

MARTIAL ART BASICS

judo

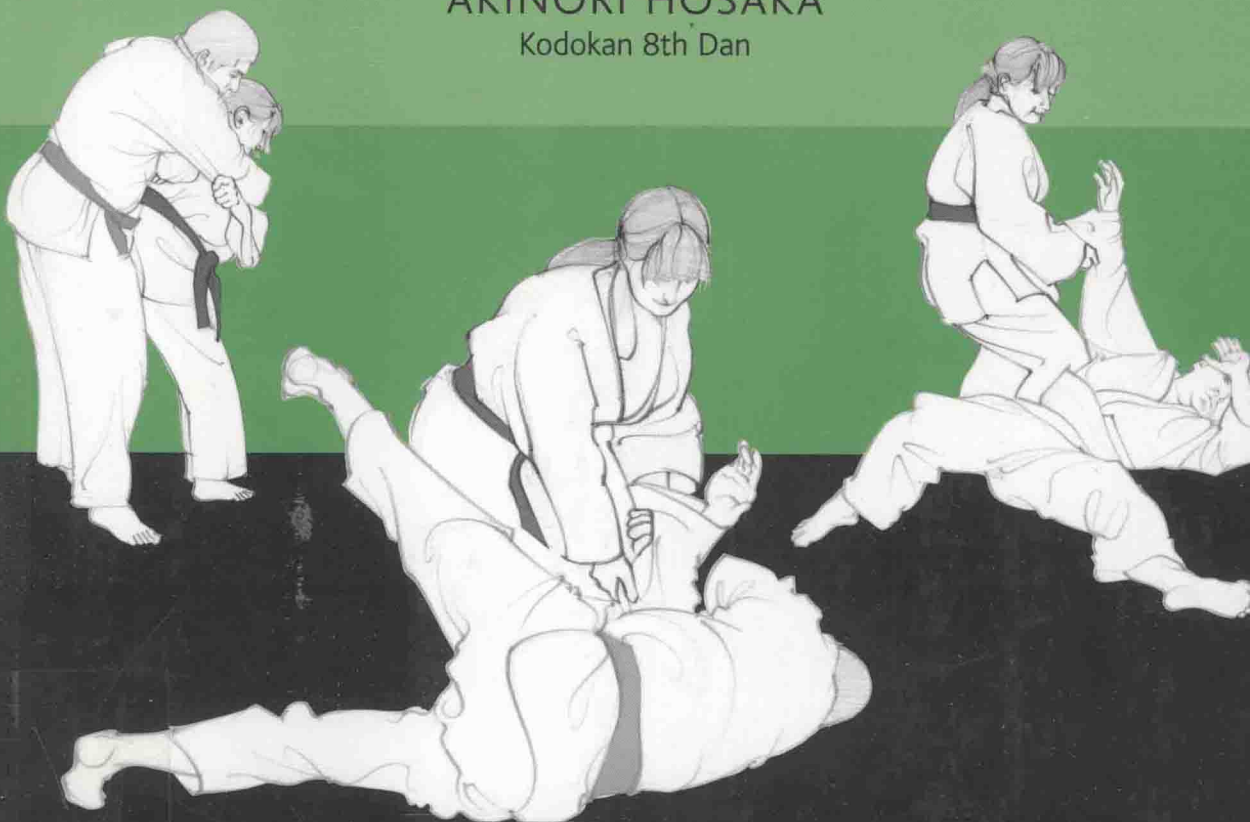
ROGER MARKS

Black belt 4th Dan

Technical consultant

AKINORI HOSAKA

Kodokan 8th Dan



OVER **40** TECHNIQUES FOR PRACTICE

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CONNECTIONS
BOOK PUBLISHING

*I acknowledge my eternal debt to my first teacher Richard Bowen,
and to Masutaro Otani, whose memory continues to inspire me.*

PLEASE NOTE:

Judo is a dynamic full-body-contact activity and there is an inherent risk of injury. Breakfalls and partnered techniques including throws, joint locks and strangles should only be practised in a suitable environment and under the supervision of a qualified instructor. If you are in any doubt about your level of health and fitness, please seek medical consultation before attempting any of the techniques described in this book.

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INTRODUCTION

Why Judo?

Practised in almost every country around the world, Judo is an Olympic sport with internationally recognized rules and regulations. There are divisions suited to people of all ages and sizes, and opportunities for those with a range of disabilities to compete at all levels.

