

Things That You Should (and Should Not) Do to Become an Uchideshi

Carlos Blanco

Forewords

In January 2013, I wrote to my instructor telling him that I thought that time had arrived for me to apply for a Musubi fund help. I had started preparing my body since September 2012. An important injure on my left knee needed to be taken seriously if I wanted to train as uchideshi.

In December 30, 2013 I finally arrived in Japan after 30 hours trip from Argentina.

I decided to write this essay in English and while being in Japan for two reasons. First, my English would be acceptable for reading and writing, second and more important, my impressions would be vividly.

This is a work in progress and some impressions might be in disorder. I prefer this way.

Body

First of all, take care of your body.

I know this may sound out of place. Why don't I start just saying how much I wanted to become uchideshi, training, improving aikido, and so on? Because you will need your body to do all that things. Strong body and pure "kokoro".

Sleep, clean and eat. These are the three most important things an uchideshi must learn. Taking care of your body must be done in many ways. Especially when you are not training. Sleeping, eating well, stretching are some ways. Shave and take a shower regularly. This will not only help to your body but also to your mood. Keep your nails cut, especially toes ones!

Taking care of your body is also part of the responsibility you are given. An injured uchideshi is useless not only for every day practice but especially for doing the cleaning of dojo.

Be sincere towards your body: don't over try it but don't get lazy as well.

Clothes and Time

Dress properly. This is the beginning of good "waza". Take care of your clothes as well especially your keikogi and your hakama and always be punctual.

Japanese culture just doesn't conceive not being punctual so be where you are told to be ten minutes earlier. Just looking for your socks while you



are in a hurry would miss the train and get late.

Being punctual also means considering additional problems, tidying up your dogi the night before and not arriving running. "A gentleman will walk, but never run".

You should have at least two dogis in winter and no less than three for summer season.

The less you have, the more careful you should be with them. The more you have, bigger the temptation to be lazy and say "okay, I'll wash them tomorrow". And of course it's not only a matter of washing. Learn how to fold your clothes appropriately in order they don't take so much space. Prepare the clothes you were going to wear the following day the previous night.

Dealing with people

Don't challenge people. This is not the spirit of training and you'll probably get injured.

Never forget that you have come to learn. Being aware of this situation from the very beginning will avoid you many problems.

Not everybody has the same ways for having fun. Some people like dancing, karaoke or perhaps just having a beer alone and enjoying that. Please, be polite when you refuse an invitation. In fact, you can be polite as well as sincere. These two virtues will be highly appreciated.

Techniques

Train just do the way you see, not the way to know.

If you want to try effectiveness of your technique you should go to a bar or start a street fighting. Don't try to do this at dojo. People just want to practice, not to be your sparring.

You'll probably be taught ten different ways of carry on a shihonague. Take all of them with you. When back to your country, you'll have time enough to do it the way you like the most.

Don't hesitate in asking what you don't know. But also think it twice. Perhaps all you need is to watch carefully the way the instructor is doing the technique. Avoid asking unnecessary things.

Learn what to ask, how to ask, and who to ask. You just can't ask dojo-cho where the dirty towels should be. Just ask your sempai or an older uchideshi.



Learn small details!

It is said that "God dwells in small details". Take as much knowledge as you can.

Learn when you throw and also when you are thrown, learn the better way to take that ukemi, and learn to be aware of others' movements.

Be careful with your fingers. Nails cut but not so short to harm your fingers when grappling. Careful when you tap on the floor and especially in that position very careful of ukes stepping back over your hand!

Usually and injured finger is not a big problem. But when having three classes a day, grappling and taping and your hand being twisted...well it could turn a painful catastrophe!

When here, you realize the real meaning of "Kobayashi style". It's not only a way of performing techniques but also of bowing, warming up, stretching, holding ken and jo etc. Respect this style! It had taken his creator more than %0 years of hard practice to develop it. You don't have to follow it for the rest of your life, but you should follow it while in here.

Have a health insurance! We tend to believe that because we have strong health accidents will not happen. But, it never happens until it happens. And it's highly probable if you are training hard. Don't be ashamed. Being tired or being upset or frustrated make your chances bigger so, again, rest, learn and be patient.

Epilogue

Enjoy and learn. Enjoy every moment. When training, when cleaning, while eating. If you can stop thinking just for few seconds, you will be able to enjoy even when you are told of.

Life is so short, don't miss this opportunity. Smile and enjoy. Always!
Gannbatte kudasai!

