

Both Hands
Clapping
Aikido
Student Manual

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Introduction

Both Hands Clapping is an independent Aikido dojo that combines training in the very modern, 'multiple attacker' art of Aikido with very traditional Zen practice. Both Hands Clapping was formed in 2006 by Jim Redel.

History and Aikido Lineage

Jim started studying Aikido in 1989 at Albuquerque Shin-Budo Kai with Wade Ishimoto. Wade was one of the original members of the Army's Delta Force and a life-long karate student who had started studying Aikido years earlier. Wade and Albuquerque Shin-Budo Kai were affiliated with the New York based Shin-Budo Kai organization headed by Shizuo Imaizumi. As a note, Imaizumi is one of the last of the generation of teachers who actually trained directly with Morihei Ueshiba (the founder of Aikido). Jim first met Imaizumi in 1991 and trained with him (through seminars) for another 15 years, attending several dozen of his 3 and 4 day seminars throughout the US.

In 1995, Wade took a job in Washington DC, and left the running of Albuquerque Shin-Budo Kai to his senior students, among them Jim, who had earlier been promoted to shodan (1st degree black belt). After his fellow senior students were off in other pursuits, Jim guided Albuquerque Shin-Budo Kai as its Chief Instructor until 2006, when he resigned to establish Both Hands Clapping.

Figure 1 shows the basic Both Hands Clapping lineage. *Realize of course that the full Aikido 'tree' is quite massive, and Figure 1 shows only the teachers that have directly impacted what ultimately has become Both Hands Clapping.* At the top of the tree is the founder of Aikido – Morihei Ueshiba. Below Ueshiba, we see three boxes – Ueshiba's son Kisshomaru, Koichi Tohei (the founder of the Ki Society) and Shizuo Imaizumi. The first bubble is trying to show that Imaizumi was primarily influenced by the three teachers in that first bubble, one of whom was Morihei Ueshiba.

Below Imaizumi we see three more boxes – Wade Ishimoto, Wade's teacher Mark Leidig, and Jim. This second bubble is trying to show that Jim was likewise influenced by the three teachers in that second bubble, one of whom was Shizuo Imaizumi.

And below Jim, we have the students of Both Hands Clapping.

The point here is that as a Both Hands Clapping student, you are standing remarkably close to the founder of Aikido. In fact, on this portion of the Aikido tree, you are essentially a third generation student – meaning that there are only two individuals between you and Ueshiba. *It's important to mention once again ... this is just a small piece of a very, very, very big tree!* So, when it comes to your Aikido instruction here at Both Hands Clapping, you can rest assured you are getting traditional, practical 'close to the source' instruction.

