

Grading

A young boy travelled across Japan to the school of a great swordsman. When he arrived at the school he was given an audience with the founder, who was impressed that this young boy had made such a long journey.

“What do you wish from me?” the master asked.

“I wish to be your student and become the finest swordsman in the land,” the boy replied. “How long must I study?”

“Ten years at least,” the master answered.

“Ten years is a long time. What if I studied twice as hard as all your other students?”

“Twenty years,” replied the master.

“Twenty! What if I practice relentlessly, day and night, with all my effort?”

“Thirty years,” replied the master.

“How is it that each time I say I will work harder you tell me that it will take longer?” the student asked, quite confused by now.

“The answer is clear,” said the master. “When there is one eye fixed upon your destination, there is only one eye left with which to find the Way.”



Mastery of Aikido is a journey, not a destination.

Criteria for examination

The information below will help you understand the idea behind gradings.

Firstly, all students pass the grade when they are examined. There are no marks, points or percentages awarded. Only when the instructor feels you are ready, and you have attended the required number of classes, may you go for the exam.

Please note that it is inappropriate to ask to be graded - your instructor keeps a close eye on your progress and will invite you to grade when you have met the requirements.

The reason you do the exam is to show that you can perform with confidence and extend Ki in front of your fellow students. Learning to do this will boost your confidence and assertiveness in your daily life.

Sometimes students are reluctant to grade, preferring to simply train. However, the grading syllabus is carefully structured to ensure steady progress through the basics. In reality, preparation for a grading is more important than the grading itself. By achieving a specific level of competence in a number of particular techniques you consolidate your progress in Aikido. It is important to complete the process by doing the grading so that you can integrate the experience and reap the maximum benefit from your training.

Ki exams show your understanding of the four basic principles.

Kyu exams show how well you blend this understanding with the physical techniques.

Aikido grading terms

Kyu levels (coloured belts)

These are the beginning levels of Aikido understanding. There are six kyu levels -

6th Kyu being the lowest and 1st Kyu being the highest.

Dan levels (black belts)

These are the senior levels of Aikido understanding. Dan means step, Shodan being the first step, Nidan the second, Sandan the third, Yondan the fourth, and so on. There are 10 dan levels in Aikido. Students who have achieved black belt level are called Yudansha.

Ki grading terms

Shokyu

The first Ki exam is called Shokyu and this can be done together with the 5th Kyu grading. The Shokyu Ki exam covers two kyu levels – 5th and 4th.

Chukyu

The Chukyu Ki exam can be done together with the 3rd Kyu grading. The Chukyu Ki exam covers two kyu levels – 3rd and 2nd.

Jokyu

The Jokyu Ki exam is done with 1st Kyu. The Jokyu Ki exam covers 1st Kyu and Shodan.

Significance of the belt and hakama

Throughout the world, the rules governing belts and hakama vary from dojo to dojo and from style to style. In most clubs, coloured belts are worn so that student levels of experience and understanding can immediately be recognised.

Belt colours and what they mean

White	6th Kyu	Purity and Potential
Yellow	5th Kyu	Stability and Assertiveness
Orange	4th Kyu	Fluidity and Adaptability
Green	3rd Kyu	Emotion and Sensitivity
Blue	2nd Kyu	Practical and Creative
Brown	1st Kyu	Practical and Creative
Black	Shodan	Consolidates all above

In your training, do not be in a hurry, for it takes a minimum of ten years to master the basics and advance to the first rung. Never think of yourself as an all-knowing, perfected master; you must continue to train daily with your friends and students and progress together in the Art of Peace.

O'Sensei

Hakama

The hakama is a seven-pleated garment worn by senior students. Each pleat symbolises one of the seven virtues of budo. Senior students should aim to refine these virtues.

