

Calgary Kendo Club

Established 1972

A Technical Guide of Kendo:
Basic and Advanced Hitting, Drills and Techniques
Version 0.21

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This technical guide will allow beginners and seniors alike to gain a technical understanding of kendo. It can be used a source of reference for any kendo-ka.

The following are expectations that the Calgary Kendo Club has for our students:

Experience	Responsible For	Comments
0 months	1.0 Fundamentals	Before you can start with our club, you must have read over this section and you should be able to understand it. You do not have to be able to apply it; just know the theory.
0 – 3+ months	1.0 Fundamentals 2.0 Basic Drills	For the first while you will work on these two very important stages. Depending on how often you attend classes, you might be able to progress quickly (3 months) to the next stage, but most likely between 3-6 months will take to move forward.
3-6 months	1.0 Fundamentals 2.0 Basic Drills <i>1.0 Advanced Speed and Energy Drills</i>	You will slowly begin to incorporate the Advanced Speed and Energy Drills. You must have bogu to do most of the speed and energy drills.
6 months – 1 year	1.0 Fundamentals 2.0 Basic Drills 3.0 Advanced Speed and Energy Drills	You are fully responsible for knowing every drill and how to do them.
1 year +	1.0 Fundamentals 2.0 Basic Drills 1.0 Advanced Speed and Energy Drills 2.0 Advanced Reaction/ Reflex Drills	Once you have had your bogu on for a while, you will need to start to learn how to incorporate your speed and aggression with reaction. The key is to start watching your opponents better and react and counter-react their moves.
1 year ++	1.0 Fundamentals 2.0 Basic Drills 3.0 Advanced Speed and Energy Drills 1.0 Advanced Reaction/ Reflex Drills 2.0 Application	Kendo is about continuous learning and cycling back to through all these stages. Just when we think we have learned everything, it is important to go and revisit every stage. When everything fails, go back to your kamae. Most likely your problem is there.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 Fundamentals.....	4
Kiai (spirit/shouting).....	4
Kamae (the ready position).....	4
Suri-ashi (sliding foot movement).....	5
Suburi (empty swings).....	6
Different types of Suburi	7
Tai-atari (body crash).....	8
Zanshin (your spirit that is left behind)	9
Ma-ai (distance between you and your opponent).....	9
2.0 Basic Drills.....	11
2.1 Kirikaeshi	11
2.2 Basic Hitting.....	11
2.3 Advanced Hitting.....	14
2.4 Uchikomi (hitting drills).....	16
3.0 Advanced Speed and Energy Drills.....	18
3.1 Kakari-keiko (attack keiko).....	18
3.2 Ai-Gakari-keiko (both players attack).....	18
3.3 Mawari geiko (circling practice).....	19
3.4 Go Dan Uchi keiko (5-hit practice).....	20
3.5 Block and hit keiko.....	21
4.0 Advanced Reaction/Reflex Drills.....	23
4.1 Men Ouji-waza Keiko (techniques against men strikes).....	23
4.2 Kote Ouji-waza Keiko (techniques against kote strikes)	25
4.3 Doh Ouji-waza keiko (techniques against doh strikes).....	27
4.4 Tsuki Ouji-waza keiko (techniques against tsuki strikes)	27
4.5 Footwork timing drills.....	28
5.0 Application	31
5.1 Jiyu-geiko or Ji-geiko (open practice).....	31
5.2 Shiai geiko (tournament practice)	32

1.0 Fundamentals

.1 Kiai (spirit/shouting)

The kiai is fundamental in kendo. It is the expression of your spirit and the generation of your courage. The goal is to generate spirit and energy and is must be done **before** all strikes and **in conjunction** with all strikes. When doing exercises, stretches and swings, everybody does kiai in unison. This allows us to feel cohesion as a group and develop a sense of unity to strive for the common goal. A good kiai serves as a motivational instrument for everybody.

Even when you are tired and you feel you can't move anymore, you can still produce good kiai. The more tired you get, the more louder and longer the kiai should be. When you're tired and see your fellow kendo-ka producing loud kiai and giving 100%, ask yourself, "if he/she is doing it, why can't I?".

"Yah!!"	Said when facing an opponent even before hitting him/her.	Kiai should be generated from your stomach, not your neck. Breathe in from your nose and release your spirit all at once.
"Men"	When striking an opponent's head	Kiai should be generated from your stomach, not your neck.
"Kotay"	When striking an opponent's wrist.	Kiai should be generated from your stomach, not your neck.
"Dohhh"	When striking an opponent's body.	Kiai should be generated from your stomach, not your neck.
"Tsuki"	When striking an opponent's throat.	Kiai should be generated from your stomach, not your neck.
"Ichi, nichi san, shi" Etc	Counting in Japanese for stretching.	Consult the Beginner's Guide for counting in Japanese.

.2 Kamae (the ready position)

There are a number of different kamaes associated with kendo and bushido. The most commonly practiced kamaes are chudan-no-kamae (center kamae) and jyodan-no-kamae

(high kamae). All beginners will start with learning the chudan no kamae. Your kamae (the ready position) is the single-most important building block for kendo. For juniors and seniors alike, the kamae is the source of true, strong kendo.

Focus your energy in your stomach and in your toes with your left hand holding the base of your shinai and your right hand at the top of the handle. Point the tip of your shinai to your opponent's neck or slight below. Keep your kamae in the **centre** as much as possible. Do not let it wave left or right, or up or down too much.

