

The Doshi-Kai Kendo & Iaido Club

Member Handbook

Version 1.0

道志会

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Introduction

This handbook is written to provide a valuable reference for dojo members. It is somewhat Spartan at the moment, but more detail will be added in time.

What is Japanese Swordsmanship?

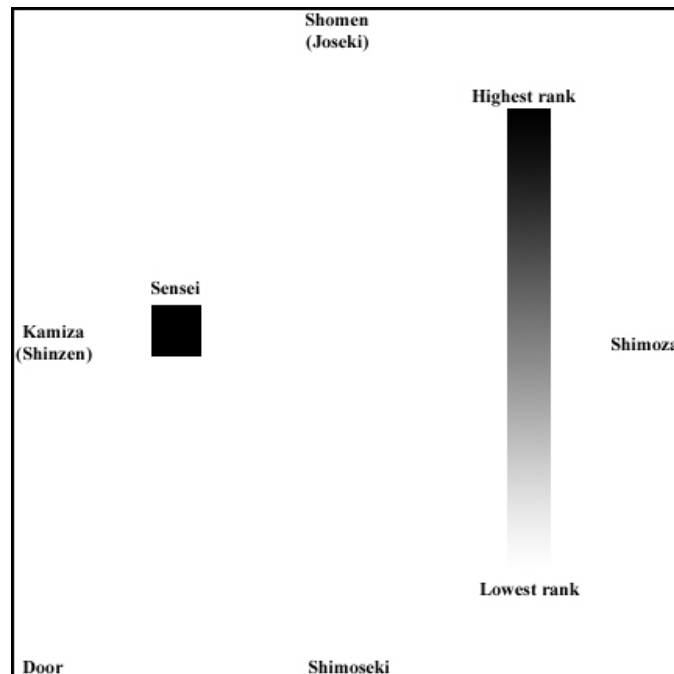
The art of Japanese Swordsmanship can be broken down into two separate, but complimentary art forms. The first, called Iaido, is the art of drawing the Japanese Sword and defending oneself in various scenarios through the practice of kata. The second, called Kendo, is the art of Japanese fencing where two kendoka use Japanese armor and bamboo swords to strike certain targets.

History

Doshi Kai practices ZNKR (Zen Nippon Kendo Renmei - All Japan Kendo Federation) Kendo and Iaido. The study of Iaido is organized around the 12-seitei kata (forms), or standardized forms, of the ZNKR. We also study Koryu, or the classical style of Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu (MJER) Iaido. The All Japan Kendo Federation established 12 kata that are meant to embody what is Iaido. The Koryu, or classical school contains all of the forms from the MJER style of Iaido.

The Dojo

The dojo has several areas of importance.



The four walls of the dojo are symbolic. Kamiza is the East wall, or altar, where the protective Shinto deities reside. It is symbolic of the rising sun and energies. This area is also called shinzen. Sensei begins class from shinzen. Shomoza is the side opposite

kamiza; this is where the students line up by rank, with the higher ranked students on the right.

Beginning the class

At the start of the class, all students line up, holding swords in the left hand at hip-level. Sensei will then announce “seiza,” at which time everyone will kneel into seiza. Swords are then to be placed on the right side with the cutting edge towards you. This change from left to right is indicative of the non-aggressive intentions of the practitioner – the sword cannot be drawn while sitting on the right side.

Mokuso

It is important to clear one’s mind of the days work, activities, etc. and focus on your development in the dojo. Once in seiza, Sensei will announce “mokuso,” or meditate. Use these brief moments to close your eyes and clear your thoughts in preparation for practice.

