



# PENANG KENDO CLUB



## MEMBERSHIP BOOKLET

2024

## MOTTO

### 文武両道

剣道を通じて、礼節を学ぶとともに、  
気力・体力・精神力を高め、  
その養った力を仕事や勉強にいかし  
社会のために寄与していこう。

### Bun Bu Ryou Dou

(Concurrently Developing Culture and Martial Arts)

Through the art of Kendo, one not only learns etiquette and manners,  
but also develop one's vitality, strength, mind and spirit.

These valuable life lessons learnt through Kendo may also be applied to the  
workplace and the school  
and enhance our contributions to the society.

Kendo is not just about sports, it is about developing both the Body  
and the Spirit of the Kendo-ka. The Penang Kendo Club has  
adopted the slogan above to exemplify both the simplicity in our aim  
as well as the depth of meaning in our pursuit of Kendo mastery.



Arimatsu Setsuo

7-Dan Master

Founding Instructor

Penang Kendo Club

## BRIEF HISTORY

The history of the Penang Kendo Club began only in early 2005, when a young boy called to ask if we knew of any Kendo teachers in Penang. Piqued by curiosity and a naïve fascination for Kendo, we began searching for a Kendo teacher. We found out very quickly that Kendo has not been taught in Penang for the previous 9 – 10 years.

A chance meeting with a teacher at the Japanese school in Penang led us to Arimatsu Sensei who had been eager to teach anyone Kendo in Penang for one and a half years but with no Dojo or willing students, he was about to pack his Bougu (armour) home to Japan. You wouldn't believe the relief we felt when Arimatsu Sensei agreed to teach Kendo. We were even more impressed and humbled when we realized that Arimatsu Sensei obtained his 6-dan under incredibly rigorous training at the Tokyo Police Academy at the record age of 32. Today, we're honoured and indebted to Arimatsu Sensei for willing to be a pioneer in starting Kendo here in Penang.

Our initial objective was to start with 2 -3 students... but from our first notice in the newspapers, we received something like 40+ enquiries. We were ecstatic! We never dreamed that Kendo could have such a large following. But having 'recruited' the students, we faced a big problem of 'space' – the appropriate training ground required for Kendo. We finally found one and in July 2005, 26 eager students began learning the way of the sword.

By September 2006, we felt confident enough to register ourselves with the International Kendo Federation through the Malaysian Kendo Association.

We created our logo – from the family crest of our founding Arimatsu Sensei – in honour of his contribution and dedication to teaching our students. Known in Japan as “Katabami” or Clover, this logo is an ancient symbol used by samurai families in Japan as it is revered for its dual representation of healing and proliferation.

Today, we are the proud and Official Head Branch for MKA in the Northern region for Malaysia and have members from all walks of life, young and old. Our vision for Kendo in Penang is for it to grow into a popular martial form in the entire Northern region of Malaysia.

We hope that by knowing our history and the contributions of many dedicated kendo-ka in Penang, you will feel proud to be a part of a growing family of Kendo aficionados. From this humble beginning, you will embark on a journey to discover what is the true meaning of Kendo ~ that Kendo is not just about Kendo; it's about the discovery of your strengths and your SELF through the rigors of training. Our objective is to accompany and assist you in that momentous journey.



Emi Yamazaki

Co-Founder

Penang Kendo Club

*Postscript: As for the young boy who called to ask to find a Kendo teacher? Well, he never joined the class and we never heard from him again. But we are nevertheless all very grateful for his initial enquiry which lead us to where we are today! True story!*

## BEGINNER INFORMATION

Welcome to the Penang Kendo Club! You are about to embark on a path of self discovery that will challenge you to persevere in the face of adversity, to accept setbacks with equanimity, and change the way you think about yourself. Kendo is not an easy martial art to learn, let alone master. In fact, put away all thoughts of mastery and focus, instead, on reaching your fullest potential, to whatever level of skill that may lead. In the final analysis, skill is not the measure of success in kendo. Rather, it is the manner in which you conduct yourself, your respect for others, your compassion for humanity, and your humility and self-restraint.

You will need to be patient, keep an open mind, and practice diligently at the dojo and at home as well. For most members, practice is only once a week so it is critical that you maximize that time. Move quickly during practice, without rushing, and avoid milling about waiting for someone to notice you; actively seek out instruction. There is a tremendous responsibility placed on you to determine your own future in kendo. That is not to say that you will be ignored, to the contrary, everyone at our dojo is more than willing to share their knowledge and help you to become integrated into the routine practice. Every member of our dojo, from the highest ranks down to the first day beginner, is equally worthy of respect and consideration. However, sometimes you will have to be proactive in your approach to learning.

Your first few weeks and months will be a little trying, with much to remember and learn. While there are many books on Kendo available, we have given you a short overview of what to expect from Kendo and the practice times. Your first 'lesson' will be with the Dojo Manager. You will learn the basics to enable you to enter the Dojo without feeling too awkward. Make sure you go home and review your first lesson.

Whether you are a beginner or not, you must show respect to all your Senseis, Dojo Manager and Senpais (seniors). In the world of Kendo, anyone who joined the Dojo before you is considered your Senpai, *regardless* of age. Having said that, there is no outward show of ranking or experience, so the best thing to do is to be respectful to everyone!

## ETIQUETTE

It is important that you learn about the manners and etiquette of kendo. This attendance to tradition, along with kendo kata, is what differentiates kendo from sport.

First of all, you need to pay respect to all the senseis whenever you see them. This is to thank the sensei for the time he is volunteering to teach you skills in kendo. You should bow standing and depending on the situation, say, "Sensei" (sir), or "Yoroshiku onegaishimasu" (please guide me).

