Onegaishimasu

Karate classes in many styles are formally begun by bowing to the sensei or instructor and saying onegaishimasu. In the culture of the martial arts this Japanese word is generally understood to mean “please teach me.” Actually it is just a very formal expression for “please” or “I beg of you,” as would be said to a person of very superior rank. Probably the original expression was misete onegaishimasu (“show me, I beg of you”), but became shortened over many decades of use. A related phrase, useful when difficult techniques are being explained or demonstrated, is mo ichido onegaishimasu (“Once more, please?”).

Onegaishimasu
(Please; I beg of you [teach me])

Mō ichido onegaishimasu
(Once more, please?)

(Underlined letters are nearly silent. The macron (bar) above a letter means that the vowel sound is held for about twice the usual duration.)

©Wendell E. Wilson (2010)
(email: minrecord@comcast.net)
from Essays on the Martial Arts