

Meaning of Judo

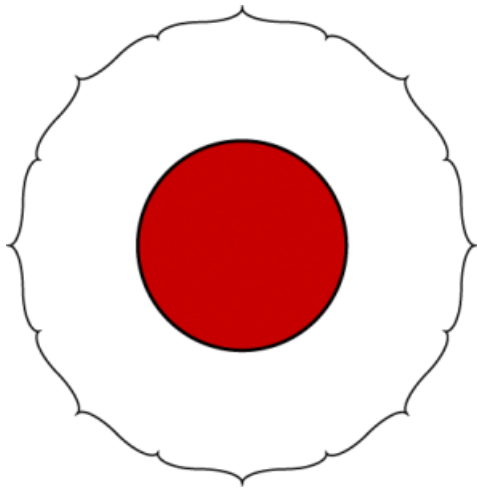
Meaning of Judo



The traditional explanation for the meaning of JUDO is: “The word judo consists of two Japanese characters, ju, which means “gentle”, and do, which means “the way”. Judo, therefore, literally means **the way of gentleness**.

However, the two words JU and DO have much deeper and wider meanings. JU can also mean Giving and Flexible. Like the willow branch that is flexible and does not contend with the wind so too does a student of Judo not meet force with force unless it is to their advantage or for a further purpose.

The meaning of DO is the way, the path or system or philosophy. By renaming Jujitsu to Judo, Dr. Kano gave Judo a higher meaning and distinguished it from ancient Jujitsu.



The symbol of the Kodokan (literally translated to “the place for teaching the way” [Dr. Kano’s dojo]) is the cherry blossom with a red circle in the middle. The symbol itself has been described in many ways. For students just beginning Judo, the best symbolism is in the fact that the outside edge is in the shape of cherry blossom petals, while the inside is a hard red circle. So there is hardness being covered by softness. A student’s Judo should be the same: Soft and flexible with a hard core at its center. This means that a player’s movement and their arms should be soft and flowing so as to find opportunities to break an opponent’s balance, yet at their center should be a super solid core of techniques and inner and outer strength that he/she can call upon when the time is right.

What is Judo?

Judo is a derivative of *jujitsu*, which is a traditional Japanese martial art originally created for killing or maiming an enemy. For the jujitsu practitioners of long ago, the only rule was to win by any means necessary. However, in the 19th century, Japan underwent a period of modernization known as the Meiji Restoration; it was an era during which Japan discarded feudalism in favor of the modern world, trading traditional swords for modern guns. This era also helped lay the groundwork for judo founder Jigoro Kano to change the face of the Japanese combative martial arts.

In his journeys abroad, Kano came into constant contact with emerging Western sports and their ideals. Originally, these sports had come about as a way for the Western armies to maintain their physical health. Kano saw value in this, too. He wanted to preserve the timeless qualities of jujitsu – loyalty, discipline, resolve, honor, morality – and discard the traditional qualities in which the martial artist learns techniques to hurt, maim and kill. To do this, Kano made judo safe, rewarding and challenging.

The ancient Japanese warrior Minamoto Yoritomo once stated that the outcome of a battle is determined by the preparation one has invested. Ask yourself: What do I need to do to have a real chance at winning?

– Hayward Nishioka