Jin Benevolence

Gi Honour and Justice

Rei Courtesy and Etiquette

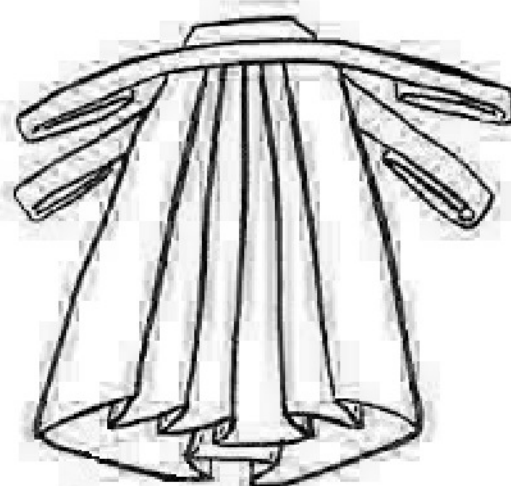
Chi Wisdom and Intelligence

Shin Sincerity

Chu Loyalty

Ko Piety

The hakama is retained in Aikido because of the beauty it adds to movement. It gives the wearer a feeling of gliding across the mat while at the same time being more grounded. If you have the privilege of wearing a hakama you must learn how to fold, wear, and care for it properly. If your hakama shows sign of wear (the knees are the first to go) make plans for a new one. Full, clean gi pants are worn underneath - meaning no cut-offs or holes in the knees.



Grading Requirements

Minimum requirements

The table below shows the minimum training requirement before you can be considered for grading by a Qualified Examiner. The number of classes required may vary slightly between dojos. Once you achieve Shodan, your progress is measured in years of dedicated training, rather than the number of classes you attend. In each case, the minimum requirement listed is in addition to the previous level achieved.

Grading (and ki exam)	Minimum Requirement
5th kyu (and Shokyu)	25 classes
4th kyu	30 classes
3rd kyu (and Chukyu)	35 classes
2nd kyu	45 classes
1st kyu (and Jokyu)	70 classes
Shodan	100 classes
Nidan	2 years
Sandan	3 years
Yondan	4 years

Ki exams

The first Ki exam is called Shokyu and this should be done together with the 5th Kyu grading.

The Chukyu exam should be done together with the 3rd Kyu grading.

The Jokyu exam should be done together with 1st Kyu.

Grading etiquette



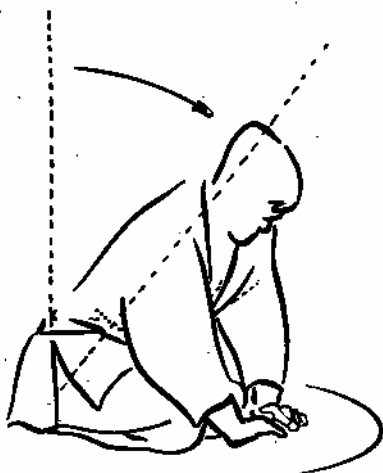
To begin your grading, bow three times:

1. Kamiza rei
2. Sensei rei
3. Uke rei.

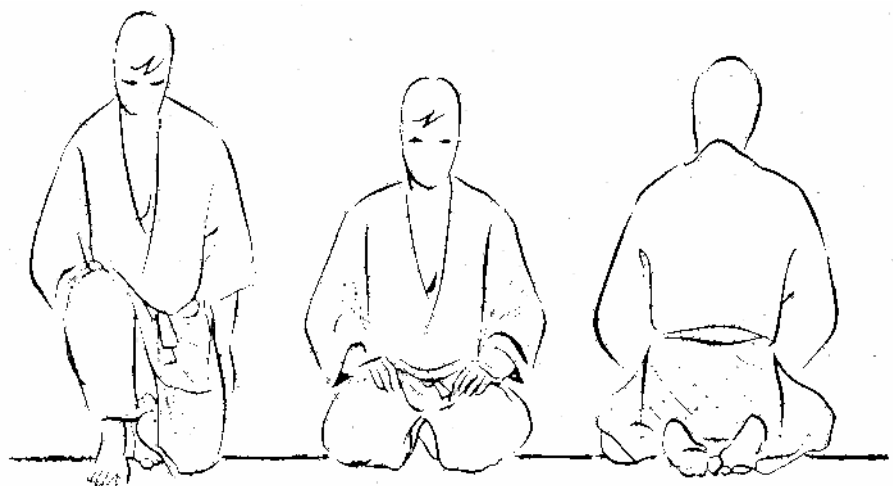
At the end of your grading bow three times:

1. Uke rei
2. Kamiza rei
3. Sensei rei.

It is Uke's responsibility to ensure that weapons are readily available for Nage's use.



