

# AIKIDO FOUNDATIONS COURSE 2024

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

November 16, 2023 – July 7, 2024

### PURPOSE OF COURSE

Our intent in offering this course is to preserve the essence of Aikido through teaching the necessary skills to identify the path leading to the essence.

The course points to a way to identify and extract the essence of Aikido, and packages it in concise training methods. This outline describes the content of this package and how it is to be delivered and used.

### THE FOUNDATIONS OF AIKIDO

The foundations of Aikido rest on simple core practices that are imbued with its essence and that lead to the acquisition of skills to impart the essence of Aikido to others in any environment and through times.

It is important to note at the outset that the foundations described herein are not the essence of Aikido; they form the path that can lead to the essence of Aikido. The courage and determination to undertake this path are the discretion of the students.

The foundations consist of four concentric elements, with the inner directing the outer:

#### The Spirit of Ai

This is the core of the foundations that infuses Aikido techniques with the Aiki spirit, and consists of meditation and purification practices that still the mind and allow the inner self to emerge as well as the universal spirit to reach in and create harmony.

#### Ki and Kokyu

These are inner practices that connect breath, ki energy and the physical center, and allow the spirit of Ai to manifest physically. They constitute the fundamental practices of an internal martial art.

#### The Way of Bu

This is comprised of martial practices and codes of behavior that make Aikido a true Budo.

#### The Techniques in Do

These are the core techniques of Aikido which physically express the Aiki spirit. These include Kamae; Tai Sabaki; Ukemi; Awase; core Taijutsu; and core Bukiwaza.

Each of these four elements separately does not represent Aikido but all four together give birth to Aikido. A special note must be made here about the meaning of Ai Ki Do.

In O Sensei's recorded speeches, he often explained that *Aiki* came into being with this universe, referring to *Aiki* as the spirit of harmony that existed before everything else in this

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universe. It is not different from what the Taoists call the Tao. From this viewpoint, Aikido takes on a meaning slightly different from the standard translation of The Way to Harmonize with Ki: *Aiki Do* should be understood as the *Way of Aiki*, that is, the *Way of the Spirit of Harmony*, in other words, it is the manifestation of the primal spirit of harmony in the universe. With this meaning, we realize that the emphasis should be on *Aiki*, the spirit of harmony.

From this vantage, it is clear that the popular view of Aikido has been overly focused on the physical manifestation, that is, the *Do* part, meaning the techniques; whereas the true essence, which lies in *Aiki*, has been overlooked. It is this inner content and its potential that determine the outer aspect. Working solely on the outer aspect hardly affects the deeper contents; an inward journey is needed. Therefore, any real effort to strengthen Aikido must correct this deficiency and restore the focus on *Aiki*.

That is a primary goal of the Aikido Foundations Course.

In addition, in contemporary Aikido practice, scant attention is given to the proper preparation of the physical body and mental stamina, such as strong basics like posture, footwork, ukemi, and weapon handling, resulting in weak techniques and inability to go in depth. This Course seeks to correct these deficiencies.

## THE AIKIDO FOUNDATIONS COURSE

The course organically blends these foundational elements. We work on the techniques of *Do*, within a framework of *Bu*, while using *Ki* to remain connected with *Ai*.

### **Ai**

- Mind awareness and purification
- Meditation practices to still the spirit
- Centering practices to find one's center
- Awase: Connection and Non-resistance

### **Ki**

- Overview of energetic system & internal energy work
- Awareness and development of center
- Sensing the ki, feeling the techniques
- Clearing the ki pathways
- Breathing practices and ki flow
- Mobilizing ki & resistance training
- Practices to open the body
- Practices to move ki

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### **Bu**

Focus life on learning and training

The training imperative

Discipline & code of conduct

The Yin & Yang of relationship - Kohai & Sempai

Tanren practices

Shugyo in life

### **Do**

#### ***Principles of Aikido Training***

Chain of control: inner directs outer

Structure: anchors and connectors

Alignment & movement: centric and vertical

Distillation: break apart and reassemble

Takemusu aiki: the result of sustained focus on *Aiki*

Awase: connect center to center

Balance: doing and non-doing

Oneness: merging of the trinity

Return path: stillness

#### ***Aiki Taiso and Health***

Strength (internal + external)