Rei

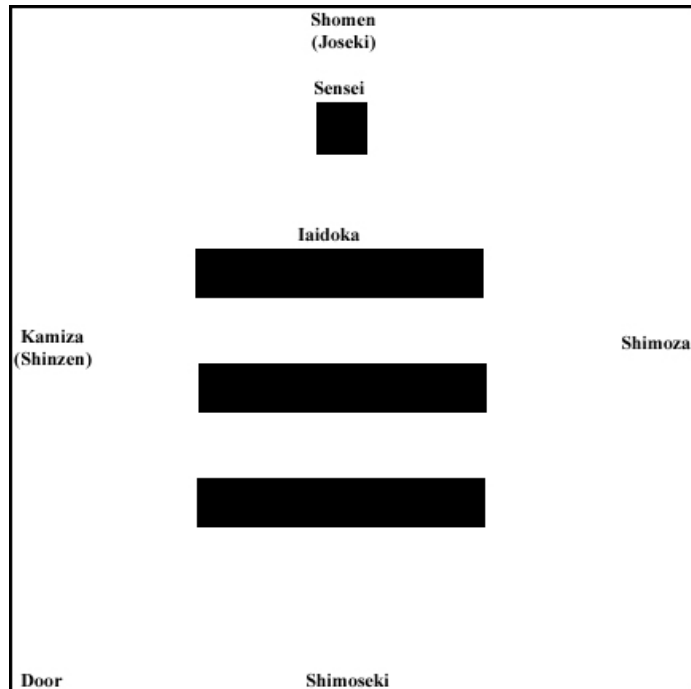
Upon completion of mokuso, we then bow to sensei. Upon completion of the bow, we rise, step forward (without our weapons) and begin some warm-up exercises.

Warming up

Warming up typically consists of stretching exercises that help prepare the body for the rigors of practice. It is important to warm-up properly before any workout in order to avoid and prevent injury. Our warm-up exercises include stretching of the following areas:

- Legs and knees
- Neck and shoulders
- Wrists and elbows
- Ankles and toes
- Torso and hips

After warming up, students should return to seiza, next to their swords. Students then rise and spread out across the floor, as in the following diagram:



At this time, students should be standing with swords at their left hip.

Bow to shomen

Before beginning any actual use of the sword or bokken, the final beginning acts of etiquette are performed. While standing, the student should pass the sword across the front of their body (from their left hip), the right hand reaching over the sword and then curling under in order to turn the ha, the cutting edge, down towards the ground and bringing the sword to the right side. Sensei will then announce “Shomeni – rei.” Students should then bow from the hip to about 30 degrees, towards shomen.

Important notes:

- The sword should be brought across the front of the body when transferring hands
- The eyes should remain looking straight ahead while bowing, which means you will be looking out at the floor or downward when bowing
- Try to bow from the hips, and keep the sword as still as possible

To-rei

After bowing to shomen, students will then bow to the sword. This is done in seiza, kneeling position.

- Starting with the sword in the left hand and on left hip, push the sword forward a few inches.
- Take hold of the sword with the right hand, using your thumb to secure the tsuba.
- Take the sageo with your left hand, towards the kojiri (closed end of the scabbard).
- Bring the sword and scabbard forward with your right hand facing upward and left hand facing downward, holding the sageo under the scabbard.

- Rest the sword on the floor in front of you, bringing the kojiri back towards you so the sword is at a slight angle. The cutting edge should not directly face shomen, this angle is usually about thirty degrees.
- Keeping the right hand on the scabbard by the tsuba, the left hand should then loop the sageo behind the sword so that it does not extend beyond the kojiri.
- Sensei announces "To-rei," at which time students should bow to the sword.

Important notes on To-rei:

- Neaten the sageo behind the sword with only a couple of short movements, this should be a smooth, continuous motion that takes little time
- Assure that the ha is angled away from shomen and not horizontally in front of you

Tying the sword

- After completing To-rei, students should reach forward with both hands in the same manner as the sword was placed on the floor, and pick up the sword.
- Place the kojiri between the two inner-most layers of the obi, sliding it in and through the opening at the side of the hakama.
- A bend the sageo a few inches before the end to make a loop
- Tuck this loop through the straps of the hakama near your hip/pelvis
- Place your right hand on your thigh and left hand holding the tsuba before rising.

Etiquette

Proper etiquette is a very important part of an iaidoka/kendoka's training as it shows respect for Sensei, students, the sword and the history of the art. Good etiquette should be used throughout each class. Class begins and ends with the proper etiquette, and there are important aspects that should be learned.

Entering and leaving the dojo

- When entering the dojo, please remove your shoes before walking across the dojo floor.
- Remove all watches and jewelry prior to practice (keiko)
- Upon stepping on or off the dojo floor, one should execute a standing bow, facing shomen, backing away.
- Please notify sensei prior to leaving the dojo floor if class is still in session

Safety

Safety within the dojo requires the attention of all members. This includes the removal of jewelry, including watches, bracelets, necklaces and rings (wedding rings are ok?) that could get caught or cause injury to the student or others.

Shoes and socks should be removed prior to stepping on the dojo floor. If the student wishes to wear foot coverings for medical or other purposes, the student should purchase tabi, which provide traction so the student does not slip on the floor (as one would if wearing socks).

