial arts as well. Etiquette is the way of showing respect to fellow students, to the dojo, to the sensei, and to all the other senseis throughout history whose dedication and skills have come down to us as the art we now study. And yet, demonstrating proper etiquette is really for ourselves, a small symbol of our efforts at self-mastery and our pride in being an active participant in something so fascinating and enjoyable. As Shorin-ryu Grand Master Ansei Ueshiro said:

*Respect benefits the one showing it
far more than the one receiving it.*

Minor variations in acceptable dojo etiquette exist from one school to the next. But the major points are generally the same. Shotokan founder Gichin Funakoshi, for example, often remarked that "Karate begins and ends with courtesy"; therefore so does our list. Following are the principle tenets or dictums regarding proper etiquette at the KoSho karate schools.

(1.) Always show courtesy to all.

(2.) Forms of address:

- (a) Address your dojo's chief teacher as *Sensei*.
- (b) Address the heads of other KoSho schools as *Sensei* (there can be only one sensei per school).
- (c) Address the master who is above the senseis in rank as *Shihan*.
- (d) Address other instructors as Mr./Miss/Mrs. (last name).

(3.) Bowing:

- (a) Bow upon entering the dojo.
- (b) Bow upon exiting the dojo.
- (c) Upon entering the dojo, seek out the sensei if he is there and bow to him (he need not bow back if he is busy).
- (d) Bow to other black belts encountered in the dojo.
- (e) Bow to fellow students as a greeting.
- (f) Bow before stepping on deck.
- (g) Entering or leaving the deck *during* a class session is permissible *only* with Sensei's specific permission. Permission should be acknowledged with a bow.
- (h) Upon the call of "*Rei*" from the sensei, all will bow. *Shomeni rei* indicates a bow to the kamiza or the "front" of the room; *Senseini rei* indicates a bow to the sensei; and *Otagaini rei* indicates a bow to fellow students or competitors.
- (i) When bowing in at the beginning of class, students will say in unison: "*Onegaishimasu*" ("Teach me, I beg of you"). When bowing out at the end of class, students will say in unison: "*Arigato gozaimasu, Sensei*" ("Thank you, Sensei").
- (j) Bow to your opponent at the beginning and end of a match or practice engagement, when told to do so by the instructor. A handshake or hug following the bow is often beneficial when the match or practice engagement has been a rough or difficult one.
- (k) An optional bow may be given to the referee during a match when he awards you a point or when he gives you a warning or penalty.
- (l) In kata competition, bow to the judges when stepping up to the edge of the competition area on the deck, then walk to your starting position and bow again.
- (m) NOTE: Men and boys should bow with hands at their sides; women and girls should bow with palms on the front of their thighs.

(4.) Personal appearance:

- (a) Wear a clean uniform (allowing the *belt* to remain increasingly soiled and worn is an option sometimes chosen to show one's long, hard work).
- (b) Keep fingernails and toenails trimmed short (for safety reasons).
- (c) Take off all jewelry, watches, rings, necklaces, earrings, etc., before class begins. Glasses may be worn during standards classes but not during fight classes unless a protective cover is employed. Glasses are generally forbidden in formal competition.
- (d) Women and girls may wear a plain white t-shirt under the jacket if they wish.
- (e) Long hair may be tied back with a rubber band or other inconspicuous tie.
- (f) Only white gis are permitted.
- (g) Only the patches representing the USAKF, the Kwanmuzendokai, the Shuri style and the KoSho schools are allowed for dojo wear. Either of the first two may be worn in the left chest position; the KoSho patch may be worn at the cuff of the right sleeve, and the style patch on the cuff of

- (h) Gi pants should not be shorter than mid-calf, or longer than the top of the foot. Rolling up the pants cuffs is not allowed at tournaments, nor is it preferred for classroom use.
- (i) Gi jacket sleeves should not be shorter than mid-forearm, or longer than the base of the hand. Rolling up the sleeves is not allowed in tournaments, nor is it preferred for classroom use.
- (j) Gi jacket length is optional, but normally should fall around the baseline of the buttocks, plus or minus a couple of inches.

(5.) Kneeling and rising:

- (a) Upon the call of “*shita*,” all students will kneel. Step back with the left leg, kneel down with the left knee beside the right foot, bring the right knee down beside the left, cross the ends of the feet, and sit back on the heels. As an option, students may swing the right leg around and change into a cross-legged position. At no time should the hands touch the floor.
- (b) To bow from the kneeling position, place both hands palm-down on the mat, in front of the knees, fingers pointing a bit inward, and bow.
- (c) Upon the call of “*tashi*,” all students will rise, according to the above steps in reverse order. Hands should not touch the floor. Movement should be smooth, precise and graceful.

(6.) Sideline behavior:

When Sensei indicates that some or all students should move to the side of the mat, they should do so and--

- (a) Remain standing unless told to sit.
- (b) Remain quiet and attentive.
- (c) If allowed to sit, use only the kneeling or cross-legged positions.

(6.) Prohibitions:

- (a) No smoking in the dojo.
- (b) No eating in the dojo (except during approved social events).
- (c) No drinking on the deck.
- (d) No profanity in the dojo.
- (e) No horseplay in the dojo.
- (f) No loud talking, laughing or screaming in the dojo.
- (g) No shoes may be worn on the deck.
- (h) No playing or socializing on the deck.
- (i) Never argue with a referee.
- (j) Never speak angrily or tauntingly to an opponent.

(7.) Always show courtesy to all.

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