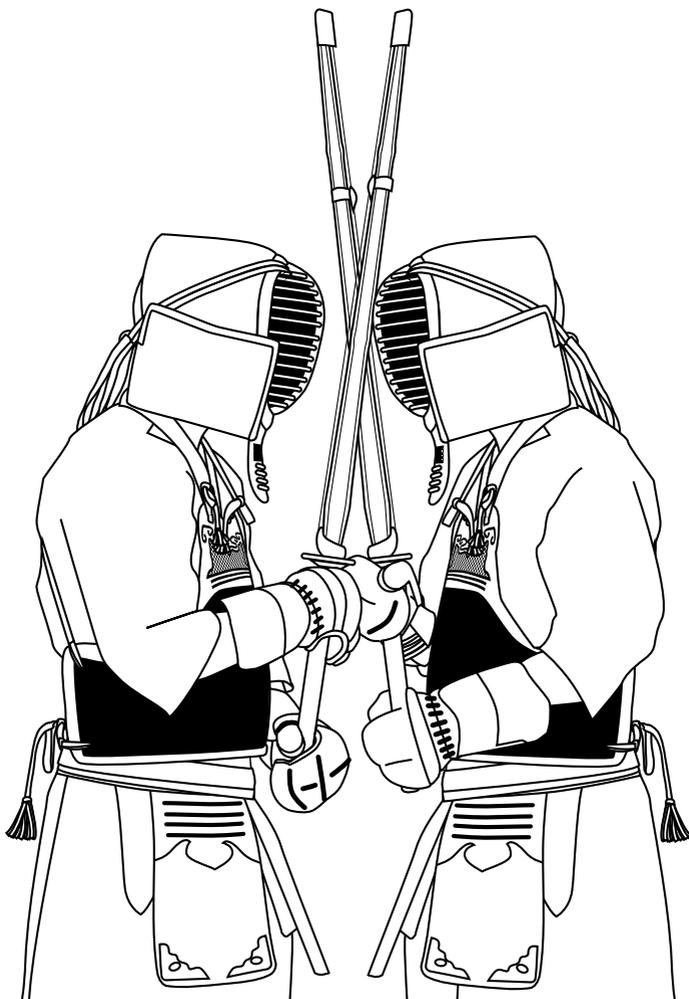


This is Kendo

– an introduction to Japanese fencing



Kendo 剣道

History

Kendo is translated as “the way of the sword”, and has its origins in the sword art of the Japanese samurai. Techniques that were once used to defeat and kill their opponents has since been refined; and today Kendo is a competitive sport where two competitors fight against each other. With your *shinai*, your bamboo sword, you’re trying to hit your opponent on specific target areas. Protected by your armour – helmet, gloves, chest plate and hip protector – you can attack you opponent without having to injure either yourself or the one you are fighting.

Kendo promotes both your mental and physical exercise; and characteristics such as concentration, strength, endurance, speed and respect all increase when you practice Kendo.

The Idea of Kendo

Kendo not only work your muscles, but also your heart, and mental strength is also in focus. The meaning 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 will one 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.

The All Japan Kendo Federation was founded in 1952, with it can a kind of resurrection to the martial arts that had been dormant since the end of the 2nd World War. Yet the roots of Kendo goes back even further, to the feudal Japan of the 16th Century. For the samurai, the Japanese warrior elite of that time, their sword – or *katana* – was their most prized possession. It was a reflection of its wielders soul. In the Japanese sword schools, *ryu*, they practiced with it until it was but an extension its the wielder’s arm.

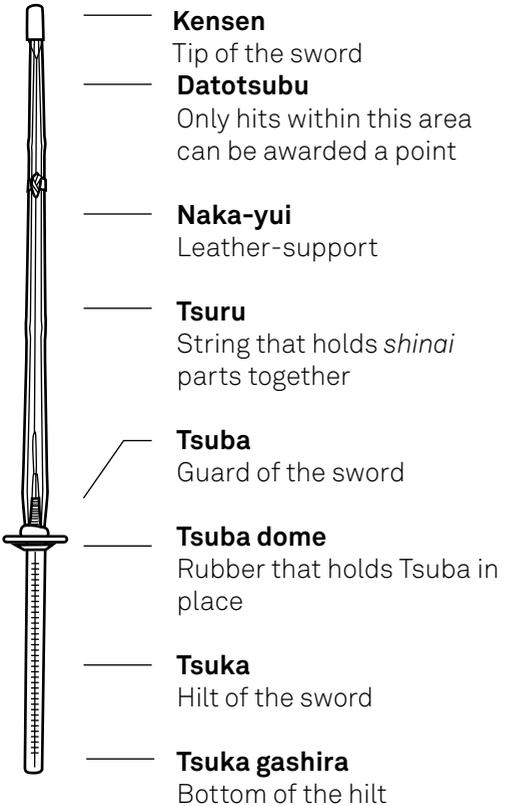
Back then the samurai practiced both to kill and to survive, and they used both the wooden sword – *bokuto* – as well as the iron sword – the *katana*. However, to practice with these carried risks. Injuries even deaths could happen. Because of this, they developed a sword used for practice, comprised of four bamboo ribs – the *shinai* – as well as pieces of armour for protecting head, face, torso and hands. Now you could practice with full force, whereas the *bokuto* or *katana* was, and today still is, only used for *kata*, controlled movement patters or forms, where the sword is stopped before a hit.

