



# KENDO JAPANESE FENCING

剣道



## **Kendo – The way of the sword**

Kendo is the Japanese samurai traditional art of fencing. Kendo is today practiced for its mental and physical rewards. It well known that Kendo practice will give you characteristics such as; humility, respect, honor, calmness and speed of reaction.

## Table of content

<b>WHAT IS KENDO .....</b>	<b>III</b>
THE CONCEPT OF KENDO.....	III
<b>EQUIPMENT.....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>EQUIPMENT.....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>REIGI (DOJO ROUTINES) .....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>COMMON COMMANDS .....</b>	<b>VII</b>
<b>COMMON COMMANDS .....</b>	<b>VII</b>
BEFORE AND AFTER THE PRACTICE .....	VII
DURING THE PRACTICE.....	VII
1 TO 10 IN JAPANESE .....	VII
<b>WARMING UP EXERCISES (SUBURI).....</b>	<b>VIII</b>
JOGEBURI.....	VIII
ZENSHIN MEN/KOTE/DO (FORWARD MEN/KOTE/DO – IN 3 STEPS) .....	VIII
KATATE ZENSHIN MEN.....	VIII
ZENSHIN KOTAI MEN .....	VIII
ZENSHIN KOTAI SAYU MEN .....	VIII
HAYASUBURI (HAYA – MEANS FAST).....	VIII
NANAMEBURI .....	VIII
WARMING UP PHRASES.....	VIII
<b>MOVEMENTS AND FOOT WORK.....</b>	<b>X</b>
AYUMI ASHI .....	X
OKURI ASHI.....	X
FUMIKOMI ASHI.....	X
TSUGI ASHI.....	X
HIRAKI ASHI.....	X
<b>KIAI .....</b>	<b>XI</b>
WHY KIAI? .....	XI
HOW IS IT DONE? .....	XI
<b>COMMON EXERCISES.....</b>	<b>XII</b>
<b>COMPETITION .....</b>	<b>XIII</b>
<b>A SMALL KENDO DICTIONARY .....</b>	<b>XIV</b>

### **The rules of the Samurai:**

- *Rightness*
- *Determination*
- *Courage*
- *Love*
- *Etiquette*
- *Total sincerity*
- *Honor and glory*
- *Loyalty*

# What is Kendo

## ***The concept of Kendo***

*The concept of Kendo to discipline the human character through the application of the principles of the katana.*

*The purpose of kendo is to mold the mind and body, to cultivate a vigorous spirit, and, through correct and rigid training, to strive for improvement in the art of kendo, to hold in esteem human courtesy and honour, to associate with others with sincerity, and to forever pursue the cultivation of oneself. Thus one will be able to love one's country and society, to contribute to the development of culture, and to promote peace and prosperity among all peoples.*

Kendo as it is practiced today, has been developed for about two hundred years. In the 1500s Japan was in a period of civil war, the way of the sword was studied to ensure survival of one's family and clan. The warrior (Samurai) was trained so that his sword became an extension of his arm.

During this period a large number of experts were born, all with their own style. These masters had their own fencing schools (Ryu). There were approximately 600 schools. At that time the goal was to neutralize your opponent as effectively as possible. The warriors learned to cut and strike in such a way that death arose immediately, the idea was not to cause your opponent unnecessary pain. This was the etiquette of the samurai.

Both the wooden sword (Bokko or bokken) and the metal sword (Katana) were used in order to practice techniques and for fencing. Certain fundamental moves were selected and they are called Kata, which are still today fundamental to Kendo. Kata is still important to master when one practices Kendo, but learning Kata, only, is insufficient in order to cover all situations that may arise in a sword fight. In order to be able to practice in a really safe and free way, the old sword art was redesigned, the wooden and metal swords were replaced by a bamboo sword (Shinai) and protective equipment was introduced.

Today's Kendo is mostly practiced with the Shinai, metal and wooden swords are used only for Kata.

## Equipment

A Kendoka's (person who practices kendo) equipment has evolved over hundreds of years to give maximum protection and mobility. It originates from when samurai used to practice with real swords or wooden swords, which had the potential to cause serious injury during practice. Something quite common before the use of protective armour.