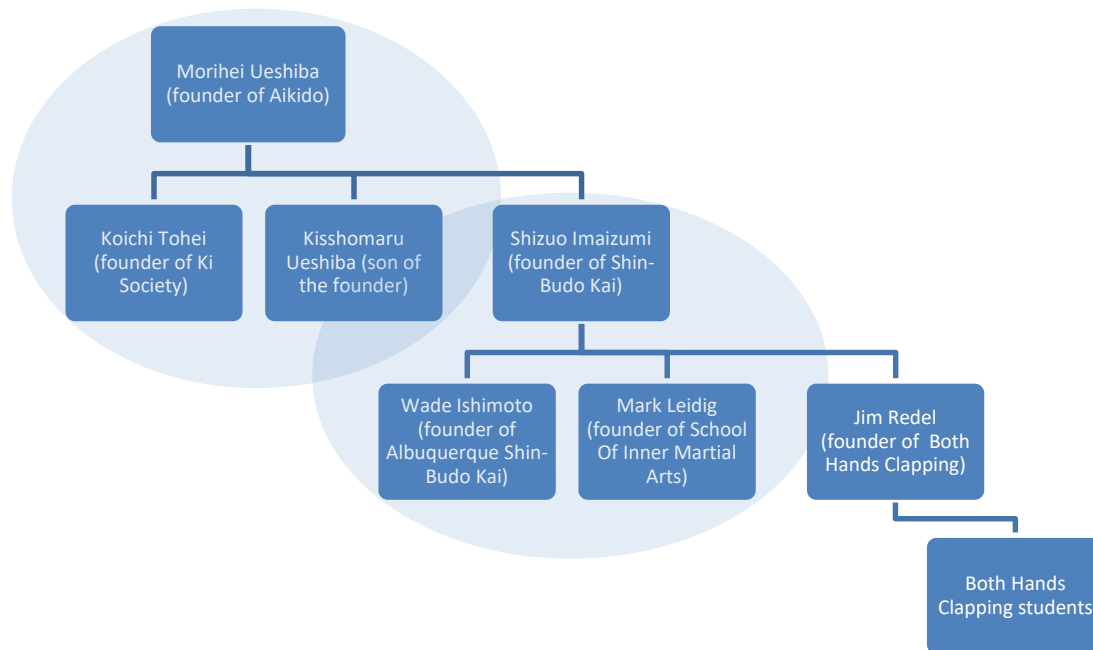


Figure 1 Both Hands Clapping Lineage

Zen Lineage

Shortly after beginning his studies in Aikido, Jim also began studying Zen at the Albuquerque Zen Center, under the guidance of Kogan Seiju Bob Mammoser. In addition to his studies as AZC, Jim has attended over a dozen week long retreats with Joshu Sasaki Roshi, who was, in his prime, described as “the greatest living Zen master in the United States”.

Aikido Style

One frequent question that is asked (and should be asked) is “What style of Aikido do you teach (study). The basic assumption is that you either train in a ‘hard’ style or a ‘soft’ style. For example, the Yoshinkan schools of Aikido are often considered a harder style. The Shin-Shin Toitsu schools (Ki Society) are often considered a softer style.

At Both Hands Clapping, our style is best characterized as ‘energetic’ or flowing. Certainly, one of the down sides of both the hard and soft styles is that you don’t often get much of a workout. In the hard styles, going harder and faster is often just too dangerous ... and some of the very soft styles can resemble Tai Chi.

At Both Hands Clapping, we like to think that ‘we go hard with a softer style – resulting in energy and flow. Resting, pausing, getting off the mat, getting a drink of water or discussing techniques at length are definite no-nos. You learn Aikido from doing, and when you do start to run low on gas, part of what you will learn is how to control the pace of the attacks, how to attack and roll more efficiently ... how to save energy – how to flow. If you are indeed saving energy in the middle of a throw, then you are probably doing good Aikido.

Our Curriculum

At Both Hands Clapping we practice Zen, Aikido, Aikido weapons and advanced Aikido all as a series of structured, 13 week sessions. Each of the 13 week sessions focus on just one of the 10 traditional attacks studied by Aikido students world-wide. From the standpoint of teaching and practicing beginning, unarmed Aikido, there are several reasons for this:

First, it guarantees that all new students will get the complete basic instruction they need and deserve. As each session essentially starts from scratch – all students will learn and relearn the basics from the ground up. This is opposed to most schools, where a new student is handed off to a 'senior' student to learn the warm-ups, rolls and basic moves. The new student is then expected to somehow seamlessly join the rest of the class ... and any instruction that was overlooked by the senior student is expected to be magically taken care of by time.

Second, it is more efficient for learning. Since each multi-week session focuses on just one attack, less practice time is spent in constantly reintroducing new attacks. This is opposed to most schools, where several attacks may actually be covered in a single one-hour class – forcing the students to constantly fumble and adjust to the new attack – with neither the attacker nor the defender being able to fully commit to the attack or the defense.

Last, it allows us to commit to a three-week series of freestyle classes. Because we have only studied a single attack for eight weeks and because all students have seen the same progression of defenses, starting with week 9, we can safely commit to several weeks of freestyle practice based on just this one attack. While newer students are not expected to perform quite like an advanced student, they do participate just the same. In no uncertain terms, freestyle practice should be a major part of Aikido instruction, and is a very major part of Both Hands Clapping instruction – especially vital in illustrating the need for stillness and an absolute inner silence. There is no doubt that freestyle classes are the reason that we do formal Zen practice.

Getting to the nitty-gritty, as we mentioned briefly earlier, the Both Hands Clapping curriculum consists of three types of classes.

- Zen and Aikido
- Aikido Weapons
- Advanced Aikido

Zen and Aikido

Zen and Aikido classes deal with Zen instruction and Aikido training where both the attacker and defender are unarmed. This group of classes can also be thought of as 'Zen and Basic Aikido' – suitable for students of all skill levels. From an Aikido standpoint, there are 10 basic attacks studied in just about every Aikido dojo worldwide and this group of classes will cover these attacks. The 10 attacks are:

- *Katate-tori* (wrist grabs, as in grab to punch)