Since the founding of the All Japan Kendo Federation, Kendo has been reformed, refined and modernized. Techniques aimed to efficiently kill your opponent have given way to a style more focused on competitiveness and agility, with moves like leg sweeps and grapples being dropped. In Kendo you don’t use the strength required to cut a body part or split skin, but instead focus on control, endurance and speed.

Equipment

When you start practicing kendo, your first lessons are the basic foot-movements and cuts. At the beginning you do this without armour and the cuts are made in the air instead of against an opponent. On a more advanced level, we practice with armour, *bogu*, which allows for full-contact when we strike.

Shinai – The practice sword we use in Kendo is called a *shinai*, and is a bamboo sword comprised of four bamboo ribs held together with leather and string.



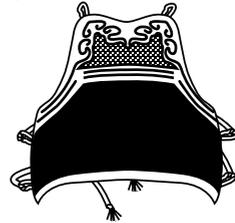
Bokken – The wooden practice sword used to practice forms, called *Kata*. Is also called *Bokuto*.

The armour, *bogu*, has evolved during the last few hundred years, and the balance between protection and manoeuvrability has been enhanced to fit the kendo we practice today. It is comprised of four parts:

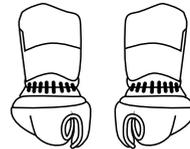


Men – the helmet or mask that protects head and shoulders. It is made from multiple tightly sewn layers of cotton that comprises the main shape and shoulder protection. A steel grill protects the face and a hard plate protects the throat. The helmet is held in place by two cotton ribbons that are tied at the back of the head.

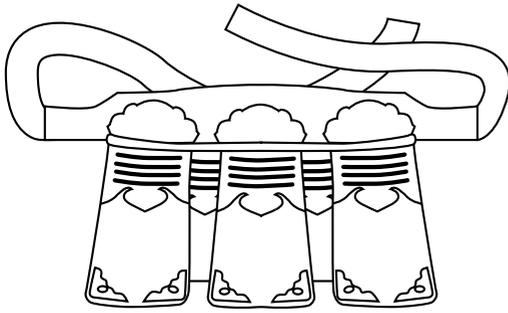
The top of the men is one of the target areas in kendo, and the throat guard being another one.



Do – Stomach and chest is protected by a harness traditionally made of bamboo. Today they are generally made of plastic. The armour is tied with four cotton ribbons. The sides of the do is also point giving targets in Kendo.



Kote – Your hands are protected by a pair of heavily quilted cotton gloves. The gloves protect hands and forearms and allows for collisions between two kendo practitioners, or *kendoka*. The surface of the harder part of the kote is one of the point giving targets in kendo.



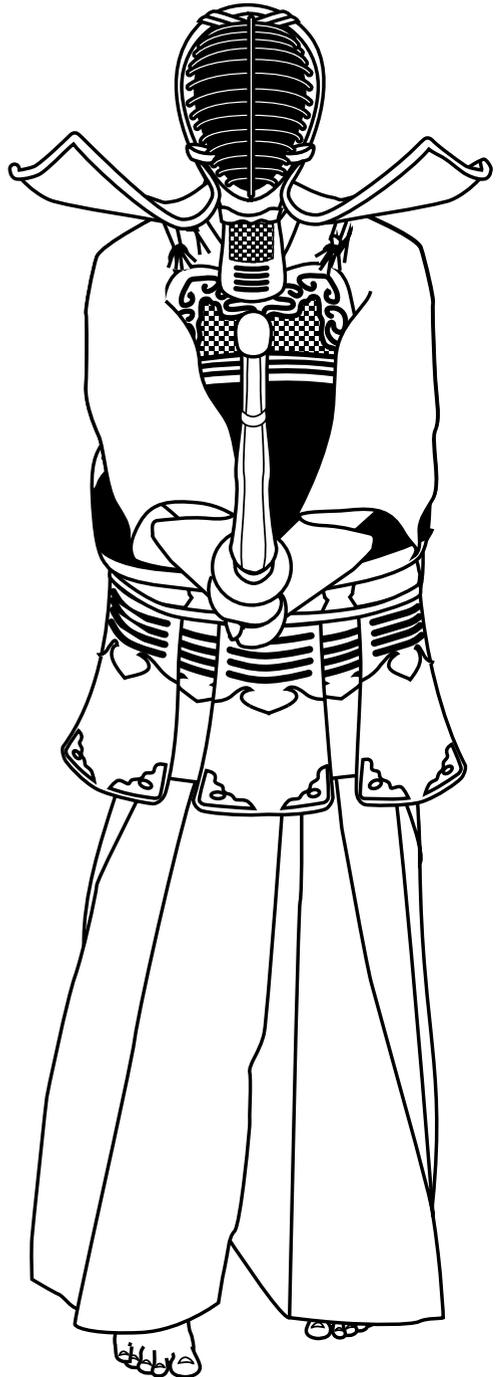
Tare – Hip guard that is carried below the do, and is made of the same material as the *men*. This piece of equipment is not a target in Kendo and is like the shoulder protection a remnant of traditional samurai armour.



