

Dojo Etiquette Reference

Mat Manual companion guide to "The Unwritten Rules of the Dojo." Print it. The article writes the unwritten rules down and gives their reasons. This reference gives you the first-month checklists, the good-partner standards card, the family viewing guidelines, and the worksheet that records your own school's way of doing the things schools differ on, completed in your first two weeks, with a senior student's help.

Name: _____ Dojo: _____ Art:
_____ Started: _____

BEFORE ANYTHING: Read these first, and keep them as pass or fail. ☐ Safety outranks every convention in this reference. A question about pain, injury, or a drill you do not understand how to do safely is asked at once, in any way that gets heard. ☐ A tap, a word, or a hand raised to stop a drill stops it instantly — yours when you give it, your partner's when you receive it. No rep in this reference or in your school is finished through a tap. ☐ Trimmed nails, a clean uniform, and staying home when sick are safety rules, not appearance rules. They are kept even on the days nobody would check. ☐ Report injuries to your instructor before class, and any injury that happens in class before you leave that day. Concealing an injury to look committed is a fail, not a virtue. ☐ Where this reference and your school differ, your school wins on the mat. This book marks those places as conventions so you know exactly where to ask.

Part 1: This Reference on One Page

Everything here sorts into two kinds of rule, and knowing which kind you are looking at tells you how to handle it.

Kind	What it means	Examples	How to treat it
Universal	Protects bodies, partners, or the room's attention in every school	Tap stops a drill; report injuries before class; stay home when sick; trimmed nails; control your partner work	Keep it everywhere, including as a guest in another room

Kind	What it means	Examples	How to treat it
Convention	Your school's own way of organising shared life	Which end of the line the highest rank takes; when and how bows happen; where shoes and bags live; whether photographs are welcome	Learn your school's version in your first two weeks and follow that version, in that room

The worksheet in Part 27 is where your school's conventions get written down. Parts describing a convention give you the range of ways schools handle it and the questions to ask, never one school's answer dressed up as the rule. Parts describing a universal give the standard plainly, because on those the rooms agree even when their words differ.

Nothing in this reference is a test of your worth as a person. It is a map of how a room practising on each other stays safe, teachable, and worth coming back to.

Part 2: The First Two Weeks — What to Learn, in What Order

New students absorb etiquette fastest in the order the room presents it. Use this order.

Order	Learn this	How
Before your first class	Where to arrive, what to wear, what your school says about watching a class first	The school's own materials, a phone call, or a question at the desk
First class	Where to stand, where the line forms, when bows happen, who to follow	Watch the senior students and copy them; ask one before class if you can
First week	The line-up order for your rank in your room, the question channels, the changing and shoe conventions	Part 27 worksheet, filled with a senior student's help
Second week	Partner standards in full, viewing guidelines if family will watch, kit-care specifics	Parts 11 and 20; ask about anything this reference marks as a convention
First month	The whole checklist in Parts 3 to 5 running without thought	The monthly self-check in Part 5

Notice what is not on the list: performing everything perfectly in week one. Rooms expect new students to learn the culture while they learn the art. What rooms notice, kindly, is a beginner who asks early and watches carefully. What they remember is a beginner who guessed confidently for a month.

Part 3: First-Month Checklist: Before Class

Run this list until it runs itself. Convention items take your school's version, recorded in Part 27.

☐ Arrive with time to change, settle, and be ready when the class lines up, not still tying a belt as instruction begins. ☐ Nails checked: fingers and toes trimmed short, no rough edges you would want on your own skin in a clinch. ☐ Uniform clean, complete, and worn as your school wears it. Belt tied as taught. (Convention: some schools tie in the room, some before entering. Follow yours.) ☐ Jewellery off. (Convention in detail, universal in spirit: anything that can cut, catch, or break comes off before bodies meet.) ☐ Hair secured so it stays out of your eyes and your partner's hands. ☐ Water, towel, and anything else you need placed where your school keeps them, never scattered at the mat's edge. (Convention: the place varies.) ☐ Phone silenced and out of the training area entirely. ☐ Injuries, illness, and anything that changes what you should do today reported to the instructor before class starts. ☐ If family will watch: they know the viewing guidelines in Part 20 before their first class, not after their first mistake.

