

# Kendo Training Handbook

By Matt Jackson, Tsurugi Bashi Kendo Kai (剣橋剣道会), Cambridge University Kendo Society

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## Kendo Training Handbook

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By Matt Jackson

Kendo is a traditional Japanese martial art, as well as Athletic sport. How you think of and practice it will change and develop over the time to practice the art. This guide is a summary of my understandings, and so, as a disclaimer, I cannot guarantee that these are thoughts of everyone, including myself in future times. Over the years I have practiced Kendo, I have learned and been taught many ideas, in many ways. I have, from the advice I have received and ideas taught to me, compiled my notes, and have selected those ideas I found most useful myself, and that was a common idea among many Sensei. To avoid changing ideas beyond those of Kendo, I have set the basic standard as that described in the **All Japan Kendo Federation manuals**. Where differences appear in teaching ideas, I have commented in *Italics* to give some guidance. I set the basic elements needed for practice to master basic Kendo and teach the skills needed to face an opponent, these being the **Kihon-dosa** as described by the **All Japan Kendo Federation**. They are as follows:

- 1) **Shisei** (Posture)
- 2) **Kamae** (stance or posture) and **Metsuke** (use of eyes)
- 3) **Kamae-kata** (the way of drawing the bokutō/shinai) and **Osame-kata** (the way of putting away bokutō/shinai)
- 4) **Ashi-sabaki** (footwork)
- 5) **Suburi** (Swinging the shinai)
- 6) **Kake-goe** (vocalization)
- 7) **Ma-ai** (distance between oneself and opponent)
- 8) **Kihon-no-uchi-kata, Tsuki-kata, and Uke-kata** (Basic ways of striking, thrusting and receiving strikes.)
- 9) **Kiri-kaeshi** (Continuous striking center, right-left men)
- 10) **Tai-atari** (colliding with opponent)
- 11) **Tsuba-zeriai** (fighting close with the sword guards.)
- 12) **Zanshin** (keeping alert with correct posture after cutting)

I have adjusted the order to fit in with the logical progression of practice and contents of this list to include notes on Reigi-Saho (Etiquette and Manners).

The Content Chapters are listed in step by step order that is needed to master the basics of Kendo.

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## Chapter 1: Reigi-Saho (礼儀作法)

The Etiquette, Manners, and Attitudes below should be shown during Kendo training. Remember, in Kendo, the *do* (道) refers to the way or path to enlightenment, and as such, the attitudes should also be taken with you into everyday life. No matter what your experience or ability in kendo you can always show good reigi. Reigi is important because it helps to maintain the relationship between the sword and the shinai. By showing such manners you are showing that you respect the fact you are dealing with a real sword and death is a very real possibility. Kendo is Japanese art, and if we fail to maintain the Japanese identity of kendo, it will lose its meaning.

### Good Etiquette and Manners:

- Always ensure your toenails and fingernails are cut short before training.
- Always air your uniform and your armor after each session: never leave them in the bag between sessions or they will get moldy and smell horrible.
- Keep your uniform clean and fold it correctly before attending the session.
- Always check your shinai for splinters *before* attending the session.
- Do not wear shoes in the dojo.
- Remove all jewelers, including rings and watches before training.
- Show up early to practice. You shouldn't only just have time to get ready. You should help to prepare the dojo. It is usually the beginners' responsibility to clean the floor before and after every session. With a job or busy lifestyle this can sometimes be hard to achieve, but if you make an effort to do this, you will eventually understand the benefits. Don't use business or studies as your excuse to miss a session. Management of yourself is still part of your kendo.
- If you are late to practice, enter quietly, warm up and stretch, prepare yourself in seiza and join in from the end of the line.
- Always bow on entering and leaving the dojo.
- If you are warming yourself up before a session, you **MUST** stay in the **shimoza**. The **kamiza** is for your sensei and the **shomen**. Never enter it unless you are doing so to prepare the dojo for practice or are carrying sensei's gear for him. Usually, the half near to the entrance is the shimoza, and the other half is the kamiza.
- When you bring all your equipment into the dojo take up as little space as possible when you leave it at the side, make sure that it doesn't get in the way of the practice or the doors.
- Do not smoke, eat, drink or fool around in the dojo.
- Do not lean on a sword or rest a shinai or bokutō point downwards. Don't leave your shinai or bokutō in a way that means they can fall over; they represent your swords which would be of great value. The blade and kensen of your shinai and bokutō should point away from the Kamiza. If the dojo is small, then place your swords on the floor close to the wall.
- Do not step over or kick a shinai on the ground.
- When you are asked to line up, this should be done quickly. **KNOW YOUR PLACE IN THE LINE**. The order in which you line up is the order of your responsibility in the group, not just your rank.
- Make it a habit of sitting in seiza quietly at the beginning and the end of the session.
- **DON'T** move about unnecessarily when you sit in seiza. You should sit with correct posture even if it starts to hurt. Controlling your posture and maintaining seiza even when it becomes uncomfortable is part of kendo. If you have a serious issue, swap to the cross-legged position but do not move again.
- If someone is kneeling in armor, you should pass behind them or, if you have to pass in front of them, bow and extend your right hand in a vertical plane, palm forward.
- Follow the Sensei to whether **Tenugui** is laid over the **Men** or folded inside. If laid out, you should be able to read your tenugui before you put it on.
- When you bow (shomen-ni, senseigata-ni, or otagai-ni) always bow longer than your seniors. Also if you are saying '**onegaishimasu**' or '**dōmo arigatō gozaimasu**' say it correctly.
- When you put on your equipment (**Men** when we are in seiza, or **Do** after **Kata** practice) try to be the quickest. However, it is worse if you have to redo your equipment. Be quick but put the gear on properly. If your **Men-himo** is too long, shorten them; if your **Kote** is untied, then tie them.
- During practice always bow correctly; 15 degrees maintaining eye contact.

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- During rotation you will have to pass quickly around the back of the sensei - DO NOT slow the whole practice down by being slow.
- Do not interrupt the teacher's instruction, and do not chat with each other during practice. Save questions to when asked or to after final rei.
- If you need to fix your bogu during a session then first ask your partner, move back out of the way and sit in seiza.
- If someone falls over in the dojo, unless it directly involves you, you should continue training. Don't stop and crowd around. Sensei will say if you have to stop, and if you are the first aider, be ready.
- Keep practicing unless you truly can't continue. It is reigi to keep going to get the most out of sensei; they will appreciate that you kept trying despite it causing you pain. Kendo practice means to train you, in other words, to make you feel pain physically and mentally. Don't run away from this.
- Do not lean or lay down: stand, kneel or sit cross-legged when resting.
- It is reigi to be ready for practice; this means eating and drinking enough that you don't become tired and dehydrated. Drink enough before sessions, so you have the energy to continue, and don't let the sensei, the dojo, and yourself down.
- If the weather is very hot, pay extra attention to fluid intake. If you are dehydrated and practicing for a long time in such weather, you may get heat stroke.
- If you vomit or your feet bleed your first responsibility is to clean the dojo floor. After the dojo is cleaned, you can take off **Men** and clean it, after which you can tend to yourself.
- Do not just stop practicing. If you cannot continue, tell your partner, excuse yourself to the sensei, take seiza and remove equipment in such a way as to not get in the way of practice.
- Only break for rest when invited to by sensei. Take that opportunity to drink fluids and check shinai and Bogu.
- Normally drinking will be outside Dojo, or in an assigned area. Bow if leaving the Dojo. Do NOT walk around the Dojo drinking!
- Take your **Men** off correctly: Pull the himo over your head and untie them there. Then take the **Men** off, holding it in front of your face until you have removed the tenugui.
- ALWAYS carry the visiting sensei's equipment for them; you should also fold it for them after the session. If you offer to do this, but they don't accept don't give up; offer again.

## Attitudes for Kendo:

- Always value the basics.
- Practice repeatedly and many times, practice with someone formidable
- Practice with the proper attitude.
- Practice with courtesy and respect.
- Do not be obsessed with winning; practice with the desire to study the principles of kendo.
- Have devotion to Kendo and practice with the initiative.
- Practice with determination.
- Value graceful, elegant, dignified Kendo.
- Be prepared physically and mentally, and then practice with eagerness.
- Know your capabilities and practice accordingly.
- Learn by experiencing.
- Always consider ways to improve.
- Be mindful of everyday life.
- Be conscious of safety.
- Be conscious of health and hygiene.
- Do not over-exhaust unreasonably beyond the limit.
- For students, consider how studies and Kendo can be balanced.
- Grasp the value of watching; humbly learn merits of others by observing.
- Always do warming up and cooling down exercises.

**Dojo:** The term **Dojo** comes from Buddhism meaning "place to study," which originally referred to the platform Buddha meditated on. Commit yourself to sincere training when entering Dojo, appreciate having a place to practice and people to practice with, maintain cleanliness, and take care of your belongings neatly (e.g., shoes, clothes, Bogu).

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Know the location of **Kamiza**, the upper seat; this may be a shrine, flag or another symbol. The term **Kamiza** can be written in different Japanese characters which mean "upper seat" or "toward the altar." Beginners line up toward the lower end (**Shimoza**). Reigi is not just a quick bow entering the Dojo but is about Respect. Know how to bow correctly, and when, where and who to in the Dojo. They are not empty rituals but an expression of respect for all the other members of the dojo who are offering you a chance to practice kendo. Here is an extract from the Kendo Reader - written some 70+ years ago:

- Make a reverend bow when entering and leaving the Dojo.
- Do not enter the Dojo dressed untidily; a Hakama should be worn if dressed in Japanese style.
- Maintain a respectful attitude and most correct posture.
- Be quiet and conscientious, do not engage in noisy chatter, laughter, clapping or cheering.
- After eating, allow a suitable amount of time to elapse before training.
- If you have taken alcohol, do not enter the Dojo; let alone engage in training.
- The sword is one's soul, and the bogu is one's armor. Handle them with respect according to the correct method.
- The Dojo interior must be cleaned morning and evening and kept tidy.
- Do not comment on other styles of swordsmanship or in each other's technique.
- For those who are training in swordsmanship, take caution against shortness of temper or selfishness, do not be quarrelsome but always remain serene of heart.

All senior students make sure the Dojo floor is safe, and tape/make any holes, etc., while juniors sweep the floor clean.

## Visiting other Dojo:

If you are WEARING your Club's Zekken, and visiting other Dojo, it is expected that you show CORRECT Reigi and set a good example. Always bow to the most senior Sensei (find out who it is), and introduce yourself and ask permission to join the class. Always try your hardest, and even if the ideas differ from what you have been taught, listen, try, learn from them - never argue or debate with your seniors. Some commands may differ – try to follow their way.

**About Rei:** Rei is a way to pay respect and show acknowledgment. Upon entry to the **Dojo**, enter then **Rei** to the **Kamiza**; this is a way to pay respect to the Dojo and to commit yourself to a sincere practice. Also, when exiting, **Rei** to the **Kamiza**, then exit.

## Commands during Training

At the start will be:

**Sei retsu:** line up in the correct order. You may hear **Shinai o motte** or **Bokutō o motte** - with Shinai or Bokutō.

**Chakuza:** all sit down in Seiza

**Shisei o tadashite:** straighten back/sit up straight

**Mokusō:** a brief moment for meditation

**Yame:** stop mokuso

**Shōmen ni rei:** bow to the flag (Kamiza)

**Sensei (gata) ni rei:** bow to the sensei (sensei's)

**Otagai ni rei:** bow to each other, and ask "please train with me" by saying; "**Onegai shimasu.**"

**Men o tsuke:** put on men and kote. – seniors first when required

At the end of Practice will be:

**Sei retsu:** line up in correct order

**Chakuza:** all sit down in Seiza

**Men o tore:** take off kote and men

**Shisei o tadashite:** straighten back/sit up straight

**Mokusō:** a brief moment for meditation

**Yame:** stop mokuso

**Sensei (gata) ni rei:** bow to the sensei (sensei's) [NB: note slightly different order]

**Shomen ni rei:** bow to the flag (Kamiza)

**Otagai ni rei:** bow to each other and thank them very much: "**Arigatou gozaimashita.**"

Acknowledge **Sensei** (teacher), **Senpai** (senior) and each other with **Rei**; this is to show respect and appreciation. To someone senior, bow first and rise last. To each other, bow together simultaneously.

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**Shizen-tai:** Shizen-tai is natural posture which is the basis of all kendo postures and movements.

- The body should not feel strained.
- The face and eyes should face straight forward.
- Stretch the neck upward, and pull the chin back with a feeling of stretching the top of head to reach the ceiling. (There should be no gap between neck and Kendo-gi.)
- Shoulders are relaxed, with a feeling of being held slightly back.
- Arms should hang down naturally by your side, with fingers together.
- The hips are held straight, and lower abdomen held taut with a feeling of tightening the buttocks.
- Knees should not be bent, but relaxed, i.e., not completely straight legged (don't lock your knees).
- The feet slightly apart, heels are drawn in, you should have your weight evenly applied.

**Ritsu-rei:** There are two kinds of standing bow. The one to your opponent (**moku-rei**) and secondly, a formal bow, which we use bowing to the Shomen or sensei. The bow can be performed with or without a sword (shinai). The main difference between them is the angle of the bow, and the eye contact.

When entering or leaving the dojo, we perform a formal bow toward the Shomen or senior Sensei:

- Keep their body in **shizen-tai** position. Bend your body from the hip. Do not keep your eyes on them. You have to look down. The angle of your body when you bow in this way is 30 degrees.

When bowing to your opponent to perform the standard bow (**moku-rei**):

- Keep their body in **shizen-tai** position. Bend your body from the hip while looking at your opponent. Do not keep your face straight toward your opponent. You want to keep your chin pulled in. The angle of your body is about 15 degrees since you have to keep your eyes on your opponent.

Your fingers should remain together, hand slightly on the front side of the leg. If you hold a Shinai, it should be at **sage-to**, i.e., straight-armed by your side. When bowing with shinai, the angle of the shinai should not change.

**Seiza:** Seiza is the formal kneeling sitting position. To assume seiza:

1. Stand in **shizen-tai**.
2. Draw back the left foot.
3. Kneel down with the left knee next to the right foot, keeping heel up, and ball of the foot is touching the floor.
4. Withdraw the right leg to a position next to the left leg with the heels up, and balls of feet are touching the floor.
5. Tuck the toes of both feet under so the tops of the feet are touching the floor and the big toe of the right foot is overlapping the big toe of the left foot.
6. Lower the hips to a fully seated position. Keep the upper body in correct posture with the hands placed naturally on the thighs.

Standing from seiza is the reverse of sitting:

1. First, raise your upper body to a kneeling position.
2. Raise your toes, so the balls of the feet are touching the floor.
3. Step forward with the right foot, placing the foot next to the left knee.
4. Push the legs straight to a standing position and then bring the left foot together with the right to end in shizen-tai.

Main Points:

- Keep the upper body in correct, upright posture throughout the process of sitting or standing.
- While seated, your eyes cast forward. If listening to Sensei, turn your face toward the Sensei, not simply your gaze.
- The large toe of the right foot should be overlapping the large toe of the left foot.
- The knees should be separated by approximately 10cm. (the width one or two fists).

## **Moku-so**

Moku-so is the act of composing one's breath, posture, mind, and spirit while in the seiza position and is performed to start and end the practice sessions. When performing moku-so, the hands are brought together to form an oval in front of the abdomen. The fingers of the left hand overlap the fingers of the right hand, and the tips of the thumbs are brought together under light pressure. The eyes are closed halfway, and deep breathing is performed. The tongue should be resting on the top of the mouth, touching the back of the upper teeth.

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## Main Points:

- The mind should be cleared of thoughts but kept fully alert (See below). Senseis say we should focus on our Kendo goals for the practice or to clear our minds by concentrating on breathing, counting the timing of the breathing cycle - this will concentrate your thoughts.
- The eyes should remain slightly open. When the eyes are fully open or closed, the mind tends to remain active, thus making it difficult to perform moku-so correctly.

*I quote Zen Master Dogen (1200-1253), who stated in the Shobogenzo texts that we must keep our eyes "not so wide open and not so narrowly closed." Therefore, I relax my eyes naturally, focussed about 1 meter in front of me.*

## Breathing:

1. Breathe in for three seconds.
2. Hold your breath for two seconds.
3. Breathe out for 10-15 seconds.

## How to Breathe:

### 1. Breathe in:

Breathe in deeply through your nose, filling your lungs in about 3 seconds. As breathing in, the air goes down to a place called *seika-tanden* (臍下丹田). Using our stomach or abdomen instead of our chest to inhale, we can take in a lot more air. It is an image-training to think that the air goes down to the lower abdomen. Do not let your shoulders or chest rise during breathing. Chest breathing is not good for kendo as it will show our opponent when we are breathing in, which it is a good opportunity for our opponent to attack us.

### 2. Hold your breath:

We do not breathe out the air right after breathing in. We hold the air inside us for a while. It is said that the air should be held in *seika-tanden*, about three fingers down from your belly button. We hold the air in *seika-tanden* for about 2 seconds.

### 3. Breathe out:

We breathe out through our mouth, slowly, not at once. It takes about 10 - 15 seconds to breathe out the air. When we breathe out, we have to control the breathing. To do so, we have to use our abdominal muscles. (NB: Also the position of the tongue can help, relax it when exhaling.) After we breathe out, we can breathe in. Be focused on breathing out.

- **Do not breathe out completely.** Leave a bit of the air inside of you so you will not be out of breath. Try to breathe out for 10 seconds and gradually make it longer.
- **Do not think about emptying your thoughts.** By trying not to think about anything, you are already thinking. So just relax and concentrate on breathing. You may think about what you are going to improve in or have achieved during training.

That is the basic breathing. Some people may say the different duration of each action, but the duration mentioned above of each action (inhale, hold, and exhale) seems a common idea. I have also been told that some old schools of swordsmanship taught to count Zen breathing in 7's - 7 second inhale, hold for 7 seconds, exhale over 7 seconds.

**Za-rei:** Za-rei is the bowing from seiza. Like Ritsu-rei, za-rei has many levels of formality that are applied to its execution.

1. Sitting in correct seiza, bend the upper body forward at the hips. At the same time, slide the hands forward over the thighs.
2. As the bow deepens, merge the hands, creating a triangle with the index fingers and thumbs.
3. At the deepest point of the bow, the back is parallel to the floor. The hands are flat on the floor with the triangular opening, between the index fingers and thumbs, directly below the nose.
4. After holding the bow for a moment, raise the upper body back to the upright posture. At the same time, slide both hands back to their original position.

## Main Points:

- a. When bowing, the back and neck should remain aligned, keeping correct upper body posture.
- b. Allowing the head to bob, especially allowing the chin to come to the chest exposing the nape of the neck to the kamiza or shinden is very poor form and impolite.
- c. As the upper body bows down, the eyes remain fixed, and the gaze follows down to the floor.
- d. The hips should not rise when the upper body bows downward.
- e. Exhale as the bow is performed.

## Chapter 2: Kamae, Kamae-kata and Osame-kata

**Kamae:** Kamae is the guard or ready posture employed for attack and defense. However, more than just a physical pose, kamae is also the on-guard posturing of the mind and spirit. These aspects of kamae, the body, and mindset, must always be practiced together. Equally important to keep in mind is that kamae begins and ends with proper etiquette. These points are never to be overlooked. There are three processes of kamae. They are assuming kamae, withdrawing from kamae and Kamae O-toku - kamae at-ease or open kamae. The legendary swordsman, Miyamoto Musashi (1584–1645) distinguished in his writings five primary guard postures collectively termed *Goho-no-Kamae*. In modern kendo, the goho-no-kamae continues to be the principal guard postures. The goho-no-kamaes are *chudan-no-kamae*, *jodan-no-kamae*, *gedan-no-kamae*, *hidari-waki-gamae*, and *migi-waki-gamae*. Of the five, *chudan-no-kamae* (middle guard posture) is the first and most versatile of the guard postures. In modern kendo, *chudan-no-kamae* is the standard posture from which the other four kamae are instigated. *Hasso-no-kamae* is Kamae for eight directions (many enemies) and treated as a special stance (?).

**Chudan no Kamae (Center Guard Posture):** Left-hand grips at the end of **Tsuka** (hilt), placed in front of the navel, and right-hand grips near **Tsuba** (guard) but not touching it. The “V” shape between the thumb and index finger (Tora no kuchi) of both hands is over the top of the Tsuka. The left grip with last three fingers hold the Shinai, while the right hand with last two fingers lightly support it, Kensen is directed toward the opponent's throat. Tsuru (string) is up, right foot forward, the width of a foot between feet, left heel slightly off the floor, and left knee straight but not locked.

