

Iaido Reiho & Protocol



Compiled by the Japanese Swordsmanship Society

Carrying and Wearing the Sword

There are four acceptable ways of carrying and wearing the sword:

1. Worn through the belt. This is the preferred position while in the dojo, but not outside the dojo.
2. Carried in the right hand, cutting edge down, tsuka to the rear, arm at full length along the right side of the body, kurikata behind the hand. This is normally a static position (no movement) used for standing bows.
3. **Sageto position:** Held in the left hand, cutting edge up, arm at full length along the left side of the body, tsuka pointing inward slightly, kurikata in the hand. This is normally a static position (no movement).
4. **Teito position:** From the Sageto position, bend the elbow raising the tsuba alongside the body slightly in front of and on a level with the left hip-bone, tsuka pointing inward slightly.

Note: If during instruction, the class is stopped for explanation or discussion, the sword should be returned to the saya if there is a fairly long period before practice continues. If it is only a short period, stand normally holding the sword in both hands in a relaxed manner such that the kissaki is pointing down towards the floor in front of you at a slight angle to the right so that the tip is just to the outside front and right of your right foot.

Entering the Dojo

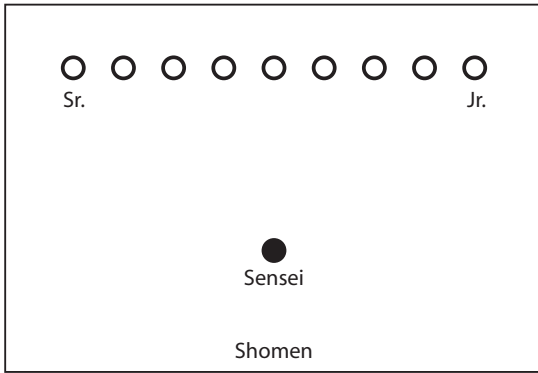
Holding the sword in Sageto, move to the dojo entrance. Transfer the sword across the front of your body to the right-hand position, face the Kamiza/Shomen and bow slightly from the waist towards it. Transfer the sword to the Teito position and enter the dojo. While in the dojo, the sword is to be carried in Teito or worn through the belt.

Placement Preparatory to Bowing

“We strive to master ourselves through our training, so each student’s efforts toward this goal should be honored”

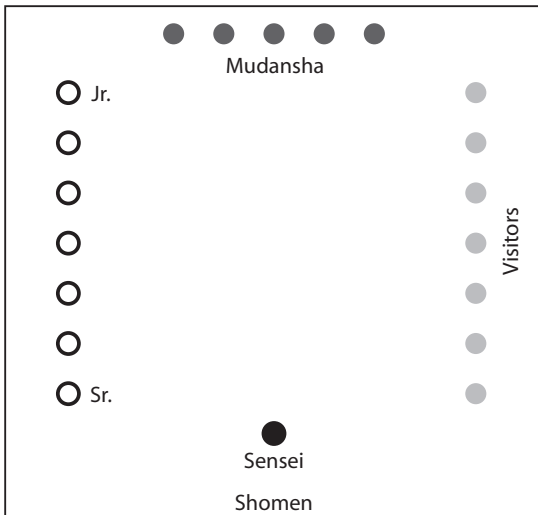
Holding the sword in Teito, proceed to the place appropriate to your rank and seniority in that rank; sit in Seiza. The Sensei will sit directly in front of and with his back to the Shomen. The students should line up opposite the Shomen. The highest rank will be to the right as you face the Shomen and lowest rank student will be to the left. Sometime the Sensei does not take his place in front, then continue without him/her.

See basic laido class bowing layout, next page.



Crowded or Special Visitors Bowing Layout

If crowded or there are visitors or other special conditions, the yudansha will sit to the sensei's left and perpendicular to the shomen, the most senior student closest to the sensei. The mudansha will sit facing the sensei. Honored guests and visitors will sit to the sensei's right and perpendicular to the shomen (facing the yudansha, the most senior or honored closest to the sensei)



Sequence of Bows before Class

The sequence of bows and commands before a class:

1. To the dojo (Kamiza/Shomen) – **Shomen ni Rei** (sword is on the floor along right side, sensei will elaborate).
2. To the sensei – **Sensei ni Rei**.
3. To each other – **Otagai ni Rei** (Onegi shimasu*).
4. To the sword – **To ni Rei**.** (Sword is switched from right side to left hand, then placed into proper position for bow – see below).

Sequence of Bows before Class

The sequence of bows and commands after a class:

1. To the sword – **To ni Rei**.** (Sword is taken out of the belt and placed on the floor in the proper position for bow – see below).
2. To the dojo (Kamiza/Shomen) – **Shomen ni Rei** (sword is moved to the right side after sword bow).
3. To the sensei – **Sensei ni Rei**.
4. To each other – **Otagai ni Rei** (domo arigato gozaimashita*).