Left foot	Heal up 3-4 inches off the ground, toes pointing straight forward. The front of your left foot lines up to the right heel roughly, one fist's width in between left and right feet.	Never lift toes off ground; never show your opponents the back of your foot
Right foot	Heal up half an inch off the ground, toes pointing straight forward. Right heel lines up to the front of left foot, with roughly one fist's width in between your feet.	Never lift toes off ground; never show your opponents the back of your foot
Left hand	Gripping the shinai tightly with pinkie and ring finger, one inch away from your belly	Relax your arms, enough to be able to cradle an egg in arm pits
Right hand	Gripping the shinai lightly with pinkie and finger, have an 'open' grip.	Relax your arms, enough to be able to cradle an egg in arm pits
Head and chin	Down, focus your eyes on opponent.	
Shoulders	Relaxed	
Back	Straight, upright. Okay to lean forward just a bit. Do not lean backwards.	

.3 Suri-ashi (sliding foot movement)

In kendo we will learn suri-ashi. It is the movement of your feet front and back, left and right. Your right foot then left always starts your movement to the front. Movement back is left foot then right. Never show the back of feet to opponent. Toes should always be on the ground.

Suri-ashi is the primary way to move towards and away from your opponent.

Arms	Keep the shinai in steady position. Aim end of shinai towards opponent's neck or slightly below.	Keep shinai in center.
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Feet	Right foot first, then left foot when going forwards. Left first then right when going backwards. Right foot first, then left foot when going right. Left first then right when going left.	Need to make sure feet are always working in unison , as close to kamae position. Never have left feet go beyond right foot when going forwards. Never have right foot go beyond left foot when going backwards.
Body	Keep still as possible. Avoid bending at waste, swaying side to side	Keep stomach pushed out.
Head and chin	Down, focus your eyes on opponent.	
Shoulders	Relaxed	
Back	Straight, upright. Okay to lean forward just a bit. Do not lean backwards.	

.4 Suburi (empty swings)

Suburi is about swinging your shinai above your head cutting down to eye-level. It is referred to as ‘empty swings’ because you are not actually hitting anything or anybody. You are taking swings to train your muscles and to build the form for other swings in the future. It is similar to a boxer shadow-boxing. The boxer shadow-boxes to practice form, to increase speed and to replicate a fighting situation.

From Kamae, raise your hands above your head and come straight down, stop when your end of the shinai is eye-level with you.

Arms (1)	As you raise your shinai from kamae, your arms should be relaxed and bent over your head. Left hand should almost be able feel your own head. Be able to look directly left or right without seeing your arms in the way	Relax shoulders. Make sure your fingers are completely wrapped around shinai, though not gripping too tightly. Upward motion can be slow.
Feet (1)	Feet do not move during this time when shinai is being lifted above head	
Arms (2)	When swinging down, bring your arms straight down and extend both arms. Left hand should end up slightly below your neck (height wise) and the right hand should end up by your neck (height wise)	Tighten the grip on your left hand as your swing down. The downward motion is quick.

Feet (2)	As your hands come down, your feet will begin to move in suri-ashi . Your feet will complete the movement at the exact time the swing is completed and your kiai is bellowed.	
Head and chin	Down, focus your eyes on opponent.	
Shoulders	Relaxed at all times.	Focus energy in stomach. This will keep your shoulders relaxed.
Back	Straight, upright. Okay to lean forward just a bit. Do not lean backwards.	

.5 Different types of Suburi

There are various types of suburi designed to help with creating the skills in different areas. All suburi start at kamae, and employ suri-ashi (except sonoba suburi). All suburi should be accompanied with loud kiai.

Oh-Suburi (big Suburi)	Big, big motion. Hands go all the way behind the back and the swing goes all the way down to your feet.	Designed to stretch out your arms.
Shomen (straight) Suburi	Basic suburi. Swing goes to your own eye-level.	
Sayu-men (left right) Suburi	The upward motion is exactly the same as shomen suburi. When coming down to swing, you swing down on a 45-degree plane, aiming at your opponents left eye, then right eye.	Used for kiri-kaeshi. Swing to the right first, then left.
Haya-suburi (fast suburi)	Feet will move together in kamae position (right in front of left). As the swing is made, the feet go forward. As you raise your shinai above your head, your feet move backwards.	Both feet move simultaneously.
3 or 5 steps in, 3 or 5 steps back suburi	Exactly the same as shomen suburi except feet movement is three steps forward then three steps back OR five steps in and five steps back. The kiai should be one breath for every 3 or 5 strokes depending on what you are doing.	Make sure the kiai is loud and continuous.

Kote-Men-Doh Suburi	Exactly the same as shomen suburi except feet movement is three steps forward then three steps back but the first strike is aimed at hitting your opponents wrist, therefore is wrist-level. The second stroke is aimed at the head, therefore eye-level. The third stroke is aimed at the opponent's right side of the body. Therefore you take a swing at a 45-degree angle down from your left side.	
One hand Suburi	Exactly the same as shomen suburi except only using the left hand. Right hand is to the side of your body.	
One hand haya-suburi	Exactly the same as haya-suburi except only using the left hand. Right hand is to the side of your body.	
Sonoba (on the spot) suburi	Exactly the same as shomen suburi except feet remain stationary in kamae position (heels up).	Focus on quickening the swing during the strike. Use left hand grip firmly and power down.

.6 Tai-atari (body crash)

The purpose of the body crash is to develop strength in the lower body and use your speed and momentum to knock your opponent off and gain advantage. Once your opponent has been knocked around, then you can hit a hiki-waza (backwards hit) to score a point.

