

KENDO CLUB AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

THE CONCEPT OF KENDO

The concept of Kendo is to discipline the human character through the application of the principles of the Katana.

The purpose of practicing 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 honor,
To associate with others with sincerity,
And to forever pursue the cultivation of oneself.

Thus will one be able
To love his country and society,
To contribute to the development of culture,
And to promote peace and prosperity among all peoples.

KENDO SAFETY GUIDELINES

Alertness, awareness, foresight, clear assessment of the total situation all times, responsibility, and careful preparedness are among the major goals of kendo training and tradition, in one word, SAFETY ... safety for oneself, for others, for the community, and ultimately for the entire human family.

Accordingly, in the dojo (training facility) and during training, safety will be uppermost in our agenda at all times, and all kenshi (kendo participants of all levels both students and instructors) are required learn and practice the following:

MANNERS

1. Courteous manners are required by Kendo tradition. All kenshi must show respect to their seniors in the art, especially senior sensei (instructors). Fostering respect and concern for fellow kenshi - helping each other train and develop physically and spiritually - is the purpose for studying kendo, and must motivate every consideration in the dojo.
2. Shoes must be removed prior to entering the dojo, and neatly arranged so as not to create a hazard, or kept in one's equipment bag.
3. Horseplay, fooling around, waving or throwing equipment, lounging, casual conversation during practice, or behaving carelessly in the dojo is strictly forbidden.
4. Smoking, eating, chewing gum, or drinking of any beverage whatsoever is strictly forbidden inside the dojo. This applies to visitors or guests as well as kenshi.
5. The dojo floor must be carefully cleaned and inspected for hazards prior to the beginning of every practice and all trash picked up. Sweeping the floor is the duty of all junior kenshi, supervised by the ranking kenshi.
6. All chairs, tables, benches and other loose furniture must moved well away from the practice area, and all personal baggage neatly arranged against the wall.
7. It is forbidden to kick, step on, or step over any kendo equipment at any time.

PREPARATION

8. Excellent bodily hygiene and cleanliness is required of every kenshi. Toenails and fingernails must be clean and neatly trimmed, hair clean and combed. Ill or injured kenshi are not allowed to practice without specific permission of the instructor on a case-by-case basis.
9. No rings, necklaces, earrings, bracelets or other jewelry are permitted during practice, because they are very dangerous to both wearer and partner. There is also a tradition of stripping away worldly trappings and insignia of status before entering any dojo.
10. The proper kendo clothing, keikogi (jacket) and hakama (trousers) must be worn correctly at all times during practice, because the design of the hakama creates a large cushioning airspace and the keikogi features special heavy knit, both specifically for absorbing the occasional misdirected blow.
11. Beginners who have not yet entered the sparring practice are not required to wear keikogi and hakama, and are permitted to wear ordinary loose clothing, subject to review by an instructor, while they are learning.
12. All keikogi, hakama, and bogu (protective armor) must be kept clean and in good repair. Neatly patched or mended equipment, subject to review by an instructor, is quite acceptable and respected. Kenshi must learn to pack their bogu (complete set of all equipment) properly, and also to pack the bogu of senior sensei.
13. Kenshi must first obtain permission before using tape, elastic supporters, elbow pads, or other standard athletic supplies.

PRACTICE

14. The classic kendo body posture is taught for technical reasons basic to the art. Kenshi are urged to bear in mind the important health and safety benefits that result from keeping this posture. Breathing is deep-, blood circulates freely, all the muscles are relaxed and poised, and the eyes are able to take in all surroundings easily. Constantly remaining in this classic stance makes it easy to accurately hit the desired target and minimizes or eliminates entirely "wild shots" which sting or bruise one's partner in inappropriate places. It also prevents twisting straining, or pulling one's body painfully. Most injuries are immediate feedback letting you know that you are not doing what you were taught. The same may be said of ordinary everyday life. All kendo is based on the hypothesis that there is a "Force" (ki) which every individual can learn to tap. Without the proper posture, the "Force" can never flow freely or be fully available.
15. In particular, the special foot positions and footwork movements have very serious health and safety ramifications and must be learned thoroughly as the very first stage of kendo training. It is extremely important that both feet be pointed straight ahead at all times. The untrained tendency to turn or twist the left foot out must be altered consciously, as serious damage to the Achilles tendon may result from this action due to the heavy pressure advanced kendo movements bring to bear upon the left tendon. The orthodox kendo footwork also prevents blisters cracks, tears, and other minor foot injuries. The toes must slide or skim across the floor in the manner prescribed. This allows the kenshi to "feel" the terrain while keeping eye contact with the partner. It also keeps the toes from snagging on the skirt of the hakama, which may result in falling down, pulling a leg muscle, breaking toes, ankles, or other bones, etc. In other words, correct posture and correct footwork are absolutely essential to the safe as well as beautiful performance of kendo. Kendo can never be mastered without them, and it is dangerous to depart from them.
16. Consistent attendance is essential to development in kendo. It also an important factor in safety. Absenteeism without adequate reason cannot be tolerated. Prolonged absence can only jeopardize the thinking other kenshi thus causing a weak dojo both physically and spiritually. You must notify the instructor or assistant instructor prior to any absences.

17. All kenshi must take part in the regular warmup and stretching routine which begins every class or event. Late comers are required to bow in properly and go through the warmup routine on their own before they join the group practice. These warmups follow a careful plan and are not optional.

18. When kenshi visit other clubs or attend tournaments they assume full responsibility for warming up and stretching properly, using the routine learned at our practice if necessary.

19. The shinai (bamboo sword) must be carefully and thoroughly maintained by the kenshi on a continuous basis, and every shinai must be inspected for cracks, splinters, torn or broken leather fittings, or other damage, at the beginning of practice. Only perfect shinai may be used actual practice.

20. During practice all kenshi must be vigilant about any damage which may occur to the shinai. Stop immediately to repair or replace any substandard shinai.

21. During practice all kenshi must alertly listen for the command "YAME" (stop), and instantly stop whatever they're doing and look at instructor as soon as they hear it.

22. For intermediate and advanced kenshi the correct wearing of bogu is required. Every kenshi must watch alertly to make sure his or own bogu and that of fellow kenshi has not become untied, tangled or broken, and every kenshi has the responsibility to tell others of equipment problem.

23. The design of the men (face guard) provides excellent protection for the eyes, but it is still possible for particles or splinters to enter the grillwork. Therefore kenshi are encouraged to consider the option of obtaining shatterproof plastic eyeglasses or a special plastic shield which snaps inside the grill for added defense of the eyes.

24. During practice every kenshi must try hard not to injure fellow kenshi in any way, and must stop immediately if injury does occur. Abusive kendo is prohibited.

25. Actions taken in anger are never permitted. However, because the symbolic combative mode of kendo, sometimes people accidentally become temporarily angry. We are willing to bear risking a remote possibility of anger, because this training helps us learn to remain cool in real life situations. However, the concept is to learn never to lose control. Thus anger must be actively guarded against, and all kenshi must honestly stop if they become angry, or perceive that their partner is angry.

SUMMARY

Proper kendo techniques will be carefully taught to every kenshi, but ultimate responsibility for safe and correct conduct of the art of kendo lies with the individual. To study kendo is to accept the challenge taking active responsibility for your own life and for the well-being those around you. If you have any special circumstances which might prohibit you from following any safety guidelines, please inform one of the sensei.