



## Program for Young People

### Structure of Program - "Learner to Leader"

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The Griffin Aikido 'Program for Young People' is focused on providing a progressive 'Learner to Leader' approach to the practice of Aikido. This approach involves students beginning as a learner and progressing to a leader for each of the colour belt levels, moving from White Belt to Purple Belt. Following graduation from the 'Program for Young People' students are then assessed for placement in the Program for 'Teens and Adults' based on proficiency. The emphasis of the program is on undertaking successive 'Learner to Leader' cycles with students experiencing a journey from learning new skills, practicing those skills to gain proficiency, and then assisting others to learn the skills. Students are then graded to move to the next level, with students encouraged to reflect on the journey as part of the grading process.

The 'Learner to Leader' process begins with learning a set of techniques and movements for the level, which is recognised by the achievement of a first tip (applied as tape to the base belt), followed by undertaking sufficient practice (both in class and in own time) to become proficient, recognised with a second tip. Once both tips have been achieved the student focuses on providing leadership to students who are learning and practicing the skills as part of the proficiency level, before moving to the next belt colour. Once students achieve Purple Belt they form part of the leadership team and support the entire class while also undertaking advanced practice with the Sensei prior to grading for placement in the 'Teens and Adults' class.

The three stages of progression in each colour belt level are:

- *Learn*: The initial stage focuses on providing students with instruction on the core set of Aikido practices required for the particular level of proficiency (including associated language and dress code). Each level has a curriculum for students to develop proficiency in before progressing to the next level. Levels include a focus on rituals, balance and stance, effective holds, safe landing techniques and a set of Aikido movements.
- *Practice*: Once students have learned the curriculum for the level, and receive their first tip, the focus is on undertaking effective practice to become proficient, to achieve the second tip. Through an emphasis on '*practice before progression*' students experience learning a new skill and then taking the time to practice without expecting themselves or others to be proficient without suitable levels of practice. Students are encouraged to practice at home to compliment practice undertaken in class.
- *Lead*: Once the student has demonstrated proficiency the focus is on providing leadership and peer-to-peer instruction to students learning and practicing the skills. The students will work with the Sensei to provide demonstrations of the skills to both inform learning of other students and allow advanced practice in the implementation of such skills with the Sensei in preparation for the final grading. The student will also be instructed in an advanced skill by the Sensei for demonstration at the grading.

### Grading Process

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The grading of students takes place at set intervals in the teaching term depending on the stage and level of proficiency (See 'Grading Progression'). Families of students being graded are encouraged to observe the grading process. As part of each level the following grading is undertaken:

1. *Enter Level of Proficiency*: The student is provided with the appropriate base belt to signify the level of proficiency they have achieved. All students are provided a copy of this document to inform their progression along with a self-assessment chart to be used as part of the grading process.

2. *Demonstrate core skills have been learned (First Tip)*: If the student is to undertake a grading in a particular term, beginning with the entry level students, at Week 6 the student presents their self-assessment findings based on how much of the curriculum they feel they have learned for review by the Sensei. The Sensei identifies areas to work on prior to the next grading (the Sensei may refer to notes kept on each student to compare to the self-assessment). In the final session of the term the student seeks to demonstrate that they have learned the curriculum and are able to carry out the items on request using Japanese terms with appropriate body placement and physical movement. This process may be led by a student who has achieved both tips in this level or subsequent levels, supported by the Sensei.
3. *Demonstrate proficiency in core skills (Second Tip)*: If the student is to undertake a grading in a particular term, at Week 6 the student presents their self-assessment findings based on their perceived level of proficiency for review by the Sensei to identify areas to work on prior to grading. In the final session of the term the student seeks to demonstrate that they are proficient in the curriculum by being able to carry out the items to a high degree of proficiency on request using Japanese terms with appropriate body placement and physical movement. This process is led by a student who has achieved proficiency in this level or subsequent levels, supported by the Sensei. (This will provide a comparison between those that have learned the skill and those that have invested the time to become proficient, showing that such investment delivers results and that taking time to practice is a key way to build proficiency.)
4. *Demonstrate leadership and reflection*: If the student is to undertake a grading in a particular term, as part of the grading the student will participate in leading grading for other students in their level or in previous levels. The student will seek to demonstrate their proficiency in the advanced skill developed with the Sensei and will be asked to provide a short statement of reflection on their journey from learner to leader.
5. *Progress to next level of Proficiency*: Each time a student demonstrated leadership and reflection they are presented with the belt for the next level following their personal reflection. For students that have achieved proficiency in all levels the grading will include a graduation to the 'Program for Teens and Adults' where they will be awarded a new belt appropriate to proficiency levels.

