



# Dublin Kendo Kobukai



## Kendo Terminology

Japanese terms are written using adapted Chinese characters rather than the western alphabet. Therefore, words that "sound the same" may have radically different meanings and are written differently in kanji (for example, the term "do" meaning "way" or "path" and "do" meaning "ground" are actually different words). Where a similar-sounding term is written in different kanji, it is listed here as a separate term. We hope to add the kanji for the terms listed below in the near future.

**aizome:** A special blue dye used in the making of martial art uniforms, such as the hakama.

**ashi:** Foot/feet.

**ashibaki:** Footwork.

**ayumiashi:** A normal stride or walk.

**bogu:** Protective armor used in kendo.

**bokken:** A wooden sword used in martial art and kendo training also known as a bokuto.

**bokuto:** A wooden sword used in martial art and kendo training also known as a bokken.

**budo:** Martial way, a term used to signify modern derivatives (with philosophical and moral aims) of bujutsu fighting traditions, such as kendo, iaido, judo, karatedo and others.

**budoka:** A student or practitioner of the marital arts.

**bujutsu:** Marital techniques, a term used to signify the combative martial arts weapon systems once used by the professional warrior (samurai or bushi) as contrasted with "budo."

**bushi:** Warrior.

**chi:** Wisdom,

**chi:** Blood

**chi:** Earth or ground

**chi:** Chinese term for "ki," or intrinsic or vital energy.

**chika-ma:** (1) Close interval., (2) Another meaning of chikaku.



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**chikaku:** A position of advantage outside of an opponents front foot.

**chu:** Loyalty.

**chu:** Middle, or center.

**chudan no kamae:** A stance in kendo in which the opponent is faced directly and the shinai (bamboo practice sword) is held at the center of the body.

**daisho:** A term signifying the two swords (one long and one short) worn by the samurai that signified their status.

**dan:** A category used to describe the rank (black belt or dan level) of an advance practitioner of a martial art.

**debana waza:** A method of forestalling an opponents attack at the initiation of an opponents action.

**deshi:** Disciple, another word for montei.

**do:** "Way." or "path." A term often used as a suffix as in iaido, judo, kendo, aikido and karate-do to indicate the way or road toward self-development and denotes a spiritual path followed by students of budo disciplines.

**do:** Chest protector in kendo. Also refers to the target area covered by the chest protector.

**dojo:** A martial arts training hall.

**dojo kun:** Dojo or martial arts precepts often repeated at the beginning or end of training.

**doshu:** An inherited title signifying the heir to the control of a particular martial discipline or budo method.

**gedan no kamae:** Stance in which one faces the opponent directly, but the shinai (bamboo practice sword) is held with the tip pointing towards the opponent's knees.

**gi:** A training uniform in the martial ways, such as judo and karate-do. Short for keiko gi.

**hachimaki:** Headband.

**hajime:** Begin.

**hakama:** Traditional pleated divided pants.



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**hanmi:** (lit. profile) Triangular stance, where one foot is in front of the other (equal distribution of weight) and where the hips are at a 45 degree angle to the opponent.

**hanshi:** An honorary certificate (a title normally written, but not voiced) signifying a master, usually issued to those who have achieved a ninth or tenth dan.

**hantai:** Opposite.

**hantei:** A judgment or decision as in a tournament.

**hara:** Lower abdomen, the center of the body and body weight and locus of intrinsic energy, or "ki" (chi in Chinese).

**haragei:** Stomach wisdom, the development of the center (lower hara) for power and perception (intuition).

**harai waza:** Warding off techniques.

**hashi:** The boundary area of a match or contest area.

**hasso no kamae:** A stance where the sword or shinai is held at the right side of the head, one of the basic stances (kamae) in the sword arts.

**haya suburi:** Striking practice where sword strikes are done quickly while moving towards and then away from the target.