Gi
Practice jacket

Hakama
Practice trousers

In kendo you practice dressed in specific clothing, comprised of two pieces of garments *Gi*, a thick practice jacket, and *hakama*, a pleated pair of wide-legged trouser. These are usually coloured in with indigo, dark blue, similar to the rest of the armour, but you can also practice in white. Traditionally white has mostly been used by women, but is today used by both men and women.



Examinations

In Kendo, you have the opportunity to test your level of experience through examinations. During an examination your skill and knowledge of Kendo is assessed by a panel of judges. If the judges believe that you pass the criteria for the grade you're trying for, you receive it.

In Kendo, the first grade you get during an examination is 4th *kyu*, and after 1st *kyu* comes the *dan*-grades, of which 8th *dan* is the highest you can achieve in kendo. As a beginner you have no grade, but when your teachers determine that you are ready you can try for the next grade. Unlike for example Judo or Karate, in Kendo you do not carry anything to show your current grade.

Here are the rules for examination as determined by the Swedish Budo Federation's Kendo section (2003-09-21):

Examination Topics:

Grade Extent

4th kyu *Dai Ichi Kihon or Suburi, Uchikomi against Motodachi in Bogu: Men, Kote-Men, Kote-Do*

3th kyu *Dai Ichi Kihon or Suburi, Uchikomi, Kirikaeshi, Jigeiko*

2th kyu *Dai Ichi Kihon or Suburi, Uchikomi, Kirikaeshi, Jigeiko, Kata*

1st kyu *Jigeiko, Kata, possibly a written test*

1st dan *Jigeiko, Kata (tachi 1-7), possibly written test*

2nd dan *Jigeiko, Kata (tachi 1-7), possibly skriftligt prov*

Dress code

During examination to 3rd *Kyu* or higher, you are required to be dressed in hakama and keiko-gi.

Minimum time between examinations

Grade	Minimitid	Minimiålder
4th–1st kyu	<i>3 mon after previous passed examination.</i>	<i>12 years (1 kyu)</i>
1 dan	<i>3 mon after 1 kyu</i>	<i>14 år</i>
2 dan	<i>1 year after 1 dan</i>	
3 dan	<i>2 year after 2 dan</i>	

Graduation focus points

Posture: It is important to have a straight posture. Keep eye contact with your opponent (during *suburi*, imagine you're standing opposite someone of your own height).

Foot work: Keep your feet parallel and remember to not pass your right foot with your left. Your left heel should be raised by 1-2 cm.

Suburi: Work with your left hand (the right should only assist in keeping it straight), always keeping it in the centre. Raise the left hand over your head and open your elbows. Relax and use as little force as possible.

*Try to practice a lot of **suburi** by yourselves and you will see progress. Remember to learn how to stop the cut exactly where you want it (i.e. **tenouchi**).*

Kata

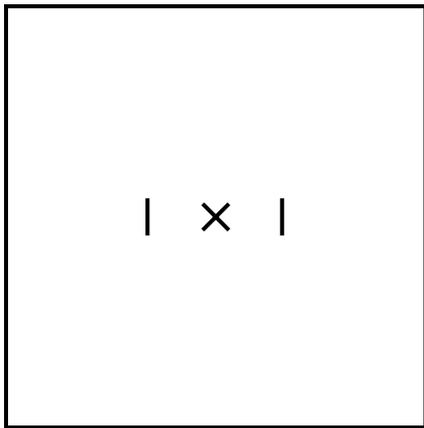
In kendo we also practice *kata*, a set of pre-determined moves designed with the purpose of increasing your control, techniques and focus. In *kata* you always practice against an opponent and you use the *bokuto*. *Kata* is part of the kendo examinations from 1st *kyu* and higher.

