

# What To Expect At A Training Session

A Basic Outline of A Typical Class at  
Bujinkan Lexington Dojo

## **Stretching and Conversation:**

The first half hour is an informal time to stretch and *hang out*. For those of us studying *Bujinkan Budo Taijutsu* (generically called *Ninjutsu*), properly stretching and warming the body up help to prevent injury while training. Also, daily stretching is good for the body whether you practice martial arts or not. Research, overwhelmingly, suggests that a daily stretching routine can prevent many age-related physical problems.

This part of class is kept very informal so students may converse and new students can get to know the rest of the class. This is important, as safe and effective training relies heavily on the trust placed in your training partners and the friendships that develop in class.

## **Bowing In:**

Following the informal gathering is a short, formal bowing in. Students line up (facing the instructor or *sensei*) kneeling in *seiza*, left to right starting with the senior-most student. After a brief moment of silence, the instructor will speak “*shikin haramitsu daikomyo*” (This phrase cannot be translated directly into English, one interpretation is: "A moment of true interaction between mind and spirit may lead to enlightenment"). The entire class repeats this phrase, claps twice, bows, claps once more, and bows again. At this point the instructor turns to face the class and all students then say “*onegaishimas*” (“please assist me”), and bow to the teacher.

The instructor will then make any, brief, important announcements and outline the theme or goal for this particular session. New students will be introduced at this time as well.

## **Punches, Kicks, and Rolls:**

After bowing in, students will begin a warm-up, practicing basic front, side, and back rolls and break-falls (*Ukemi*). Depending on the class theme, basic punches and kicks may be practiced on target mitts as well. Learning to roll (or hit the ground for that matter) properly is imperative to progressing in this art. Rolling allows us to evade attacks, escape holds and strikes, prevent injury when being thrown or directed toward the ground, and a means to perform some offensive techniques.

### **Kihon Happo Gata:**

Following the rolling, the instructor will demonstrate one (or more) of the *Kihon Happo Kata* (8 fundamental forms) that pertain to the techniques we will be learning in class. These kata are composed of three basic receiving postures (*Ichimonji no Kamae*, *Hicho no Kamae*, and *Jumonji no Kamae*) and five hand capture forms (*Omote Gyaku Dori*, *Ura Gyaku Dori*, *Musha Dori*, *Oni Kudaki*, and *Ganseki Nage*).

Depending on the theme, one of these will be focused on. When practicing these, we will usually explore several subtle variations of the basic form. These “techniques” are practiced in what may seem to be an exaggerated motion or form and are not likely to be used as such in actual combat.

Why do we train this way? Think of our art as a language; the Kihon Happo is the alphabet. Much like in any language, people don’t run around shouting letters at each other, they converse (analogous to a fight here) with words (techniques in this analogy). However, if you don’t know the alphabet you can’t make words, let alone a sentence. When we practice the Kihon, we are basically reciting the alphabet over and over and over until we have mastered it forwards and back. Now...*quick... pick a letter*. Without thinking we can pick a letter (base technique), or several and create a word (fighting technique) and apply it in an abbreviated (not long and exaggerated) form to any situation. Mastering these basics and learning how the body (both yours and your opponents) moves will open the door for successful training and an understanding of more complex and advanced techniques.

### **Sanshin no Kata:**

To finish up the first hour, students spread out in staggering lines to practice the *Sanshin no Kata*. The *Sanshin* is a set of 5 forms practiced as exercises that teach proper body alignment, balance, and movement, especially the transition from left to right (and vice-versa) postures. Though the exercises each contain the look and feel of an actual technique, they are not “fighting moves”.

The *Sanshin* is composed of forms of the five-elements which are:

*Chi*- earth

*Sui*- water

*Ka*- fire

*Fu*- wind

*Ku*- void

### **“Main Class”- The Second Hour:**

This is the part of class that most of us really look forward to. Based on the theme for the class, the instructor will demonstrate several techniques (many are variations or continuations of a basic move). As techniques are shown and explained, the instructor will point out many aspects of how and why certain things are happening. These techniques are demonstrated (quite roughly) on one of the senior students. During these demonstrations the student is called *Uke* (“to receive”, the attacker and receiver of the technique) and the instructor is the *Tori* (“to Give”, the person performing the technique). These are the “fighting moves” or techniques, as you would actually use them in a real-life situation.

After each technique is demonstrated and explained, students pair up and practice the techniques on each other. In an effort to further instruction and create a safe environment, new students are always paired with experienced, senior students to practice. While practicing, the instructor will evaluate and comment individually on students’ techniques.

### **Bowing Out:**

At the end of class, students again line up according to rank kneeling in *seiza* and facing the instructor. Any important announcements are made and time is made for any questions about the day’s training. Sensei will then sum up the intended “lesson” of the class. After this, the instructor will kneel in *seiza* and say “*domo arigato gozaimas*” (“thank you very much) which is then repeated by the class. All then clap twice, bow, clap once more, and bow again. Sensei then turns to face the class and all bow to each other.

Of course, a lot more than can be briefly explained occurs during a training session. However, if you are considering training with us, this should give you a pretty good idea of what to expect and make the experience a bit easier to follow and more enjoyable. Don’t worry, you’re not expected to know any of this when you start your training