

Approaching your first grading?

This will mean you have been with us for a while and if others are to be believed you don't feel ready, you don't know the movements required and you don't know the names. See you are no different!

Do you have to take the grading?

No, but the expectation is that you should. Why? Well it marks and demonstrates your progress. The lead-up to a grading is a time when your skills and knowledge are accelerated. It is also aids the organisation and practice in the club. A grading tests not only the physical but also the mental development.

What do you need to know?

The grading syllabus is set out in the "Beginners Booklet" given to you when you started; in there is also a translation of terms. Lost it?!? ...Well there are downloadable syllabus and translation sheets from 'Members Area—Technical stuff' on the Aikikai Website – <http://www.lancashireaikikai.org> or ask at the club for a replacement. Additionally you can download the grading sheet which lists 10 criteria that you are marked against. There are also video training aids on the Club website—see later

Gosh that sounds serious?

Whilst you are being marked the threshold for criteria differ from grade to grade. For your first grade i.e. 7th Kyu to 6th Kyu what is being looked at is the ability to do the basic movements and techniques. Do I have to know the names? Well, it helps but for your first grade it is not essential.

Remember you are not normally allowed to take a grading unless you are capable of achieving it. How do I know I am capable? Talk to the instructors in the club.

Historically students had to wait to be invited to take a grading. This is still true for higher kyu grades but not necessarily for lower grades such as yourself.

Grading Opportunities

These normally occur 3 or 4 times a year. They are announced in advance at classes or can be found on the club website (<http://www.traffordaikido.org.uk>)

This will enable you to swot up in the weeks before a grading. Ask instructors to plug gaps for you. Talk to others as well. Use periods at the beginning and end of classes to try out problems / iron out areas with their experience. Instructors will also try to cover the syllabus requirements specifically in class – provided they know what your needs are!

What is the format of a grading?

There is a Grading Book, usually with the club night official at the start of the class, into which you enter your name and pay your grading fee. (Currently £3 for first grading). You will need also to



bring your membership book and leave it with the grading book.

Gradings are integrated into normal classes and take 2 parts – watching your practice within the class and the more formal part.

When the more formal section is reached the class generally watches.

When your name is called you move to kneel in front of Sensei/Grading Panel. A uke will be selected for you. The Grading Panel will exchange bows with you by issuing the command 'Rei'. They will invite you to turn and bow to your uke (partner). (Still on your knees) Take care to maintain distance so you don't bang heads. Now turn back to facing the Sensei/Grading Panel. Stay calm. Listen to what they ask you to do; if you haven't heard you ask for it to be repeated.

Keep practicing what has been asked until it is changed. If the variation of omote or ura has not been specified demonstrate your breadth of

knowledge by doing both versions. Remember to demonstrate both left and right sides.

If this is your first grading and you are uncertain whether you are managing the correct movement, sneak a look at others. If it is only you grading then it is a little harder but your uke may be giving you discreet signs.! As this is your first grading if you are really stuck the Sensei/Grading Panel will either show you through demonstration or will move you onto something else.

All to soon the grading will be over. Return in front of Sensei/Grading Panel, exchanges bows with Sensei/Grading Panel, then your uke and face Sensei/Grading Panel to await your dismissal. Then return to the rest of the class who were watching. It is more than likely that there will be others taking higher grades after you. It is now your turn to wait and watch.

Once the formal grading is complete the Sensei/Grading Panel will retire to formalise their decisions. The class will continue. In the early grades your general performance in normal classes is also given weight – so it doesn't just depend on the demonstration of what you have shown in the formal part of the grading. (For higher grades – performance in the formal part carries greater weight but doesn't exclude continuous assessment). [Allowances will be made for those who have special needs which includes age.]

Grading results are announced at the end of the class. When your name is called out stand up and listen for the result. Once announce you should move to collect the result sheet from Sensei – walk or knee walk towards Sensei and bow when Sensei bows. Sensei will then pass you the paper using both hands, you receive it with both hands and both bow again. Now return to your position in the line.

If you don't make the grade you have tried for you will be asked to try again.

So now you are graded!

You have taken your first step along the path. You have to realise that it takes different people different lengths of time to progress through the grades (the details are in the syllabus). You need to think about courses to broaden your experience of being taught by others and meeting and practicing with new people.

Whilst you have made a start you probably still regard yourself as a beginner you will now be a valuable member of the club and as such your assistance to be an ambassador for the club is expected. Try to help any newcomers/beginners settle in and feel more at ease – in fact you will probably be able to identify with them because they will be struggling with the stuff you have / or may still be doing.

All club members should endeavour to practice with everyone so that at the end of a class you can be satisfied that you have met each student on the mat. It is not good for your development to avoid practicing with beginners / higher grades – practicing with different people broadens your experience

in being able to move individuals the way you want to. You do this by actively getting up after a demonstration and bowing to the person you wish to practise with provided they haven't already paired. It is bad etiquette to refuse.



The World is your Oyster

We run a Junior section Sunday 18:30 to 19:30 (during the Senior Class) and would welcome assistance in the junior class – you could add your name to the rota of helpers (contact Andrew)

If you could help the club in other ways we would be please to hear from you. Publicity Committee is always on the look out for help.

All club members are welcome to our 6 monthly General Meetings – details on the web and publicised in advance at classes.

Grading Fees

These are collected and paid to the Association to validated your grade. There are no retake fees

6th Kyu to 4th Kyu £3

Video Clips

The club website from the members area's home page has a log-in area. User *****
Password ***** (Apply to Andrew)

The syllabus for 6th Kyu and 5th Kyu is covered. This will help you associate names with moves. It is not intended to replace what you should learn in class—just is there as an aid.



Trafford Aikido

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Website www.traffordaikido.org.uk