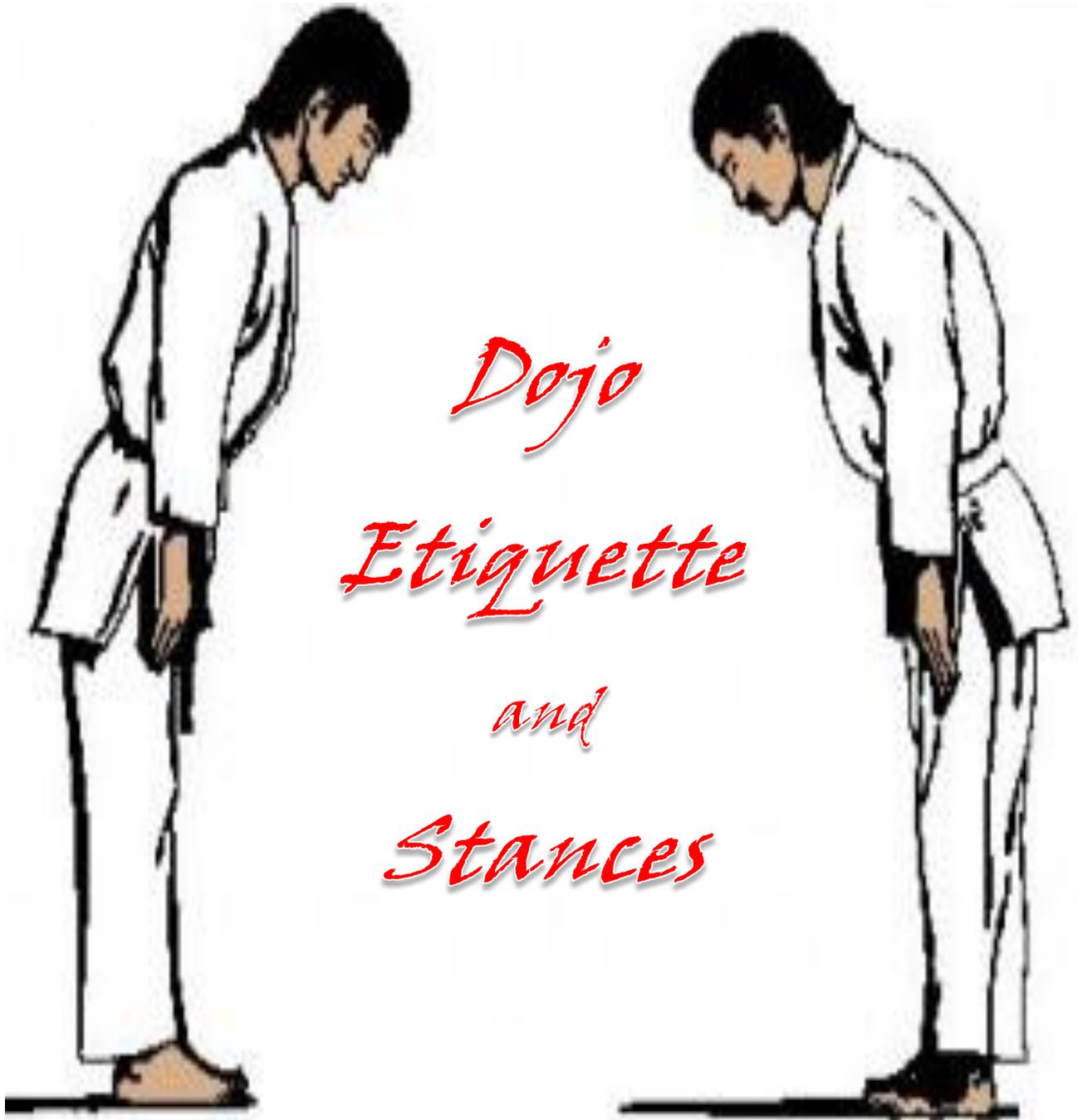




ZEN DO KAI MARTIAL ARTS

"The Best of Everything in Progression"



Dojo
Etiquette
and
Stances

Presented by

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Guide to Dojo Etiquette

Etiquette - conventional code of conduct.

(Collins English Dictionary)

Good manners, courtesy and respect for traditions should be assets of great importance to each karate/martial arts student. This requirement is underlined by Dojo etiquette. Showing respect for Dojo etiquette helps us all to carry the assets of courtesy and respect into our everyday lives.

Proper Dojo etiquette is one of the essential aspects of martial arts training. Etiquette is a way of showing respect to fellow students, to the Dojo, to the instructors, and to all the Sensei's throughout history whose dedication and skill have come down to us as the art we now study. And yet, demonstrating proper etiquette is really for ourselves, a small symbol of our efforts at self-mastery and pride in being an active participant in something so fascinating and enjoyable.

***“Respect benefits the one showing it
far more than the one receiving it”
(Shorin-rye Grand Master Ansei Ueshiro)***

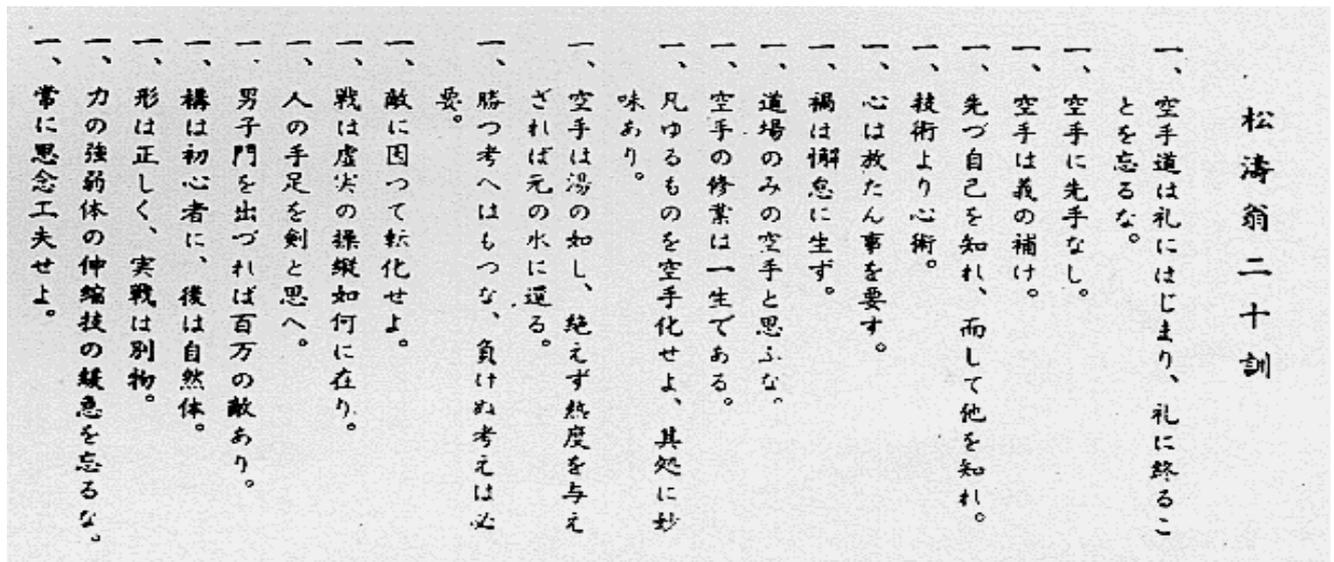
Minor variations in acceptable Dojo etiquette exist from one school to the next, and many are open to personal interpretations, or are specific for that particular school. But the major points are the same. The Zen Do Kai website lists 23 points of Dojo etiquette, modified for the 21st century martial artists and some are very specific to Zen Do Kai and even some that seem to repeat themselves by their meanings. But these are all based on much older traditions.