**Hand position:** The anatomy of the hand includes the **tora-kuchi**. The tora-kuchi is the angle at the base of the index finger and thumb. The tora-kuchi and the tsuru or the seams of the tsuka-gawa [leather handle covering] are the keys to positioning the hands about the shinai's circumference. The tsuru indicates the upright side of the shinai in its drawn attitude. In its correct configuration, the tsuru also marks the top centerline of the shinai. The hands should be positioned on the shinai in such a way that the top centerline of the shinai runs through the apex of the **tora-kuchi** of both hands. The left hand is positioned at the end of the tsuka, clasping the tsuka-gashira midway into the little finger. [NB: Holding Bokutō, the left hand should just reveal the tsuka-gashira]. The forward position of the right hand is one-and-a-half fists ahead of the left hand. A common method for establishing the forward position of the right hand is to:

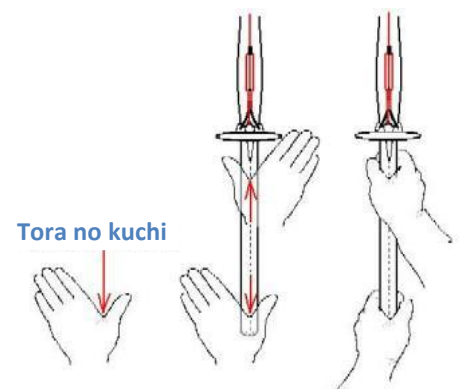
- Bend the right arm at the elbow.
- Place the hilt of the shinai in the joint of the right-hand elbow.
- Grasp the shinai with the right hand. Where the hand grasps the shinai with the right hand is the location for the right hand.
- The right hand should almost touch the tsuba of the shinai (more than 2cm of tsuka space means it is the wrong length and needs adjusting).

**Hand grip:** The shinai should be gripped firmly, not tightly, as if holding an egg without crushing the shell. Both hands grip similarly, but the left grip should be firmer than that of the right hand. To grip the shinai:

- Extend the left hand as if reaching out to give a handshake greeting.
- Position the **tsuka-gashira** on the inside portion of the heel of the hand.
- Grasp the shinai firmly with the little and ring fingers.
- Grip the shinai with the middle finger using moderate (not tight or loose) pressure.
- The index finger and thumb remain relaxed.
- The right hand is positioned appropriately on the shinai, as previously outlined, and grips the shinai in the same manner as the left hand, with slightly less pressure.

### Main Points:

- Throughout the process of strikes and techniques, the hand positioning and grip should never change.
- The hands should not grip the shinai squarely. A square grip is usually the result of including the index fingers and thumbs in gripping the shinai. Such a grip will restrict the flexibility and movement of the hands.



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3. The hilt of the shinai should be held at the very end (left hand). The overlapping of the small finger halfway over the end of the shinai is an acceptable practice. However, never is the shinai to be held with the hilt protruding from the heel of the left hand. [NB: In holding a Bokutō, the left hand should just reveal the **tsuka-gashira** (end of the hilt)].
4. The right hand should not grasp the shinai directly below the tsuba.

**Chudan-no-kamae** (or **chudan**): The shinai is held in the center-plane of the body with the tip projecting forward to the opponent. Detailed below are the correct positioning of the hands and shinai relative to the body and the opponent:

a. The left hand is extended approximately the width of one fist (10cm) forward of the abdomen.

b. The first joint of the thumb (at the base of the thumb) is in a direct line in front of the navel.

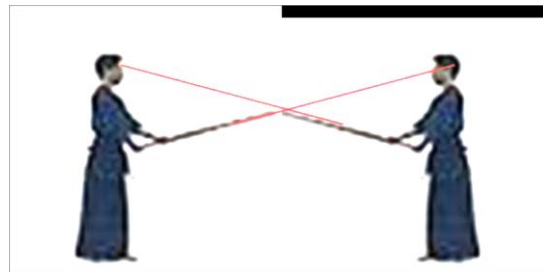
c. The shinai is angled forward, tsuru (cord) upwards, projecting the line of the shinai to the opponent's throat, face or left eye (see note below).

d. The elbows should not stick out, but be relaxed, with a slight space between them and the body - they would just touch your Do lightly.

Have the feeling of holding an egg in each armpit.

**NB:** The height of the Kensen can vary in certain instances, but should not be higher than your opponent's throat or lower than his Kote. It must also remain close to the center, always point within opponent's body/throat area.

The All Japan Kendo Federation Dictionary says "... the extension of the kensen (tip of the shinai) points between the opponent's eyes." However, they also add within their "kihon kata" text "From issoku-itto-no-maai (one-step one-strike interval) the line of the kensen should extend to a point on the face between the eyes or toward the left-eye." However, in their Fundamental Kendo manual, and Nippon Kendo Kata text, they state that the shinai or bokutō "... is held so that the tip (**kissaki**) points toward the opponent's throat." *The projected line of the shinai is called the "kensen."* However, kensen is more than just a noun for a positional reference, kensen includes functional principles. The understanding and application of kensen is the key to maneuvering, attacking, and forestalling an opponent. This aspect is presented here as an introduction, only. The concept and the actual application can only be acquired through diligent training. If the Kensen drops too low, the shinai becomes vulnerable to being struck down, giving the opportunity to strike Men using Hari-otoshi or Kote-Men. If the kensen rises to point above the head, it no longer exerts pressure on the opponent and is also an opportunity to strike kote. Keeping the Kensen at a level where the opponent can only see its tip seems to about the correct level. That provides a threat to the opponent, requiring the displacement of the shinai to make an opportunity. From this position, pushing hands or body forward, the shiani tip should strike the throat, as in tsuki attack.



**Foot Position:** As noted in the coming section, Ashi Sabaki, footwork is the most important aspect of kendo practice.

Good footwork begins with correct foot positioning. In their correct position, the feet are separated by approximately the width of one fist (10cm) with the toes pointed directly forward. The heel of the right foot should be aligned with the big toe of the left foot. The heel of the right foot should be resting lightly on the floor while the heel of the left foot should be elevated to a natural height off of the floor. The body weight is centered between the feet with the strength of mobility-focused in the lower part of the legs from the knees downward. The upper body, from the knees upward, remains relaxed. While the left leg should remain straight, the knee must not be locked. The position of the left foot/leg is vital. There are two common methods used to aid in foot positioning:

a. The first method starts from shizen-tai with the heels of the feet together, and the toes pointed 30 degrees outward. Pivot on the balls of the feet and rotate the heels outward to point the toes directly forward. Step forward with the right foot to a point where the heel is aligned with the big toe of the left foot.

b. In the second method, the right foot is positioned with the toes pointed directly forward. The heel of the left foot is placed against the heel of the right foot with the toes pointed 90 degrees outward (to the left). From this position, pivot the ball of the left foot and rotate the heel outward to point the toes directly forward. The feet should now be in their correct positioning.



You will take a correct position by taking a natural step forward from right foot and halting at mid-step, so that right heel is in line with left toes. The left heel will be naturally raised with the weight evenly (50:50) distributed on both feet.



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## Conditions to avoid:

- The toes should not point outward. Such a stance may seem stable; however, it is unstable when moving backward and fumikiri (push of the rear leg) is slow and weak. Toes should point forward toward your opponent.
- Avoid a stance where the feet are in a line. That is an unstable stance and movement in any direction is difficult.
- Do not position the feet closer together than prescribed. This foot position may have some benefit in forwarding and backward movements but is unstable. It is also weak when receiving an opponent's tai-atari (body check).
- When the feet are extended too far apart in their forward-back relation, movement in all directions becomes awkward. Additionally, such a stance lowers the body height and allows an opponent to dominate in stature.

## Hip Position:

Hips should be kept square to the front, with the buttocks tucked in. That allows the left leg/foot to be positioned correctly. When pushing or lunging forward, your body will then keep straight. That also helps the left foot to return to its position behind the right foot quickly. It is essential to provide a stable and balanced platform to allow correct striking.

## Eyes position (Metsuke)

- Metsuke** is the positioning of one's eyes. It is the act of observing the opponent as a whole while looking into eyes.

Some Kendo sayings used to try explaining the feeling are:

- Enzan no Metsuke** means that you look at your opponent as if you are looking at a far away mountain. That is to look at the opponent as a whole, rather than focusing on one point.
- Kan-ken-no-metsuke** is the teaching of the importance of having a keen eye which can not only see the opponent's appearance but can also perceive the opponents abilities, state of mind and intentions. (Read **Gorin no Sho** by Miyamoto Musashi for more detail)

These ideas are all very deep and require study. To begin with:

- Watch the **eyes**: opponent looking at the target before striking (Don't get tricked)
- Watch the **Kensen** and **wrists**: (especially right Kote) to spot initiation of technique
- Watch the **shoulders**: As they breathe out is a good time to attack them
- Watch **oneself**: check your position for weakness

## Assuming Kamae (with Shinai)

- Stand in shizen-tai (see the previous chapter) with the shinai held in **sage-to**.

**Sage-to** (also **Tei-to**): The holding of the shinai in a relaxed attitude while standing in **shizen-tai**. The shinai is held naturally at the side with the hilt angled slightly inward. The shinai should be held at a 45-degree angle when viewed from the side. The tsuru of the shinai is positioned on the downward side.

- Execute **Moku-rei** (See **Ritsu-rei**): Keep the grasp of the shinai relaxed. Do not change the position or angle of the shinai as the bow is performed. Ask your partner to please train "*Onegai shimasu.*"
- Raise the shinai to the **Tai-to** position.

**Tai-to**: The standing posture with the shinai held in a drawing attitude. From **sage-to**, the shinai is raised to the hip with Tsuka-gashira (end of the hilt of the shinai) directly forward of the bellybutton. The pad of the thumb is placed on the tsuba, slightly to the inside (right) from the center of the shinai.

- Draw the Shinai (sword) - "**Nuke-to.**"

**Nuke-to**: Push out your shinai a little forward and start drawing your shinai toward your opponent. At the same time, take a small step forward with the right foot.

\* When drawing the shinai with the right hand, the left-hand stays still.

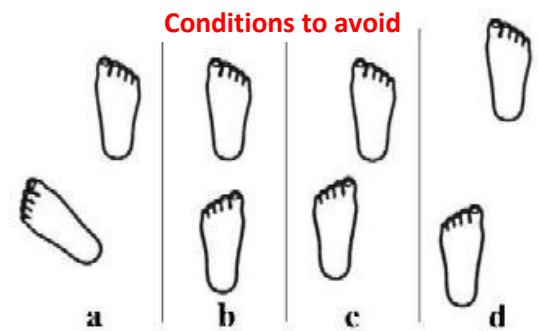
\* Flip your sword forward in a large arc to the front, and grab the shinai with the left hand.

When you stop here, you are ready to go in the **chudan** position.

- Assume the **sonkyo** position.

**Sonkyo**: Turn in your left heel, and bend at the knees to lower the hips. **Sonkyo** is a posture taken to show respect before and after a match or training evolution. When in this squatting posture, correct upper body posture is maintained. The knees are opened outward with the thighs forming a 90-degree angle. The body is balanced on the balls of the feet, and the shinai is held in chudan (center guard position).

- Stand and take a step forward with the right foot to bring the feet into a proper guard position.



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## Kamae-kata - Assuming Kamae with partner (Shinai practice)

1. Face each other in the **sage-to** posture at a separation of nine steps.
2. Execute **Ritsu-rei**.
3. Bring the shinai to the **Tai-to** position.
4. Take three steps forward starting on the right foot.
5. Draw the shinai, "**nuke-to**," on the third step and assume the **sonkyo** position.
6. Stand and take a step forward with the right foot to bring the feet into a proper guard position.

## Osame-kata - Withdrawing from kamae

1. From the chudan-no-kamae posture.
2. Turn in your left heel, and bend the knees and lower the hips to assume the **sonkyo** position.
3. Withdraw the shinai -"**Osame-to**" to the **Tai-to** position and then straighten the legs to stand.

**Osame-to**: Reverse of **nuke-to** action.

4. Step back starting with the left foot.
5. Lower the shinai to the **sage-to** position.
6. Perform **Moku-rei**, and thank your partner "**Arigatou gozaimasu.**"

## Main Points:

- Proper upper body posture should always be maintained.
- When drawing the shinai, grasp the tsuka from the underside so the tsuru will come to rest on the topside of the shinai after the shinai is drawn. Conversely, when withdrawing the shinai, the shinai should be rotated to bring the tsuru to rest on the downward side.
- When taking sonkyo with a partner, careful consideration should be given to the distance to the center starting point - upon taking three steps and drawing the shinai; the shinai tip should be within the center area of the court.
- When in the sonkyo position with a partner, the tips of the shinai should be separated by two to ten centimeters.

## Kamae O-toku (normal instruction "Yasume" in Shinai kendo)

Assume a relaxed or at-ease posture with the shinai drawn. From chudan-no-kamae, turn the shinai downward to point the **kissaki** (tip of shinai) to just outside the opponent's left knee. The **kissaki** should be at a level five or six centimeters below the knee. The cutting edge of the shinai (the side opposite the tsuru) should be angled downward and to the inside at approximately 45 degrees.

## Chapter 3: Ashi-sabaki

Ashi-sabaki is the collective term for all kendo footwork techniques. Ashi-sabaki is the single most important physical aspect of kendo; it is the foundation of all kendo skills. Without good footwork (without a strong foundation), it is difficult, if not impossible to build the structures of kendo technique. There are four primary footwork techniques: Okuri-ashi, Hiraki-ashi, Ayumi-ashi, and Tsugi-ashi. (The first three are used most frequently)

### Okuri-ashi

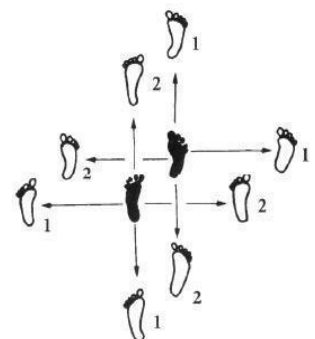
Of the four footwork techniques, okuri-ashi is the principal technique, as it allows coordinated body movement in all directions and can be associated with all kendo techniques. The movement is a simple glide/sliding step with the foot corresponding to the direction of travel initiating the movement.

### Hiraki-ashi

Hiraki-ashi is a footwork technique applied when a diagonal movement would prove advantageous in avoiding an opponent's attack and open opportunities for a counterattack. Hiraki means "open." As the name implies, this footwork allows a person to step out of the way, opening the path of an advancing opponent, while maintaining correct guard posture of the body and feet.



Hiraki-ashi



Okuri-ashi

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## Ayumi-ashi

Ayumi-ashi is the same as a walking step and is used in situations requiring rapid movement across an extended distance.

## Tsugi-ashi:

Tsugi-ashi is an advanced footwork technique. It normally recommends leaving this practice to later in your study (Shodan +) as it can lead to bad habits forming in Kihon. Tsugi-ashi is used to move forward quickly across a distance greater than would be possible to cover using okuri-ashi. I was taught (as older texts describe it) when practicing tsugi-ashi, it is particularly important to keep in mind the basic rule that the foot corresponding to the direction of movement is advanced first. In other words, the tsugi-ashi technique starts with the forward foot advancing first, then followed by the left foot being drawn even with the right to complete the first step of the movement. Do not move the left foot first - in all circumstances, initiating with Ayumi-ashi is incorrect and should not be practiced.

## Suri-ashi (Sliding step)

- All Ashi-sabaki should be learned and practiced with Suri-ashi - sliding step.
- Slide (actually Glide) your feet across the floor without pointing toes up.
- Keeping the heel raised slightly, and sliding the ball of feet and toes helps slide feet smoothly.
- Do not drag feet; try to make ashi-sabiki smooth and graceful.
- This footwork is ideal for smooth wooden surfaces but will be difficult on treated anti-slip surfaces.
- If your toes rise, it may be due to the step being too large - try smaller steps

## Fumi-kiri and Fumi-komi-Ashi (Lunge forward explosively with the left and right footwork)

It is difficult to execute this footwork correctly, and it can take several years to do properly. I have broken the sequence of movements down and later will describe some practical ideas.

**Fumi-kiri:** To kick/push off the floor forcefully with the rear leg to lunge forward explosively.

**Fumi-kiri-ashi:** The leg/foot which provides force and stability by pushing off the floor; it is the left leg in a forward strike, and it is the right leg when retreat or execute Hiki waza.

**Fumi-kiri-dōsa:** The motion of pushing off from the floor with Fumi-kiri-ashi.

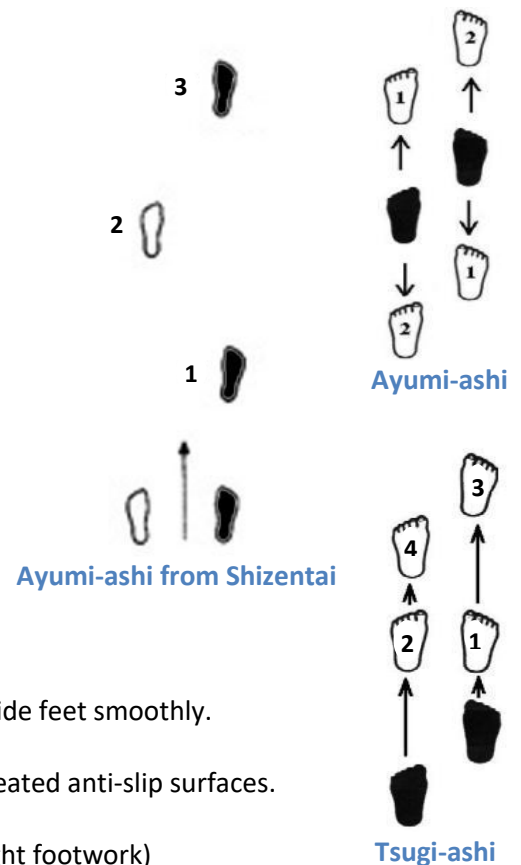
**Fumi-komi:** A firm stamping step with front foot/leg in the forward strike to stabilize the body.

**Fumi-komi-ashi:** The front foot which stamps on the floor with the entire sole.

**Fumi-komi-dōsa:** The series of motions from stamping, recovery to a stable position by bringing the left foot in after a rapid lunge and accomplished by the continuous body movement forward with Okuri-ashi.

The processes to complete these actions are:

- Without bending the left leg, lunge forward the hips maintaining your posture.
- The right foot should move forward parallel to, and just above the floor – don't point toes upwards.
- Straighten your right leg, causing you to stamp the floor with right foot - feeling of slapping the floor with the foot. Remember, Fumi-komi is to stabilize your body, and the loud stamping slap is the result, not the aim.
- The above action should be "straight" posture and bring hips and Left leg/foot up to the right. (Similar feeling to when stepping up) - Again left leg/knee straight.
- The body should naturally want to keep moving forward with its momentum - use okuri-ashi to continue forward movement.
- Do not cheat. Since it is hard to reach our training partner with one *fumi-komi*, people tend to cheat to get closer to their training partner. Common cheating to shorten the distance between you and your training partner is using *tsugi-ashi* and *ayumi-ashi*.



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## Seme-ashi

This subject will be mentioned in later chapters. The right foot action is called Seme-ashi (foot used for Seme) when you move your right foot slightly (only slightly) forward, without leaning forward. Have the feeling of pushing forward the right foot, the right knee, and hips as if you are pressing opponent to attack.

## Jiku-ashi

This subject is the left foot (Foot used for supporting the body). - The left foot must remain planted in the correct position to allow you to push forward and attack immediately. Do not lose the feeling that your left foot, left leg, left hip and the left side of the body are all connected and act together.

*You will not be able to use both feet as described above while you are trying to pressure your opponent if the distance between your right foot and left foot is too wide from front to rear. Also, this is true if the center of gravity moves forward and backward or from backward to forward, or your upper body leans forward and backward in the Kamae.*

## Main Points for all footwork:

1. It is Important that during ashi-sabaki, that you move maintaining your posture. Have the feeling of moving along your hips/tanden (lower abdomen), keeping constant eye level.
2. Keeping your posture must prevent back heel touch the floor. During Okuri-ashi make sure left heel does not touch the floor when stepping back.
3. Especially during Okuri-ashi, never drag the rear foot - it must "snap" up immediately behind the front foot. **Hiki-tsuke** is the action of immediately drawing/pulling up the back foot to the front foot.
4. The foot corresponding to the direction of movement is advanced first. For example, when moving forward the forward foot leads the movement. Likewise, when moving backward, the back foot leads. When moving left, the left foot leads, etc. That is the general rule for all footwork techniques.
5. The speed and strength of both feet should be synchronous, quickly pulling the rear foot back to its correct guard position. This tempo was termed "**Inyo-ashi**" (shadow and light foot-movement) by Miyamoto Musashi. Musashi wrote: *"When you cut, when you retreat, and even when you deflect an attack you step right-left-right-left with **Inyo-ashi**."*
6. The upper body should remain toned, yet relaxed, so the shoulders, arms, and shinai do not sway or bob when moving.