The ZNKR Kata

There are currently twelve forms recognized by the federation called the “seitei gata.”

1. Ipponme – “Mae” (To the front)
2. Nihonme – “Ushiro” (To the rear)
3. Sanponme – “Ukenagashi” (Take and give back)
4. Yonhonme – “Tsuka-ate” (Strike with the tsuka)
5. Gohonme – “Kesa giri” (Diagonal cuts)
6. Ropponme – “Morote tsuki” (2 handed thrust)
7. Shichihonme – “Sanpo giri” (3 direction cuts)
8. Hachihonme – “Ganmen-ate” (Strike to the face)
9. Kyuhonme – “Soete tsuki” (Companion hand thrust)
10. Jupponme – “Shiho giri” (4 direction cuts)
11. Juipponme – “Sou giri” (Many cuts)
12. Ju Nihonme – “Nukiuchi” (Draw and cut down)

Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu Kata

There are several sets of kata for MJER. The following lists the eleven forms in the first, “Seiza no bu,” set.

1. Mae
2. Hidari
3. Migi
4. Ushiro
5. Yaegaki
 - a. Omote
 - b. Ura
6. Ukenagashi
7. Kaishaku
8. Tsukekome
9. Tsukikage
10. Oikaze
11. Nukiuchi

Definition of Japanese Terms

This section outlines some of the Japanese terms heard during class and when discussing topics related to Japanese Swordsmanship and other martial arts.

- Batto – another name for iai
- bunkai – The application of the technique, a description of the real-world scenario around which the kata is formed.
- Dan – advanced grades from 1 to 10
- hajime – start
- hakama – the pleated pants, bottom half of the uniform
- hasuji – the angle of the blade
- iaido – The way of drawing the Japanese Sword, name from 1932

- iaito – literally sword for iai, practice sword – unsharpened, typically made of alloy.
- jo-ha-kyu – the concept of rhythm within the kata. Jo-ha-kyu is expressed as slow-to-fast-to-slow movement. Cuts should exhibit a buildup of intensity and speed, slowly bringing the blade back and increasing the speed through the cut, then letting the intensity slow again.
- keiko-gi – the jacket (top half) of the uniform
- kendo – the way of the sword, already drawn, name from 1895
- kesa-giri – the diagonal cut that follows the keiko-gi line. Named after the kesa/lapel that monks wore.
- Ki – spirit or presence
- Kyu – student grade, from 5 up to 1 where 1 is the highest
- ma-ai – the distance between combatants
- men-uchi – strike to men, the head
- metsuke – one’s gaze or look.
- mo ichido - one more time
- mokuso – meditate
- obi – the belt wrapped around the waist/keiko-gi, in which the sword is placed.
- Otagai ni rei – bow to each other
- rei – bow
- reigi – etiquette
- reiho – etiquette, method of bowing
- ritsu rei – standing bow
- seitei – basic, fundamental. Seitei Gata is fundamental techniques kata.
- seiza - kneeling
- shibori – wringing; the wringing motion of one’s hands when performing a cut
- shihan – teacher who takes class when sensei is absent
- shinken – literally “live sword” – used to describe sharp swords made in the Japanese style
- shomen – the front of the dojo, also the front of the head, as in shomen uchi
- shomen ni rei – bow to front of the dojo
- suburi – practice
- taito – position of the sword when put into the belt
- tatte – to stand up from the kneeling position (seiza)
- tate-hiza – raised-knee position
- teito – holding the sword loose by the left side
- torei - bow to the sword
- yame – stop
- yudansha – members with dan grades
- zanshin – remaining spirit/heart
- za rei – kneeling bow

Counting in Japanese

For many of the warm-ups and exercises, students will hear a count in Japanese. The following are the Japanese words for the numbers one through ten, with pronunciation in parentheses – the final vowel is often not pronounced in Japanese words:

1. Ichi (eech)
2. Ni (nee)
3. San (sahn)
4. Shi (she)
5. Go (go)
6. Roku (rook)
7. Shichi (sheech)
8. Hachi (hach)
9. Kyu (kyu)
10. Ju (joo)

Doshikai Equipment / Uniform Recommendations

Bokken

The Bokken is the wooden practice sword that is used for initial kata practice in both iaido and kendo. It is also known as a bokuto. High quality hardwood bokkens are available starting at around \$15 and should be purchased with a tsuba (sword guard) and a stopper to hold the tsuba. They are available in a variety of different natural colors including white, black and red depending upon the type of hardwood. Some bokken are also available with a plastic saya (scabbard) which can make your iaido pre-sword training much more realistic.

