

# Grading Guideline (For All Kyu Grades)

## Why Grade?

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The grading confirms your development in Aikido and the extent of your familiarity with its principles. Regular class and seminar attendance are the building blocks of your grade. (Be aware that you are always grading for yourself, not for your teachers or in order to compare yourself to others.)

Your individual preparation helps you to consolidate your knowledge and skills by giving your practice a special focus prior to the grading. Each grade highlights your development from a different angle. If you accept this as your personal challenge, you will experience a major improvement and gain notably more confidence.

The grading should be a fun experience, something to look forward to with excitement. And it should be safe for all people involved – so your partners' well-being takes first place.

## Grading System

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The grading curriculum comprises kihon waza (basic techniques) which are the foundation of advanced practice. The individual kyu grades (student grades) build on each other systematically and will step by step prepare for your first dan grade (black belt).

Dojo teachers will only assign kyu grades. Dan grades are obtained from a special committee outside of the dojo which is authorised by Aikikai Tokyo. In our dojo, we prepare for gradings with Jan Nevelius shihan and Endo Seishiro shihan.

*Please note: you will find the specific requirements for the individual grades under <http://aikido-oberursel.de/en/dojo/downloads>*

## Hakama

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From 2nd kyu, members of our dojo wear the **hakama** (Japanese culotte-style trousers).<sup>1</sup>

The hakama signifies that you are an advanced student, and obliges you to act as a **role-model** in the dojo. This includes behaviour that gives beginners helpful guidance for their first steps in the art and that you take over responsibility for various tasks.

Additionally, you start to represent the dojo spirit at seminars and other aikido events as well as in public life – with a notable degree of politeness, mindfulness and helpfulness.

The general rule is: rising in the ranks should be accompanied by increasingly modest and self-reflective behaviour.

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<sup>1</sup> The hakama has 7 pleats (5 at the front, 2 at the back) which are seen to stand for the 7 virtues of the samurai: righteousness, courage, compassion, respect, integrity, honour and duty. Depending on the source or translation, patience, modesty, purity and wisdom are also explicitly listed as the samurai's core qualities.

## Order of the Grading

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### AUDIENCE

The grading is **public**: friends and family are invited to watch.

The audience sits either alongside the edge of the tatami (in seiza or cross-legged) or on chairs/ benches along the wall. Everybody is asked to comply with dojo etiquette: be quiet, do not eat or drink, do not lean against walls. Please remember: strictly **no photography or filming** during the exam!

### PREPARATION

**Important**: please bring your **mudansha book** and the **grading fee**.

Both are handed over to the jury *before* the grading starts. The fee is paid only once per kyu grade (if you do not pass your grading, it will be returned to you).

Up to 3<sup>rd</sup> Kyu the jury chooses an **uke** for you. From 2<sup>nd</sup> Kyu you are asked to find your uke some time before the grading (same grade or one level higher than you). Please practise often with your chosen uke in the weeks before the grading.

### ORDER OF THE GRADING

At the beginning of the grading, candidates pair up with their ukes and line up in seiza.

As soon as a candidate (**tori**) is called by name, he or she advances 3 steps in shikko towards the kamiza and stays seated facing the kamiza. **Uke** changes to the position behind him in the line. If the grade requires weapons, uke has them ready at hand and visible to the jury.

On „**shomen ni rei**“ all people present on the tatami turn towards the kamiza and bow on „rei“.

On „**otagai ni rei**“ tori and uke bow towards each other. Both say clearly „**onagai shimasu**“, stay seated and wait for further instructions by the jury.

The **jury** announces all forms loud and clear. All forms are repeated until the jury asks for something else (do not stop unless you are told to do so).

Unless the jury gives other instructions, all techniques are shown from a left- and right-handed attack in omote, then both sides in ura.

All techniques are carried out in silence. However, you may ask the jury if you did not hear the requested technique properly.

#### Keep moving:

- If you do not know the exact form of the requested technique, do whatever you remember.
- If you realise you are showing a different technique, finish this one first before you start with the requested form.

Be focused and attentive throughout the whole grading and treat your uke respectfully. Show **zanshin**, awareness and relaxed alertness towards your partner and environment, especially between two techniques.

The grading ends with „**owari masho**“. Tori and uke kneel into seiza, facing each other.

On „**otagai ni rei**“ both bow towards each other while saying clearly „arigato gosai mashita“.

On „**shomen ni rei**“ *all people* present on the tatami bow towards the kamiza. The participants go back into line in shikko.

## END

After the grading there is a **short interval** while the jury retreats to discuss results. Use this time to drink something, relax, exchange your experiences with the audience or grading partners, but **do not leave the room**.

When the jury is ready, the candidates line up in seiza.

Candidates who graded successfully are now called up individually: take 2 steps forward in shikko and remain in seiza until all candidates of your grade are called forward. Once your new grade is announced, bow to the jury and go back into line.

The jury's decision is final and cannot be disputed. However, you will get extensive feedback.

Your grading certificate will be handed over to you either immediately after the grading or at one of the next keikos.