## Conditions to avoid

In the Book of Five Rings, Miyamoto Musashi invalidates three types of footwork: Tobi-ashi, Uki-ashi, and Fumi-yusuru.

### **Tobi-ashi** (Jumping foot)

This foot movement is exhibited when the lead foot is raised upward upon the execution of a step or strike.

### **Uki-ashi** (Floating foot)

This foot movement is when one foot is not grounded. This situation occurs when the body weight is not centered between the feet, allowing one foot to move lightly over the floor while the opposite foot bears the body weight.

### **Fumi-yusuru** (Stuck foot)

When the feet are inactive - fixed in their position.

## Chapter 4: Suburi

Suburi is the act of swinging the shinai or bokutō up and down vertically or diagonally. The purpose of suburi is to learn how to handle the shinai or bokutō, the correct direction of its movement (**ha-suji**), the proper grip for striking, and the basic striking movements related to **ashi-sabaki** (footwork) and **tai-sabaki** (body action). **Jōge Suburi** (vertical swing) and **naname suburi** (diagonal swing) are Basic Suburi. **Kūkan Datotsu** is suburi where one practices striking the targets of *men*, *kote*, *do* and *tsuki* to an imaginary opponent. In the Kamae chapter, we discussed the correct posture, grip, and stance for Chudan-no-kame. To master suburi, it is essential all these elements are followed correctly. A solid platform is required for correct cutting. The elements needed for correct suburi are:

**Furi-kaburi** (*furi-kaburu*) – Swing the arms and shinai up above the head. **N.B:** The shoulders should be the center of rotation for the swing – avoid bending wrists and elbows inwards.

**Furi-oroshi** (*furi-orosu*) – swing the shinai down from an upward position and strike.

**Furu** (verb) - To move the shinai, continuously up and down or diagonally right and left.

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## Jōge Suburi (also Jōge-buri)

- Start from the correct Chudan-no kamae position:

**NB:** *The manuals state that we should swing the shinai without changing the grip. To make action easier when learning Jōge-buri, some Sensei suggest the followings. Move the right hand close to the left or grip with both hands together at the center of the tsuka or others say to keep normal grip - do as Instructor asks, but either way - Do NOT allow hands to slide up and down Tsuka during swing - hand position must remain constant.*

## **Furi-kaburi**

- Swing the shinai upward in a large movement keeping left and right hands perfectly centered.
- The feeling should be of pushing the left hand toward and up over the head, raising the hands and elbows as far as shoulders will allow. (DO NOT pull it up with the right hand- this arm must remain relaxed.) Think of lifting elbows up as far as you can.
- The shoulders are the point the arms and shinai rotate around; the other joints should not move initially.
- Keep the shoulders down and relaxed - do not “hunch” them up during the swing.

**NB:** *The size of the swing varies with different Sensei’s ideas. Some say that it should only swing back parallel to the floor, as beyond this requires the other joints to bend. Others state that the swing should go all the way back until the shinai tip reaches the center of your buttocks. The later one is best for beginners/children as it checks the swing is perfectly centered and teaches the correct way to relax and open the shoulder. Therefore this is the method normally practiced.*

- Swing the shinai all the way back over your head in a large arc until the kensen touches the center of your buttocks.
- You will need to bend/relax your elbows and wrists to do this - Do NOT allow your hand grip to loosen.

## **Furi-oroshi**

- Keeping the feeling of rotating the swing around the shoulder, allow arms (Elbows and wrists) to naturally extend during the downswing, while turning wrists slightly inwards, with the feeling of “wringing the Tsuka-gawa” with the bottom three fingers. Thus, swing the shinai in a large arc forward and downwards in a perfectly centered line.
- The swing should finish with the kensen at knee level.

## **Important points and Common Mistakes:**

1. The upswing and downswing should be one action; there is no pause or break between the actions (unless instructed to do so during certain practice patterns).
2. Cutting off-center is normally a result of the right arm being too stiff or using it to swing shinai.
3. Keep wrist, elbows, and shoulders relaxed - do not hunch shoulders.
4. Keep correct posture - do not “duck” or nod head during the swing, and keep hips square to the front.
5. Do not stick out your left elbow - this is the result of wrong kamae/grip and no **shibori** action.

Add **Okuri-ashi** footwork once you have mastered the basic swing, moving forward/backward and Kake-goe (shout) to suburi. The followings are the procedures for **Jōge-Suburi**:

- Step forward on the right foot and swing up shinai for furi-kaburi.
- Immediately Swing down shinai and bring up the left foot behind the right - so it is in place at the same moment the swing finishes at knee level - with a shout - normally counting, e.g., “Ichi.”
- Step back with the left leg and swing shinai up for furi-kaburi.
- Immediately Swing down shinai and bring back the right foot in front of the left - so it is in place at the same moment the swing finishes at knee level - with a shout - normally counting, e.g., “Ni.”
- Repeat sequence 10, 30, 50,100 times as required to learn it.

## **Naname Suburi (Naname-buri)**

Naname suburi is a progression from Jōge suburi where the swings are diagonal. Whereas Jōge suburi leads to Men and Kote striking, Naname-buri is the basis of Sayu Men (right and left) and Do; Most of the exercise should be performed as Jōge Suburi, with some changes like:

- Large swing up until kensen reaches between buttocks (as above)
- Swing down and squeeze/turn the wrists to the left, so shinai swings down at on a 45-degree angle path from the right.

**NB:** Angle is approximate, and can vary between 30 and 60 degrees, just try to keep consistent.

- With the same furi-oroshi action as before, swing down the shinai until kensen is level with the left knee.

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- Swing the shinai back over your head following the reverse path as swing came down - until kensen touches between buttocks.
- Swing down and squeeze/turn the wrists to the right, so shinai swings down at on a 45-degree angle path from the left.
- With the same furi-oroshi action as before, swing down the shinai until kensen is level with the right knee.

## IMPORTANT

- Left hand (think of left thumb) must remain in the center body line during entire swing.
- Once you have mastered the basic swing, add Okuri-ashi footwork, moving forward/backward and later Hiraki-ashi footwork (moving diagonally sideways).

## Kūkan Datotsu.

Kūkan Datotsu is a suburi practice where we imagine cutting a similar sized opponent's target zones of Shomen, Migi and Hidari Men, Kote, Migi and Hidari Do and thrust to Tsuki. I will focus on Shomen (straight frontal head cut) suburi - because this fundamental strike must be mastered before you can properly learn any other cuts.

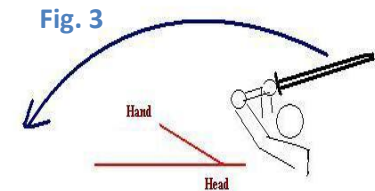
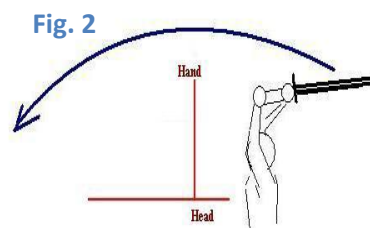
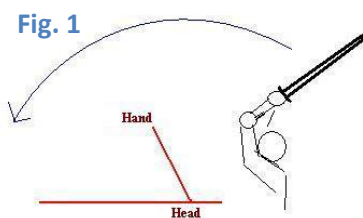
## Shomen suburi:

- Assume Chudan-no-Kamae - it is essential that your posture, grip, and kamae are correct - otherwise, it will affect and destroy your suburi. (Check Kamae in mirror if needed)

## Furi-kaburi

- Raise the arms up until the left fist is above the forehead (at about one fist's distance), Shinai is at about a 45-degree angle at least pointing up and back, keeping your head still. **NB:** The shoulders should be the center of rotation for the swing – avoid bending wrists and elbows inwards, feeling of throwing hands and elbow forward and up.
- Instruction: "Raise both elbows as far as they will go" may best describe the action.

Below is some commonly taught Furi-kaburi. Most textbooks state: "swing up until left fist is above the forehead, the Shinai at 45-degrees up and back." That would appear to be Fig. 1. Also very common is that seen in figure 3, but I feel this is more the result of bending elbows or Jodan kamae - as it is clear that right fist is above forehead here. I have also been taught to swing back until shoulder resists movement, and it can act as a spring. Further to this is to "swing back as if thrusting into a wall behind you." That would appear to be as seen in Fig. 2. In practice, Fig. 2 swing is an extension of Fig 1 that is the arms continue their swing up to their natural limit. As we cannot see behind us when swinging up, this is the point reached in most cases. So maybe suffice it to say "perform a large upward swing with the feeling of shinai being at 45 degrees behind, and left fist above your forehead, use the natural limit of swing to send arms forward to strike." Later, I will include some scientific proof that this method (Fig. 2) is the fastest and most efficient action - see Appendix C.



## Furi-oroshi

**NB:** Other terms; **Kiritsuke** is a cut, and **Kirioroshi** is a downward cut.

- Swing the shinai down from an upward position and strike.
- Have the feeling of pulling left fist down and forward. Remember arms must rotate around the shoulders. Keep right arm relaxed.
- Allow elbows and wrist to stretch naturally.
- Squeeze both hands slightly in, straightening arms – **Chakin-shibori** (茶巾絞り, used for the teaching of **Te-no-uchi**).
- Strike down so that kensen stops at your head height.
- Do not use strength to strike, but snap wrists toward with a "whip" action.
- Right fist just below shoulder level, almost parallel to the floor, left fist just below chest level.

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When performing **Kiri-tsuke** (kiri-oroshi), you must also include:

- **Te-no-uchi** – this is the overall use of the hands when striking. It includes the way of tightening/loosening of the grip and the adjusting of the balance between the two hands.
- **Chakin-shibori** – the way to grip the shinai with both hands, in posture, or when striking. The term originates from the fact that the way the shinai is gripped when striking resembles the method used to wring out a towel in the tea ceremony. One grips tightly only with little and ring fingers, and loosely with the middle finger, thumb and forefinger.
- **Sae** – When striking, the correct coordination of the right and left hands, with instantaneous te-no-uchi, and sharp “whip-like” wrist action give the strike the sharpness known as “sae.”

## "Cut with the left hand, not the right."

I am sure everyone has heard or been told this. So what does it mean? We hold the sword with two hands, not one, so what is the thought here? After listening to the Senseis I have trained with, I think the following sums up the idea:

The right arm is the forward one and normally the strongest, so there is a tendency to make it do the work. If the right arm is used for pulling up the shinai and cutting, then the action will be incorrect and will affect your posture. The left hand must pull down and back as the right arm extends forward to achieve the correct cutting action. By having the feeling of the Left arm doing 70% of the work, and the right side 30%, they should work in balance.

## Points to watch and avoid:

- Pause between furi-kaburi and Kiri-tsuke (**NB:** Unless practicing like san-kyo-do suburi).
- Hips are not square to the front.
- Head ducks/nods down - keep correct posture.
- Left elbow bent and stuck out after cutting.
- Left fist finishes too high (level with right fist) or too low (arms not reaching forward).
- Use of excess strength - stiff right arm or shoulder raised (hunched) when cutting.
- No snap action with kensen.
- Kensen should not be below the level of the hands - may be a sign of incorrect grip or hand position in Kamae.
- Not completing the cut, but pulling it back upwards without completing action - try pausing.

## Kake-goe (shouts)

Kake-goe is a natural vocalization which shows that one is full of spirit and on guard. It can serve to encourage one's self, to intimidate the opponent, and to announce victory. The shout is often called **ki-ai**, as the shout shows that one's spirit is fully focused on attacking. Before attacking from **tōma**, a shout of “Yah” or “Ei” is often used to increase one's spirit and to unsettle the opponent. We shout the name of the target, for example, “MEN!” when attacking showing that you meant to hit where you did, but that you are throwing all of your **ki** into the strike. Continue this ki-ai until Zanshin is complete. Make ki-ai short and sharp during Suburi. If counting, shout the numbers. The shout must be loud and strong - not from your mouth/vocal cords, but from yours abdomen/belly. Close your mouth after you shout.

### 1. Stationary Shomen Uchi

- **Furi-kaburi**: Large swing up until left fist is above the forehead.
- **Kiritsuke: Shomen Uchi** - left fist in front of chest; right arm extended and almost parallel to the floor, both hands (**Te-no-uchi**) snap and squeeze slightly inward (**Chakin-shibori**), express sharp, loud **Ki-ai** - "MEN!"

After this, add Okuri-ashi:

### 2. Okuri Ashi - Shomen Uchi ("Men uchi San Kyo Do Suburi")

- One step forward with **Suri-ashi** as SHINAI swung up **Furi-kaburi** above head as in above practice - “Ichi.”
- **Kiritsuke - Men-uchi** as you bring left foot up to proper position behind the right (**hikitsuke**).
- At the moment of striking, express **Ki-ai** - “Men!” or “Ni!”
- Retreat from the left foot in one **Okuri-ashi** step to original position; assume **Chudan-no-kamae** - “San!”

**NB:** *The first steps may be altered to aid learning principles:*

- *Swing up/Furi-kaburi – “Ichi.”*
- *Step forward from the right, then perform Kiritsuke – “Men.”*

Later, do both actions in one continuous motion (**Ik-kyo-do**) -no pause between Furi-kaburi and Kiritsuke - Men-uchi:

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### 3. "**Men uchi Ni Kyo Do Suburi**" - (Okuri-ashi Men-uchi with **Ik-kyo-do** swing)

- One step forward with Suri-ashi as Shinai swung up Furi-kaburi above head as in above practice, and immediately,
- **Kiritsuke - Men-uchi** as you bring left foot up to proper position behind the right.
- At the moment of striking, express **Ki-ai** - "Men!" or "Ichi! etc."
- Retreat from left foot in one **Okuri-ashi** step to original position; assume **Chudan-no-kamae** - "Ni!"

### 4. **Renzoku Shomen Uchi- "Zenshin Kotai Men Suburi."** (Men-uchi should be in **Ik-Kyo-Do**, one motion, no pause)

- One step forward with Suri-ashi as Shinai swung up Furi-kaburi above head as in above practice, and immediately,
- **Kiritsuke - Men-uchi** - as you bring left foot up to proper position behind the right, later motion should be in **Ik-kyo-do**.
- At the moment of striking, express **Ki-ai** - "Men!" or "Ichi! etc."
- Retreat from left foot Okuri-ashi step, swinging the Shinai up with Furi-kaburi.
- **Kiritsuke - Men-uchi** as you bring right foot back to the proper position in front of the left, the later motion should be in **Ik-kyo-do** (one motion, no pause.)
- At the moment of striking, express **Ki-ai** - "Men!" or "Ni! etc."

**NB:** Each cut must be with **Ki-ken-tai-itchi** - the harmonization of Spirit - Sword - Body when cutting. Co-ordinate the strike - withdraw of trailing foot – **ki-ai** together.

The above basics can be expanded to include other suburi, such as:

- **Sonkyo suburi** - cut when rising, furi-kaburi as sinking back to sonkyo.
- **Matawari suburi** - feet in a wide stance, and cutting as you squat/sink down.
- **Sayu Men suburi** - cutting to the left and right men (see **Kiri-kaeshi** chapter)
- **Kote men suburi** - practice **renzoku** Kote and Men forward then back.
- **Katate suburi** - using an only left hand (best performed against the target.)
- **Haya suburi** - using jumping footwork to cut forward and backward

Also, as well as practicing alone with shinai, they can be practiced:

- In pairs, cutting to a Shinai held out in both extended arms at your head level. This method is beneficial in teaching feeling of not striking too hard, learning **te-no-uchi** and **sae**, as well as practicing **reigi** by working together with your partner.
- Using Bokutō instead of shinai can be beneficial to the understanding of **ha-suji**.
- Practicing **suburi** forward, backward, sideways, up and down the Dojo length on one breath to help breathe control and ashi-sabaki.
- Using Hiraki-ashi or Fumi-komi-ashi to learn ashi-sabaki.

## Chapter 5

### Ma-ai, Kihon-no-uchi-kata, Tsuki-kata, Uke-kata, Tsuba-zeriai, and Zanshin

#### Ma-ai

**Ma-ai** is the spatial distance between you and your opponent. The establishment of **ma-ai** through a relationship with the opponent is a subtle and important matter.

1. **Chika-ma (Chikai ma-ai):** Closer distance. When you get closer than **issoku ittō no ma-ai**, you are in Chika-ma. You can easily reach your opponent, but your opponent also can reach you easily.
  2. **Issoku ittō no ma-ai (Issoku ittō no ma):** This distance is a distance where you can reach your opponent with one step forward, and you can avoid your opponent's cut with one step backward - The fundamental spatial distance in Kendo.
  3. **Tō-ma (Tōi ma-ai):** Distance beyond **issoku ittō no ma**. You cannot reach your opponent, and your opponent cannot reach you with one step. Your shinai and your opponent's shinai are not touching (or barely touching).
- **Uchi-ma:** The distance for you to strike. - One's optimum distance and opportunity for striking. When learning, start close to make keeping posture easy, then increase distance - try to be able to strike from as far as possible.

It is easy to strike from **Chika-ma**: Beginners should focus on practicing **Keiko** from **To-ma** to encourage fast ashi-sabaki and large fluid striking. Closing from **tō-ma** is when one must be fully prepared to attack or be attacked - there is no chance to relax.



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## Kihon-no-uchi-kata - The Basic way of striking and Tsuki-kata - Thrusting

We can learn, practice and improve our cutting with Suburi, but we need an opponent to learn about distance and learn to strike effectively. We should practice striking with Bokutō to just above the target, and striking the target with Shinai - either to the Bogu or a shinai held close to the actual target position, so not to effect cutting distances. Practicing in pairs, the term **Kakarite** is used for the one striking (practicing technique) and **Motodachi** used for the receiver of the strike or technique. Both must maintain alertness during practice as both roles are vital. **Kakarite** must always maintain posture and pressure to be ready to cut immediately any opportunity to strike. The height of the **kensen** in **kamae** will vary with the size of one's opponent, as will your **Uchi-ma**. When in **kamae** adjust the **kensen** level by moving the left fist (hand) position rather than bending the wrist. When cutting your right hand should finish around your opponents shoulder level.

**Motodachi** must help maintain correct Ma-ai and provide correct opportunities to be struck for **Kakarite**.

- Open for **Men** by moving **Kensen** to your right, or lowering it to the right.
- Open for **Kote** by raising the **kensen** to the left - at first, exaggerate movement to make **kote** easy to strike.
- Open for **Do** by raising arms to reveal target, and sometimes turn the body to the right to offer larger target.
- Open for **Tsuki** by lowering **kensen** down to the right - keep chin pulled in to receive.

If not wearing Bogu (armor) then use the shinai to receive strikes. Do not hold it arms stretched out as mentioned in the Suburi section as this will effect **Ma-ai** - instead hold close to where the actual target would be, in such a way you are still protected:

- **Men** - hold shinai in both hands just in front and above the head, or with hands in that position, shinai out to your side.
- **Kote** - hold shinai in stretched out hands at position **Kote** would normally be, or with hands in that position, shinai out to your side.
- **Do** - hold shinai in both hands, right hand low down close to your right hip and left hand near the right shoulder. The vertical shinai is then in a similar position to the **Do**.
- **Tsuki** - Not normally practiced by beginners except in style of Bokutō ni your Kendo kihon waza Keiko ho.

First one must master **Reigi-Kamae** - **Ashi-sabaki** and **Suburi**. Then you must learn and develop effective **Kihon**. Keep in mind some important ideas:

- The strike must be with sufficient force to cut with a real sword. Not too soft or too hard - **Men** and **Do** are struck more firmly than the **Kote**.
- You must always keep control of posture and kamae.
- Strikes are not made by force of strength, but by the correct action of arms and wrists.
- Do not think of striking with the Right hand, strike with the left. Do not think of striking with the left hand, but strike with the hips, legs, and feet - use all your body.
- Do not put strength into lifting the shinai, relax arms, and strike quickly.