***“Karate begins and ends with courtesy”
(Shotokan founder Gichin Funakoshi)***

(It should be noted now, that a senior student means higher ranked student, black belt or instructor. Junior students are lower ranked; we are all students of the martial arts regardless of our rank or age)

***“Martial Arts without philosophy is street fighting.”
(Tae Kwon Do Grand Master Jhoon Rhee)***

Niju Kun



The “Niju kun” is the “twenty instructions” of the Okinawan martial arts master Gichin Funakoshi, believed to have been documented around 1890; they were first published in a book (The Twenty Guiding Principles of Karate) in 1938.

1. Karate-do begins and ends with bowing.
2. There is no first strike in karate.
3. Karate stands on the side of justice.
4. First know yourself, then know others.
5. Mentality over technique.
6. The heart must be set free.
7. Calamity springs from carelessness.
8. Karate goes beyond the Dojo.
9. Karate is a lifelong pursuit.
10. Apply the way of karate to all things. Therein lies its beauty.
11. Karate is like boiling water; without heat, it returns to its tepid state.
12. Do not think of winning. Think rather, of not losing.
13. Make adjustments according to your opponent.
14. The outcome of a battle depends on how one handles emptiness and fullness (weakness and strength).
15. Think of hands and feet as swords.
16. When you step beyond your own gate, you face a million enemies.
17. Formal stances are for beginners; later, one stands naturally.
18. Perform prescribed sets of techniques exactly; actual combat is another matter.
19. Do not forget the employment of withdrawal of power, the extension or contraction of the body, the swift or leisurely application of technique.
20. Be constantly mindful, diligent, and respectful, in your pursuit of the Way.

Dojo Kun

The Dojo Kun (Dojo rules) was derived from the Niju Kun (The Twenty Guiding Principles of Karate), and is used by many as a condensed form of the twenty precepts. They are generally posted at the entrance of the Dojo and outline behaviour expected and disallowed. As Zen Do Kai has its roots in the Goju karate system, the following is the Dojo Kun of the Goju Rye;

- **Be humble and polite**
- **Train considering your physical strength**
- **Practice earnestly with creativity**
- **Be calm and swift**
- **Take care of your health**
- **Live a plain life**
- **Do not be too proud or modest**
- **Continue your training with patience**

"OSU!"

Patience, determination, appreciation, respect and perseverance

"Osu" (pronounced "oss" with a long "O") comes from the expression "Oshi Shinobu" which is a combination of the words: Oshi which means "Push", and Shinobu which means "to Endure".

"Oshi Shinobu" means to push oneself to the limit of one's ability and yet continue, to persevere under pressure, and to endure.

"Osu" is a word with many meanings, expressing the willingness to strive against all odds, to persevere on the road to physical, mental and spiritual strength, an expression of respect of ones seniors, and responsibility to ones juniors.

In a school of Karate it is also a greeting and can be used to replace words such as "yes", "alright", "good", "I'll do it" and "excuse me". It is also used to mean "hello", "goodbye", "have patience with me" and "I'm trying".

ZEN DO KAI

Dojo Etiquette

1. Dojo means "A Sacred Place" - treat it as such
2. Do not wear shoes on the dojo training area
3. No drugs, cigarettes or alcohol in the dojo
4. Do not enter a class late or leave early without acknowledgment of the highest rank instructor in the class
5. No swearing or actions of disrespect or breaching of rules
6. Always train with the "true" attitude of Bushido
7. Never abuse fighting skills, always fight defensively and use these skills always to help lower ranks
8. Dojo etiquette is to be always clean in body and appearance
9. Bow upon entering or leaving the training area of the dojo
10. Never walk in front of your seniors
11. Always address your seniors by their proper titles
12. When placing or removing your belt, students should kneel on their right knee when doing so
13. Students are to line up in order of rank from left (highest rank) to right (lowest rank), standing opposite the instructor (rank is indicated by belt colour and seniority of training time).
14. Black belts are to line up in order of rank with the highest ranked instructor in the centre, then alternating order of rank with the second highest rank to the right, the third highest rank to the left and so on.
15. Within the black belt hierarchy, grade (Dan) ranking primarily designates seniority. However, where two black belts are of the same rank, the one with the higher teaching title is considered the higher rank
16. Higher rank coloured belts should endeavor to set a good example for lower ranked students and be responsible for the behaviour and conduct of lower ranked students
17. If a student must adjust their Gi (uniform) during training, they must wait until the end of the activity in progress then turn to the back of the class prior to adjusting their Gi or belt.
18. During training, there should be no idle talking between students
19. Students and black belts are not permitted to use training equipment without first obtaining permission from the instructor
20. All students are to participate in any competition in strict accordance with the competition rules and in the spirit of good sportsmanship
21. During training all students should be aware that the level of intensity of their training is at an appropriate level when partnered up with another student, taking into consideration the other students age, weight & sex
22. Zen Do Kai tradition encourages that new black belts wear their belts continuously for at least 24 hours after successfully attaining their Sho Dan Ho (probationary 1st Degree) grading
23. When it comes to dojo financial problems, Samurai would have discussions but would never develop into arguing on such matters

1. Dojo means "A Sacred Place" - treat it as such

In martial arts, the Dojo ("place of the Way") is understood to be a special space, different from the spaces of day-to-day experience. Dojo etiquette and protocol reflect our respect for tradition, our commitment to train together diligently and our readiness to focus all our attention on the work at hand. It is important to learn these protocols, follow them, and contemplate their meaning.

2. Do not wear shoes on the dojo training area

Remove your shoes before or as soon as you enter the training hall. If there is no place provided for them, place them neatly at the rear/side of training hall along with any clothing/training bags. Never place these things where people will be walking.

All footwear to be worn on the training floor must be approved by the instructor.

3. No Drugs, cigarettes or alcohol in the dojo

Also, do not eat, chew gum or use mobile phones while in the Dojo

4. Do not enter a class late or leave early without acknowledgment of the highest rank instructor in the class

Be prompt. Arrive before class begins. Arriving late for training is to be discouraged but is sometimes unavoidable. Arriving late regularly is a bad habit and is disrespectful to the instructors and fellow students.

Should you arrive late, stand to the side at the rear of class in shoulder stance and wait until you are acknowledged/invited to join class by the instructor. Once acknowledged, bow say "OSU" then quietly join the back of class.

Do not break rank for any reason without permission from the instructor.

5. No swearing or actions of disrespect or breaching of rules

Behave appropriately in the Dojo. Conduct yourself in a formal, respectful manner at all times when in the Dojo. Speak quietly and maintain an attitude appropriate for serious practice.

The club reserves the right to suspend any student at any time (this includes any serious breach of rules outside the Dojo)

6. Always train with "true" attitude of Bushido

The Bushidō ("Way of the Warrior") code is typified by 7 virtues:

- (義 *gi*) Rectitude, Justice, Integrity
- (勇 *yū*) Courage, Bravery
- (仁 *jin*) Benevolence, Charity, Humanity, Mercy
- (礼 *rei*) Respect, Etiquette, Courtesy
- (誠 *makoto*) Honesty, Truth, Sincerity
- (名誉 *meiyo*) Honour, Glory, Prestige
- (忠義 *chūgi*) Loyalty, Devotion, Harmony

In Bushidō the Dojo Kun consists of five rules and are as follows:

- Loyalty is the essential duty of the soldier.
- Courage is essential since the trait of the fighting man is his spirit to win.
- Valor is a trait to be admired and encouraged in the modern warrior.
- Faithfulness in keeping one's word.
- Simplicity is a samurai virtue.