Judo is a great recreational activity and a superb way to get fit. The techniques used in Judo follow the body's natural movements, leading to the balanced development of the body, good posture, exceptional flexibility and improved stamina. The huge variety of techniques on offer means that you will never stop learning and enjoying Judo.

The strong moral and educational conventions of *Kodokan* Judo – as set down by the founder, Jigoro Kano – form the foundations of most kinds of modern Judo. Sports Judo contains the same basic principles but the emphasis is on winning competitions.

Judo philosophy

People often take up Judo purely as a hobby or to improve their fitness, and have little interest in its life-enhancing possibilities. However, Judo should be enjoyed as a true holistic experience, and, in order to build a good understanding of this martial art, there are a number of different elements that should be considered. These are:

- Physical development
- Spiritual development
- Mental development
- Contest proficiency.

Judo is essentially for the benefit of the individual, for personal development, but with the underlying concept of 'mutual benefit': you need the respect and cooperation of your fellow students to help you on the path to your personal best, and, likewise, they need you for their journey.

History

In the West, our sports and pastimes are not often linked to practical applications, usually bearing only the slightest relationship to 'real life'. In Japan, Judo was developed and derived from martial arts that were refined to the highest degree at the time of the Samurai, the warrior caste. Before a battle, a champion from each army would engage in combat, usually ending in the death of one of them. If the result was judged to be fair, the two armies would not engage in battle, sparing many soldiers' lives. This ideal of the individual achieving personal martial arts skills for the benefit of others and to bring about peace is reflected in modern *budo*, the Japanese martial arts-derived activities that include Judo, Aikido, Kendo and Karate, among many others.

Practical matters

Once you've made the decision to take up Judo, there are a few issues to consider.

Choosing a club

Contact your national Judo body for details of the registered coaches and clubs in your area. Try to sit in on a few training sessions to gain an idea of whether the teaching style and club ethos would

suit you. Speak to the teacher and some of the club members. Some places run special induction courses for beginners, which can be useful. Will the session times and location allow you to commit to a regular training regime?

Your teacher should have a grade that is recognized by a national Judo body and be fully insured to teach. Although reaching Dan grade (black belt) level should indicate a sound basic knowledge and experience of Judo, it doesn't necessarily indicate good teaching skills, so find out if they hold any nationally recognized teaching qualifications. It's also important to note whether they are safety aware.

Getting a licence

When you start learning Judo, you should join the national Judo body that your club is affiliated to. You will be given a licence, which acts as a record of your Judo career, eventually including details of your grade assessments, competition attendance and results, and other information relating to courses completed at regional, national and international level. It will also note any related qualifications such as first aid, teaching and refereeing. The licence should include an element of personal insurance covering some of the eventualities not relevant to the instructor's liability insurance.

The reputable organizations that issue licences exist for the benefit of their members. They also fulfill other roles:

- Setting the technical standards and issuing a syllabus for their members' development and grade assessments
- Establishing codes of behaviour for members and teachers
- Operating a training scheme for teachers and

assistant teachers at club and national level

- Keeping their members up to date with news and details of courses, competitions and grade assessments.

Once inside the dojo

In a typical adult session there will be students of all ages and a whole range of grades taking part. The teaching methods for children should be modified to suit their stage of development, and most Judo clubs will offer separate sessions for children, often dividing them up into primary and junior age groups. However, it is possible that the more experienced and physically developed juniors will be invited to take part in sessions for adults.

Preparing to start

In Judo, as in all martial arts, etiquette plays a very important part. From the moment you step inside the *dojo* (practice hall), a code of practice should be adhered to.

As you enter the dojo it's customary to make a standing bow towards the position designated the *joza* (upper seat), where the higher grades sit on formal occasions. In some clubs it is expected that shoes are removed before entering and are left outside the dojo.

Plan to arrive at the class early to allow time to register, get changed into your judogi and, if necessary, help with cleaning the dojo and laying the *tatami* (mats).

At the edge of the mat, remove your shoes (flip-flops or similar) and leave them by the side of the mat with the toes facing outwards. Facing the mat, stand with your feet together and make a standing bow before stepping onto the mat. No footwear (including socks) is worn on the mat.

Tying the obi

Putting on your *judogi* (Judo suit) and tying the *obi* (belt) takes practice. These tips should help.



Hold the belt in the centre.



Place the middle of the belt on the lower abdomen and wrap around the body.



Bring the lower end across the body, thread the other end through the gap, and pull up to make a reef knot.



Fasten the belt as if tying the beginning of a bow. Once pulled through, the ends should be equal in length.