All students on the mat must be sitting in seiza at the beginning and end of each grading. Any student participating in a grading must stay until all gradings are completed unless prior arrangements have been made with Sensei.



Handing weapons to Nage during grading



Carl and Blake



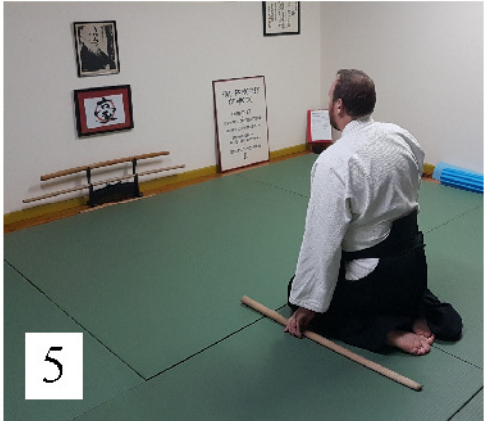
Handing weapons to Nage during grading



Blake and Carl with Mark Albrecht Sensei



Bokken Etiquette during grading



Jo Etiquette during grading



Handing over weapons



Blake and Carl with Mark Albrecht Sensei



Ki examinations

Shokyu

Standing
Unbendable arm
Extending arm with weight underside
Sitting seiza
Sitting seiza and standing up
Breathing exercise

Chukyu

Standing
Unbendable arm
Extending arm with weight underside
Sitting seiza
Sitting seiza and standing up
Sitting cross-legged
 a) while being pushed from behind
 b) while being raised by one knee
Extending wrist
Bending backwards
Stooping
Unraisable body
Breathing exercise

Jokyu

Standing

Unbendable arm

Extend arm with weight underside

Sitting seiza

Sitting seiza and standing up

Sitting cross-legged

a) while being pushed from behind

b) while being raised by one knee

Extending wrist

Bending backwards

Stooping

Unraisable body

Leaning backwards on a partner

Leaning forward on a partner

Extending wrist and raising leg

Swinging up both arms

Walking forward when being held from behind

Sitting cross-legged and holding the examiner's
arms from underneath

Breathing exercise

Aikido kyu gradings

5th Kyu (yellow belt)

Nage may choose their own Uke for Techniques and Taigi arts.

Shokyu Ki Exam

- Standing
- Unbendable arm
- Extending arm with weight underside
- Sitting seiza
- Sitting seiza and standing up
- Breathing exercise

Taiso

Udefuri

Udefuri choyaku

Tenkan

Ushiro ukemi

Zenpo kaiten

Shikko

Techniques

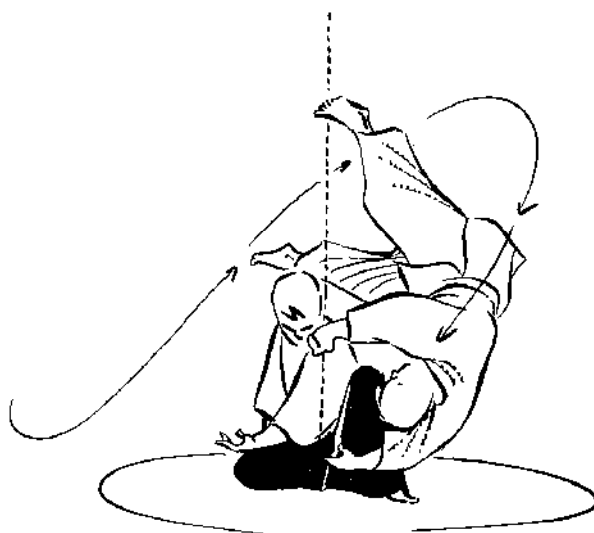
Katatekosadori kokyunage

Katatedori sayunage tenkan

Taigi arts

Taigi No. 5

1. Shomenuchi kokyunage
2. Yokomenuchi shihonage irimi
3. Munetsuki kotegaeshi katameru
4. Katadori ikkyo irimi katameru
5. Kokyu dosa



4th Kyu (orange belt)

Nage may choose their own Uke for Techniques and Taigi arts.

