

Aikido: is an illustrated guide for students of aikido; with explanations of four aikido kata and in depth technical discussions of principles which form the underlying physical and strategic concepts that form the core of aikido techniques.

Aikido: Principles of Kata and Randori

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**Aikido**  
**principles of kata and randori**

**by Nick Lowry**



**12 Winds Publishing, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma**

# **Aikido: Principles of Kata and Randori**

By Nick Lowry

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1. Aikido – technical
  2. Aikido – practice and theory
  3. Aikido – teaching
  4. Aikido – philosophy
- I. Title

that we don't allow conflict to enter into this relationship by attempting, as kohai, to correct, teach, or criticize our sempai. Sempai is there to help kohai, and sempai has the added responsibility of keeping the practice safe and positive. If kohai does not allow sempai's help and guidance, the learning cannot take place, and practice may become unsafe.

As a teacher or outside observer, it is inadvisable to interrupt or disturb a sempai/kohai interaction except when safety is in question, and even then, if possible, it is best to consult with the sempai privately. Everyone must take responsibility to keep the training safe, regardless of rank or experience.

#### **I. Helpful safety and etiquette guidelines and rules**

- Stay focused on the training, be observant of your area, and avoid throwing into the path of other couples' kata, or off the floor. While working on the mat, each aikidoka must be aware of his/her surroundings at all times to avoid potential accidents. As a rule, tori must always look out for uke.
- Remain focused on the lesson or kata demonstration rather than visiting with others. Discussions of safety issues are of particular importance.
- Practice **only** what you have been instructed to practice. Adding something "more advanced" or elements from other arts demonstrates immaturity and unwillingness to receive well planned instruction.
- Refrain from all intoxicants, alcohol or non-prescribed drugs before a lesson.
- If you have a health condition or an injury, advise your sensei and sempai.
- If a technique appears to "fail," slow it down and practice it softer. Speed only leads to frustration, injury, and poor or erroneous technique.
- Aikido is a dangerous art. Every participant must be very careful when applying arm bars, wrist locks, or use of force. We must

remain acutely aware of the potential for pain and injury. Pay close attention to all safety issues related to specific techniques - i.e. “cranking,” hyper extending, premature release of falling partners, inappropriate acceleration of the throw, etc.

- If sitting on the floor, keep legs folded and pay attention to what is happening around you. If someone falls on your extended legs it will probably injure or break them.
- When learning falls, go at your own pace. Stay within your own personal comfort zone and move on to the more advanced forms only after mastery of the basic forms.
- When learning to roll, spend your first 3-6 months on the safety mats.
- When learning to do elevated break falls (flips), spend the first month on safety mats.
- The most commonly avoidable aikido injuries occur when learning to fall and roll. Keep it slow and safe. Build your falls gradually and they will serve you throughout your life. Falling skills that you develop in the first few months of training are a foundation that will sustain your growth in aikido and make practice come alive. To be a good tori, you must be a good uke, and to be a good uke, you must have good ukemi. If you become injured during this learning period, while building your basic structure, your foundation of ukemi might be flawed and growth may be somewhat stifled. Early injuries can hamper your falling skills and consequently all your aikido skills for years. So stay safe; learn it slow, and learn it right.
- Stay near your partner once they have been thrown in order to protect them from other people falling.
- If you have problems with certain types of ukemi (falling), inform your partner and pat out instead or use safety mats.
- Keep finger and toe nails short so as not to be torn off. Long hair should be put in a ponytail.
- No food or drink is allowed on the mat. Refrain from chewing gum on the mat.
- Refrain from wearing jewelry, perfume or makeup on the mat.

- Make sure your feet and hands are clean before getting on the mat. Keep your body, especially feet, scrupulously clean. Players with dirty feet should not be permitted on the mat.
- If you find blood on the mat, stop and find out who is bleeding. If *you* are bleeding, clean up the mat immediately with peroxide.
- Shoes are not allowed on the mat.

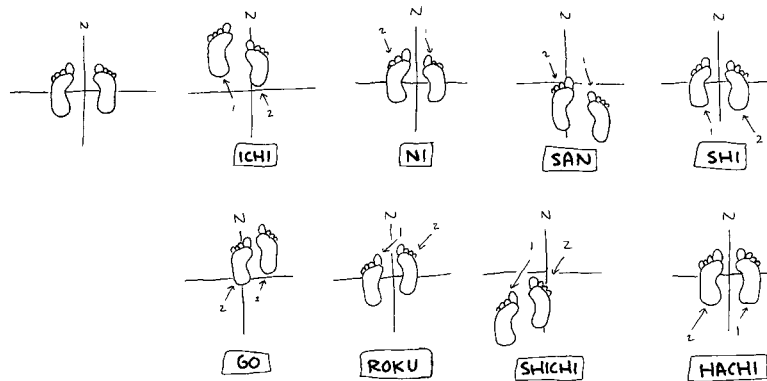
*There are no shortcuts  
because there is no end.  
-- Kyuzo Mifune*



## 1. Shomen Ashi -- the "X" pattern

Shomen ashi and the two movements that follow it can be seen as an evasion series, due to their similarity to evasion steps in later katas.