You must also always note where he is standing or sitting. You should not cross in front of him as it is disrespectful. If you must cross in front of him because there is no other way behind him,

you should bow slightly as if to beg his pardon. Sometimes, people may raise their hand slightly as to 'make-way' for you to pass. Even in practice, you should not pass in front of the sensei – always pass the sensei by walking around from behind.

Respect must also be shown to the Dojo – the training ground. You should bow before entering and upon leaving the dojo. You should avoid joking and horsing around inside the dojo; always assume a serious attitude and treat the dojo as a place where something important transpires.

In all Dojos, all students regardless of rank are expected to wipe the Dojo clean with a Zokin (wiping cloth) each time before they start. The purpose of doing so is to show respect to the Dojo – without a Dojo, there can be no training and no kendo, so due respect must be paid. The second purpose is to use this time to reflect and build on the spirit of kendo as you wipe the Dojo up and down. By showing respect even for the inanimate object, one learns humility and place in the wider universe.

When you have time left, start with your stretches – make sure you warm up your heels sufficiently. In Kendo, blisters and bruises are a common and acceptable part of practice. However, a big cause of concern is the Achilles' Tendon. Because you need to lunge forward with the full weight of your body, the Achilles' Tendon can tear if you do not warm up sufficiently with proper stretches. Prevention is obviously better than cure, as it requires surgery and 6 months recuperation if you tear your tendon. This is no laughing matter because even in Japan, at least one out of 30 students will tear his/her tendon within 3 years because of inadequate warm-ups.

The senior student (**sempai**) will then lead the warm-up exercises. These may include:

- Running
- Skip & Suri-Ashi
- Stretches

After the warm-up, line up quickly and quietly when the sempai calls the dojo to line up (**sei retsu**). Check to make sure you are aligned with the person to your right holding your shinai in your left hand. Wait until sempai instructs you to be seated (**seiza**). Sit down gently, under control, and avoid plopping on the floor with a thud. Assume the seiza position by stepping back with your left foot and lowering your left knee to the floor. Bring your right foot back and under, next to your left. Slowly lower your body until your buttocks are resting on your heels. Make sure your knees are about one or two fists apart. This may be the first test of the difficult nature of kendo. Also, try not to let your shinai crash to the floor, but rather place it there gently.



Check to make sure you are still aligned to the person to your right, knees and shinai in straight lines from sempai to most junior student (**kohai**).

Sempai will then call the dojo to attention (**ki o tsuke**). Sit up straight, chin pulled slightly in, mouth closed. Place your hands in your lap palms up with your fingertips overlapping and your thumbs touching tip to tip. The feeling should be that you are holding an egg in your hands. If you press too hard the egg breaks; if you do not press the egg falls to the floor. Sempai will then call the dojo to engage in a moment of meditation (**mokuso**) to clear the mind of distractions and prepare for practice. Breathe naturally through your nose, using your abdomen and diaphragm to draw the air into the bottom of your lungs. After a while, sempai will call an end to the meditation (**mokuso yame**).

At this point the sempai will instruct the dojo to stand (**kiritsu**) and face the shinzen, the head of the dojo, and bow (**shomen ni rei**) followed by (**shinzen ni rei**) if there is one. Please note that our Dojo follow the customs of the Police force as with the custom followed by our founding instructor. In the Police Force, the shomen ni rei is made while standing. However, in most other Dojos, the bow is made while still seated. A good rule is to follow when visiting other Dojos is to follow the instructions of the sempai to see to either stand (kiritsu) or to remain seated.

In the event where you are expected to bow seated, turn to face the front of the dojo and bow (**rei**) at the waist placing first your left hand and then your right on the floor in front of you. Your fingers should be extended and joined with your forefingers and thumbs touching, forming a triangle. Keep your back straight and avoid raising your hips. Do not duck your head; keep your neck in alignment with your back. After a short pause, raise yourself back to the seiza position, retracting first your right hand and then your left. Place your hands comfortably on your thighs.

Again, in the Penang Kendo Dojo, after the rei, we will be asked to be seated once more (**seiza**). Sempai will then instruct the dojo to face the teachers (**sensei ni rei**). Turn to the teachers and follow the same method described above. However, shout in a respectful tone "**onagai shimasu**". This lets the teacher know that you are eager and ready to practice kendo. Sempai will next instruct to bow once last time facing the teacher as a respect to fellow students (**otagai ni rei**), to which you bow and shout "onagai shimasu" once again.

## SUMMARY OF COMMANDS

Entering the Dojo

**Rei – Bow to the Head of Dojo**

Start of Group Practice

**Seiretsu – Line up**

**Seiza – Sit down**

**Ki o tsuke – Attention**

**Mokuso – Meditation**

**Mokuso yame – Stop Meditation**

**Kiritsu – Stand up**

**Shomen ni Rei – Bow to head of Dojo**

**Seiza – Sit down**

**Sensei ni Rei – Bow to the teacher**

**Otagai ni Rei – Bow to everyone**

**Men o tsuke – Put on your men**

Start of Individual Practice

**Rei – Bow to partner**

**“Onegai Shimasu” – Please, let’s practice**

**Sonkyo – Crouching “En garde” position**

### **Additional Greetings**

Whenever you see the teacher or any sempai, you must stop to bow and if in the case of the teacher, call “Sensei”.