A Kendoka's armour consists of:

**MEN** - Protects the head from blows and thrusts. It is made up of a metal grill and thick cloth and is tied together by two long cotton ropes.

**DO** - Protects the chest area. It is made up fifty or more bamboo or plastic pieces and is then laced. It is tied in place by four cotton ropes.

**KOTE** – A pair of thick padded gloves that protect the wrists.

**TARE** – To protect the hips and groin a thick belt with five flaps of thick cloth is worn under the Do.



Under all the armour a Kendoka wears two pieces of clothing, the training jacket **KENDOGI** and a **HAKAMA**. The Hakama is very characteristic with its wide legs and sharp finish.

Finally there is the **SHINAI** which is the bamboo sword and it is made out of four bamboo pieces held together by leather and strings.

## Reigi - Etiquette

Always bow when you enter and leave the Dojo

- To show respect for Kendo and the members of the club.

Never lean on or step over a Shinai or Bokken

- Shinai and Bokken shall be treated as real swords, because sometimes, we do practice with real blades.

Be changed and ready when the practice starts

- Then others don't have to wait for you.

Don't wear shoes, caps or hats inside the dojo

- Shoes can bring dirt in with them and you show respect for the other members who use the hall by leaving shoes outside the hall door.

Don't bring food or drinks into the Dojo, without permission of the trainer (Sensei)

- It may cause litter and can distract those who are practicing.

Keep your finger and toe nails short and clean

- Long and dirty nails can hurt someone if your feet clash in practice.

Remove all jewelry and rings before practice

- As it may cause you to hurt other or yourself, and you may lose them during practice.

Before the practice begins check that your equipment is intact, in good working order and that you wear it correctly.

- That way you minimize the risks of hurting yourself during practice and you don't have to take a break to correct your equipment.

Be quiet and pay attention during practice

- So that you don't miss anything or disturb anyone else.

If want to ask anything during practice raise your hand.

- That way the teacher can see and decide when to break the practice.

If you need to leave the practice before it ends, let the teacher know.

- So the teacher can adjust the practices.

If you during an exercise or competition (Shiai) you need to stop you must raise your left hand.

- The person you're practicing with or the judges with will then stop.

Make sure that you sit in line with the Dojo-Captain (Sempai) when practice starts and ends

- So that the teacher can see how many are practicing.

Put the Shinai, Kote and Men in the same manner as the teacher

- Gives a nice unified impression and looks good.

Carry your Kote, Men and Shinai in your left hand  
- Always keep your right hand free to draw the sword.

Sit in Seiza when you put on and take off your armour in the Dojo  
- Others will see that you are preparing for practice.

Always walk behind another persons who is practicing  
- That way you won't block them for seeing something.  
(If you have to walk in front of someone extend your right hand and bow as you pass them)

Say thank you before every exercise by saying "Onegai shimasu" and after each one by saying "Domo arigato gozaimashita" .

It is polite to thank the other person for the opportunity to practice with them and for the experience that you received.

## **10 Golden Dojo Rules**

1. Do not sweat, eat food or talk on the phone in the dojo
2. Be properly dressed in Keikogo and Hakam
3. Announce your coming in the dojo by saying "Onegai Shimasu" and bow
4. Don't leave the dojo before the end of the class
5. Finish each exercise if your partner has not enough energy to do so.
6. Keep your armor on until end of each lesson (unless injured or due to health problem)
7. Do not speak or teach other unless your are an instructor.
8. Be loyal to you're fellow kendokas, your club, Irish Kendo Federation.
9. Respect and follow Regi
10. Behave in a BUDO spirit.

## Common commands

Some of the most common commands that the teacher may use during a practice.

