



Kendo Originated around 794 A.D.

Originally, fencing contests were held at the Butokuden (Hall of Martial Virtue).

Consequently to qualify for participation, warriors trained themselves in KENDO (The Way of the Sword).

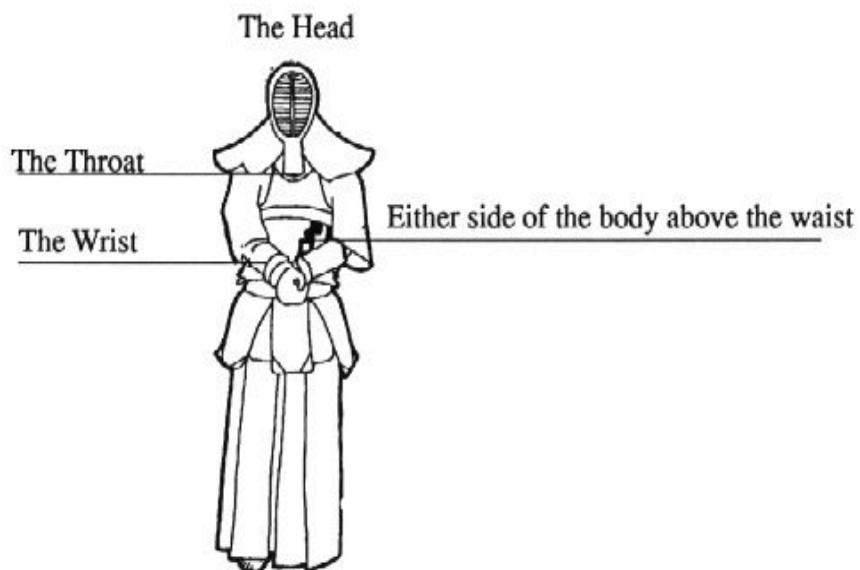
Modern Kendo exponents wear armour similar to that of their illustrious predecessors.

The weapon used in training is a bamboo sword called shinai

Although the shinai substitute the sword in practice, it is still regarded as a sword in spirit and respected as such.

Kendo is a full contact martial art with emphasis placed on controlled techniques.

The target areas are:



Where can I practice ?

KENDO is practised in a DOJO (Training Hall)

This is a place of certain formalities, demanding respect from its users and dedication to improvement.

Before the start and at the end of the training session, formal etiquette is always observed

This booklet is a collection of information contributed by Kendoka (people who practice Kendo) who are conscious of the need for information to be passed on and to provide guidance on Dojo etiquette, Japanese terminology and certain technical aspects in the hope of helping students develop to high standards. The rules of the Dojo handed down by Japanese Sensei (Teachers), have been carefully compiled for the guidance of all who enter the Dojo. Failure to observe these courtesies may result in a Kendoka being asked to leave the Dojo.

Kendo without discipline, control and etiquette would degenerate into petty acts of violence. The Sensei and their assistants are ahead of you on the path of learning and have experienced what you are going through at present. Treat these people with respect and listen to what they have to offer with an open mind.

HEALTH & AGE

The basic training is the same for all age groups and both sexes, however the training is adjusted to suit each individual. As a result of this, it is important for the Dojo teachers to know your age, general health and past injuries. Hiding such information could hamper your progress in Kendo and even cause further damage to your health.

HYGIENE

- You should have pride in your appearance; your Keikogi (jacket) and Hakama (trousers) should be cleaned regularly.
- It is important to keep your feet clean, and to keep your fingernails and toe nails short.
- No body ornament of any kind should be worn during kendo practice.

CONDUCT

When in the Dojo:

- Do not use bad language whatever the reason.
- Do not eat or chew gum.
- Do not smoke.
- REMEMBER! It costs us nothing to be polite.

SAFETY

- If you have to stop for any reason, make sure the Sensei or his/her assistants know where you are and what is wrong. Please DO NOT leave the Dojo without informing them.
- When performing exercises, be aware of the people around you.
- Do not practice if the Dojo floor is wet.
- Always check the shinai before using it.
- DO NOT practice with a damaged shinai. If you see another Kendoka using a defective shinai, you must bring it to his/her attention and inform the Sensei or his/her assistant.
- Lay your shinai case and spare shinai down (do not stand them up)
- Do not step over placed bogu (Kendo armour) or shinai.

THE DOJO

The position of Kendoka at the start of Keiko (practice) or kihon (basics) in the Dojo will depend on their grade status. For group instruction, you will generally be on the Shimoza side (lower seat) of the Dojo (which is opposite the Kamiza/Shinzen - the upper seat/alter), until asked to form pairs. While instruction is in progress, you must be attentive even if you have “done it all before”, hold your shinai in yasume (in front of you, with tip at knee height and slightly to the right) or teito (loosely at the left side). Do not lean on the shinai. Make sure you are in a position where you can see what is being demonstrated. If you do not understand what is expected of you, then you must say so.

The occurrence of serious Kendo accidents is rare, this we can attribute to the diligence of teachers. You, as new students of Kendo, must ensure that this standard is maintained by being responsible for each other’s safety. Violence of any kind will not be tolerated.

You must always try to control the way you hit with your shinai. Where contact sports or arts are concerned you could receive some abrasions and bruising, but this should not be excessive. If you wish to retie your bogu, request permission from the Sensei or Sempai (senior student) to remove your Men (headpiece of the armour), then return to the Shimoza side, a safe distance away from practising Kendoka, only then you will sit in seiza (kneeling position).