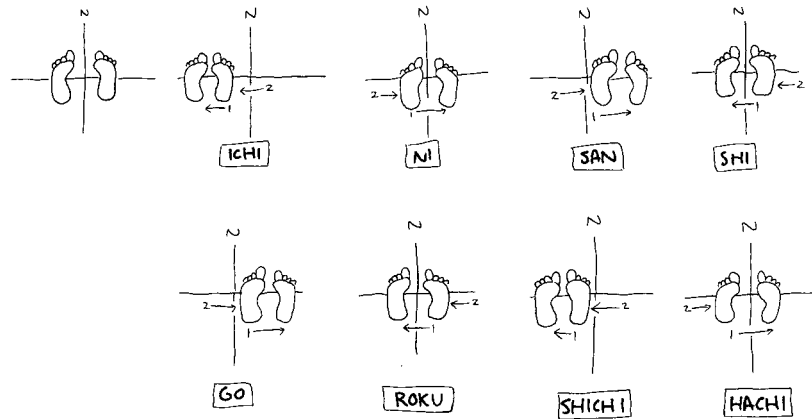
To begin Shomen ashi, from the left side, we step forward in tsugiashi (following foot step). As both feet move, the leading foot remains forward and the trailing foot stays behind. Remember to let the center fall into the steps and maintain good posture. In each move of the evasion series, the hands and arms remain relaxed at your sides. The focus here is on the movement of the center and the footwork. Do not rock or tilt, and minimize any bobbing or exaggerated rising or falling action by adjusting with the bend in your knees. Try to remain level in each step.



## 2. Waki Ashi -- side to side

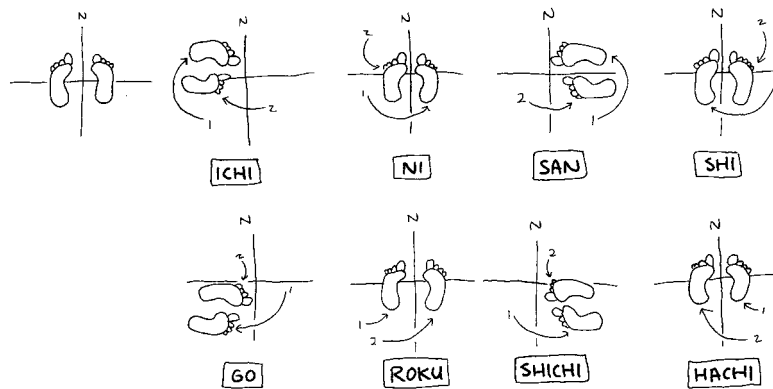
Waki ashi is a side stepping action, and all the same rules apply as in shomen ashi. Pay particular attention not to let the body load up, lean, or tilt in the opposite the direction you are about to step in. In other words, do not prepare to step right by shifting the weight to the left; instead, fall directly into the step from the center. Do not rock or wobble from side to side.





### 3. Tenkan Ashi -- goblet step

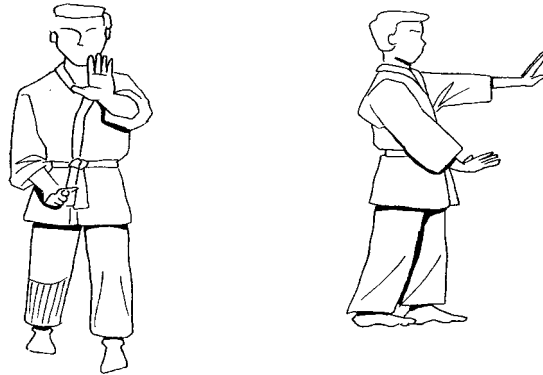
Tenkan ashi is a turning step or “goblet” step. Turn the leading foot in with the hip action closing. Be careful to make no preparatory shifts or foot turnings in the transitions. Turn the leading foot out with a complete opening hip action, and make sure that feet line up square to an imaginary box in front of you and behind you.



