

Mokusoⁱ

At

BLACKWATER JUDO CLUB (MALDON)

There are various thoughts on what mokuso is.

- In its simplest form it is a formal etiquette for beginning and ending a training session.
- It can be used as a time to compose the mind and focus on the task ahead, or to reflect on what has been learnt.
- On a more advanced level Mokuso can be used to improve the flow of energy through the body.
 - ❖ This may simply be due to focusing on maintaining a good posture, learning to breath more efficiently and making time to take stock of what you have achieved each day.
 - ❖ Or you may want to investigate for yourself how mokuso is used within Eastern style philosophies.

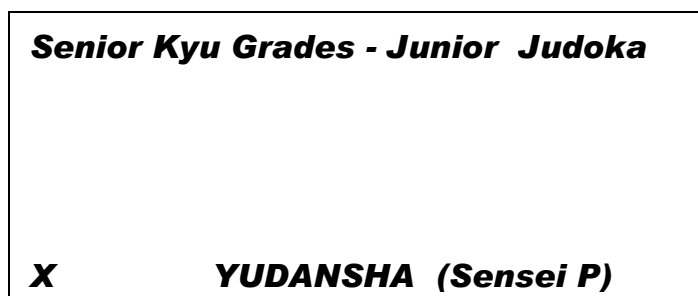
Since the Kamizaⁱⁱ of the Blackwater JC is kept at the West Maldon Community Centre, the format for mokuso there is slightly different to other dojos.

It is bad etiquette to interrupt mokuso by turning up late, or arriving when it has been completed.

At Blackwater JC (Maldon) the highest-ranking kyu grade on the mat makes the calls. On the junior mat these calls are made by the highest-ranking junior kyu grade (HRJ Kyu), whilst on the senior mat it is the highest-ranking senior kyu grade (HRSK).

SENIOR MAT

Kyu grades line up in order of rank facing their yudansha (black belts). Sensei John Pegram as founder of the Blackwater JC, stands on the right hand side of his yudansha, closest to the Kamiza (if present). Any junior black belts stand between the junior and senior kyu grades. The Highest Ranking Senior Kyu Grade (HRSK) stands to the left of the yudansha.



K A M I Z A

X - Highest ranking Senior Kyu grade. (HRSK).

Preparation

Judoka should make sure they have removed all jewellery, any injuries are taped up, shoes are tidy at the edge of the mat, and judo-gi's are neatly tucked into their belts, which are tied securely. The second highest kyu grade has responsibility (assisted by other higher-ranking grades) to make sure that the class is ready and that any beginners are been advised as to what to do. The class should wait quietly for Sensei and any visiting Dan grades to take their places.

When Sensei has taken his place, everyone on the tatami should be standing still, quiet and facing forwards whilst anyone in the dojo should maintain a respectful silence throughout mokuso.

When HRSK is happy that the all the judoka are ready and the dojo is quiet.

❖ HRSK: *SEIZA*ⁱⁱⁱ.

All grades kneel, first onto the Left knee then onto right, into low kneeling position - toes should be flat on the mat and not crossed. (When the Kamiza is set-up all judoka kneel so they are angled at 45^o to it, the yudansha can then show respect to their students and to the Kamiza. If no Kamiza then kyu grades and yudansha face each other.)

❖ HRSK: *YOI*

Judoka straighten their backs

After 5 seconds

- **HRSK:** claps his/her hands 3 times to indicate start of mokuso/meditation.

***There should be ABSOLUTE SILENCE within the dojo. ***

Hands should be cupped, with the back of the top hand sitting in the cup formed by the palm of the lower hand which is facing up. Eyes should be lightly closed or fixed on a point. Judoka should spend a few seconds preparing themselves for their practise session, considering why they do judo and what they hope to get from the next hour.

After 10 seconds

❖ HRSK: *CLAPS HAND ONCE.*

❖ **HRSK: KAMIZA ZA-REI.** *(This call is omitted when no Kamiza)*

All Judoka bow together towards the Kamiza, then they adjust their position so that kyu grades and yudansha are facing across the mat.

❖ **HRSK: SENSEI ZA-RE I-** Kyu grades and yudansha bow to each other.

❖ **HRSK: YUDANSHA ZA-REI.** Yudansha turn to face Sensei John or the most senior Dan grade (Kuri Obi) and bow to each other.

All stand in turn according to seniority, starting from Sensei Pogram or the highest ranking Kuri Obi, finishing with the lowest kyu grade on the mat

❖ On standing, kyu grades and yudansha rei to each other. Then yudansha turn and do an informal ritsu-rei to their Sensei.

