



# Welcome to Abundant Peace!

Coming to an aikido class for the first time takes courage!

One of the biggest challenges to come to your first class is stepping into the unknown. This guide will share information on what you can expect from your first class at Abundant Peace.

## What to Expect in Your First Class

### How to Prepare and What to Wear

- Come 10-15 minutes early. Fill out the registration form, meet Brad and other students.
- Wear clothing you can move in (like sweatpants and t-shirt). We train barefoot. If you want socks, please wear socks with non-slip treads on the sole.
- There are change rooms and bathrooms so you can change onsite.
- You do not have to purchase a GI (white jacket and pants) to come to your first class.



## What You Will be Asked to Do

- You will be guided by a senior student to learn basic movements, to introduce skills and to learn at least one technique.
- You don't need to remember everything; you will repeat these basic movement until they become part of you.

## What an Aikido Class Looks like



### Before Class

- *You are welcome to come onto the mat 15 minutes prior to class to stretch or practice.*

### Opening

- *We start class by kneeling (or sitting cross-legged) from most senior to most beginner student.*
- *We do a short meditation, following our teacher to bow towards the picture of our founder teacher.*

### Warm Up

- *A senior student leads a 20 minute warmup. In aikido, we focus on developing flexibility and mobility. Listen to your own body and do what feels possible. Some exercises may be unfamiliar as they support specific movements in aikido.*
- *Connection practice - we practice a connection exercise every class to develop our ability to connect and move with our partner.*

## Skill and Technical Training

- *We work on skills and aikido techniques. We teach techniques so you learn a repertoire of technical forms along with ways to improve how you perform those techniques so you can affect your partner more powerfully without relying on physical strength alone.*

## Closing Routine

- *We end class by lining up in order of rank and bowing to complete the class. We create a half circle to share any announcements.*

## Weapons Class

- *We offer 2-30 minute weapons classes each week. You are welcome to join the weapons class right away. We train bokken (wooden sword), jo (wooden staff) and tanto (wooden knife). You can borrow weapons from the club; you can also buy training weapons from Sensei Brad. We encourage joining weapons class to improve how you perform techniques and learn how to apply aikido principles using training weapons.*

# Aikido is a Japanese Martial Art



In class, we honor the Japanese origin of Aikido in several ways. We:

- Bow to step on and off the mat. We bow to the picture of the founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba to demonstrate respect and gratitude for training
- Line up in order of rank (senior students to beginner students) at the beginning and end of class
- Wear a Gi (white jacket/pants) as a training uniform. We add patches for Abundant Peace and our parent school Aikido Schools of Ueshiba to represent our dojo tradition.
- Use Japanese terms during class routines and to express ideas, movements and techniques.

You will get a student handbook with these terms when you register for class.

# How to Learn



The dojo is a learning space.

We value the dojo as a safe space to learn skills, to performance aikido techniques and explore aikido concepts. The dojo is also a space to challenge and learn about yourself.

Aikido is taught by our head instructor Brad Schultz. Brad is a life-long martial artist who has dedicated his professional life to teaching internal martial arts. In our dojo, aikido is also taught by volunteer senior students who are 6th kyu or higher (students wearing blue or black hakama/wide pants).

As a beginner, you will want to know, “Am I doing it right?”

It is important to understand that doing it right does not mean the end of learning. In aikido, learning to do techniques correctly is the beginning of learning. We work through a learning progression that includes learning to:

1. Perform basic movement and techniques.
2. Cultivate and use structural strength stationary and in movement with a partner
3. Cultivate your ability to use connection to affect your partner so you are not relying primarily on physical strength.
4. Develop and apply aikido concepts like entering, expansion and energy flow to create more powerful, elegant and effective movement in your techniques.
5. Pressure test how well you have integrated your training by increasing the speed, intensity and force of attacks with training partners.

# Aikido is an individual journey shared with supportive partners



To get an enjoyable, fulfilling experience at aikido we encourage you to:

- bring a sincere intention to learn. Watch and listen to Sensei Brad and then try for yourself.
- focus on progress not perfection. Rather than being hard on yourself for what you can't yet do, acknowledge what you learned today.
- be open to what senior students offer to you - try it out.

When you train closely with partners you will have great training days, challenging days, days you barely make it to the dojo and days when you feel energize and exhilarated. Continuing to train regularly is a sure path to build your personal resilience and perseverance to reach your training goals.



# We Value What You Bring



We value learning about you and what you bring to the dojo. We want to support you to participate fully in class in the way that is appropriate and supportive for you.

**Please share with Sensei Brad any of the following:**

- physical injuries or conditions that may affect your participation.

**We want you to be safe when you train.**

- feeling overwhelmed emotionally or mentally during training.

**We want you to feel supported when you train.**

- cultural beliefs or customs that may affect your participation. We appreciate every person at the dojo comes from a background that shapes you to be the person you are. We choose to train within a Canadian and Japanese cultural context that includes ideas, behaviors and expectations for how we will interact with each other. If you find you experience a clash of expectations and behaviors in class, please talk to Sensei Brad about your experience.

**We value learning from differences and connecting through similarities.**

We hope this guide has helped take away some uncertainties to try an aikido class.

**We value creating a training community where everyone who wants to train aikido has an opportunity to practice.**