Those without bogu are NOT expected to do tai-atari at full speed.

It is imperative that the receiving side be alert when tai-atari occurs.

Hitting side	When hitting any technique, if your opponent has not moved out of the way for you, then lower hands close to your body, right hand on top of left and crash in to your opponent straight and hard.	Keep hands close to body and go full force.
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Receiving side	As the hitter comes toward you, take a small step forward and offer resistance to the hitter. If the momentum of the hitter knocks you backwards, then you must be able to ready yourself immediately.	Receiving side must be able to provide maximum resistance to hitter . Use your discretion to how much resistance you should give. Depending on the size, skill level and age of the person who is hitting, you can offer a softer resistance.
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.7 **Zanshin** (your spirit that is left behind)

Zanshin is the single most difficult concept to explain to a new person who is starting kendo for the first time. What it boils down to is that in kendo, your spirit and energy that you have **after** you hit is just as important as what you have before you hit.

Zanshin is the state of which you are in **after** you make a strike to the men, kote, doh or tsuki. A proper strike to any part of the body is not complete until you deliver the hit and then quickly recover, both mind and body, to a state in which you can hit again.

For instance, being out of position, giving up, turning your back on your opponent, your shinai not in the chu-shin (center), not being back in kamae and kiai that trails off all constitute examples of improper zanshin.

Having good zanshin in kendo is equally important as the strike itself.

.8 **Ma-ai** (distance between you and your opponent)

(For senior students) As you spar, you need to understand the relationship between you and your opponent, specifically the distance.

Typically the best way to gauge your distance is through the kamae. You will use your shinai to see how close (or far) you are from your opponent. If you are far, then try to work your way in closer a) **without letting your opponent realize** b) **by attacking your opponent's shinai** c) **being ready anytime for their strikes** d) **keeping your shinai in the chushin (center)**.

Striking from too far (relative to your shinai distance) will leave you too vulnerable to your counter attacks. If you venture in too close, it leaves you vulnerable to your opponent's attacks. Studying the ma-ai is a very difficult endeavour.

2.0 Basic Drills

2.1 Kirikaeshi

This is the basic hitting drills that is typically are used to warm up after putting on the men. The following is an explanation of kiri-kaeshi broken down into **five** steps.

1) One big men and tai-atari	Big kiai followed by men and tai-atari. Once in kamae, do not let left foot sneak up. Right foot lunge and as you hit the men with your shinai, so should your foot to the ground and your kiai.	Receiver should give good tai-atari resistance.
2) Nine Sayu (keft and right) men	4 hits going forward, then 5 hits coming back. All one long kiai.	<forward>Right-left-right-left, then <back>right-left-right-left-right
3) One big men and tai-atari	Big kiai followed by men and tai-atari. Once in kamae, do not let left foot sneak up. Right foot lunge and as you hit the men with your shinai, so should your foot to the ground and your kiai.	Receiver should give good tai-atari resistance.
4) Nine Sayu-men	4 hits going forward, then 5 hits coming back. All one long kiai.	<forward>Right-left-right-left, then <back>right-left-right-left-right
5) One big men	Big kiai followed by men and go straight through past your opponent. Once in kamae, do not let left foot sneak up. Right foot lunge and as you hit the men with your shinai, so should your foot to the ground and your kiai.	Receiver should move quickly out of way so hitter can go through you. When the hitter hits through, the receiver MUST always move quickly to his/her right to avoid the person who is hitting.

2.2 Basic Hitting

The following are the basic building blocks to modern contemporary kendo. Basic Hitting is probably one of the most important drills that you can practice. Speed is not important initially. **Kiai, kamae, footwork, proper hitting** and the **movement of body** –

all of these as ONE single entity – is absolutely crucial. In Japanese, this is called ”Ki-Ken-Tai” or “Spirit-Sword-Body”. Once you are able to combine all of these factors together, then increase your speed. If you having problems, then slow down, and make sure your form is perfect.

If you are the person who is hitting, go straight through after you hit. If your receiver does not move for you fast enough, ask them to do so. If they still don’t dodge you fast enough, do a tai-atari.

Receivers need to quickly dodge the hitters and move to your **right** to let them go through you.

Men	<p>A big motion as if you were doing a shomen suburi, followed by big step, kiai, and hit and follows through.</p> <p>The kiai should be “yaaaah” up until the time you hit and then “men!!!” up until the time until you turn around. (Repeated for “kote” and every other waza”).</p>	<p>After you hit and go through, make sure there is at least 4 or 5-shinai lengths space between you and the receiver before you turn around. (Repeated for “kote” and every other waza”).</p> <p>As soon as you turn around to face your receiver, your kamae should be on them and read to go. (Repeated for “kote” and every other waza”).</p>
Kote	<p>A big motion as if you were doing a shomen suburi, followed by big step, kiai, and hit and follows through. The target is not the head, but the opponents right wrist.</p>	<p>Receivers need to quickly dodge the hitters to let them go through you.</p> <p>Hitters should not hit hard; they should look to hit the kote slightly gripping the left hand as they hit.</p>
Doh	<p>A big motion as if you were doing a shomen suburi, followed by big step, kiai, and hit and follows through. The target is the opponent’s right side of the body. So you need to hit at a 45-degree angle from your left side and then move your foot to the right as you go through.</p>	