**hidari:** Left.

**hidari-do:** The left of the torso protector, a target in kendo.

**hidari-men:** Left side of the head, a target in kendo.

**hikiwake:** A draw (no winner) in a kendo match.

**hiki waza:** Techniques performed while stepping back.

**himo:** Strings, as on practice uniforms, protective equipment or armor.

**hodoku:** A posture that suggests non-aggressive intent.

**iaido:** The way of sword drawing, a modern budo specialty discipline derived from drawing and sheathing techniques for the katana (Japanese curved long sword) that were once practiced as part of kenjutsu, or combative sword techniques.



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**in/yo:** The Japanese terms for the Chinese yin/yang (passive/active forces)

**ippon:** One point.

**issoku-itto no ma:** The basic combatant distance in kendo where one step forward will bring the two participants into striking range.

**jin:** The Confucian concept of benevolence

**jin:** Tendons or muscles.

**jiyu-renshu:** Free fighting in kendo.

**jodan no kamae:** A sword stance (kamae) where the sword is held with both hands high above the head, elbows spread wide to maximize vision, one of the basic combative engagement postures in swordsmanship and kendo.

**jutsu:** Art, technique, or system of techniques (sometimes spelled jitsu).

**kaeshi:** A counter technique.

**kaeshi waza:** Deflecting a shinai (practice sword) by using the power of the opponent's strike.

**kai:** Association, a modern term sometimes used to signify a school or style.

**kakari geiko:** Attack practice.

**kake goe:** A shout that demonstrates unity of spirit and focus, usually of the intended target area.

**kamae:** Combative engagement postures.

**kami:** Spirit or deity.

**kamiza:** A place of honor or deity seat often the front wall of a dojo where there may be a Shinto altar, scroll or picture of a teacher or founder.

**kansetsu waza:** Joint techniques or attacks.

**kappo:** Resuscitation techniques, also known as katsu.

**kata:** A prearranged sequence of movements (techniques) used in martial arts training.



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**katana:** A Japanese long curved sword.

**katsu:** Resuscitation techniques, also known as kappo.

**keiko:** Practice.

**keikogi:** The upper part (jacket) of traditional training uniform used in budo.

**kendo:** The "way of the sword," a modern ritualized and sports version and heir of Japanese combative sword arts and the bushido social, cultural, and philosophical heritage, a discipline which is neither a viable combat art nor a pure sport, but can be more truly characterized as a spiritual discipline.

**kendoka:** A kendo student or practitioner.

**kenshi:** Swordsman.

**kenjutsu:** Combative sword techniques developed by Japanese professional warriors.

**keppan:** Blood seal, a vow or oath taken by a prospective student, often with the letting of blood, before being accepted within a traditional Japanese martial arts discipline.

**ken zen ichi mi:** A kendo training motto or saying: "the goals of the sword and zen are one."

**ki:** Vital energy of the universe and man, thought to nurture the body and vital organs, promote health and serve as a source of power.

**kiai:** A type of cry (shout) common to many martial art forms, which can have an incredible emotional impact. It is intended to symbolize and encourage the unification of intent, technique, and spirit into a potentially devastating strike. To hear the kiai in a kendo training hall, however, is to experience kiai as the unity of body and spirit. It was not merely a symbolic expression of that condition, it is a palpable expression of it. It is also the contention of some Zen masters that the shout of a master can in some cases actually propel a student into satori (enlightenment).

**kihon:** Basics.

**kirikaeshi:** The repetition of strokes of the shinai, often done as an opening exercise (kendo)

**kiriotoshi:** The single technique that was the basis of the Itto Ryu school of swordsmanship.



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**kissaki:** The point of a shinai or tip of a sword.

**koan:** Seemingly unsolvable riddles used by some sects of Zen to free the mind of logical thought and speed the attainment of enlightenment.

