

SSAA Grading Guidelines

We want to aim for progressive improvement, both in range and depth. Here are some general guidelines for what can be expected at different levels. Allowances will be made for age and impairments, including adapted gradings if required.

Ki Gradings

Any unsuccessful exercise to be retested. 3 unsuccessful tests means they'll need to try again.

Shoden (basic level) - first test (touch, send ki, follow). Students should be fairly relaxed and confident for most exercises. Allow for nerves, put student at ease if necessary.

Chuden (middle level) - first test exercises - student relaxed and confident. Second test (distract, touch, send ki, follow). Overcoming nerves is part of this test (a distraction to be ignored). Students should demonstrate determined, single minded focus on unification of mind and body.

Joden (higher level) - confidence and relaxed stability for first and second test. Third test (send continuing ki, touch, follow) - student non-reactive and stable.

5th Kyu - 3rd Kyu

Increasing level of confidence, flowing movement (less and less 'stops and starts'). Leading and following with increasing natural, relaxed coordination. Leading up to a fair understanding of the principles for the 9 basic techniques.

2nd - 1st Kyu

Fair understanding of the principles for the basic techniques, consistently applied. Leading and following with more confidence, awareness, and a sense of extension and connection. Techniques, particularly on the move, will be more flowing and with some evidence of rhythm. Tanto - showing respect for the weapon, and a basic understanding of the exercises demonstrated.

1st Dan

Ki Grading - confidence and relaxed stability for all tests.

Aikido Grading - as above, but better understanding of the principles of the 9 basic techniques, more consistently applied across 1st to 8th form. Weapons - basic understanding of handling and moving with relaxation and coordination. Basic understanding of bokken kata. Tanto - as before, but more flowing and more confident.

2nd Dan

Ki Grading - good feeling of extension and coordination for each exercise.

Aikido Grading - as above, but now fairly consistently applied across 9th to 16th form and weapon techniques (some allowance for the wide range of new techniques). Better understanding of weapon katas. Tanto - as before, but more flowing and more confident. Generally starting to demonstrate early connection and control at the beginning of techniques, leading well throughout the technique, and ki continuing at the end.

3rd Dan

Showcasing a wide curriculum to a good standard.

Ki Grading - a continuous feeling of extension and coordination that deals effortlessly with all the tests.

Aikido Grading - Consistently demonstrating a higher level of early connection and control at the beginning of techniques, leading well throughout the technique, and ki continuing at the end.

Weapon katas, confident - clear positive movements, with relaxed coordination and rhythm.

Suitability for becoming a Teacher - it is possible for students to achieve Dan grades by demonstrating the outlined progression in confidence and control, but not have demonstrated a consistent or clear understanding of the principles to the level required to teach. Students will be told this and have the opportunity to improve that area if they want to teach.