Kote men	A big motion as if you were doing a shomen suburi, followed by two big steps and hits and follows through. The target is first the wrist and then the head in consecutive blows.	Receivers need to quickly dodge the hitters to let them go through you. Hitters should not hit hard; they should look to hit the kote slightly gripping the left hand as they hit. Also make sure that you take 'one step for one hit'. So for this exercise, two step-two hits.
Kote doh	A big motion as if you were doing a shomen suburi, followed by two big steps and hits and follows through. The target is first the wrist and then the opponent's right side of the body in consecutive blows. As you hit the doh, you will do so at a 45-degree angle from your left side and then move your foot to the right as you go through.	Receivers need to quickly dodge the hitters to let them go through you. Hitters should not hit hard; they should look to hit the kote slightly gripping the left hand as they hit. Also make sure that you take 'one step for one hit'. So for this exercise, two step-two hits.
Kote men men	A big motion as if you were doing a shomen suburi, followed by three big steps and hits and follows through. The target is first the wrist and then two consecutive men hits.	Receivers need to quickly move backwards to allow the hitters to have ample hitting space. Hitters should not hit hard; they should look to hit the kote slightly gripping the left hand as they hit. Also make sure that you take 'one step for one hit'. So for this exercise, three steps-three hits.
Hiki (backwards) men	From close in quarters (typically after tai-atari), the hitter will take step backwards as if doing the shomen suburi backwards and hit the men and quickly back up.	Your zanshin for this position is to have your hand above your head, straight up and arms extended.

Hiki (backwards) kote	From close in quarters (typically after tai-atari), the hitter will take step backwards to your left and hit the opponent's right kote and quickly back up.	Your zanshin for this position is to have your hands beside your body, straight out and arms extended.
Hiki (backwards) doh	From close in quarters (typically after tai-atari), the hitter will take step backwards to your left and hit your opponent's right side of the body and quickly back up.	Your zanshin for this position is to have your hands straight out in front of you with arms extended.

2.3 Advanced Hitting

These are only for senior students. Junior students should read this section and try to get a feel for what these techniques are about and when the senior students practice this, try to watch them and learn by observing.

Sashi Men	<p>A smaller motion men that aims straight for the throat and then at the last second hits the men.</p> <p>It is important that your opponent's shinai is 'attacked' before you hit men.</p>	Extend your arms when you hit the men. Make sure your left hand is as high as your neck upon the impact of shinai to the men.
'Underneath' Kote	<p>If you notice that your opponent has a tendency to raise his hands when you attack his kamae, you might want to try this waza.</p> <p>Attack his/her kamae and then go underneath his shinai so that when you hit the kote, you are hitting from under the shinai, not over the top as when you do a more conventional kote.</p>	<p>Make sure your feet are moving towards your opponent.</p> <p>If you miss the kote, make sure you are able to be in a blocking position immediately. If you miss the kote, you are vulnerable.</p>
'Fake the men' kote	Attack his/her kamae and then make a thrust with your shinai towards his/her men. (Make sure you take a full step as you do the thrust). As your opponent raise his arms to protect his men, then hit the kote from the left side at a slight angle.	

Harai Kote	Using left hand, move shinai underneath your opponent's shinai and come up by hitting the right side of your shinai against their right side of the shinai. You will hit the shinai up at a 45-degree angle and in one smooth motion, then hit kote.	<p>Make sure your feet move forward at the same time your hands do. You might want to make this into a two-step attack. The first step is in conjunction with the shinai hitting your opponent's shinai out of the way; the second step is in conjunction with hitting kote.</p> <p>Using the left hand is the key to success for this. Aim at the base of their shinai rather than the tip.</p>
Harai Men	Using left hand, move shinai underneath your opponent's shinai and come up by hitting the right side of your shinai against their right side of the shinai. You will hit the shinai up at a 45-degree angle and in one smooth motion, then hit men.	<p>Make sure your feet move forward at the same time your hands do. You might want to make this into a two-step attack. The first step is in conjunction with the shinai hitting your opponent's shinai out of the way; the second step is in conjunction with hitting kote.</p> <p>Using left hand is the key to success for this. Aim at the base of their shinai rather than the tip.</p>
Morote Tsuki (for black belts only)	Two hand Tsuki. While moving forward slowly in suri-ashi, move your shinai straight down. This movement will bring your opponent's shinai down. As this happens, then immediately extend arms and jump and hit Tsuki. If you miss, quickly recover and hit men for a "tsuki-men" attack.	

Katate Tsuki (for black belts only)	One hand Tsuki. While moving forward slowly in suri-ashi, extend your left arm and jump and hit tsuki. If you miss, quickly recover and hit men for a “tsuki-men” attack.	
Katsugi men	While moving forward slowly in suri-ashi, bring your arms back to your left side. This will look like you are going to hit kote. In one big motion then, attack men.	Don’t do this too often or else you will get used to it and not be able to do straight sashi-men.
Gyaku doh (for black belts only)	As you move forward in suri-ashi, point your shinai and aim it to your opponents left eye in a thrusting motion. This will bring up their hands and then you can quickly strike their doh on their left side.	
Hiki (backwards) Doh Men	From tsuba-zuri, take your arms to your opponent’s right side and pretend that you are about to hit doh. As your opponent goes to protect the doh, then quickly bring arm up and hit men and back up.	
Hiki (backwards) Men Doh	From tsuba-zuri, take your arms to your opponent’s head and pretend that you are about to hit men. You may even give him a big tap. As your opponent goes to protect the men and raises his arms, then quickly jump back and hit doh and back up to your left.	