Whilst you practice, if you notice loose or undone himo (cords) on other Kendoka, try to bring this to their attention in a polite manner.

ENTERING the DOJO

When entering or leaving the Dojo, pause at the entrance and face the Shinzen (altar) then perform ritzu-rei (standing bow - angle of approximate 30 deg.).



When you put your bogu on in the Dojo, you must sit in seiza on the Shimoza side, place your shinai alongside your left leg, the tsuru (string) of the shinai should face downwards and the tsuba (hilt) in line with the knee of your left leg. Place your Kote (gloves) and Men to the outside and forward of your right knee, but within reach of your right hand, in line with your Sempai’s Kote and men. The left Kote should be positioned in front of the right; palms face down, the left and right

Atama (fist sections) pointing to the right. The Men is placed on top of both Kote with the Men gane (metal bars) facing down the tsuki-dare (throat protector) pointing towards you. The Men himo folded tidily inside, and the tenugui (thin cotton towel) draped over the men.



BOGU

Kendo armour is made up of four pieces (shown below):

- Men (Headpiece)
- Kote (Gloves)
- Do (Chest and trunk protector)
- Tare (Waist and thigh protector)



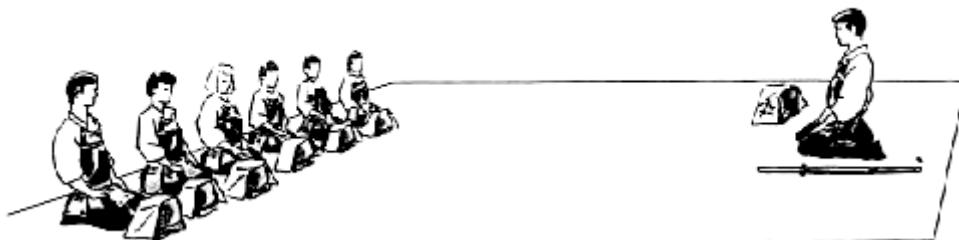
(Reproduced with kind permission of www.ninecircles.co.uk)

PREPARATION

At the start and at the end of the session, all Kendoka will sit in seiza on the Shimoza side, with their Sempai to their right.

If you need to walk in front of a Kendoka, you should extend your right hand and rei slightly as you pass in front. There are Dojos who allow their Kendoka, each in turn, to shout the commands of rei. This helps to build up confidence and is a chance to practice their Kiai (vocalising of spirit).

If, after the final rei, you wish to give special thanks to your opponent or Sensei, because you feel it was an extraordinary practice in which you learnt a further aspect of Kendo or a transmission of mutual thought, rise to your feet and go to that particular Kendoka or Sensei and show your appreciation by performing Za-rei (kneeling bow) before he/she begins to take off Do and Tare.



PRACTICE

Listen attentively to the commands, which are:

At the beginning of the session:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| KI-O-TSUKE or KIRITSU | - Pay attention. |
| MOKSO | - Assume zazen (mediation) posture. |
| YAME | - Stop (zazen posture). |
| SHINZEN-NI-REI | - Bow to the Shinzen/Kamiza. |
| SENSEI-NI-REI | - Bow to the Teacher/s. |
| MEN-TSUKE | - Put your tenugui, Men and Kote on. |

At the end of the session:

- | | |
|----------|---|
| MEN-TORE | - Remove your left Kote then the right (gripping them by the Kote futon - wrist section); place them to the right as at the start. Untie your Men himo from the back, place your tenugui inside your Men. |
|----------|---|

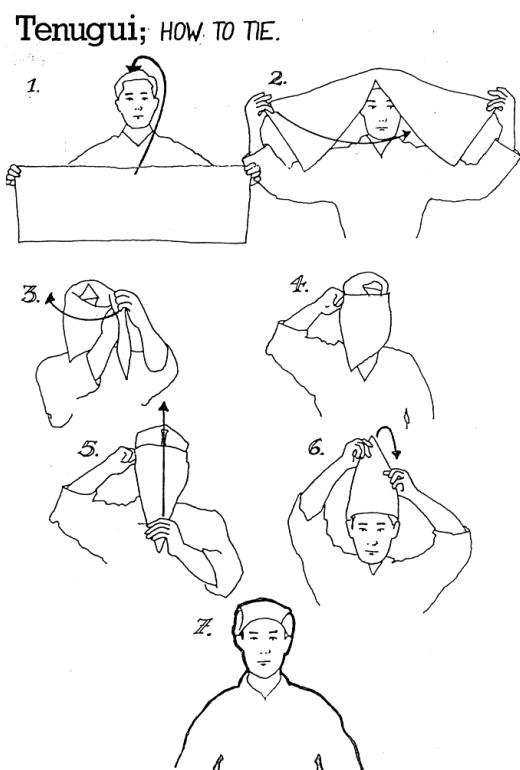
KI-O-TSUKE or KIRITSU	- Pay attention.
MOKSO	- Assume zazen (meditation) posture.
YAME	- Stop (zazen posture).
SENSEI-NI-REI	- Bow to the Teacher/s.
SHINZEN-NI-REI	- Bow to the Shinzen/Kamiza.
OTAGAI-NI-REI	- Bow to each other.