Taiso

Funakogi

Ikkyo

Zengo

Happo

Techniques

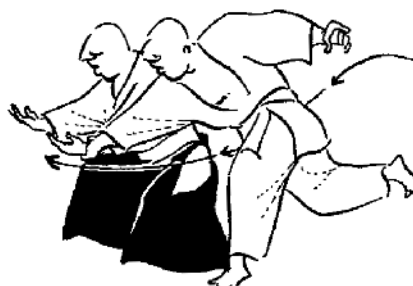
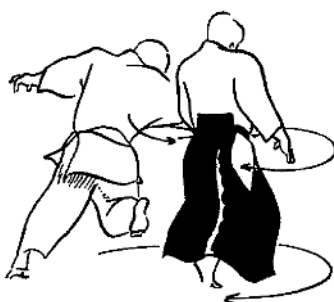
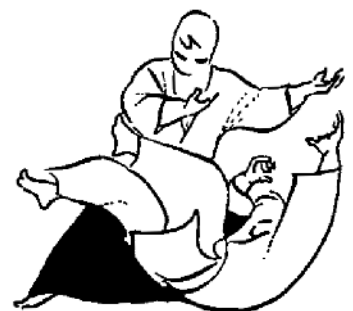
Katatekosadori kokyunage

Katatedori sayunage tenkan

Taigi arts

Kitei Taigi

1. Shomenuchi kokyunage
2. Yokomenuchi shihonage irimi
3. Munetsuki kotegaeshi katameru
4. Katatedori ikkyo tenkan katameru
5. Katadori nikyo irimi katameru
6. Ushirotekubidori sankyo katameru



3rd Kyu (green belt)

Nage may choose their own Uke for Techniques and Taigi arts.

Chukyu Ki Exam

- Standing
- Unbendable arm
- Extending arm with weight underside
- Sitting seiza
- Sitting seiza and standing up
- Sitting cross-legged
 - a) while being pushed from behind
 - b) while being raised by one knee
- Extending wrist
- Bending backwards
- Stooping
- Unraisable body
- Breathing exercise

Taiso

Nikyo

Kotegaeshi

Sankyo

Tekubi furi

Sayu

Sayu choyaku

Techniques

Katadori ikkyo katameru *

Katadori nikyo katameru *

Katadori sankyo katameru *

Katadori yonkyo katameru *

* (*irimi & tenkan*)

Taigi arts

Taigi No. 1 - Katatedori

1. Katatedori sayunage tenkan
2. Kirikaeshi tenkan
3. Zenponage tenkan
4. Kaitennage tenkan
5. Shihonage tenkan
6. Ikkyo tenkan katameru

Weapons

Tanto tori (2 arts)

Bokken tori (2 arts)

Jo tori (2 arts)

Jo Nage (2 arts)

Sword of Nine Ways

Shooting Star

2nd Kyu (blue belt – Hakama)

Nage may choose their own Uke for Techniques and Taigi arts.

The Hakama is a seven-pleated garment worn by senior students. Each pleat symbolises one of the seven virtues of budo. Senior students should aim to refine these virtues.