You may also add other greetings like “Mata Kyou mo Yoroshiku onegaishimasu”



End of Individual Practice

**Sonkyo – Crouching En garde position**

**Rei – Bow to partner**

**“Domo arigatou gozaimashita” – Thank you very much**

End of Group Practice

**Sei Retsu**

**Seiza**

**Ki otsuke**

**Men o tore – take off your men**

**Mokuso**

**Mokuso yame**

**Sensei ni Rei**

**“Domo arigatou gozaimashita”**

**Kiritsu**

**Shomen ni rei**

Leaving the Dojo

**Rei**

#### **Additional Greetings**

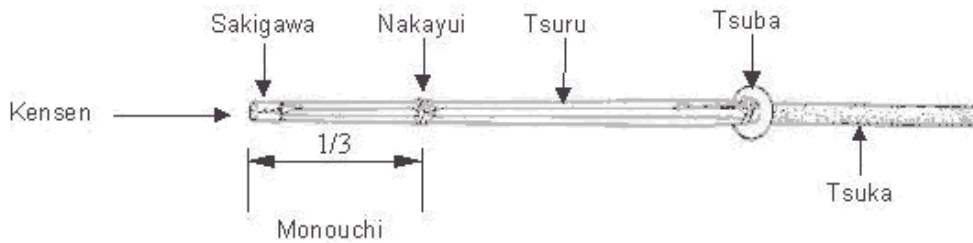
Upon leaving the Dojo, greet as many classmates and teachers by saying, “Ostukaresama deshita” or “Arigatou gozaimashita”.

When finally leaving, you may say “Shitsurei shimasu” (I leave first) or “Sayo-nara” (good bye) or “Mata raishuu” (see you next week)

## **EQUIPMENT**

The most basic piece of equipment is the shinai. Even though it is fairly inexpensive, you must treat it with respect. Never lean on it, swing it around casually, or throw it down. When not engaged in practice, hold it in your left hand, down by your side with your fingers on the string (tsuru). In this position, called sage-to, or hanging sword, the shinai should be held loosely allowing it to hang freely with the tip (sakigawa) just off the floor.

The shinai is constructed of four shafts of split bamboo, bound with a leather grip (tsuka) and cap (sakigawa), and leather thong (nakayui) wound three times around the shafts, all tied together by a nylon chord (tsuru) running from tip to hilt. Additionally, a round hand guard (tsuba) is slipped over the tsuka and held in place by a rubber washer (tsuba dome). The tip of the shinai is referred to as the kensen. The striking surface of the shinai, called monouchi, is the first one third of the shinai visible from the tsuka to kensen. When striking a target you must strike with this portion of the shinai in order for the strike to be considered valid.



Proper care must be given the shinai to ensure the safety of your fellow kendoka. The tsuka should not be loose and sliding around.

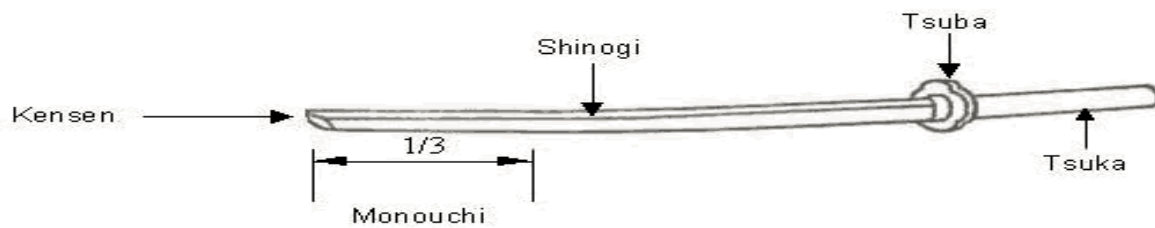
The nakayui, likewise, should not be loose and sliding up or down the shaft of the shinai. Make sure that the sakigawa is not torn or coming apart. The tsuru should be strung tight. Most importantly, make sure that there are no splinters or cracks in the bamboo. The Sensei will regularly ask you to check your shinai for loose straps, or splinters but you should do it yourself every time before you start the lessons. Do so with utmost concentration – a splinter from a shinai can blind or kill someone. Inform your Sensei immediately when you notice abnormalities. Most kendo-ka own two or more shinai at any one time so that they have a spare one to use.

Large cracks or breaks will necessitate replacing the broken slat or replacing the shinai entirely. If there are splinters use a knife or some other flat metal tool to plane the splintered area smooth. Periodically disassemble your shinai and rub the bamboo slats with oil. There is special oil available from kendo equipment vendors, but a light vegetable oil will suffice. Do not use petroleum-based oils. Once you have reassembled the shinai, pour hot water over the leather parts to shrink them to a snug fit.

The next basic piece of equipment is the wooden sword, or bokuto, sometimes called bokken. It is somewhat more expensive, depending upon the type of wood from which it is made, and can cost from \$10 - \$200. Like the shinai it should be treated with respect. In addition, because it is made of solid wood, it can be dangerous if not handled properly. Never swing the bokuto at another person for "fun".

Many samurai, most famously Miyamoto Musashi, used the bokken in combat to lethal effect. The tip of the bokuto is also called kensen. It has a tsuka, tsuba and tsuba dome. The proper striking portion is also referred to as monouchi. The ridge line running the length of the "blade" is called shinogi. The bokuto is used in prearranged forms practice (kendo kata) that employ parry and deflection techniques using the shinogi.

You will want to keep the bokuto clean and rub oil on the "blade" (not the handle) from time to time.

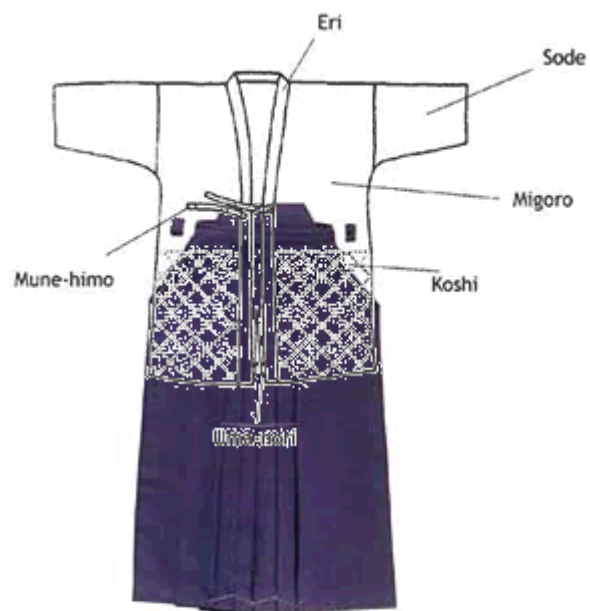


## CLOTHING

The clothing worn during kendo practice is referred to as **do-gi**. There is a heavy cotton jacket (keiko-gi) and a pleated, skirt-like trousers (hakama). While there are no specific requirements for color, most kendoka prefer deep indigo blue. These come in a variety of qualities and prices vary accordingly for a set. The keiko-gi is comfortable, absorbs perspiration, and provides additional protection from inadvertent hits.