**kobujutsu:** Classical martial warrior arts, also often called kobudo.

**koe:** Steel.

**kodachi:** A Japanese short sword; another term for wakizashi.

**kote:** Protective mitts (part of kendo armor) that protect the hands and wrists that are a target in kendo.

**kuji-in:** Ritualistic hand postures and linking of fingers (mudras) into specific patterns used the martial arts and ways to develop various mental states (self-hypnosis) and esoteric powers.

**kuzushi:** Breaking of an opponents balance.

**kyoshi:** Teacher. Depending on how kanji are written, either means "teacher" in the generic sense, or if kanji for "shi" is synonymous with "samurai," used on ranking certificates in certain martial arts styles as an indication of teaching rank. Usually issued to those who have achieved a seventh or eight dan.

**mate:** Wait, pause, stop.

**ma-ai:** Combative engagement distance.

**mei jin:** A true master, someone who has achieved technical, mental and spiritual perfection in their art.

**men:** (1) Head, (2) Head/face protector which is part of kendo protective armor, (3) Kendo target, the middle of the head.

**men buton:** The wing-like sides of the men.

**men tori:** A command to remove the men, or face/head protector used at part of kendo armor.

**michi:** "Way," another pronunciation for the Japanese character "do."

**migi:** Right.



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**migi-do:** The right side of the torso protector, a target in kendo.

**migi-men:** Right hand side of the head, a target in kendo.

**mikkyo:** Esoteric Buddhist disciplines.

**mokuso:** (1) Meditative sitting, (2) Command to close the eyes and begin meditation.

**montei:** Disciple, another word for deshi.

**mudra:** Hand and finger configurations used by esoteric Buddhism (Shingon) to achieve mental states and speed enlightenment.

**mushin:** An empty and clear mind: a mind not fixed or occupied by thought or emotion and thus open to everything.

**mushin no shin:** A Zen term meaning "mind of no mind."

**muto:** "No sword," an empty hand technique of the Yagyu Ryu as well as the name of Yamaoka Tesshu's school of Itto ryu swordsmanship.

**nidan waza:** Two step techniques.

**nuki waza:** Techniques that utilize dodge tactics.

**oji-waza:** The practice of feints, deflections or parrying followed up with an immediate counter of a technique.

**okugi:** Hidden or esoteric principles, or hidden (inner) mysteries or practices in the martial arts and ways.

**okuriashi:** A sliding step commonly used in kendo.

**onegaishimasu:** A formal way of asking for a favor which in kendo and other martial arts has come to mean, "please practice with me," the wording used (often with a seated bow) to start practice.

**osae waza:** Immobilization and pinning techniques.

**rei:** Bow.

**reigi (-saho):** Courtesy, etiquette, good manners.



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**renshi:** An honorary certificate (or title normally written, but not voiced) signifying a trainer, usually issued to those who have achieved a fourth through sixth dan.

**renshu:** (1) Exercise, practice, (2) Practice period.

**ri:** Underlying principles (of technique).

**ri ai:** The integration or blending of the major elements of sword technique, such as kamae, zanshin and ma-ai in support of action.

**saika tanden:** A point on the lower abdomen, also called the center, considered to be the body's center of gravity and locus of energy.

**sage to:** Carrying sword posture, the position used to carry a sword into the practice or performance area.

**sakigawa:** The leather tip of a shinai (practice sword).

**sandan waza:** Three step techniques.

**satori:** A Zen term meaning enlightenment.

**satsujinken:** "The sword takes life," part of a saying in the school of Yagyu Ryu swordsmanship.

**sayu men:** Strikes to alternate sides of the men (protective head, face, throat armor).

**seishin:** Spirit, soul.

**seishin o choetsu suru:** Transcending thought of life or death.

**seishin tanren:** Spiritual forging, the higher purpose and end of all physical technique in budo training. The oftentimes punishing physical ordeal of kendo training is designed not to focus the attention on the body but to help the trainee learn to transcend bodily cares and the duality of perception that inhibits performance. For proper execution of kendo techniques, the student must not concentrate either on physical mechanics or theory as isolated elements. They must be united, blended together by the spirit in the heat of training into a living whole. The hundreds of thousands of repetitions of techniques are used to numb the mind, and, in a sense, to free it from self-absorption. Despite its heavy competitive emphasis, even thoughts of winning and losing are ultimately unimportant in kendo.