### Steps to Kihon Waza:

1. Focus on large proper **Furi-kaburi**, **Ki-ai**, and **Te-no-uchi** from a stationary position where **Datotsu-bui** (striking zones) can be reached without moving.
2. From **Issoku-ittō-no-ma-ai**, step in using **Suri-ashi** and practice **Ashi-sabaki** to strike with **Ki-ken-tai-no-itchi**.
3. From **Issoku-ittō-no-ma-ai**, build up the pressure, step in, and then strike with **Ki-ten-tai-itchi** using **Fumi-komi-ashi**. Here one learns and improves their **Uchi-ma** (optimum distance and opportunity for cutting with good posture).
4. From a far distance (**Toma**), step into **Issoku-ittō-no-ma-ai** with **Suri-ashi**, then use sharp **Fumi-komi** to strike and follow through with **Zanshin**.

### Step 1: Stationary Shomen Uchi (straight Men-Uchi) – Without footwork

- From **Chudan-no-kamae** at a distance where **Datotsu-bu** can be reached without a step.
- **Furi-kaburi**: large swing up until left fist is above the forehead.
- **Kiritsuke**: - cut Men with the left fist in front of chest, right arm extended and almost parallel to the floor, both hands squeeze slightly inward in (**Chakin-shibori**) and (**Te-no-uchi**) wrist snap, express sharp, loud **Ki-ai** - "MEN!"
- Do both actions in one continuous motion (**Ik-kyo-do**) - no pause between **Furi-kaburi** and **Kiritsuke** - **Men-uchi**.

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## Step 2: **Okuri Ashi Shomen Uchi**

- From **Chudan-no-kamae** at a distance of **Issoku-ittō-no-ma-ai** (where one step away to reach the target)
- One step forward from right with **Suri-ashi** as Shinai swung up **Furi-kaburi** above head as in above practice, and immediately,
- **Kiritsuke - Men-uchi** strike as you bring left foot up to proper position behind the right.
- At the moment of striking, express **Ki-ai** - "Men!" or "Ichi! etc."
- **Ki-ai, Hiki-tsuke** (pulling up Left foot) and Strike must be simultaneous - **Ki-ken-tai-itchi**
- Retreat from left foot in one small **Okuri-ashi** step to show **Zanshin** in **Chudan-no-kamae**.
- Retreat from left foot, in another small **Okuri-ashi** step, to original distance/position, maintaining **Chudan-no-kamae**.

## Step 3: **Fumikomi ashi Shomen Uchi - Issoku-ittō-no-ma-ai (one step cut)**

- From **Chudan-no-kamae** at a distance of **Issoku-ittō-no-ma-ai** (where one step away to reach the target - start at easy distance, then try to increase it maintaining posture)
- When Motodachi (opponent) opens his or her shinai to the right,
- **Furi-kaburi** swing up Shinai above head as in above practice, and immediately,
- Step forward and **Kiritsuke - Men-uchi**. Strike **Men** while stepping decisively forward with the right foot, and expressing **Ki-ai** - "Men!" the step should be large enough to reach the opponent at **Issoku-ittō-no-ma-ai**. When striking, **Ki-ai**, stamping **Fumi-komi-ashi**, and Strike must be simultaneous - **Ki-ken-tai-itchi**
- Immediately bring the left foot to the proper position (**hiki-tsuke**); use quick **Okuri-ashi (suri-ashi)** to proceed straightforwardly; relax hands; keep the arms extended until ready to return to **Chudan-no-kamae**

**NB:** Several ways of continuing after cutting which are useful to practice are:

1. Continue just 1 step forward and stop at **tsuba-zerai** (see later) - takes two steps back.
2. Continue straight forward 3-4 steps while Motodachi retreats - Kakarite keeping Shinai close to men target. Assume **chudan** and reverse roles.

## Step 4: **Seme – Fumikomi ashi Shomen Uchi - Toma (two-step action)**

- From **Chudan-no-kamae** at a distance of **To-ma** (where one cannot reach the target in one step - Kissaki not touching.) express **Ki-ai** (Yaah!, Aei! etc.)
- Take one step into **Issoku-ittō-no-ma-ai** with **Suri-ashi**,
- Advance right foot/knee/body slightly while maintaining **Kensen** position to apply pressure (**seme-ashi**)
- When Motodachi (opponent) opens his or her shinai to the right,
- Immediately, (**Ik-kyo-do** - in one motion) **Furi-kaburi** swing up Shinai above head as in above practice, **Kiritsuke - Men-uchi** -strike **Men** while stepping decisively forward with the right foot, and expressing **Ki-ai** - "Men!" The step should be big enough to reach the opponent at **Issoku-ittō-no-ma-ai**. When striking, **Ki-ai**, stamping **Fumi-komi-ashi**, and Strike must be simultaneous - **Ki-ken-tai-itchi**
- Immediately, bring left foot to the proper position, use quick successive **Okuri-ashi (suri-ashi)**, proceed fast steps (3 to 4) straightforward, relax hands, keep the arms extended until ready to turn the shortest way toward the opponent. – Keep your composure with eye contact and return to **Chudan-no-kamae**, at **To-ma** or **Issoku-ittō-no-ma-ai** fully ready to attack again.

**NB:** Several different ways of Motodachi offering target can be practiced:

1. Immediately open right after Kakarite makes pressure (**seme**)
2. Keep relaxed kamae, and Kakarite will "Drive" in **seme** to control center line and make opportunity to strike (**kizeme**)
3. Wait 2-3 seconds before opening Kamae - to teach sensing opportunity.

## **Summary of Undesirable habits:**

### **Furi-kaburi:**

- **Kensen** pulled back too soon losing control of the center
- Eyes are looking at the target rather the straight ahead into opponents
- Hands in front of face at **Furi-kaburi**
- A stiff left elbow or bending the elbows in
- Shoulders rise or hunch

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- Head “ducks” underarms, nodding action
- Shinai up angled to the right due to excess strength in the right arm or hand
- **Kensen** drops in the back below hand level during **Furi-kaburi**

## **Fumi-komi, Kiritsuke, and Zanshin:**

- A pause after **Furi-kaburi** and before **Kiritsuke**
- Insufficient **Ki-ai**
- Not moving straight forward
- Hips are not square to the opponent
- Right arm low
- Left elbow bent
- Left fist too high
- Shinai swings down at an angle due to excess strength in the right arm or hand
- Striking too hard or too softly without snap
- Raising **shinai** above head after striking
- Dropping hands to make **tsuba-zeriai** too soon
- Turns away from opponent too soon or runs around them
- Turns too soon while passing opponent or runs too far from the opponent
- Turns wrong direction (away from them)
- Turns with hands and shinai still extended forward

After understanding the fundamentals of **Men-uchi**, progression onto the other strikes and thrusts can be made using the same basic practice method.

## **Kote-Uchi**

- As in **Men-uchi**, a straight large **Furi-kaburi**, and **ashi-sabaki**.
- From **Chudan-no-kamae** the distance where one step away to reach the **Kote** target is different from **Men-uchi**, as the **Kote** is held in front of the body. Adjust your **Uchi-ma** and the size of the step appropriately
- Looking at the opponent's eyes, strike the **Kote** straight with both arms naturally extended. Say "**Kote!**"
- Keep **Kensen** directed to the opponent and bring left foot up behind right immediately (**hiki-tsuke**)
- Use quick **Okuri-ashi (suri-ashi)** to proceed straightforward and stop at **tsuba-zeriai**

**NB:** In some exercises, (such as using **Uchi-komi-bo**) run straight past Motodachi for Zanshin, and turn to the right at correct **ma-ai** (distance). Most, not all, textbooks and Sensei teach always to take Tsuba-zeriai after Kote-uchi.

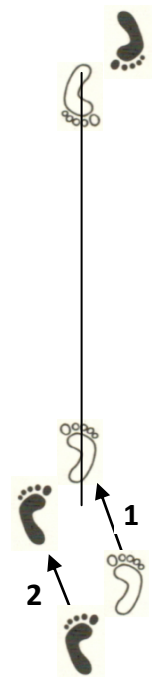
*Normally the motodachi should make a clear opening that is easy to strike. However, in some exercise, motodachi may keep a passive kamae. In this case, it is only possible to strike the kote cleanly by either displacing the **kensen** using a push-release technique or **harai-waza** or by changing one's body center.*

*Adjusting the footwork allows clean striking of the **Kote** as soon as **kensen** rises:*

- Position your RIGHT foot in front of opponent's right foot with hips/body facing him directly during the forward step.

## **Undesirable habits:**

- **Shinai** swings down at an angle
- Eyes look to **Kote** before striking
- Left fist too high or to the side
- Hips bent or twisted
- Pulls **Kensen** away from the opponent after striking
- Arms not extended - pulling hands down or inward to correct incorrect **ma-ai** (distance)



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## Do-Uchi (Migi)

- As in **Men-uchi**, straight large **Furi-kaburi** and **ashi-sabaki**
- Looking at the opponent's eyes
- Swing the shinai down at a 45-degree angle in front of you keeping the Left fist/thumb centered and below level of right fist (against an opponent of the same size)
- Strike the **Do** straight in front with both arms naturally extended, say "**Do!**"
- Bring left foot up behind right immediately (**hiki-tsuke**)
- Use quick successive **Okuri-ashi (suri-ashi)** to proceed fast steps (3 to 4) straightforward for **Zanshin**. **NB:** Begin by cutting straight ahead, and pass an opponent on your right side.

**Motodachi** can turn right to offer large **Do** area, and allow **kakarite** to pass on his left for **Zanshin** - after passing, turn left

Later,

- Step out to the right, so your left foot is in line with opponent's left foot on completion of the **Do** strike.
- Move quickly past **Motodachi** to your left side with the feeling of "brushing" shoulders. At an appropriate distance, turn left for **Zanshin**.

### **Undesirable habits:**

- **Kiri-tsuke** does not start from above the head
- Eyes look to **Do** before striking
- **Shinai** strikes with the side of shinai
- Left fist too high (Shinai tips down) or the left fist, not centered
- Arms are crossed
- Hips twisted or leaning forward

## Tsuki-Uchi

- From **Chudan-no-kamae** at the required distance
- Step in one (or two from **To-ma**) large step from the right foot without moving or dipping the **Kensen**
- Thrust to **Tsuki** straight to the **Nodo** (throat)
- Extend both arms naturally without raising them and shout "**Tsuki!**"
- Bring left foot up to proper position immediately, thrusting hip forward to maintain posture and stability
- As soon as thrust completed relax **kamae** and let arm return naturally back into **Chudan-no-kamae**

### **Undesirable habits:**

- **Shinai** is thrust in an angle because of uneven strengths in hands at both arms
- Hands too high
- Hips are twisted
- **Kakarite** strikes the floor with **kensen** after **Tsuki**

## Uke-kata - (Basic blocking techniques)

These are the methods of defending oneself from strikes using the shinai or bokutō. So why do we need to learn these? Kendo teaches that there is no defense for the sake of defense and it is not Kendo to just block attacks. That being said, it is common for beginners in Jigeiko or shiai to block attacks in such a way that they leave other areas open, vulnerable to get struck. Usually, this is because all they know is to attack, and when under pressure they back off and try to avoid being hit. By teaching correct **Uke-kata**, they will learn the correct posture, use of arms and shinai to block attacks and be in a position where they can immediately attack. These actions will eventually lead to **Oji waza** such as **Suriage** and **Kaeshi waza**.

### **Shomen-Uchi-no Uke-kata I** (blocking straight strike to head)

- Push both fists forward and up (Not higher than right hand at opponent's throat level)
- Take a small step forward, or have to feel of going forward
- Block opponent's strike in a diagonal direction with left (**omote**) or right (**ura**) side of shinai (or bokutō)
- Immediately return **kamae** to control the center - being mentally and physically return to attack

**NB:** This movement is the principle of **Suri-age** motion (beginnings of) and connects to **Men Suri-age Men waza**



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## Shomen-Uchi-no Uke-kata II (blocking straight strike to head)

- Raise hands and kensen in response to opponents attack
- Strike down opponent's shinai in a diagonal direction with left (**omote**) or right (**ura**) side of shinai (or bokutō)
- Immediately return kamae to control the center - being mentally and physically return to attack

**NB:** This movement is the principle of **Kiri-otoshi** motion (beginnings of) and connects to **Men Kiri-otoshi Men** waza  
For blocking attacks to the Hidari and Migi (Left and right) Men, please refer to Kiri-kaeshi chapter 7.

## Kote-Uchi-no Uke-kata I

- Push both fists forward, turning them (think of using left fist) slightly right (also possible to the left)
- Adjust Kamae to maintain correct posture using rear step if required, but with feeling of going forward
- Block opponent's Kote strike to the right front with a sliding lift up motion using the right (**ura**) side of shinai (or bokutō) - left (**omote**) side can also be used in the other direction.
- Immediately return kamae to control the center - being mentally and physically return to attack

**NB:** This movement is the principle of **Suri-age** motion (beginnings of) and connects to **Kote Suri-age Men** waza

## Kote-Uchi-no Uke-kata II

- Push both fists forward, turning them to the right with left side of shinai on top
- Receive opponent's strike on the left center side area of your shinai
- Immediately return kamae to control the center - being mentally and physically return to attack

**NB:** This movement is the principle of **Kaeshi** motion (beginnings of) and connects to **Kote kaeshi Men (or Kote)** waza

## Do-Uchi-no Uke-kata

- Adjust Kamae to the diagonal rear left
- Lift both hands slightly
- Slap opponent's striking shinai down (Feeling of small sharp striking action)
- Immediately return kamae to control the center - being mentally and physically return to attack

**NB:** This movement is the principle of **Uchi-otoshi** motion (beginnings of) and connects to **Do Uchi-otoshi-Men** waza

## Tsuki-no-Uke-kata I

- Push both fists forward, turning them (think of using left fist) left slightly
- Take a small step forward, or have to feel of going forward
- Block opponent's Tsuki thrust with a sliding lift to the left front with the left (**omote**) side of shinai (or bokutō)
- Immediately return kamae to control the center - being mentally and physically return to attack

**NB:** This movement is the principle of **Suri-age** motion (beginnings of) and connects to **Tsuki Suri-age Men** waza

The above is not the only ways - The idea of cutting down the attack (as mentioned in the Uke-kata for Men and Do above) can equally be used for **Kote** and **Tsuki**, leading to Uchi-otoshi waza. Always have the feeling of going forward when blocking. When I have mentioned moving backward, have the feeling of stepping back left foot to where it would be needed for your **uchi-ma**, then block with a feeling of pushing forward. Your kamae must be stable and prepared to attack going forward.

## Tsuba-zeriai:

I mentioned moving into **Tsuba-zeriai** above in Kote-uchi. That is the situation in which the distance between opponents is at its closest. Both are holding shinai (bokutō) tilted slightly right with the Tsuba locked together, fighting to spoil opponent's posture and gain initiative to attack.

- After striking, move forward quickly with **Okuri-ashi**
- Do not pull hands down too quickly, but allow hands to come down naturally as you close in. Have the feeling of keeping shinai in contact with Men, forcing hands to lower as you close the distance.
- Hands should not be close to your body but keep arms forward in a position where you can swing up (**furi-kaburi**) normally.
- Shinai held forward - upward - tilted to the right. The left hand is slightly left of center, right hand to the right (**NB:** Left thumb knuckle should be almost centered).
- Blades are locked together by the Tsuba. [**NB:** 1. Not by fists - try using Bokutō to see position. 2. Touching fist to the blade is Hansoku (Foul) in Shiai]



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**NB:** When moving in quickly after straight **Kote** strike, raise **kensen** only when needed to avoid poking opponent, and make sure it comes to the correct Tsuba-zeriai position as shown in the above picture.- this will be impossible if cutting at an angle and pulling tip backward after striking.

From this position, **seme** by pushing body/hands in, down, right and left to find an opportunity to strike (see **Kiki waza**). Do not relax, keep alert and show **Zanshin**, being ready to attack at once.

## Zan-shin:

The body posture and state of mind in which, even after striking, one is alert and ready to respond instantly to any counter-attack by your opponent. **Zan-shin** is the state in which, after striking with full power without hesitation, one faces the opponent with full spirit and the ability to respond naturally. Generally speaking, after striking one should put the proper distance between yourself and the opponent, and face them in **Chudan-no-kamae** ready to attack or respond to a counter-attack. During **Kihon** and **Keiko**, the **motodachi** will normally move aside to allow you to move straight forward and pass to the correct distance, where you turn to show **Zan-shin**. If they do not move, then do not "run around" - you must drive forward. You may force them out of your way, but if not, enter to **Tsuba-zeriai** or perform **Tai-atari**. If you cannot move the proper distance away from your opponent, such as after **Tsuki** attack (and during **Kata**), show **Zan-shin** by keeping **kensen** centered around the throat area to guard against attack. Only then move back to the correct **ma-ai**. You must show and train this idea of **Zan-shin** during all practices. It is a vital part of **yuko-datotsu** (valid striking). In shiai, even a perfect strike will be deemed invalid if you do not show **Zan-shin** after the cut.

## Ways to practice

Some ideas for improving **Zan-shin** and instill the actions required are:

- **Motodachi** should turn and follow **Kakarite** as they pass and check that they look, turn correctly for proper Zan-shin.
- Try **Men - Zanshin - Men**, where, after striking and making the distance, **kakarite** turns and show Zan-shin and then immediately cuts **Men** again (**Motodachi** must be positioned in the correct place).
- During **Uchikomi-geiko**, **Kakari-geiko**, and **Jigeiko** - follow up after attacks, and try to strike an opponent as they turn - this is one of the key opportunities to attack.

## Chapter 6: Kiri-kaeshi and Tai-atari

The importance of training the fundamentals has already been mentioned. Kiri-kaeshi is an important practice method for beginners and experienced Kendoka alike. It should be used at the start and end of practice as a warm-up and cool-down exercise. I will later discuss all the benefits of Kiri-kaeshi but first is how to practice it.

### Kiri-kaeshi

#### Important points to check:

- All movements must be as large as possible – all big motions
- Movements of body and striking action must be coordinated correctly
- Do not sever the mental connection between you and your opponent and perform all motions in an unbroken series
- When swinging the Shinai upward, make sure it reaches center position well above your head
- Make the left and right strikes at an angle of about 45 degrees, beginning with a strike to the left side (your right)
- Keep shoulder relaxed, extend elbows when striking, and keep left fist centered
- Keep correct ma-ai and make sure you cut with the mono-uchi
- It is important for beginners to practice correctly with slow and exaggerated movements rather than with speed
- Always end with a strike to the left side (your right)
- Use strong ki-ai with correct and controlled breathing

If kiri-kaeshi is not done properly, it will not have the desired results. It is essential to practice fully committed and correctly. If one seeks only speed, striking will become imprecise and small. Aim for precision, and the speed will increase gradually with improvement.

#### Kiri-kaeshi practice:

##### Kakarite:

- Give a loud Ki-ai from To-ma, seme to Motodachi, and then perform a large Shomen strike
- Move forward quickly and do Tai-atari with good posture. (Breath allowed)
- Immediately Furi-kaburi straight up while stepping forward on right foot, and strike continuous Hidari and Migi Men (normally four Men-uchi forward and five Men-uchi backward) - first and last are Hidari Men (your right side)

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- Move forward in Okuri-ashi (suri-ashi) four steps and retreat about five steps
- Cut the Men (not the shinai) with correct hasuji from correct uchi-ma, give loud Ki-ai (Men, Men, Men, etc.), and follow Motodachi's movements
- After last Hidari strike, return to To-ma in Chudan, then repeat the above Kiri-kaeshi actions
- After last Hidari strike, return to To-ma in Chudan and,
- Give a loud Ki-ai from To-ma, seme to Motodachi, and then perform a large Shomen strike
- Follow through with the final Shomen 3-4 steps and show Zanshin

## Motodachi:

- After Kakarite's seme, open quickly to allow him an unobstructed Shomen-uchi to be received
- Receive tai-atari and adjust ma-ai to Kakarite's Uchi-ma distance
- Move backward from the left foot and receive alternate Hidari and Migi Men strikes, controlling the ma-ai using Ayumi-ashi footwork.
- Repeat above sequence.
- Then, on receiving final Shomen-uchi, move to your right and let Kakarite pass your left, turn and check zanshin. (The pairs then usually reverse the roles and repeat exercise)

The **motodachi** role is very important as they control the ma-ai for the exercise.

According to Kakarite's ability, the motodachi must alter the speed and intensity of the practice.