The hakama allows excellent freedom of movement for the legs and disguises somewhat the footwork. The hakama has seven pleats, five in the front and two in the back. It is said that these pleats represent the seven virtues of kendo:

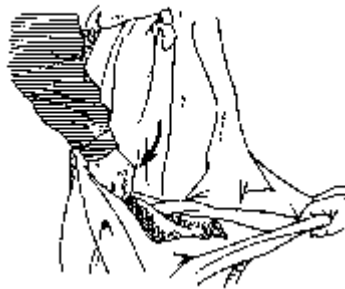
- Yuki** courage, valor, bravery
- Jin** humanity, charity, benevolence
- Gi** justice, righteousness, integrity
- Rei** etiquette, courtesy, civility
- Makoto** sincerity, honesty, reality
- Chugi** loyalty, fidelity, devotion
- Meiyo** honor, dignity, prestige



## HOW TO FOLD THE HAKAMA

### Step 1

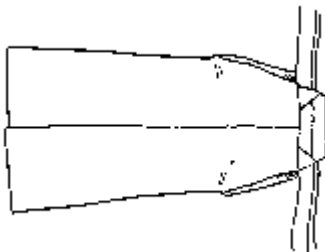
Hold the koshi-ita under the chin, and the front of the hakama with your left hand. Move the gusset to the right with your right hand.



Back of hakama

### Step 2

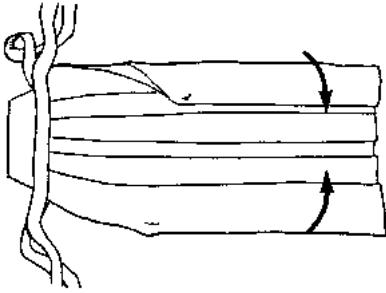
Lie the hakama front down on the floor with the right hand side 2 cm over the left, and straighten out all the wrinkles.



### Step 3

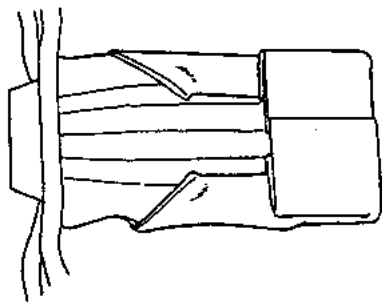
Take the koshi-ita with the right hand and flip the hakama over by securing the bottom of the hakama to the floor with the left hand. The back should be on the floor with the front facing up.





**Step 4**

Fold the left and right sides 10 cm into the middle.

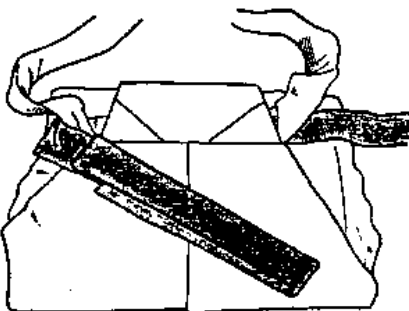
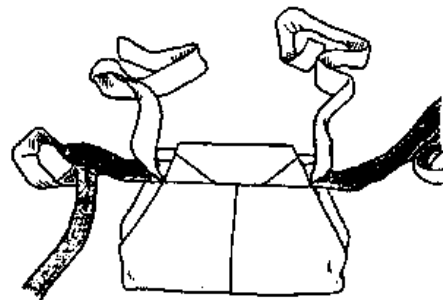


**Step 5**

Fold three or four times from the bottom.

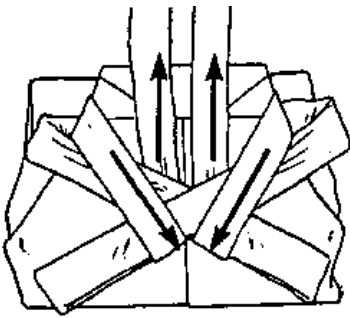
**Step 6**

Turn the hakama over so that the koshi-ita is facing up.



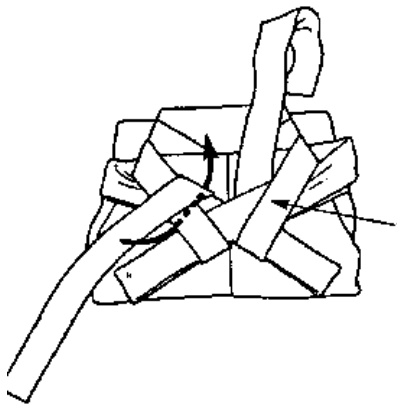
**Step 7**

Fold the cords (himo) into four and cross them diagonally.



**Step 8**

Feed the two back cords over and then under the crossed front cords.