Shinai

The Shinai is the bamboo fencing sword used in kendo. They are available in various lengths. For obvious reasons it is important that your shinai be as long as that of your opponent. At Doshikai we use a size 39. A basic good quality shinai may be obtained for as little as \$30. One shinai will be sufficient until you begin contact training. At that time you will want to have at least one spare shinai available in case your primary shinai becomes damaged during practice. A splintered shinai can be dangerous to your fellow students and should never be used until repaired.

Make sure that you order a ‘Complete Shinai.’ It is possible to order a Shinai ‘Bamboo Only’ in which case you will receive only the bamboo replacement staves and not all the parts necessary for a working shinai.

Some initial conditioning of your new shinai and minor ongoing maintenance will be required to minimize breakage and maximize shinai life. Some initial sanding and periodic oiling will minimize splinters and help your shinai last longer. See the Kendo USA website, www.kendo-usa.org, for detailed instructions about initial care and maintenance of your shinai under “Kendo References and How To’s.” (There is a wealth

of information on that website including: uniform care, folding and washing; dojo locations; kendo history; seminars; and links to other key kendo sites.)

Clothing

To get started you may use any comfortable, loose fitting, athletic-cut clothing for your training. A sweatshirt and sweatpants or a martial arts gi will work just fine. Since we will be spending a fair amount of time kneeling on the hardwood floor of the dojo, you will probably wish to purchase a pair of kneepads. These can be obtained at a local discount store for less than \$15. More specialized athletic pads may be obtained through your local sporting goods store or any martial arts supplier.

As soon as you are sure that you wish to pursue your studies, you should invest in a kendo/iaido uniform. While many fabrics and colors are available, traditionally, kendo and iaido students wear uniforms that are the same throughout their school to recognize their affiliation with that school and with their sensei. At Doshikai we wear blue, 100% cotton.

Keikogi

The Keikogi or kendo top is used at Doshikai for both kendo and iaido. You should buy 100% cotton, blue in color. A top quality, single layer, 100% cotton keikogi can be purchased for between \$55 and \$75. Double layer keikogis with a sweat absorbing inner liner are available at a slightly higher price.

Obi

The Obi is the wide belt that is used to close and secure the keikogi before donning the Hakama. The saya (scabbard) with the iaito (training sword) is inserted between the second and third layers of the obi to secure it to the iaidoka.

Hakama

The Hakama is the pleated pant-like uniform bottom used in both kendo and iaido. Top quality hakamas are available in 100% cotton in various weights. The heavier weights last longer and maintain their pleats better. However, the heaviest weight material may also be warmer and, therefore, less comfortable during warm weather practice sessions. Heavier weight fabric is recommended during promotion exams and tournaments, where appearing at your best is particularly important as it is considered part of good etiquette and respect. Top quality, 100% cotton, blue hakamas are available for between \$130 and \$200. It is very important to make sure that the dye is set before the first wearing. Again, you can get valuable information on this subject at the Kendo USA website.

Bogu

Kendo armor, called Bogu, is fashioned after the fighting armor of the Samurai. It consists of four different pieces:

- The Men, or helmet, is designed to protect the head, face, shoulders and throat.
- The Kote are the gloves or gauntlets that are used to protect your hands, wrists and forearms.

- The Do, or Doh, is the body armor used to protect your chest and abdomen.
- The Tare is used to protect your hips, groin and lower body.

We have a few sets of spare bogu for beginning students to use at Doshikai. Eventually, you will want to get your own bogu that is sized to your proportions.

Hand-stitched, custom-made bogu is available in a wide array of designs and colors for the experienced kendoka to use on special occasions and can be very expensive. Machine-stitched bogu is also available and is more than sufficient for students and, in fact, is what most kendoka use during practice sessions. One measure of the quality of machine-stitched bogu is the density of their stitching (i.e. 2mm, 3mm, 4mm). In general, higher stitching density is a key indicator of higher overall quality. Therefore, a 3mm bogu would probably be of better quality than a 4mm bogu from the same supplier.

We recognize that the cost of bogu represents a major investment to a student. However, you should be comforted by the knowledge that a good quality set of armor should last for many years if it is well cared for. It has been our experience that better quality bogu will last longer and offer the student greater comfort and better protection for the life of the armor.