Pass standard: fully ready, every item handled, without once being reminded. Fail and repair: miss the same item twice in your first month and it becomes a written line on your bag or door until the habit holds.

Part 4: First-Month Checklist: On the Mat

☐ Bow where and when your school bows, with attention, neither rushing it nor performing it. (Convention: timing, depth, kneeling or standing, accompanying words.) ☐ Take your place in the line according to your room's order for your rank. (Convention: which end the highest rank takes: see Part 6.) ☐ During instruction, listen with your whole posture: eyes on the teaching, hands quiet, questions held for their channel. ☐ Move when the room moves. A room that resets together trains together; be part of the together. ☐ In partner work, run the good-partner standards in Part 11 on every rep, at every speed. ☐ Tap early when you need to, release instantly when your partner does, and say plainly when you need a rep slower, lighter, or stopped. ☐ Falls, throws, and hard drills stay inside the area and the agreement for that drill. No improvisation with another person's body. ☐ Water breaks, sitting out, and stepping off follow your school's way (convention in form, universal in right: water and safety are never earned or begged). ☐ If you arrive late or must leave early, use your school's quiet way of joining or leaving, learned in week one.

Part 5: First-Month Checklist: After Class, and the Monthly Self-Check

☐ Bow out as your school closes class, and thank partners briefly, by name where you can. ☐ Anything that happened to your body in class, a knock, a twist, a pain that was not there at the start, reported to the instructor before you leave the building. ☐ Kit gathered completely: a left belt or towel becomes somebody else's chore, and your school will have a lost-property convention worth learning (convention). ☐ Uniform

aired or washed promptly; belt cared for as Part 16 sets out, and never, ever into the clothes dryer. ☐ Questions that belong after class asked now, or written down for the school's proper moment. ☐ If you trained badly, said the wrong thing, or broke a rule you now understand: a plain apology, soon, without a speech. Rooms forgive quickly what is owned quickly.

Monthly self-check (first three months, then quarterly). Read Parts 3 and 4 and mark each line: automatic / deliberate / still missing. Automatic lines need no further thought. Deliberate lines are your current work. A still-missing line after a month means you have not learned your school's convention yet. Ask, and write the answer in Part 27 the same day.

Month	Automatic	Deliberate	Still missing	Asked and recorded?
_____	_____	_____	_____	☐
_____	_____	_____	_____	☐
_____	_____	_____	_____	☐

Part 6: Lining Up — What It Is For, and Your School's Way

Lining up by rank is an information system. It shows the instructor the room at a glance: attendance, seniority available for demonstrations and partnering beginners, and the pairings the next drill needs. It shows students where help lives. It is not a league table of human value, and healthy rooms talk about it that way.

The convention, stated plainly. Schools differ on which end of the line the highest rank takes. Facing the front of the room, one school's highest rank stands at one end; another school places the highest rank at the opposite end; the direction the line faces can reverse what left and right even mean between rooms. Federation habits, founding instructors, and plain local history all feed the choice. No version is the correct one in general. Each version is correct in its own room.

Learn this in week one	Record it in Part 27 as
Which end of the line the highest rank takes in your room	"In our line, the highest rank stands at _____"
Which direction the line faces when it forms	"Our line faces _____"
Where a brand-new student stands before they hold any rank	"New students stand _____"
What happens when ranks are equal or a guest visits	"Equal ranks and guests _____"

How to learn it without embarrassment: arrive early once, watch where the senior students go, and stand where your rank puts you by that pattern. If in doubt, ask a senior student before the class lines up: every senior has answered this question and remembers needing it answered.

Part 7: Bowing — the Contract, and Its Local Forms

The bow is a contract about intent, made visible. It marks transitions: outside to inside, ordinary time to training time, stranger to partner, practising to finished. At each transition it says the same thing in the local dialect of the school: I am here to train with you, carefully, and I will look after you while we do it.

The meaning travels and the form stays local, so this part teaches attention rather than choreography.