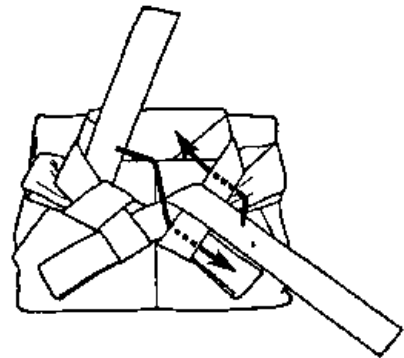


**Step 9**

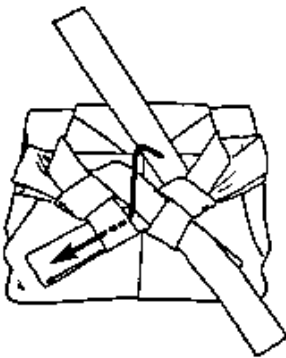
Thread the back cords back down and under where they crossed over the front cords. Arrow on right side points to back cord.

**Step 10**

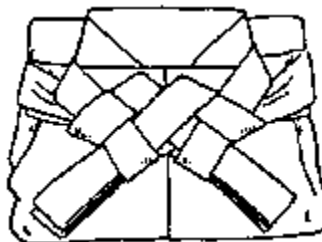
Pull the left cord up and move it down to the diagonal right and thread it through the loop where the right back cord is wrapped around the front cord.



**Step 11**



Do the same for the right side.



Completed folding of the hakama.

## BOGU

Of course the most dramatic of the kendo equipment is the armor (**bogu**) which consists of a face mask (**men**), a chest protector (**do**), a hip and waist protector (**tare**), and a pair of gloves (**kote**). The bogu is lightweight for mobility and comfort, yet affords maximum protection against the shinai. One of the things to consider is the spacing of the stitching. Generally speaking, the narrower the distance between the stitching, the more durable the bogu is. Of course, that increases the price. Shop around and compare.



## MEN

The men, obviously, protects the head, ears, face, and throat. Although, everyone must take care that you do not use a cracked or splintered shinai, because it could get into the face or eyes. The men is constructed of heavily quilted cotton pad (**men buton**) with a metal, usually aluminum or titanium, grill (**men gane**) and leather flap ( ) that covers the throat. It is secured to by means of two cords (**men himo**) that wrap around the head twice and tie in the rear. Two large flaps extend out over the shoulders to give some protection to the neck and shoulders. The men is surprisingly light and manoeverable, but it does limit your peripheral vision somewhat.

## DO

The do protects the chest and sides. Usually made from bamboo, it also is available in fiberglass or molded, high impact plastic. It is suspended by two cords crossed in the back and slung over the shoulders. A special slip knot secures it to two loops on each side of the do. Another pair of cords are looped around the waist and tied in the rear. It does not cover under the arms, so take care when striking the do to be accurate!

## TARE

The tare is a type of apron that protects the hips, thighs, and groin from inadvertant strikes. It is not a target and you should always avoid hitting anyone on the tare. It is made entirely from heavily quilted cotton. Sometimes it is trimmed with leather. It consists of a waistband, three large panels, and two smaller panels. The tare is secured to the body by two cloth bands wrapped around the waist and tied in front under the center flap. It is extremely flexible and allows a great range of motion in the hips and legs. The center flap is usually covered by a cloth bag (**zekken**) that displays the dojo name, perhaps an insignia, and the kendoka's family name.

## KOTE

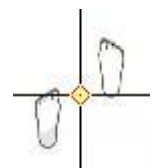
The kote are a pair of padded gloves (mittens, really) that protect the fingers, hand, and wrist. They are made from leather and cotton, with a stiff, heavily quilted cotton cuff that covers the wrist.

## PRACTICE

Practice begins with 10-15 minutes of warm-up exercises. It is important to stretch and limber your muscles and joints before any kind of strenuous activity such as kendo. Pay specific attention to your wrists, shoulders, legs and ankles. An all too common kendo injury occurs to the Achilles' tendon when not enough time is spent stretching this part of the body. The footwork in kendo, particularly fumikomi ashi, the powerful lunging step, places enormous stress on this tendon.

After stretching comes **suburi**, the repetitive stroking in the air with the bamboo sword (**shinai**). Usually, this consists of **shomen uchi**, forward men strike, using **okuri ashi**, slide stepping. When participating in this drill it is important to use big motions and take big steps. Push off with your left foot sliding your right foot forward while raising your shinai above your head with elbows spread wide. Quickly bring your left foot forward to a position slightly to the rear of your right while swinging your shinai forward and out with your left hand driving and your right guiding. At the point that your left foot comes to a stop and your shinai "strikes" an imaginary target, squeeze your hands inward and enthusiastically shout "**MEN**". It is crucial to coordinate your strike, your footwork, and your shout (**kiai**) so that they occur simultaneously. This is called "**ki ken tai ichi**", literally spirit - sword - body - one, and is one of the fundamental qualities of proper kendo technique (**waza**).

Other forms of suburi may also be practiced, including **hayasuburi**, quick suburi, **jo-ge-buri**, suburi with a large motion, or **naname-buri**, diagonal suburi. In addition, other types of fundamental drills (**kihon**) may be performed as well, such as footwork drills (**ashi sabaki**), or striking a baton (**uchikomi**). All of these drills can, and should, be practiced by all members of the dojo, those who don the armor (**bogu**) and those who do not. They represent the building blocks, the foundation for all other kendo techniques and methods.



After the basic drills and techniques are performed, sempai will again call the dojo to line up and be seated. This time sempai will instruct the advanced students to put on their men (**men o tsuke**). They will then pull their men and kote in front of them and start the process by wrapping a cotton towel (**tenugui**) around their head in a sort of turban. This will absorb their sweat and prevent their hair from obscuring their vision. Next, they will place the face mask (**men**) on their heads and tie it securely. Finally they will put on their gauntlets (**kote**), left first then right, retrieve their shinai and stand up, ready for more advanced kendo practice. At this time, beginners should also retrieve their shinai and stand up. There are still many drills and techniques in which beginners are able to participate. In fact, the only practice that beginners



cannot perform is free practice (**ji-geiko**), the actual fencing, which by its nature requires that both kendoka have bogu.