1. Allow beginners to strike your Men by keeping open kamae or holding shinai vertically in the center of your men closely.
2. Block left / right strikes by holding shinai vertically (or slightly angled inwards) and moving it to the left and right side while keeping left wrist at waist level.
3. For more advanced practice, keep hands near the center and block the Sayu-Men-uchi by striking down their shinai.
4. Use ten-o-uchi when blocking the Sayu-Men-uchi.
5. Keep constant rhythm of moving backward and forward

A good motodachi requires to watch kakarite and be able to point out any wrong doings for correct Kiri-kaeshi.

## Some of the Benefits of doing Kiri-kaeshi:

- Improves posture
- Improves stamina while learning correct breathing
- The Men-uchi becomes stronger and reliable
- Learns to keep shoulders relaxed and flexible
- Learns the skill of **Ten-no-uchi**
- Develops faster striking technique
- Improves footwork
- Develops a stable **kamae**
- **Ma-ai** is made clear
- Strengthens one's spirit and body

## Some of the Benefits of receiving Kiri-kaeshi:

- Improves posture
- Improves footwork and balance
- Gains awareness of ma-ai
- Develops **ten-no-uchi**
- Gains awareness of judging opponent's skill

Always practice **Kiri-kaeshi**. Practice it at the start of Keiko to warm up, use it to prepare oneself for practice, and practice at the end to correct one's posture. Use it to condition one's body.

## Variations on Kiri-kaeshi practice:

- Practice with bokutō to master the basic pattern of cutting, blade path, and breathing using suri-ashi
- Practice the sequence to teach partner's footwork and **ma-ai** by striking only Shomen
- Practice cutting Sayu-Men for the entire length or width of the Dojo, boosting stamina and number of strikes
- Strike Hidari and Migi Do forward and backward instead of the Sayu-Men strikes
- Alternate Sayu-Men and Sayu-Do strikes

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- Uchikomi Kiri-kaeshi - Perform Striking techniques such as Men, Kote-Men, etc. 3 or 5 times, after which the set of nine Sayu-Men cut, followed by another set of uchi-komi, and another set of 9-Sayu men cut before finishing on men or another 3-5 cut.

The standard format for BKA Grading requires Kakarite to execute Tai-atari. However, not all senior Sensei say it is necessary. At the start of training, it may be easier for motodachi just to move backward, as this will not disturb the posture or balance of Kakarite, and will avoid them pulling hands down after cutting.

## Tai-atari

Tai-atari is the act of colliding with the opponent with the surplus force of a strike. Tai-atari is important not only for upsetting the opponent's balance/posture and creating an opportunity for a strike but also for stabilizing your posture (especially lower body).

### **Effective & Correct Tai-atari:**

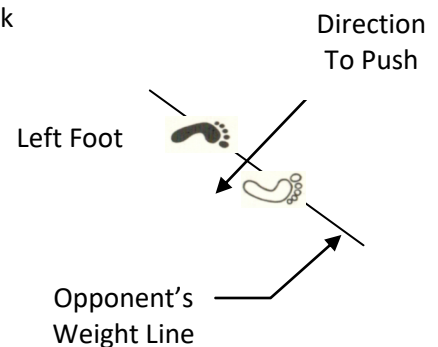
- Your position of your hands and elbows are very important as you make contact. Your left hand should be at the similar level as chudan kamae but slightly left of centerline.
- Consequently, your right hand will move slightly off center to the right, with shinai lifted up, of course, your right hand will be mid chest or a little lower.

**NB:** This will help to stop your elbows from crushing into your *Do*, and your shinai will be at a slight angle rather than straight up. That is same as discussed in **tsuba-zeriai**. Breathing is very important. Don't inhale as you make contact. Don't expend all the air in your lung but hold in some of your breath as contact is made. Feel that you have a strong abdominal muscle to keep residual air in your stomach (image training).

- As you meet opponent in tsuba-zeriai, have a feeling like **te-no-uchi** in the hands - to make arms strong
  - Use your arms, body, and hips to push forward in the direction perpendicular to the opponent's weight line, which is the line connecting opponent's right and left feet, using fumi-komi like footwork. Push forward with arms only so much to maintain the correct position for swinging up to execute **Hiki-waza**.
  - Use left leg and lower back to drive in Tai-atari. The feeling is a crashing blow rather than a push.
  - You must be ready and immediately strike whether opponent moves backward or you move backward at Tai-atari
- When receiving Tai-atari, step forward with right foot and meet the Kakarite's push in the hips. Do not step back when receiving). You must maintain your balance.
- When receiving Tai-atari in Kiri-kaeshi, allow the Kakarite's force to push you back a step, and receive strikes.
  - Otherwise, both would crash each other. Whoever keeps good composure with correct arm position can find an opportunity to strike using Hiki-waza.

Therefore Tai-atari can be used for two purposes:

1. To allow you to strike going forward by forcedly pushing the opponent back unbalancing him with the Tai-atari.
2. To give you the opportunity to perform **Hiki-waza** by forcedly breaking opponent's balance of **ki-ken-tai-itchi**.



## **Chapter 7: Seme, Sen, and Kikai**

It is the achieving of the perfect strike which is the goal of Kendo. All the previous practices teach our bodies how to move correctly. When we face our opponent in perfect **Kamae**, we will be in a deadlock. Breaking this deadlock, by pressing and probing for weakness, is known as **Seme-ai**. While taking the initiative to attack (**sen**), we must also be able to detect or make an opportunity to strike (**kikai**) before we select a technique to make the valid strike. It is said that without the struggle to break the deadlock by taking the initiative, it is not Kendo, but mere "slapping for points."

### **Seme**

This complex idea is critical to learning Kendo. **Seme** is described as taking the initiative to close the distance with the opponent with full spirit. That puts the opponent off balance mentally and physically. It is the process of searching for a way to break the deadlock of **kamae** and putting you in an advantageous position where you produce an opportunity to make a valid strike. There is a saying in Kendo "Win then strike; do not strike to win." - it is **seme** where we must win before we strike.



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## San-sappo. (三殺法, three ways to kill)

**San-sappo** is the teaching of the three ways to overwhelm an opponent. Everyone's Kendo differs due to their physical build and personality, and the kind of defense and attack methods developed are almost unlimited. However, they can be grouped in 3 ways to unbalance and overwhelm your opponent.

1. **Ki-o-korosu** -Killing the Spirit (**Ki**) - Use your spirit and force of will (**Ki**) to overcome your opponent's **Ki**. With strong spirit they may feel fear, doubt or surprise, forestalling their attack and leading to a weakness or opportunity for you to strike.
2. **Ken-o-korosu** - Killing the sword - Spoil the opponent's **kamae**. Control the opponent's **kensen** by restraining or deflecting it. If you direct your **kensen** to the center of your opponent's body, you will exert control over their actions.
3. **Waza-o-korosu** - Killing the technique. - By anticipating opponents attack, you can disrupt it and make it ineffective. As they attack, sweep it aside and counterattack, or be in a position where they are unable to strike.

## Sen - the initiative:

**Sen** can be defined as Initiative, advantage, and ambition. When facing an opponent in Kendo, we must constantly strive to seize the initiative. When one has **sen** (the initiative) one defeats the opponent. There are said to be three **sen** within **sen**. About the opponent, these are before, during, and after **sen**. There are different names and descriptions given to them, such as **sen-sen-no-sen**, **sen-no-sen**, **go-no-sen** or as Mushasi used in his book, Go Rin no Sho, **Ken-no-sen**, **Tai-no-sen**, **Tai-tai-no-sen**. I have used the terms listed by the All Japan Kendo Federation.

## Mittsu-no-sen:

In **kendo** it is of paramount importance to suppress the opponent's movement at the moment it begins. It may be said that the competition to take **sen** decides the match. There are said to be three **sen**:

1. **Sen-sen-no-sen** - When opponent's intent to attack appears in his heart (**Ki**), win immediately by striking him before he shows his initial move, having keen insight to recognize opponent's **Ki**, forestalling his move. This act of attacking faster than opponent's **sen** is the most important in **kendo**.
2. **Sen-no-sen** – When opponent's intent to attack appears in his initial move (**Tai**), win immediately by striking him before the **waza** is shaped up. That is the initiative of the pre-emptive strike. **Debana-waza**
3. **Go-no-sen** - When opponent's attack appears in his **waza** (**Ken**), win by striking him before his **waza** is completed using parrying techniques (**Nuki**, **Harai**, **Uchi-otoshi**, **Suriage**, etc.) with your **shinai** and body. **Ōji-waza**

## Kikai (Chance or opportunity)

The best moments to strike is called **datotsu-no-kōki**. These are said to be when:

## Datotsu-no-kōki:

- Opponent begins to strike
- Opponent Blocks a strike
- Opponent finishes a strike or moves back.

It can be said that these are the three great opportunities that cannot be missed. It is important to practice recognizing these situations. Some moments are said to occur unfailingly during combat where opportunities occur:

1. Avoid their strengths, strike where and when they are weakest.
  - Strike openings when they appear, but do not be tricked by feints of weakness.
  - Control opponent, take an advantageous **ma-ai** and strike them when they are immobile or move backward. (**Ippon uchi no waza**, **Tobikomi-waza**)
2. Harass them and strike
  - Aggressively probe opponent's **kamae** and strike at resultant movements
  - Attack relentlessly without mercy and strike at openings (**Ni-san-dan-no-waza**)
3. Strike them when they move to attack.
  - Discern your opponent has decided to attack, as their **Ki** is about to take form and strike them first. (**Debana-waza**.)
4. Strike them at the moment of his attack.
  - Fein weakness, and invite them to attack
  - Strike at the unbalanced part of their attack. (**Nuki-waza**, **Suriage-waza**)
  - Wait until they think of success, then counter and strike. (**Nuki-waza**, **kaeshi-waza**)

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5. Strike them when they are confused.
  - Strike when your opponent when they are beset with doubts and unable to decide on action.
  - Confuse them and strike. (**Katsugi-waza**)
6. Strike them when they stop.
  - Strike opponent when their attacks come to an end.
  - Strike when their psychological, physical and technical impetus as ended. (**Uchiotoshi-waza**)

That is the idea of taking the initiative (**sen**) by use of **seme** to find the opportunity (**kikai**) to perform technique (**waza**)

## Basic Seme techniques:

- The saying "Win then strike; do not strike to win" emphasizes the importance of gaining superiority over the opponent before striking.
- **Seme** is a way to overcome opponent's strong **ki-ai** and **Kensen**;
- Breaking the opponent's **Ki-ai** and **Kamae** creates an opportunity to strike.
- As soon as **Seme** defeats the opponent's **Kensen**, you must strike without hesitation.
- Basic **seme** practice is done with Shinai or Bokutō; applications are practiced later with Bogu.

## Kensen and opportunity:

When is **Chudan-no-kamae**, the kensen is directed toward the throat, this exerts pressure on opponents, preventing them attacking. If the kensen moves, there is a chance to strike.

- **Kensen** moves too far to the sides or is too low, and then **Men** and **Tsuki** become open.
- **Kensen** is raised to high - **Kote** becomes open.
- Hands and Arms raised to high - **Do** becomes open.

If you move your **kensen** away from center before moving to attack, you will give opportunity away. These points apply to how **seme** and **furi-kaburi** are performed.

## Ways of Deflecting the Kensen as Seme

When opponent obligingly offers an open target, simply proceed with one on the basic strikes or thrust. If however, he has assumed a stable **kamae**, you must break it before striking.

1. **Fureru** (Touch): Lightly touch **Kensen** from the right or left side without moving the position of your left or right grip. Feel how the opponent responds, you may raise doubt or concern in opponent's mind and induce a reaction.
2. **Osaeru** (hold down or suppress): Push down or lightly cover opponent's **shinai** with your left or right side of **kensen** (**shinogi**) as the opponent is about to move or strike, then strike as soon as the opportunity arises.
3. **Hajiku** or **Harai** (knock away): Using a wrist snap or slap action, knock opponent's **shinai** to the left or right side, thus destroying their **kensen**'s center position.
4. **Harai-otoshi** (Slap down): When opponent's **kensen** is in a lower position, hit down (diagonally) their **shinai** with a quick sharp action, returning to maintain your **Kensen** in the center to capture the opportunity to strike. Be aware that during the slap down, your **kensen** will reveal a **suki** (weakness).
5. **Harai-ageru** (deflect upward): When **kensen** in a high position or is lightly held, deflect it diagonally up. Use your snap and semi-circular motion to hold the center. (Be aware of opponent's **Shinai** returning with momentum)
6. **Maku** (**maki-age** or **maki-otoshi**)(wind round): When the opponent is holding the **Shinai** tightly near the end, wind your **shinai** around his **shinai** close to his **tsuba** from the right or left side. You can force their **kensen** diagonally up or down to break their **kamae**.

When performing the above actions, you must make sure you follow these rules:

- Use your body during the **seme** not just your hands - the above actions should include the use of **seme-ashi** (see chapter 4) to press with the whole body.
- Use your **shinogi** and **mono-uchi** of your **shinai** respectively to knock off and strike. Knock off close to its center.
- You must dominate the center position. During any push or slap, your **kensen** must return immediately to the center.
- Have strong spirit and determination. Make actions powerful and strike at any opening immediately.
- Do not push hands forward during **seme** - the left fist must maintain its position to allow correct **furi-kaburi**, and the right arm must remain relaxed - as mentioned already, use your body. Hold your breath in your **tanden**, and hold the **ki** in place with an unyielding left fist.

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## Ki-zeme:

Senselessly "batting" around your opponent's **shinai** using your wrist will only induce weakness (**suki**) in your position, even if you are moving forward. Even though the above techniques have its place, a strong **kamae** and powerful body movement should form the root of all **seme**.

- Take the initiative with your **Ki**
- Dominate the center
- Control the **ma-ai** to your advantage

1. **Ki:** Do not let your opponent **ki** gain form. Bottle up or frustrate his spirit and exploit immobility. Hold the breath in your **tanden**, don't allow hands to rise, hold your **ki** in with an unyielding left fist. Feel the **ki** flow from your belly through the **shinai** and **kensen** into your opponent's center. Try to develop **Ki-gurai**.
2. **Dominate the center:** Aim your **kensen** at your opponent's center without moving your hands. I have been told different ideas (**seme** to the body)- focus the **kensen** toward the throat (**tsuki**), chest (left or right breast) or sternum. The fundamental idea though is to dominate the center to force opponent's **kensen** away from the center, leaving an opening.
3. **Ma-ai:** You must break into opponent's space and break down their **kamae**. You must position yourself at your **uchi-ma**, but do not raise your **kensen** too soon or you will lose the center. Have the feeling of closing inside opponent's **shinai** and **ma-ai** before striking.

**NB: Ki-gurai** - The strength or commanding presence derived from confidence acquired through repeated training.

## **Practice applications of Seme.**

I have used the term "seme to" for these exercises. It refers to the focus of the **kensen**. As discussed already, DO NOT push hands forward toward the target, as this will stop correct **furi-kaburi** - instead use **seme-ashi** and the left hand to control **kensen**.

- **Seme to Tsuki** (Body) - then strike **Men** or **Kote** depending on response.
- **Seme to Men** - then strike **Kote** or **Do** according to response.
- **Seme to Kote**, then strike **Men**.
- **Opponent retreats:** use **Oi-komi Men** (chase with **tsugi-ashi**) or **Renzoku-waza** (such as **Kote-Men**.)
- **Opponent advances to strike:** use **Debana-waza** or **Harai-waza**

## Ken-Tai-ichi (or Kō-bō-itchi) - Attack and waiting (defense) as one

In this saying, **Ken** (懸, not 劍) means to attack or strike opponent fiercely, and **Tai** (待, not 体) means to wait to resist opponent making the first move while observing his move calmly for ready to counter-attack. In Kendo, it is the direct attack that is valued most. We are all taught we should attack with "**sutemi** – give all you have regardless of the outcome," not thinking of receiving or dodging, but only of striking. That does not mean it is right to attack when there is no opportunity recklessly. Offence and defense are inseparably combined. You must attack when one should attack, and wait when one should wait. This term is saying the importance of always being mentally and physically ready to defend against the opponent's counterattack while attacking, and ready to counterattack while defending. While attacking one also watches and waits. One is on the verge of attacking while waiting and watching.

- Have a posture of **Ken** (懸) with the body. Advance the body ready to strike at any time.
- Have an attitude of **Tai** (待) with the sword. Entice the opponent to attack and counterattack at the first opportunity.
- The mind should retain an attitude of **Tai** (待). You must be calm and able to discern the correct opportunity to strike.

## Chapter 8: Shikake-waza and Ōji-waza

Kendo techniques (**waza**) are usually grouped into two categories:

1. **Shikake-waza:** techniques for initiating an attack. These positive attacking techniques are used to challenge and forestall the opponent, gaining the center, and thus an opportunity.
2. **Oji-waza:** techniques for counter-attacking by parrying opponent's strike with body and **shinai**. It is commonly said that in Kendo we never defend for the sake of defense. Oji means to respond, but we cannot wait to be attacked. We must still probe our opponent's **kamae**, lead with our **ki**, sense opponent's intention (**waza**) of attack, and create an opportunity to strike.

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However, the situation is not so clear to sense opponent's real intention. Rather like "Yin and Yang in Chinese" or "InYō (陰陽) in Japanese," meaning "shadow exist where light is," the opponent's intention is "In (陰)" and actual waza executed is "Yō (陽)." These thought and ideas have to be balanced and merged into one another. What may start as **shikake-waza** may end as **ōji-waza**. An example here is to initiate the attack with **harai-waza**, but you are countered by **debana-waza** - you then counter it and strike with the same action (harai), but this is now **suriage-waza**. Only by constant training can we hope to react correctly. You should be able to move and strike as discussed in the previous section. All the following assumes this previous **kihon** have learned, and that **seme** is used. This **waza** is then used according to opponent's response (see **Kikai** - chapter 8). These two categories are further divided into subgroups of similar techniques. I have only listed a few. I have made my choices based on what senior **Sensei** most commonly teach us and on the ideas and goals of the **Bokutō ni yoru Kendo kihon waza keiko ho**. I have heard different ideas with regards to the learning and use of the different **waza**. It is an old kendo dictum that says it takes three years to learn the basics. That I believe depends on the person and how much they practice, but still, without the ability to perform large correct strikes, it is impossible to progress to complex techniques. However, Kendo without **waza** can become dull if you think of only striking **Men**. The use of the **Bokutō ni yoru Kendo kihon waza keiko ho** is a good way of introducing the ideas of **waza**. I have read that these are designed to teach students these basics of **waza** by the time they reach 2nd **Dan**. To begin with, concentrate on **Shikake-waza**, taking the initiative to strike going forward.

## Shikake-waza.

### Ippon-uchi-no-waza:

These attacks are performed as the basic **Kihon** strikes already discussed. They sometimes go under other names, such as **Tobikomi-waza** and **hikibana-waza**, but these are ways of describing the **seme** and timing. Some basic ideas and practices are:

- **Men-uchi** from **To-ma #1**: Push in with full spirit and **kensen** aimed at opponent's neck for **seme** to **tsuki** (body). Opponent hesitates or retreats - drive forward controlling center and strike **Men**.
- **Men-uchi** from **To-ma #2**: Push in with **kensen** aimed at opponent's Kote for **seme** to **kote**. Opponent moves **kensen** to cover your shinai to protect his Kote - take the center and strike **Men**.
- **Kote-uchi** from **to-ma: Seme to men or tsuki**: Opponent raises **kensen** to defend, showing a weakness- strike **Kote**
- **Do-uchi** from **To-ma**: Push in with **seme** to **Men** as if you are about to strike **Men**. Opponent raises shinai to block **Men**, leap forward and strike **Do**.

### Renzoku-waza (Ni-san-dan-no-waza)

There are two methods of using these techniques.

1. First, attack rather than just **seme** to destroy opponent's spirit and posture, revealing an opportunity to strike. These actions must be performed in a continuous unbroken sequence. You must strike with determination, not a mere feinting action. Example of the waza: Kote-Men, Kote-Do, Men-Men, Kote-Kote-Men, etc.
2. When the first attack is unsuccessful, observe the change in opponent's position, respond to their movement and strikes again (and again) until a valid strike is made. The correct continuous rhythm must be maintained.

**NB:** In **shiai**, even if the first strike were a perfect **ippon**, it would not count if the second strike was unsuccessful when **Renzoku-waza** is used - keep this in mind.