### **General greeting phrases**

(good to memorize)

Domo Arigato gozaimashita	Thank you
Onegai Shimasu	Thank you for allowing me to practice with you (said before each exercise)
Gomen na sai	Sorry
Hai	Yes (an answer to command from the teacher)
Sumimasen	Excuse me

### **Before and after the practice**

Junbi Taiso	Warming up
Nuki...To	Draw the sword
Toke Kamae	Sword in resting position
Kamae To	Draw sword and have in chudan position
Osamae To	Put away sword usually from sonkyo
Seiretsu	Form a line
Seiza	Sit down
Mokuso	Mediations
Mokuso yame	End of mediation
Shomen Ni	Salute the holy object
Otaga Ni	Salute all how practice
Rei	Bow
Men Wo Tsuke	Put on the amour
Men Wo Tore	Take of the amour
Kiritsu	Stand up

### **During the practice**

Hajime	Start
Yame	End
Kamae	Start position (usually Chudan no Kamae)
Ippon Migi	One step to the right
Rotte	Rotate
Moikai	Same as before
Osame...To	Holster the sword

### **1 to 10 in Japanese**

Ichi	One
Ni	Two
San	Three
Shi	Four
Go	Five
Roku	Six
Shichi	Seven
Hachi	Eight
Kyu	Nine
Ju	Ten

## **Warming up exercises (Suburi)**

These are some of the basic exercises we use before the practice starts

### ***Jogeburi***

Large "sweeping strikes" that goes from the base of the back to the floor. Try to get the Shinai as far back as it hits between the buttocks, this to feel that the Shinai is on the center line of the body. Foot movement is with Okuri ashi. Important is to move the hands together somewhat in order to avoid an unnatural angle in the wrists when the Shinai reaches its lowest position. Strike as you are going forward and back.

### ***Zenshin men/kote/do (forward men/kote/do – in 3 steps)***

Men – Large strikes against the imaginary opponents heads. Raise the Shinai above our head 45 degrees, left hand 7-8 cm from the forehead. Foot movements are with Okuri Ashi. Important is that one stretches out during the strike, and climax of the strike is when you hit the target. Return to Chuan no Kamae.

### ***Katate zenshin Men***

As above but only with the left hand. Keep the right hand on the hip for better balance.

### ***Zenshin kotai men***

Same as Zenshin Men but you don't return to Chudan no Kamae but make a new Men cut as you move back.

### ***Zenshin kotai sayu men***

Same foot movements as above. Use the right hand only to guide the Shinai, the left is exactly like in zenshin kotai men. You cut the right temple, then left going forward and then left temple and right temple going back. Do NOT return to Chudan no Kamae but make a new Men cut as you move back.

### ***Hayasuburi (Haya – means fast)***

Jumping Suburi. Same as Zenshin Men only faster, so fast that you jump instead of having the feet sliding on the floor. POINT! The foot movement is the same as in Okuri Ashi!!!

### ***Nanameburi***

A mix of Jogeburi and Zenshin men. Raise the Shinai above our head 45°, left hand 7-8 cm from the forehead. Foot movements are with Hiraki Ashi. Strike all the way down to the floor important is not to twist the upper body but to change direction with the use of the feet's.

### ***Warming up phrases***

<b>Trainer</b>	<b>Everyone</b>
Ichi, Ni	San, Shi
Go, Roku	Shichi, Hachi

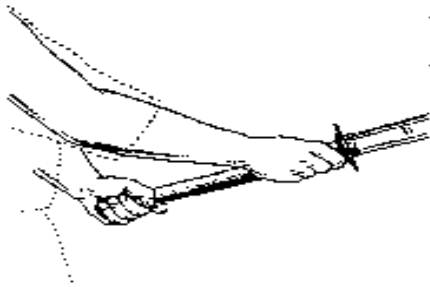
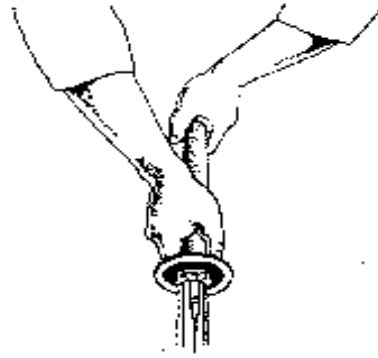


## How to hold a Shinai

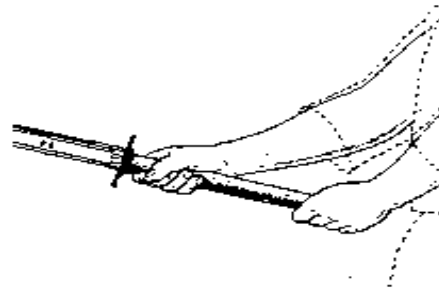
The string (tsuru) shows the back on sword and you can see it when the sword is Chudan no Kamae. It forms a line with the V shape between the thumb and the index finger of your .