- *Ryote-tori* (both wrists grabbed, as in grab to kick)
- *Mune-tsuki* (straight punch to the body)
- *Katate-kosa-tori* (cross-wrist grabs, as in grab to choke)
- *Ryote-mochi* (strong-arm grabs, as in grab to control)
- *Shomen-uchi* (overhead strikes, as with a bottle)
- *Kata-tori* (shoulder grabs, as in grab to punch or choke)
- *Yokomen-uchi* (slashing strikes, as with a knife)
- *Ushiro-tori* (rear grabs, as in grab to restrain)

For each attack, each session is 13 weeks and is set up as follows:

- Weeks 1 – 6: Learn standard warm-ups, rolls, basic throw and zazen.
- Weeks 7 - 9: Review Aikido techniques prior to free style practice.
- Weeks 10 – 12: Freestyle practice.
- Week 13: Review and demonstrations by rank.

Aikido Weapons

Traditional Aikido instruction involves the study of two Japanese weapons – the short staff and the wooden sword. Consider that there are three pillars of Aikido - timing, footwork and balance and that these same pillars also form the basis of Aikido weapons practice. So, in a sense, after learning a weapons form, students can actually practice the pillars of Aikido at home, without the need for a partner.

Paired weapons practice also provides the opportunity to study two of the more subtle aspects of timing, namely, spacing and sequencing. In unarmed Aikido, if the spacing isn't quite right or the sequencing is a bit off, the defender can usually compensate. But in paired weapons work, poor spacing or poor sequencing becomes a real problem that must be sorted out.

The Short Staff (*Jo*)

The *jo* is a wooden staff slightly over 4' long, about 1" in diameter (much like a walking stick). It is an excellent weapon for coordinating hand skills and foot skills – especially the ability to change directions quickly. We will learn and practice three forms:

- *Jo 31* – Solo
- *Jo 22 #1* – Solo
- *Jo 22 #2* – Solo

The Wooden Sword (*Bokken*)

The *bokken* is a tradition in many Japanese martial arts. Bokken training has less emphasis on hand skills, but still plenty of emphasis on the footwork skills, especially the concepts of entering, yielding and turning. We will learn and practice 4 forms:

- *Happo-kiri* (8-way cuts)
- *Ken 13*
- *Ken Suburi*

- *Ken Awase*

Advanced Aikido

In Advanced Aikido, experienced students (having a rank of 3rd kyu and higher) explore topics that push their throwing and falling skills further and further along. The classes will study the same attack as being studied in the basic class, but will explore the following concepts:

- *Juji-nage* (crossed arm throws)
- *Kaiten-nage* (rotary throws, as in defending a leg grab)
- *Koshi-nage* (hip throws)
- *Sankyo* (3rd pinning technique)
- *Yonkyo* (4th pinning technique)
- *Gokyo* (5th pinning technique)
- *Ude-katame* (Miscellaneous arm pins)
- *Suwari waza*, *Suwari-handachi-waza* (seated throws)
- Defense against an attacker with a weapon
 - Knife
 - Sword
 - Staff
- Defending while holding a weapon
- *Henka-waza* (switching techniques)
- *Kaeshi-waza* (reversal techniques)
- Randori (multiple attackers)

Last, What to Expect

When you are first starting out, Aikido classes will undoubtedly be much more challenging to your ego than it will be physically. You will be asked to do things that look frustratingly simple but realistically just take time and practice to master. Your hands and legs will no longer seem to work quite right. This is to be expected. At this point many students feel extremely self-conscious and quit, usually saying "Hey, I was expecting a better workout."

Aikido is not punching and kicking air. It is very unlikely that you will see a new technique demonstrated and then be able to perform it to your satisfaction in just one night. Sorry. When I was first learning, I finally came to a conclusion for myself ... "the rule of three". I had to have a technique explained and demonstrated and practiced on three separate training nights before I felt even somewhat comfortable. You may find you have a "rule of two" or a "rule of eight". No matter, it's simply a matter of time ... and persistence.

But once you get beyond the basics and move to the advanced Aikido classes, your challenge will be indeed be much more physical. Of course the learning never ends ... this will never be like running on a treadmill. You will still have moments where your feet will desert you, but you will always get a great workout as well. You will sweat and suck air and your legs will give out and you will see real progress (did I mention sucking air) ... and it's really only a matter of 8 months or so before you start in with the advanced class. And those 8 months will go by, so why not be doing Aikido?

Class Times

Students are certainly free to mix and match class times as their schedule requires.