A new set of bogu may be obtained for as little as \$300 to \$400. Top quality 3mm or 2mm machine stitched bogu may be purchased for between \$600 and \$1,000.

Iaito

The Iaito or practice sword used by the iaido student for kata is very similar to the katana, or long sword, used by the Samurai. The parts of the iaito are the same and have the same names. The weight, balance and feel should also be the same. There is one key difference, however. Since the iaito blade is not designed for cutting or striking other objects, it is made from softer metal alloys, usually zinc and aluminum. Their edges cannot be honed to the razor sharp cutting edge of the high quality carbon steel of the Samurai katana blade.

Since the workmanship and quality of all the various parts of the iaito, except the blade itself, may be the same as that of the true katana, it is possible to spend a great deal of money (\$1,000+) for a high quality, customized iaito. Beginning students should be able to purchase a good quality iaito for \$300 to \$700.

Occasionally, advanced iaido students may participate in cutting exercises where the shinken, “live sword”, such as a sharpened katana will be used.

Sources

The clothing and equipment listed above may be obtained from a variety of sources. Again, there are multiple links available from the Kendo USA website as well as this Doshikai Handbook.

Most of the items listed above can be obtained through www.e-bogu.com. We have found their prices to be competitive and their service to be very good. They sometimes offer Beginner/Student Combo Packages that include uniforms and equipment at reduced prices. Their CEO and many of their staff are practicing kendoka and are happy to answer your questions. They are located in Torrance, California. They usually send shipments via ground, but one-day and two-day express shipping is available upon request.

Sources of Information

This section provides sources of useful information regarding budo, swordsmanship, martial arts and related philosophies.

Web Sites

Informational

<http://www.swordforum.com> – Sword Forum International

<http://home.earthlink.net/~steinrl/> - Richard Stein's Japanese Sword Index

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/~kataylor/index.htm> - Kim Taylor's Japanese Sword site

Commercial

<http://www.nosyuiaido.com> or <http://www.swordstore.com> – iaito and shinken.

<http://www.tozando.com> – iaito, bogu, other equipment

<http://www.e-bogu.com> – kendo equipment, bogu, iaito equipment.

<http://www.kendoshop.com> – uniforms, weapons, etc.

<http://www.bujindesign.com> – weapons cases, weapons, uniforms

Books

Iai, *The Art of Drawing The Sword* – Darrell Craig

The Book of Five Rings – Miyamoto Musashi

Kendo: The Definitive Guide – Hiroshi Ozawa

This is Kendo: The Art of Japanese Fencing – Junzo Sasamori & Gordon Warner

The Sword of No-Sword – John Stevens

The Art of Japanese Swordsmanship – Nicklaus Suino

Japanese Swordsmanship, Technique and Practice – Gordon Warner & Donn Draeger

Video

The following order form can be used to order videos from the AUSKF. I would recommend getting in contact with the Highline Kendo club via email to assure that the prices have not changed. The email address is highline@kendo-pnw.org.

KENDO VIDEOS

The Highline Kendo Club is offering video tapes for sale:
The tapes have been professionally copied from originals provided by the Zen Ken Ren.
Why bother with a copy of a copy of a copy!!! The tapes are in **English**

TAPE 1

Kendo - Instruction Guidance 90 minutes \$ 10.00 ea
vol 1 fundamentals: rei-ho & basic movements
vol 2 practice (1) correct datotsu & shikake waza
vol 3 practice (2) ohji-waza & practice methods
vols 1,2, & 3 are on one tape

TAPE 2 Nihon Kendo Kata All Japan Kendo Federation \$ 10.00 ea

TAPE 3 SEITE IAIDO -AJKF \$ 10.00 ea

TAPE 4 JODO - AJKF 12 basic forms \$ 10.00 ea

TAPE 5 Rules and Regulations for Shimpan \$10.00ea

TAPE 6 SELECTED MEN & KOTE POINTS \$10.00 EA

TAPE 7 SELECTED DOH & TSUKI POINTS \$10.00 EA

Complete 7 tape set \$70.00 + Shipping =\$84.00

All tapes are produced and supervised by the All Japan Kendo Renmei and are narrated in English.

SEND THE ORDER TO JEFFREY MARSTEN, 616 SW 135TH, SEATTLE, WA 98146

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address _____

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shipping total # of tapes _ X _ \$2.00 (\$6.00 minimum)= _____

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