Taiso

Zenshin koshin

Ushirodori

Ushirotekubidori zenshin

Ushirotekubidori koshin

Taigi Arts

Taigi No. 2 - Katatedori Ryotemochi

1. Kokyunage tenkan (jump in)
2. Kokyunage tenkan (circle)
3. Kokyunage tenkan (figure 8)
4. Zenponage tenkan
5. Nikyo tenkan katameru
6. Kotegaeshi tenkan katameru

Taigi No. 6 - Ushiro

1. Ushirodori kokyunage
2. Ushirotekubidori uragaeshi
3. Ushirotekubidori zenponage
4. Ushirotekubidori kotegaeshi
5. Ushirotekubidori ikkyo katameru
6. Ushirotekubidori sankyonage

Taigi No. 8 - Ryotedori

1. Tenchinage irimi
2. Tenchinage tenkan
3. Kokyunage yureinage
4. Kokyunage sayunage
5. Kokyunage zenponage
6. Kokyunage kirikaeshi

Weapons

Tanto tori (*3 arts*)

Bokken tori (*3 arts*)

Jo tori (*3 arts*)

Jo Nage (*3 arts*)

Sword of Nine Ways

Shooting Star

1st Kyu (brown belt)

Nage may choose their own Uke for Techniques and Taigi arts.

Jokyu Ki Exam

- Standing
- Unbendable arm
- Extending arm with weight underside
- Sitting seiza
- Sitting seiza and standing up
- Sitting cross-legged
 - a) while being pushed from behind
 - b) while being raised by one knee
- Extending wrist
- Bending backwards
- Stooping
- Unraisable body
- Leaning backwards on a partner
- Leaning forward on a partner
- Extending wrist and raising leg
- Swinging up both arms
- Walking forward when being held from behind
- Sitting cross-legged and holding examiner's arms from underneath
- Breathing exercise

Taigi Arts

Taigi No. 9 - Shomenuchi

1. Ikkyo irimi katameru
2. Ikkyo tenkan katameru
3. Kokyunage
4. Kotegaeshi
5. Kokyunage kirikaeshi
6. Kokyunage zenponage

Taigi No. 17 - Zagi Handachi

1. Katatedori kokyunage
2. Katatedori kokyunage kirikaeshi
3. Shomenuchi kokyunage
4. Ushirokatadori kokyunage
5. Munetsuki kotegaeshi
6. Yokomenuchi zenponage

1st Kyu (brown belt)

Techniques

Yokomenuchi

Shihonage irimi
Kokyunage (circle)
Kokyunage kirikaeshi
Kokyunage zenponage
Kotegaeshi (circle)
Kokyunage irimi
Kokyunage (figure 8)
Ushiro ryokatadori kokyunage
Kokyunage sudorinage (atemi)
Kokyunage sayunage

Munetsuki

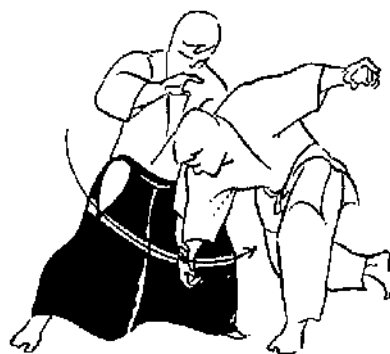
Kotegaeshi
Kokyunage zenponage
Ikkyo (hantai tenkan) katameru
Kokyunage kaitenage
Ushiro ryokatadori kokyunage
Kotegaeshi (hantai tenkan)

Weapons

Tanto tori (4 arts)
Bokken tori (4 arts)
Jo tori (4 arts)
Jo Nage (4 arts)

Sword of Nine Ways Freewielding Sword

Shooting Star Butterfly



Aikido dan gradings

Shodan

Each randori lasts one minute and Nage must demonstrate at least five arts. There are two Ukes for all randori except tanto tori, bokken tori and jo tori.

In tanto tori, bokken tori and jo tori there is one Uke only and Uke must attack shomenuchi, yokomenuchi and munetsuki.

Ukes must continue moving and keep steady pressure on Nage, only attacking once the correct Ma-ai has been established.

Randori

Katatedori

Ryotedori

Katadori

Ushirotekubidori

Yokomenuchi

Shomenuchi

Munetsuki

Jo nage

Tanto tori

Bokken tori

Jo tori

**Sword of Nine Ways
Freewielding Sword**

**Shooting Star
Butterfly**

Sanningake

Nidan

Each randori lasts one minute and nage must demonstrate at least five arts. There are two ukes for all randori except tanto tori, bokken tori and jo tori.

