



BRITISH KENDO
ASSOCIATION
KENDO

剣道





In **Kendo**, bamboo swords (*shinai*) replace steel swords, and thus allowing contact during free-practice. The *shinai* is made of four splints of bamboo, with a leather sheath covering the handle, a leather cord lashed around the lower third of the length and a leather cup at the far end. The *shinai* weighs around 500 grams. Various basic cuts and thrusts are made repeatedly with the *shinai*, to build up speed and stamina. Practitioners of *kendo* are called *kendoka*, meaning ‘someone who practices *kendo*’ or occasionally *kenshi*, meaning ‘swordsmen’.



To focus concentration and to aid correct breathing, a shout, or *kiai*, is made on the completion of each strike. When practising *Kendo*, padded armour (traditionally made of bamboo and cotton) is worn over the customary dress of the *samurai*. To score in paired practise, a good cut must be delivered to well-defined targets (the top of the head, the throat, wrists and the breastplate) using the upper third of the *shinai*. Thrusts to the throat may be made with the point of the *shinai*. All the targets are well protected by the armour.

First impressions of *Kendo* are of a noisy, aggressive martial art. *Kendo* is certainly dynamic, but by delving a little deeper will soon reveal a high level of skill and concentration, along with the physical agility that any choreographer would appreciate. *Kendo* may be safely practised by men, women and children of all ages, and women train on equal terms with men, practice may of course be adjusted to suit each pupil.



History

The *samurai* of Japan established numerous schools of *kenjutsu* throughout the country (*Kendo* historians estimate that there were more than 200 different sword schools by the end of the sixteenth century). These form the basis of *kendo* practice today. Formal *kendo* practice is known as *kata*, and were developed from *kenjutsu*, and are still studied today, in a modified form.

The introduction of bamboo swords (*shinai*) and armour (*bogu*) is attributed to *Naganuma Shirozaemon Kunisato* during the *Edo* Era. Developments included improving the *bokuto* and *shinai*, and refining the armour by adding a metal grille to the *men* (head piece) and thick cotton protective coverings to the *kote* (gauntlets). *Kunisato* inherited the tradition from his father *Heizaemon* in 1708, and the two of them worked hard together to improve the *bogu* until *Heizaemon's* death.



Chiba Shusaku Narimasa, founder of the *Hokushin Itto-ryu* introduced *Gekiken* (full contact duels with *shinai* and *bogu*) to the curriculum of this *koryu* in the 1820s. Due to the popularity and the large number of students of the *Hokushin Itto-ryu* at the end of the *Edo*-period, this kind of practice contributed greatly to the spread of *shinai* and *bogu* all over Japan. Also there are many *waza* in modern *Kendo* which were originally techniques of the *Hokushin Itto-ryu*.

Kendo (along with other martial arts) was banned in Japan in 1946 by the occupying powers. This was part of “the removal and exclusion from public life of militaristic and ultra nationalistic persons” in response to the wartime militarisation of martial arts instruction in Japan. *Kendo* was allowed to return to the curriculum in 1950 (first as “*shinai* competition” and then as *kendo* from 1952).

The All Japan Kendo Federation (AJKF or ZNKR) was founded in 1952, immediately after Japan’s independence was restored and the ban on martial arts in Japan was lifted. It was formed on the principle of *kendo* being an educational sport, and it has continued to be practiced as such to this day in state schools throughout Japan along with *judo*.



Modern practice

Kendo training is quite noisy in comparison to most martial arts. This is because *kendoka* use a shout, or *kiai*, to express their fighting spirit when striking. Additionally, *kendoka* use footwork called *fumikomi-ashi*, an action similar to a stomp of the front foot, when making the strike.

Kendoka train and fight barefoot, and is ideally practiced in a purpose-built *dojo*, though standard sports halls and other venues are often used. An appropriate venue has a clean and well-sprung wooden floor, suitable for the specific and unique footwork of *fumikomi-ashi*. Modern *kendo* techniques comprise both strikes and thrusts. Strikes are only made towards specified target areas on the wrists, head, or body, all of which are protected by armour.



Kata

Kata are fixed patterns that teach *kendoka* the basic elements of swordsmanship. The *kata* include fundamental techniques of attacking and counter-attacking, and have useful practical applications in general *kendo*. There are ten *Nihon Kendo Kata*. These are generally practised with wooden swords (*bokuto* or *bokken*). Occasionally, real swords or swords with a blunt edge, called *kata-yo* or *ha-biki* may be used for special demonstrations.

Kata is performed by two people: *uchidachi* – the teacher, and *shidachi* – the student. *Uchidachi* makes the first move or attack in each *kata*. As this is a teaching role, *uchidachi* is always the losing party, thus allowing the *shidachi* win in order to learn.



Kata

Katas one to seven are performed with both partners using a normal length *bokuto*. *Katas* eight to ten are performed with *uchidachi* using a normal length *bokuto* and *shidachi* using a shorter one, *kodachi* or *shoto*. The forms of the *Nihon Kendo Kata* were introduced in 1933 based on the *Dai Nihon Teikoku Kendo Kata*, which was composed in 1912.

“It is impossible to link the individual forms of *Dai Nihon Teikoku Kendo Kata* to their original influences, although the genealogical reference diagram does indicate the masters of the various committees involved, and it is possible from this, to determine the influences and origins of *Kendo* and the *Kata*.”

In 2003, the All Japan Kendo Federation introduced *Bokuto ni yoru Kendo kihon-waza keiko-ho*, which is a set of basic exercises that also utilises a *bokuto*. This form of practice, is intended primarily for *kendoka* up to second dan, but is very useful for all *kendo* students at any level.



Concept

In 1975 the All Japan Kendo Federation (AJKF) developed then published '*The Concept and Purpose of Kendo*'

Kendo is a way to discipline the human character through the application of the principles of the *Katana*.

Purpose

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 ones country and society.
To contribute to the development of culture
And to promote peace and prosperity among
all peoples.

For further information, visit the **British Kendo Association** website or Facebook page:

www.kendo.org.uk



Some information has been sourced from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kendo>

