



# Lakewood Budo Kai

*Jujitsu, Karate, and Women's Self Defense*

## Martial Arts Protocol

Students are probably a white belt when they first hear the word protocol. At first, they don't really know what protocol was or what it meant. Everyone else in class is a higher rank and the student knows that they just need to do what they are told.

Later, students learn that protocol involves a formal conduct when interacting with, and showing respect to, high ranking visitors and guest instructors. The protocol we follow today is as ancient as the arts we study and shows our dedication to upholding Japanese traditions.

In addition to our normal etiquette and dojo courtesy rules, students learn the proper actions to be taken when a high ranking person is in class. One of the first things we learn is to listen how the person is introduced. By paying special attention to the person's title (e.g. O'Sensei, Shihan, Professor) we know how to address the individual. We use this title when speaking to or about this person. In general, we do not speak to high ranking people unless they first speak to us or ask us a question.

Our instructor was a brown belt when his instructor asked him if he would like to take a trip and train with a high ranking individual. Our instructor jumped at the chance and, instead of enjoying a relaxing vacation in San Diego with his family, he went to Las Vegas during the summer where he worked out with his instructor and an even higher ranking black belt.

He didn't get a fancy hotel room. Instead, he slept in the dojo. He quickly learned that his instructor woke up early and it was up to the student to clean the dojo before each training session. By cleaning the dojo the student showed his instructor and the higher ranking black belt how much he valued the dojo and the training that he received. You can imagine how hot the room was during the Las Vegas summer without air conditioning. The days were long but he enjoyed each and every training session.

Protocol teaches us that a high ranking person's time is much more valuable than ours. By arriving at the dojo prior to the high ranking person, we find we can learn from them if they make any comments prior to the start of class or the event.

Right after our instructor was promoted to black belt he was on his way to a Jujitsu competition. He wanted to arrive early because he knew that a high ranking Jujitsu guest instructor was going to be there. Unfortunately, the group he was with arrived a few minutes later than expected. They arrived in plenty of time for the event, but they arrived after the high ranking guest. The guest didn't say anything but our instructor knew that he didn't ever want to be in that situation again. As students, we like to arrive early to the dojo to show our desire and willingness to learn as much as possible. We know that when I arrive early and pay attention, we are more likely to be taught additional techniques or learn more about the martial arts.



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Several years later our instructor was watching a karate tournament. He recognized a high ranking karateka (a person who studies karate) and stood out of the way so he could easily pass. As the high ranking person passed, our instructor bowed to thank him for being at the tournament. The high ranking karateka smiled and gave a slight nod of his head, recognizing our instructor and the respect he showed. Even though the high ranking karateka knew our instructor wasn't a student of his, his nod showed his appreciation for the proper protocol. Who was this high ranking person? A high ranking black belt who was later asked to perform the action sequences in the original Karate Kid movie.

Years later our instructor discovered that a karate master from Okinawa was traveling to the United States and our instructor was excited to hear that the karate master was going to be teaching at a dojo in the San Diego area. It was there that our instructor learned students should bring a small gift each day that a high ranking person taught class. Our instructor also learned that students can collectively pool their funds together and purchase a larger gift for the guest. Then, at the end of the day, a black belt transports the gift(s) to the location where the high ranking person is staying.

Lakewood Budo Kai students are fortunate to learn from many high ranking instructors, martial arts experts, and guest instructors. By following proper protocol, we help ensure that our students continue to benefit by receiving instruction from these high ranking individuals.