* Spoken together

** For small classes not stated

Note: The command to bow is Rei. If the sensei is in front of the class, the Sensei ni Rei command is used, otherwise it is skipped. Additionally, when the teacher is facing the class and the Shomen ni Rei is the command, then pause between Shomen ni and Rei until the teacher has turned around and faced the Shomen. Likewise, allow time for the teacher to turn back and face the class before giving the next bow.

Onegai Shimasu

Means “Please do me the favor.” If an important teacher is present, then the more respectful, **Yoroshiku Onegai Shimasu**.

Domo Arigato Gozaimashita

Means “Thank you for what you have done.” Less formal bows between instructor and students in gratitude for learning together, “domo arigato” or just “domo.”

When the sword is along right side for bows, the edge is pointed to the right, tsuka is toward the front, the tsuba is even with the front of the knee, and there is about a hand width between the right leg and the sword.

Sequence of Bows for Individual Demonstration, Taikai & Shinsa (Exams)

The sequence of bows before:

1. To the dojo – Standing bow at the starting place.
2. To the sword – Appropriate sitting bow (see below).
Place sword directly into belt after bow and proceed.

The sequence of bows after class:

1. To the sword – (see below).
2. To the dojo – Standing bow at the starting place.
Retreat to entrance by walking backward 3 steps – then turn and leave.

Description of bowing Sequence to the Sword for ZNKR Seitei-gata laido

The bowing sequence for Seitei-gata laido is the same as for Muso Shinden Ryu at the beginning and for Jikiden Eishin Ryu at the end. As a general practice, the Nichibukan will use these bows for the beginning and ending of classes. The bows for an examination, contest or demonstration only have a single bow in seiza to the sword at the beginning and end of the shinsa, et al. At the beginning and end of class, there are 3 or 4 bows (see above) done in seiza. This results in the sword being moved from the left side to the right side for the extra bows.

Upon entering the dojo or examination area, the sword will be along the left side – either in Teito or through the belt. Proceed to the proper place within the dojo for your status (see item 3 above) or the designated spot for the shiai et al.

Bowing In Sequence

Assume seiza sitting position (left knee should always touch the floor first). If in class, follow the lead of the Instructor. For the initial bows the sword needs to be moved to the right side after sitting in seiza.

- a. Bring the tsuka towards your center line and switch control to the right hand. The sageo should be looped over the left thumb. Do not try and transfer this to the right thumb, but have the right hand fingers push the sageo against the saya. Place the sword down along the right side with the tsuba even with the knee, edge away. Make sure the sword is not laying on your hakama (this is considered an insult to the sword).
- b. After doing the 2 or 3 bows as noted above, the sword needs to be transferred from the right side and placed in the proper position. Essentially, the sword needs to be moved back to where it would have been if you had just sat down. Reach down with the right hand and grasp the saya in the normal manner with the thumb on the tsuba being careful to get a good grip on the sageo.

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- c. Lift the sword smoothly up and swing it around to the left side bringing it down along the left thigh.
 - d. Switch control to the left hand, trying to maintain control of the sageo. Then continue the next steps.

Place the sword to the front of you for the To ni Rei. The sequence for this is:

- e. With the left hand (which is holding the saya just behind the tsuba and the left thumb holding the tsuba) extend the tsuka directly out and to the right until the left arm has reached its maximum extension but the tip is still in the obi.
- f. Switch the hold of the saya/tsuba from the left hand to the right hand. Then slide the left hand back along the saya until the belt is reached – letting the sageo slide through the left hand and thus smoothing the sageo along the saya.
- g. While maintaining the left hand at the belt, with the right hand, continue the removal of the sword from the belt. The left hand will then continue to smooth the sageo alongside of the saya as the removal progresses.
- h. As the end of the saya (kojiri) passes through the left hand, the left hand will grasp the end of the saya and with a smooth continuous motion of both hands, place the sword directly in front on the floor. The sword should be lying on the floor, edge away, tsuba in front of the right knee, kojiri slightly closer than the tsuka. After placement on the floor, the excess sageo is looped back from the kojiri along the back of the saya (mune side).
- i. When placing the sword down on the floor, the right hand fingers should be under the saya with the thumb on the tsuba. The left hand fingers are above the saya at the kojiri. The left thumb should be under the saya holding the sageo tight against the saya.
- j. To ni Rei is done on command from the Instructor/Senior student when the size of the group warrants it. The sword bow is essentially private between the person and their sword. Commands are not necessary except to coordinate a larger group.
- k. The left hand is placed flat on the floor between the left knee (slightly inside towards the right knee) and the sword. Then the right hand is placed on the floor next to the left hand in such a way as to form a small triangle with the two thumbs touching each other at the tips and thus forming the base, and the index fingers touching at the tips and thus forming the sides of the triangle. The arms are at this moment straight and the body bent slightly forward. Bend the body forward into the bow such that the elbows are to the sides of each knee and the back is straight and horizontal. The head must not dip down during the bow, but must stay in the same plane as the back. Also, do not let the buttocks rise off the heels of your feet. After the Instructor has risen from his bow, slowly and gracefully come back up to where the arms are straight and the hands are still on the floor. Then lift the right hand back onto the right thigh, and then the left hand back onto the left thigh. Posture is once more erect and straight.