Bowing moment	What varies between schools (conventions)	What never varies
Entering and leaving the training area	Whether a bow is made, toward what, standing or otherwise	If your school bows here, the bow is real, not a nod thrown over your shoulder while walking
Opening and closing class	Kneeling or standing, words spoken or silent, who bows first	Attention. The room settles together, and late fiddling with kit during it is noticed everywhere
Meeting a partner	A bow, a handshake, a fist touch, a spoken word; arts and schools differ warmly	A clear start and a clear thank-you at the end of the work
Receiving a correction	A bow, a word of thanks, a simple nod in busy rooms	The correction is received without argument in the moment; discussion has its channel in Part 9

If you visit another school, do not import your home bow wholesale and do not abandon it theatrically either. Watch the room, follow its form as a guest, and keep the contract underneath (attention and intent) identical. Hosts read intention more accurately than choreography.

Part 8: Arriving, Lateness, and Leaving Early

Rooms run on shared time, and shared time is courtesy to the warm-up you missed and the instruction everyone else is in the middle of. These standards are close to universal, with local forms noted.

Arriving. Be ready at the line-up, not arriving at it. Ready means changed, settled, reported-in if injured, and mentally in the room. The minutes before class are also the room's social fabric: greetings, a senior's quick answer, a new student's name learned. Students who live in the doorway miss the fabric and wonder why the room feels distant.

Lateness. Life happens in every family, and schools know it. Learn your school's late-joining convention in week one: where to wait, what signal to give, whether to warm up at the side first (common, and wise), and how to take a place without pausing the class. Use it without drama. Chronic lateness is a different matter, and its honest fix is a conversation about class times, not a better sprint from the car.

Leaving early. Tell the instructor before class, or at a natural break. Leave at a break rather than mid-drill, gather kit quietly, and bow out by your school's form. Partners deserve early warning that they will need re-pairing.

Part 9: Asking Questions in a Working Room

Questions are welcome in every healthy room. They are channelled because attention is shared, and because the person teaching a room cannot also run a private seminar for each student inside the hour. Use the channels.

Channel	Use it for
The invited moment	The question about the technique being taught, asked briefly, for the room's benefit as much as yours
The passing instructor	The drilling question: a grip, a direction, a standard you cannot settle with your partner
A senior partner	The small mechanical question during drilling, when your partner is senior enough to own the answer
After class	The long question, the personal question, the question about your own progress
At once, always	Anything about pain, safety, dizziness, or a drill you cannot do without risking yourself or your partner

Asking well has a short technique: ask one question, in words your partner could understand, then be quiet and let the answer land. If the answer raises a follow-up, take it to the next channel rather than extending the moment while the room waits. Write good answers down after class.

Correcting another beginner is not a question channel. Unless safety is involved, leave corrections to instructors and seniors, including the correction you are quite sure about, because you may be sure about last month's version of the drill.

Part 10: Silence, Phones, and the Room's Attention

Silence on the mat is not solemnity. It is acoustics and safety. An instructor's warning has to cross a noisy room in under a second, so rooms keep background talk low to let that voice travel. Partner talk inside a drill is normal and necessary; conversation across the room during instruction is not.

Habit	Standard
Talking during a demonstration	None, beyond what the instructor invites
Talking in partner work	Drill talk: counts, feedback, "slower please," the tap: all welcome; life stories wait
Phones	Out of the training area; a phone filmed or buzzing at the mat's edge ends the room's concentration for everyone
Watching other pairs	Brief and educational is fine; standing idle mid-drill to spectate is not
Children and siblings in the room	In the viewing area under Part 20, not on or around the mat, however cute the interruption

If your school runs a looser acoustic than this, that is its convention. Guests and new students should default to the quieter standard until the room's own level is obvious; easier to relax into a lively room than to be remembered as the noise in a quiet one.

Part 11: The Good-Partner Standards Card

Print this card for your training bag. It is the heart of this reference and the standard seniors use to judge whether a room is healthy.

Standard	Pass	Fail
Match the drill	You give the technique and stage being taught	You test your own counters inside a beginner's learning rep
Match the person	Size, strength, age, injury, and experience all shape your feed, unannounced	You win drills against smaller or newer partners and call it training

Standard	Pass	Fail
Feed honestly	Your reactions are the ones the technique produces in a real body	Statue (nothing works) or actor (everything works)
Control everything	Holds applied by position, throws landed with care, strikes pulled to the agreed target and depth	Speed or force substituting for position; any finish cranked
Release instantly	Tap, word, or raised hand ends the rep in the same motion	One more second to finish the technique
Communicate	Short, kind, specific: what you felt, what opened, what closed	Silence that hoards information, or commentary that runs the whole drill
Protect the invisible	You watch for the injury they reported, the fatigue they hide, and the new student's nerves	You treat every partner as the freshest version of themselves

Review the card against yourself monthly in your first season, brutally and privately. The question is not whether you are a nice person. It is whether partners finish rounds with you having learned something and lost nothing.

