

Kyudo Etiquette

Both at Your Home Dojo

And For

Visiting Other Dojos

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The Reiki Shagi begins” The shooting, with the round of moving forward and backward must never be without courtesy and propriety.” So right from the beginning we are led to understand that Kyudo etiquette is at the heart of how we practice this art. But what does that mean? What specifically are we to do and not do to align our behavior with the rules of Kyudo etiquette. Below, you will find a summary of how to properly navigate a variety of Kyudo situations.

When Visiting Other Dojos (他道場訪問の礼儀):

1. Pre-Visit & Local Customs

In the United States, most Kyudojos are private venues. Before visiting, please ask Bill Sensei to provide a formal introduction and ensure the hosting dojo has granted permission.

Fees: Inquire about guest fees in advance. If no fee is required, bringing a small gift for the host dojo is appropriate.

Local Rules: Every dojo is different. Please learn their specific rules regarding etiquette, as well as their policies on bringing water, beverages, or food.

Social Media: Please obtain permission from the host dojo before taking photos or videos and posting them on social media.

2. Greetings and Respect

Make sure to arrive early enough to offer help with the dojo setup. Upon arrival, please greet the chief instructor, the hosts, and senior members with a formal bow. You should also perform a respectful bow toward the Kamidana (shrine) or the national flag.

3. Teaching and Feedback

Do not teach at another dojo unless specifically invited. There should be no unsolicited teaching or coaching at any time. Additionally, please refrain from commenting on or criticizing other members' equipment, form or shooting style.

For All Kyudo Practices, Both at Home and Visiting:

4. Dress Code & Appearance

Ensure you are dressed correctly and professionally in Kyudo attire. The attire should be clean and neat (no wrinkles). It needs to fit and be worn properly (e.g. obi and hakama need to be at the correct height around the waist and ankles).

No Bare Feet: White tabi or socks must be always worn.

Jewelry: Please remove all earrings, rings, necklaces, and watches before entering the dojo.

Nails: Please ensure you have no manicure or colored nail polish.

Tattoos: Please ensure all tattoos are fully covered by your clothing or athletic tape.

5. Silence and Focus

Please maintain a quiet atmosphere. At some dojo, talking is strictly prohibited once a shooter reaches or passes the Daisan position to ensure their concentration is not broken.

6. Seeking Advice

When seeking guidance, find a proper time to ask the Sensei or the most senior members so as not to interrupt the flow of practice.

7. Floor Etiquette & Movement

Sitting: Please don't sit on the floor with legs crossed. Don't sit in chairs that may be needed by Rissha members to put on/take off their yugake. Either sit in seiza or stand.

Passing: If you must pass in front of others, perform a light Yu (a small, respectful bow).

Space: When walking, do not cross directly in front of others or step over their equipment (bows, strings, arrows, yugake, etc.).

8. Observation

Watching others is a vital way to learn. However, avoid watching from directly behind the Sensei while they are shooting unless you have been given explicit permission.

9. Handling Equipment

Only handle your own equipment. Your equipment must be maintained properly (e.g. length of string) and checked for damage (e.g. check for cracked nocks). A spare string must always be ready.

Preparation: When preparing to shoot, pick up your arrows first, then your bow.

Bow Racks: When returning your bow to the rack, please leave the first few slots available for the Sensei's use.

Arrow Placement: If you place your arrows on a hardwood floor, the tips of the arrows should always point up.

10. Service and Cleaning

Kyudo is a shared responsibility. Please offer to help with the dojo cleaning (Soji) before or after the session.

11. Safety

Always observe the necessary safety procedures. Those are universal, but their implementation may differ slightly depending on the size and exact layout of the dojo.

12. Lunch breaks during or visiting a restaurant after a Kyudo event

Wait until the sensei (or senior instructor) is seated before you take your own seat. The seats closest to the sensei are reserved for other instructors and senior students. They might occupy a table of their

own. You may be asked by senior practitioners to move to another table or chair - please follow their request. This is nothing personal, but a matter of respecting the higher ranks.

Please refrain from consuming food or beverages before the sensei started eating or drinking.

Consider this to be a formal occasion and conduct yourself properly.

Please remember and consider that Kyudo's customs and traditions are rooted deeply in Japanese history and culture. When studying Kyudo one also practices aspects of Japanese culture that might, at first glance, not appear to be directly connected to or necessary for the handling of bow and arrows itself. To always be aware of the occasion and respectful towards the dojo and your fellow practitioners are of great importance. The seniority within a dojo should always be kept in mind and observed. When you are unsure about the specific roles of practitioners at a dojo that you are visiting, or rules that might be specific to their location, please observe what others are doing, and when in doubt, ask.