The major styles of aikido each have their own Hombu Dojo in Japan, have an international breadth and were founded by direct students of Morihei Ueshiba. Although there has been an explosion of “independent styles” generally only the first five listed have been considered major. Iwama Ryu is a debatable sixth as, although its influence is major, it has until recently been part of the Aikikai (see below).

- **Aikikai** is the largest aikido organization, and is led by the family of the founder. Numerous sub-organisations and teachers affiliate themselves with this umbrella organisation, which therefore encompasses a wide variety of aikido styles, training methods and technical differences. Prominent sub-organisations include numerous national Aikikai, as well as several US-based ones including the United States Aikido Federation (USAF) and Aikido Schools of Ueshiba (ASU).

- **Yoshinkan** Founded by Gozo Shioda, has a reputation for being the most rigidly precise. Students of Yoshinkan aikido practise basic movements as solo kata, and this style has been popular among the Japanese police. The international organization associated with the Yoshinkan style of aikido is known as the Yoshinkai, and has active branches in many parts of the world.

- **Yoseikan** was founded by Minoru Mochizuki, who was an early student of O-Sensei and also of Jigoro Kano at the Kodokan. This style includes elements of aiiki-budo together with aspects of karate, judo and other arts. It is now carried on by his son, Hiroo Mochizuki, the creator of Yoseikan Budo.

- **Shodokan Aikido** (often called Tomiki aikido, after its founder) use sparring and rule based competition in training as opposed to most others. People tend to compete to train rather than to train to compete. Kenji Tomiki, an early student of O-Sensei and also of judo's Jigoro Kano, believed that introducing an element of competition would serve to sharpen and focus the practice since it was no longer tested in real combat. This latter view was the cause of a split with O-Sensei's family who firmly believed that there was no place for competition in aikido training. Tomiki said that at no point did O-Sensei actually cast him out.

- The **Ki Society**, founded by former head-instructor of the Hombu dojo 10th dan Koichi Tohei, emphasizes very soft flowing techniques and has a special program for the development of ki. It also has a special system of ki-ranks alongside the traditional kyu and dan system. This style is called Shin Shin Toitsu Aikido (or Ki-Aikido).

- **Iwama Ryu** emphasizes the relation between weapon techniques and barehand techniques, and a great deal of emphasis is placed on weapons training. Since the death of its founder Morihiro Saito, the Iwama style has been practiced by clubs within the Aikikai and an independent organization headed by Hitohiro Saito. Saito sensei was a long time uchideshi of O-Sensei, beginning in 1946 and staying with him through his death. Many consider that Saito sensei was the student who spent most time directly studying with O-Sensei. Saito sensei said he was trying to preserve and teach the art exactly as the founder of aikido taught it to him. Technically, Iwama-ryu
seems to resemble the aikido O-Sensei was teaching in the early 50s mainly in the Iwama dojo. The technical repertoire is fairly large. The new, separate from Aikikai, Iwama Ryu Aikido has been renamed Iwama Shin Shin Aikishurenkai.

- **Shin'ei Taido** Founded by the late Noriaki Inoue, nephew of Morihei Ueshiba.

- **Yoshokai** aikido, begun by then-hachidan Takashi Kushida-sensei of Yoshinkan aikido, is a remarkably centralized style of aikido, with test techniques yearly passed down with explanations from the home dojo. The syllabus contains a considerable amount of weapons study, and like Yoshinkan, Yoshokai includes many solo movements and exercises.

- **Doshinkan** aikido, begun by Yukio Utada-sensei of Yoshinkan aikido. Utada Sensei was a student of both the Yoshinkan Founder Shioda Kancho and Yoshokai Founder Takashi Kushida-sensei. Like Yoshokai, the syllabus also contains a considerable amount of weapons study, and like Yoshinkan, Doshinkan includes many solo movements and exercises. Doshinkan Aikido (Aikido Association of North America and Doshinkan Aikido International) is still affiliated with the International Yoshinkan Aikido Federation.

- **Tendoryu Aikido** Headed by Kenji Shimizu.

- **Shin Budo Kai** headed by Shizuo Imaizumi.

- **Kokikai** aikido, founded by Shuji Maruyama in 1986, focuses on minimalist but effective technique. It emphasizes natural stances and ukemi that do not require high breakfalls, and de-emphasizes atemi and techniques that cause pain or undue discomfort to uke. As such, it is considered by some to be a "soft" style of aikido.

- **Seidokan** Aikido, founded by Rod Kobayashi. Tends to utilize movements which are very small and economical. Encourages students to discover an aikido which is truly their own, stresses the importance of doing away with the extraneous and focusing on that which works.

- **Nippon Kan** Headed by Gaku Homma.

- **Nishio Aikido** a part of the Aikikai although technically well defined according to its head Shoji Nishio. Nishio Sensei passed away in March 2005.

- **Nihon Goshin Aikido** Headed by Richard Bowe. It is considered a "hard" style of aikido, combining techniques from karate, Judo and Daito-Ryu Aikijutsu. There are roughly a dozen dojos in the United States and none left in Japan. Founded by Shoto Morita in Japan circa 1950. Derivative styles include Nihon Goshin Aikijutsu founded by Walter Kopitov in 2000. For more information see "The Black Belt Master Course in Nihon Goshin Aikido".

- **Takemusu Aiki Tomita Academy**. Academy for the development of Takemusu Aiki founded in 1992 by Takeji Tomita. This training method incorporates Tai-Jutsu, Aiki-Ken and Aiki-Jo for the study of the inter-related principles of Takemusu Aiki and Japanese Budo.