2.4 Uchikomi (hitting drills)

The aim here is to put together consecutive hits and is a free flowing exercise to combine different attacks while moving your body and keeping your head clear. Both the hitter and receiver have **equally difficult** responsibilities for this exercise. Typically, uchikomi is short and free flowing to ensure that the hitter can stay focused and sharp.

For ‘good’ uchikomi to occur, there needs to be from the hitting side is **will** and **desire** to work hard. Most of the owe ness falls on the side of the receiver, whose responsibility is

to it is motivate, push them, pull, and in general, help the hitter get better. If you are the receiver for uchikomi, it is **not** a time to rest.

Hitter	<p>The hitter should give big kiai and look to hit wherever is ‘open’, whether it is men, kote, doh, or tsuki (for seniors), kote-men, kote-doh etc. The hitter must keep their legs moving quickly and not stop until told to do so.</p>	
Receiver	<p>When facing the hitter, give an equal amount of kiai as the person who is hitting. If their kiai is not sufficient before they hit, stop them, and make them do the hit again.</p> <p>If you would like the hitter to do a tai-atari (body block), then give them a firm tai-atari. Do not step backwards. Give them maximum resistance. If not, move out of the way and let them go through. The hitter should always go straight through and not have to go around you. The receiver should always move to the right to avoid the hitter.</p> <p>If the hitter is slow to go through, then give them a push with your shinai across their lower back and help them go faster.</p> <p>As the hitter goes through and turns around, make sure you have followed quickly behind them so that they don't have to wait more than one second before being able to hit again. Open up multiple places and let them be creative.</p>	<p>Depending on the time, the receiver should call the end of the uchikomi for that person at around 20-30 seconds.</p> <p>The time can be greater however up to a minute or longer.</p>

3.0 Advanced Speed and Energy Drills

3.1 Kakari-keiko (attack keiko)

This drill is very similar to that of uchi-komi. The only difference is that the hitter must increase his/her intensity and hitting speed of each hit. The goal is to get as many hits in, using proper technique, footwork, body movement and kiai, during a short amount of time.

Hitter	As soon as 'hajime' is called, the aim is to go hard and go fast. Hit wherever is open and hit often.	
Receiver	<p>As soon as 'hajime' is called, give equal amounts of kiai and move around with them hitter. Make sure they can hit places and at the first sign of them getting tired, you MUST encourage them vocally; give them light pushes in the back as they go by.</p> <p>If you would like the hitter to do a tai-atari (body block), then give them a firm tai-atari. Do not step backwards. Give them maximum resistance. If not, move out of the way and let them go through. The hitter should always go straight through and not have to go around you.</p> <p>As the hitter goes through and turns around, make sure you have followed quickly behind them so that they don't have to wait more than one second before being able to hit again.</p>	<p>Depending on the time, the receiver should call the end of the round for that person at around 10-20 seconds.</p> <p>The time can be greater however up to a minute or longer.</p> <p>The key for the receiver is that they must help the hitter make it through these tough ten to twenty seconds with full energy and make the hitter give them everything they have got.</p>

3.2 Ai-Gakari-keiko (both players attack)

This goals of this drill are essentially the same as kakari-keiko except in this drill, **both players** will hit. The goal is to hit fast, hit often, and hit everywhere using proper technique, footwork, body movement and kiai, during a short amount of time.

Both hitters	<p>At the call of ‘hajime’ both players give 100% and go hard and go fast. Keep the motion continuous; do not come to a stand still at any time since it is especially easy to do so after tai-atari and backing up.</p> <p>If one side feels that the other side is tiring or weakening, give them verbal encouragement even as you hit them.</p> <p>This is one exercise that if both sides encourage each other, they can go on and on for a long time.</p>	<p>Depending on the time, 15-20 seconds is usually long enough.</p> <p>The time can be greater however up to a minute or longer.</p>
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3.3 Mawari geiko (circling practice)

Two people make up a pair as each pair takes turns going around the dojo. As soon as one pair goes, the next follows. Each pair starts at one end of the dojo in the corner, go around in a horseshoe fashion and then end up at the same side of the dojo but in the opposite corner.

The goal of this exercise is to build endurance and speed as each player faces one another. One player goes forward and the other, backward. The very **last hit** of the sequence will be a good one with bigger kiai. While speed is important in this drill, so is the ability to keep moving at an even pace.

Hitter	Using proper technique, footwork, body movement and kiai, will hit whatever is called for that drill.	
Receiver	Will move quickly so that the hitter can get into a tempo and rhythm.	

3.4 Go Dan Uchi keiko (5-hit practice)

This practice is meant teach your body the movements to be able to hit 4-5 strikes consecutively. In a sparring match, it is easy to get into a bad habit of hitting one area, being blocked and then stopping, and then hitting again and being blocked and then stopping. The opportunities exist after you hit once or twice because typically, your opponent will be able to handle one or two hits but is not adept to handle a barrage of multiple strikes. Thus, with the fourth and fifth consecutive strike, the opportunities arise.

The key to this when practicing this drill is that you will only **breath ONCE** per every 5 hits. So after the initial kiai before you hit, you will continue to hit and **give kiai** on that one breath until you have finished all 5 hits.