Shiai 試合

Kendo is a competitive martial art. You are never forced to compete, but the sport is developed for two kendokas to face each other in a duel and try to get points by hitting each other on predetermined locations.

In a match, or *shiai*, the goal is to first score two points. You get a point by hitting one of the four target areas whilst having the correct attitude, *kiai*, posture, *fumikomi*, and control, *zanchin*. Three judges decide whether or not the hit deserves a point or not. Usually a *shiai* is 3-5 minutes, but it can end in only a handful of seconds.

The arena, or *shiai-jo*, is 10x10 meters.



The match starts with the contestants bowing to each other, taking three steps towards the middle of the *shiai-jo* and crouching down into *sonkyou-no-kamae*, where they'll await the judge's command to begin. Both contestants carry a coloured ribbon tied to their back, either white or red.

The goal is to hit one of the four target areas: **Men** – the head, **kote** – the forearm, **do** – the lower torso, or **tsuki** – the throat. But just to hit is not enough. To constitute a correct hit you need to have *ki-ken-tai-ichi* during and after the attack, i.e. for the spirit, sword and body to act as one. So all

in all there are three steps to defeat your opponent and take a point:

- I: *First you kill your opponent's sword by getting past his/her **kamae**. You do this either by owning the centre or create an opening.*
- II: *Then you have to kill his/her body. This is done by getting a good hit with your **shinai**. You need to hit the correct area of your opponent with the correct part of your **shinai**, i.e. **datotsubu**.*
- III: *Finally you need to kill his/her spirit, by overwhelming your opponent with your **kiai** and **zanshin**.*

If a judge determines that your attack fulfilled all the requirements they will raise the flag with your colour on it. If two out of the three judges raises your colour it is a point.

In a *shiai*, a warning, *hansako*, can also be given. If you get two warnings during a match, your opponent is given a point. A warning can for example be given if you step outside the boundaries of the *shiai-jo* or for foul-play such as leg sweeps, punches or if you grab your opponent. You will also be given a warning if you drop your *shinai*.

Besides being a physical sport, it is also a psychological one, where the one with the better fighting spirit can get a mental advantage before the judge has even had time to shout *hajime*.

Remember that kendo is not an outlet for hate or aggressions towards other people. We train and compete with the outmost respect for each other, the judges and everyone else involved. For example scolding a judge after what you believe is an incorrect call is not tolerated in kendo.

Start training kendo!

Reigi 礼儀

Before you start to practice it might be a good thing to learn a bit about *reigi* – the rules of etiquette inside the *dojo*. The purpose is to create a pleasant, safe and effective atmosphere to practice in. These rules should be followed during practice:

- Bow, when you enter or leave the *dojo*. You do this to show respect for the martial art and for those that practice there.
- Never lean on or walk over a *shinai* or *bokuto*. Even if they are not sharp, they are still weapons and should be treated as such.
- Be dressed and ready for practice when it starts. This way no one has to wait for you to get ready.
- Take as little time as possible between exercises or when you're correcting something that is out of order.
- Do not carry shoes or hats in the *dojo*. Shoes bring in dirt and hats are worn outside.
- Be quite and attentive during practice. When your sensei is reviewing something it important not to interrupt. You don't want to miss anything, right?
- If you have a question or need to interrupt your practice, raise your hand – your *sensei* decides when the practice is interrupted.

- Sit in *seiza* when you put on or remove your equipment. This way others can plainly see what you are doing and you'll have an easier time keeping track of your own things.

- Keep your nails short and clean. Long nails can hurt other *kendoka*.

- Always walk behind your fellow practitioners. This is out of respect, but also for everyone's safety. We are after all using swords. If you need to walk in front of someone, bow and show your right palm when you pass.

- Don't carry any jewellery during practice. It can hurt yourselves or others during practice.

- Check your equipment and *shinai* before, during and after practice, so that they are whole and safe for practice.

- Do not bring food or drink into the *dojo*.

Seiretsu

Means line-up. Everyone stands in a line parallel with the long side of the *dojo*. While in *seiretsu* you follow a couple of rules: Before you sit down you carry the *shinai* in your left hand. *Kote* is tucked into the *men* and held under your right arm. Stand straight in the line in accordance with your grade and age. On command we sit down in *seiza* – i.e. on your knees with back straight – in line with the *dojo*-captain. Put down your *shinai*, *kote* and *men* in the same way as your sensei. Uniformity is important in Kendo.

Kiai 気合

The first time you encounter kendo you might be shocked by all the shouts. It is easy to wonder why we scream, and can it all really be necessary?