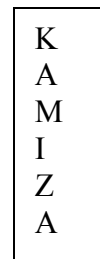
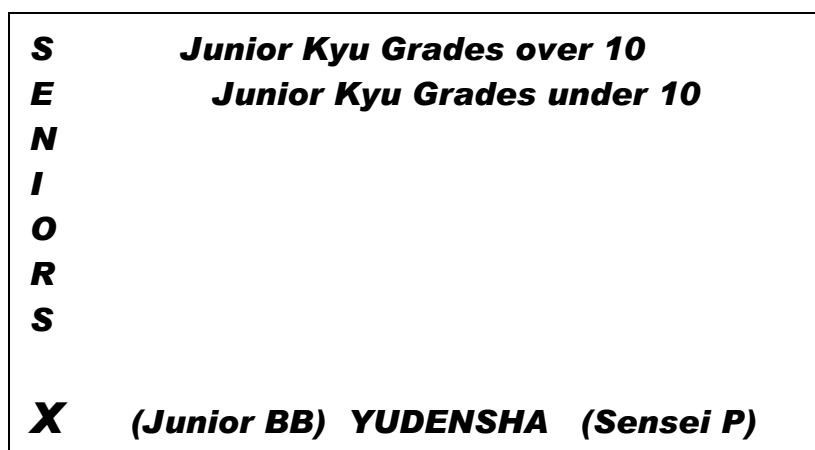
Closing Form

This follows the same format but here the meditation should be on what has been learnt.

On standing lower grades should wait until their sensei and other Black Belts have left the mat.

JUNIOR MAT

Ceremony is similar, but judoka line up slightly differently.



X – Highest ranking junior kyu grade. **(HRJ Kyu)**

Junior Black Belts take their place alongside other yudansha.

All juniors should ensure that they have been to the toilet before being called to line up for mokuso. It is the responsibility of junior Green belts and above to check that lower ranking juniors are ready for their training, belts tied correctly, judo-gi's tidy, no jewellery or hair slides being worn and nails are short. Judoka should be spread out evenly along their rows not bunched together with large gaps. The back row of juniors should ensure that their heels are at the edge of the mat, and that the younger ones in front of them are evenly spaced out.

When everyone is standing still and quiet, Sensei will indicate to **HRJ Kyu** to begin

Junior Mokuso

➤ **HRJ Kyu: *SEIZA*.**

All grades kneel, first onto the Left knee then onto right, into low kneeling position.

(When the Kamiza is set up all judoka kneel so they are angled at 45° to it, the yudansha can then show respect to their students and to the Kamiza. If no Kamiza then kyu grades and yudansha face each other.)

➤ **HRJ Kyu: *YOI***

Judoka straighten their backs

After 5 seconds

➤ **HRJ Kyu:** claps his/her hands 3 times to indicate start of mokuso/meditation.

***There should be ABSOLUTE SILENCE within the dojo. ***

Hands should be cupped, with the back of the top hand sitting in the cup formed by the palm of the lower hand which is facing up. Eyes should be lightly closed or fixed on a point. Judoka should spend a few seconds preparing themselves for their practise session, considering why they do judo and what they hope to get from the next hour.

After 10 seconds

➤ **HRJ Kyu: *CLAPS HAND ONCE*.**

➤ **HRJ Kyu: *KAMIZA ZA-REI*. (This call is omitted when no Kamiza)**

All Judoka bow together, then they adjust their position so that kyu grades and yudansha are facing the centre of the mat.

- **HRJ Kyu: *SENSEI ZA-REI***- Kyu grades and yudansha bow to each other.
- **HRJ Kyu: *YUDANSHA ZA-REI***. Yudansha turn to face Sensei John or senior Dan grade and bow to each other.

All stand in turn according to seniority, starting from Sensei Pogram or the highest-ranking Kuri Obi, finishing with the lowest kyu grade on the mat. When all judoka are standing, juniors should ensure that they use the lines on the mat to make sure they form a straight line.

- **At sensei's instigation**, all judoka do a standing rei,
- **Then yudansha** turn to face the **senior kyu grades** whose support ensures the smooth running of the club. The SKG and yudansha rei to each other. Yudansha then do an informal rei to Sensei Pogram.

The Closing Ceremony,

This follows the same format, but here the meditation should be on what has been learnt.

On standing the lower grades should wait until their sensei and other Black Belts have left the mat.

After the final Tachi Rei, students should leave the mat quietly if another group is waiting to train, or quickly help to clear the mats away. Making sure that the dojo is left clean and tidy.

It is good etiquette to quietly thank any instructors and/or training partners for their participation.

NOTES FOR MORE ADVANCED MOKUSO.

Since mokuso is a form of meditation it can be used to boost energy levels but to do so requires more than a 30 second dose twice a week, it is suggested that after about a month of sustained daily discipline of only 15 to 30 minutes per day you will notice a difference.