Zen and Aikido

Noon

Mondays and Wednesdays: 11:30 – 12:50PM

Evenings

Tuesdays and Thursdays: 6:00 – 7:20PM

Aikido Weapons

Evenings

Thursdays: 7:25 – 8:15PM

Advanced Aikido

Evenings Only

Tuesdays: 7:25 – 8:15PM

Class Fees

We have made every attempt to make class fees reasonable and simple and are willing to work with anyone who may be currently in the middle of a financial hardship. (We can make most cases work.)

Standard rate:

- Zen and Aikido: 3 payments - \$60/month (or onetime \$165)
- Aikido Weapons: 3 payments - \$25/month (or onetime \$65)
- Advanced Aikido: 3 payments - \$45/month (or onetime \$115)

Discounted rate:

- Zen and Aikido: 3 payments - \$45/month (or onetime \$110)
- Aikido Weapons: 3 payments - \$20/month (or onetime \$50)
- Advanced Aikido: 3 payments - \$35/month (or onetime \$100)

There are discounts for additional family, military, fire and police staff, students, teachers and retirees

Promotional Requirements

We are a white belt, black belt – 'kyu and dan' school. White belts are worn through the 'kyu' ranks; black belts are worn through the 'dan' ranks. A student comes into the school as unranked and his or her first promotion is to the rank of 5th kyu. Students progress in rank – 4th kyu, 3rd kyu, etc. until promotion to shodan (1st degree black belt). The student is then dan ranked and will progress to nidan (2nd degree black belt), sandan (3rd), yondan (4th), etc.

While we are strictly a white and black belt school, at the rank of sankyu, students are expected to begin wearing the traditional Aikido hakama (black trousers).

Promotions are based solely on attendance. If you are persistent, you will become a black belt in Both Hands Clapping. As a note, you may probably know from talking with friends that most martial arts schools (and so most Aikido schools) require testing as the basis for promotions. Be aware that testing (and the fees that are required) is simply a thinly disguised income generator. I certainly don't fault other instructors for promotional exams and testing fees and for trying to make a living teaching the martial arts. It is certainly not an way to make a living, and income is income.

Attendance Cards

Each student is responsible for his/her own attendance, and you will have a spot on the attendance shelves. Place a card on your stack for each class you attend. For back-to-back classes, you will place two cards.

Promotion Requirements

- 5th Kyu: At least 4 months and 40 classes
- 4th Kyu: At least 4 additional months and 40 additional classes
- 3rd Kyu: At least 6 additional months and 60 additional Aikido
- 2nd Kyu: At least 6 additional months and 90 additional Aikido
- 1st Kyu: At least 9 additional months and 135 additional Aikido
- Shodan: At least 1 additional year and 240 additional Aikido
- Nidan: At least 2 additional years
- Sandan: At least 3 additional years
- Yondan: At least 4 additional years

Etiquette

Etiquette is an important part of most martial arts and we are no different. There are two main reasons we study and practice traditional Aikido etiquette.

- To be a good 'Aikido citizen'. As Aikido students, we will be interacting with other students, occasionally from other countries and cultures. Etiquette then becomes our common language. You should want to feel comfortable entering any dojo, in any city, in any country. This comfort can only come from recognition, acceptance and continuous practice of proper etiquette.
- To practice Zen mindfulness. An adherence to etiquette requires us to be constantly aware of our surroundings. Walking into the dojo, stepping onto the mat, lining up for class, starting and stopping practice with a partner. When you are in the dojo, these are no longer just random acts. An adherence to etiquette is really about mindfulness of your surroundings.

Entering and leaving the dojo

After you enter the dojo, simply turn toward the front of the dojo and bow.

As you prepare to leave, before exiting, simply turn toward the front of the dojo and bow.

Stepping onto and off the mat

You can step onto and off of the mat from any side. Simply face the front of the mat and bow.

Beginning and ending a class session

Line up in rank order, right to left, in seiza (kneeling position). The instructor will turn to face the front of the dojo. The instructor and all students bow together. The instructor turns to face the students. Instructor and students bow to each other.

Observing the demonstration of a technique

All students need to see the demonstration of a technique. In small classes it is not a big deal, but in large classes this is a real problem. Large class or small, we will observe this basic etiquette - move to the rear of the mat and sit. If you can sit in seiza, fine, if not, any comfortable sitting position will do. The trick is to pick one and stick with it. After the demonstration is over, the instructor will bow to the students to signal the start of practice time. Bow to the instructor, stand and begin practice.

Beginning and ending an individual practice session

After seeing a technique demonstrated, quickly find a partner to practice with. Bow to your partner. Always practice knowing your partner's name, so, if necessary, do a quick self-introduction. Begin practicing.

