

BASIC JAPANESE

In *Aikido*, we use Japanese words in counting, in naming techniques, and in the common courtesies that are a part of *dojo* etiquette. One reason for this is to help the student gain an appreciation for the culture that gave rise to the art. Another is that Japanese serves as a common language in *Aikido dojo* worldwide. Thus, by learning some basic language skills, an *aikido* student will be more able to train in *dojo* where the native language is not English.

COUNTING

The words that correspond to one through twenty are:

(1-10) (11-20)

ichi	jyu ichi
ni	jyu ni
san	jyu san
shi	jyu shi
go	jyu go
roku	jyu roku
shichi	jyu shichi
hachi	jyu hachi
ku	jyu ku
ju	ni jyu

These basic counting numbers will sometimes change form when used in different contexts; in counting backwards, for instance, one would use *yon* instead of *shi* for four. When describing ranks, the following words are used:

RANK (*dan*) RANK (*kyu*)

shodan	ikkyu
nidan	nikkyu
sandan	sankyu
yondan	yonkyu
godan	gokkyu
rokudan	rokkyu
nanadan	nanakyu
hachidan	hachikyu
kyudan	
jyudan	

Note that the lowest *kyu* grade is *hachikyu*, while the lowest *dan* level is *shodan*.

COURTESIES

When the students bow in at the beginning of class, they say *onegaishimasu*, *sensei*, which means “please share”. During class, your fellow students are referred to using their first name and *san*: Peter *san*. *Yudansha* (black belts) are referred to by their last name and *sensei*: Hamer *sensei*. It is appropriate to thank others in Japanese; the following terms are roughly ordered from least formal to most formal:

<i>domo</i>	thanks (very informal)
<i>arigato</i>	thank you
<i>domo arigato</i>	thank you
<i>arigato gozaimasu</i>	thank you very much
<i>domo arigato gozaimasu</i>	thank you very much (most formal)

At the end of class, when the students bow out, they say *domo arigato gozaimashita*, which is the past tense of the most formal thank you. Some other handy phrases:

<i>gomen nasai</i>	I'm sorry or pardon me
<i>sumimasen</i>	I'm sorry; also a form of thank you: I'm sorry to trouble you
<i>shitsuree shimasu</i>	excuse me
<i>doo itashimashite</i>	don't mention it

PRONOUNCIATION

In general, the transliterations used for Japanese are designed to read just as they would be pronounced. The vowels are pronounced as follows: **a** as in **father**, **i** as in **meet**, **u** as in **root**, **e** as in **bed**, **o** as in **tone**. A vowel that is doubled is sounded for a longer period of time, so **doo** is not pronounced like the English **do**, but like **doe**, with the speaker drawing the sound of the 'o' out. Consonants sound much like their English counterparts, except that **g** is always hard (like **go**), and **r** sounds like a mixture of the English 'r' and 'l'. Each consonant is pronounced distinctly, but a doubled consonant indicates a pause before voicing the consonant: **shikko** would be pronounced **shi-ko** where the '-' indicates a slight pause. Also, each syllable is pronounced separately, although in conversation, 'i' and 'u' are often elided: **tsuki** sounds like **ski**. Another example is **gozaimashita** (as in **arigato gozaimashita**); it sounds like **gozaimashta**.

(adapted from **Let's Study Japanese** by Jun Maeda, 1965, C.E. Tuttle Co.)