Both hands shall be on top and rotated toward the center.

Hold the Shinai loosely, on the left hand only small, ring and long finger are holding a solid grip. Left small finger is somewhat outside of the end of the Shinai.



Both arms are slightly bent and relaxed. The left hand is one fist from out from the body and in line with or just below the belly button.

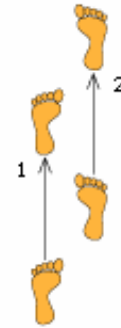


**CHUDAN NO KAMAE** (the most common on-guard position). The Shinai is in the center, left heel has a slight off the floor. The right foot is forward. The toes of the left foot are no further back than the heel of the right and the left foot is no more than one fist to the left of the right foot from. It is a very narrow short stance. The weight of the body is on the left foot and the attacking during fighting is done with the right foot (seme). The feet move as if joined with a strong elastic.

## Movements and foot work

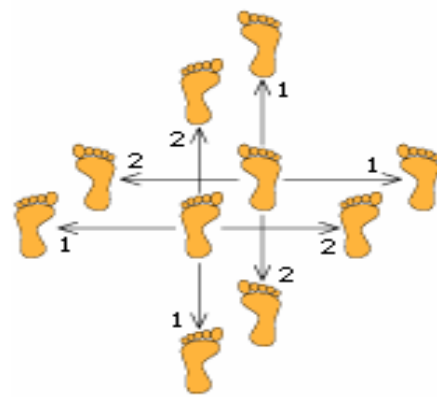
### ***Ayumi Ashi***

Regular walking steps. It is used to move (back and forward) when the distance to the opponent is great and one needs to move fast.



### ***Okuri Ashi***

Or kendo step. Used when distance to the opponent is short one needs move quickly. With Okuri Ashi one is able move in all directions.



### ***Fumikomi Ashi***

Also known as “attack step”. Used move quickly to strike the opponent. The body is pushed forward with left leg/foot, the right foot is slightly raised above the ground and then hits the ground with a thump. Almost instantly the left foot is moved forward. Fumikomi Ashi usually followed by Okuri Ashi



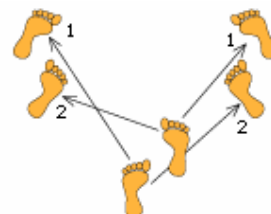
### ***Tsugi Ashi***

Used for attacked from distance greater then Issoki-Itto-no-Maai. Move the left foot forward and then do Fukumi Ashi.



### ***Hiraki Ashi***

Kendo’s most advanced foot movements. Used for technique on very high level.



## **Kiai**

The first impression of a Kendo practice is the noise level, there seems to be a lot of shouting. What is the reason for it?

### ***Why Kiai?***

Within Kendo the cry, KIAI, is not some arbitrary or a random phenomenon. The kiai is instead one of many weapons used in a Kendo fight. Kiai is used in order to show fighting spirit, willingness and determination to fight, and it can also intimidate an opponent. At the same time it help control your own breathing and lets you gain maximum force from each strike as you tighten your abdominal muscles.

### ***How is it done?***

The basic rule is that one shall not scream, or only take air only from the lungs and voice a scream out loud. No, Kiai comes from something more fundamental, which is the body's centre, the stomach! (Hara)

Kiai is carried out with the aid of the abdominal muscles (it can be compared with opera singers how also us the abdominal muscles). It is therefore the abdominal muscles that will press forward a good Kiai.

A good Kiai can only be learned through exercise.