Kote-men <tai atari> hiki men – kote men	One breath – Five hits Make sure for your very last hit, the fifth hit, that your kiai is very strong and loud.	The receiver must give good tai atari resistance. He/She must also be fleet footed and move so that the hitter can pass through quickly.
Kote-men <tai atari> hiki doh – kote men	One breath – Five hits As you enter into tai-atari, hit your opponent's hands up so as to naturally open up the hiki doh. Make sure for your very last hit, the fifth hit, that your kiai is very strong and loud.	The receiver must give good tai atari resistance. He/She must also be fleet footed and move so that the hitter can pass through quickly.
Kote-men <tai atari> hiki kote – kote men	One breath – Five hits As you enter into tai-atari, hit your opponents to the right so as to naturally open up the hiki-kote. Make sure for your very last hit, the fifth hit, that your kiai is very strong and loud.	The receiver must give good tai atari resistance. He/She must also be fleet footed and move so that the hitter can pass through quickly.
Kote-men <tai atari> hiki men – kote doh	One breath – Five hits Make sure for your very last hit, the fifth hit, that your kiai is very strong and loud.	The receiver must give good tai atari resistance. He/She must also be fleet footed and move so that the hitter can pass through quickly.

Kote-men <tai atari>hiki kote – kote doh	<p>One breath – Five hits</p> <p>As you enter into tai-atari, hit your opponents to the right so as to naturally open up the hiki kote.</p> <p>Make sure for your very last hit, the fifth hit, that your kiai is very strong and loud.</p>	<p>The receiver must give good tai atari resistance. He/She must also be fleet footed and move so that the hitter can pass through quickly.</p>
Kote-men <tai atari>hiki doh – kote doh	<p>One breath – Five hits</p> <p>As you enter into tai-atari, hit your opponent's hands up so as to naturally open up the hiki doh.</p> <p>Make sure for your very last hit, the fifth hit, that your kiai is very strong and loud.</p>	<p>The receiver must give good tai atari resistance. He/She must also be fleet footed and move so that the hitter can pass through quickly.</p>
Kote-men <tai atari>hiki men – kote	<p>One breath – Four hits</p> <p>Make sure for your very last hit, the fourth hit, that your kiai is very strong and loud.</p>	<p>The receiver must give good tai atari resistance. He/She must also be fleet footed and move so that the hitter can pass through quickly.</p>
Kote-doh-kote-men	<p>One breath – Four hits</p> <p>After you go through kote-doh, quickly turn around and swing at kote-men</p> <p>Make sure for your very last hit, the fourth hit, that your kiai is very strong and loud.</p>	<p>The receiver must give good tai atari resistance. He/She must also be fleet footed and move so that the hitter can pass through quickly.</p>

3.5 Block and hit keiko

This exercise helps in improving your ability to counter attack and counter hit. In kendo, it is not sufficient enough to be able to attack but be able to read the opponent's movements and strikes and provide a counter-strike.

The keys to this drill is to be constantly moving, to make sure your left hands snaps quickly, recover quickly after each hit and some zanshin after each hit.

Hitter	At the call of ‘hajime’, he/she will attack rapidly, aggressively and thoughtfully. This means that they will keep hitting all areas (men, kote etc) in rapid succession.	It is important to not fall into a pattern and keep hitting one area. If this happens, it does not become useful for the receiver.
Receiver	As the hitter begins to hit, you will block each hit provide a counter hit. (You can learn more about counter hitting in the Ouji-waza section). You will make sure your feet are always moving and make sure to deliver a clean hit with zanshin. As the hitter may keep attacking, be ready at all times.	Make sure your feet are always moving forward . Just because this drill calls for the opposing player to hit you first, does not mean that you don’t have to attack. You will attack their shinai and as soon they make the strike, be ready to make the counter attack. Don’t forget about your footwork either. Your feet have to hit the ground each time you make a strike to men, kote, or doh.

4.0 Advanced Reaction/Reflex Drills

4.1 Men Ouji-waza Keiko (techniques against men strikes)

Ouji-waza is about taking what an opponent hits, using his/her energy and reacting against it. In this drill, one player will hit **men**, while the other player will do a counter-hit off **men**. The keys to practicing this drill is that whoever is hitting **men**, MUST hit **men** with **full vigour, full kiai and full speed**. This is the only way the other player can fully learn. (If necessary, however, you may start things slowly to get the fundamentals down).

Another key is that whoever is practicing the drills (the person who **reacts** to the opponent's hits) must keep their feet moving. Small suri-ashi back and forth is important as you wait for the your opponent's moves. Make sure to keep your shinai active in the center. Always be aware of the distance between your and your opponent's shinai. Do not become static.

Demonstrations for these drills may be necessary as it is difficult to capture the essence of each technique just in words.

Ai-men	As the opponent begins to strike men, quickly go over top him and hit your own men.	
Uchiotoshi men	As the person hits men on you, come from over the top as if trying to split wood through the middle. Since your hit is in the center, your men strikes while your opponent goes off to his right.	
Harai-men	As the person hits men, block with the left side of your shinai, raising it a little and angling it to the right. (Shinai is angling out facing right at a 45 degree angle) Once the block is made, then quickly strike down and hit full force.	

De-gote (to right)	As the person's arms go upwards lunge forward with kote, extending your arms, and then quickly move to your right after you make the hit. Don't wait until the person has actually hit the men to hit your kote. Hit their kote while they are in the upward motion of hitting men.	
De-gote (to left)	As the person's arms go upwards lunge forward with kote, extending your arms, and then quickly move to your left, with left foot first and then right foot. Don't wait until the person has actually hit the men to hit your kote. Hit their kote while they are in the upward motion of hitting men	
Nuki-doh	As the person hits men, quickly bend down at your knees a little, move your body to the right to avoid the men strike and while looking at your opponent's eyes all the way, strike down on the left side of the doh.	
Kaeshi-doh (backward)	As the person hits men, raise your hands up and to the right. Block the men with the left side of your shinai (shinai is angling out facing right at a 45 degree angle) and quickly hit doh, move your body to the right and go through.	
Kaeshi-doh (forward)	As the person hits men, raise your hands up and to the right. Block the men with the left side of your shinai (shinai is angling out facing right at a 45 degree angle) and quickly hit doh, move your body back to the left and quickly back up.	

