

## Ouyouwaza and Henkawaza

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"Does it **really** work?"

The goal of any budoka is to be able to execute effective techniques.

In the challenging quest for effective technique, there are two Japanese words - *ouyouwaza* and *henkawaza* - which describe concepts essential to ensuring that "it really works."

In deceptively simple terms, *ouyouwaza* is the study of how to make a technique effective, or how to get the job done. It is akin to using a drinking glass to hold a flower, when no vase is available; or to seasoning a dish with soy sauce, when the salt shaker is empty. The aspect of adaptation and/or change is inherent in the definition of *ouyouwaza*, and a certain mindset is implied.

*Henkawaza* is somewhat more straightforward and refers to the study of how one technique changes into another - *ikkyo* into *nikyo*, for instance, or *ikkyo* into *shihonage*. *Henkawaza* comes into our training when we start to learn how to change spontaneously from one technique to another, when we realize when the first technique is not effective in a certain situation. For example, we may start one technique but realize that our partner is resisting - so we change our technique to use that resistance to transform the technique into something else.

Although we may not explicitly refer to these either of these two concepts during our budo training, chances are that all students have encountered both *henkawaza* and *ouyouwaza* through everyday practice.

One could say that *ouyouwaza* is the next phase beyond *kihonwaza* (basic techniques). It takes years to establish our base repertoire, learning to reliably execute the step-by-step, basic movements of *kihonwaza* -- ultimately to break free of them and engage in the intriguing prospect of "making budo work in a real-life situation." We all know that in a typical training session, our partner is, for the most part, cooperative and takes *ukemi* for us. However, when our partner or opponent decides to experiment with either muscle resistance or with "center," we have a rude awakening - "it doesn't work." In this situation, we have to be able to *draw upon all that we have learned in order to make our techniques effective with non-cooperative partners*.

*Ouyouwaza* and *henkawaza* overlap somewhat in meaning, both being techniques that cultivate the ability to think freely and move without constraint. In our chosen budo, we train for this open, fluid mindset through *randori* (freestyle) training, *kumite* (sparring) training, and *shiai* (competitive) training. The value of these practices is that they all require and reinforce flexible awareness, while demonstrating the fallacy of preconceiving specific techniques.