

# Unsoku

Within all styles of Aikido, there are a number of basic movements which create the foundations of that system, Tomiki Aikido is no different. One of these basic movements is called unsoku.

The unsoku movements are performed to a count of eight, and the count should be slow and loud to enable the aikidoka to practice the variety of basic movements correctly. There are three unsoku movements in the Tomiki system, which enable you to cover eight different directions of movement while maintaining balance.

At the Meikyokai Dojo, we use these movements as the basic building block for our Aikido. These three basic movements teach us how to use how feet while stabilising our bodies, it should be noted we do not use these as avoidance movements, as there are fundamentally stronger positions than neutral posture to use as avoidance.

When performing these movements we emphasise the following general points:

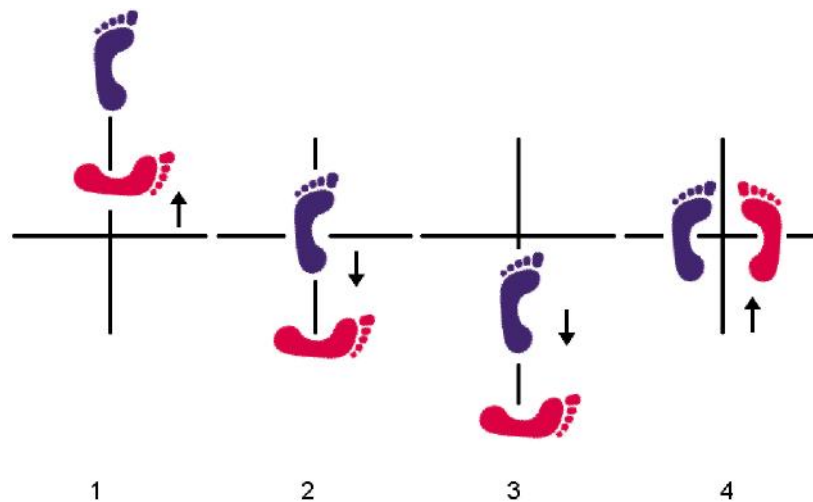
- Move after the count.
- Relax the shoulders and maintain a straight back throughout all the movements.
- Maintain the distance between your feet at the end of each movement (i.e. shoulder width apart). At no stage should your feet end up close together or too far apart.
- During the side and corner movements ensure the feet point forward, not splayed outwards, i.e. 'penguin toed'.
- Don't sway during any of the movements; examine your centre of balance constantly. This does not mean being rigid, but being balanced and centred throughout the movements.
- Do not look at your feet as this will cause your spine to curve and therefore lose your straight back.
- Keep your heels on the ground throughout the movement.
- Maintain a constant level by using the hips correctly; you should not bob up and down!

## Unsoku Movement Number 1

The first movement enables you to tsugi-ashi forwards and backwards along your centre line. This exercise allows you to practice your right and left postures. To perform unsoku movement number 1:

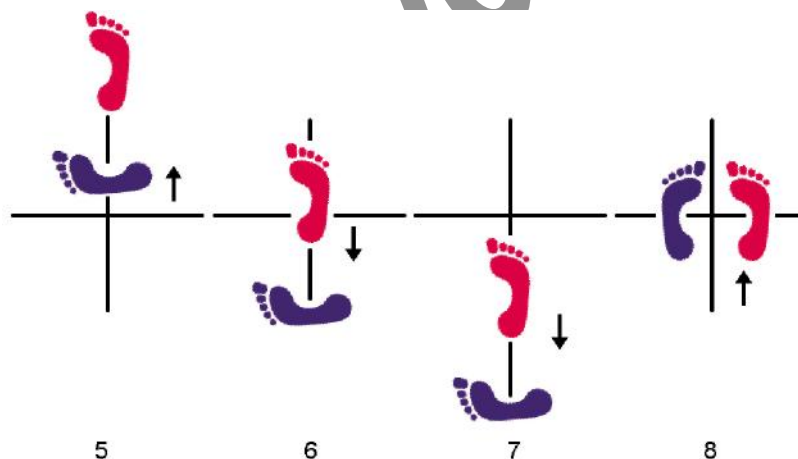
From a neutral posture (1) move forward into left posture and then (2) tsugi-ashi backwards staying in left posture.

(3) Tsugi-ashi backwards again in left posture and (4) then return to a neutral posture.



(5) Move forward into right posture and then (6) tsugi-ashi backwards staying in tight posture.

(7) Tsugi-ashi backwards again in right posture and then (8) return to a neutral posture.



When performing these movements, be aware of the following points:

- Apply the principles of kamae and maintain throughout the movement.
- Have the feeling of your energy going forward at all times - even when going backwards.
- DON'T STEP! Tsugi-ashi (especially when going backwards).
- Relax the shoulders and the front knee and have the feeling of power in the legs.
- When you come back to the neutral position at the shi and hachi counts ensure that your feet are shoulder width apart and toes pointing forwards.
- Remember to relax.