The reason is partly to show your will and intent, but also to increase your concentration and reach maximum power for each strike. By tensing the muscles in our stomach and focusing your breathing with a shout each attack becomes more distinct and carries greater power. *Kiai*, or the combat shout we do in kendo comes from the stomach. It is no coarse roar but a controlled, high and powerfull shout.

In the beginning it might feel uncomfortable to do *kiai*, but you will soon learn that in Kendo it is more embarrassing not to have a *Kiai*, than to shout like a madman.

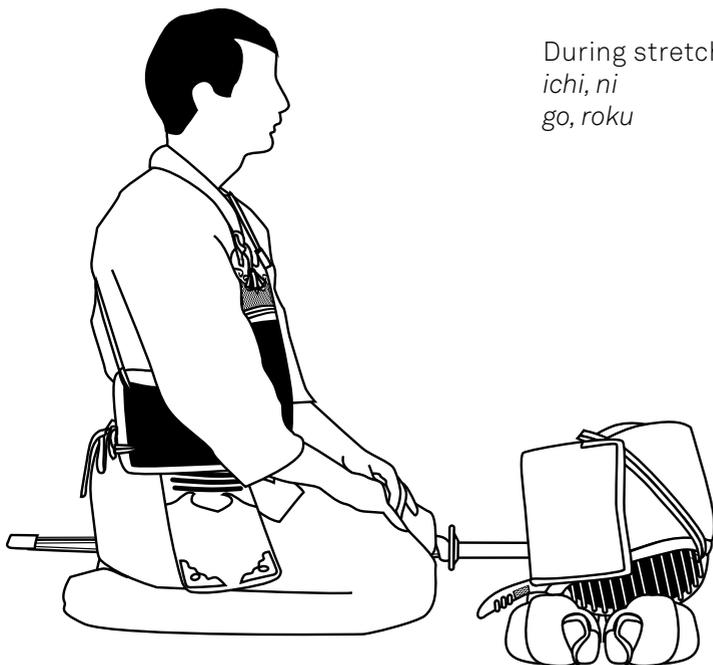
Warm-up chant

The leader sings the part on the left, after which everyone else answers with the right. When the whole chant is done the next person in line starts again from the top of the chant. The tempo of the chant decides the tempo of the warm-up jog:

<i>ichi, ichi, ichi-ni</i>	–	<i>chore</i>
<i>ichi, ichi, ichi-ni</i>	–	<i>chore</i>
<i>cho, cho, cho</i>	–	<i>chore</i>
<i>ichi</i>	–	<i>chore</i>
<i>ni</i>	–	<i>chore</i>
<i>san</i>	–	<i>chore</i>
<i>shi</i>	–	<i>chore</i>
<i>ichi</i>	–	<i>hai</i>
<i>ni</i>	–	<i>hai</i>
<i>san</i>	–	<i>hai</i>
<i>shi</i>	–	<i>hai</i>
<i>ichi-ni-san-shi</i>	–	<i>ichi-ni-san-shi</i>
<i>ichi-ni-san-shi</i>	–	<i>ichi-ni-san-shi</i>

During stretch and suburi:

<i>ichi, ni</i>	–	<i>san, shi</i>
<i>go, roku</i>	–	<i>shichi, hachi</i>



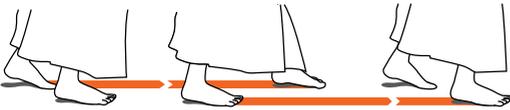
Foot work 足さばき

Kendo begins with the feet; to become a good kendoka you need quick and stable feet, that can move quickly without losing balance and control. Because of this Kendo has developed specific techniques for moving your feet.



Kendo position

Basic position in Kendo where your feet points straight ahead, and about shoulder width apart. The toes of the left foot positioned in level with the heel of the right, heel not touching the floor. Knees slightly bent, back and head held straight.



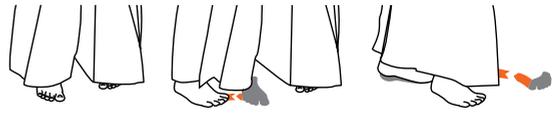
Ayumi ashi

Regular steps. The difference is that you use *suri ashi*, or sliding steps. These are used when your opponent is far away and you need to close distance fast.



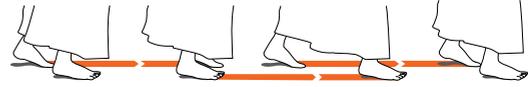
Okuri ashi

So-called “Kendo steps”. Uses *suri ashi*, and is best used when the distance is short and you want to move quickly while still being ready to act. During *okuri ashi* the toes of your left foot never passes the heel of the right. Between each step you return to the basic Kendo position.