Part 12: Feeding Honestly — Resistance, Reaction, and Stages

Honest feeding is the technical half of being a good partner, learned in stages like any other technique.

Stage of a drill	Your job as the feeder
First learning	Give the attack cleanly, at walking honesty: the right line, the right grip, no surprises
Building	Add the reaction the technique is meant to produce (the step, the turn, the weight shift) at the size a real body would give
Testing	Resist inside the drill's terms: defend the known target, keep your base honest, make your partner solve the actual problem
Live work	Your own game, inside the round's agreed intensity and the room's rules, and your partner standards from Part 11 still apply in full

The two corruptions of feeding sit at opposite ends. Under-feeding (collapsing early, reacting to techniques that have not yet earned a reaction) gives your partner a technique that works only on you. Over-feeding at

the learning stage gives them nothing at all and can give the room an injury to remember you by. When in doubt about the stage, ask: "How do you want this fed?" Four words, welcome in every room.

Part 13: Matching Size and Intensity, and Hands That Help

Martial arts rooms mix bodies no sensible sport would match: teenagers and grandparents, heavyweights and lightweights, the returning injured and the competition-fit. The culture carries what the matchmaking cannot, through one skill: matching.

Matching is done with the variables you control. Speed before power: a fast feed at low weight teaches more than a slow feed at full weight, and endangers less. Range before pressure: give a smaller partner the distance to work before you give them your mass to work under. Agreement before everything: intensity in any paired work is set by words before the round, and the lower request wins ties, every time, without argument.

Hands that help have a feel partners recognise within a round: grips that guide rather than clamp, throws that place rather than drop, holds that arrive by position and stop at control, strikes that touch the agreed target and no deeper. If your hands are only ever described as strong, work this part until they are described as good. When you are the smaller, newer, or returning body, use your voice early: a partner cannot match information they were never given.

Part 14: Being Easy to Help — the Receiving Half

Partnership has a second chair, and the student in it has standards too. Being the receiving partner (the one being thrown, held, struck at, or drilled on) is a skill rooms quietly grade you on, because everyone learns faster with a good receiver.

Standard	What it looks like
Receive the drill being taught	Take the technique as set while it is being learned; counters belong to the stages that call for them
Fall and roll as taught	Your breakfalls protect the thrower's learning as well as your body; wild landings train wild throws
Say it early	Pain, dizziness, fear of a specific drill, a reported injury playing up: spoken before the rep, not discovered during it
Give the feedback that teaches	"That one landed" / "I could step out" / "The grip was not set": three kinds of sentence, all gold to a partner

Standard	What it looks like
Stay present at the end	Tired receivers drift, stiffen, or clown; the last reps of a drill are where receiving standards pay for themselves

Students returning from injury live in this part for a while, and good rooms honour it: receiving honestly at reduced load is not a lesser role. It is how a room keeps its experienced people for decades.

Part 15: Hygiene: Nails, Skin, and the Close-Quarters Rules

You will spend your training life inside other people's arm's reach, gripping their sleeves and landing where they landed. Hygiene is therefore a partner standard, filed beside feeding honestly rather than beside housekeeping.

□ Finger nails and toe nails trimmed short and smooth. Check them before class the way you check your belt is tied; a scratch across a partner's face or forearm is a preventable injury with your name on it. □ Skin covered where it should be: open cuts and grazes cleaned, dressed, and covered before training; anything weeping or suspect stays off the mat and gets proper attention. □ Feet clean before stepping on the mat, most schools walk a path from entrance to mat that assumes it (convention: the path and its rules vary). □ Breath and body considered with the same honesty you bring to technique. You are close to people. Shower timing, a clean uniform, and a spare top on double-session days are courtesies with a safety edge. □ Anything contagious (skin, stomach, or respiratory) is a stay-home matter under Part 17, however mild it feels to you. Your partner did not consent to your germs along with your grips.

