

# Teaching Tips for Yudansha

(Teaching 9<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> Kyu Inclusive)

- ❑ **Be prepared!** Know what you are going to teach. Have a lesson plan to follow in the early stages of your teaching. Plan to engage the whole person – body, mind & spirit.
- ❑ **Be enthusiastic!** Positive energy is contagious. Enjoy yourself and keep a sense of humour.
- ❑ **Learn by teaching!** Teaching is a great way to consolidate and stretch your own capacities.
- ❑ **Keep it simple!** Teach them only what they need to know then, plus enough to make them look forward to the next class.
- ❑ **Be adaptable!** Adapt your delivery style to suit the situation or group.
- ❑ **Teach what you know and can do!** Concentrate on demonstrating and teaching only what you are sure of. If you have even the slightest doubt, please ask.
- ❑ **Teach the kihon!** There is no room for personal views or variations on the kihon (either yours or the students). They are the chords that underpin all technique (waza).
- ❑ **Bank your own knowledge!** The application of the kihon based on size / speed / strength / flexibility / circumstance / ability will always be different. Learn and retain these variations based on your personal experience.
- ❑ **The Kihon is not Aikido!** Remember that the kihon is a tool to explore principles (riai) that connect waza. It is a method to develop and polish ability in Aikido.
- ❑ **Teach each individual to his or her strengths!** Notice whether students use visual, auditory or kinaesthetic language. (I see! / I hear what you're saying! / I get what you mean!). Tailor your message to their preferred learning style. (Let me show you – please watch / I'll explain that again / Here, I'll do it with you.) A good teacher blends these styles into their presentations to groups. (Do you know your own preferred learning style?)
- ❑ **Be polite and respectful!** Teaching is a privilege – not a right. You are the representative of the Dojo and the Kami. Be careful with students' feelings and bodies. Always build confidence in beginners. This is the glue that helps skill adhere to people. (As students develop, however, it is sometimes necessary to encourage them to question their capacities in order that they become willing to train without thought of perfection, time limits or outcomes.)
- ❑ **Use short, specific instruction!** Use minimal words to convey the instruction. (Left hand forehead height!)
- ❑ **Allow the student to attempt the skill!** Let the student try six or eight times before intervening again with further instruction/s unless it is completely wrong. Balancing this area is important – allowing them to regularly repeat a poor movement will develop bad habits but intervening too soon will not allow them to experience the concept or movement themselves.
- ❑ **Stay on track!** Being firm in directing the students towards the lessons' objectives is vital. This needs to be balanced with the adaptability to move with the energy of the class.
- ❑ **Maintain control of your class!** Ensuring that the students are respectful of each other, the Dojo and you is important. There is no excuse for rough or violent behavior. Establishing the wa (harmony) of the Dojo is your responsibility. Staying composed yourself is the easiest way to achieve this.
- ❑ **Distinguish between Kihon waza & Jiyu waza!** The Kihon dosa and waza are about detail complexity and the Jiyu waza is about dynamic complexity. Use the appropriate teaching style for each. (Absolutely limited instruction for Jiyu waza – they must learn by demonstration, participation, repetition and flow.)
- ❑ **Finish strongly!** End every class with ten minutes of shitei jiyu waza and encourage students to stretch / warm down after class. Talk with students after class.
- ❑ **The student must come to the Dojo!** This has two meanings. No student, no teacher. We can't teach if the students don't attend so the class must be 'magnetic'. Secondly, the standards of the Dojo are not flexible. The student must adapt and rise to these standards because the Dojo cannot lower or change the standards to suit the student.
- ❑ **Learn from your performance!** We serve the same meal (Aikido) every day so we must ensure it is 'fresh' each time. Learn from each class how to improve as a teacher.