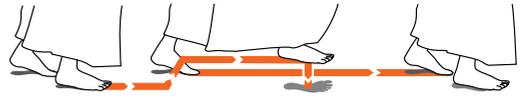
Hiraki ashi

The most advanced movement in Kendo, where you turn your body along a 90 degree arc.



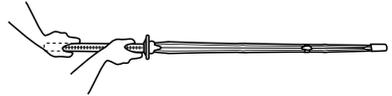
Tsugi ashi

Used for attacks on far distance. You move your left foot up beside your right without passing your right.



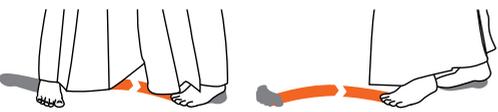
Fumikome

Attack step. The left foot pushes your body and your right foot makes a stomp in the ground at the same time as the strike hits your opponent. A correct stomp is required to get a point during a shiai.



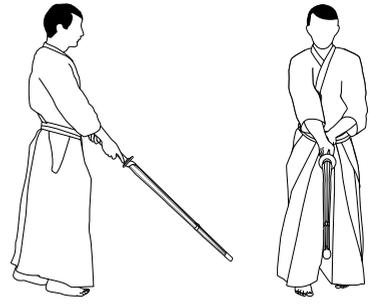
How to grip your Shinai

In Kendo everyone hold their *shinai* in the same way, your left hand should be at the bottom of the handle, or *tsuka*, whilst the right hand is held up against the *tsuba*. *Tsuru*, the string running along the back of the *shinai*, should be facing you. Your hands should hold the sword from above, so that the seam of the *tsukagashira*, leather handle, is in line with the V that forms between your thumbs and index finger on each hand. Hold the *shinai* firmly with the bottom fingers of each hand, height leveled with the navel, one fist away from your body. In *chudan-no-kamae*, the basic stance in kendo – the tip of the *shinai* should point towards your opponent’s throat.



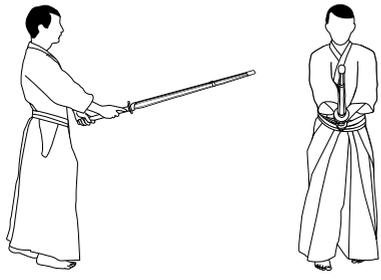
Kamae 構え

Kamae is translated as basic stance, and in Kendo there are a couple of stances you should know. It is from these stances you execute your attacks. Some of these are however never used during sparring or matches, but instead only used when we practice *kata*.



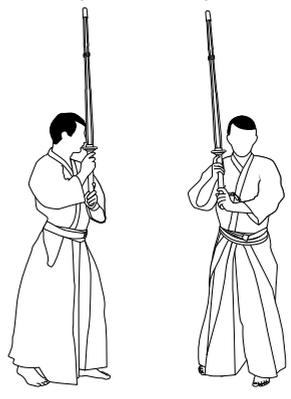
Gedan-no-kamae

The *kamae* of earth and the most defensive of the *Kamae*, where your aim is foremost to block your enemy's attack before retaliating.



Chodan-no-kamae

The *kamae* of water, and the most usual stance in Kendo. From here you control the middle – simple, safe and flexible.



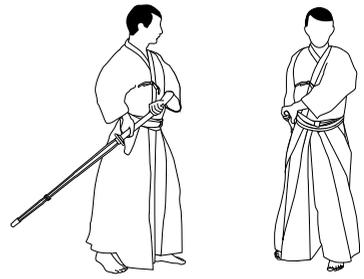
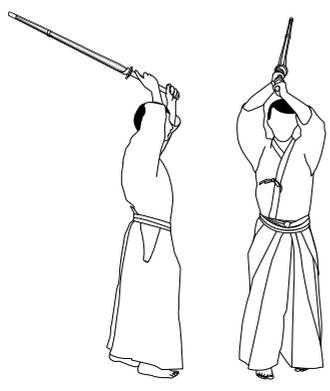
Hasso-no-kamae

The *kamae* of the forest, since you are standing like a tree. Also called the *mounted warrior's kamae* since

it was often used by samurai on horseback. It is similarly to *Jodan no Kamae* an offensive *kamae*, but is today almost exclusively used in *kata*.

Jodan-no-kamae

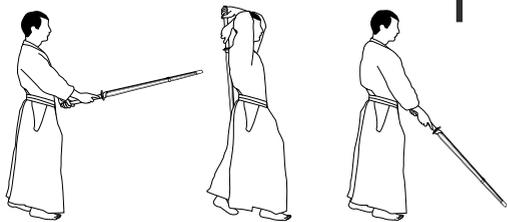
The *kamae* of fire, and the most aggressive *Kamae*. From this stance you can execute big cuts. Sometimes used by experienced *Kendokas*. Exists in two versions, *mi-gi-jodan* where the right foot is in front, and *hidari-jodan*, where the left foot is in front, which is even more aggressive!