In tanto tori, bokken tori and jo tori there is one Uke only and Uke must attack shomenuchi, yokomenuchi and munetsuki.

Ukes must continue moving and keep steady pressure on Nage, only attacking once the correct Ma-ai has been established.

Randori

Katatedori

Ryotedori

Katadori

Ushirotekubidori

Yokomenuchi

Shomenuchi

Munetsuki

Jo nage

Tanto tori

Bokken tori

Jo tori

**Sword of Nine Ways
Freewielding Sword**

**Shooting Star
Butterfly**

Yoningake

Sandan

Each randori lasts one minute and Nage must demonstrate at least five arts. There are two Ukes for all randori except tanto tori, bokken tori and jo tori.

In tanto tori, bokken tori and jo tori there is one Uke only and Uke must attack shomenuchi, yokomenuchi and munetsuki.

Ukes must continue moving and keep steady pressure on Nage, only attacking once the correct Ma-ai has been established.

Randori

Katatedori
Ryotedori
Katadori
Ushirotekubidori
Yokomenuchi
Shomenuchi
Munetsuki
Jo nage

Tanto tori
Bokken tori
Jo tori

Taigi Arts

Taigi No. 10 - Katadori shomenuchi

1. Kokyunage irimi
2. Kokyunage tenkan (circle)
3. Kokyunage tenkan (figure 8)
4. Nikyo tenkan katameru
5. Kokyunage sankyo uragaeshi
6. Kokyunage zenponage

Taigi No. 19 - Munetsuki

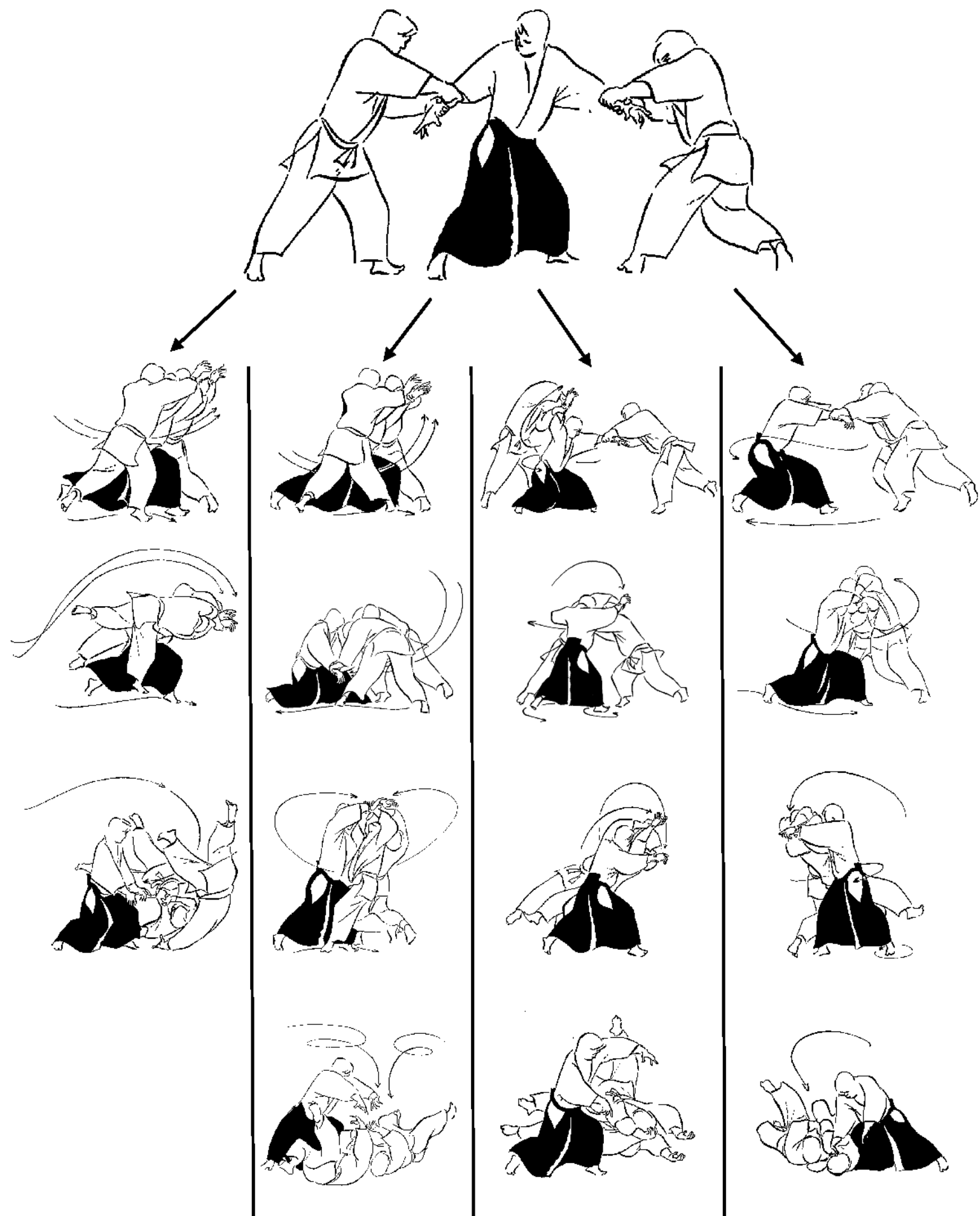
1. Uchiwanage kubikiri
2. Zenponage kubiuchi
3. Uchiwanage menuchi
4. Irimi sudori
5. Shomenuchi
6. Kotegaeshi hantai tenkan