All individual practice sessions end with a clap. When hearing the clap, finish the technique in a manner that is both prompt and safe. Bow to your partner and move to the rear of the mat and sit down. If this is the last practice session for that class (you will generally know when that is) you can simply move to the front of the dojo for the end of class bows.

Interacting with instructors

In our dojo, it is fine to call instructors by their first names, but in more traditional dojos, be prepared to use the term 'sensei'. Also, in our dojo, no need for 'over the top' bowing, but in other dojos, be prepared to bow to an instructor before addressing him or her. Do not make this a big deal – understand it, accept it and get on with it.

Regarding questions about techniques – 'when in doubt, try to figure things out for yourself.' If you still need further resolution on a technique or form, always seek out the instructor (as opposed to simply calling him or her to come over). If possible, both you and your partner should seek out the instructor. If this is not practical, it is reasonable to expect that the instructor will follow you back to where you are practicing.

Folding hakamas

In some schools, junior students fold the hakamas of the senior students and instructor. At Both Hands Clapping, each student folds his/her own hakama.

Conversation

The dojo is *not* an extension of the outside world. Crossing the threshold brings you into a different world with different norms. Certainly, good spirit trumps all – meaning we don't want to stifle all interactions, but realize that proper action will always trump idle talk.

Cleaning the mat

Before and after every class, we dry mop the mat. Anyone can do it. In fact all can do it. Mopping the mat has two aspects. First, as students, we all want a clean mat to start practice. A windy Albuquerque is a dusty place, and dust will naturally settle on the mat and dust from the mats sticks nicely to sweat soaked gis. Second, we should want to leave the mat as we found it – as if no one could tell we were there.

Warm-ups

At the start of each class, we spend 15 minutes doing a set of warm-up exercises. These warm-ups accomplish the following:

- Generally warm up the body
- Specifically loosen and stretch wrists and shoulders
- Improve balance
- Improve footwork

Rolling warm-ups

- Rolling back and forth
- Rolling back and forth and standing

Wrist warm-ups

1. Compress
2. Compress and rotate in
3. Compress and rotate out
4. Forearm Stretch
5. Stretch and rotate in

Shoulder warm-ups

- Arm Swinging 1: Circles
- Arm Swinging 2: Side to side
- Arm Swinging 3: Vertical
- Wrist crossing 1: At the navel
- Wrist crossing 2: To face height (on one foot)

Balance Drills

1. Forward-back
2. Raise-drop
3. Left-right

Footwork Drills

1. Straight pivot
2. 8-way stances
3. Two-step turn
4. Back pivot

Technique Names

In general, we will not focus on lengthy Japanese names for the throws we learn. However, this is a Japanese martial art and much of the literature does standardize on a few names. As a minimum, it is recommended that students become familiar with the following names. For the majority of students, these names will invariably become a part of your vocabulary without any effort at all.

Nage Waza (Throwing Techniques)

The term 'nage waza' refers to a category of techniques that ends up with the attacker and defender engaging and then completely disengaging, with the defender falling or rolling.

Zen and Aikido students should be familiar with these basic technique names:

- *Irimi-nage* (entering throw)
- *Kokyu-nage* (miscellaneous timing throws)
- *Shiho-nage* (4 way throw)
- *Tenchi-nage* (heaven and earth throw)
- *Sayu-nage* (left-right throw)
- *Ude-nage* (miscellaneous arm throws)
- *Zenpo-nage* (forward throw)

Advanced Aikido students must be familiar with these additional technique names:

- *Kaiten-nage* (rotary throw, as in defense against a leg grab)
- *Juji-nage* (crossed-arm throw)
- *Koshi-nage* (hip throw)

Katame Waza (Pinning Techniques)

The term 'katame waza' refers to a category of techniques where the defender stays engaged with the attacker throughout a throw, taking him to the mat and applying a submission pin or immobilization.

Zen and Aikido students should be familiar with these basic technique names:

- *Kote-kaeshi* (wrist turnout pin)
- *Ikkyo* (literally first lesson. straight, bent, straight)
- *Nikyo* (literally second lesson, straight, bent, bent)

Advanced Aikido students must be familiar with these additional technique names:

- *Sankyo* (literally third lesson, controlling a bent arm through a straight wrist)
- *Yonkyo* (literally fourth lesson. controlling a bent arm through the forearm)
- *Gokyo* (literally fifth lesson) rolling the bent elbow, palm-up grip
- *Ude-katame* (miscellaneous arm pins)