Waki-no-kamae

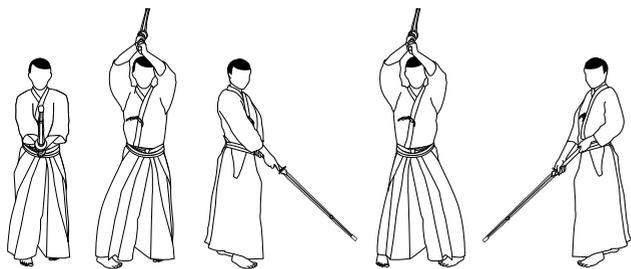
The *kamae* of metal, in which you hide your blade behind your body. Historically used to hide the length of your sword, since it varied between swords and wielder. This is a defensive *Kame* and similarly to *Hasso no Kamae* only used in *kata*.

Warm-up exercises



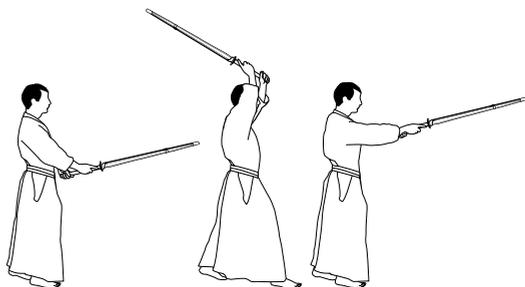
Jogi-buri

Big sweeping cuts from your lower back to the floor. Try to lift the *shinai* all the way against your back, so as to warm up with big movements, and too feel that the *shinai* is in the centre of your body. The movement occurs together with *okuri ashi*. The deep cut allows you to lower your right hand along the *tsuka* – the handle of the *shinai* – to avoid unnatural hand movements. Do the cut on both the step forward and back. It is important to use large movements during the entire exercise.



Naname-buri

A more advanced version of *jogi-buri*. You raise the *shinai* as in *senshin-men* but your feet move as in *hiraki ashi*. Cut all the way down to the floor. Remember to not twist your upper body but instead change direction using your feet.

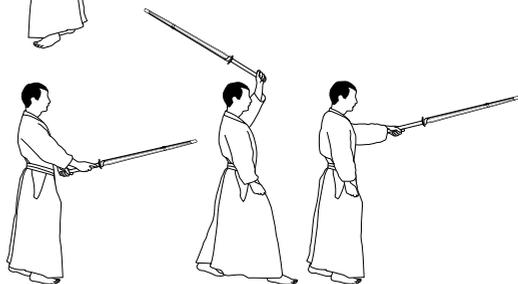


Senshin men

Betyder 'stora hugg mot huvudet'. Lyft *shinai* ovanför huvudet, spetsen ska vara riktad snett uppåt bakåt, vänster hand 7-8 cm från pannan. Förflyttningar sker med *okuri ashi*. Tänk på att sträck ut hugget, känsla i hugget ska vara när träffen kommer. Stanna hugget med *tenuchi* i huvudhöjd.

Senshin kotai men

As *senshin men*, but cuts on both the step forward and back. Move back into *chudan no kamae* only after the entire exercise is done.



Katate senshin men

Like *senshin men* but you only use your left hand. The right hand should be held to your hip for increased balance.

Regular Kendo exercises

During a Kendo practice you will encounter numerous different kinds of exercises. In most of these we use the *shinai*, and most are meant to be performed in pairs, where one *kendoka*, the *kakari*, does the exercise, while the other, the *motodachi*, receives.

Kendo requires endurance, focus and patience – it may take thousands of repetitions to master a technique. The different exercises are developed to increase your speed, endurance, balance, sense of distance, timing to name but a few things. Here are a couple of the more common exercises:

Kirikaeshi

Repeated cuts alternating to the left and right side of the helmet. Elements such as *tsuba-tsuri-ai*, *senshin-men* and *sayu-men* are all included. The exercise focuses on improving your sense of centre, distance and cutting technique.

Waza-Geiko

A kind of exercise during which you do a specified number of attacks on the *motodachi*, who receives by opening his guard and not resisting. You usually switch roles between *kakari* and *motodachi*.

Kakari-Geiko

A short but intensive exercise where you do a series of attacks in quick succession. This exercise works your speed, endurance and reflexes.

Ji-Geiko

Sparring, where two *kendokas* attack each other, giving each other the opportunity to test their techniques in a more real environment.

Gokaku-Geiko

A sparring exercise between two *kendokas* of the same level of experience.

Hikitate-Geiko

Sparring between a higher graded *kendoka* and a lower graded one, where the higher graded *kendoka* helps the other one by giving help and suggestions.