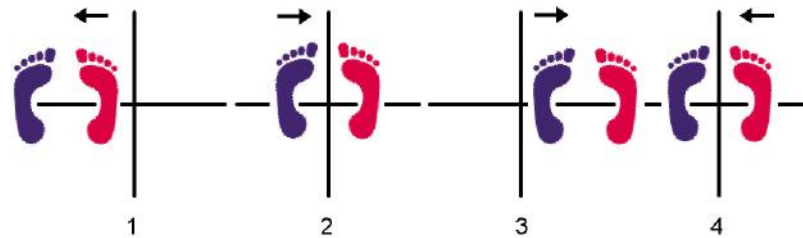
## Unsoku Movement Number 2

The second unsoku movement does not require the basic Aikido posture. This type of movement is uncommon in Aikido as you should never be in a neutral posture when you move. However, it enables you to practice moving your hips at one level and once again

using your ability to use a variation of tsugi-ashi. To perform unsoku movement number 2:

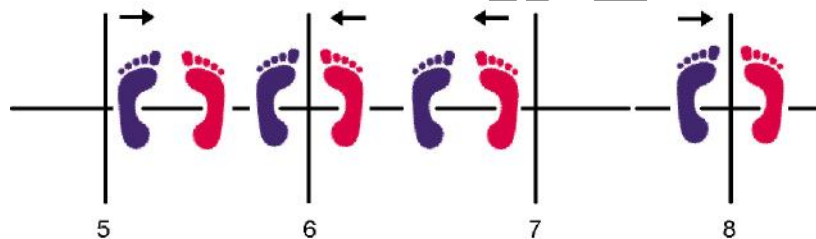
Tsugi-ashi to your left (1) and then tsugi-ashi to your right (2).

Tsugi-ashi to your right (3) and then tsugi-ashi to your left (4).



Tsugi-ashi to your right (5) and then tsugi-ashi to your left (6).

Tsugi-ashi to your left (7) and then tsugi-ashi to your right (8).



When performing these movements, be aware of the following points:

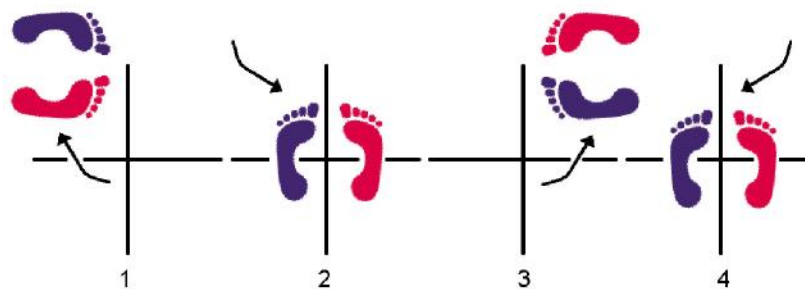
- Maintain your centre during the movements.
- Check that your feet are shoulder width apart after each side movement.
- Check that your feet haven't become 'penguin-toed'.
- Have the sensation that your energy is going forward, even though you are moving to the sides.
- Keep your heels on the ground.
- Keep your feet and upper body movement connected - move the whole body as one
- Remember to relax.

### Unsoku Movement Number 3

The third movement is very similar to the second, as once again you are in a neutral posture, but this time moving to your four corners. To perform unsoku movement number 3:

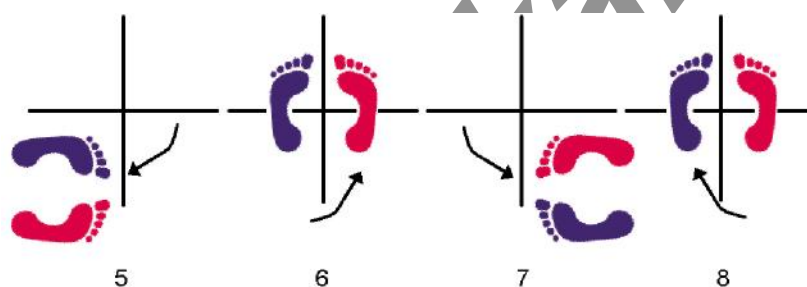
Tsugi-ashi to your left corner (1) and tsugi-ashi back to your starting position (2)

Tsugi-ashi to your right front corner (3) and tsugi-ashi back to your starting position (4)



Tsugi-ashi to your left corner (5) and tsugi-ashi back to your starting position (6).  
Tsugi-ashi to your right rear corner (7) and tsugi-ashi back to your starting position (8).

When performing these movements, be aware of the following points:



- Move the same distance to the forward corners as you move to the rear corners.
- Do not sway - keep centred.
- Keep your heels on the ground.
- Avoid 'penguin-feet' at each stage of the corner movement.
- Do not allow your weight to rest on your heels when moving backwards.
- Remember to relax.

There seems a lot to think about, but after a relatively short time of applying the above you come to recognise some recurring themes:

- Relax.
- Keep your energy projecting forward.
- Maintain your centre.
- Keep your feet shoulder width apart (this is the foundation of your kamae).

The beauty of the unsoku practice is that you can do it at home. During the initial stages of learning these movements, break them down and carefully check everything in the beginning. As the movements become more ingrained you won't have to think about them so much - but you should regularly go back to these fundamentals and check to make sure that faults haven't crept in.