



NEWSLETTER

Lakewood Budo Kai

Fall 2026

Fall has come upon us quickly; the end of what turned out to be a wonderful summer. Even though we expected it to slow down a bit, it did not. Students kept their training consistent and along with many new students joining over the last few months we have had amazing growth. With the growth we have experienced we not only reached the goal we set at the beginning of the year to reach one hundred active students, but we also exceeded it. I appreciate the help the senior students that gave their spare time to come in early and help in the juniors' class.

On August 21st we held our second Self-defense Workshop fundraising event for our 50th Anniversary. Along with holding a Self-defense Class for the City of Hawaiian Gardens Teen Center.

There will be no class on the following dates:

September 7th Labor Day.

November 23rd to 27th Thanksgiving Week

Enjoy the following submitted articles. Until next time, see you on the mats.

NEWS / EVENTS

CALENDAR EVENTS

9/07 No Class Labor Day

9/24 Dojo Group Trip to Knott's Scary Farm

11/23-27 No Class Thanksgiving Week

DOJO PROMOTIONS

Congratulations to our students who were recently promoted.

CHILDREN'S CLASS

Joseph Donohoo

Luna Velazquez

JUJITSU CLASS

Dahlia Barraza

Aiden Mesa

Santiago Ramirez

Narin Rath

What is Protocol?

Why is it important in Martial Arts?

By Russell Kelley, Sensei

Unless you have served in a branch of the military you probably have never heard the word “protocol” before let alone even know what it is. As a U.S. Marine, I am very familiar with it, and the importance of it. For those that are not familiar with it, military protocol is the established rules, regulations, etiquette, and formal procedures that govern conduct, training, respect, discipline, safety, and the preservation of tradition.

Martial arts protocol though similar does differ some. It refers to the formalized rules, traditions, and etiquette that governs behavior both inside and outside of the dojo. It is more than just manners, it is the framework for respect, discipline, safety, and cultural continuity that shapes the martial arts experience.

Essentially martial arts protocol is the “right way to act”. It includes formal greetings, bowing, addressing instructors and peers with proper titles, following class procedures, and maintaining a respectful atmosphere. These practices are not arbitrary; they are rooted in the history and culture of each style which has been passed down through generations.

Core Principles of Martial Arts Protocol – while there are many martial arts and they can vary greatly; most share the following foundational core principles when it comes to protocol.

1. Respect for Instructors and Peers

Bow before entering/leaving the dojo; Bow before stepping on/off of training mats/area; Bow to partner before/after training; Bow at beginning/end of class to head instructor; Address instructors and higher-ranking practitioners with their proper titles; If there is a guest present listen to how they are introduced so you can use their proper title; Show

gratitude to instructors by acknowledging their efforts and listening attentively during instruction

2. Discipline and Focus

Maintain composure at all times; Following instructions without interruption; Staying mentally and physically engaged during training, recognizing that martial arts develop both body and mind

3. Safety Foremost

Control techniques to avoid injury to yourself or others; Be aware of surroundings and maintain proper safe distance; Never leave the training area/dojo without permission; If an injury occurs notify the instructors or high-ranking student in charge

4. Etiquette in the Dojo

Arrive early before class starts to prepare; Keep the training area clean and organized; Listen attentively and refrain from talking during instruction; Properly wear the uniform; Uniform clean and free from holes or tears; Maintain personal hygiene

5. Rank and Ceremony

Rank reflects skill and experience; Protocol includes many formal ceremonies

Why Does Protocol Matter

1. Preserves Tradition and History – protocol keeps the cultural and historical essence of martial arts alive.
2. Builds Respect and Discipline – protocol teaches respect for instructors, peers, and the art itself; following uniform etiquette are tools for cultivating humanity, self-control, and a warrior mindset.
3. Creates a Unified Culture – consistent application of protocol gives an organization a distinct identity which defines the character of the group, reinforcing shared values and making the community cohesive.

4. Shapes Character and Mindset – protocol trains the mind, body, and spirit which helps martial artists manage emotions, avoid aggression, and turns challenges into positive outcomes.
5. Sets the Standard for Excellence – instructors set the tone for students with their behavior inside/outside the dojo which influences students' attitude, discipline, and long-term character development.
6. Maintains Order and Safety – clear, consistent rules ensure safe, respectful training environments.

Practical Do's and Don'ts of Protocol

Do's

- Bow as tradition requires
- Addressing instructors and seniors with proper titles
- Follow class structure and warm-up routines
- Maintain a clean, respectful appearance, appropriately wearing of uniform
- Maintain a clean and organized dojo
- Encourage peers and accept feedback humbly

Don'ts

- Disrespect instructors or high-ranking students
- Give unsolicited advice
- Disrupt training with talking or unsanctioned movements

Protocol is not just a set of rules, it is a cultural and ethical framework. It fosters mutual respect, ensures a safe and productive training environment, and preserves the traditions of the martial arts. Observing protocol consistently reinforces values that extend beyond the dojo, shaping personal character and develops leadership skills. Skipping it risks losing the very essence of the martial arts as a lifelong path of personal growth.

The Meaning of Bowing in Martial Arts

By Russell Kelley, Sensei

Bowing in martial arts is far more than just a simple gesture or formality, it is an act that is a symbol of respect, an act of humility, and a cultural tradition that connects one with the history, philosophy, and traditions of the discipline being studied. The practice of bowing can be traced back to the 12th-century Feudal Japan, where the formal bow was part of the bushido code, the samurai's moral and ethical code of honor. In Japanese, *rei* means bow, salutation, courtesy, salute, and appreciation, while *gi* means ceremony or rite. Put the two words together and you get, *reigi* meaning ceremonial manners, which reinforces martial arts etiquette.