IF YOU ARE LATE FOR THE START

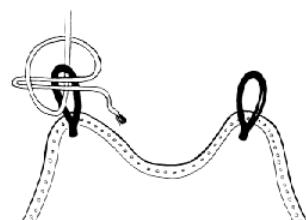
Enter the Dojo as explained earlier and request permission to join the class from the Sensei.

Remember if you are unwell do not practice but still attend if you can, you can learn by watching (Metori-Geiko).

If you became unwell during the practice do not stray away out of the Dojo, but let us know.



**How to tie
the Do himo**



DRESS

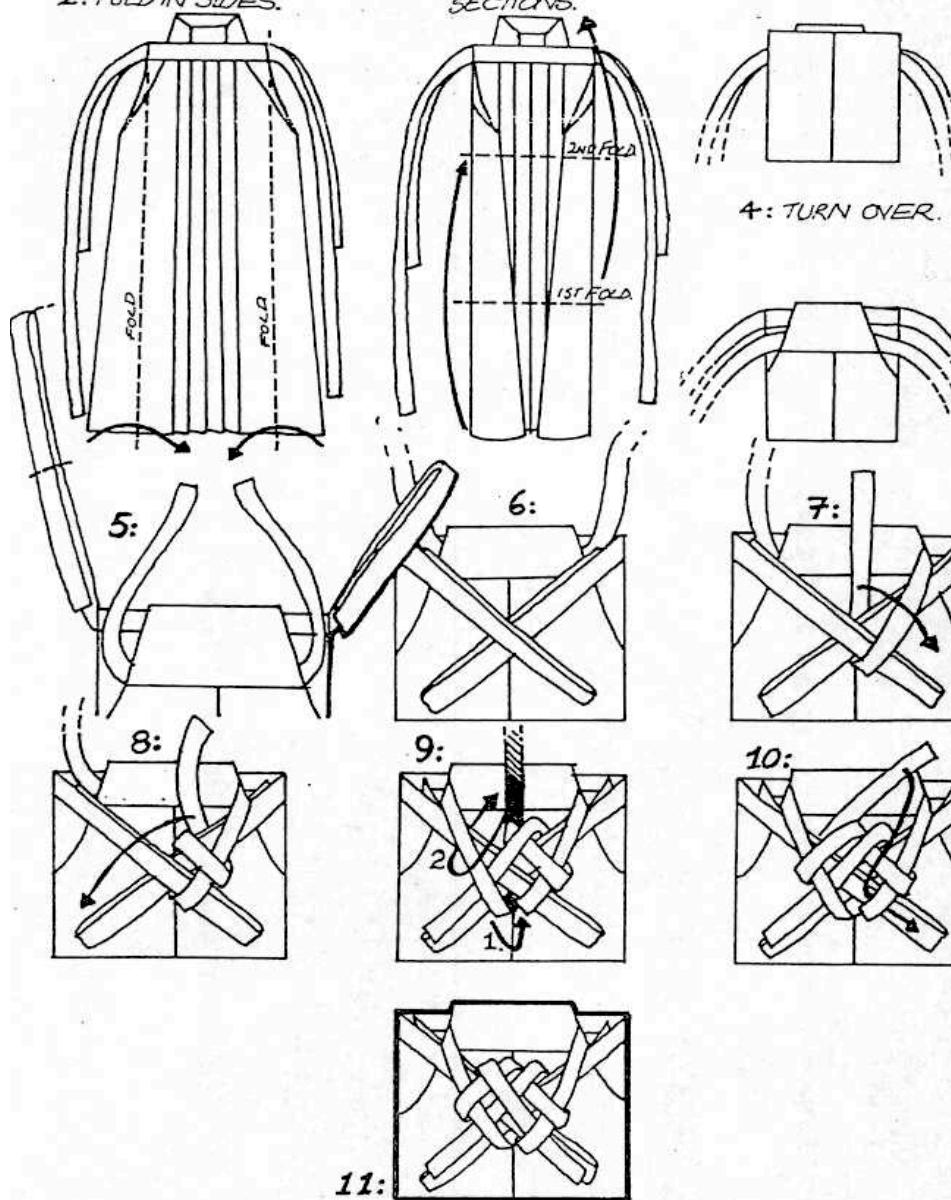
Kendogi are very handsome and are designed for maximum movement. They are made up of the Keikogi (jacket) and the Hakama (pleated skirt-like trousers). Other Kendoka will judge your experience by the way you dress, so be careful not to look like a sack tied in the middle. Wear your Kendogi with pride and learn how to wear them correctly. When you wear these garments, the Hakama should be long enough to reach the ankles. It should also be adjusted so that the rear hem is slightly higher than the front one - this is not only traditional, but also prevents you tripping over it when standing up.

Hakama: HOW TO FOLD & SECURE TIES

1: LAY DOWN HAKAMA
ENSURE BACK PLEAT IS ALSO FLAT.
2: FOLD IN SIDES.

3: FOLD UP IN
THREE EQUAL
SECTIONS.

4: TURN OVER.