7. Never abuse fighting skills, always fight defensively and use these skills always to help lower ranks

Unnecessary roughness, crude language or display of ill-temper or disrespect is forbidden.

8. Dojo etiquette is to be always clean in body and appearance

Cleanliness will be practiced at all times. Keep finger nails and toe nails short and clean.

Your Gi must be neat and washed clean at all times. Your belt must NEVER be washed; it symbolically contains the spirit of your hard training.

For reasons of modesty, women and girls may wear a plain white, black or club T-shirt under the Gi. Training with a T-shirt for men and boys is unnecessary and will even be uncomfortable as perspiration will be trapped close to the body.

It is up to individual clubs to decide whether during extremely hot weather students may exchange the Gi jacket for a T-shirt (plain black, white or club). And changing into a clean top at the end of class is highly recommended.

9. Bow upon entering or leaving the training area of the dojo

This represents a mark of respect for the Dojo and the people in it. Do not rush in or out, and take your time to do this correctly.

Stand at the edge of the training area (most often in the doorway of the hall). Direct your bow towards one of the following.

- a) The most senior person in the Dojo
- b) Or the head of the Dojo if there is a picture of the Grand Master
- c) Or if none of the above, the centre of the room

Face in the correct direction, bow and say "OSU."

It is also very highly recommended that when you first arrive at class you approach the instructor and all assistant instructors, bow and say "OSU" do not wait to be acknowledged back unless you are waiting to speak to them

10. Never walk in front of your seniors

If you must break rank (after being given permission to do so) do not walk between the instructor and other students. Walk behind the row you are in to either side and proceed from there.

11. Always address your seniors by their proper titles

Always means **ALWAYS!** Sempai, Sensei, Kyoshi etc. when inside the Dojo.

Bow before and after speaking to a senior and acknowledge them with a loud "OSU" when they speak to you.

Even if you are outside of the Dojo or not wearing a Gi the rank is not left behind. Higher ranks have still worked harder and longer than you and are still more knowledgeable whether you or they are in Gi or not. To be too familiar with them or even disrespect them because they don't have their Gi on is both rude and stupid. Never forget your place and others will remember theirs.

12. When placing or removing your belt, students should kneel on their right knee when doing so

This is a symbol of modesty and humility (because you are not in full uniform) as well as a sign of respect, as your belt is a symbol of your hard training so far.

13. Students are to line up in order of rank from left (highest rank) to right (lowest rank), standing opposite the instructor (rank is indicated by belt colour and seniority of training time).

Please refer to No 14.

14. Black belts are to line up in order of rank with the highest ranked instructor in the centre, then alternating order of rank with the second highest rank to the right, the third highest rank to the left and so on.

<u>Front of Dojo</u>				
4	2	1	3	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25

Beginning with the highest rank being No.1 and the lowest rank being No.25, this is how instructors and students should be lined up

15. Within the black belt hierarchy, grade (Dan) ranking primarily designates seniority. However, where two black belts are of the same rank, the one with the higher teaching title is considered the higher rank

Simply put, things go in the following order;

- Rank
- Title
- Age (adult before child)
- Grading date
- Time training

16. Higher rank coloured belts should endeavor to set a good example for lower ranked students and be responsible for the behaviour and conduct of lower ranked students

Respect other students with a higher grade than yourself, irrespective of their age. Show other students with grades lower than yourself the same respect you would like them to show you.

Junior students are expected to look to seniors for guidance, imitate their behavior, and treat them with respect and consideration.

Senior students are expected to set a good example for juniors, protect them from injury, help them learn and treat them with respect and consideration.

17. If a student must adjust their Gi (uniform) during training, they must wait until the end of the activity in progress then turn to the back of the class prior to adjusting their Gi or belt.

A complete Gi (uniform) must be worn by all students. The belt must be worn in the proper fashion, in the colour representing your current rank and be worn at all times (NEVER wash your belt)

If your Gi requires adjustment during training; bow to and then face away from your partner/instructor. When fixing your belt, you would also go down onto your right knee to do so.

At no time would you stop training to do this, wait until an appropriate time to do so.

18. During training, there should be no idle talking between students

Pay attention; it is part of your training. Concentrate fully on training while in the Dojo. Your training should be a serious matter. Talking, laughing, giggling during instructional periods is disruptive and rude. You should be in shoulder stance when awaiting the next command.

19. Students and black belts are not permitted to use training equipment without first obtaining permission from the instructor

Focus pads/gloves, kick shields, Thai forearm pads, hanging bags, weapons. In fact, anything you do not personally own should not be touched without the owner's permission. To do so is extremely rude and disrespectful.

If the Dojo is a rented hall, as most are, nothing that is not the club's property should be touched for **any reason**. To do so, is again, extremely rude and disrespectful. It reflects badly on you, your fellow students, the club and your instructor.

Rented or owned by the club, a Dojo is a sacred place. It and everything in it should be treated as such!

20. All students are to participate in any competition in strict accordance with the competition rules and in the spirit of good sportsmanship

Un-sportsman like conduct will not be tolerated. Such as, profanities, obscene gestures or actions, unnecessary roughness, and especially sexism and racism.

21. During training all students should be aware that the level of intensity of their training is at an appropriate level when partnered up with another student, taking into consideration the other students age, weight & sex

All students are to practice CAUTION at all times. The Zen Do Kai motto is "Training for Strength Together". NOT training for strength against each other! Fellow students are your training partners, NOT your training enemies!

22. Zen Do Kai tradition encourages that new black belts wear their belts continuously for at least 24 hours after successfully attaining their Sho Dan Ho (probationary 1st Degree) grading

A true Black Belt following the path of Bushido unwittingly changes their way of life....for they can never be the same person again. BLACK BELT is the JOURNEY, not the DESTINATION. All the coloured belts before that are simply packing for the trip! Black Belt should be a mark not only of physical prowess and understanding, but of good character.

This is the last belt you will ever wear and a lot of hard work has gone into achieving this level. But it is not the end of your journey, it is only the beginning!

23. When it comes to dojo financial problems, Samurai would have discussions but would never develop into arguing on such matters

"Gentlemen warriors will have discussions but will never lower themselves to arguing"

Any problems (financial or otherwise) within the club should be discussed with the club instructor. Solutions for most problems can be found, but only if they are known.



Although not covered directly in Zen Do Kai etiquette as such (although very much implied) the following are "common sense" rules and courtesies to be observed.

- | |
|--|
| ➤ All students (and visitors) are to observe Dojo etiquette during class. |
| ➤ <i>When the instructor assumes his or her place at the head of the Dojo, all students immediately assume their rightful positions to prepare for practice. Stand calmly and quietly in shoulder stance. Posture is erect and balanced (centered).</i> |
| ➤ All directions, by instructor, are to be obeyed in the Dojo, without question. You will not be asked to do anything that your instructor has not done him/herself already. If you cannot keep up, do the best you can. |
| ➤ <i>Always move quickly in class when instructed to do something. DO NOT STROLL.</i> |
| ➤ Do not practice sparring unless instructed to do so. |
| ➤ <i>Protective gear must be worn during all sparring.</i> |
| ➤ It is everyone's responsibility to ensure the Dojo is clean, tidy and safe at all times. |
| ➤ <i>Jewellery, watches and other adornments are not allowed on Dojo floor in respect for one's fellow students. Such items can cause injury to others and oneself. The only exceptions are "medic alert" and Zen Do Kai "Family Crosses"</i> |
| ➤ Do not teach new techniques or Kata to other students unless asked to do so by your teacher. |
| ➤ <i>Practice your drills and Kata's consistently outside of class, even if it is just a few minutes every day. This is the only way to improve your skill and physical conditioning.</i> |
| ➤ Sideline behaviour: Remain standing (shoulder stance) unless told to sit. If allowed to sit, use only the kneeling (seiza) or cross legged position, posture is erect and balanced (centered). Remain quiet and attentive. |
| ➤ <i>During a break: No sitting on chairs, leaning against the wall or lying down. Do some training rather than waste time.</i> |
| ➤ Accept constructive criticism from your teacher with grace. He/she is only trying to get you to achieve your maximum potential. |
| ➤ <i>Students who attend training session but because of injury only watch and do not participate in training, must in any event participate in the bow-in and bow-out.</i> |
| ➤ At the end of a training session, your instructor will thank you for doing your best/thank you for training by saying "Gokuro san." You will then respond to thank your instructor for his/her help and guidance/for teaching you by saying "Gokuro sama deshita" |