Students line up along one side of the mat in grade order, beginners on the left, and face the *sensei* (the teacher and any black belts who are present). On command of *seiza* (meaning 'be seated'), all students bow to the *sensei*.

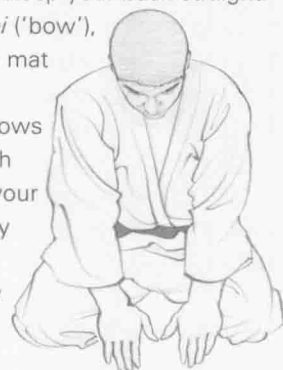
The bow

From a standing position, place the left and then right knee on the mat. Your knees should be two hand widths apart. Move your toes back so that the tops of your feet are flat on the mat. The big toes should be almost overlapping. Then lower the body into

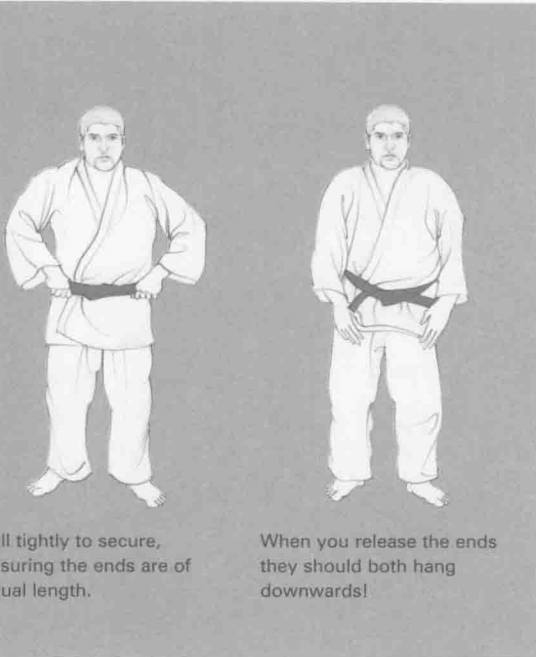


the final position, *seiza*, resting the buttocks in the 'V' formed by the heels. Keep your back straight.

On the command *rei* ('bow'), place your hands on the mat – palms down, fingers together – with your elbows bent outwards. Bow with the *sensei* by lowering your body forwards. Bow only for a few seconds, then return to *seiza*. The bow is made with respect and concentration.



The instructor may wish to make a few points about the session; remain in *seiza* until requested to stand. To return to standing, reverse the sitting procedure.



Pull tightly to secure, ensuring the ends are of equal length.

When you release the ends they should both hang downwards!

Warming up

A warming-up routine is essential to increase the heart rate, depth of breathing and metabolic rate. In addition, muscles and body joints are less prone to damage when they're warm. You should also benefit from quicker reaction times and enhanced mental alertness.

The time, intensity and specific exercises used will depend on the length of the session and the fitness level of the group. But this warm-up sequence will give you an idea.

1 Loosening joints It's useful to work first on the neck, then move to the arms, shoulders and wrists, and then the spine, hips, knees, ankles and toes. See the Warming Up section on pages 14–21.

- 2 Cardiovascular** Try star jumps, running around the mat – anything that increases the heart rate and breathing rate.
- 3 Flexibility and stretching** See the stretching exercises on pages 16–17.
- 4 Strength** Press-ups and squat-thrusts are ideal for helping to build strength.
- 5 Judo-specific** See the exercises shown on pages 18–21. It's vital to include breakfall exercises as they will help to prepare you for the following session. Other exercises will be chosen according to the technical content of the class.

Learning and practising techniques

The techniques demonstrated in a session will be chosen according to the standard of the students in the group. The instructor will make sure there is something suitable for everyone to work on. Beginners and lower grades will practise at their own level, but will have the opportunity to benefit from the experience of higher grades.

Methods of practice include:

- **Uchikomi** Multirepetition training that allows the body to learn movements correctly.
- **Randori** Similar to sparring in boxing, where partners experiment with techniques, helping each other to improve. Variations may include 'throw-for-throw', where partners take it in turns to apply a technique skilfully while moving. Although you shouldn't resist your partner too much, it's important not to allow poor techniques to succeed. Students should always focus on applying a technique safely, and their partner's ability to receive it without injury.
- **Shiai** This is a contest under contest rules, with a win, lose or draw outcome.

- **Kata** Translated as 'form', this is a partnered formal demonstration of the principles of Judo and, although usually performed by higher grades, has great value as a training aid for those seeking to perfect their Judo. There are many *kata*, some of which seek to preserve the technical origins of Judo, including working with weapons.