### 4. Shomen Togatana -- front push

The next five kata forms all employ same hand and foot actions in a variety of ways to deliver energy. The hands and arms are

engaged in actions that are recognizable as pushes, parries, pickups, hand changes, and releases. In each form, the arm begins from a relaxed hanging position at your side. As the motion begins, the fingers are engaged first, wrists second, and shoulder last. The hand movement ends at eye level in each action, and the step and arm actions are completed simultaneously. After the forward actions, both left and right, you then turn 90° and repeat them to each side. In this first action, shomen tegatana, just push straight up to eye level with fingers upright and let the hand return to your side as you step back.



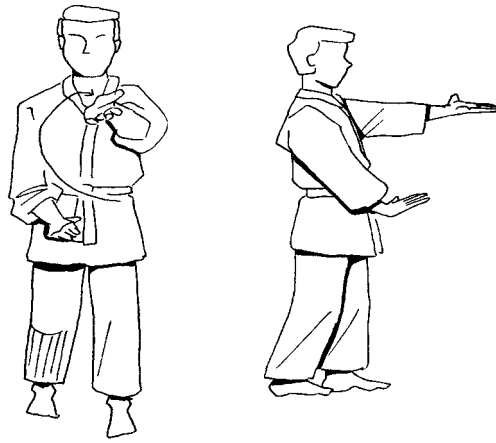
### **5. Uchi Mawashi--inside sweep**

In this push from outside to the inside, the footwork and stepping pattern are the same as in the previous form. The arm action begins from the side. As fingers push to the outside, the wrist cocks, and the arm is brought over head in a large outside sweeping action until it descends directly over head to bring the hand, palm pushing out, to eye level. The arm action is like a sword cut coming down on the center line.



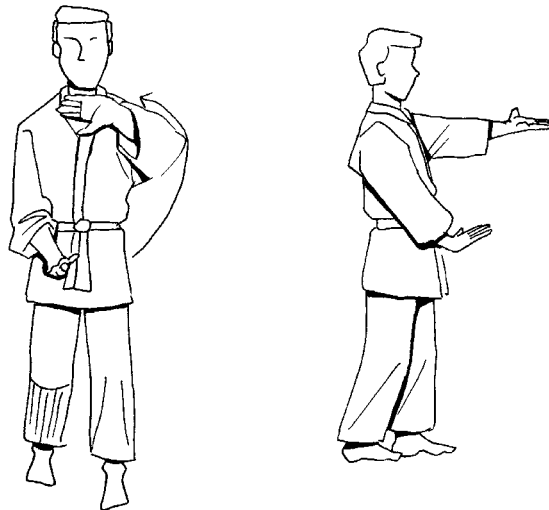
#### **6. Soto Mawashi -- underhand push**

In this push from the inside to the outside, the footwork and stepping pattern are the same as in the previous two techniques. As the step begins, the fingers engage pointing in, and the wrist pushes forward as the arm moves straight up the center line. The hand sweeps, turning over to a palm up position at eye level at the conclusion of the step.



### 7. Uchi Soto Gaeshi -- pet the dragon

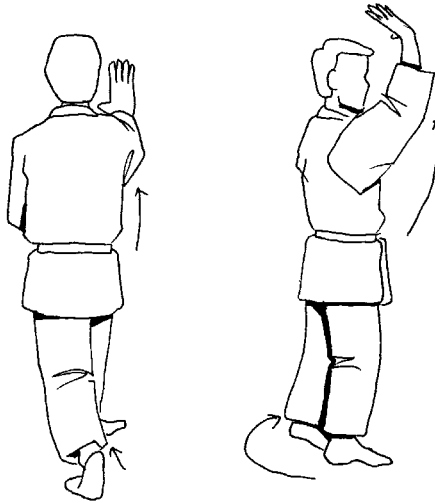
In this combination of pushes to the inside and then to the outside, the footwork and stepping pattern are the same as in the previous three techniques, but instead of making both front then both side pushes, here we make the front and side push alternately. In the initial step, the hand and arm push to the center line in a horizontal arc ending at eye level. As you step back, the arm returns to the belt line. As the side step begins, the palm rotates up to an outward push, ending at eye level.