- **Kote-Men**: From **To-ma**, push in with full spirit and strike **Kote**. Opponent defends and retreats - pull left foot quickly up into place, drive forward and strike **Men**.
- **Kote-Do**: From **To-ma**, push in with full spirit and strike **Kote**. Opponent avoids and anticipates men cut, blocking or retreating (retreats while raising shiani to perform **nuki-Do-waza**) - pull left foot quickly up into place, drive forward (diagonally right) and strike **Do**.
- **Men-Do**: From **To-ma**, push in with full spirit and strike **Men**. Opponent avoids and anticipates men cut, blocking (while retreating) - pull left foot quickly up into place, drive forward (diagonally right) and strike **Do**. (Control footwork to strike with **monouchi** because **ma-ai** is harder for this waza)
- **Men-Men**: From **To-ma**, push in with full spirit and strike **Men**. Opponent avoids and anticipates another strike, and retreats while losing strong **kamae** - pull left foot quickly up into place, and strike **Men**. (This is a case when opponent is trying to avoid making the first strike ineffective).

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Many other combinations exist, such as **Tsuki-Men**, **Kote-Men-Do**, **Men**, **tai-atari**, **Hiki-men**, etc.

When practicing, keep the following in mind:

1. Begin with large striking action and body movements; **motodachi** moves back sufficiently to allow correct striking.
2. Later, use small techniques; **motodachi** does not have to move to allow the second strike.
3. The left foot must be drawn up immediately (**hiki-tsuke**) to allow correct striking in good posture.
4. Learn to control the size of your steps. You must move your body in a good posture to allow striking with **monouchi**.
5. Each strike must be made in full spirit.
6. Your **tenouchi** must be tightened and relaxed with each strike. Correct **tenouchi** is essential.
7. Perform actions in one continuous attack sequence.

## Harai-waza:

When your opponent has a strong **chudan-no-kamae**, there is no chance to strike. The **kensen** must be moved away from the center to give an opportunity. That can be achieved by **Harai-age** - parrying their **shinai** diagonally upward to the left or right or **Harai-otoshi** - parrying it diagonally down to the left, controlling the center and striking immediately. Several key aspects must be observed or considered to be effective:

1. You must use/perform the sweeping action with your body (moving forward), not just your hands - sweeping with **seme-ashi**.
2. Use both hands to parry, snap your wrist at the moment of parrying to sharpen the action.
3. Parry in a semi-circular motion. Your hands must move quickly forward and up along the path of **furi-kaburi**.
4. Parry the midpoint of opponent's **shinai** using **shinogi** at **monouchi** of your **shinai**.
5. The curved motion allows the sweeping action to finish at the end of **furi-kaburi** and ensures **shinai** in the correct position (including correct **hasuji**) to strike - all in one action.
6. In the beginning, learn techniques using **suri-ashi** and large techniques.
7. Later use small sweeping action and fast, powerful **fumi-komi**.
8. The entire action must be made in one continuous action.

The timing and opportunities are also critical:

- When you are stationary, the **kamae** is strongest. You will gain great advantage performing this **harai-waza** at the moment opponent advances to attack or retreats.
- **Harai-age** is most effective when opponent's **kensen** is higher than yours.
- **Harai-otoshi** is most effective against a **kensen** lower than yours.

**NB:** You can set the level of your **Kensen** as part of **seme**. For example, **seme to Kote** is the **kensen** to lower position.

## **Harai-Men (omote)**

- Push forward while sweeping up the **shinai** from lower right to upper left in semi-circular action knocking **kensen** of opponent away from the center.
- Maintaining the center, immediately (in one motion) strike **shomen**.

## **Harai-Men (ura)**

- Drop **kensen** slightly, and push forward while sweeping up **shinai** from lower left to upper right in semi-circular action knocking **kensen** of opponent away from the center.
- Maintaining the center, immediately (in one motion) strike **shomen**.

## **Harai-Kote (ura)**

- Drop **kensen** slightly, and push forward while sweeping up **shinai** from lower left to upper right in semi-circular action knocking **kensen** of opponent away from the center.
- Maintaining the center, immediately (in one motion) strike **kote**. It requires quick action and small, fast footwork.

## **Harai-Men (otoshi)**

- Raise **kensen** and push forward while sweeping down **shinai** from upper right to lower left with sharp **tenouchi** in a small circular action knocking **kensen** of opponent down to your left.
- Your **kensen** must return immediately to the center position, from where you can complete the strike to **shomen**.

Again, many other options of the **waza** exist, such as **harai-tsuki**, **ura**, **omote** and **otoshi**.

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## Hiki-waza

These are stepping back techniques, a **waza** where you strike while retreating from close quarters. These techniques are usually performed from **tsuba-zeriai** after a previous attack. You must first break your opponent's guard either by **tai-atari** or pushing the opponent to off balance and break his posture. **Tsuba-zeriai** means to fight or compete with the handguard (see **Kamae**.)

- The footwork is hard to master because **fumikomi-ashi** (right foot) is used like **fumikiri-ashi**.
- First practice using **Suri-ashi** and large actions, then later use small, fast actions and powerful footwork.
- Push with right foot/knee, body, hips and arms. But do not push arms forward or allow them to collapse inward - left fist must remain in correct position to strike. Left foot must be drawn back quietly and act like **seme-ashi**.

There are many ways of breaking the **kamae** from **tsuba-zerai**, I will discuss the basic ideas only:

### **Hiki-Men**

- From **tsuba-zerai**, push forward with **seme-ashi** (right foot). Push **shinai** inward toward the opponent's body or his right shoulder.
- Wait for opponent to push back, trying to maintain his **kamae**,
- Immediately step back from the left leg to **uchima**, with the feeling of pulling opponent toward you.
- Opponent should now be off balance and **kensen** will drop forward (to your left) giving an opportunity.
- Stamp the right foot (**fumi-komi-ashi**) while striking **Men** with **ki-ken-tai-itchi**, and flick left foot up and back to move back showing **zanshin**.

**NB: Zanshin:** Retreat about three steps and take **chudan-no-kamae** at an appropriate distance. - when retreating, do not pull arms above the head but keep hands forward slightly raised (*some sensei teach otherwise to produce **sae** to cut*).

### **Hiki-Do**

- From **tsuba-zerai**, press in and down with **seme-ashi** (right foot). Push **shinai** and hands down.
- Wait for opponent to resist, push hands back up, trying to maintain his **kamae**,
- Immediately step back from the left leg to **uchima**, with the feeling of push opponent's hands up as you swing up.
- Opponent's arms will rise.
- Rotate wrist and strike the **Do** while stamping the right foot (**fumi-komi-ashi**) and flick left foot up and back to move back showing **zanshin**.

**NB: Zanshin** - do not pull arms back when retreating, keep hands forward in striking position (may be slightly raised, **kensen** point up). Retreat about three steps and take **chudan-no-kamae** at an appropriate distance.

### **Hiki-Kote**

- From **tsuba-zerai**, push forward and down with **seme-ashi** (right foot). Push **shinai** inward toward body as if trying to touch the neck of the opponent.
- Wait for opponent to push back, trying to maintain his **kamae**,
- Immediately step diagonally back to the left, starting from the left leg, to **uchima**, maybe have a feeling of flicking left hand up beneath opponent's hand.
- Opponent should now be off balance and **kensen** will rise, giving an opportunity for Kote strike.
- Stamp the right foot (**fumi-komi-ashi**) while striking a straight **Kote** with **ki-ken-tai-itchi**, and flick left foot up and back to move back showing **zanshin**.

**NB: Zanshin** - do not pull arms back when retreating, keep hands forward-center, in striking position (may be slightly raised, **kensen** point up). Retreat about three steps and take **chudan-no-kamae** at an appropriate distance.

You can practice this waza in many different ways:

- From **tsuba-zeriai**: Compete to find opening and strike. **Motodachi** should follow up to help develop a speed of your footwork and **zanshin**.
- Strike opponent, then both performs **tai-atari**, and **kakari-te** will strike with **hiki-waza**.
- Strike opponent, **motodachi** blocks, and strikes, then both perform **tai-atari**, and **kakari-te** will strike with **hiki-waza**.
- Strike opponent, **motodachi** blocks, and strikes, then move aside, and **kakari-te** turns as he passes and will strike again with **hiki-waza**.
- **Motodachi** strike (**Men**) - you block/attack using correct **uke-kata**, and immediately use **hiki-waza** to strike.

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## Debana-waza

Just as the opponent moves toward you on the verge of striking, he is likely to be concentrating on his technique, losing sight of your actions, thus presenting you with a good opportunity to strike. You must strike at the first sign of his intention to attack. If you wait for **kensen** to lift, you have already missed the chance.

### **Debana-men**

- From **To-ma**, you push in with **seme ashi** to **tsuki** (body) or **kote**.
- Opponent steps forward with intention to perform **seme** and **Men** strike.
- You dominate the center and push your body and hips forward to strike **Men** immediately.

### **Debana-kote**

- From **To-ma**, you push in with **seme ashi** to **tsuki** (body) or **kote**.
- Opponent steps forward with the intention to perform **seme** and **Men** strike raising his **kensen** up.
- You anticipate this **kensen** rise, and step forward with small quick footwork, and strike **kote** with the small, fast action using **tenouchi**.

**NB:** Try stepping forward, so your right foot faces opponent's right foot when striking.

Practice the following types:

- From **to-ma** use **seme-ashi**. **Motodachi** reacts by pushing forward to strike **seme-men** (2 step cut due to **ma-ai**) - as he pushes forward, you dominate center and strike **kote** or **men**.
- As a pair, step forward and back using **suri (okuri) - ashi** trying to reach an advantageous **ma-ai** and position. Once you feel opportunity strike **Motodachi** as he steps forward (or back) - can be repeated with both trying to strike.

## Oji-waza

### Nuki-waza

This waza is an evasion technique, where you avoid an opponent, so his strike cuts the air only, and counter-attack. You need to anticipate opponent's intent, and timing is vital. If you move too soon, you will signal your intention, and this becomes his opportunity. If you move too late, you will be struck. Start by learning large waza where a rear step with left foot is required using **suri-ashi** and then **fumikomi-ashi** to strike. Later, using small action, learn to position left foot to allow fast dynamic counterattacks.

### **Men-nuki-Do**

- Press in with **seme-ashi**, **seme** to body or **kote**, and wait for the reaction.
- As opponent swings up to strike **Men**, step diagonally forward right on the right foot while swinging up **shinai**.
- Immediately turn wrist and strike his right **Do**.
- Pass close to opponent pulling **shinai** through, and turn to him in **chudan** for **Zanshin**.
- Move with the whole body. Keep posture upright, push forward the hips.
- Your footwork must be fast.
- Pass close to the opponent as if hitting the shoulder.

### **Kote-nuki-Men**

- Press in with **seme-ashi**, **seme** to **men**, and wait for the reaction.
- As opponent swings down to strike **Kote**, step back on the left foot, quickly swinging up **shinai** in a large movement.
- Opponent's **shinai** will swing down into thin air,
- Immediately step forward and strike his **Men**.
- **Tai-atari**, **tsuba-zeriai** or pass through and turn to him in **chudan** for **Zanshin**.

### **NB:**

- Evade with the entire body not just hands.
- Step back with a feeling of going forward - Position of left foot vital - try **Haya suburi** footwork.
- Swing **shinai** up in large rapid motion.
- The entire sequence must be one continuous action.
- It is possible to also evade from below by dropping **kensen** and stepping diagonally back.

Many other **nuki-waza** exist, such as **Men-nuki-men** (see **Nihon Kendo Kata- Ipponme**) and **Kote-nuki-kote** (see **Nihon Kendo Kata- Nihonme**).

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## Suriage-waza

This waza is a raising slide technique used to deflect opponent's attack and immediately counter strike. The parrying action is a similar principle as Harai-waza, but the timing is after **sen**. Here the strike has begun, and we deflect his shinai during the strike.

### **Kote-suriage-Men (from Ura side)**

- seme-ashi, seme to men and wait for the reaction
- Opponent reacts by cutting your kote.
- As he strikes down, push forward and sweep shinai forward and up in a right semi-circular arc parrying with **shinigi** at the right side (Ura) of the shinai near monouchi.
- Top of the sweep must be central, immediately strike Men – the string of shinai must be on top side before the strike.

### **Important:**

- Learn basics with suri-ashi, and large movements. Here you must place left foot back to correct uchima position as he strikes, still trying to do waza going forward.
- Later add fumikomi-ashi, and then try small, fast movements.
- Do suriage and strike men going forward in one continuous motion due to the different ma-ai for kote and men.
- Suriage is part of furi-kaburi motion; remember it is the strike that is the object of waza.
- The position of the left foot is important.
- During suriage, have a feeling of advancing hips, left hand must move forward and up along the furi-kaburi path, and right fist rolls to the left with a snapping action.
- Try to parry close to the middle of opponent's shinai.

### **Men-suriage-Men (Omote)**

- seme-ashi, seme to kote or tsuki, and wait for the reaction
- Opponent reacts by cutting your Men.
- As he strikes down, step forward (and a bit right) and sweep shinai forward and up in a left semi-circular arc parrying with **shinigi** at the left side (Omote) of the shinai near monouchi.
- Top of sweep must be central, you face an opponent, immediately strike Men. Your left foot should end in line with opponent's left foot - the string of shinai must be on top side before the strike.

### **Important:**

- Learn basics with suri-ashi, and large movements.
- Later add fumikomi-ashi, and then try small, fast movements.
- Due to close ma-ai, this is a very difficult timing to master - try with a feeling of Fumikomi-ashi almost on the spot.
- Try to catch strike early, parrying close to the middle of opponent's shinai.
- Try reverse, waza on ura side also.
- Can be executed with back step action (see Nihon Kendo Kata- Gohonme)

Many other suriage-waza exist, such as tsuki-suriage-men, and kote-suriage-kote (Nihon Kendo Kata- Ropponme)

## Kaeshi-waza

This waza is a reflex deflection technique in which you parry with one side of the shinai using the opponent's energy to reverse direction and counter strike the other side. Again, many options exist for this waza, and I have again selected those most simple and therefore most practical:

### **Men-Kaeshi-Do (Migi)**

- Seme to kote or tsuki and wait for the reaction.
- Opponent strikes Men.
- As they strike down, push forward and right and lift shinai forward and up parrying with the left side.
- Rotate the wrists over, using the striking force to change direction and immediately strike his migi Do while stepping forward diagonally right from your right foot.
- Pass each other, turn toward the opponent with zanshin.

### **Important:**

- Learn basics with suri-ashi, and large movements.
- Try practicing waza straight in front, then later with a forward right diagonal step.



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- Later add fumikomi-ashi, and then try small, fast movements.
- Have the feeling of "catching" opponent's shinai as far forward as possible.
- Hands must not rise above head level - neck level sufficient.
- Use small, fast footwork going forward - NEVER go backward.
- There must be no break between parry and striking.

## **Kote-Kaeshi-Men**

- Seme to men and wait for the reaction.
- Opponent strikes Kote.
- As he strikes down, step back diagonally to the left on the left foot, and lift shinai forward and up (kensen down) parrying with the left side.
- Rotate the wrists over, using the striking force to change direction and immediately strike his shomen while stepping forward with your right foot.
- Tai-atari or pass and turn toward the opponent with zanshin.

## **Important:**

- Learn basics with suri-ashi, and large movements.
- Later add fumikomi-ashi, and then try small, fast movements.
- Wrists must be flexible.
- Can also be done stepping straight back.
- Small, fast waza can be done without a rear step.

Other versions include Men-kaeshi-men and kote-kaeshi-kote. These both have difficult ma-ai, and I have seen them performed going backward as they strike, i.e., Koke-kaeshi-hiki kote.

## **Uchiotoshi-waza**

This waza is a downward striking technique. You strike down opponent's strike to spoil its effects and upset his balance while giving you an opportunity to counter strike.

## **Do-Uchiotoshi-Men**

- Seme to men and wait for the reaction.
- Opponent strikes the Do.
- As they strike down, step back diagonally to the left on the left foot, and swing shinai up.
- Strike opponent's shinai down to the right with strong tenouchi using cutting edge of the shinai.
- Immediately strike his shomen while stepping forward with your right foot.
- Tai-atari or pass and turn toward the opponent with zanshin.

**NB:** Use of tenouchi is important here. Try to strike his shinai close to his tsuba. Also, if opponent drives forward quickly, strike hiki-men.

## **Kote-Uchiotoshi-Men**

- Seme to men (or body) and wait for the reaction.
- Opponent strikes Kote.
- As he strikes down, step back diagonally to the left on the left foot, and swing shinai up.
- Strike opponent's shinai down to the right with strong tenouchi.
- Immediately strike his shomen while stepping forward with your right foot.
- Tai-atari or pass and turn toward the opponent with zanshin.

## **Important:**

- Learn basics with suri-ashi, and large movements.
- Later add fumikomi-ashi, then try small, fast movements.
- Use of tenouchi is important here. Strike his shinai down close to his tsuba with small sharp action.
- With small, fast waza: strike down opponent's shinai with feeling of striking his right kote, then strike men immediately – have a feeling of small fast kote-men striking - maintain the center line (Seichūsen)
- Very effective against opponent cutting Kote at an angle.

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## Chapter 9: Uchikomi geiko, Kakari-geiko and Jigeiko

### Uchikomi geiko (8 Benefits of)

1. Good posture (Shisei)
2. Strong physical body, endurance
3. Strong limbs, more agility
4. Faster Waza
5. Extend breathing
6. Observe, see striking distance or opportunity (Uchima)
7. Powerful strikes, sharper grip (Te-no-uchi)
8. Remove doubt or fear, unite thoughts, spirit, and strength (Shin Ki Ryoku no itchi.)

### Uchikomi Procedures:

- With Motodachi and Kakarite in Chudan at Issoku-ittō-no-ma-ai or a little further - Kissaki just touching, express Ki-ai ("Yah!").
- Kakarite performs seme - step slightly forward from right foot (Seme-ashi)

**NB:** Undesirable habits; insufficient Ki-ai, improper Ma-ai.

- If Motodachi feels sufficient pressure (Ki-ai and seme), move Kensen slightly away from the center to allow kakarite one of the Kihon strikes (or thrusts)
  - If Kensen moves down or to the sides, strike Men or Tsuki.
  - Kensen moves up, strike Kote.
  - If Motodachi's Shinai is thrust forward (and up), strike Do.
- Step forward and strike with Fumikomi: one large forward step sharply to the floor, and left foot immediately follows up, moving forward with okuriashi- 3 to 4 steps.
- Motodachi uses Hiraki-ashi to move away after the strike. With Tsuki, retreat slightly with Okuri-ashi.

**NB:** Undesirable habits; inadequate Fumikomi, right foot raised too high, left foot does not follow quickly or kicks up, pause between Furikaburi and Datotsu, improper Okuriashi, hips bent and body unstable.

- Datotsu as in Kihon; equal strength in both hands, release strength from hands immediately after strike, relax shoulders (especially for Furikaburi) and contain power in the lower abdomen (Seika Tanden)
- Follow through with Okuriashi until the distance is again at **Issoku-ittō-no-ma-ai** or **to-ma**, then come to Chudan and show Zanshin.

**NB:** Undesirable habits: excess upper body strength after striking, follow through diagonally, breaking Kamae after each strike, (i.e., pulling hands down or pushing back overhead), insufficient or excessive follow through without Zanshin.

### Uchikomi Geiko methods:

- Against a Motodachi, practice continuous Fumikomi practice: Shomen uchi, Kote uchi, Do uchi.
- Add Renzoku-waza: Kote-Men, Kote-Do, Kote-Men-Do.
- Combine the Waza in a prearranged order - Yakusoku geiko. Such as Men, kote-men, kote-do, men-hiki men, men-hiki kote, men-hiki do, men.
- Following the ideas of the **Bokutō ni yoru kendo kihon waza keiko-hō**, try: Men, kote, do, kote-men, harai-men, mentaiatari-hiki men.

### Uchikomi versus Kakari Geiko:

The practices may look similar at first, but:

- In Kakari Geiko, Motodachi maintains Chudan-no-kamae, and the student (Kakarite) must break this to gain center before striking.
- In Kakari Geiko, there should be no pause between Waza, continue Keiko with strength, speed and power until nearly exhausted, use Okuriashi, as when tired people start using Ayumiashi.
- In Kakari Geiko, Motodachi can sometimes also strike if Kakarite's attacks have insufficient Ki-ai or concentration. Use Oji-waza against improper strikes, but otherwise allow the strike.
- In Kakari Geiko, student strikes appropriate points according to Motodachi's position, instead of just rhythmically continuing the strikes.
- Kakari Geiko is extremely exhausting since the student (Kakarite) must maintain strong Ki-ai, strike properly and quickly, and continue without pause, practice for 10-15 seconds at a time, but repeat several times.

