

BRITISH AIKIDO BOARD
WEAPONS PROTOCOL

The Protocol has been approved to provide guidance to Instructors and Students on the correct use, transportation and storage of such weapons and should be read in conjunction with the Insurance Guidelines, and the BAB Coaching Handbook which can be downloaded from the BAB website www.bab.org.uk.

1. Types of Weapons Used in Aikido Training

(i) Wooden Weapons, including bokken, tanto and jo.

In the case of the bokken and tanto these either have a blunt end or a rounded point and the use of either is covered by the BAB Insurance policy.

(ii) Live Blades

These could include weapons such as original and replica “samurai swords”(i.e. curved blades of 50cm or over in length from handle to tip) and tanto and under the 2008 Amendment to the Criminal Justice Act 1988 (Offensive Weapons) could include weapons made from wood, alloy, carbon fibre or even plastic. The use of such weapons is covered by the BAB Insurance policy, subject to strict adherence with this Weapons Protocol.

The following basic protocols and risk assessment requirements should be applied to the use of ALL types of weapons.

2. Basic Protocols

(i) Transportation & Storage

- Police Guidance on the possession and carrying of offensive weapons can be downloaded from the BAB website and forms an integral part of this Protocol.
- The law regarding the carrying of weapons in a public place is contained in Section 1 of the Prevention of Crime Act 1953 & Section 139 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988.
- Aikidoka carrying weapons who are stopped by the Police, should give every assistance to the officer(s) including an explanation of why such weapons are being carried. No attempt to conceal the fact that weapons are being carried should be made.
- Aikidoka should carry their Association’s Membership book to show they are participating in an approved martial art...
- Weapons should only be carried when it is known that they are required at a particular training session. Coaches should therefore inform their students as to when weapons are actually required.
- Weapons should only be carried directly to and from a practice.
- Weapons should not be left in a vehicle on a permanent basis.
- Aikidoka should ensure that their weapons are carried within a secure bag at all times and hence not directly visible, and should ensure that the bag is never left unattended. “Live blades” must always be transported in their scabbards
- Travelling on public transport with weapons should be avoided if possible.
- Whilst the words “reasonable excuse” and “good reason” in each of the relevant Acts may provide a defence for the student, in relation to the carrying of such weapons, it will be for the individual, not the police, to prove that they had a reasonable excuse or good reason for possessing the item. The student’s demeanor is a most important factor in dealing with a police enquiry.

- All live blades should be stored in a locked secure cupboard if left permanently in the dojo and Instructors should be able to have access to them. If not kept at the dojo, live blades should be kept at qualified Aikidoka's homes.

(ii)Risk Assessment

Before starting a training session the instructor should carry out a risk assessment including considering the following factors:

- The Dojo floor should be clean and present no tripping hazards.(check for holes, gaps etc and potential slippage from sweat)
- The height of the ceiling should be sufficient to avoid contact with weapons
- Avoid dangerous obstructions, pillars, heaters etc.
- The Dojo should be large enough for the number of students and the activity. This may be obvious in respect of the area in front of the students but can be overlooked in the area behind them.
- The minimum space recommendation for pairs training with weapons is 5 square metres per practitioner.
- Ensure students know how to check their own equipment and its safe use.
- Weapons and any related equipment should be checked, by the user, prior to the classes for any defects. In the case of "live blades" particular attention should be paid to the security of the handle.
- The student's gi and hakama should be worn correctly to avoid the risk of tripping over or weapons becoming entangled in clothing.
- Special consideration should be given to other "users" sharing an area, particularly in large sports halls, where access routes are shared with other activities.

(iii)Training with "Live Blades"

- Practice should be for special classes under the direct supervision, at all times, of a qualified BAB Coach
- Qualifications for practice. As a minimum the last 12 months of practice should have included the use of wooden tantos or bokkens.
- The Coach should ensure the students always practise what is being taught and not permit any deviation during the training session.
- There should be absolute quiet on the mat by all watching students.
- There should be an atmosphere of study and concentration
- Written guidance is to be provided to Instructors, by the Associations on progressive practice – starting for e.g. with fixed moves, before progressing to say tai-sabaki.
- Be aware of sweaty wrists and palms, dry with a towel before practice.
- When a blade is not being used it should be placed in its scabbard, and then put securely away.
- With the exception of an organised public demonstration, there should be no on-lookers who are not practicing.