Uniform Etiquette

Training uniform (Dogi or Gi as it is more commonly known) as we know it today is kimono style, and as such always wraps right side first on both male and female students. It was created by the founder of the Judo system (Kanō Jigorō). He also created the belt system that is used today.

It is designed to have nothing worn under it.

Females are required to wear a sports top or T-shirt under the jacket, for when the jacket opens during class activities.

It must be uniform colour (Black or White) and be plain, no brand names or insignia.

Dojo etiquette is to be always clean in body and appearance.

If you have no respect for yourself or your uniform, neither will anybody else.

If you must adjust your Gi during training, you must wait until the end of the activity in progress before adjusting your Gi or belt. And when doing so, bow first, then turn away, either to the side or back of the dojo facing away from your partner and instructor.

When placing or removing your belt, you are to kneel on your right knee when doing so.

The knot is tied left over right, under both layers, then right over left. The belt is to hang evenly.

More respect would be given to a white belt that takes the time and effort to tie their belt correctly then would be given to a black belt that cannot get their belt to hang evenly. (If you have no respect for yourself or your uniform, neither will anybody else, the belt is an important part of your uniform)

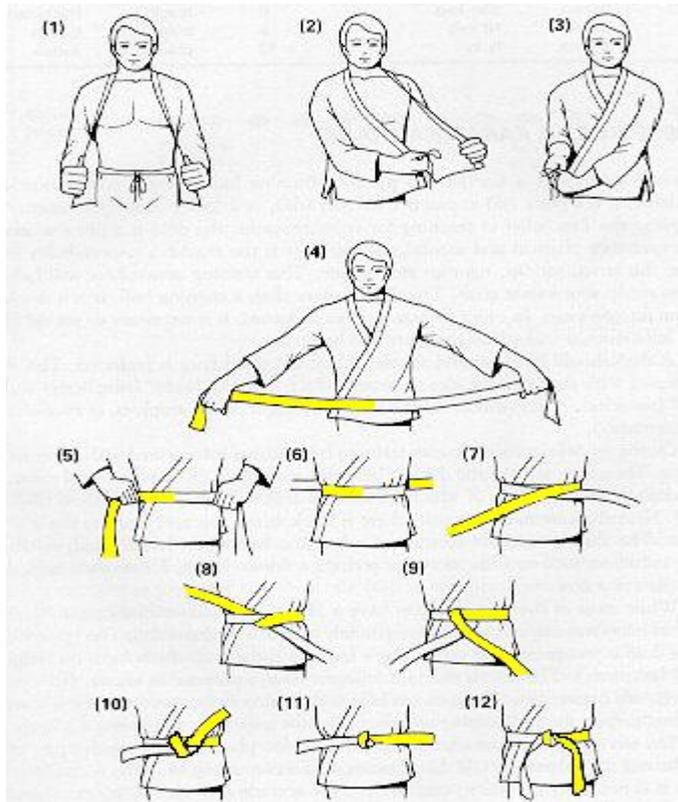
You should never leave your belt lying around. The belt you wear is a symbol of what you have achieved and who you are in the hierarchical order. If you are so indifferent about those achievements that you don't take care of your belt then why should anybody else care about your belt or your achievements?

NEVER wash your belt. The sweat, tears and sometimes even blood that accumulates on the belt is as much a symbol of your achievements as the colour of the belt itself.

Uniform is to be worn at every class and grading, even if you are not grading on the day.

Sleeve cuffs may be turned up two or three times only and must remain below the elbows.

During hot weather, T-shirts or singlets may be worn. They are to be of uniform colour, no brand names or insignia (other than Zen Do Kai), and are to be worn out side of the Gi pants with your belt.



- (1) Put jacket on
- (2) Wrap right side in and tie
- (3) Wrap left side in and tie
- (4) Find middle of belt (best done by folding belt in half)
- (5) Go down on right knee, place middle of belt on your 'Hara'
- (6) Wrap both ends around your back (keeping the belt flat) bring the ends back to the front, ends level.
- (7) Place the right side flat. **Bring the left side over the top.**
- (8) **Pull left end of belt underneath both layers of belt and up**
- (9) **Fold bottom end back to the right and bring the top end over**
- (10) **Under and through**
- (11) Pull tight
- (12) Belt should hang evenly

When tying the belt you must first make certain that it hangs evenly from the middle. This symbolizes the balance between the physical and mental aspects of your training.

The belt is first wrapped around the waist by placing the middle of it on the 'Hara' which is your centre and is your balance point.

When you cross the belt behind your back the "X" is to remind you to be prepared for what can go on behind your back.

Bringing the belt around to the front is to remind you that what goes around comes around and give emphasis on morality and "right thinking"

Crossing the belt again in front emphasizes the fact that what goes on behind ones back can go on under your nose as well, and we must be prepared for adversity wherever it comes from.

Bringing one end of the belt up under the waist and the other down serves to remind us the only two directions we can travel and the importance of continuing on and upwards in an effort to improve ourselves.

Every time you tie the knot you should remind yourself to tighten your resolve.

Finally, you should make sure that the ends of the belt are perfectly even, you should pay attention to the details at the finish of all things.

Guide to Stances

Stances are a fundamental part of karate. They serve many purposes: they act as the foundation from which your techniques are delivered, providing stability, reach and power.

However, most of the stances that we learn in Zen Do Kai are not necessarily intended to be used in the form that we learn them. In the early days of karate, when it was being formalised into the form that we know now, karate was used as a form of exercise for school and university students. Many of the practical fighting stances were magnified. Therefore, stances that had functional applications at one or even one-and-a-half shoulders long or wide, were increased to two shoulders or something thereabouts. These stances have reduced fighting application, and you're unlikely to consciously place yourself into such a stance during combat. However, such stances serve to develop the muscle strength and explosive movement that makes your fighting stances so much better.

Stances are transitional points, through which you might move on the way to somewhere else. They can also be the starting or ending point of movement. Stances are primarily about generating movement. Thus, a low stance like the horse stance might be a preparatory position for a lift, or the final position for a throw or grapple, whilst the bear stance is an excellent stance for generating rotational movement.

Stances are about more than just foot and leg angles and positions; they are also about muscle tensions, and your body's interaction with the floor. This could be about grounding yourself, to make yourself strong and immovable, or it could be about using your stance and posture, to deliver power via any connecting joints, to the point of impact, alternatively your stance can be used to redirect your opponent's energy via your joints, so that it is dissipated with minimal or no effort on your behalf.

**“Formal stances are for beginners; later, one stands naturally”
(Shotokan founder Gichin Funakoshi)**

You must first learn the most fundamental dimensions, energies and interactions of a stance before you can progress to develop it into a more useful part of your real-world karate.

