

Being Uchi-deshi in Iwama / In and around the dojo / Manners & customs / Japanese glossary:

Make sure you know your basics in taijutsu and weapons. Don't go to Iwama before this. Being uchi deshi should be regarded as the possibility to receive special attention and training by Nemoto Sensei. Your stay should not be considered a vacation. It is both physical and spiritual training, in both techniques as well as awareness training and much more. You have the unique chance to experience Japan and Japanese culture, but always with top priority given to the fact that this is Budo training. Whatever you are doing, it all relates to your training. Deep, rigorous training is called "Shugyo." This means training at all levels, and at all times- physical as well as mental and spiritual training. Uchi deshi training is Shugyo.

Gifts

Bring gifts to give to Nemoto Sensei, and to Nemoto Sensei's wife (Oku-sama). Make sure to have several small gifts to give if invited to someone's home or to special friends made during your stay. Dojo T shirts are a good present for Aikido friends you may make in Japan.

Titles

Nemoto Sensei should always be called Sensei or Nemoto Sensei (And Oku-sama: "Oku-sama"). Also when talking to someone else, be sure to always refer to them by the aforementioned names. It is rude to refer to people without using "...san, ...sama or ...Sensei."

Personal names

Use the prefix "-san" when addressing people, for instance: you should call Nakamura "Nakamura-san." Usually Japanese people use their family names in daily life and will introduce themselves as for instance "Nakamura Ichiro," with the family name first and given name last. In general, you call Japanese people by their last names + san. In cases where you are about the same age and have a close friendly relationship with the person, then the Japanese first name + san can be used. Also use "-san" after names when talking about a person to another person. You never use "...san" or any other title (Sensei for instance) when talking about yourself.

Inside / outside

Be aware of the different levels in Japan; the ground is considered dirty and shoes are taken off when you step up one level, as when entering a house, dojo etc. When in doubt, look to see if other people's outdoor shoes are placed there, or ask! The same goes for things you are carrying: carry bags and other items should not be put on the ground if you are going to put them inside a house. Find an elevated place such as a bench etc. to park your bags when not holding them.

Entering the dojo or a Japanese house

A sign of good manners and a necessary habit to form is to put your own and others shoes in order at the "genkan" (entrance). Shoes should be paired nicely in rows and should face so that the tips of the shoes are facing away from the room they are outside of. This is a custom from the olden days so that samurai could leave the premises as quickly as possible. It is also a nice thing to do even in other homes you may be visiting while in Japan.

In the dojo or Japanese house

Do not step on the wooden door steps when entering rooms. Step directly onto the tatami mats. There is "soji" (cleaning up) before and after every practice. Be ready to clean as soon as the sempai ask for it. Watch how the cleaning is done and do it the way you are told.

Training in general

During practice you will run into many different interpretations of what is being taught. Each person you practice with will have their own way. Keep an open mind and follow the way you are being taught at the time without saying "I know better". In Japanese dojos, sometimes teaching seems to be quite irrational, especially to Westerners who are used to systematic pedagogy and "positive reinforcement." Techniques change occasionally, and everyone wants you to do a certain technique "their" way, oblivious to the fact that someone just showed you another way. Concentrate on learning the "new" way, you can always decide later on if it is something you can use or not.

Shoes for training outdoors

You will need outdoor shoes for outdoor weapons practice. Sandals are not allowed, since your feet will get muddy and this will be the same as walking barefoot if you have to go back into the dojo. Get some kind of rubber-soled shoes or sneakers, slip-ons are good since you will be doing a lot of getting in and out of them. You will also need them for wearing around the dojo area.

Clothing

You will need easy everyday clothes such as sweat suits for working in, as well as wearing around the dojo and in Iwama. Also one good set of clothes for parties and going out: A shirt with a collar (poloshirt / short sleeved shirt for summer or long sleeved shirt with collar for fall / winter) and a pair of pants (not jeans) will be good enough for most occasions. You may also need a pair of presentable shoes for dressing up. No sandals!