4.2 Kote Uji-waza Keiko (techniques against kote strikes)

Ouji-waza is about taking what an opponent hits, using his/her energy and reacting against it. In this drill, one player will hit **kote**, while the other player will do a counter-hit off **kote**. The keys to practicing this drill is that whoever is hitting **kote**, **MUST** hit **kote** with **full vigour, full kiai and full speed**. This is the only way the other player can fully learn. (If necessary, however, you may start things slowly to get the fundamentals down).

Another key is that whoever is practicing the drills (the person who **reacts** to the opponent's hits) must keep their feet moving. Small suri-ashi back and forth is important as you wait for the your opponent's moves. Make sure to keep your shinai active in the center. Always be aware of the distance between your and your opponent's shinai. Do not become static.

Demonstrations for these drills may be necessary as it is difficult to capture the essence of each technique just in words.

Nuki-men (forward)	As the person hits the kote, raise your arms as if to do shomen suburi motion, then quickly strike down on the person's men and go forward . The opponent should end up hitting air where the kote should have been.	
Nuki-men (backward)	As the person hits the kote, raise your arms as if to do shomen suburi motion, then quickly strike down on the person's men and back up . The opponent should end up hitting air where the kote should have been.	
Harai-men	As the person hits kote raise your arms a little twisting your shinai to the left a bit. You will block their kote strike with the right side of your shinai (sometimes with the tsuba area as well) and then quickly hit the men all in one motion.	Do not raise the arms too high. The men hit should be right after the block. Don't delay. A poor block can result in your opponent successfully hitting kote.

Kaeshi-men (forward)	As the person hits kote raise your arms a little and angle your shinai to the right at a 45-degree angle. You will block the opponent's strike with the left side of your shinai. After you block, you will quickly hit the men on the left side of your opponent's head by twisting your hands and coming around in a circular motion. Quickly move forward as you make your hit.	
Kaeshi-men (backward)	As the person hits kote raise your arms a little and angle your shinai to the right at a 45-degree angle. You will block the opponent's strike with the left side of your shinai. After you block, you will quickly hit the men on the left side of your opponent's head by twisting your hands and coming around in a circular motion. Quickly back up as you make your hit.	
Suriage-men	As the person hits kote raise your arms forward and angle your shinai to the right at a 45-degree angle. As soon as you block the kote, in the same motion, hit the men.	This is a relatively safe waza that we should all have in our arsenal. The key is to make sure that blocking and hitting is all in one motion and not two separate movements.
Ai-gote-men	As the person hits kote, so will you, thus canceling out their kote hit. But your intention from the start will be to hit kote-men, and so as your kotes cancel each other out, you can hit men and rewarded. No special moves are required here.	This is an excellent waza that we should all have in our arsenal. In instances where your opponent is coming to hit kote (which is quite often – kote is probably the most hit waza), then this waza comes into play a lot.

Harai-kote	As the person hits kote raise your arms a little twisting your shinai to the left a bit. You will block their kote strike with the right side of your shinai (sometimes with the tsuba area as well) and then quickly hit the kote all in one motion.	Do not raise the arms too high. The kote hit should be right after the block. Don't delay. A poor block can result in your opponent successfully hitting kote.
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4.3 Doh Ouji-waza keiko (techniques against doh strikes)

Ouji-waza is about taking what an opponent hits, using his/her energy and reacting against it. In this drill, one player will hit **doh**, while the other player will do a counter-hit off **doh**. The keys to practicing this drill is that whoever is hitting **doh**, MUST hit **doh** with **full vigour, full kiai and full speed**. This is the only way the other player can fully learn. (If necessary, however, you may start things slowly to get the fundamentals down).

Another key is that whoever is practicing the drills (the person who **reacts** to the opponent's hits) must keep their feet moving. Small suri-ashi back and forth is important as you wait for the your opponent's moves. Make sure to keep your shinai active in the center. Always be aware of the distance between your and your opponent's shinai. Do not become static.

Demonstrations for these drills may be necessary as it is difficult to capture the essence of each technique just in words.

Harai-men	As the person comes to strike doh, block the doh in a similar position of blocking a kirikaeshi men, but only lower hand position. As you block, quickly do a hiki-men and back up.	
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4.4 Tsuki Ouji-waza keiko (techniques against tsuki strikes)

Ouji-waza is about taking what an opponent hits, using his/her energy and reacting against it. In this drill, one player will hit **tsuki**, while the other player will do a counter-hit off **tsuki**. The keys to practicing this drill is that whoever is hitting **tsuki**, MUST hit

tsuki with full vigour, full kiai and full speed. This is the only way the other player can fully learn. (If necessary, however, you may start things slowly to get the fundamentals down).

Another key is that whoever is practicing the drills (the person who **reacts** to the opponent's hits) must keep their feet moving. Small suri-ashi back and forth is important as you wait for the your opponent's moves. Make sure to keep your shinai active in the center. Always be aware of the distance between your and your opponent's shinai. Do not become static.

Demonstrations for these drills may be necessary as it is difficult to capture the essence of each technique just in words.