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## Kakari Geiko

### **Procedure:**

- With strong Ki-ai shout ("Yah!") break Motodachi's kamae and step forward to striking distance, show Seme, observe Motodachi's response, and immediately strike appropriate point.
- Follow through quickly, and commence next Waza as soon as Ma-ai is re-established
- Use Shikake-waza only, no Oji-waza.
- Continue without pause until told to stop

Kakari Geiko may be practiced by the pair simultaneously

### Jigeiko

This Keiko is the general method of doing Keiko in which we can practice implementing all the kihon and waza we have learned during the other practices. Here we learn to find opportunity, polish our techniques, and discipline our minds and bodies. We will learn our strengths and weaknesses, which we can try to overcome. Do not let it become your focus just to beat your opponent, and try to strike him more time than he strikes you. You should aim to practice the waza you have learned. Learn to use seme and with a strong spirit, using fluid actions in good posture, try to learn when and how you can make perfect strikes.

**Mawari-geiko:** Here all members practice together, while rotating partners in a fixed direction, for a fixed length of time. Good for cultivating spirit as you face different opponents one after another.

**Hikitate-geiko:** A method of instructional Keiko where the higher ranked kendoka lets, the lower ranked opponent strike correctly (without making this obvious), so the less experienced person can gain experience of success, and learn the opportunities. Poorly executed attacks may be countered. The less experienced person should try their best to try to score first, using all they know to make an opening. It has been said that you should exhaust all your energy in such a 5-minute bout. For the senior, try to act may be a half grade higher than opponent, and handicap yourself to what waza you can use.

**Gokaku-geiko:** This Keiko is for practice between persons of almost equal skills. In this practice, we treat each other as equals, even if there is a difference in ability. You must always try to do your best Kendo. Here you should concentrate on dominating the center, and try to score the first valid strike.

**Mitori-geiko:** A method where one observes the practice of another, learning their good points and reflecting on how to improve your kendo. If injured or waiting, do this. If you cannot do training, I am sure Youtube and the like will show you experienced kendoka.

### Shiai-geiko

In this type of practice, referees rate the match. Both kendoka compete as if it is a real match. This way we learn our inadequacies and faults, as well as finding our effective waza, and gaining confidence in our techniques. When judging our match, we must be honest, and call our opponent's successful strikes, and not cheating to gain an advantage. Do not let this Keiko degenerate into a violent fight. You must maintain the correct mental attitude to do your best kendo. If you try to attack without the same basic principles you have learned, Kamae - Seme - Kikai (Opportunity) - Datotsu - Zanshin, you will not achieve a valid strike. Remember Shiai is to challenge yourself and your training. If you cannot succeed there, then you have not learned correctly.

### Shiai

Kendo is not a sport or martial art to learn to kill somebody. It is part of your life to train yourself. It is not about somebody else; it is about yourself. Kendo training is hard and strict because it means to be so and not to be something enjoyable like football or any other sports. How you achieved winning a match is more important than the winning in that; how you prepared, practiced before and how you fought, controlled yourself physically and mentally in the match. However, winning a match is still very important. You should understand now how difficult it is to get Ippon against your opponent. You need to practice long and hard to be able to beat someone. Through the preparation for a competition, you will learn many things, and this is the reason why we have competition. Therefore a bad result or defeat makes your preparation meaningless. Only a victory can justify your preparation. It is wrong to think that "I lost, but it was good kendo." That is just an excuse hiding or justifying weakness. Try to win once you compete in a shiai and after you have become able to win then talk about your ideal kendo.

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## Appendix A: Bokutō ni yoru Kendo kihon waza keiko hō

This practice method was devised, so students can learn the fundamental techniques of Kendo based on the notion that the Shinai is a sword. Some of the benefits of this practice are:

- Movements are based on those of the Nihon Kendo Kata, thus giving a basic understanding, to aid their learning.
- You use bokutō to learn kendo correctly.
- Develop solid basics and techniques that are directly translatable into bogu kendo practice.
- Develop reiho (manners).

There, a 9 Kihon that comprises 5 Shikake-waza and 4 Oji-waza: Shikake-Waza is Kihon 1, 2,3,4,7 while the others are Oji-waza, Kihon 5,6,8,9. The following rules need to be followed:

### Reigi:

Reigi is the same as for the Nihon Kendo Kata. Begin with bokutō in right hand, rei, and swap to left hand for **tai-to** and move three ayumi-ashi steps to center, draw bokutō as taking sonkyo at the correct ma-ai. Stand in Chudan, Yokote of tips just crossing. Lower kensen while turning hands to the right, until Kensen just below knee level, retreat five small ayumi-ashi steps, take chudan, then begin kihon. Reverse the sequence at the end.

### Kamae

Kamae used is chudan-no-kamae.

### Metsuke

Eye focus centered on opponent's eyes but seeing the whole body.

### Ma-ai

Issoko-ittō-no-ma-ai. The distance will vary slightly according to size, experience levels, and the target of your strikes.

### Datotsu

Strikes must be made in full spirit, with large and correct furi-kaburi. Strikes must have correct tenouchi (grip), hasuji (path of the blade) and use the monouchi. All strikes should stop just short of the target.

### Ki-Ken-Tai-itchi

This Ki-Ken-Tai-itchi must be demonstrated by coordinating the Strike, Shout and rear foot "snapping" up behind the right foot.

### Ashi-sabaki

For Kihon, all footwork is Okuri-ashi with suri-ashi (sliding step).

### Kakegoe

Show Ki-ai with clear, loud, sharp shout of the targets during all strikes. "Men!", "Kote!", "Do!" and "Tsuki!"

### Breathing

Breathe in deeply before beginning, and perform each Kihon using one breath.

### Zanshin

Step back at the end of each strike keeping mentally alert and exerting pressure on the opponent with the kensen. The manual states kensen to the throat, although some teachings state between the eyes. After the Shikake-waza, you take a small step back for zanshin, then another back to **ai-chudan** (mutual chudan stance). For Oji-waza, both step back simultaneously to Chudan for zanshin.

### Practice ideas:

Perform Kihon fully as the Kata.

Perform Kihon in a continuous sequence, with no break between them.

Perform each twice, reversing the roles, before separating.

Choose those relevant to the lesson plan.

Use principles to practice other similar waza.

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## Kihon Ichi - Ippon-uchi-no-waza "Shomen, Kote, Do, Tsuki"

Motodachi	Kakarite
1) <b>Open Men</b> by moving the kensen sharply to the right.	1) Step forward and strike shomen – Okuri-ashi <b>Men</b>
2) Wait for kakarite's zanshin.	2) Take a small step back and point kensen toward the mototachi's throat.
3) Move the kensen back to ai-chudan.	3) Step back into ai-chudan at issoku ittō no ma-ai for the next strike.
4) <b>Open Kote</b> by moving the kensen up to the left.	4) Step forward and strike kote – Okuri-ashi <b>Kote</b>
5) Wait for kakarite's zanshin.	5) Take a small step back and point kensen toward the mototachi's throat.
6) Move the kensen back to ai-chudan.	6) Step back into ai-chudan at issoku ittō no ma-ai for the next strike.
7) <b>Open Do</b> by raising the bokutō upward.	7) Step forward and strike migi <b>Do</b> – Okuri-ashi <b>Do</b>
8) Wait for kakarite's zanshin.	8) Take a small step back and point kensen toward the mototachi's throat.
9) Move the kensen down to ai-chudan.	9) Step back into ai-chudan at issoku ittō no maai for the next strike.
10) <b>Open Tsuki</b> by moving the kensen slightly down to the right while taking a step backward receiving the thrust.	10) Step forward and thrust <b>Tsuki</b> .
11) Wait for kakarite's zanshin.	11) Take a small step back and point kensen toward the mototachi's throat.
12) Return to chudan and step forward simultaneously with kakarite's second step.	12) Take a second back to ai-chudan at yokote kosa.

- Keep tension between each other. Kakarite must immediately strike when motodachi release the center position.
- Kakarite should complete the entire sequence of cuts in one breath.
- The ma-ai (uchima) for each strike is different. When taking Zanshin, adjust rearward steps to reach correct ma-ai for next strike.

**NB: Yokote kōsa** – distance where the Yokote of sword are cross (tips just crossing)

## Kihon Ni - Ni/San-dan-no-waza (Renzoku-waza) "Kote-Men."

Motodachi	Kakarite
1) Open <b>Kote</b> by raising the kensen up to the left.	1) Step forward and strike Kote – Okuri-ashi <b>Kote</b>
2) Take a small step back and move your kensen to the right opening <b>Men</b> . (Move the kensen straight across underneath the kakarite's bokutō as he swings up.)	2) Step forward and strike Men – Okuri-ashi <b>Men</b>
3) Wait for kakarite's zanshin.	3) Take a small step back and point kensen toward the mototachi's throat.
4) Return to ai-chudan.	4) Step back into ai-chudan at yokote kōsa.
5) Step forward while in ai-chudan.	5) Step back while in ai-chudan.

- Kakarite's strikes must both be performed in one continuous sequence of action.
- Motodachi must control the ma-ai for the second Men strike. Do not take a large step as this will make it hard for Kakarite to make up the extra distance between the kote and men position.

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## Kihon San- Harai-waza, "Harai-Men." (omote)

Motodachi	Kakarite
1) From issoku ittō no ma-ai the kakarite breaks your kamae by using harai-waza.	1) From issoku-ittō-no-ma-ai, Kakarite takes one large step forward and at the same time moves the bokutō in an upward, clockwise, circular motion to strike and to use the omote shinogi to break the mototachi's kamae by hitting /pushing his kensen to your left.
2) (Kakarite performs <b>harai-aga</b> and <b>shomen-uchi</b> in one action)	2) Continuing the same upward circular motion used to offset Motodachi's bokutō, Kakarite completes the upward swing of the bokutō and then strikes forward to Motodachi's Shomen
3) Wait for kakarite's zanshin.	3) Take a small step back and point kensen toward the mototachi's throat.
4) Return to ai-chudan.	4) Step back into ai-chudan at yokote kōsa.

- The Harai action must have sufficient force to move opponent's Bokutō, resulting in an audible knocking sound.
- Harai action must be with the body going forward, not on the spot.

## Kihon Yon - Hiki-waza, "Hiki-do."

Motodachi	Kakarite
1) At Issoku-ittō-no-ma-ai, receive the kakarite's <b>Men</b> strike with the omote (left) shinogi of the bokutō without moving feet.	1) Step forward and strike shomen. – Okuri-ashi <b>Men</b>
2) Step forward and enter tsuazeriai with the kakarite.	2) Your strike having been received, step forward and into tsubazeriai with the mototachi.
3) The kakarite presses your hands down as if to create a shomen opening, so you push hands upward in response.	3) Press down your tsuba against mototachi's tsuba, forcing hands downward.
4) As kakarite release pressure, your hands spring up forward.	4) Feeling the Motodachi's upward response, Kakarite releases the downward pressure to elevate the bokutō, takes a large step backward with the left foot, and executes a strike to Motodachi's right Do. (Hiki-Do)
5) Wait for kakarite's zanshin.	5) Take a small step back and point kensen toward the mototachi's throat.
6) Step back and assume ai-chudan.	6) Step back into ai-chudan at yokote kosa.

- Both step into tsubazeria together. Kakarite's tsuba on top.
- The action of taking tsubazeria, pushing down, and stepping back to strike must be a continuous sequence of actions.

## Kihon Go - Nuki-waza, "Men-nuki-do."

Motodachi	Kakarite
1) From issoku ittō no ma-ai step forward and strike shomen.	1) Avoid the mototachi's strike by taking a step to the forward, diagonal right while simultaneously striking migi Do.
2) Align yourself with the kakarite while turning slightly to the left, and take a step back and assume chudan.	2) Face the motodachi and take a step back together along your current off-center angle, and assume chudan.
3) While in ai-chudan take a circular step to the left back to the starting positions.	3) While in ai-chudan take a circular step to the left back to the starting positions.

- The Ki-ai "**Men! – Do!**" should sound joined as one voice if the timing is correct.

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## Kihon Roku - Suriage-waza, "Kote-suriage-men." (ura)

Motodachi	Kakarite
1) From issoku-ittō-no-ma-ai step forward from the right foot and strike kote.	1) As the mototachi strikes, step back from the left foot and perform suriage waza with the right (ura) shinogi of bokutō. Then immediately (in one action) step forward and strike men.
2) Step back together and assume ai-chudan.	2) Step back together and assume ai-chudan.

- The stepping back by Kakarite must be coordinated to allow the strike made going forward, with entire action in one continuous motion.

## Kihon Nana - Debana-waza, "Debana-kote."

Motodachi	Kakarite
1) From issoku-ittō-no-ma-ai, take a small step forward with the right foot (as seme-ashi) and raise the kensen slightly by moving hands forward / upward from chudan as if to initiate a strike.	1) At the moment the mototachi begins to move, step forward and make a "small" fast strike to the right kote.
2) Wait for kakarite's zanshin.	2) Take a small step back and point kensen toward the mototachi's throat.
3) Withdraw right foot and return to ai-chudan.	3) Step back into ai-chudan at yokote kosa.

- Motodachi should move kensen slightly left if required, to allow Kakarite to strike Kote cleanly.
- For Kakarite, this shows Debana waza and small striking action (see Appendix). Make sure the hands rise then cut correctly.
- Kakarite may try moving forward slightly left of center, still facing an opponent (see kihon).

## Kihon Hachi - Kaeshi-waza, "Men-kaeshi-Do."

Motodachi	Kakarite
1) From issoku-ittō-no-ma-ai strike shomen.	1) Receive(block) the mototachi's strike with the left shinogi of the bokutō while starting to step forward, diagonal right and continues moving while flicking bokutō around underneath to strike migi Do.
2) Align yourself with the kakarite while turning slightly to the left, and take a step back and assume chudan.	2) Face the motodachi and take a step back together along your current off-center angle, and assume chudan.
3) While in ai-chudan take a circular step to the left back to the starting positions.	3) While in ai-chudan take a circular step to the left back to the starting positions.

- Kakarite should not raise the hands above the head for the Kaeshi-waza action. Keep hands in front with the feeling of moving forward.
- Blocking action and kaeshi-do action must be a continuous motion.

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## Kihon Kyu - Uchiotoshi-waza, "Do-uchiotoshi-Men."

Motodachi	Kakarite
1) From issoku-ittō-no-ma-ai strike migi Do.	1) As the motodachi strikes, step back to the diagonal left and strike the center of motodachi's bokutō, down right, with your monouchi. Then immediately step forward and strike men.
2) Align yourself with the kakarite while turning slightly to the left and take a step back and assume chudan.	2) Face the motodachi and take a step back together along your current off-center angle, and assume chudan.
3) While in ai-chudan take a circular step to the left back to the starting positions.	3) While in ai-chudan take a circular step to the left back to the starting positions.

- Motodachi must cut with correct hasuji – blade at 45 degrees when cutting.
- Kakarite knocks down opponent's bokutō with the te-no-uchi action of the straight downward strike to the center (close to tsuba) of motodachi's bokutō.
- Strike straight down with the blade – do NOT use the side or shinogi.

## Appendix B: Nihon Kendo Kata

### **Brief History:**

- Kata is the essence of a Kendo school, with all the techniques that have been tested in combat.
- During Tokugawa period, there were over 200 schools of Kendo.
- Major schools gathered for the first time to establish a Ten form Kata for the Imperial Police in 1886 (Keishicho Ryu Gekken Kata).
- Butoku-kai established the three Kata forms in 1906 to promote Kendo in schools.
- Kendo became part of the required curriculum in intermediate and high schools in 1911.
- A Kata Committee by Dai-Nippon Butokukai introduced the Kata forms in October 1912.
- In September 1917, and May 1933 the Kata was revised with additional details to take its present form.
- At this time it became known as Nihon Kendo Kata or Nippon Kendo Kata.

**From the original writing of Noboru Shigeoka Hanshi 9th Dan, and passed on by Jumpei Matsumoto 7th Dan:**

### **Practicing Kata helps one to:**

1. Establish adequate Kiai and spirit
2. Understand the principle of Sen (taking the initiative)
3. Control your mind
4. Establish natural Reiho (etiquette) and calmness in behavior
5. Establish correct posture
6. Improve footwork
7. Learn how to read the opponent's movements and mind
8. Move and react quickly
9. Correct your bad habits
10. Understand about distance
11. Understand the law, reason, rationality, and logic of Kendo
12. Establish your Kihin (elegance in presence), Fū-Kaku (noble presence) and Kigurai (noble bearing – pride in attitude)

### **Points to remember when practicing Kata:**

- 1) When moving forward and backward, you should hold your breath while maintaining a good balance of spirit and mind. When moving forward, firstly you should breathe in deeply and continue to move in holding this breath, until exhaling with the utterance of either "Ya" or "Toh." The strike should be perfected with an awareness of Tanden (the lower part of the abdomen). When moving to Ma-ai, a diaphragmatic breathing method should be exercised quietly so that the opponent will not notice your breathing pattern.



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- 2) In Kata, the movements are pre-arranged. However one should exercise a freedom of thought, and Uchidachi should consider various ways of potential Seme in the attacks, to break through Shidachi's pre-arranged defense, strikes or counter-attacks, try to use this image to make this as real as possible. That will also create a high level of spiritual tension.
- 3) Shidachi should practice all of the techniques with a quick reaction against the strikes made by Uchidachi, but not by hasty or rushed actions. Both Uchidachi and Shidachi should maintain enough tension from the first Rei until the last Rei.
- 4) Uchidachi should strike when the harmony in the breathing coming from both sides meets and when the level of spiritual tension from both sides reaches an adequate point. Uchidachi as a teacher initiates his/her spirit and encourages and helps to establish Shidachi's spirit and in turn, should teach the opportunity for the strikes.
- 5) Shidachi should maintain the spirit of Seme or Sen, and even though the movements are pre-arranged, he/she should not just wait for Uchidachi's strikes to happen. When within Ma-ai [see footnote on this particular Ma-ai], he/she should win in spirit by Seme firstly, inviting Uchidachi to attack and therefore creating a reaction against the strike and then to win with technique.
- 6) Always pull the left foot toward the right foot when striking. The shoulders should be relaxed while maintaining good tension in the Tanden, this way you can strike correctly with the back and the lower part of the body. Cut by pushing the sword away from the body with the right hand and by pulling it back with the left hand toward the body. Only in this way can a Japanese sword cut.

## Footnote on Ma-ai.

According to the teaching of Noboru Shigeoka Hanshi 9th Dan, the Ma-ai referred herein to item 5) is when engaging in the Issoku Ittō no Mai. The Issoku Ittō no Mai is a dangerous distance to enter into, as it could become a mutual position from where your opponent may also be able to strike. So extreme caution should be exercised. That also includes any closer distance than Issoku Ittō no Mai including Chikama. I have only discussed the first three kata here. There are many good textbooks available on the subject that you can refer to for more detail. The reigi/terms are similar to that discussed in chapter 1, except:

- Sage-tō - Bokutō held in right hand on right side (blade up)
- Bring bokutō up in front of the chest and swap to left hand and place in Tai-tō.
- Start and finish at a position where the Yoko-te of bokutō are crossing.
- Metsuke - keep eye contact throughout Kata.

## **Key Points:**

- Practice predefined steps but perform with flexibility.
- Maintain focus from the first Rei to the last, especially when retreating after each Kata.
- Uchidachi is the senior and Shidachi is the student, so Uchidachi always leads and Shidachi responds.
- Learn not only the steps but also the reasons and logic of the Waza (Riai) and the variation of speed and strength.
- Always look at each other's eyes and not at the target point.
- Move forward from the front foot and retreat from the back foot.
- Kata starts after Uchidachi sees a proper opportunity to strike. **NB:** Kodachi kata starts as Shidachi tries to enter into the Ma-ai (Irimi).
- Shidachi always shows Zanshin after each Kata, and Uchidachi moves after seeing this.
- Use Suriashi footwork quietly.
- Bring the rear foot immediately up to the heel of the front foot with each Datotsu to a proper footwork, release shoulder tension, focus power to lower abdomen, and strike from the hip (whole body, not just arms).
- Monouchi must reach the target point with force, stopping just short.
- Hold breath to stabilize the body when coming into Ma-ai or retreating from it. Inhale deeply before stepping forward, approach at once, then strike with Ki-ai (exhale) and power from lower abdomen (while in Ma-ai, breath shallow, quietly, and naturally from the diaphragm so as not to let the opponent sense your breathing).
- Ki-ai is expressed by the shouts of "Yah!" for Uchidachi and "Toh!" for Shidachi, with a loud voice with power from the lower abdomen.