Behaviour

Your behaviour will reflect back to the people who have recommended you to Nemoto Sensei. You should take great care in behaving properly at all times. There are rules in the Aiki House and dojo which will be explained to you. You must abide by them, even if you do not agree with them. Keep a humble attitude at all times. Remember that you are a guest in a foreign country and culture, so behave nicely.

Work in the dojo

As uchi deshi, you are expected to do chores and work every day. These chores will be assigned to you by the dojo sempai (the person in the dojo who has been there longest). You should be willing to take part in any work that has to be done with a positive attitude, even when this work is cleaning the toilets! Kitchen duty is called Toban. When you arrive at the Aiki House you will be asked (told!) to share in the kitchen duties with the other uchi deshi. Club leaders , chief instructors and students alike all have to take their turn. Sometimes you will be paired with someone else for Toban. Toban is for one whole day on a rotational schedule. If you have to do something on your designated day you can ask to switch with someone else. Toban includes preparing breakfast, shopping for lunch and dinner, making the meals, setting the table and doing the dishes . The others will usually help with the clearing away and washing but it is in fact the responsibility of the designated people. Be prepared to be able to cook a wholesome, inexpensive meal with things which can be bought locally. There are fairly well-stocked supermarkets and inexpensive green-grocers in Iwama. You can expect to be anywhere from one to about eight or so uchi deshi at the Aiki House.

Food money

Check how much is to be payed per week, and pay promptly. Apart from the work you are expected to do, you should also train your awareness to find anything that needs to be done on your own. Ask your dojo sempai or Nemoto Sensei, but try to take the initiative yourself to get the job done. If you notice something that needs to be picked up, cleaned up or repaired, do it !

In general at the Aiki House and dojo

In Japan energy is very expensive. Make a habit of turning off lights when you do not need them, or when you leave a room. Remember also to close doors after you. Observe what other people who know about the dojo and the Aiki House are doing, and follow suit.

Keiko gi

Wash your keiko-gi frequently - after every practice if you sweat heavily. Japanese people are sensitive to body odors (and many Western people are not - especially not to their own!). Shower every day, and use cold water as much as possible. If during the cold seasons, use the warm water sparingly.

Expenses

If extra practice is scheduled with Nemoto Sensei, you should not use the excuse of insufficient funds to not participate in these practices. Be prepared for extra expenses during your stay.

Japanese society and Budo training

Japan is a society based on teacher - student relationships. The role of hierarchy must be understood and respected. The sempai - kohai order must be respected. No matter what your rank or how long you have been studying Budo, you will start as a kohai. The sempai should be consulted in all matters concerning the training and daily life. By doing this you will gain their respect and acceptance. Be aware that whatever you do will have an effect on the way other foreigners will be treated. A humble attitude will get you the farthest. Japan is a vertical society. This means that in schools, workplaces and basically any situation where there is a group of people who are together for a certain purpose, sempai or sensei can at times talk roughly to kohai. Especially in situations where tasks are to be performed or in teaching situations you will find that this is often the case. Japanese people do not consider being ordered in a very abrupt fashion to do things by their sempai or sensei to be demeaning. It will help to keep this in mind during your stay.

Uchi deshi daily life

As uchi deshi, you are expected to stay in the dojo area. If you wish to go somewhere locally, make sure to ask permission from Nemoto Sensei. Make it clear where you are going and when you will be back. Also make sure there is no work or other plans before asking to

leave. During the warm months, care should be taken if sunbathing. Put on a shirt if in the presence of Nemoto Sensei, Oku - sama or other Japanese.

Travelling

If you wish to do some sightseeing while in Japan, arrange to do this before or after your stay as uchi deshi. You may be taken out for some sightseeing by Nemoto Sensei or others from the dojo, but this is only if it fits with the overall plans for the uchi deshi. Don't expect this, but enjoy it if you get the chance!