Ending the session

A Judo session can be very physically demanding, and cooling-down exercises are important to bring the body and mind back to a normal state. This will minimize the discomfort and stiffness that can follow a hard workout! The Stretching exercises shown in the Warming Up section are ideal for this purpose. It's also a good idea to do a few breathing exercises before you finish.

After cooling down, the session will be formally ended. Like the start of the class, this involves lining up and bowing. If your instructor has anything to say about the practice or club notices to give out, this will take place before you are dismissed. If required, help to clean the dojo and store the mats before leaving. Remember to bow when exiting.

About this book

This book is designed to give you a good understanding of the basic Judo skills. It's not intended to take the place of an instructor, but will provide an invaluable resource to kick-start your Judo experience and aid your progress. Don't feel that you have to work through the book in the order in which it's set out. Simply turn to the pages that relate to the aspect of your technique that you're focusing on at any given time.

Some of the breakfall exercises shown can be

practised outside the class, but a full breakfall from a standing position belongs in the dojo. Likewise, any of the throws, joint locks and strangles should be practised in the presence of a qualified instructor, in a suitable environment.

Making the grade

Once you're familiar with the fundamentals of basic Judo and are confident in your ability to do breakfalls, you will work towards your first grade assessments. In the larger clubs, grading for up to green belt may take place within the club itself. Smaller clubs may arrange their gradings with other clubs belonging to the same Judo body, or their students can visit a larger club to take their assessment.

The syllabus for grade requirements varies from one Judo body to another, but, for your first few grades, emphasis will be placed on basic techniques and your ability to practise safely. You will also be required to demonstrate good etiquette and an understanding of basic rules and vocabulary. Your assessment may also include some *randori* (free practice) or *shiai* (contest), to assess how well you're mastering breakfalls and other fundamental principles. Standards of behaviour are also noted.

Once green-belt standard has been reached, most Judo organizations require students to demonstrate their contest ability against others of the same grade. If, because of your age or a disability, it's considered that you shouldn't contest for your grade, alternatives will be offered. Teaching or refereeing experience, or other services you offer your club or organization, may be recognized by advancement in grade.

Assessments for the higher *kyu* grades (steps towards black belt) and recommendations for Dan

grades usually take place at designated events away from the club.

Grading systems

Grades are denoted by the colour of the belt. Although the number of kyu grades and the colours of the belts may vary from one organization to another, most use a version of the following system. Note that 1st kyu is the *highest* kyu grade whereas 1st Dan is the *lowest* Dan grade.

Kyu grades

| | | |
|-----------------------|---|----------------------|
| 6th kyu <i>white</i> | ● | 3rd kyu <i>green</i> |
| 5th kyu <i>yellow</i> | ● | 2nd kyu <i>blue</i> |
| 4th kyu <i>orange</i> | ● | 1st kyu <i>brown</i> |

Dan grades

| |
|-------------------------------------|
| 1st–5th Dan <i>black</i> |
| 6th–8th Dan <i>red/white blocks</i> |
| 9th–10th Dan <i>red</i> |

Primary grades (for young children) are usually indicated by a system of coloured stripes on a white belt. This allows for a large number of increments so young students can move through the grades quickly. This really helps to boost their sense of achievement. Juniors (older children) have a similar system, with the stripes being combined with coloured belts to differentiate junior grades from primary.

Most Judo organizations do not grade children as a senior black belt (Dan grade) apart from

in a few exceptional cases; it's accepted that not many children would be able to hold their own in a contest with an adult. When junior grades reach the age to be designated as seniors, they can then work towards obtaining a senior grade.

What next?

When you've been learning Judo for perhaps six months or so and have worked towards your first (successful!) grading, you may have a good idea of the huge range of possibilities that Judo can offer.

You might be happy to carry on practising for fun and/or physical fitness, and be content with your once- or twice-weekly sessions. You'll join other members of your club on occasional visits to other local clubs, take part in low-key competitions, and support your club in any major competitions.

Or, you might catch the Judo bug big time! You will take every opportunity to practise and work towards your next grade, as well as going to as many other clubs and courses as you can, entering competitions and meeting Judo enthusiasts all over the country and abroad, bringing your experiences back to help inspire the other members of your club.

If you have the ambition and potential to become a Judo champion, your teacher, club and Judo organization will advise you and help you select a coach who will work with you to organize your development and enable you to reach your goals.

Do the best you can, be safe and have fun!

WARMING UP