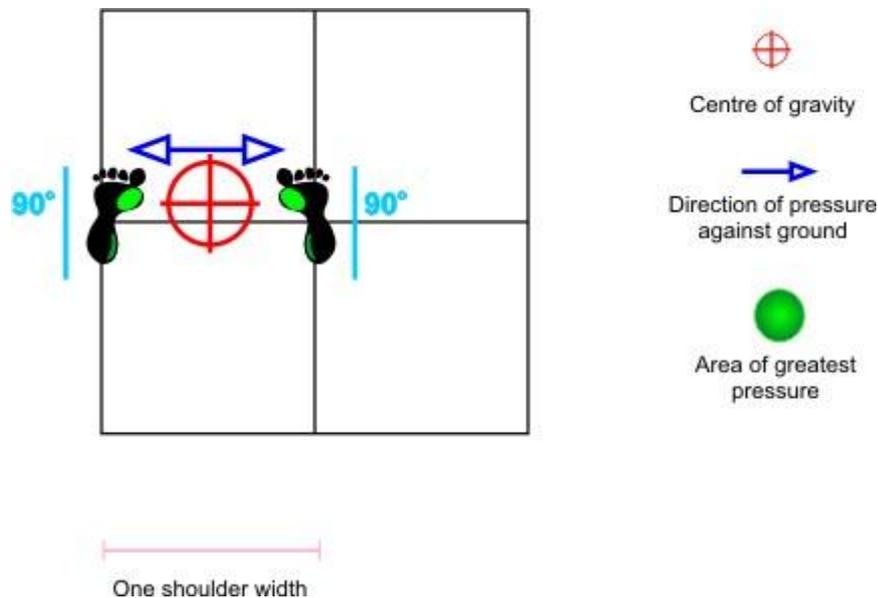
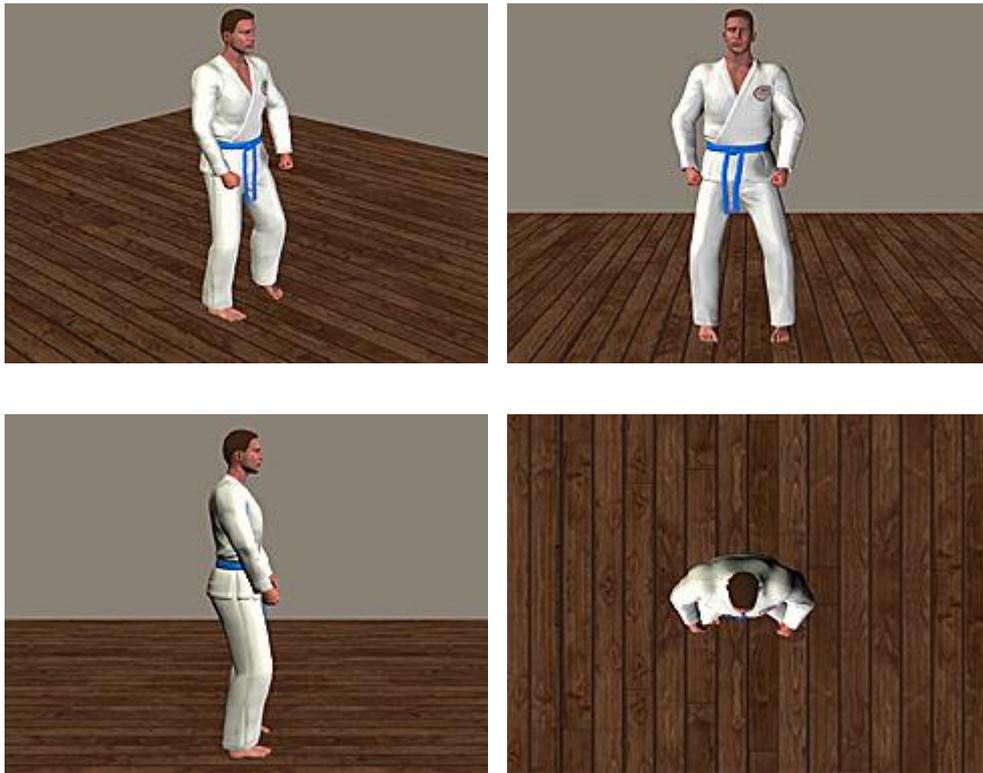
Zen Do Kai has fused many fighting systems together, but our system of stances originates largely from Goju Karate Do.

I have attempted to find the best pictures and descriptions of these stances off the internet.

It is my hope that this will help both the beginner and advanced students to better understand the foundations on which you stand.

Shoulder Stance - Heiko Dachi

(Hey-Ko-dachi)



As its name indicates, this is a parallel shoulder stance. Which means that neither foot is forward of the other and your weight is balanced evenly between them. Your feet should be about one shoulder-width apart, and that should feel like a fairly natural width. Your toes are turned slightly inward, pressing against the floor to provide the traction for any hip rotation you may require as you deliver techniques or for subsequent foot movement as you move into a different stance.

Your knees should be slightly bent. Your chest out. Your back should be straight and natural, and your hips and shoulders should face forwards in their natural position.

If you are not delivering techniques (for example, when your instructor is talking), your arms also have a correct position in the full Heiko Dachi - Shoulder stance. They should be held down, in line with your thighs, and just wide enough apart so that if you swing them backwards past your legs your fists would brush against the outside of your legs. Your elbows should be slightly bent, and your fists should be clenched, Sei-ken knuckles (index and middle finger knuckles) pointed to the ground. Your palms facing towards your thighs.

Common mistakes to avoid

Make sure that the outside edges of the feet face straight forwards, which makes it look as though the toes are facing inwards. Don't actually turn your toes in or out.

Remember to bend the knees. This adds suspension to your stance, making it easier to retain balance, and gain power.

Keep your elbows tucked in by your sides. If you let them stick out, you look like a gorilla.

Remember, your fists should be closed, forearms and wrists straight with sei-ken knuckles pointed to the ground.

Attention Stance - Musubi Dachi

(Moo-sue-b-da-chi)



Attention stance is used at the beginning and end of every Kata. The heels are together, and the toes are pointed out at a 45 degree angle, hands open and palms pressed against your outer thighs, standing tall like a soldier. You would normally move to this position from shoulder stance.

From the shoulder stance, leave the big toe of your right foot in place and turn the heel in while bringing your right hand palm up, a shoulder width distance from your 'Hara' (Hara is your centre, just below the belly button). Turn on the big toe of your left foot, bringing the heels together at a 45 degree angle, at the same time, bringing your left hand under and lining up the sei-ken knuckles. Bringing both hands up together (and keeping the same distance from your body), in front of your face without obscuring your eye sight, make a rolling action and turning the palms down. Straighten legs as you return hands, palm down, to the starting position in front of your 'hara' left hand on top. Then place your hands to your sides. Your back is straight and your head is up.