The first one must do is get rid of the shyness of one own voice and then build up the abdominal muscles. After a while most have overcomes the shyness and then the Kiai becomes a natural part of Kendo practice.

## Common Exercises

A Kendo session comprises many different types of exercises. Each has its own objective and together forms Kendo practice. Kendo requires as all other Budo sports a lot of patience and tenacity. In the beginning a lot may feel strange, such as the rules, footwork and how one handles the sword. Once the beginner has learned the basic techniques he or she will begin practicing with armour and against an opponent.

There exists many different techniques that all must be practiced over and over again in order to make them second nature. Some examples are various types of counter-attack techniques, situation assessment, fast body movement and pure physical exercises.

Here follows some of the common Kendo exercises:

**Kirikaeshi:** repeated cuts left and right on the helmet. Five forward and five back. Twice. Kirikaeshi it is said has all of kendo in it. An initial kiai, threatening attack or seme, forward and backward motion. Proper footwork. Establishes correct distance or mai. Timing accuracy and fighting spirit. It is used for many things in kendo and it is used often to restore spirit after other types of exercise especially keiko, when a kendoka might have become demoralized.

**Keiko / Geiko:** both words mean “practice”

**Waza-Geiko:** This lets the student practice between five to fifteen attacks on a recipient.

**Kakari-Geiko:** A lot of intensive, attacking exercises one after the other to increase fighting spirit and automatic hitting of open targets, and to create openings.

**Ai-Kakari-Geiko:** Where both attack in kakari-geiko at the same time.

**Ji-Geiko:** practice fight - where both two Kendoka's attacks each other, gives an opportunity to test all their techniques on each other during realistic relations!

**Gokaku-Geiko:** keiko between two Kendoka at same level of ability.

**Hikitate-Geiko:** keiko when a higher graded Kendoka exercises against a lower graded and concurrent gives advice and ideas.

**Shiai-Geiko:** competition games that are adjudicated by three referees. It is the best out of three, and points are received when one has a clean strike and shown good spirit in your attacks.

People can gauge their progress during these “keiko”. One has to have high intensity to do well in these “free fighting” sessions and they require great mental and physical strength. This in turn can be prepared for carrying out the basic training in a serious fashion. The noise levels are usually high in the dojo as each kendoka tries to bring to bear greater fighting spirit than his or her opponent.

## Competition

A game in Kendo usually has a five minute time limit. That may sound like a short time but trust us it is very long minutes!

Those compete are given either a white or red band that is put on there back in order for the judges to recognize them during the fight. Competition is limited to a 10 x 10 metres big area. The first one how get two points win.

A point is given when one of the competitors has made a clear and powerful attack against some of the four the target areas: the head (MEN), the wrists (KOTE), the chest (DO), or thrust to throat (TSUKI). There is three judges assessing if it was a point or not.

Should any of the competitors break the rules, for example; dropping a Shinai or stepping outside the area, he/she is given a warning. Two warnings give a point to the opponent.

If neither of the competitors should have a point or it is equally after five minutes then the match is decided by sudden death (first point wins).

A match of Kendo can gives an impression of incredible violence and appears to contain a lot of aggressiveness, but Kendo like all other Budo sport it contains a number rules. It is an activity based upon good behavior, friendship and mutual respect.

**Kendo if demonstrated and practiced correctly should not inspire any of the negative emotions, such as hatred or revenge.**

A match in Kendo is not only a question of pure physical endurance it as much about psychic presence and stamina. The competitor with the best ZANSHIN, or self-control and strong spirit often holds an inherent advantage against his or her opponent. A really strong Kendoka can already before the fight begin exert such a strong spirit that he has won, for he can read opponent and upset the opponents attacks.