Essence of Mokuso

- Breathing is the key to beneficial mokuso.
- The back should be straight for efficient breathing,
- Eyes narrowed but not shut, to avoid distractions or falling asleep,
- Lips slightly parted so you can breathe in deeply through the nose, and out through the mouth.

- Don't try and think about 'nothing', but just try and get your breath back into a controlled rhythm, 'go with the flow, and chill out'.
- In Zen training the goal of meditation is to try and empty the mind to contact your true essence.

Posture. Correct positioning of the body centres around the spine, which must be erect, and even when straight must not feel "collapsed", imagine a piece of string pulling the top of the head towards the ceiling.. Seiza is the accepted way to sit while bowing or resting in the Dojo but if prolonged sitting in Seiza is uncomfortable, or painful as a result of injury, then for prolonged mokuso it is permissible to stand or to sit cross-legged, but the spine must be erect.

There are various schools of thought as to the correct positioning the hands during Mokuso. Hands may be lightly resting on your knees or cupped but feet should be flat without crossing the toes – a non-aggressive posture.

Reasoning behind mokuso posture relates to

- The need to keep the abdomen open so that the abdominal muscles and the diaphragm and ribs can work effectively to fully expand and deflate the lungs, for optimal breathing.
- And to oriental thought that the human being is the conduit between heaven and earth (Heaven in eastern philosophies means, the universe, or the cosmos and should not be confused with the Christian understanding of heaven.)

Gaze. Look at the floor about two metres in front of you, with eyes half closed. This prevents unnecessary visual distractions and also discourages the tendency to fall asleep.

Concentration. A wandering mind is a hindrance; it has to command the body if the practitioner is to reap the benefits of any form of practice. A settled and controlled mind can have escalating beneficial effects on the body, and boost and retain supplies of vital energy. Breathing can be used to focus your concentration; by counting each breath you can prevent your practice deteriorating into just idle daydreaming.

Breathing. Over hundreds of years many techniques for meditational breathing have been developed, but they are all based upon a series of basic principles.

Correct breathing benefits the body in many ways, but for most people poor posture, tension, stress etc results in shallow upper chest breathing. Deep breathing is physiologically better for the body but has to be relearnt. Observe the breathing of a newborn baby or of animals and it is noticeable that the breathing is primarily abdominal, while ours tends to involve the upper chest. Physiologically the diaphragm controls the breathing, acting as a pump. It is diaphragm breathing that should be used in Mokuso.

All breathing must involve long, slow cycles of breath.

- ✓ Inhale through the nose, slowly drawing air into your lungs, but feeling as though you are drawing it down into your lower abdomen. This encourages abdominal breathing and correct use of the diaphragm^{iv}.
- ✓ Stop inhaling just before you are completely topped up. Don't push it too far, as it will cause tension in the wrong places. Retain your breath for a couple of seconds. Not too long or you will feel faint. Then slowly release the breath through your mouth, again concentrating on the use of the lower abdomen. Do not force or squeeze out the last of the breath.
- ✓ When you relax, your next breath in should come slowly and naturally.

Try to rest the tip of the tongue on the palette just behind the top teeth. This keeps it out of the way and it acts as a connector to the cross over of two meridian channels, without this connection vital benefits of the practice will be lost.

ⁱ Blackwater Mokuso – formalised ritual/ceremony that marks the start and finish of a judo training session

ⁱⁱ Kamiza – in simple terms the Blackwater Kamiza is a place to focus your attention on whilst participating in mokuso

In Japanese the term relates to ‘the best seat’ the place that is reserved for the most important/respected person present. Therefore in the dojo it contains a picture of Jigaro Kano to remind us that he was the founder of Judo.

Kamiza is also associated with ideas of a Kamidana. Traditionally the kamidana is a small domestic Shinto shrine. In the martial arts world ideas concerning the Kamiza and the kamidana have become mixed and it has become a place that is a focus for the spirit/essence/ life force of the universe.

ⁱⁱⁱ To perform a bow from the Seiza position, first move your left hand from your left thigh and on to the floor about two hand lengths out in front of your left knee with your finger tips pointed inward, then, move your right hand from your right thigh and on to the floor about two hand lengths out in front of your right knee with your finger tips pointed inward so that your right hand is facing your left hand so that your index fingers are nearly touching. Now without letting your elbows touch the floor lean forward and bow your head stopping this motion just short of touching the back of both your hands. The bow is done entirely from the waist and since it is a more formal way of bowing you should pause for slightly longer than you do when performing a standing bow. Remember not to show the back of your neck. When coming up from the bow slide your hands back to their starting position in reverse order, that is your right hand first followed by your left hand and then sit up straight in a relaxed posture.

^{iv}. Eastern philosophies say that correct breathing charges and replenishes vital energy, which is stored in the Saika Tanden "centre". This is situated two inches below the navel.