Preparation Stance – Yoi

(Yoy)

Yoi is the command to prepare or to get ready, the feet remain the same as in the attention stance, but the hands move to the preparation position. Left hand on right, sei-ken knuckles lined up and wrists straight, palms down and shoulder width distance from your 'hara'

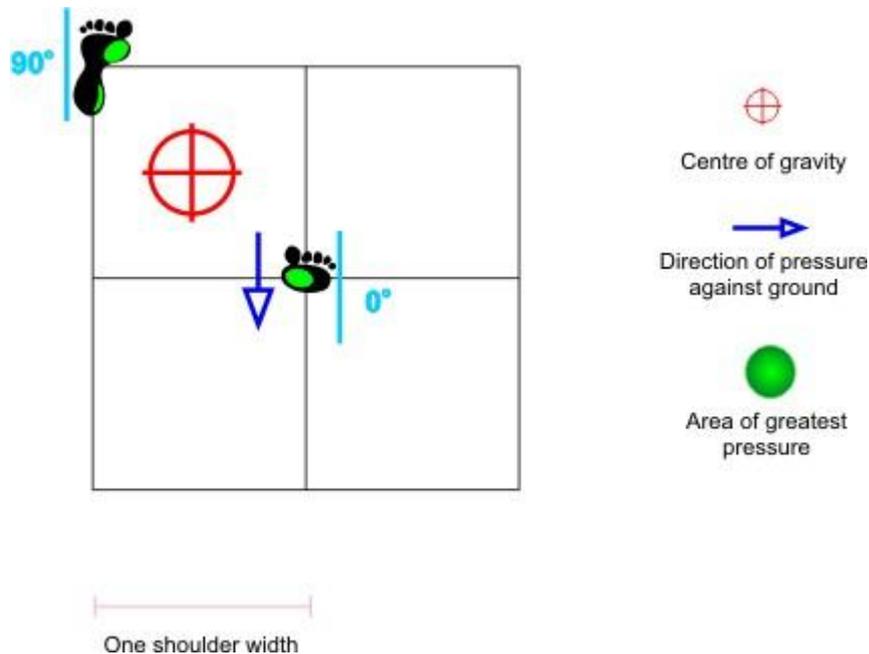
Bowing Position - Heisoku Dachi

(Hey-sue-ko-da-chi)



Heisoku dachi is a formal attention stance used when bowing. Your feet are together and your hands are by your side. Your back is straight and your head is up. You would keep your eyes forward while bowing from the waist, slightly lower than the highest rank.

Fighting Stance



Fighting stance is one shoulder-width wide and one shoulder-width long. Both legs should be slightly bent, and the knees are allowed to rest naturally. Your weight is evenly distributed between your two legs, enabling you to switch your weight onto either leg with equal ease.

Your back should be straight, with your hips and shoulders turned away to 45 degrees whilst sparring in this stance. This reduces the frontal body area that can be used as a target, and pre-cocks the hips ready to add body weight to a strike. Your back heel should be lifted from the floor, with your foot facing forwards.

Keep your elbows in close and in line with your body. On the side that the leg is back, the hand needs to be up by the side of your face. On the side that the leg is forward, the hand needs to be up in front of your face, (approximately one shoulder width distance away) without obscuring your eyesight.

Common mistakes to avoid

Holding hands too low with elbows at the side, instead of being in front, or out like chicken wings.

Stance too narrow and/or short.

Try not to turn your back foot any further out than 45 degrees. It locks the back leg and slows down your reaction time. It also provides less of a platform from which to spring forwards.

Be careful that your front knee doesn't collapse in. This not only provides a target for a kick, but is bad for your knee joint.

Make sure that you don't turn your hips past 45 degrees as this presents your back as an easy target to round kicks, and makes it easier for opponents to move around to your weak side.

Seiza – Kneeling Position (say-zah)



Sei = proper, right, true. Za = sitting posture

Normally you would move into this position from the attention stance or shoulder stance.

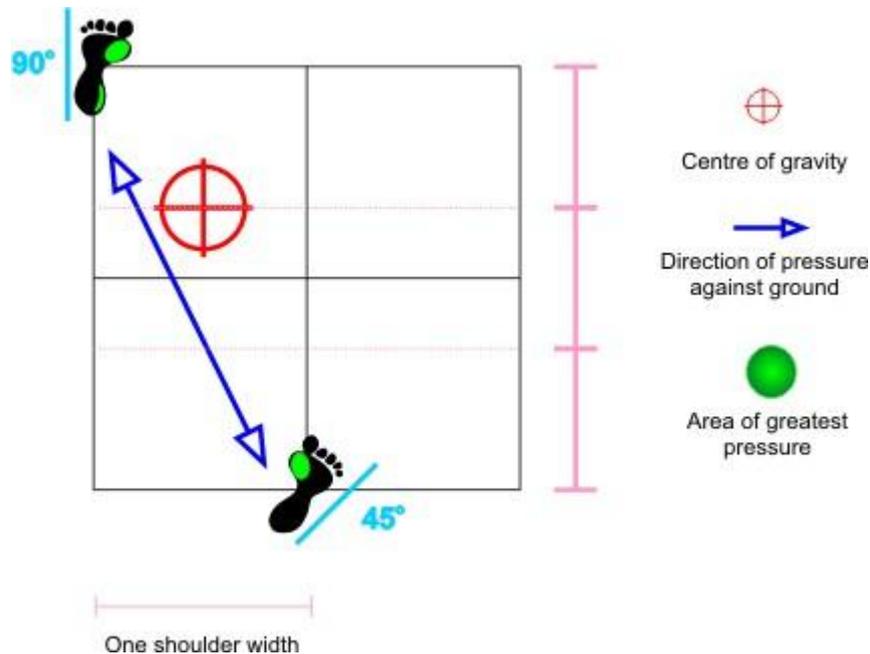
Begin by sinking down, turning your left knee out 90 degrees, gently lower your right knee to the floor, followed by the left knee, gently sit back on the heels of your feet. The big toe of your right foot should overlap the big toe of the left. Keep your back straight, shoulders back and relaxed, palms resting on upper thighs, fingers closed and pointed inward. Arms slightly rounded.

Moving out of Seiza is the reverse of moving into it. Step up with the right foot, rise up, and then step up with the left foot into shoulder stance.



Dragon Stance - Zenkutsu Dachi

(zen-kut-sue-da-chi)



Dragon stance is one shoulder width wide and two shoulders widths long. The front leg is bent at the knee at least 45 degrees and the front shin should be vertical, with the knee above the ankle. The back leg should be straight, but the knee should not be locked at the joint (which will cause joint damage over a period of time) - instead, you should use your muscles to hold the leg a fraction short of straight. The rear foot faces forwards at an angle of at least 45 degrees (measured on the *outside* edge of the foot). The front foot is turned slightly inwards and the front knee is pushed outwards slightly over the shin.

Your centre of gravity should be forwards with approximately two-thirds (66%) of your weight on the front leg, and the remainder on the back leg. Your body should also be two thirds of the way to the front.

Your hip rotation depends upon the action that you are performing, and with which limb you are performing it, so your hips may face forwards for a punch or kick, or to 45 degrees for a block. However, you also want to roll your hips forwards from the bottom upwards.

Although both feet should be flat on the floor, your pressure should be on the inside of the feet. Regardless of whether you are moving forwards or backwards, your pressure against the ground is forwards through your front foot and backwards through your rear foot.

There are many forces at work in this stance. The essence is to achieve maximum transferral of strength to your arm or body via the straight back leg. The leg transfers power to the hip. If you are attacking, you will want to use the straightening of the back leg, in conjunction with rotation of the hip and shoulder, to maximise the amount of energy being transferred along the arm. However, to accomplish this successfully, you will also want to synchronise these movements with your body's forward momentum, and the timing of your foot hitting the ground.

For stability, you will not want a punch to land whilst your foot is in the air, but for maximum body weight, you will not want to strike after your foot has been planted as this dissipates some of your energy downwards. You should make contact just as your toes land, and complete your strike as your heel lands.

