



CHUDOKAI express

Being "Uke"

Written by Guy Hagen

Ukemi - training as Uke, being the attacker, taking the falls -- is probably the most important part of your Aikido experience. 99% of your interaction with your Sensei will be as an Uke. More importantly, Uke and Nage (Shite) are two sides of the same coin. The way you train as Uke will shape the way you perform technique as Nage, and in the end how good of a martial artist you will become.

Unfortunately, students fall into limiting, destructive patterns as Uke.

The best way to avoid these patterns is flexibility in our training styles. There is a saying in Tai Chi Chu'an: "train low center, train high center; train strong, train weak; train fast, train slow." The message

is that we must learn to "switch on" different ways of moving that best fit the situation and increase our understanding of the art. Based on the different



styles and dojos that I've trained in and my own training and teaching, I've categorized a few important "ways of being Uke". None of them is really better or "higher level" than the others, and I strongly urge every student to try each style with determination and sincerity. In my own training, I would often try to "be" each of these Uke to the best of my ability for a couple weeks or a month at a time.

1. Passive (Empty) Uke

This Uke is essentially just "there" for their partner. No real resistance, no aggression, and they just let themselves be



QUOTE:

"People do not seem to realize that their opinion of the world is also a confession of character."

**-Ralph Waldo
Emerson**

REMEMBER...

- Spring Fling
May 21—22
- Dan Test
June 5
- Iaido Test
June 8
- Instructor's Class
June 9
- Kyu Test
June 10
- RCAO Charity Golf
Tournament
June 26

- SPRING FLING AIKIDO SEMINAR:
Birmingham, Alabama
 - Friday May 21—Saturday May 22
 - Join us in beautiful Birmingham, Alabama for this annual event
 - Visit www.usamartialarts.com
- IAIDO TEST
 - Tuesday June 8 @ 9:00pm
 - All students who are eligible and prepared are encouraged to test
- INSTRUCTOR'S CLASS
 - Wednesday June 9 @ 7:00pm
 - 3rd Kyu and above are encouraged to attend
- KYU TEST
 - Thursday June 10 @ 11:00am & 7:00pm
 - All students who are eligible and prepared are encouraged to test
- RCAO CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT
 - Saturday June 26 @ 9:30pm
 - The golf outing will be held at Royal Estate Golf Club, followed by a buffet dinner at the Windsor Sportsman Club.
 - Please contact us directly to arrange for your spot.

Being "Uke" ...cont'd

thrown. When working with new students that have enough difficulty getting their own hands and feet straightened out, it's often best to "be" this type of Uke.

However, this doesn't mean you get to sleep through the technique. Now is the chance for Uke to practice perfect posture and alignment, and deep, centered breathing without distraction. Don't let your attention wander - you can still get hurt. I had my knee almost destroyed (literally) in Judo when I got confident and sloppy being a "passive uke" for a beginner student.

2. Sincerity Uke

This type of Uke also gets to focus on posture and clarity -- and ferocity of attacks. A sincere Uke strikes or grabs with all their intent, focus and energy. This should be an intentional overcoming of laziness and fatigue (which we all experience). The attacks should never be sneaky, or have the hidden purpose of making you look good or your partner look bad. A sincere attack prepares your partner for realistic situations. You may have to "tone down" the force of your attack to what your partner can handle; but too many "soft pitches" will give your partner a false sense of confidence and rob them of the growth that comes from being challenged. After your sincere attack, continue your force and effort into the original direction of your

attack (upon contact, press toward your partner's center) until you are thrown or pinned. Sincere attacks are characteristic of all good Ukes. Practice your punches! Practice ferocity! Don't telegraph your attacks! Break up your timing!

3. Acrobatic Uke

Believe it or not, it's beneficial to exaggerate your attacks and falls sometimes. Attack fast, throwing all your center into your strike or grab. Abandon safety. When you are thrown or pinned, fling yourself as dramatically as you can ahead of the attack. Learn to feel what it's like to accelerate out of your partner's technique (by speeding up your center, not using force), and let your partner feel what it's like to have done a technique masterfully.

This type of Uke will make you a popular training partner, and teach you to make big, pretty falls. If it's all you ever do, however, you will never develop any real center, or learn how to "change your mind" mid-attack to protect yourself or change to a different attack. It definitely puts you at the mercy of your Nage, and if they step it up or act cruelly, you may suffer for it.