Instructors will occasionally inspect or remind, and the correct receipt of a hygiene reminder is thanks and immediate repair. It is never an insult. It is the room maintaining conditions everyone agreed to train inside.

Part 16: The Uniform, the Belt, and Kit Care

A clean, complete, correctly worn uniform does three jobs: it keeps training safe (no loose hazards), it lets an instructor read your movement (a sloppy uniform hides a sloppy stance), and it tells the room you prepared to be there.

Kit item	Care standard
Uniform (gi, dobok, or your art's kit)	Washed regularly and aired between sessions; repaired when torn; worn complete as your school wears it

Kit item	Care standard
Under-layers	As your school directs (conventions vary widely, including by class type in some schools, learn yours and follow it without commentary)
Belt	Kept clean and dry by washing as your school teaches if at all, airing after class, and storing untangled. Never in the clothes dryer: heat and tumbling destroy its shape, stiffness, and stitching, and a shrunken, warped belt is a small unnecessary expense with a long memory
Protective gear	Cleaned, aired, and checked for cracks and failing straps; gear that smells is gear your partner can describe
Bag and contents	Repacked after class so the next session starts ready; wet kit never sealed away to ripen

Belt lore varies by school and lineage: how it is washed, whether it is washed at all, what its fading means. Treat lore as convention: honour your school's, enjoy other rooms', and argue about none of it. The dryer rule, by contrast, is plain care of equipment, and it survives every lore.

Part 17: Stay Home When Sick

This is the shortest part in the reference and one of the least negotiable.

If you are sick (feverish, contagious, stomach unwell, coughing hard, or carrying anything a close-contact room would catch) stay home. The arithmetic is not close: one student training through an illness can hand it to a room of partners, instructors, and the children in the next class, each of whom hands it onward at home. Your missed class costs you days. Your attended class can cost the room weeks.

Situation	Answer
Clearly contagious or feverish	Stay home; tell the school if your school tracks absences (convention)
Mild symptoms, unsure	Ask the school before class; accept the answer without negotiation
Recovering, energy back, symptoms gone	Return gently; tell the instructor it is your first session back
Someone at home is sick, you feel fine	Train, with extra care for hygiene, unless your school's current guidance says otherwise
Sick child, class is your only break	The hard one, and the answer is still home. Rooms understand; they have all lived it

A room's sickness culture is set by its seniors more than its notices. Seniors who visibly stay home when ill give every beginner permission to do the same. One day it is your example doing the protecting.

Part 18: Injuries — Report Before Class, Report Before You Leave

Two reporting moments, both pass or fail, both printed here because students reliably get both wrong in the direction of silence.

Before class. Tell your instructor about any injury, flare-up, medical change, or bad night that alters what you should do today, before warm-up, in plain words: what it is, what movements provoke it, what you have been told to avoid. Instructors then do the job they are good at: changing your drill, partner, role, or whole session. A reported injury is a training variable. A concealed one is a trap for you and for the partner blamed for springing it.

During and after class. Anything that happens in the room (a fall that felt wrong, a twist, a head knock of any degree, new pain) is reported before you leave that day, even if you feel fine by the bow-out. Some injuries declare themselves hours later. Head symptoms of any kind after a blow or fall move the matter out of etiquette entirely and into prompt professional help, that day, without a debate about toughness.

Write injuries down in your training record with the date and the session. Patterns of small reports are how chronic problems get spotted while they are still cheap to fix.

Part 19: Stepping Off, Sitting Out, and Watching Well

Every student sits out something: a drill beyond a healing injury, a round beyond the day's capacity, a session spent watching by an instructor's order. Sitting out has its own etiquette, built on one idea: you remain a member of the room while you are out of the work.

Sit or stand where your school places observers (convention), clear of the working area and its fall zones. Watch with a notebook if you like; watching with a question is genuine training, and instructors will often set one for an injured student who asks. Do not coach, demonstrate, or partner-talk a drilling student out of their drill from the edge. When you rejoin, rejoin at the drill's current stage rather than asking the room to rewind.

Watching well, briefly: pick one thing to watch (a senior's feet, the drill's set-up, your next partner's habits) rather than letting the class wash over you. Rooms notice the injured student who keeps learning. So, in time, do gradings.

Part 20: Family Viewing Guidelines

Print or copy this part for family members who will watch you or your child train. It is written to them.