By pushing the front knee out, you reduce your vulnerability to a round knee kick. Sports physios also say that this is the safest way to bend the knees if you wish to avoid joint damage caused by the strain. By bending the front knee, you increase your strength against front kicks to the knee (but you increase your vulnerability to sweeps). You also make it easier to create tension between the legs to increase the strength of the stance. When you step forwards, it is the bend in the knee that forces you to pull yourself forwards with front leg, moving from the hips. Do not lean your shoulders forwards to initiate your movement! This is opposite to normal walking where steps are initiated by creating tension in the back thigh in order to step forwards under gravity. It is the pulling action caused by the lowness of the stance that gives this stance its exercise benefits.

When you step backwards, you lead with the shoulders, as you balance on the supporting leg, you should experience a sensation similar to sitting down on a chair. As you do so, you extend your leg backwards under control.

The angle of the back foot is critical. If you were to turn it fully out to the side (90 degrees to the front), it would lock your back knee (because the knee bends poorly to the side). This would make the stance strong but immobile. However, if you have your toes facing fully forwards, the stance lacks strength, but becomes very dynamic, enabling fast movement. With the foot facing forwards, the heel has to rise from the ground, creating tension in the calf muscle. This creates a store of potential energy that is only released when you step forwards. By setting the foot to 45 degrees, you select a compromise, which offers the best of both worlds.

Given the fact that the stance is more likely to be used at the end of single committed movement, the ability to be very dynamic is perhaps less vital.

In its natural position, you'll have a tendency to allow the hip to turn off, dropping backwards on whichever side has the back leg. This can be useful for throwing a front arm block, or for cocking a reverse punch strike.

If your stance is too narrow, you'll find it virtually impossible to square the stance off for a fully effective reverse punch. However, if you go too wide you lose the hip angle for the blocks. The angle is also useful because it minimises your body's exposure to attacks. People with lower back problems will probably want to set their stance a little wider to reduce the strain.

When moving in forward stance, it's generally a good idea to keep your feet as close to the ground as possible without sliding them. Imagine a piece of rice paper between your foot and the floor. Apart from anything else, this way of moving forces you to tense your stomach to maintain composure. Thus, at your moment of greatest potential vulnerability, your stomach is already prepared to take a strike. Even if this were not the case, this type of movement helps to build up your stomach muscles. This way of moving slightly reduces your exposure to sweeps, and more importantly means that if you need to shorten your stance halfway through a step, you still remain in balance. The only danger with this type of movement is if you find yourself fighting in trainers, or on an uneven surface - then you can find your feet sticking or getting caught on obstacles.

Your toes should be gripping the floor in order to create tension and strength in the stance. However, don't grip so hard that that your toes bend downwards, as this endangers you to foot stamps, which would then be far more damaging.

Common mistakes to avoid

Don't allow the back knee to bend.

Make sure the front knee is pushed out the side.

Don't set the stance too wide when stepping forwards.

Don't set the stance too narrow or short, especially when turning.

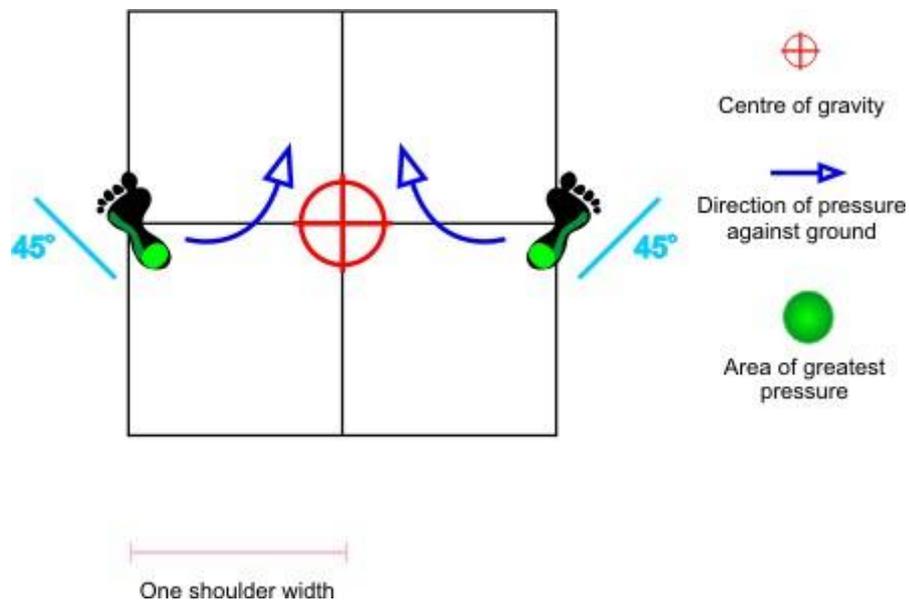
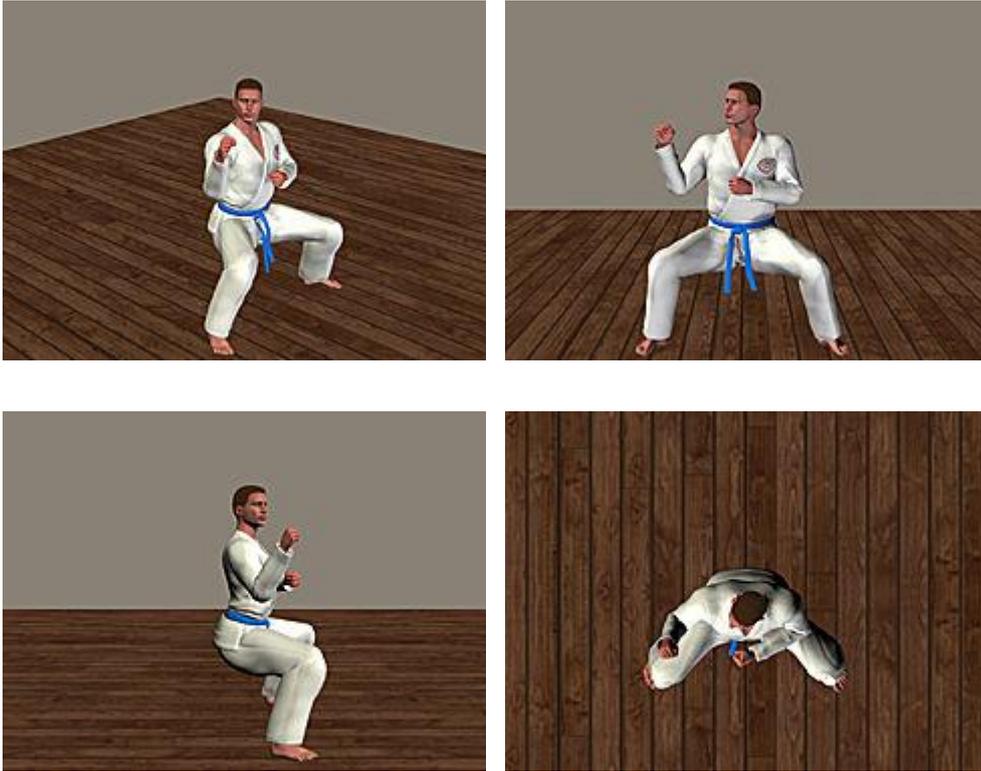
Push the stance down from the hips, and don't allow yourself to stand tall as you get tired.

Ensure that the hips are facing the correct direction for the technique you're performing. (normally forward)

Don't allow the back foot to turn out too far.

Don't scrunch your toes up as you grip the floor

Horse Stance - Shiko Dachi (she-ko-da-chi)



To reach Shiko Dachi, position your feet side-by-side two shoulder-widths apart, and turn your toes outwards so that the OUTSIDE of each foot is at 45 degrees. Your weight should be evenly distributed between your legs. Now lower your weight so that your knees are bent almost to a right-angle and over your ankles. It's important not to go so low that you are forced to compromise your position by leaning forwards. However, over time your spinal suppleness will improve and your muscles will adapt so that you can get lower without bending or hurting as much.