### 8. Uchi Mawashi Gaeshi -- push the sphere

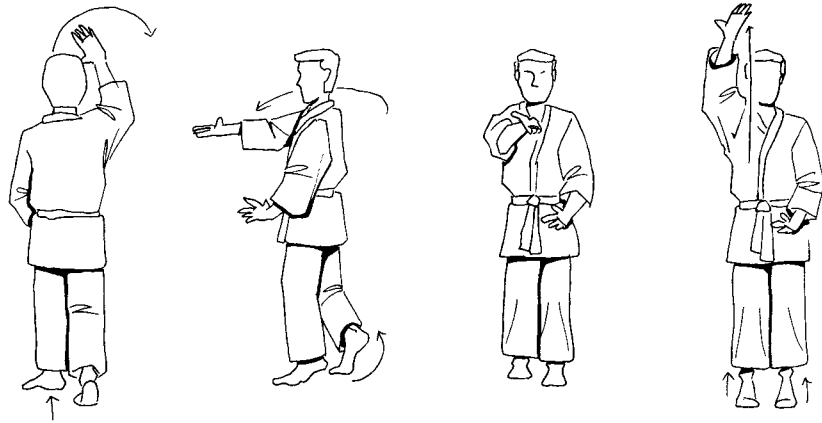
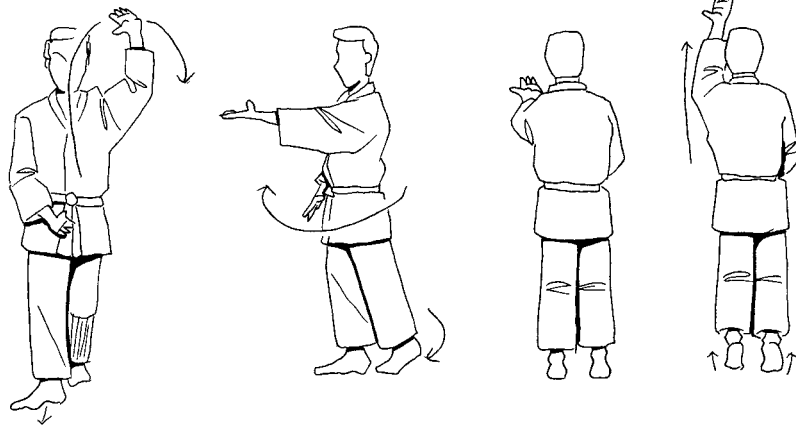
The stepping pattern in this form is across the center line and rotating 180°. This stepping action requires a complete opening and closing of the hips in order to minimize, or even eliminate, any pivoting adjustments of the feet. The pushing hand engages at the side and pushes up in as large an arc as possible. The body rise from the step and the top of the arc of the arm should be simultaneous. As the body drops, the arm falls in a pushing gesture back to the starting point. This series of actions is repeated twice, alternating with each hand.





#### 9. Soto Mawashi Gaeshi -- opposite hand and foot spin

This technique and the two that follow use opposite hand and foot actions that justify themselves by becoming same hand and foot actions. As the step begins, bring the hand up the center line, as in soto mawashi (#6), but using opposite hand and foot. Allow the arm action to extend from overhead into a horizontal sweep to eye level. As the sweep begins, the center rotates 180°; hips should open and close completely in order to minimize steps. The arm action joins the rotation of the center, and the hand terminates palm up at eye level. Finally, raise the hand above head, and raise up on the balls of both feet. This series is repeated on the opposite side.





#### 10. Ude Goshi Gaeshi -- hip switch

Ude Goshi Gaeshi is the only technique in the kata in which we use pivoting actions on the balls of our feet. As you step forward, raise the opposite arm, palm up to the center line. Next, engage the fingers and wrist in a downward pushing arc, and begin to pivot 180°. The arm swings down, the hand stays centered, and the body pivots. As the arm swings up into a same hand and foot relationship, the fingers and wrist are in a forward pushing position. Then, reverse all of the above. Make sure that your arm descends and rises in an arc on the vertical plane. There are no horizontal arm actions in this technique. Repeat the series on the opposite side.