Flexibility (physical + mental)

Health (fitness + nutrition + lifestyle)

Maintenance and Development

Wholeness and Balance

#### ***Stances***

Kamae as potential and portal

Shizentai / Wuchi

Seiza

Grounding

Horse stance

Hanmi

Hito e mi

#### ***Tai Sabaki & Ashi Sabaki & Central Axis***

Ashi Sabaki and Walking

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Shikko  
Ukemi  
Moving to/from Seiza  
Moving to/from Shizentai  
Moving to/from Hanmi  
Moving to/from Hito e mi  
The four primary movements

### ***Awase***

Ukemi  
Awase with shomenuchi  
Awase with yokomenuchi  
Awase with munetsuki

### ***Kokyu Renshu***

Connect center to breath, breath to movement  
[Shin Kokyu](#)  
Kokyu ho

### ***The Four Essential Techniques***

Rolling & centering  
Tai no henko  
Kokyu ho  
Kokyu dosa

### ***Foundational Exercises (Kihon Kunren)***

Part 1 - Waking up central axis  
Part 2 - Connecting central axis to limbs  
Part 3 - Stances & Transitions  
Part 4 - Moving from center  
Part 5 - Conscious training

## **Taijutsu Foundations**

***Ikkyo***

***Nikyo***

***Sankyo***

***Yonkyo***

***Kotegaeshi***

***Kokyunage***

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

*Iriminage*

*Shihonage*

*Koshinage*

## **Bukiwaza Foundations**

### ***Kamae***

Ken kamae

Jo kamae

### ***Ken and Jo Sabaki***

#### **Connection**

Connect central axis to weapons

Moving from central axis

Changing directions

Creating spirals

Ken breath cut

#### **Precision**

Ken circular cut

Ken zig zag cut

### ***Ken and Jo Tanren***

Making the strike more effective

### ***Ken and Jo Suburi***

Form and alignment

Speed and power

Smoothing out the transitions

### ***Ken and Jo Awase***

#### **Stop-start practice**

Angle: aligning with Uke

Timing: awase with Uke

#### **Awase practice**

Together as-one

### ***Riai***

Connect center to breath

Connect breath to movement

Connect movement to weapon

Connect weapon to target

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The course weaves together these foundational elements to effect a transformation that points the seeker toward the inner essence. If allowed to continue past the course, the inner transformation normally progresses through the following seven steps:

1. Strengthen the body structure.
2. Find and reinforce the center.
3. Clear the inner pathways.
4. Allow the energy flow within.
5. Sense the energy without.
6. Align the inner and outer energies with the center.
7. Create Aiki movements.

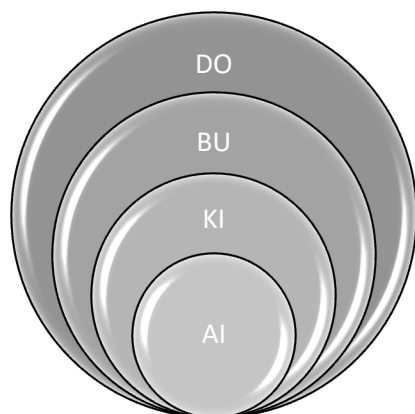
## HOW TO USE THE FOUNDATIONS

These foundations constitute the seeds that must be preserved for future transmission of Aikido. From these seeds will germinate more complex techniques that will give rise to Takemusu Aiki blossoms and can be adapted to any style of Aikido.

The Foundations can be the training foci of a concentrated course, an uchideshi program or the long-term training goals of a beginner, as well as the regular practice of a seasoned senior martial artist.

More emphasis should be placed on personal training in the aspects of Ai and Ki than in the current practice throughout the world: self-improve first before training with others. All serious students should create and follow their own personal training program in addition to the regular mat training in class.

The urgent task for Aikido leadership is to help instructors acquire these foundational skills so that they can contribute toward the preservation of the Aikido seeds. In this respect, the Foundations can be an integral part of an instructor training program.