4. Resistance (Static) Uke

This type of Uke attacks with clarity and force, but actively resists when their partner begins a

RCAO Golf Tournament (Royal Estate Golf Club)

Saturday June 26, 2010

Tee time 9:30am

Buffet Dinner to follow at Windsor Sportsman Club - 5pm

•18 Holes of Golf with Cart & Dinner - \$60

•18 Holes of Golf with Cart - \$50

•Dinner Only - \$15

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TEST RESULTS

CHUDOKAN DOJO, Windsor, Ontario, Canada

Youth

- Joshua Maadi 8th Kyu
- Ethan Yue 8th Kyu
- Perla Layman 8th Kyu
- Ana Oljagic 8th Kyu
- Gabriela Oljagic 8th Kyu
- William Layman 8th Kyu
- Carl James Harris 8th Kyu
- Hanna Monuma 7th Kyu

Adult

- Don Ascott 9th Kyu
- Andriy Chertov 8th Kyu
- Daniel A. Westfall 8th Kyu
- Tristan Jodoin 6th Kyu
- Andjela Stevanovic 6th Kyu
- Jordan Andrews 5th Kyu
- Anton Chertov 5th Kyu
- James Zedd 4th Kyu
- Shawn Jay Hodgins 4th Kyu

Aiki Buki

- Shawn Jay Hodgins Sankyu

GISHINKAN DOJO, Abingdon, Virginia, USA

- Kaitlin Honaker 6th Kyu
- Sherry Harden 6th Kyu
- Harland Simpson 6th Kyu
- Kannan Rosiah 6th Kyu
- Mark Overbay 6th Kyu
- Anna Nichols 6th Kyu
- Kaitlin Honaker 5th Kyu
- Sherry Harden 5th Kyu
- Harland Simpson 5th Kyu
- Anna Nichols 5th Kyu
- Kannan Rosiah 5th Kyu

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technique. This type of training builds strong centers, and reveals the flaws in your partner's technique. For it to be honest, however, you must erase your memory before each technique, always attack honestly, and never begin countering a technique early just because you know it's coming. This is important! It's easy to block almost any technique if you know it's coming, and the "You can't throw me" game gets old really quickly. It also rapidly results in pointless struggling, no real learning, and worthless technique. If you and your partner begin "butting heads" this way, it just gets ugly and nothing more.

However, this type of Uke is also one of the more common and dangerous traps. Many students somehow get the idea that being able to resist a senior partner's technique demonstrates how good they are. Real resistance destroys any sensitivity and subtlety you may have, so you are unable to feel your partner's technique -- they may be trying to show you something, and you may be leaving them no resort but smack you on the head! Do this enough, and all your technique as Nage will look exactly like this - straining, forceful, ungraceful and violent, with a grimace on your face and every muscle in your body tense. Learn to recognize these symptoms in yourself before your growth becomes stunted. If your partner brings out these reactions in you, switch to being another type of Uke.

Too much of this is the antithesis of Aiki.

5. Reversal (Kaeshi) Uke

If you have become sensitive and skillful enough, you will begin to sense moments of weakness in your partner's technique. If you can take advantage of that opening with a small, subtle and clean reversal, this is good training. Done correctly, this "kaeshi" will flow naturally and spontaneously without force or struggle. It should never be situation where you overpower or yank away from your opponent's technique -- if both you and your

partner can maintain this mindset, one reversal might simultaneously flow into another, and you both may experience continuation training, which I believe is one of the higher levels of training in Aikido.

6. Guiding Uke

Usually when our partner is having difficulty, we all like to give spoken advice - to teach (often after our "bad Uke" caused the difficulty to begin with). Sometimes this is okay, but remember, this is Sensei's class, not yours, and people generally want advice from you less often than you think. What you can try, instead, is to let your partner do the technique, while practicing the opposite of resistance. Without grabbing your partner or becoming Nage, shape and off-balance your body so that your partner performs the technique correctly. In a sense, Uke does the technique from start to finish, and Nage sort of "holds on".

While reading this, you've probably told yourself several times "Oh, I already practice that way" or "Yeah, I see others having problems with that." Well, I think there's only a handful of people in dojos who are truly proficient in 'being' all of these types of Uke -- and they are all yudansha. I personally look to improve myself in each of these, all the time... and maybe in a couple other ways too.

I believe that becoming the type of martial artist that people admire requires determination and discipline. It also requires constant self-examination and adjustment.

Don't be afraid to ask for feedback from your Nage -- "Am I resisting too much? Was my attack good enough?" Remember, 50% of your training is as Uke, so you should be using that time to improve and practice every bit as much as when you are doing the technique!

Use your time as Uke to focus on the things that you aren't able to focus on as Nage. Learn to switch from an invisible center to a powerhouse center as needed. Learn when to pour on your power, and learn when to be super sensitive in your training. All these characteristics are important to being a well-rounded Aikidoka.