SHINAI CARE

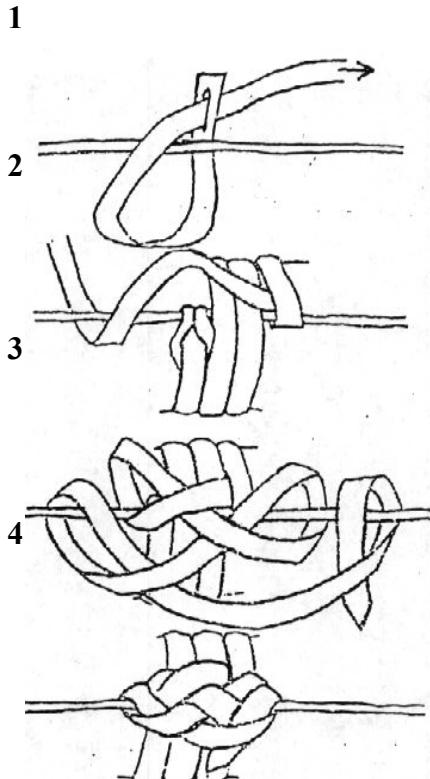
The Shinai (Bamboo sword) is authentic in shape - straight, like the original swords of ancient Japan. The Shinai is ingeniously made; it is very practical and easy to repair.



Maintenance and routine checking of your shinai is essential, because it will stop the sharp edges of the take (bamboo staves) from splintering on impact, which could cause injury to your opponents' eyes. If you have to maintain, repair or check your shinai, you should start by untying the nakayui (leather thong towards the tip of the shinai), then untie the tsuru (string) from the leather thong of the tsuka-gawa (leather handle). Slide off the tsuka-gawa and the saki-gawa (leather hood), with the tsuru still attached. Open the take (bamboo staves), and mark them for re-assembly. Care must be taken not to lose the tsuka-ganai (small metal square) from the tsuka (handle end), and the sakigomu (rubber or plastic mushroom) from the kissaki (point end). Sandpaper each take until the edges are smooth, from the kissaki to the widest part of the take.

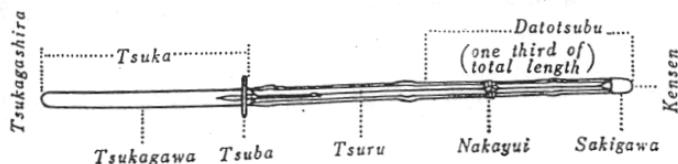
Most accidents in Kendo are caused through negligence and lack of foresight, so it is up to you to check your shinai before each practice.

How to tie the Nakayui

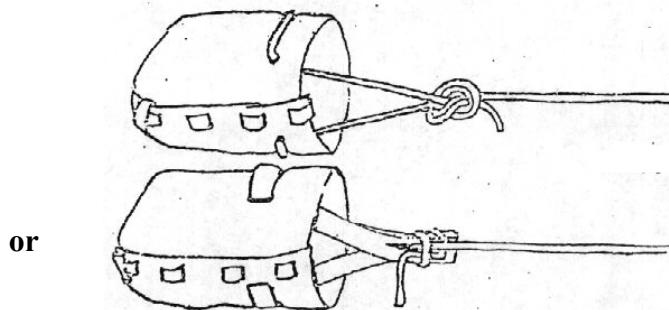


Standard of SHINAI

Age Group	Maximum Length	Minimum Weight
Under 15	112 cm	375 g
16 - 18	115 cm	450 g
Over 19	118 cm	500 g



How to tie the Saki-gawa



KI-KEN-TAI no Ichi

Ki-Ken-Tai no Ichi, which is essential to Kendoka in trying to succeed in attacking their opponents, refers to the right co-relationship between the spiritual, technical and physical activity.

KI means the action of the mentality replete with the will power or the force of spirit.
It promotes the effective use of the technique.

KEN, the application of a sword, mentions the technical ability relating directly to the mental activity.

TAI means the strength of the body or the good posture making KI & KEN very effective.

Seeing things with eyes accurately and hearing sounds with ears correctly promotes the right mental activity immediately, which gives Kendoka the effective use of technique and bodily movement in a moment according to circumstances.

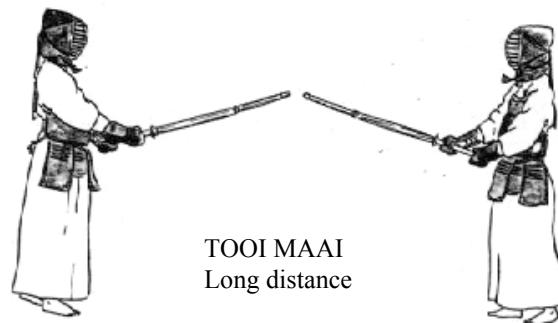
We call the above-mentioned co-relationship KI-KENTAI no Ichi. This is how, so long as these three elements co-relate directly to themselves, Kendoka can display their own skills in a blink and succeed in defeating their opponents.

In Kendo, in which victory or defeat is found at lightning speed, KI-KEN-TAI no Ichi is of great importance.

SHIN-KI-RYOKU no Ichi, SHIN-KEN-RYOKU no Ichi and SHIN-GAN-SOKU no Ichi are almost the same expressions as the above theory of Kendo

[From All Japan Kendo Federation. Translated by Tsuneo Suzumori.]

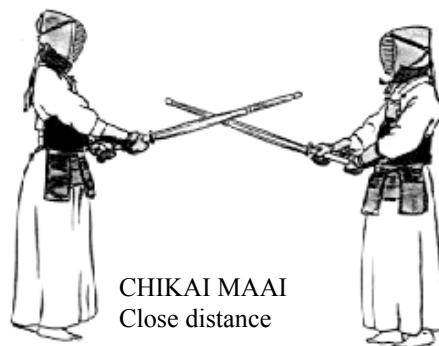
MAWAI
Distance



TOOI MAAI
Long distance



ISSOKU ITTO NO MAAI
Right distance



CHIKAI MAAI
Close distance



TSUBA ZERIAI
Body close distance

KENSEN & its Role

In order to break in to the perfect Chudan-Kamae, you must somehow move the opponent's Kensen, which is blocking the way. Here you need to have contact with your opponent through the KENSEN.