Once everyone is standing the dojo pairs up and practice is conducted in a rotational fashion called **mawari geiko**. Each pair of kendoka begins by bowing to each other and shouting, "**onagai shimasu**", which can be translated as "by your leave". They raise their shinai to their waist placing their thumb on the guard (**tsuba**), simulating having a sword in their sash (**obi**). Then they take three steps forward, draw their shinai, point it at the other's throat, and squat down on their heels (**sonkyo**). This is analogous to the "en garde" in western fencing, a moment to ensure that both kendoka are ready for fair play. They then stand up in the defensive position (**chudan no kamae**) and engage in the various drills and methods of practice that the teacher (**sensei**) determines is appropriate.

After each drill is completed, the kendoka return to their starting point, tips of the shinai touching, and assume sonkyo position, sheath their shinai (**osame to**), stand up and take five small steps to the rear. The kendoka then lower their hands from the taito position and bow slightly while shouting, "**domo arigato gozaimashita**", "thank you very much". Everyone rotates one position to their right and gets a new partner for the next iteration. This continues until the end of practice, or until the sensei announces that free practice shall be allowed. At that point, everyone is free to practice any drill, method, or technique with anyone else. The advanced students usually prefer free fencing. Beginners should take this opportunity to practice with any available sempai, or sensei. Whenever someone is available, take a position opposite them; make eye contact; bow and shout "onagai shimasu". They are obligated to practice with you and help you in your practice. Follow the procedure described above to begin practice which will usually consist of uchikomi geiko, directed striking. Sensei will show you an open target that you are expected to strike. This will be repeated for several iterations.

When sensei feels that sufficient time and attention has been given, they will signal an end to practice and assume sonkyo position. You should hurry to take up your sonkyo position, so that both may perform osame to, stand up, take five small steps rearward, lower your hands to sageto and bow. You should shout, "domo arigato gozaimashita" with sincere appreciation for the attention you received. Then find another sempai to practice with.

When practice is over sempai will again call the dojo to line up and be seated. Waiting until sensei has removed his men, sempai will call the dojo to attention and instruct the students to remove their men (**men o tore**) and kote. When all the students have complied and placed their men on their kote and their tenogui over their men, sempai will, once again, call the dojo to mokuso. This time everyone should meditate upon the day's practice and prepare to re-enter the everyday world. After mokuso, sempai will call the students to bow to the teacher and bow to the dojo head. In addition, sempai will call the dojo to bow to each other (**otagai ni rei**), at which every one expresses their thanks; the students for the attention they received from sensei and the teacher for the effort and determination of the students. At this point it is

customary for everyone to individually thank those with whom they have practiced and to receive review and critique of their performance.

## POSTURE

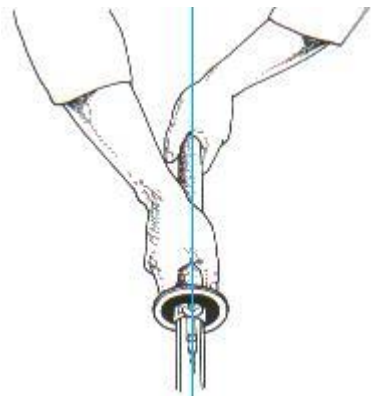
Good posture (**kamae**) is critical in kendo. You must strive to keep your spine perpendicular to the floor at all times. Shoulders should be relaxed and level. Keep your feet underneath your hips, hips underneath your shoulders. Keep your chin slightly held in. Your weight should be evenly distributed on both feet. The stance used in kendo, left foot slightly behind the right with the left heel slightly raised, both feet parallel, is designed, primarily, for explosive forward motion. Its narrow base requires perfect posture in order to maximize stability. Your center of gravity (**tanden**) should be centered between your feet as shown in the diagram at the right. The most common kamae, used by most kendoka most of the time, is **chudan no kamae**, the middle guard. The others are high guard (**jodan no kamae**), low guard (**gedan no kamae**), hidden guard (**waki gamae**), and eight direction guard (**hasso no kamae**).



In chudan no kamae the shinai is held out in front of the body with the kensen pointed at your opponent's throat. The left hand is held about a fist's length away from your abdomen in a direct line with your tanden. The shinai should be in the center line of your body forming a triangle with your shoulders. This affords you the most protection as the shinai forms a natural wedge that will deflect attacks to the left or right. Chudan no kamae also allows to attack all four targets (men, kote, do, and tsuki) without telegraphing your intentions. Your shoulders and arms should be relaxed, elbows pointing down. The shinai should seem suspended by your arms. Don't hold up the shinai; don't hold down the shinai.

## GRIPPING THE SHINAI

Another critical element of kamae is the grip on the shinai. Hold your shinai with the left hand at the very base of the tsuka, the baby finger almost sliding off the end. Use only the baby, ring, and middle fingers for a firm grip with the forefinger and thumb merely tucked away. Once you make this left hand grip do not change it! Fumbling around with your grip in mid-stroke takes time and focus away from a good strike. The right hand is placed further up on the tsuka with the right forefinger touching the tsuba. Use a similar three finger grip as the left



hand, but with a much less firmness. If a line was extended down from the tsuru, it would bisect your thumbs at the base knuckle. Your grip should be more like a surgeon's on a scalpel than a lumberjack's on an axe; you are going to be executing cuts, not felling trees!