### Standard Grading Progression

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The progression of grading takes place to steward students through a repeated process of moving from learner to leader as part of the development of proficiency in the art of Aikido. The following table outlines the recommended grading progression based on the assumption that the student is either undertaking one class per week with 2 hours of home practice or two classes per week with 1 hour of home practice. Note that the following is a guide and additional practice may shorten the timeframe, with reduced training and practice extending the timeframe.

|        | Term 1          | Term 2               | Term 3               | Term 4               |
|--------|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Year 1 | Casual Clothing | White Belt           | White Belt           | White / Black Tip 1  |
| Year 2 | Yellow Belt     | Yellow / Black Tip 1 | Yellow / Black Tip 1 | Yellow / Black Tip 2 |
| Year 3 | Orange Belt     | Orange / Black Tip 1 | Orange / Black Tip 1 | Orange / Black Tip 2 |
| Year 4 | Blue Belt       | Blue / Black Tip 1   | Blue / Black Tip 1   | Blue / Black Tip 2   |
| Year 5 | Purple Belt     |                      |                      |                      |

## Grading Requirements

### Grading Themes

Each grading ceremony will include a focus on the three core themes of Aikido, namely:

1. *Peace*: This theme focuses on the student's ability to be mentally present in class, paying attention to the Senesi and other students. This theme will be graded based on a number of aspects of the students practice over the term leading up to the grading, hence this is an ongoing grading item. For instance students will be graded as to their ability to sit quietly and participate in the opening and closing meditation sessions, their ability to stay focused in class and not create distractions, and their ability to receive instruction and feedback.
2. *Strength*: This theme is focussed on the student's ability to learn new techniques. This theme will be graded based on the student's ability to demonstrate the techniques as part of the grading ceremony. Each level of proficiency will have a set of core techniques, outlined below, with a self-assessment sheet provided to students at the start of the learner stage for each level.
3. *Practice*: This theme is focussed on the student's ability to practice the techniques associated with the level and demonstrate proficiency. This theme will be graded based on the student's ability to demonstrate proficiency in the techniques as part of the grading ceremony.

### Graded Techniques

#### White Belt

- *Preliminaries*: Students will be graded on ability to adorn the training suit and tie the belt along with undertaking a number of bowing rituals and practices
- *Balance*: Students will be graded on learning and proficiency in standing balance positions, both 'Shizentai Gamae' (*Natural Stance*) and 'Hanmi' (*Combat Stance*) with each foot forward.
- *Holds*: Students will be graded on learning and proficiency in applying 'Kote Gaeshi' and 'Nikyo' hand holds as a form of personal stretch.
- *Safe Landing*: Students will be graded on learning and proficiency in pre-'Ukemi' rolling technique, involving sitting, gently holding knees and rocking back and forth with a twist of the hips.
- *Movement*: Students will be graded on learning and proficiency in the movements of 'Irimi' (*entering movement*) and 'Tai Sabaki' (*turning movement*) which are core to the practice of Aikido.



#### Yellow Belt

- *Preliminaries*: Students will be graded on ability to be appropriately dressed, undertaking bowing rituals, and sustain focus during class
- *Balance*: Students will be graded on learning and proficiency in standing balance positions facing a partner, in both 'Gyaku Hanmi' (*Mirror Stance*) and 'Ai Hanmi' (*Facing with same foot forward*).
- *Holds*: Students will be graded on learning and proficiency in applying 'Kote Gaeshi' and 'Nikyo' hand holds applied to training partner. (*No movement, just holding other person's hand in position*)
- *Safe Landing*: Students will be graded on learning and proficiency in forward and backwards rolls from kneeling.
- *Movements*: Students will be graded on learning and proficiency in the combined movements of 'Irimi' (*entering movement*) and 'Tai Sabaki' (*turning movement*) and the movement of 'Tenkan' (*entering and pivoting*).



- *Techniques:* Students will be graded on learning and proficiency in performing the following techniques.
  - i. 'Suwari Waza Ai Hanmi Ikkyo' (*kneeling, 2<sup>nd</sup> form right to right/left to left grip, Arm Pin Technique*) for both Ura & Omote (*move behind/move across front*)
  - ii. 'Ryote Dori Tenchi Nage' (*hold both wrist, heaven and earth, opposing energy direction throw, with zig zag step, leading partner into backward roll*)
  - iii. 'Ushiro Ryote Dori Kote Gaeshi' (*behind, hold both wrists, wrist lock, leading partner into backward roll*)
- *Counting in Japanese 1 – 10:* Ichi, Ni, San, Shi, Go, Roku, Shuchi, Hachi, Ku, Juu

### Orange Belt

- *Preliminaries:* Students will be graded on ability to sustain focus and provide a role model during class.
- *Balance:* Students will be graded on learning and proficiency in maintaining one's own balance and holding training partner off balance whilst undertaking the movements as part of this level.
- *Holds:* Students will be graded on learning and proficiency in applying 'Kote Geshi' and 'Nikyo' hand holds applied to training partner as part of the movement techniques for this level.
- *Safe Landing:* Students will be graded on learning and proficiency in forward, backwards, and forwards/backwards rolls from standing.
- *Movement:* Students will be graded on learning and proficiency in:
  - i. The combined movements of 'Irimi' (*entering movement*), 'Tai Sabaki' (*turning movement*), and 'Tenkan' (*entering and pivoting*) with a partner.
 