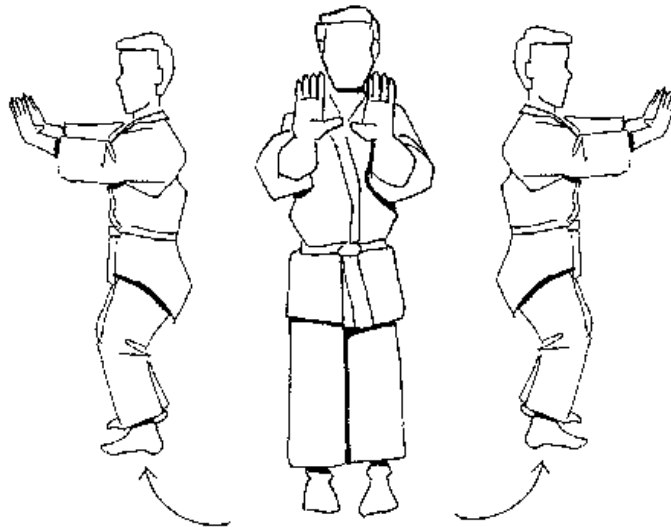
#### 11. O Mawashi

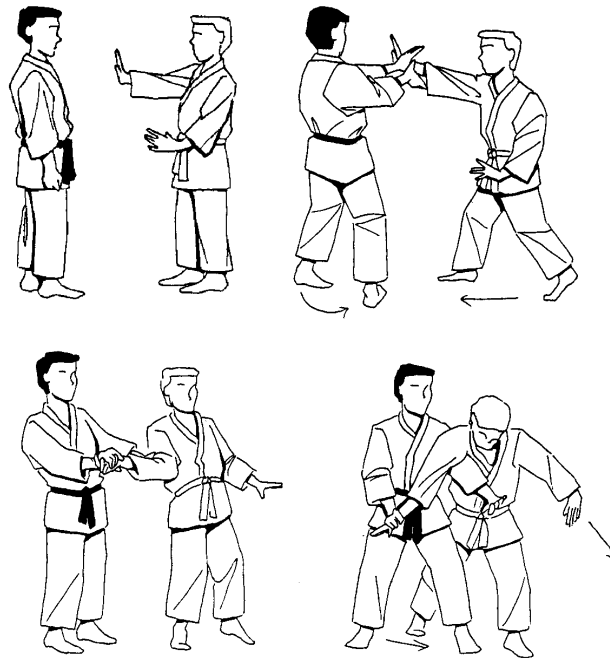
O Mawashi is the same move as uchi mawashi gaeshi (#8) but done with opposed hand and foot actions. As you push, step and rotate 180°. The hand and body both rise and fall together. As you return to the starting position, engage both hands in a pushing posture from the center.



## 12. Yoko O Mawashi -- window wash

With both hands palm out in the center, step to the back corner in a dropping action, and as the body rises, turn back square and return to starting position. The hands will define a horizontal figure eight, which comes from the rise and fall of the body, exaggerated by the bend of the knees not from swinging the arms. Repeat on opposite side.





#### Note on Mae otoshi

This technique follows along after tori attempts shiho nage and at the end of the first hip switch, uke turns away and attempts to pull free. The arm coil is held and uke's turning causes him to exaggerate his body rise. Tori follows the rise and then executes the throw as uke's arm uncoils and his body drops. We are not cranking the wrist, uke's own reactions take him into the coil.

## 16. **Sumi Otoshi**

Same as in mae otoshi  
(#15)

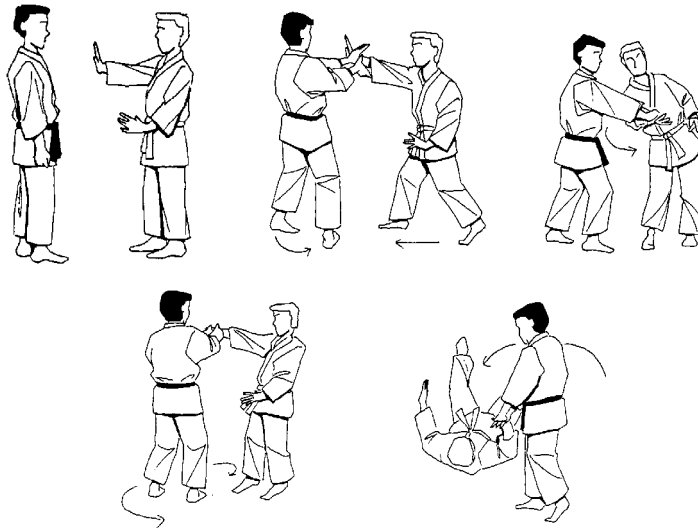
Tori floats with uke's  
pull until momentum  
ceases then extends with  
tsugiashi step in an  
inverted wrist coil to  
throw to the corner that  
uke has pulled to.

Standard attack.

Same as mae otoshi, but as tori coils  
arm, uke resists by pulling the arm  
back in a step with the right foot.

Balance is broken to the right front  
corner.

Elevated rolling break fall.



#### Note on Sumi otoshi

Here uki is reacting to the arm coil from mae otoshi by reversing with a pull so as to get behind tori's arm and possibly reverse the throw. As tori follows uke's pull and turn, make sure to maintain good separation between the bodies. The throw is executed with an extension of uke's step which requires tori to follow slightly behind and throw by exploiting the metatarsal reflex as in kotegaeshi.

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