There are several techniques of invasion through Kensen such as:

- FURERU** (touch)
- OSAERU** (depress)
- HAJIKU** (snap)
- HARAU** (strongly snap)
- MAKU** (twine round)

FURERU (touch)

This is one way to attack suddenly from the Kamae position. This may be useful once in a while, but won't be successful every time. It is essential that you guard yourself first and watch carefully the good and bad points of your opponent before you start anything. This process begins soon after you stand up face to face, by touching your opponent's shinai with your shinai.

So from Issoku-Itto-No-Maai, touch your opponent's shinai both from Omote (left side) and Ura (right side). Usually you touch the base side of your opponent's shinai. Touch the Kensen without too much strength in it. If you keep on doing this, trying to take the centre, your opponent will surely get worried thinking: "If I stay still, I might be attacked. Shall I go first? (Before he/she comes)". Gradually he/she will loose temper and the Kamae starts breaking down. That is the chance for your attack.

You can also feel your opponent's condition through this "Touching" process. To enable this, you should keep your grip relaxed so that you can feel every delicate movement.

OSAERU (depress)

From the mutual Chudan-Kamae, keep your centre and slightly override your opponent's shinai from Omote (left side) or Ura (right side).

The timing of "Osaeru" is when you perceive your opponent starting to attack you. You must not use this when he/she has no intention to move, because it will only give him/her the chance to hit you. This technique is useful because when your opponent receives this resistance just when he/she is about to start. He/she instinctively reacts to step back or push back and break the guard. Keep your shoulders and grip relaxed when you do this, and in some cases, step a little forward to get into the hitting stance.

It should be more effective when combined with the following techniques.

OSAERU Men – Kote – Do – Tsuki.

HAJIKU (snap)

From the mutual Chudan-Kamae, snap your wrist to move your opponent's shinai. Hit sharply and stop. Using this technique, your opponent's shinai will lose its centre while yours is kept. It would be most effective when your opponent is just about to start (Debana).

UCHIOTOSU (UCHIOTOSHI) (knock down)

When your opponent's Kamae is lower than the normal Chudan, knock it down on a slant. This technique is risky because you may lose your balance. To minimise this risk, always keep the Kensen to the centre. It is more effective when accompanied by a small step forward. Also do not forget to keep the centre so that the next step could be easy.

HARAU (HARAI) (strongly snap)

Harau would be regarded as large scale Hajiku. Snap your opponent's shinai to the right-up or left-up direction and create the chance of breaking in. There is a risk that your opponent will hit you back by taking advantage of the lifted shinai. To avoid this, always keep your Kensen to the centre, snap your wrist as soon as possible, and after the snap let your Kensen draw an arc. These enable you to keep the advantage. Harau is effective for opponents whose grip is easy or whose Kensen is too high.

MAKU (twine round)

Twine round your opponent's shinai just like drawing a circle from right to left or left to right. As this movement is a big one, imperfect twining could lead to a disastrous failure.

The knack of this technique is flexibility of your arm which coils round like a snake and an instant snap of your wrist. Maku is effective for an opponent whose grip is strong.

KAMAE
Engagement posture



WAKI-GAMAE



JODAN-NO-KAMAE (left)



GEDAN-NO-KAMAE



HASSO-NO-KAMAE



CHUDAN-NO-KAMAE



JODAN-NO-KAMAE (right)

KEIKO (free mutual practice)

Invasion through the Kensen does not mean that you fix the Kensen rigidly at a certain point or grip the shinai too hard. These will rather give your opponent the chance to hit you. The soft grip enables you to feel your opponent's conditions through the shinai and thus the shinai will be part of your body.

Footwork is another important factor. To make it easy to hit after using any of the techniques, always ensure your left foot follows the right foot. As an example, when you step forward, the right foot moves first. But if you regard this as the left toe sending the right foot forwards, there should be a smooth footwork without any vertical fluctuations.

Based on this grip and footwork, the Kensen's movement should not be monotonous. It should be "like the tail of a wagtail" which describes the variable movements "fast-slow, slow-fast".

All those touching, pressing, snapping, knocking and twining techniques require varieties. They won't prove useful if done from the same side all the time, or if the same technique is used many times. Your opponent will get used to it and will get the chance to hit you.

Be aware of your opponent's reaction to your techniques, and always try to be one step ahead of him or her.

Finally, these techniques won't be acquired just because you have read or heard about them. They should be acquired through the Keiko.

Arranging and combining these techniques will surely improve your Kendo.

Sumi Masatake 8th Dan Hanshi.

MITSU-NO-SEN (Methods of anticipating the action of your opponent, by concealing your intentions while initiating an attack)

A) SENSEN-NO-SEN

In this method, you must anticipate the opponent's intention to strike or thrust before he/she begins the action. Then quickly reacting to his/her move, seek an opportunity to thrust or strike on your own. To do this, you must employ the Debana-waza technique.

B) SENZEN-NO-SEN

When the opponent has started, but has not completed, a technique, seek a chance to move effectively and to anticipate his/her action. For example, if he/she has found an opportunity to move toward you for a strike, anticipate him/her before his/her shinai comes into contact with you or your weapon. Evasion techniques (nuki-waza) are often used in cases like this.