*Note: 'Irimi' and 'Tai Sabaki' with a partner is to be practiced as the same movement facing each other from 'Ai Hanmi', and 'Tenkan' with a partner to be practiced from 'Gyaku Hanmi Katata Dori'.*
  - ii. 'Shikko' (Suwari Waza): Knee walking – forwards
  - iii. 'Jo Kata' – Basic coordination's; figure 8, thrust strike, overhead strike, defend overhead
- *Technique:* Students will be graded on learning and proficiency in previously learnt techniques and the following additional techniques:
  - i. 'Ai Hanmi Katata Dori Ikkyo' (right to right or left to left, single wrist hold, arm pin)
  - ii. 'Gyaku Hanmi Katata Dori Tenchi Nage' (*mirror stance, single wrist hold, entering and pivot variation with forward roll*)
  - iii. 'Ushiro Ryote Dori Ikkyo' (*hold both wrist from behind, move backwards under partners arm, arm pin*)
  - iv. 'Ushiro Ryote Dori Tenchi Nage' (*hold both wrists from behind, reverse zig-zag step with opposing energy direction with arms, partner complete backward roll*).
  - v. 'Ai Hanmi Katata Dori Kote Gaeshi' (right to right or left to left, single wrist hold, wrist lock, *partner complete backward roll*)
  - vi. 'Ai Hanmi Katata Dori Nikyo' (right to right or left to left, single wrist hold, wrist in-turn, arm lock on floor)
- *Counting in Japanese 1 – 20 :* Ichi, Ni, San, Shi, Go, Roku, Shuchi, Hachi, Ku, Juu, Juu ichi, Juu ni, Juu san, Juu shi, Juu go, Juu roku, Juu Shichi, Juu ku, Ni juu.



## Blue Belt

- *Preliminaries*: Students will be graded on ability to sustain focus and undertake leadership roles to the full class
- *Balance*: Students will be graded on learning and proficiency in maintaining one's own balance and holding training partner off balance whilst undertaking the movements as part of this level.
- *Holds*: Students will be graded on learning and proficiency in applying 'Kote Geshi' hand holds applied to training partner as part of the movement techniques for this level, including those with a forward roll.
- *Safe Landing*: Students will be graded on learning and proficiency in forward, backwards, and forwards/backwards rolls from a jumping start.
- *Movement*: Students will be graded on learning and proficiency in the following partnered movements form 'Shomen Uchi' (*downward strike towards head*):
  - i. 'Irimi', 'Tai Sabaki' and 'Tenkan'.
  - ii. 'Funakogi Undo' (*rowing exercise, 'Hanmi' stance, transferring body weight from one leg to the other maintaining contact with the floor through flat feet, with coordinated rowing motion of arms*)
  - iii. 'Jo Kata' (*previously learnt movement plus; 4 movement kata both sides, overhead strike, attack and defend overhead, changing sides within the movement*).
- *Techniques*: Students will be graded on learning and proficiency in previously learnt techniques and the following additional techniques:
  - i. 'Ai Hanmi Katata Dori Sankyo' (*right to right or left to left, single wrist hold, wrist twist and staff cut, arm lock on floor*).
  - ii. 'Ai Hanmi Katata Dori Kaiten Nage' (*'Ikkyo' beginning, circle arm, hook back of neck causing a cartwheel motion of your partner into a forward roll*).
  - iii. 'Gakyu Hanmi Katata Dori Kaiten Nage' (*enter & pivot, 'Tenkan', lead partner around, reverse direction moving under partners arm, cutting hand down partner is holding, hooking back of neck, leading partner into forward roll*).
  - iv. 'Ushiro Ryote Dori Sankyo' (*two handed wrist hold from behind, move backwards. Under partners arm, grasping wrist of arm moving under, wrist twist and sward cut, arm lock on floor*).
  - v. 'Shomen Uchi Kote Gaeshi' (*downward strike evaded using circular motion, with 'Tai Sabaki' and Tenkan variations, to rest hand on wrist, apply wrist turn and redirect partner momentum into backward roll*).
  - vi. 'Chudan Tsuki Kote Gaeshi' (*mid-section punch evaded using circular motion, with 'Tai Sabaki' and 'Tenkan' variations, to rest hand on wrist, apply wrist turn and redirect partner momentum into backward roll*).
  - vii. 'Ryote Dori Tenchi Nage' (*'Uke' entering to grab variation with partner moving in to grasp both wrists, enter to one side employing heaven and earth principle and pivot, extending partner into a forward roll*).
- *Counting in Japanese 1 – 20* : Ichi, Ni, San, Shi, Go, Roku, Shuchi, Hachi, Ku, Juu, Juu ichi, Juu ni, Juu san, Juu shi, Juu go, Juu roku, Juu Shichi, Juu ku, Ni juu.



## Purple Belt

The purple belt represents the highest achievement of a junior student and denotes that proficiency has been achieved in all aspects of the program. Prior to moving to the Adult class, age permitting, students who achieve this level will support the Sensei in the delivery of training while working with the Sensei to prepare for the adult program.