**seiza:** Formal sitting.





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**sempai/senípai:** Seniors.

**sen:** Initiative, to anticipate an attack.

**sensei:** Honorific expression used by students in addressing their teacher or instructor.

**shiai:** Contest.

**shiai-jo:** Contest area.

**shidachi:** The defender in a kendo kata.

**shikake waza:** Catching an opponent off guard and attacking.

**shimpam/shinípaní:** A referee.

**shin-budo:** Modern budo.

**shinai:** A kendo practice sword made of bamboo strips.

**shinai-geiko:** An early term for kendo, a type of training in which students used the shinai and protective armor.

**shinken:** A real sword.

**shinken shobu:** A real sword contest, fight to the death.

**shiromusashi:** A type of kendo training jacket.

**shinzentai:** A natural stance.

**shomen-uchi:** A strike to the head.

**shoshinha:** A beginner in kendo.

**sonkyo:** A crouching position used at the opening of kendo bouts wherein partners show one another respect before starting.

**suburi:** Repetitious practice of basic sword strokes as in kendo.

**suki:** A momentary gap in defense or awareness which leaves an opponent vulnerable to attack.



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**suriage waza:** A method of sliding up a shinai (practice sword) to ward off an shinai attack so as to be able to counter attack.

**tachi:** A Japanese long sword.

**taikai:** Tournament.

**taiko:** A large drum used for signaling in many traditional dojos, such as to call class to order.

**tare:** A kendo hip protector.

**tatami:** Japanese floor mats that are made to several standard sizes in Japan, but are most typically six by three feet and two and a half inches thick. They are traditionally made of bundled straw with a woven cover. For martial arts, modern tatami have a heavy-duty vinyl cover and are used as flooring for judo, aikido and jujutsu.

**te-hodoki:** "Untying of hands," a probationary period for new students (deshi) within a classical martial ryu (school or tradition).

**tenegui:** A small cotton towel with a wide variety of uses, including to cover the kendoka's head under the men (face protector).

**tenouchi:** Gripping the shinai (practice sword).

**to-ma:** A distance of more than one step (in order to strike) from an opponent.

**tsuba:** A hand guard on a shinai (practice sword) or sword.

**tsuba-zerai:** A kendo technique of closing with the opponent and immobilizing their shinai (practice sword) at the hand guard.

**tsuki:** (1) Thrust. (2) In kendo a thrust to the throat (protected by head armor) that is a target area.

**tsukuri:** A pulling action used to off balance an opponent in kendo.

**uchi-dachi:** The aggressor in kendo kata.

**uchikomi:** Attack practice done repeatedly.

**uchi-otoshi waza:** Practice of striking a shinai (practice sword) down and immediately attacking.



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**uke:** Partner, the person being thrown.

**wakizashi:** A Japanese short sword; another term for kodachi.

**waza:** Technique

**yame:** Command to stop or finish.

**zanshin:** Passive, non-threatening stances and kneeling in such a way as to be always ready to draw a sword indicate the fact that, despite its ritualized nature, kendo is very much concerned with matters of life and death. The dojo is not just a training hall but a place where a certain awareness of the possibility of serious combat must constantly be maintained. This acute awareness of one's surroundings and the potential for danger is known as zanshin. Zanshin is the flip side of single-minded devotion to technique. One must learn not to focus exclusively on your actions but rather to be attentive and receptive to all activities surrounding you.

**zareai:** A bow from a kneeling position.

**Zen Nippon Kendo Remei:** All Japan Kendo Federation.

**zendo:** A Zen training hall.