C) GO-NO-SEN

Even when the opponent is in the process of executing an attack, it is still possible to anticipate his/her action by taking advantage of whatever hesitation he/she displays during the technique. The suriage-waza, kaeshi-waza, and uchi-otoshi-waza are useful in these cases (described later).

However, to develop a good spirit through these methods, does not mean that you have to wait for your opponent to begin his/her attack, and for you to respond to it, but contrary to this, you should endeavour to provoke your opponent, and in watching his/her reaction to your provocation, you should anticipate his/her attack.

ATTACK WHILE YOU WAIT - AND WAIT WHILE YOU ATTACK

SHIKAGE WAZA (Attacking Techniques)

- From Omote (left) and Ura (right) sides of the shinai.
- From different interval MA-AI.
- Using different timing actions.
- Using Kiai.

Single attack

- Men
- Kote
- Do

Combinations attack (one or two step Technique) Nidan Waza

- Men – Men
- Men – Do
- Kote – Men
- Kote – Do

Combinations attack (two or three steps technique) Sandan Waza

- Kote – Men – Do
- Men – Men – Do
- Tsuki – Men – Do

Stepping back techniques Iki-Waza

- Men – Iki – Men
- Men – Iki - Kote
- Men – Iki – Do
- Kote – Iki - Do
- Kote - Iki – Men
- Do – Iki- Men

Combination techniques (beat the shinai) Harai – Waza

- Harai – Men
- Harai – Kote
- Harai – Do
- Harai – Tsuki

Anticipating technique Debana – Waza

- Debana – Men
- Debana – Kote
- Debana – Do
- Debana – Tsuki

Off the left shoulder technique Katzugi – Waza

- Katzugi – Men
- Katzugi – Kote

OJII WAZA (Counter Attack Techniques)

Nuki – Waza (To dodge an attack and counter attack)

- Men – Nuki Men
- Men – Nuki Do
- Kote – Nuki Men

Uchiotoshi – Waza (To dodge, and guide down the attackers shinai, then counter attack)

- Men - Uchiotoshi Men
- Kote - Uchiotoshi Men
- Do - Uchiotoshi Men
- Men - Uchiotoshi Do

Suriage Waza (To brush up in a half circle action the opponent's shinai and striking simultaneously)

- Men – Suriage Men
- Men – Suriage Kote
- Kote – Suriage Men
- Kote – Suriage Kote

Kaeshi-Waza (To parry and strike simultaneously)

- Men – Kaeshi Men
- Men – Kaeshi Do
- Kote – Kaeshi Kote
- Do – Kaeshi Men
- Men – Kaeshi Kote

“Did I cut him or not?”

Too much emphasis on this question can lead to all kinds of problems, but none the less modern kendo originated from actual combat with swords (Shinken Shobu) and so we must keep the question of cutting in mind when we talk about valid strikes.

A certain degree of strength is essential for a real cut and accordingly it is too much to ask for “strong hitting” with children’s kendo. In fact, we are forced to consider various standards for valid strikes, depending on level, age and ability.

However, the basic requirements for a valid strike remains as it was in old times, but what exactly constitutes this valid strike? Let us take the case of two high-grade Kendoka. First of all, an attack must be made with the spirit. When the two shinai touch, you must attack with your sword tip (Kensen). If the Kamae of the opponent is strong you must push or strike his/her sword to disturb his/her posture. Then, seeing a chance, attack with ki-ken-tai no ichi (spirit, sword and body in accord). You must strike firmly with the monouchi (final _ of the blade) of the shinai on the datotsu-bu. If the strike is decisive, you must move away from the opponent and show zanshin (awareness). Simply stated, these requirements, seen by the judges, make an ippon (a point).

Though not written in detail in “the rules of kendo matches” a valid strike entails the following points be observed:

- 1) Attack with the Kensen (attack with the spirit)
- 2) Strike the target using ki-ken-tai no ichi.
- 3) Separate from the opponent.
- 4) Zanshin - maintain awareness of the opponent.

These points, taken with the actual match rules, should make an ippon. However a simple reflex cut, should never be taken as a valid strike, nor can an accidental strike be taken into account. Breathing must play an important part - consider your breathing and that of your opponent.

Master your own Maai (distance)

With the above points in mind, let’s first discuss attack (seme). In seme we can examine:

- 1) Struggle of the spirit
- 2) Struggle for distance
- 3) Struggle for Kensen

That is, overwhelm the opponent with your spirit; attack with your Kensen in order to be able to take the maai most advantageous to you. We have close distance (chikai-maai) and long distance (tooi maai). Each person has his/her own speciality; some can strike with the Kensen barely touching while others have to come really close to strike. This ‘maai of your own’ can only be learned and improved in practice. Both maai have their good and bad points, but in practice you should stress tooi maai. The reason is that as you get older your body is more at ease with chikai-maai, so it is important to learn your techniques from tooi maai while you can.

The actual opportunity to attack is as follows:

- 1) When your opponent is about to move forward to strike.
- 2) When he/she moves back unconsciously.

- 3) When he/she is at a standstill.
- 4) When his/her attack is at the end.

To simplify, the best time to attack is when the heart (kokoro) of the opponent is in motion.