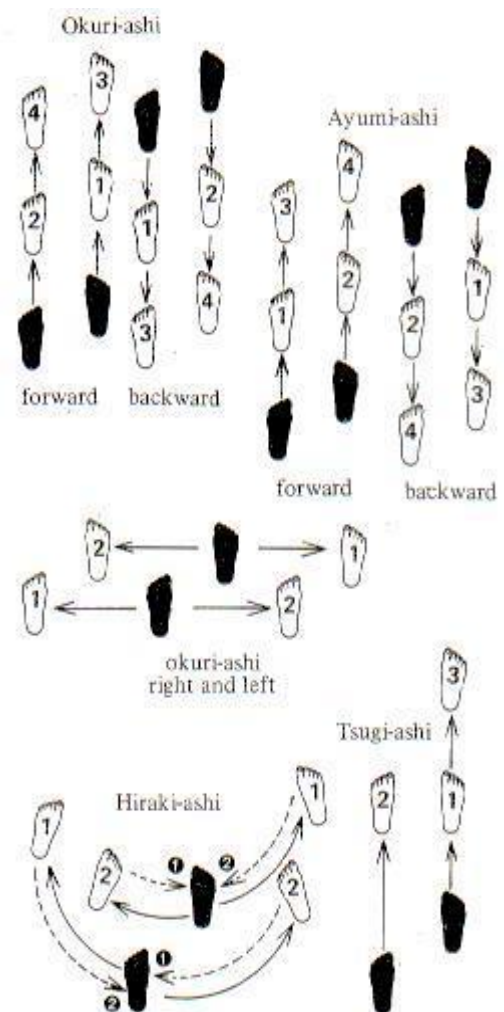
## FOOTWORK

Perhaps the most important aspect of kendo is footwork (**ashi sabaki**). The footwork most frequently employed in kendo is generally of a type called **suriashi**, or rubbing feet. What this means is that your feet should rub along the floor as you go. Do not lift your feet from the floor, but rather slide them in a kind of shuffle step. Keep your toes down and avoid thumping your heels on the floor. Sensei can tell whether or not your footwork is correct by the sound your feet make. A thumping or flapping noise indicating incorrect footwork; a swishing sound of your feet rubbing the floor indicating proper footwork. Try to move in a continuous fashion, one step blending with the next.

There are a number of varieties of footwork in kendo, each with specific application. The most common form is **okuri ashi**, characterized by the feet remaining in relative position to one another at the beginning and end of each step. The left foot is slightly to the rear of the right with the heel slightly raised. Both feet are parallel to one another with the weight evenly distributed. Push your body forward with your left foot; right foot sliding out to the front. Immediately bring your left foot up to its position relative to the right, that is, slightly to the rear ready for another step if needed. Here is where one simple adjustment to your footwork can have enormous effect; reduce the amount of time that your feet are spread apart to the absolute minimum. Okuri ashi is used to move forward and backward as well as from side to side.

**Ayumi ashi** is characterized by each foot moving forward in turn, similar to normal walking. The difference is that the feet still rub along the floor, toes down. This footwork is used at the beginning of pair practice when you take three steps forward, draw your shinai and assume sonkyo and at the end when you take five steps to the rear. It is used in **kiri kaeshi**, the intense diagonal cutting drill, by the receiver (**motodachi**) to move forward and back facilitating a smooth flowing practice. It is also used in kendo kata.

**Hiraki ashi** is characterized by a diagonal movement that allows you to sidestep an onrushing opponent to deliver a counter stroke. Note that when stepping to your left your left foot is



placed in front with your right foot slightly to the rear. This footwork is used during some forms of suburi, during regular practice by motodachi to facilitate practice, and in kendo kata.

**Tsugi ashi**, similar to okuri ashi, is used to close a long distance. It is rarely used in kendo.

## PUTTING ON THE BOGU

The first piece of bogu that you put on is the **tare**. Begin by making sure that the large flaps (odare) are on top. Place the tare against your abdomen and wrap the cords around your waist. Bring the cords back to the front and tie them in a bow under the center flap. Tuck the strings up under the waist band. Pull the tare down onto your hips.

Next, place the **do** against your chest and bring the left himo across and around your back to the right. Fasten the himo to the leather loop using a special slip knot. Bring the right himo across to the left and fasten it to the other loop using the same knot. Tie the bottom himo behind your back in a bow. The do should fit loosely, allowing freedom of movement.

The **men** is next, but first you must place the **tenogui** on your head. There are two methods for tying the tenogui. The first is to hold the tenogui at the ends and slide it back over your head until it reaches the occipital bone. Bring the ends forward and across the forehead. Tuck the ends on each side and pull the flap back on top of your head. Make sure that the flap is tucked under so that it doesn't stick out the back of the men.

The other method is to hold the ends of the tenogui tight and grab the bottom center with your teeth. Wrap the two ends back and around your head and tie them in the front of your forehead. Pull the flap up and back on top of your head. Now you can put on the men.

The information contained here is a very brief introduction to the basics of Kendo. For further detail, we suggest you purchase the "Kendo – The Definitive Guide" by Hiroshi Ozawa. A copy of the book may be available from the Dojo Manager.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

### Reiho - *Etiquette*

#### Start of group practice

Sei retsu      *Line up*

Seiza          *Be seated*

Ki o tsuke      *Attention*

Mokuso        *Deep breathing and meditation*

Mokuso yame   *End of breathing and meditation*

Shomen ni rei   *Bow to head of dojo*

Sensei ni rei    *Bow to teachers*

Otagai ni rei    *Bow to each other*

Men o tsuke    *Put on your men*

#### Start of individual practice

Rei              *Bow to partner*

"Onegai  
shimasu"      *Please, let's practice*

Sonkyo         *Crouching "En Garde" position*

#### Entering Dojo

Rei              *Bow to head of dojo*

#### End of group practice

Sei retsu      *Line up*

Seiza          *Be seated*

Ki o tsuke      *Attention*

Men o tore      *Remove your men*

Mokuso        *Deep breathing and meditation*

Mokuso yame   *End of breathing and meditation*

Sensei ni rei    *Bow to teachers*

Otagai ni rei    *Bow to each other*

Shomen ni rei   *Bow to head of dojo*

#### End of individual practice

Sonkyo         *Crouching "En Garde" position*

Rei              *Bow to partner*

"Domo arigato   *Thank you very much*  
gozaimashita"