Sleeping in the Aiki House

When laying out the futons for sleeping in the Aiki House, put them in orderly rows. In the mornings, make sure to wake up and get out of bed right away. Do not lie around. Bedding is folded properly and put away directly after getting up. There is a certain way of folding the bedding and a certain place for it as well. Ask someone to show you how. Make sure to always place it neatly as shown.

Leaving the dojo

When your stay at Aiki House is over, a gift of money is put in a special envelope and given as a token of appreciation. Envelopes can be bought, make sure to ask a dojo sempai as to which kind. Ask also about the proper amount, this depends upon how long you are staying. Also when leaving, a bottle of saké is given as well, two if your stay was for a longer period. Again, ask your sempai about the proper kind and what should be written on the package.

Table manners & eating customs

Do not start to eat until whoever is in charge (at the Aiki House your dojo sempai; at a home, your host or hostess) says "Itadakimasu," a set phrase used before eating meaning "I gratefully receive(this meal)," and everyone bows and says the same.

Using hashi (chopsticks)

- Never stick your chopsticks (hashi) points first into the rice in your ricebowl and leave them there. This is only done at Buddhist funerals!
- Never pass food from one person to another chopsticks to chopsticks. This is also a funeral ritual. If you wish to pass a piece of food from your chopsticks, then pass it on to the plate or if necessary, the hand of the person you wish to give the food to.
- Do not take food from a serving dish with your own chopsticks (they have been in your mouth!). Only if what you are taking from the serving dish is in separate pieces so you don't touch any of the rest of the food with your own chopsticks. If necessary, when there are not any serving chopsticks on the plate you wish to take food from, you can turn your own chopsticks around and use the ends which have NOT been in your mouth to take food with. This is considered good manners.
- Do not point with your chopsticks.
- If you are using "wari-bashi" (disposable chopsticks), do not polish them by rubbing the two against each other after taking them out of their package, even if you see some Japanese people do this. It is not considered polite.
- Do not move dishes around with your chopsticks.

Table manners in general

- Eat with your mouth closed, even if others at your table do not!
- When eating noodles: in soup or any other way, it is common to make a sucking sound. This is considered proper manners, but only for eating NOODLES!
- Take only as much as you can eat. Try everything that is offered to you, at least a taste. To leave food is a waste (mottainai) and is a big NO NO in Japan. (As in many other countries, as well!)
- Do not put soya sauce or other things on the rice in your rice bowl. If rice is served with a sauce to go on it, then it is put in a larger type type of bowl and is served with a spoon. White rice should stay white when served in a rice bowl.
- You should always finish your portion of rice in your bowl, down to the last grain of rice. Otherwise it is considered, can you guess it? "Mottainai!"
- When eating with Nemoto Sensei or others who are your sempai, you should not finish eating before them. Time your eating so that it fits with whom you are eating with. (Awase!)
- When finishing the meal everyone bows and says "Gochisosamadeshita." This means "thank you for the treat," and is always said at the end of a meal.

- Important! In Japan, blowing your nose while people are eating is to be avoided at all costs (as is actually the case in most other countries as well). Unless you want to see how quickly you can clear the room of Japanese people, leave the room if you have to blow your nose.
- Do not burp at the table! Somehow some people have come to think that this is an oriental custom. It is not!

Drinking customs

The usual custom when drinking in Japan is to fill other people's glasses before filling your own. Usually when you start to fill your own, someone will take the bottle from you and offer to pour for you. One always lifts one's glass to receive a drink, and should always drink a little bit to make room for more in your glass. It is most polite to hold the glass with your right hand and put your left hand flat under the glass when someone is pouring for you. When pouring for others, hold the bottle with your right hand and place your left hand under the bottle to stabilize it. This is also the most polite way to hold the bottle when pouring for others.