Body movement (Taisabaki)

Basic Kamae and posture are of course very important. The basis of all Kamae is the feet. If you put some tension in the big toes, the right heel will touch the floor but lightly and the left heel will be lifted up a little. Suri-ashi (slip step) is the basic step in kendo. In old times, they would say “hit with your feet, not with your arms” or “take far distance and use your feet”. It is very important when attacking that you move parallel to the shinai of the opponent. A perfect defence should be made with your shinai at right angles to that of the opponent, but this makes taisabaki and a counter cut almost impossible. We should therefore consider the “isosceles triangle”. For example, you avoid the opponent’s cut to the left or right, and make a counter cut to his/her Men or Kote. Now, should your sideways movement be too large an equilateral triangle is set up between your original position, your position now, and the position of the opponent. Your counter cut is therefore weak and easily foreseen by the opponent. Therefore, the minimum of evasion is somewhere between “attacking parallel” and “equilateral triangle defence”. This is the basic rule for body movement (taisabaki).

The basis of the left hand

The basic point of the shinai grip is Te-no-uchi (the strength with which you grip the tsuka). Basically when you tighten your ring and little finger and place the forefinger pointing down, your wrist will turn inwards. In Kamae your right hand may be relaxed. Especially with children and beginners there are many who, instead of bringing the left hand above the head, push the left hand to the front. In this case the end of the tsuka (tsuka-gashira) is thrust forward resulting in no forward thrust on the cut. When the left hand is swung naturally above the head and the right hand goes forward on the down strike there will be an improved reach of 20 or 30 cm. Another important thing is “turning your left side”. Famous strong Kendoka of old times are said to never have “opened their flanks”. When you receive a hit against you the left hand is covering the upper half of the opponent’s body.

Be there before the opponent

Struggling for the Kensen and for the Maai are both undertaken to bring out the “sen-no-ki” (the spirit of being earlier). In modern judging, a “good hit” or a “bad hit” prevails over who was first. For instance, previously judges gave the point to the first strike or gave the point to a weak attack though a very strong counter followed it. Nowadays, the convention is as follows: A hit of 80% or more is considered valid. However if the cut is less than 80% and it is followed by a 100% counter attack, then the counter attack is valid. Therefore, there is a tendency to wait for an opponent to attack in order to make a strong counter (go-no-sen). It is said that you must win your match but this retreat and counter attack mentality is not conducive to forming the kind of character that kendo should form. Is not the Hansoku (penalty) given in Judo for not attacking based on a consideration of this point? When teaching, the “spirit of being earlier” should be valued and kept alive. One should know that the method of defending oneself is attacking.

The principle of the sword and the points for striking.

As I said before, there should be a certain degree of strength in your strike. When you use a debana technique, you cannot strike very strongly, consequently debana techniques that are not very strong but have good timing should be considered valid. Points scored while moving backwards should be especially firm. That is because if you hit with the same force as a debana technique, from the point of view of mechanics, it is impossible to obtain the same result. As well as strength, accuracy is of course important too. Nowadays, there are only four places at which to cut or thrust. In case of a Men cut, be it left, centre or right, you must strike with the monouchi and the hasuji (the side of the shinai opposite the tsuru). In the case of Kote, it is considered a valid strike even if the cut is a little inaccurate. However, if the strike is made with Kensen or if the Kensen is caught in the opponent's chest after the strike, then this is considered invalid, even if the hit makes a good sound. Recently, students tend to say "nice touch" and the so-called sashi-men (stabbing men) are popular. There are sometimes cases where the lightest of sashi Men cuts have been considered as a valid point. However you cannot neglect the premise that the shinai is an extension of a sword.

A breathing method based on Kendo

We have explained valid strikes as: attack, strike, separate, zanshin, but all of these points have one problem in common - breathing. A teaching method says "when you swing the shinai up inhale, when you swing it down, exhale". There are probably very few people who know how breathing works. There are many people who attack while breathing. They either hold their breath at the instant of the strike or they inhale just before the strike. Consequently, "the start of the strike" (okori) is revealed to the opponent. Therefore we should teach beginners as follows: when the two Kensen have not touched (tooi-maai) use natural breathing, when the two Kensen touch and you enter the mutual attack distance, hold your breath (inhale with abdominal breathing). Then you attack with the spirit, with the Kensen etc. When a chance to strike occurs you must strike immediately. Obviously, as you shout while striking, you naturally exhale. If there is no chance to attack, arrange your distance once more and rearrange your breathing for the next push forward. This is the basic breathing method, and when you practice Keiko or shiai (match) try to use "hold breathing" technique.

In order to master this breathing naturally, a method based on kendo kata (prearranged formal patterns) is very effective. Perform one kata in one breath. When you go from chudan to jodan, take a deep breath. When you have completed the jodan Kamae, hold your breath and take three steps forward. When you see a chance shout "yaa" when striking and again hold your breath. Keep holding your breath till the five steps backward has been completed. This is the best breathing method and if you do not follow this you cannot do real kata. This method is pretty difficult and so there is an easier method whereby you take a controlled breath after you shout "yaa" and stop breathing when you assume chudan Kamae. This is called two breath training method. Practice this first and later on progress to the one-breath training method. If you do this, you will be able to hold your breath naturally in Keiko or shiai. It is said that when you practice kata taking 7 to 8 minutes from the first zarei (seated bow) to the last, the speed and intensity of the kata will become clear.