Welcome to the viewing area. The class is better for families who care enough to watch it. A few guidelines keep watching a help rather than a hazard.

Guideline	Why
No coaching from the viewing area: no instructions, corrections, or play-by-play for any student, including your own	One coaching voice keeps a student's attention undivided and keeps corrections consistent; a second voice, however loving, splits both
Keep conversation low, and take calls outside	Sound carries across a training hall further than anyone expects, straight into the ears of students mid-drill
Let the instructor give the feedback during class, praise included	Students learn to work for the room's standards; applause from the chairs teaches them to perform for the chairs
Photographs and video only as the school allows (convention: ask first, every school has a policy)	Other people's children are in the frame, and their families' wishes travel with them
Small children stay with you, seated, off the training area	A wandering toddler and a thrown adult are a combination every room organises itself to prevent
Questions for the instructor wait for after class, or the school's desk moment	The instructor's mat time belongs to the students on it

After class, your job is the one this room cannot do: be the audience for the story. Ask what was hard, what was new, what made them proud. Notice effort out loud more readily than results. A student whose family reports the class back as effort and story will still be training when results-only students have wandered off.

Part 21: Families After Class — the Ride Home and the Week

What families say after class quietly sets how long a student trains, which earns this short part its place here.

The ride home. Let the student lead. "What did you work on?" opens more doors than "Did you win?" If the class went badly, the ride home is for food, rest, and one sentence of perspective — hard classes are how good students are made, and the autopsy can wait for tomorrow. Resist rehearsing corrections you saw from the chairs: a correction delivered twice, differently, at home becomes static the student must filter.

The week. Protect the training times you agreed as a family the way the school protects its timetable. Praise the habits in this reference when you see them at home: kit washed and aired, the belt kept out of the dryer, the decision to stay home when sick made without a battle. Those are the culture, happening in your hallway.

Gradings and events. Arrive in good time, sit where families sit, photograph by the school's policy, and let the officials' voices run the room. Results are the school's to announce and the student's to tell. Your line, win or lose, is pride in the effort.

Part 22: Changing Rooms, Belongings, and Personal Space

Shared changing space runs on small courtesies schools rarely state and everyone feels. Conventions vary (some schools change in open rooms, some in cubicles, some arrive dressed), so learn your room's arrangement in week one and apply the universals inside it.

Universal	In practice
Keep it quick and leave it clean	Change, pack, move on; the bench is shared and so is the floor
Belongings contained	One bag, closed, in the place your school keeps bags (convention); nothing spread across walkways
Privacy respected absolutely	No photographs, ever; eyes and comments kept to yourself; a newcomer struggling with kit gets practical help or privacy, their choice
Valuables are your problem	Leave what you cannot lose at home or secured as your school advises (convention)
Report problems upward	A broken lock, a mess, a concern about another student's behaviour in shared space: to the instructor or desk, quietly, not handled between students

Personal space follows the same spirit off the mat: towels, bottles, and kit stay recognisably yours and out of other people's floor space.

Part 23: Photographs, Video, and Visiting Other Schools

Photographs and video are conventions all the way down, and they tighten every year as rooms protect their students, especially their youngest. Default rules until your school's policy replaces them: ask before filming anyone, never film children who are not yours without their family's and the school's clear

agreement, put the phone away the moment anyone objects, and ask before posting anything showing other students. Your own training footage, filmed by agreement, is a learning tool most rooms support.

Visiting. Students visit other schools for seminars, friendships, travel, and curiosity, and good rooms encourage it when it is done openly. Tell your own instructor you are going, as information, not a confession, unless your school's convention asks more. In the host room you are a guest under Part 1's rule: universals travel with you, conventions are theirs. Line up where guests line up (ask), bow their way under their roof, keep your home variations sheathed until invited, and thank the room before you leave. A guest who trains carefully and asks before assuming is invited back everywhere. A guest who corrects the host room's beginners is remembered differently, permanently.

Part 24: When Rules Collide — the Order of Precedence

Once in a while rules point in two directions at once: the class is mid-drill and someone is hurt; convention says quiet and a child's safety needs volume; a senior asks for a feed your injury says you cannot give. Collisions dissolve when the order of precedence is known, so this reference prints it.