Harai-men	As the person comes for your tsuki raise your arms a little twisting your shinai to the left a bit. You will block their tsuki strike with the right side of your shinai (sometimes with the tsuba area as well) and then quickly hit their men all one motion.	
Suriage-men	As the person strikes tsuki raise your arms forward and angle your shinai to the right at a 45-degree angle. As soon as you block the strike, in the same motion, hit the men.	The key is to make sure that blocking and hitting is all in one motion and not two separate movements.
Ai-zuki	As the person strikes tsuki, go over the top of their arms and deliver a crushing blow to their tsuki.	

4.5 Footwork timing drills

In a match, as you face tougher and tougher opponents, it becomes extremely difficult to just aim at some area (kote or men etc) and just hit it and expect to get a point. Often, you will be able to get points when the opponent is backing up, 'about' to move forward, caught in a vulnerable position, etc. If a player has strong kamae and is ready to hit, the chances are that you won't be able to hit him/her. It is when their kamae is off that you have the most chances. The following are timing drills to seize the moment.

Degashira (when they are about to go) -men	As both players are facing off in kamae, you notice that your opponent has a pattern of moving in and out. And when he moves in, you feel that you are at distance close enough that you can strike men. So watching his movements, as he is moving in, time the men perfectly and take off with a strong pure lunge.	
Kote	If the person backs off by raising their hands and shinai in a horizontal plane, then hit the kote. The kote may come across diagonally along the same plane as your defender's shinai	What you hit in this drills is very heavily dependant on how your opponent reacts to your kamae lunges. As you take a suri-ashi step forward with strong kamae, most people will react different. Some will lower their shinai back off. Some will raise their hands and protect their kote by making their shinai horizontal.
Kote-men	If the defender increases the strength of their kamae by putting weight into their tips of their shinai, they are susceptible to a strong kote-men attack.	
Tsuki	If the defender's kamae is weak, and his/her shinai points to his/her right (to your left) they are susceptible to a tsuki attack.	
Oi (to chase) -men	After making a few aggressive steps with strong kamae, your opponent may start to back up or back off. This is an opportune time to increase the speed of your suri-ashi and catch your opponent flatfooted or going backwards. Depending on where the shinai is as he/she retreats, chase them and hit men.	When chasing them, don't get overeager and jump from too far. Remember, in order for you to gain ground, you must be chasing in suri-ashi mode at a faster rate that which they back up.

Oi-kote-men	After making a few aggressive steps with strong kamae, your opponent may start to back up or back off. This is an opportune time to increase the speed of your suri-ashi and catch your opponent flatfooted or going backwards. Depending on where the shinai is as he/she retreats, chase them and hit kote-men .	When chasing, kote-men is one of the safest moves because for the person who is backing up, the most easiest area to hit is kote. If you were to attack men, they may hit your kote as you lunge (de-gote).
Oi-kote	After making a few aggressive steps with strong kamae, your opponent may start to back up or back off. This is an opportune time to increase the speed of your suri-ashi and catch your opponent flatfooted or going backwards. Depending on where the shinai is as he/she retreats, chase them and fake hitting the men , then hit kote .	

5.0 Application

5.1 Jiyu-geiko or Ji-geiko (open practice)

The purpose of jiyu-geiko (open practice) is to have a forum to apply what you have learned. Practice your attacks and your counterattacks. See how your opponents react when you do certain aggressive moves in and out.

Jiyu-geiko is a time to experiment. Don't be afraid to be hit upon. We learn by doing and failing. Being hit by your opponent is a great signal to tell you that whatever technique you just tried was not strong enough or that you were not able to execute it perfectly.

There is no point in practicing techniques that you are already good at and not practicing ones that you are no good at.

If your opponent is stronger than you	You should try mostly aggressive attacks to gauge the effectiveness of your spirit, your movements and your strategies. Plan your strategy for that day and see whether it works.	It is a sign of disrespect if you do too many counter-attacks to a senior person. If you are junior, you should be the one taking the initiative most of the time. Additionally, if you are fighting a senior person, do not use tsuki unless they say that 'anything goes'. Be fully prepared to withstand a barrage of tsuki attacks if you tsuki them first.
If your opponent is about the same as you	You should combine an equal amount of attacks and counter-attacks. See how they react to your aggressive thrusts. Try to read what they are going to do and then be able to take advantage of their mistakes whenever you can.	When you are on equal footing, try all of your waza, including tsuki.

If you are stronger than your opponent	You should try to do mostly counteracts, reaction and reflex drills. Really try to see how your opponents move and finish off each hit cleanly. There really is no point in practicing your attack moves because chances are you will be able to hit 90% of them.	This is time to practice developing your 'eyes'. Watch and see and learn.
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5.2 Shiai geiko (tournament practice)

This exercise is usually only reserved for those going to tournament play. The referees will call all infractions, including out of bounds penalties and other penalties. In a tournament play, never stop until you hear the referee call 'yame' (stop). Often referees will overlook or miss points by you and your opponent. The match is never over to it is officially over. **Don't** give your opponent any chance to hit. And **take** any chance that your opponent gives you.

Be creative in a match and use the 'high-low' method of attacking. If you want to attack men, then attack the kote first. Conversely if you want to attack kote, attack men first. Mix up your hits and do not solely rely on what you think you are good at. The more different areas you can attack, the stronger you will be. The best analogy is a pitcher in baseball. The most efficient pitcher is one who can throw high and throw low in the strikezone and can throw fast and throw curves. Even if the pitcher can throw 100 mph, if that's all they can throw, hitters will eventually hit it.

If all you can do is men, then your opponent will be able to block it.