SEISHIN (Spiritual forging)

When we come to understand that kendo is not simply a fight between two people, but is a means to develop our character as a human being, we must also consider how this difference occurs. We know that a shiai starts with a standing rei, nine paces from the opponent. Then move into sonkyo and, holding in one's mind the resignation of defeat, attack your opponent in a decisive way until he/her gives the impression that he/she is beaten. Then, having taken distance and shown zanshin, you will have made a valid strike. There are people who, having found an opening in the opponent's defence, do only a weak imitation of striking and then have the rudeness to claim a valid strike, though the opponent shows no sign that his/her spirit has collapsed. People, probably through doing too much shiai, seem to feel that the competition starts from sonkyo and regard it as a simple form having no meaning. Sonkyo should be character forming. If you don't greet your opponent with the feeling "please hit me anywhere you like", then shiai has no meaning. When you stand nine paces apart the shiai has already begun. You are already too late if you start concentrating on heijoshoin (every day mind) when the two Kensen touch each other. Shiai is a contest between human beings and you must let your opponent teach you, and your faults or you teach your opponent his/her faults through shiai. Merely hitting each other does nothing for developing ones character. Every movement before and after the cut itself is as important for one's self-training and so we must keep this in mind when we look at what makes a valid point. So we must first learn the rules, and within the boundary of these rules, we must strive for the above points.

Nakamura Isaburo 8th Dan Hanshi

SHISEI (POSTURE)

The HARA (literally "belly") is the place where the strength of primordial vitality is manifested from birth. Generally, as the body develops through life, the inner connection with the HARA is lost mainly because we rely more and more on developing our "EGO". In the HARA region is situated the TANDEN, positioned deep approximate 4 fingers under the belly button. This point is the physical and mental epicentre of the human being.

The KI (Chi - energy) is the TANDEN abdominal energy concentrated in the HARA. This energy is possessed by everyone and usually is underdeveloped. Mind and body do not represent two separate entities that can grow and develop apart from each other, but are two aspects of a common and inseparable phenomenon. The search and manifestation of the above function in harmony with the human character is the prime scope in developing and maintain the KI throughout the practice and discipline of the Martial Arts.

In many occasions in different places we hear "...stick your chest out, and your belly in...". This is without a doubt an aesthetically correct posture but according to the principles of the Martial Arts, this posture is not appropriate because the centre of gravity is shifted up to the chest and shoulders excluding the abdomen. It looks apparently strong and imposing but in effect this posture is rigid and slow. What we need is a "relaxing erect posture" - the shoulders are low and relaxed; the abdominal part is out and aids spinal alignment; the knees slightly apart and flexible not locked and stiff. The term "relaxed" refers to a muscular condition with no tension but alert. At the beginning, this abdominal posture is forced and is difficult to obtain, but with constant practice it usually become more instinctive and natural.

Breathing is obviously fundamental and is obtained by inhaling through the nostrils pushing the air down to the abdominal without tension leaving the upper body relaxed. During action the air is expelled out from the mouth in a slow and continuous flow. KIME is to channel the energy with the right strength in the execution of a technique, starting from zero arriving at the centre of the technique with top energy and returning to zero immediately after the execution of the technique. In executing a technique, speed is important, but without control it will not reach the peak of efficiency. Correct movements are measured like the impact of a wave that, starting from the feet or ankles, rises to the centre of the vital force, giving the necessary energy that is transmitted to the legs and arms to deliver the technique with minimal muscular force.

ETIQUETTE

This concerns the ritualistic gestures during the lessons in the Dojo, for example the initial and final zarei. The rei to each other before and after any type of exercises, or matches, the care in dressing correctly, the attention and respect required during practice manifest the need for the student to concentrate in every gesture and every moment and not be influenced by the EGO or the outside environment. Observing etiquette and performing even the most simple activities with style and proper execution will lead the student to act without uncertainties or fear in his/her practise.

KIAI

The Kiai does not correspond to a simple emission of sound; it is an integral part of a well-executed movement while maintaining a correct mental state.

When we strike, we naturally use our muscles more and we apply more energy. It is at this point that the kiai is born, and it is not only emission of sound but an extension of our KI. Paradoxically, even if we do not Kiai, but we project KI energy, we can say that we apply a Kiai.

In effect if we raise our voice only without using our Kiai correctly, and if our opponent is not of a weak spirit or is not shy, we will not produce good results from our actions, but most probably the opponent will take advantage of our weak kiai and reverse the situation to his/hers advantage. Just shouting will not constitute an advantage over your opponent.

Types of Kiai used depending on the circumstances:

YAH!! - <
It is an open sound and is defensive in its nature

EI !! - >
It is penetrating sound and is narrow and direct in its nature

TOH !! _____
It is direct and the sound is linear like thrusting (tsuki)

IEI !!  It starts narrow but continues to open like in a circle and express strong KI

This is for all people that do not Kiai with conviction during practice in the Dojo: Remember that above all, you cannot afford to be TIMID in a situation of life and death

BRITISH KENDO ASSOCIATION

You are advised to join the B.K.A. as soon as possible.

The advantages are:

- 1) Part of your subscription pays for insurance against injuries.
- 2) Take part in B.K.A. events (Seminars, Championships, and Gradings).
- 3) Take part in voting in the annual B.K.A. Annual General Meeting.
- 4) Free Newsletters.
- 5) Contribute to the sponsorship of the B.K.A. teams on visits abroad - you will have every opportunity to try for the team.

Regarding Gradings, please note that regular attendance at your Dojo is vitally important. Last minute preparations for these examinations will not be fair on either you or your teacher.