#### Leaving Dojo

Rei              *Bow to head of dojo*

### Important Concepts

Ki ken tai i-chi      *Spirit sword body as one*      Ken zen i-chi      *Kendo and Zen are the same*

Zanshin              *Resolute Will*      Ken tai i-chi      *Attack and Defense are the same*

Kokoro gamae      *Readiness of Spirit*      Tamashi      *Fighting Spirit*

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Hei jo shin	<i>Calmness of Mind</i>	Mizu no yo-ni	<i>Be like water</i>
Fudo shin	<i>Immoveable Mind</i>	Nami no yo-ni	<i>Be like a wave</i>

## Keiko - Practice

### Ashi sabaki - Footwork

Suri ashi	<i>"Rubbing Feet"</i>
Aiyumi ashi	<i>Alternating stepping</i>
Okuri ashi	<i>Slide stepping</i>
Hiraki ashi	<i>Diagonal stepping</i>
Fumi komi ashi	<i>Attack stepping</i>

### Suburi - Striking the Air

Shomen suburi	<i>Basic striking</i>
Nanameburi	<i>Diagonal striking</i>
Jogeiburi	<i>Large motion striking</i>
Hidari katate suburi	<i>Left hand only striking</i>
Hayasuburi	<i>Quick striking</i>

### Kihon Waza - Fundamental Techniques

Men uchi	<i>Strike to Men</i>
Kote uchi	<i>Strike to Kote</i>
Do uchi	<i>Strike to Do</i>
Tsuki	<i>Thrust to throat guard</i>

### Fundamental Drills

Kiri kaeshi	<i>Repeated diagonal men striking</i>
Kakari geiko	<i>Attack practice</i>
Ji geiko	<i>Free practice</i>
Shiai geiko	<i>Tournament practice</i>

### Ni Dan Waza - 2 Step Combination Techniques

Kote men	<i>Kote followed by men</i>
Kote do	<i>Kote followed by do</i>
Men men	<i>Men followed by men</i>
Tsuki men	<i>Tsuki followed by men</i>

### Oji Waza - Advanced Techniques

Men debana kote	<i>Intercept of men with kote</i>
Men debana men	<i>Intercept of men with men</i>
Kote nuki men	<i>Evasion of kote with men</i>
Men nuki do	<i>Evasion of men with do</i>

### San Dan Waza - 3 Step Combination Techniques

Kote men do	<i>Kote men followed by do</i>
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Kote suriage men	<i>Deflection of kote, followed by men</i>
Men suiage men	<i>Deflection of men, followed by men</i>

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Kote men men	<i>Kote men followed by men</i>	Kote kaeshi men	<i>Block &amp; counter kote with men</i>
Tsuki men do	<i>Tsuki men followed by do</i>	Men kaeshi do	<i>Block &amp; counter men with do</i>
<b>Hiki waza - Backward Techniques</b>		Men kaeshi men	<i>Block &amp; counter men with men</i>
Hiki men	<i>Men retreating from tsubazeriai</i>	<b>Other Techniques</b>	
Hiki do	<i>Do retreating from tsubazeriai</i>	Katate yokomen	<i>One hand diagonal men</i>
Hiki kote	<i>Kote retreating from tsubazeriai</i>	Katate tsuki	<i>One hand thrust to throat guard</i>

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**Bogu – Equipment**

Men	<i>Face mask</i>	Keiko gi	<i>Jacket</i>
Do	<i>Chest protector</i>	Hakama	<i>Trousers</i>
Tare	<i>Hip protector</i>	Obi	<i>Belt</i>
Kote	<i>Padded gloves</i>	Tenugui	<i>towel</i>
Shinai	<i>Bamboo sword</i>	Tsuba	<i>Sword guard</i>
Bokuto	<i>Wooden sword</i>	Iaito	<i>Metal practice sword</i>

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**Counting in Japanese**

<b>Ichi</b>	<b>Ni</b>	<b>San</b>	<b>Shi</b>	<b>Go</b>	<b>Roku</b>	<b>Shichi</b>	<b>Hachi</b>	<b>Kyu</b>	<b>Ju</b>
<i>One</i>	<i>Two</i>	<i>Three</i>	<i>Four</i>	<i>Five</i>	<i>Six</i>	<i>Seven</i>	<i>Eight</i>	<i>Nine</i>	<i>Ten</i>
<b>Ju-ichi</b>	<b>Ju-ni</b>	<b>Ju-san</b>	<b>Ju-shi</b>	<b>Ju-go</b>	<b>Ju-roku</b>	<b>Ju-shichi</b>	<b>Ju-hachi</b>	<b>Ju-kyu</b>	<b>Ni-ju</b>
<i>Eleven</i>	<i>Twelve</i>	<i>Thirteen</i>	<i>Fourteen</i>	<i>Fifteen</i>	<i>Sixteen</i>	<i>Seventeen</i>	<i>Eighteen</i>	<i>Nineteen</i>	<i>Twenty</i>
<b>Ju</b>	<b>Ni-ju</b>	<b>San-ju</b>	<b>Yon-ju</b>	<b>Go-ju</b>	<b>Roku-ju</b>	<b>Shichi-ju</b>	<b>Hachi-ju</b>	<b>Kyu-ju</b>	<b>Hyaku</b>
<i>Ten</i>	<i>Twenty</i>	<i>Thirty</i>	<i>Forty</i>	<i>Fifty</i>	<i>Sixty</i>	<i>Seventy</i>	<i>Eighty</i>	<i>Ninety</i>	<i>Hundred</i>

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