When do we bow? We bow at the beginning and end of each class or training session, when we are entering and leaving the dojo or training room, stepping on and off the mats or training area, with a partner when we begin workouts with them and when we stop working out with them. The depth and timing of the bow can indicate the relationship between the bowers, juniors, bowing longer and lower to seniors or to instructors. In each instance it reinforces the same values: respect, gratitude, and readiness to learn.

Even in modern martial arts, bowing is essential because they are a disciplined, ethical systems that show that skill, ethics, and respect are inseparable from technique. Without the bow, martial arts training risks becoming just another combat sport or just a mere physical exercise without the deeper character, cultural development, and moral foundation it was designed to instill in the practitioner.

Core reasons we bow in martial arts:

- Respect, gratitude, and courtesy: Bowing acknowledges the teacher, senior students, or training partners, recognizing their knowledge, guidance, and the shared opportunity to learn.

- Humility and self-awareness: It reminds practitioners that there is always more to learn, regardless of rank or experience.
- Acknowledgement of others: The bow signals awareness and recognition of the person being greeted, often establishing a respectful hierarchy in training.
- Mindfulness and focus: The bow is performed with *zanshin*, “remaining mind”, beginning a mental transition, helping practitioners leave distractions of personal life outside the dojo and prepares the mind to focus on the present moment.
- Tradition and continuity: Rooted in East Asian cultures, especially the samurai’s *rei* in Japan, the bow has been preserved for centuries as part of martial arts etiquette preserving the link between ancient martial values and modern practice, reminding practitioners they are part of a larger tradition.

Some people might think that bowing is an act of submission, an act of surrender, or inferiority but it is a sign of respect, mutual growth, and appreciation. It is a traditional greeting, similar in purpose to a handshake. When two students bow to one another, neither student is saying, “You are better than me.”; they are saying:

- **I respect you**
- **I trust you**
- **I will train safely with you**
- **Thank you for helping me improve**

That distinction matters. Martial arts training involves close interaction, physical contact, and controlled techniques. Students must be able to trust their partners to follow the rules and protect one another. The bow establishes that expectation before the training begins.

The martial arts bow is a cultural and spiritual act that not only reinforces respect, discipline, and mindfulness, linking modern training to centuries-old traditions; it honors the art and the people who practice it, past and present, making it one of the most enduring traditions in the

martial arts. It is also a reminder that martial arts are as much about character as they are about technique.

Martial Arts Lineage

By Russell Kelley, Sensei

In traditional martial arts, lineage is the “family tree” of knowledge, a record of who taught whom. Lineage allows us to trace the transmission of the martial arts from its origins to the present day. It serves as the historical, cultural, and technical bridge that preserves the art’s original intent, methods, and values, ensuring continuity and authenticity across generations.

Lineage may be documented by written records, photos, certificates or orally passed down through generations, though oral history is more prone to change over time. A genuine lineage maintains the internal logic, training sequence, and tactical relationships of a system. This includes preserving specific techniques, forms, weapon methods, and the philosophical principles that guide them, ensuring that the art’s “architecture” remains intact. Lineage carries with it the language, etiquette, rituals, and moral codes of the tradition. These elements are often passed down through direct teacher to student relationship.

In traditional warrior cultures, lineage was a quick way to assess a person’s background, skills, and reliability. In modern contexts, it still functions as a marker of identity and trust within the martial community, similar to a “name, rank, and serial number” in the military.

Martial arts lineage is both a living history and a practical framework for preserving the art’s integrity, culture, and purpose. Lineage is not a guarantee of skill or teaching quality. A person can claim a lineage without embodying its principles, and lineage can be misused to discourage inquiry. It should be combined with personal training, critical thinking, and practical testing.

Without lineage, a martial art risks losing its historical depth, technical precision, and cultural meaning. It reminds the practitioner that this did not begin with you. However, lineage is not a guarantee of skill or teaching quality; it is a framework for authenticity, not a substitute for personal mastery.

SENSEI'S NOTES

Many years ago, when I was new to the martial arts, I had the opportunity to travel and go to an event in another state. This event was a weekend full of many training seminars. It also marked our organization's 20-year anniversary. We got up extremely early in the morning for an 8-hour drive, got there and immediately jumped into some training seminars. That night our group slept in the dojo. We got up early the next morning and cleaned the dojo, wiped down all the training mats, cleaned the bathrooms, and the cleaned kitchen.

We then went outside in the early morning brisk air and did our karate warm-ups, 100 of each technique. After finishing this exhausting early morning warm-up, we went inside and ate breakfast. Some people took a short break before the day's seminars began, but myself and others from my dojo cleaned the kitchen again. Spent the rest of the day in multiple training seminars. In the late afternoon we went to my instructor's mother's house for a BBQ and to swim.

While sitting and talking with my instructor, a high-ranking black belt came over and sat down with us. He brought with him a tokkuri and placed an ochoko in front of both my instructor and me. When I looked at my instructor, he looked at the tokkuri and motioned with his head toward the high-ranking black belt. Without even hesitating I picked it up and poured the high-ranking black belt some sake. After I put it back on the table, the high-ranking black belt picked it up and poured my instructor and myself some. Making sure to pay attention how they both held their ochoko I did the same and we all drank. The high-ranking black belt stood up and said he was going to go refill the tokkuri. My instructor leaned over to me and said I did good and to go

join the other because he wanted to talk to with the high-ranking black belt by himself when he returned, so I did.

I did not know it at the time, and did not come to realize it until much later, but besides all the training I participated in over the weekend, I had been learning protocol. All the time spent maintaining the dojo and its surrounding areas is just as important as learning any technique. Even the serving of the sake, and how the ochoko are held is all part of protocol. To this day I always arrive early and clean the dojo, the bathrooms, and the entry area making sure that the building is ready for training.