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- l. Reach out with the right hand and grasp the sageo (near the kojiri where the sageo loops back) between the large and index fingers. Move the right hand to the saya near the tsuba and grasp the sword in the normal carrying manner (the sageo still being held by the fingers of the right hand). With the left hand, grasp the saya near the kojiri. then with a smooth continuous motion of both hands, lift the sword and bring the kojiri to the center of the obi in line with your navel.
 - m. Using your left thumb, force open the space between the inner most loop of the obi and the middle loop. Then slide the kojiri into that space by bringing the tsuka up and slightly forward while pushing the tip into the obi.
 - n. The left hand then goes to the slot in the hakama along the left side to guide the tip over the hakama strap.
 - o. The right hand continues to smoothly push the sword through the obi until the edge of the tsuba is lined up with the navel.
 - p. The left hand replaces the right hand holding the tsuba/tsuka. Left thumb on the tsuba (1 o'clock).
 - q. You may then begin.

Bowing Out Sequence

- a. When ready to finish, go to the same spot where you bowed in and sit in seiza.
- b. Untie your sageo and leave laying across your leg.
- c. Grasp the tsuba/tsuka in the normal manner with the left hand and extend the sword towards your right side along the same angle as the sword while still in the obi.
- d. Switch your right index finger on the tsuba for the left thumb with your right hand fingers under the saya and the right thumb over the saya near the kurikata.
- e. The left hand smooths the sageo while moving back to where the saya passes through the obi.
- f. The left hand then loops the sageo over the right thumb. (Note: The left hand moves the sageo from it's 1/3 spot, which should make about a loop and one half.
- g. After looping the sageo, the left hand moves back along the saya (which is partially in the obi) to the spot where the saya passes through the obi. It stays there until step "L" below.
- h. The right hand then removes the rest of the saya from the obi and places the kojiri on the floor to the right and forward in a vertical orientation. Do not bang the floor when putting the tip down. The edge of the sword should be towards you.
- i. Without moving the tip from where the kojiri was placed on the floor, pivot the sword down to the left so that it is laying on the floor with the edge toward you and tsuka to your left. The sageo should be inside the sword (towards you) and not under or in front of the saya.
- j. With the right hand smooth the sageo along the saya, turning back any excess that would go past the tip.
- k. Right hand up to the thigh just in front of the body.
- l. Left hand down from the obi to the left thigh.
- m. Bow the same as above.
- n. Reach out with the right hand and grasp the tsuba with the right index finger, thumb and fingers holding the saya.
- o. Bring the sword up into a vertical position directly in front (and slightly closer).
- p. With the left hand, smooth the sageo down the length of the saya. With the left hand at the kojiri, pick the sword up with both hands and bring it smoothly along your left side at the obi.
- q. With the left hand, loop the sageo around your left thumb and switch control of the tsuka/tsuba from the right hand to the left hand. Left thumb should be on the tsuba with the sageo looped around it.

Note: The alternative to step N-Q is to loop the sageo with the right hand while it is still on the floor and maintain the loop until control has been passed to the left hand.

- r. Move the sword to the right side as you did in steps "a" through "c" of the Bowing In Sequence.

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- s. Do the 2 or 3 bows for the end of the class as described above.
 - t. Switch control back to the left side as in step “d” of the Bowing In Sequence.

Finish

- u. Then with the sword in Teito, stand up by coming to a full kneeling position, then bringing the right foot up even with the left knees, standing up from there.
- v. Then step back 3 steps (starting with the left foot back first).

Standing Bow

The standing bow is done before and after the sword bows for a shinsa, shiai or demo.

- a. With the feet close together, face the Shomen.
- b. Move the tsuka along the obi to the front of the navel.
- c. Reach over the left hand with the right hand grasping the saya under and behind where the left hand is holding it.
- d. Twist in a smooth manner with your right hand up and to the right, dropping the hand down to along the side of your right leg.
- e. The sword should now be orientated with the kojiri pointing forward and down. The tsuka should be backward and up. The back of the right hand should be facing away from your leg while holding the sword at about the kurikata.
- f. The transfer of the sword from the left to the right hands must maintain the loop of the sageo being over the right thumb.
- g. Bow from the waist with the head and neck in line with the back.
- h. The sword should not move with the bow.
- i. Let the eyes move with the bow.
- j. To switch back, move the back of the right hand up and forward bringing the sword back to the left hand, which is waiting in front of the navel.
- k. Try and find the sageo loop with the left thumb, but if difficult, grasp the sageo by pressing it with the palm of the left hand against the saya.
- l. With the left thumb on the tsuba, bring the sword smoothly back along the obi to the teito position.

Muso Shinden Ryu Reiho

The reiho for Muso Shinden Ryu is the same as the bowing in sequence above. It is the same for both bowing in and out.