Remember, the higher your grade, the lower your stance!

Common mistakes to avoid

Don't stick your butt out

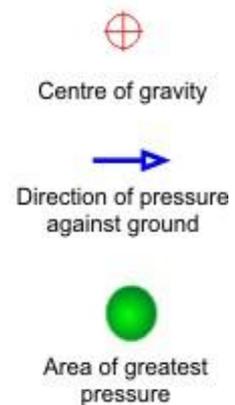
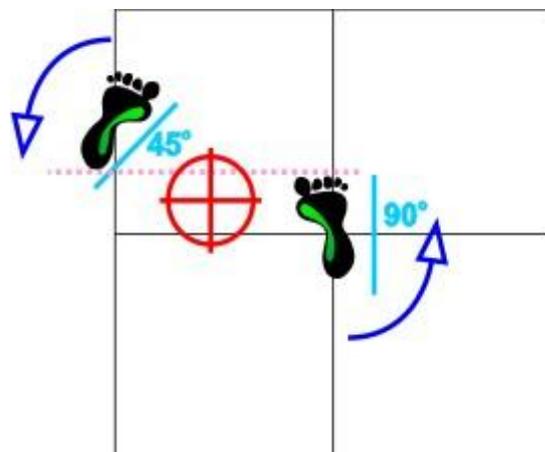
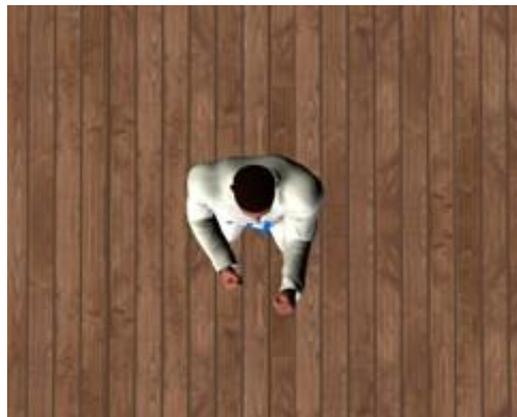
Don't lean forwards

Don't allow either of your knees to collapse in, keep knees over your ankles

Don't turn your toes out too far

Don't stand too wide or narrow

Bear Stance - Sanchin Dachi *(san-chin-da-chi)*



One shoulder width

Your rear foot should be facing directly forwards. Your front foot should be placed one shoulder-width apart from your back foot, facing inwards at an angle of 45 degrees measured on the INSIDE of the foot. We used to set the angle by the outside, but this created an unnatural and slightly ungainly stance. The heel of your front foot should line up with the toes of your rear foot.

Your knees should be tensed in a diagonal direction, and it is this inner tension, combined with gripping the floor with your toes, that helps to give this stance additional solidity.

Although this stance makes you want to set your body at an angle to the front, your hips and body both face forwards. Your weight should be lowered a little, and your knees should be somewhat bent.

Tuck your hips by rolling your groin upwards and tensing your butt cheeks. Your stomach should also be tensed.

Common mistakes to avoid

Don't bring your knees together

Ensure that your knees are bent

Don't stick your butt out

Make sure your hips are facing forwards

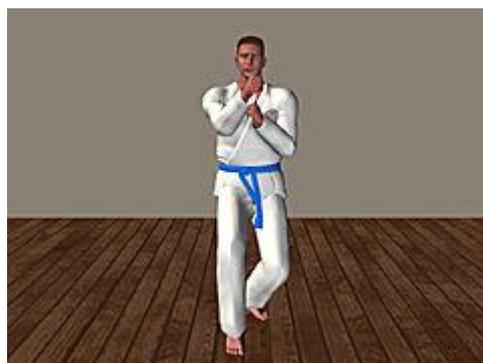
Make sure that your feet are AT LEAST a shoulder width apart - and even slightly more if you are taller

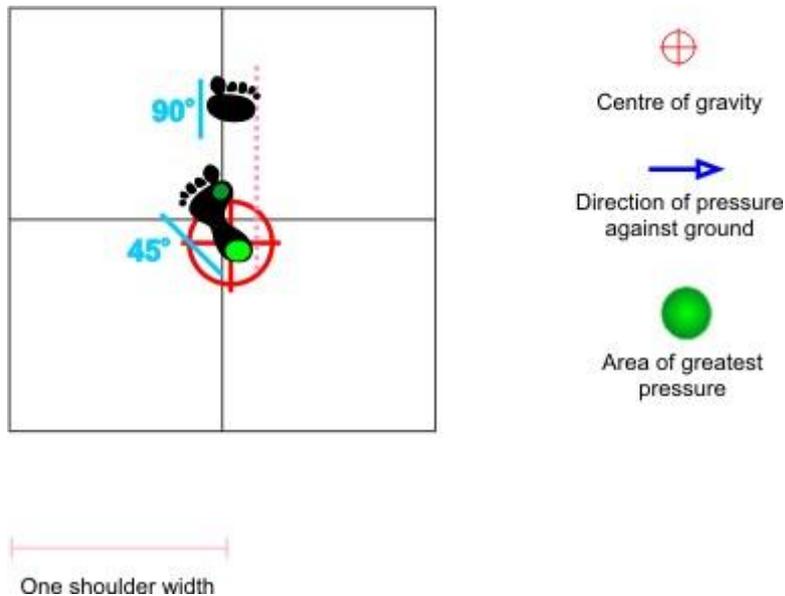
Half Dragon / Kendo Lunging Stance – Moto Dachi (*mo-toe-da-chi*)



Moto dachi is a forward stance commonly used in kendo when slipping or lunging. Your feet are one shoulder width wide, with the toes of the rear foot in line with the heel of the front foot, toes forward, 60% of your weight is on the front leg while 40% is on the back leg. The front leg is bent so that you cannot see your toes and the back leg is straight but not locked. This stance is strong front to back.

Cat Stance - Neko Ashi Dachi (*ne-ko-ah-she-da-chi*)





The most important part of this stance is the fact that the vast majority of your weight is supported by your back leg, and as such, it is developing leg strength. The front leg is purely there as an aid to balance. When teaching this technique, many instructors will sweep the front leg to ensure that it is barely supporting weight. If the student loses balance when the front leg is swept, then there was too much weight on it. You should be able to lift the front foot from the ground with no additional change in posture or balance.

The back foot faces outwards at an angle of 45 degrees, whilst the front foot faces forwards. The front foot is positioned about one-and-a-half of your foot-lengths forward of the back foot. (If you leave the big toe of your front foot on the ground and pivot your body in, you will find yourself in shoulder stance). The unusual feature of this stance is the fact that the heel of the front foot is raised from the ground, placing what tiny amount of weight exists, on the ball of the foot. This provides tension in both the quadriceps (the front of the thigh) and calf muscles of the lead leg, enabling you to initiate a kick more quickly.

This stance is used with the hips and shoulders facing forwards in the direction of your stance.

Common mistakes to avoid

Don't make the stance too short

Don't stick your butt out

Don't lean forwards

Lift your front heel up high

Tuck your back knee in behind your front one - it shouldn't stick out at 45 degrees

Don't stand up tall

Acknowledgments

"To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism; To steal from many is research."

Information researched from the following sources

"Traditions of Zen Do Kai" book, presented by Dean Woodhams (Kyoshi)

The internet web sites of the following Martial Arts and Karate organizations;

**Bob Jones-Zen Do Kai-Martial Arts
Shotokan Karate**

**Goju Karate
Go Kan Ryu Karate**

**Kyokushin Karate
Budokai Karate**