Taigi No. 20 - Futari / Sannin

1. Futari ryotemochi kokyunage zenponage (once)
2. Futari ryotemochi kokyunage senaka awase (once)
3. Futari ryotemochi kokyunage seiretsu
4. Futari ryotemochi shihonage
5. Sannin ryotemochi kokyunage seiretsu
6. **Goningake**

Sword of Nine Ways Freewielding Sword

Shooting Star Butterfly



Yondan

Nage may choose their own Ukes for Taigi arts.

Taigi Arts

Taigi 21 - Tanto tori

1. Shomenuchi kotegaeshi
2. Shomenuchi kokyunage (jump in)
3. Yokomenuchi kokyunage gokyo katameru
4. Yokomenuchi irimi sakate
5. Yokomenuchi shihonage
6. Munetsuki kotegaeshi
7. Munetsuki ikkyo hantai irimi katameru
8. Munetsuki kokyunage zenpo
9. Munetsuki hijiuchi menuchi
10. Munetsuki kaiten nage

Taigi 22 - Bokken tori

1. Shomenuchi irimi sudori kokyunage katameru
2. Shomenuchi kotegaeshi (right)
3. Shomenuchi irimi dori (left)
4. Yokomenuchi kokyunage irimi
5. Yokomenuchi shihonage (left)
6. Munetsuki kotegaeshi (right)
7. Munetsuki kokyunage zenpo
8. Munetsuki kokyunage irimi sudori
9. Douchi kokyunage katameru
10. Yokobara kokyunage katameru

Taigi 23 - Jo tori

1. Shomenuchi irimi sudori kokyunage katameru
2. Shomenuchi kotegaeshi (right)
3. Shomenuchi irimidori (left)
4. Yokomenuchi shihonage (left)
5. Yokomenuchi kokyunage zenponage
6. Munetsuki kokyunage tsukikaeshi
7. Munetsuki kokyunage zenpo
8. Munetsuki kokyunage kirikaeshi
9. Douchi kokyunage katameru
10. Yokobara kokyunage katameru

Taigi 24 - Jo nage

1. Kokyunage
2. Kokyunage zenponage
3. Sakate mochi kokyunage zenpo
4. Shihonage
5. Nikyo
6. Kotegaeshi
7. Kokyunage kirikaeshi
8. Kokyunage ashi sukui

Sword of Nine Ways

Freewielding Sword

Swallow

Sword of Infinity

Shooting Star

Butterfly

Harvest

The Links