

Ki & Aikido Testing

The ultimate goal of your training should be the personal growth that comes from regular practice, rather than simply acquiring rank. At its best the ranking system in ki-aikido is a means of marking your progress and providing motivation for your continued training. Your real, and lasting achievements can only come with regular practice. Students attending classes at Northern VA Ki Aikido are not required to test, but are encouraged to do so.

Who is eligible to test? To be eligible to test, you must have the required number of class hours, and the recommendation of a senior instructor. Please note that the number of class hours required for each rank are a *minimum* only. Additional practice will be necessary to achieve the proficiency necessary for advancement. For this reason our dojo schedules regular “**open mat**” time where skills learned in class can be polished. The focus here is on individualized training targeted to your specific needs. Feel free to ask your instructors about this. They are there to help you with your training.

Tips for testing:

1. Make sure you fully understand all of the requirements for each test level well in advance. A complete list with the names of required techniques for each **ki** and **aikido** rank is available both at the dojo and for download from the dojo website: www.novakiaikido.org/literature.htm.

2. As you look at the test list you’ll notice two categories for each aikido rank: **hitori waza**, which are the exercises performed at the beginning of each class, and **kumi waza**, the aikido techniques. Although we tend to focus our practice time on the throwing arts, or techniques, the hitori waza are an equally important part of your test. Be sure to practice them. To honor our lineage and tradition, the names for these are in Japanese. Learning these terms can seem daunting at first, but with a little practice it soon becomes second nature. Make sure you know the names of the required techniques and exercises so that you will “perform with confidence” on test day.

3. *Instructors recommend test candidates on the basis of who has already been practicing for their test. Don’t wait to be asked to start preparing.* Again, feel free to discuss this with an instructor. Test candidates are usually asked to perform one or more informal pre-tests, or mock exams prior to the actual test. These are an excellent training opportunity, and it will give you an overview of what the test will be like.

4. It is recommended that you find one or more training partners to work with you in getting yourself ready to test. This can be someone at your current level, or a more advanced student. Instructors and advanced students are also encouraged to “mentor” newer students. Do not hesitate to ask one of them if you have questions.

5. As you advance through the **ki** ranks, your understanding of ki principles should increasingly be reflected in the aikido portion of the test. The examiner will be looking for calmness, centered movement, and all the other elements that come from practicing aikido with **mind and body unification**.

6. How well a student performs on an examination is ultimately *the responsibility of the student taking the exam*. While the VKS instructional staff is there to support you, **it is up to you to take the initiative and do the practice.**