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### THE AIKIDO FOUNDATIONS COURSE 2024

The course begins on November 16, 2023, and ends July 7, 2024. It is aimed at instructors who want to contribute to the preservation of Aikido. The course content has been developed and tested through the past fourteen years and was used successfully in the 2023 inaugural course.

#### Eligibility for participation

Students meeting these four conditions are eligible to participate in this course:

1. Ranked Nidan or above, with proficiency in Iwama style Aikido.
2. Has trained diligently in the 6 months preceding the course.
3. Prepared to commit to the full course: graduation requires 100% attendance.
4. Prepared to engage in daily practice at home through the 8-month duration of the course.

The number of participants is limited to 14 to ensure adequate personal instructions.

#### Delivery

The contents listed above will be delivered organically through five sessions:

- One 3-day intensive (Traditional gasshuku format): Thursday noon – Sunday noon.
- Three 1-day workshops on Saturdays 10:00 – 16:00.
- One final 2-day intensive: Friday noon – Sunday noon
- Daily 30-minute home practice in between formal training sessions.
- Weekly guided practices through Zoom (guidance from course alumnae)
- Graduation ceremony on the last day of the course.

During the two intensives, participants train and stay overnight at the Aikido Institute of Bolinas. A strict code of behavior is observed during all sessions.

#### Timeline

The Course is taught through five sessions totaling 8 days (60 hours) of group training. Daily personal training at home is expected through the 8-month duration of the Course; this is crucial for personal success.

Dates are best estimates are this time and are subject to change.

Sessions	Location	Dates	Duration
Session 1 - 3-day intensive	Bolinas	Nov 16-19, 2023	3 days
Session 2 - Day workshop	Davis	January 6, 2024	1 day
Session 3 - Day workshop	Davis	March 2, 2024	1 day
Session 4 - Day workshop	Davis	May 18, 2024	1 day

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Session 5 - 2-day Intensive	Bolinas	July 5-7, 2024	2 days
Home practice (self)	Home	Daily 30-minute sessions	8 months
Home practice (guided)	Home	Weekly 30-minute session	30 weeks
Graduation	Bolinas	July 7, 2024	1 hour

### Graduation

Graduation requirements:

1. Satisfactory participation in all components of the Course.
2. Affirmation of daily practice during the 8- month period of the Course.
3. Satisfactory demonstration of the core practice of the course (the *Kihon Kunren*.)
4. Affirmation of willingness to help teach future courses.

### Outcome

Students who graduate from the course will know the proper direction to take their Aikido training in their quest for its essence and will be equipped with the basic skills to forge ahead. What they will find on their path is commensurate with their effort in continuing to solidify this new direction.

### Differences between this course and regular training

In normal class or seminar training the implicit purposes are to learn a variety of techniques on the next rank requirements, review techniques to refresh skills, or explore new variations of techniques and modes of training.

In the Aikido Foundations Course, we focus on drilling simple exercises and inner practices that trigger the transformation process mentioned earlier.

### Code of Behavior

The code of behavior required during the formal sessions of the course is based on awareness, humility, and perseverance. Specific rules will be posted at the training sites.

Key rules are:

1. Maintain proper posture and decorum.
2. Do your best at the task at hand.
3. Minimize mental judgment.
4. Train and learn constantly from all.
5. Participate in all activities up to your ability.
6. Fail, accept, and keep going.

### Fees

Fees are payable two weeks prior to the first day of each session.



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- 3-day intensive in Bolinas: \$360 including 3 nights' accommodations\* and meals.
- Day workshop in Davis: \$80 per day including lunch.
- 2-day intensive in Bolinas: \$280 including 2 nights' accommodations, meals and graduation.

\* Accommodations include sleeping quarters in common area and shared bathroom facilities. More details are available after enrollment.

Alumni returning for the first time receive 50% discount and are exempt from fees in future courses. Alumni must commit to the full length of the course.

## Enrollment

Enroll online between July 1<sup>st</sup> and August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023, for the first session. Though each session has a separate enrollment and payment procedure, it is expected that students complete all five sessions of the course.

The total number of participants in the course is limited to 14.

Find enrollment information on [www.aikidodavis.com](http://www.aikidodavis.com)

Send questions to Hoa Newens sensei at [dojo@aikidodavis.com](mailto:dojo@aikidodavis.com)