Shiai-Geiko

Competative matches judged by three judges. Best out of three, where points are awarded to the contestants for clean correct hits with good spirit and timing.



Small kendo dictionary

Pleasantries

Domo Arigato	
Gozaimashita	Thank you very much
Onegai shimasu	Thank you for allowing me to practice with you (usually said during the beginning of an exercise)
Gomen na sai	Excuse me / I'm sorry
Hai	Acknowledged (used as an answer to a commando from the teacher)

Commands

Taiso	Warm-up
Nuke to	Draw your sword
Toke kamai	Hold <i>shinai</i> in resting position
Seiretsu	Line-up
Chakuza	Sit down
Mokuso	Deep meditation
Shomen ni Rei	Bow or greeting towards the club altar
Otagai ni Rei	Bow or greeting towards fellow <i>kendokas</i>
Rei	Bow
Men o tsuke	Done your helmet
Men o tare	Remove your helmet
Hajime	Begin
Yame	Stop
Kamai	Take position or stance
Ippon migi	One step to the right
Osame to	Holster your <i>shinai</i>

Foot movement

Ayumi-ashi	Regular steps
Fumikomi	Attack step
Haja-suburi	Quick steps
Okuri-ashi	Kendo steps, where the toes of the left foot never passes the heel of the right foot.
Suri-ashi	Sliding steps

Basic stances

Kamae	Stance
Chudan no Kamae	Stance where the tip of the <i>shinai</i> points towards your opponents throat.
Gedan no Kamae	Stance where the tip of the <i>shinai</i> points towards your opponents knee.
Hasso no Kamae	Stance with horizontal <i>shinai</i> , <i>tsuba</i> leveled with your right chin.
Jodan no Kamae	Stance with the <i>shinai</i> held above your head, with the tip tilted slightly back.
Sonkyo no Kamae	Like Chudan no Kamae but squatting.
Waki no Kamae	Stance with the tip of the <i>shinai</i> held back, hidden behind you.

Exercises

Joge-buri	Big warm-up cuts
Kakari-geiko	Series of attacks in full speed where <i>motodachi</i> gives an opening.
Keiko	Sparring, or "free form" fighting.
Kirikaeshi	A series of big cuts to men.
Nanameburi	Big warm-up cuts with sideways movement.
Shiai	Competition
Waza	Technique

Cuts and sword-handling

Sayu men	Cut towards the side of the helmet
Senshin	Big cuts
Seme	Pressing the sword forward, controlling the middle
Senshin kotai	Big cuts, forward and backward cuts
Suburi	Cutting exercise used for warm-up

Yoko-men	Sideways <i>men</i> cuts
Tsuki	A thrust towards the throat
Tenouchi	To stop your cut with your wrists
Uchi	Cut
Uchikomi	Cutting exercise
Zanchin	Control (both physically and mentally)

Directions

Hidari	Left
Migi	Right
Hiki	Backward
Mae	Forward
Ma-ai	Distance
Sho	Small
Dai	Big

Competition

Daitotsu	Point-giving hit
Encho	Extension of a match where next point wins.
Fukushin	2nd judge
Goki	A break in the match where the judges consult each other in regards to a decision made
Hansoku (ikai/nikai)	Warning (first/second).
Hikiwake	Tie
Ippon	Point
Ippon-shobu	Match for one point, first point wins.
Nihon me	Command which begins the match again for the 2nd point.
San-bon-shobu	A match of three points
Shiai-jo	The competition area
Shobu	Command which starts the match for the 3rd point.
Shobu-ari	Winning point, competitors bow and leave the shiai-jo
Shimpan	Judge
Shushin	Head judge

Numbers

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

Equipment

Bogu	Armour
Bokuto, bokken	Wooden sword
Do	Breast plate
Hakama	Practice trousers
Himo	Cotton ribbon
Kendo-gi	Practice jacket
Kensen	Tip of the sword
Kodachi	Wooden short sword
Kote	Protective gloves
Men	Helmet or head protection
Shinai	Bamboo sword
Tare	Hip protection
Tsuba	The parry guard of the sword
Tenugui	Head towel
Tsuka	Handle of the sword
Zekken	Nameplate that is carried on the tare

Titles, roles & other concepts

Kiai	Combat shout
Dojo	Place for practice of martial arts
Kakari	<i>Kendoka</i> executing a practice
Kendo	Way of the sword
Ki-ken-tai-ichi	Spirit, sword and body as one: a requirement for point during a match.
Motodachi	Receiver during exercises
Shidachi	The "student" during a <i>kata</i> exercise
Uchidachi	The "teacher" during a <i>kata</i> exercise
Sensei	Teacher
Tai	Body