## A small Kendo dictionary

**Aiuchi** (Two Yuko-datotsu made mutually and simultaneously)

**Chigiri** (A lacvhing metal object)

**Chudan-no kamae** (One of five basic Kamae)

**Chuken** (The third competitor of a five person team)

**Chusen** (Lot)

**Daihyousha** (A representative Shiai-sha)

**Daihyousha-sen** (Shiai by Daihyousha)

**Daito** (A long sword)

**Dantai** (A team)

**Dantai-shiai** (A team match)

**Datotsu**(Strikes or thrusts)

**Datotsu-bu** (The parts of shinai to be used for valid strikes/thrusts)

**Datotsu-bui** (The target areas for valid strikes and thrusts)

**Do** (A plastron)

**Do-bu** (The right and left sides of Do)

**Encho** (An overtime Shiai)

**Fukushin** (A subreferee)

**Fukusho** (The second competitor to the last one of a team)

**Fusei-yogu** (Prohibited equipment)

**Fusen-gachi** (Victory awarded due to the opponent's default or dismissal)

**Gogi** (A conference)

**Hakama** (A skirt)

**Hansoku** (A foul)

**Hantei** (the victory decision based on a judgment of Shinpan-in, not on Yuko-datotsu)

**Hasuji** (A direction of the sword dege)

**Hikiwake** (A draw)

**Igi** (A protest)

**Ipon-gachi** (A victory with one point)

**Ippon-shobu** (A one-point-scoring)

**Itto** (One Shinai)

**Jinbu** (The blade side opposite to Tsuru)

**Jogai** (The outside of a match court)

**Jiho** (The second competitor of a team)

**Kachinuki** (A kind of match that a competitor cotinues to fight as long as he/she keeps winning)

**Kaishi-sen** (A set line)

**Kakari-in** (A court staff)

**Kantoku** (The manager of a team)

**Kantoku-ki** (A manager flag)

**Kamae** (A posture)

**Kendo-gi** (A jacket)

**Kendo-gu** (Protective gear)

**Kiken** (Default)

**Kiken-sha** (A defaulter)

**Kojin-shia** (A match fought for an individual competitor's Championship)

**Kote** (a Kendo glove)

**Kote-bu** (right and left forearms)

**Mejirusi** (A red or white piece of cloth)

**Men** (A head gear)

**Men-bu** (The forehead, and the right and left head)  
**Men-himo** (Men cords)  
**Monouchi** (A part of the blade of sword which cuts best)  
**Nafuda** (Name tag)  
**Nihon-me** (the second point)  
**Nito** (two shinai)  
**Noto** (To shear the sword)  
**Rei** (A bow)  
**Ritsu-rei** (A standing bow)  
**Sage-to** (to carry the sword in one's hand)  
**Sakigawa** (A joint cover)  
**Sanbon-shobu** (A three-point-scoring)  
**Seiza** (To sit square on one's seat)  
**Senkoku** (A pronouncement)  
**Senpo** (The first competitor of a team)  
**Shiai** (A match)  
**Shiai-funo** (Incapacitated shiai-sha)  
**Shiai-funo-sha** (An incapacitated Shiai-sha)  
**Shiai-jo** (A match court)  
**Shiai-sha** (A competitor)  
**Shinai** (A bamboo sword)  
**Shinpan** (the refereeing)  
**Shinpan-cho** (A referee director)  
**Shinpan-in** (A referee)  
**Shinpan-ki** (A referee flag)  
**Shinpan-shunin** (A presiding referee for a match)  
**Shobu** (the third point after a tie score)  
**Shoto** (A short sword)  
**Shushin** (A chief referee)  
**Sogo-no-rei** (A mutual bow)  
**Sonkyo** (A squatting posture)  
**Sosai** (An offset)  
**Taisho** (The last competitor of a team)  
**Taito** (To wear the sword)  
**Tare** (A hip protector)  
**Torikeshi** (Revocation)  
**Tsuba** (A sword guard)  
**Tsuba-zeriai** (A Tsuba engagement)  
**Tsuka** (A hilt)  
**Tsuki-bu** (The throat)  
**Tsuru** (A string)  
**Wakare** (Separation)  
**Yame** (A stop)  
**Yuko** (Valid)  
**Yuko-datotsu** (Valid strikes or thrusts)  
**Zanshin** (The state of alertness both mental and physical, against the opponent's counterattack)

**Note:** Please refer, for further details of each word, to All Japan Kendo Federation's "Kendo Japanese-English Dictionary of Kendo"