General customs in Japan

Japanese people will often invite you home, or out. This is not always what it seems. Often it is the idea that they would like to do something for you, the gesture of wanting to do it, that is important. When invited, wait to see if the person makes a step to actually realize the plans, for instance in asking when would be a good time etc. Do not push to make an invitation happen. Always bring a little something to give as a token when invited to someone's home.

In Summary: Even though these rules are general practice in Iwama, they should be considered guidelines. Things change, so keep up your awareness and practice Awase at all times. GOOD LUCK!

Japanese language

Important words and phrases to know in the Aiki House or dojo

Pronunciation Key: - means elongate the vowel. Double consonants make a short stop between the first and second letter, for instance koppu: kop-pu

Vowels: A as in arm, I as in eat (in most cases at word endings and after consonants it is almost silent), U as in you (in most cases at word endings and after consonants it is almost silent), E as in ate (but short), O as in open

Consonants: R is almost like L but short. Some words are used with the polite prefix "o" in front, but not always, hence the (o). In Japanese you usually do not specify plural or singular.

In the Kitchen

daidokoro : kitchen **shokudo-** : dojo kitchen (actually means canteen or mess hall) **(o)hashi** : chopsticks **(o)sara** : plate **chawan**: small bowl **kozara** : small plate **naifu** : knife **fo-ku**: fork **supu-n**: spoon **ho-cho-**: kitchen knife **manaita**: cutting board **koppu / gurasu**: glass (for drinking) **kappu**: cup **furai pan**: frying pan **nabe**: pot **yakan**: kettle **Inside yuka**: floor **kabe**: wall **tenjo-**: ceiling **mado**: window **do-a**: door **isu**: chair **te-buru**: table

Appliances

denki: means electricity but is usually used for light (s) **senpu-ki**: electric fan **suihanki**: rice cooker **denchi re-nji**: micro wave oven **sentakuki**: washing machine **suto-bu**: stove **so-jiki**: vacuum cleaner

Others nagashidai: kitchen sink **suido-**: water tap **(o) furo**: bath tub

Outside work

kuma de: rake **chiritori**: dustpan **ho-ki**: broom **ichirin sha**: wheelbarrow **nirin sha**: large cart for hauling **kusa**: weeds **ro-pu**: (rope)

Useful verbs in general Verbs can be conjugated in their normal polite form using the verb endings ...masu (affirmative) or ...masen (negative)/ ...nai desu in present tense. In plain form present tense, they are in their so called dictionary form. Example: to go: iku. Plain form for I am going: Iku. Polite form: Ikimasu. Not going: Ikanai. Polite form: Ikimasen (or Ikanai desu). Past tense ...mashita (affirmative) or ...masen deshita (negative) ...ka indicates a question. Note that personal pronouns like I, you etc. are often left out. verbs will be presented in plain form first, then in polite form.

go: iku/ikimasu **come**: kuru/kimasu **come (or go) home**: kaeru/kaerimasu **eat**: taberu/tabemasu **drink**: nomu/nomimasu **speak**: hanasu/hanashimasu **sit**: suwaru/suwarimasu **stand**: tatsu/tachimasu **sleep**: neru/nemasu **wake**: okiru/okimasu **see**: miru/mimasu **write**: kaku/kakimasu **walk**: aruku/arukimasu **run**: hashiru/hashirimasu **buy**: kau/kaimasu **sell**: uru/urimasu **do**: suru/shimasu (suru or shimasu is also added to certain verbs which cannot be conjugated directly) Another verb for to do is yaru/yarimasu

Useful adjectives in general

o-kii: big **chiisai:** small **nagai:** long **mijikai:** short **takai:** tall **omoi:** heavy **karui:** light **i- :** good **warui:** bad **yokunai:** not good
hayai: fast (or early) **oso:** slow (or late) **tsuyoi:** strong **yowai:** weak **futoi:** thick **hosoi:** thin

Gambatte Kudasai! (Do your best!)

Gambarimasu! (I will do my best!)