Order	Wins over everything below it
Safety of people	A body at risk ends drills, conventions, and ceremonies in the same breath
The instructor's direction in the moment	In a live room, the responsible voice decides; questions use their channels afterward
Care of a partner	Your partner's limits outrank your drill's ambitions, always
The school's conventions	Your room's way governs its own floor
Your habits from elsewhere	Another school's way, your preference, your comfort, last, and cheerfully

One more collision deserves naming: etiquette versus kindness, where a rule is used to exclude or diminish a student. Kindness wins, and it is not close. The rules exist to protect training and the people in it; wielded against a person they were built to protect, the person citing the rule has misread the whole book.

Part 25: Terms and Glossary

Term	What it means in this reference
Universal	A rule that protects bodies, partners, or attention in every school, whatever words the school uses

Term	What it means in this reference
Convention	A school's own way of organising a shared practice; varies by room, binding inside that room
The line	The rank order students form in; also the knowledge of where your rank places you in your room's version of it
Feeding	Giving a partner the attack, reaction, and resistance a drill calls for, at its proper stage
Matching	Shaping your speed, power, range, and pressure to the drill and to the partner in front of you
The tap	Any agreed signal (hand, foot, or voice) that ends a technique instantly; the room's most absolute rule
Viewing area	Where families watch from; a guest space with its own guidelines in Part 20
Your school's way	The conventions of your room, as recorded by you in Part 27
Pass or fail	The standard for safety lines in this reference: kept, or the session changes

Part 26: Instructor's Class-Plan Notes

For the instructor who hands this reference to a new student. The culture teaches fastest when the room explains itself in small doses rather than correcting in large ones. A workable pattern: name one rule and its reason each week, at the line-up or the bow-out, in a single sentence. A term of single sentences builds the whole culture without a lecture, and new students hear each rule near the moment they need it.

Publish your conventions where this reference asks students to record them. The line-up order, the bowing form, the late-joining practice, the photograph policy: one printed page at the desk saves a term of confusion. Correct breaches in this order: safety at once and plainly; partner standards privately and concretely; conventions with humour and the reason attached. And watch your seniors' modelling hardest — the culture a new student learns is the one seniors perform when they think nobody is teaching.

Part 27: Your School's Way — the Worksheet

Complete this worksheet during your first two weeks, with a senior student's or instructor's help. Every line is a convention: the answer belongs to your room, and a different room's worksheet will read differently without either being wrong.

Convention	Our way
In our line, the highest rank stands at	_____
Our line faces	_____
A brand-new student stands	_____
We bow when / how (opening, closing, partners)	_____
Words that go with our bows	_____
Late arrivals join by	_____
Leaving early works by	_____
Shoes come off at / are stored at	_____
Bags and kit are kept at	_____
Questions are invited at	_____
Uniform under-layers in our classes	_____
Belt care as our school teaches it	_____
Photographs and video: our policy	_____
Families watch from / are asked to	_____
Guests and visiting students	_____
Anything else a new student here simply learns	_____

Worksheet completed with: _____ Date: _____

Guest addendum. When you visit another school, complete a miniature version in your training record: their line's senior end, their bowing form, their late and guest practices. Three lines make your second visit feel like a return.

Part 28: Sign-Off — Partner Agreements and My First-Month Commitment

Partner agreements. Read these with a regular training partner if you keep one, and sign together.

☐ We match the drill and each other, feed honestly, and control everything we apply. ☐ A tap or a word from either of us ends any technique in the same motion, without discussion in the moment or resentment after it. ☐ We say it early: pain, fear, fatigue, injury, the need for a slower rep. ☐ We give feedback briefly and kindly, and we receive it without argument in the moment. ☐ We protect each other's invisible limits (the reported injury, the bad day, the returning body) as our own standards, not as favours.

Partner: _____ Signed: _____

My first-month commitment. ☐ I will learn my school's conventions in my first two weeks and record them in Part 27. ☐ I will keep the universals everywhere: tap and release, trimmed nails, clean kit, belt out of the dryer, home when sick, injuries reported before class and before I leave. ☐ I will be the partner other students hope for, and easy to help in return. ☐ My family will have the viewing guidelines before their first class. ☐ Where I am unsure whether something is a rule, a convention, or my own habit from elsewhere, I will ask early and kindly.

Signed: _____ Date: _____