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## Ipponme - The first LongSword kata

This Kata teaches Ma-ai, Sen, power, courage, conviction, faith, justice, truth.

**Jodan-no-kamae** (Kamae of Fire; represents all-consuming power, Jodan is primarily attacking Kamae)

- Assume Morote (with both hands) Hidari Jodan by stepping left foot forward, being alert; bring hands up without changing the hand grip from Chudan.
- Left fist is one fist away above/front of forehead and above the left foot; sword 45-degrees with the body slightly oblique; blade forward but Kensen slightly to the right.
- Morote Migi Jodan is the posture of kihon kendo with a big Furi-kaburi; body, bokutō, and kensen are straight.
- Uchidachi takes Morote Hidari Jodan, and Shidachi responds by taking Morote Migi Jodan.
- Uchidachi leads from the left foot, Shidachi follows from the right foot in response, and both move to correct ma-ai.
- Shidachi shows Sen (pressure), then, at the right opportunity, Uchidachi strikes Shomen to overcome this pressure. - "strike" means to "cut through" - Uchidachi attempts to strike through the Tsuka all the way down (fast, strong, large arc), the Kensen may drop to below Gedan position at this time.
- Shidachi evades this attack by stepping back and extending the arms up and back to the Kensen's direction (Kensen does not drop down) - Uchidachi leans slightly forward at the end of his strike due to the force of the effort to cut thru.
- Shidachi strikes back (fast, strong) with forwarding step (the evading and striking must be a continuous action).
- Immediately Uchidachi steps one step back with okuriashi, and Shidachi lowers the kensen to the center of Uchidachi's face (between eyes), then as Uchidachi's retreats another step, Shidachi follows up assuming Morote Hidari Jodan and shows Zanshin.
- As Uchidachi raises the sword and straightens up, Shidachi retreats to Chudan.

## Nihonme - The second longsword kata

This Kata teaches Seichūsen (正中線), endurance, Jin (仁). Thus Waza is merciful and strike is not fatal.

**Chudan-no-kamae** (Kamae of Water)

- Both assume Chudan-no-kamae. With Uchidachi leading and Shidachi following in response, both move forward to the correct Ma-ai (Bokutō cross at about three inches).
- Both sides endure the pressure until Uchidachi can no longer withstand the Shidachi's force.
- At the right opportunity, Uchidachi strikes the Kote (fast, strong) with large technique to a point where Kensen is slightly below the Shidachi's fist level.
- Shidachi evades by stepping back diagonally to the left, while dropping Kensen straight down to approximately Gedan (knee) level, then (naturally drawing an arc under Uchidachi's bokutō) with a large swing and large step from the right foot, make a straight strike to Uchidachi's right Kote.
- Shidachi shows Zanshin using Ki-zeme (without bodily motion, so must show this with Ki - spirit).
- Uchidachi's Kensen goes under Shidachi's bokutō when returning to Chudan.

## Sanbonme - The third long sword kata

This Kata teaches Center (中心), Kigurai, Kuraizume, and heart, commanding the opponent without injuring him.

**Gedan-no-kamae** (Kamae of earth)

- Lower the Kensen, straight down.
- Kensen should be at a level 3-6 cm below the opponent's kneecap.

**Gedan** is a defensive posture.

- Both assume in Gedan-no-kamae. With Uchidachi leading and Shidachi following in response, both move forward to the correct Ma-ai.
- From this ma-ai, both raise kensen toward Chudan with Sen (being alert, Kiarasoi), with bokutō just crossing.
- At the right opportunity, Uchidachi thrusts toward the solar plexus using Shinogi (blade turned slightly to the right).
- Shidachi parries with the Mine (with the blade turned to the right) to control the force, then immediately thrusts back to the Uchidachi's chest (blade down).

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- **Uchidachi** deflects by stepping right foot back using the right **Shinogi** (press down to the right) with arms somewhat extended and **Kensen** to the throat (**Hidari Shizentai-no-kamae**).
- **Shidachi** deliberately pressure further forward (**Kuraizume**, not a thrust with arms) with left foot leading, so **Uchidachi** steps back and uses the left **Shinogi** to parry the **Bokutō** (in **Migi Shizentai-no-kamae**). But he is unable to withstand advancement, so lowers the Bokutō to the right and retreats with three rapid steps (left-right-left).
- Shidachi quickly follows Uchidachi raising the **Kensen** gradually to end at the center of the face (between eyes) and show **Zanshin**.
- After Zanshin, Uchidachi slowly raises the bokutō to Chudan, and Shidachi begins to retreat slowly two steps, so both meet in Chudan (at issoko ittō no ma-ai), and continue another three steps back to the center position (All five steps should be continuous for Shidachi).

## Appendix C: SUBURI SWING SPEED STUDY

By Ueda Fumio & Yoshida Yasumasa - Keio University, Japan. Translated by Matt (Kingofmyrrh - Kendo World Forum)

### INTRODUCTION

In your daily practice, at what angle do you swing up the shinai, and to what position do you swing it down? In Heisei 10, at the 31st Japanese Budo Forum, two pieces of research were presented. 'Changes in suburi - in particular, changes caused by kensen position at the apex of the upswing - due to variations in kendo teaching methods' and 'Suburi teaching methods in kendo - variations in arm action at the terminal position during empty striking.' The researchers were a group centered around Professor Ueda Fumio (Kyoshi 7 dan) and Assistant Professor Yoshida Yasumasa (7 dan), both of Keio Gijuku University. Both researchers have since further advanced their research into suburi, and continue to search for the most effective suburi scientifically. Here, they explain suburi that is effective in actual use.

### INDEX

- Doubts about Ambiguous Instructional Methods
- Research into the Upswing Movement
- Investigation into the Terminal Position of the Downswing
- The Most Effective Suburi

### DOUBTS ABOUT AMBIGUOUS INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

#### Ueda

I see this every year in my role as kendo club coach at Keio University, but when it comes to university kendo clubs, the members gather together from all over the country. Even though we can raise suburi as an example of something that each of the students has been taught, the fact is that it varies wildly according to their home region. I felt that to be able to instruct all of them; it would be necessary to start by teaching them exactly what correct suburi was. At Keio University, there are not all that many students who achieved superb results in competitions during their high school years; in fact, there are many that are close to beginners [this is a somewhat relative description!]. I thought that by having them master correct basics as best, they could raise their skill level during their four years here. Taking up a shinai and striking each other is something that cannot be done without an opponent, but suburi is something that you can do by yourself. I feel that important factors in kendo are kamae and suburi. These days we have machines so we can easily do strength training, but in the old days, they didn't have such things. It was most likely suburi itself that was strength training back then. At every Japan Budo Forum, a research topic is presented. In Heisei 10, Keio University was used as the venue, and we performed the role of hosts. When we then wondered what we should present research on, we hit upon the idea of presenting something about suburi. I looked into the position of the downswing, while Yoshida sensei led those who got to work on the angle of the upswing.

#### Yoshida

I first turned my eye to the instructional methods of 'swing back until the shinai touches your buttocks' and 'swing up such that the angle of the shinai reaches 45 degrees.'

#### Ueda

Talking about the '45 degrees' method, we were somewhat concerned as to whether one could discern what angle the shinai was at since it was in a position behind the body where it could not be seen.

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We wondered whether it was really necessary to stipulate the angle to which the shinai should be swung back and whether it wasn't possible just to teach a naturally flowing backswing movement without specifying an angle. We also had our doubts as to which stopping position was best for the downswing. When talking conceptually, suburi is often taught regarding stopping the right fist at the height of the right shoulder. However, we were aware that when we did suburi, we often stopped the kensen at the height of the opponent's head. If you stop with your right hand at the height of your right shoulder, the kensen comes to a halt at quite a high position. I carried out my research into the downswing of the shinai from a stance of trying to find out just which of these suburi methods was most effective. The suburi method in which you swing back until the shinai touches the buttocks, so-called 'jōgeburī' suburi, is a method used to instruct children. It's difficult for children to understand if you just tell them to 'swing straight.' By having them line up the shinai with the coccyx at the buttocks, you can teach them a straight shinai path. In fact, in the suburi described in the All Japan Kendo Federation's 'Points for the Instruction of Young Children,' there are only two types, 'jōgeburī' and 'sayūfuri.' Swinging straight down at an imaginary opponent is distinguished with the name 'shomen strike.' In other words, it is seen not as suburi but a movement that comes at the striking stage. Despite the fact that suburi, where one stops the shinai at shomen is carried out, it does not exist as a term. In this research, we used the name 'air shomen suburi.'

## Yoshida

Most likely 'shomen strike' refers not to suburi but to the movement that comes at the stage when bogu is worn and actual striking is carried out. In Nakano Yasoji's 'An Illustrated kendo Dictionary' there is something called 'advancing and retreating men strike suburi,' which is probably safe to think of as shomen suburi.

## Ueda

Kendo suburi and basic techniques came to be standardized after the war, from around the latter half of Showa 30s to the Showa 40s. The central figure of that time was Nakano Yasoji sensei. Since 'An Illustrated Kendo Dictionary' was put out by Nakano sensei, it naturally became the basis of the post-war instructional method.

## Yoshida

If we go even further back from there, we arrive at Takano Sasaburo sensei's 'Kendo.' This 'Kendo' is the starting point. As such, the makeup of many instructional texts that followed was the same as that of 'Kendo,' and many texts use almost the same terms.

## Ueda

At present, research into kendo is carried out from every possible viewpoint, but surprisingly, there has been almost no research or data on suburi.

## RESEARCH INTO THE UPSWING MOVEMENT

## Ueda

For this investigation, we obtained the cooperation of five subjects with kendo experience, ranging from 3rd dan to 7th dan, and five subjects without kendo experience. Yoshida sensei also used the same subjects in his research.

## Yoshida

Yes, Ueda sensei looked at an electromyogram (EMG), and I carried out analysis of movements using a high-speed camera. For these observations, we first divided ways of swinging up the shinai into four types (see illustration). We designated swinging back as far as the buttocks as suburi 1, and from there suburi 2, suburi 3, and finally we designated swinging up to 45 degrees as suburi 4. We selected these four classifications based upon photographs of suburi that we had seen in various instructional texts and kendo magazines. While no matter which book you read the explanatory text is pretty much the same; the photographs of suburi are almost completely inconsistent. We looked at these photographs, and while there was a suburi method in which one touches the buttocks, there was also talk of swinging up such that the kensen would thrust into a wall behind you, with the shinai horizontal. Then again there was somewhere the shinai was swung so that it pointed diagonally up. We divided these into four types.

## 4 Types of Suburi Tested:

- Swinging upward at a 270-degree angle
- Swinging upward at a 225-degree angle
- Swinging upward at a 180-degree angle
- Swinging upward at a 135-degree angle

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## Ueda

When Yoshida sensei said to me, 'It seems that there's also a method in which you swing back as if thrusting into a wall behind you,' I argued that that was ridiculous. That is because if you swing back as if to thrust into a wall, your elbows will end up going behind your head. I felt that this type of upswing was probably inefficient.

## Yoshida

Before starting the investigation, we had our subjects practice the four types of suburi. We made the same subjects perform all four types. Next, we measured which of these swinging methods produced the greatest kensen speed at the point of swinging down, measured at phase 8 (see phase diagram). The suburi 3 was found to give the fastest kensen speed. The slowest was suburi 4. If I were to try to explain, it would seem that because with suburi 4 you are in a situation where the shinai has merely been thrust upwards, it is not possible to smoothly switch to a downswing action. In the end, all that you can do is swing using just the power of your hands. Additionally, from doing this research, we became aware of how difficult it is for humans to calibrate angles at a position not visible to themselves. During the investigation, when we had the subjects perform the four types of suburi, we instructed them to 'swing back to this position,' but the point to which they swung was rather varied. At first, they swung to roughly the designated point, but there was a trend for their upswing to become steadily larger as they continued to swing the shinai. The result was that suburi 3 was the fastest, but their actual backswing was somewhere between suburi 2 and suburi 3. I think you'll see what I mean if you look at the graph of 'variation in kensen speed.' This graph is of subject M. In this case, suburi 2 is fastest. Next is suburi 1 and suburi 3.

## Ueda

Based upon these results, we tend to feel that while there is no problem as long as the angle is at a position that can be seen, trying to specify angles outside of the field of vision is not a good idea. Expressing it regarding getting somebody to look from the side and find the rough angle is probably better.

## INVESTIGATION INTO THE TERMINAL POSITION OF THE DOWNSWING

## Ueda

We designated two kensen stopping positions. One was the position reached when stopping the right hand at the height of the right shoulder, and the other was the position reached when stopping the kensen at the position of the head of an imaginary opponent (see illustration). Since opponents come in all shapes and sizes, we went for roughly one's head height. What we were looking for as a result was a movement close to that of actual combat. The fact is that suburi that affects the actions of actual fighting is good, so the suburi that showed a balanced distribution of power use when viewed on kindenzu (筋電図) would be the best. We investigated which of suburi 1 and suburi 2 used the muscles most effectively. We took measurements with an EMG, constructed a graph and looked at the results (see 'muscular electrical output of suburi 1 against suburi 2'). For this, we did not make any stipulations about the backswing.

## Yoshida

Looking at the results, with suburi 1, where the right-hand stops at the height of the right shoulder, we see a situation in which tension remains in the right arm for a long period. The tension in the right deltoid was seen especially frequently. It continued to be tense even after finishing cutting men. On the other hand, with suburi 2, where the kensen was stopped at head height, the tension soon disappeared when cutting down.

## Ueda

In actual fighting, two-step strikes and continuous strikes are essential. To move quickly to the next movement, it is essential to first shift to a state of relaxation from the state of tension that exists after making a strike. With suburi 1, the muscles are constantly tense, and the shift to the next action is not smooth. We can state that suburi 2 enables muscle usage more in line with the movements of actual fighting. As an aside, we only specified the kensen stopping height for suburi 2, but when we started the experiment, we saw that most of the subjects brought their fists down to the solar plexus.

## Yoshida

In this experiment, we stretched a piece of rubber at each of the stopping positions of right shoulder height and head height and measured the tip speed when the kensen touched this rubber. In the case of suburi 1, we saw that the maximum tip speed occurred not when it touched the rubber, but before that point.

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## THE MOST EFFICIENT SUBURI

### **Ueda**

We would like people to think of Yoshida sensei's research on the backswing, and my own on the downswing, not separately but together. That is that suburi performed with the upswing and downswing that resulted from this research is effective. In conclusion, effective suburi would be something like the following: First, with regards to the upswing, 'from kamae, raise both elbows as far as they will go.' The position of the kensen is not specified.

### **Yoshida**

However, there is one important condition here, which is not to loosen the grip of the left hand. If you loosen it, you end up with a different movement.

### **Ueda**

That's right; you must raise the arms while gripping the shinai properly. That is an important condition. If you think about it, it's doubtful whether suburi 1 from the upswing investigation can be performed with correct te-no-uchi in the first place.

### **Yoshida**

That's right. As long as you don't loosen the grip, it's pretty difficult to get the shinai to reach the buttocks. As for the downswing, you should 'swing down so that the kensen reaches your head height.' It's best to just specify the kensen height and not the height of the arms. Since everybody has a different physique, the position of their head will also vary.

### **Yoshida**

One other thing that I can explain with confidence from the results of this research is that you must use the shoulders, then the elbows, then the wrists, in that order, such that it becomes a shoulder joint-centric movement. Best of all is to make full use of the snap of the wrists, rather like a whip. Something is often seen with suburi where the right-hand stops at shoulder height, are people who go directly from the shoulder to the wrist. It ends up being a movement like a pole, not a whip.

### **Ueda**

If you do suburi in this pole-like state, the extra effort required leads to extra fatigue and repeated many times; there is even the possibility of damaging the elbows. If the elbows extend flexible, the burden on them should be less.

### **Ueda**

There is a teaching often used when striking men, 'after you've struck men, extend both arms.' You'll soon see if you try to do this that if you try to extend the right arm when the body is facing forward, then the left arm bends. To extend both arms, you have no choice but to take a **hanmi** stance. It's difficult to describe this as correct suburi.

### **Yoshida**

If those teaching just says, 'Stretch out your arms, stretch them!' then it's difficult for those being taught as that's just what they will try to do. Something like 'you should end up with both arms extended in front of you' is probably a better expression.

## **Appendix D: Small cutting action for striking**

All the basic practices discussed in this document refer to the need for large swinging action when striking. Indeed, it is essential to master the large relaxed striking motion and practice it during all the previous practice types. All my Kendo manuals mention this fact, but none discuss the way to perform the small, fast striking action we see used in Jigeiko and Shiai. It is common for beginners to emulate their seniors, and as soon as they wear Bogu to start using small striking actions to become faster and help them strike targets. It is also a problem that the action they use is incorrect, and will hinder their progression in learning proper Kendo. I have therefore set out the basic principles and common errors for striking with a small cutting action.

- To start, the Kamae, posture, grip must all be correct. That is the same as already discussed in the previous Chapters of this document.
- The furi-kaburi action is, in essence, a small version of the large striking action. The hands swing up and forward until the kensen is above the target (more precisely, the center of gravity of shinai is just above the target).

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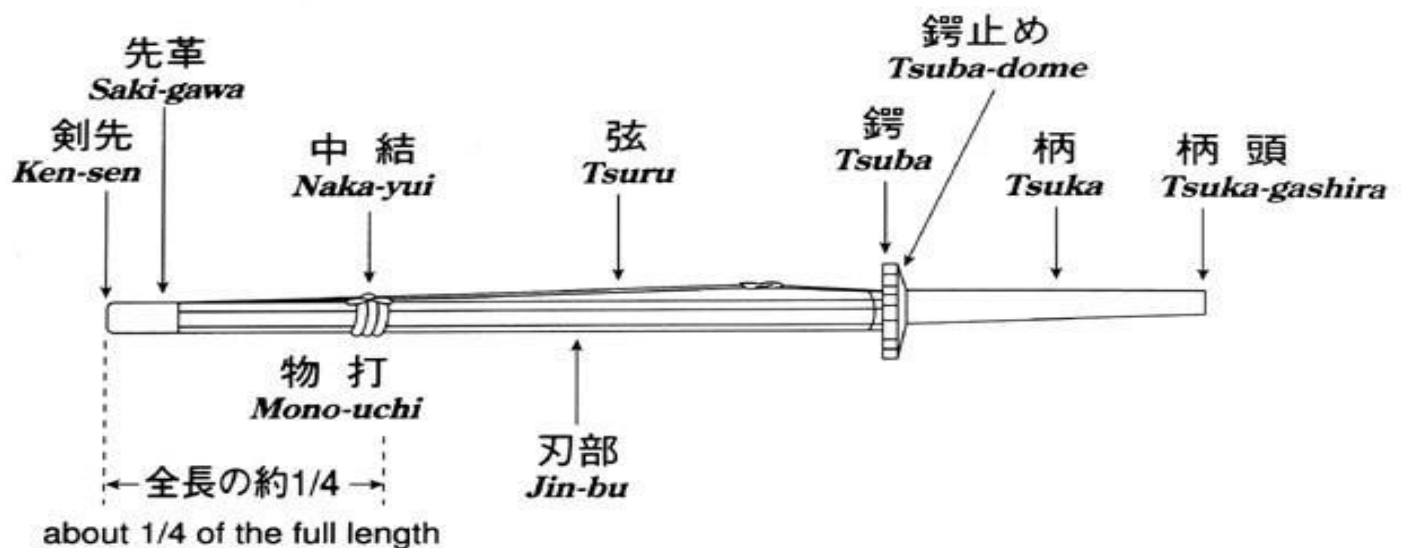
- **Kiri-tsuke** (cutting down) is then performed with normal action - left fist pulling down, while right arm extends forward to strike. Shibori, ten-o-uchi and sae actions are all required.
- Shinai, hands, and arms finish extended at the same level as discussed in the previous chapter. As the swing is much smaller, the coordination with the body movement and step is different.
- When pushing forward to strike, keep the kensen centered until almost reaching the opponent, then quickly raise hands with a spring-like action to strike as above with fumikomi. That gives you control over opponent, center and reduces the chance of being countered.
- Whichever target you are striking, the kensen and hands must rise before striking to have the correct cutting action.

## Points to Avoid:

- A common mistake is to leave left fist stationary, and pull and push (pump) right arm when striking. That results in a slapping action, not a cutting action.
- Another error is pulling right hand back as lifting arms. That pulls kensen away from opponents, losing your seme.
- Both above points rely on bending in the right elbow during upswing - remember correct basic furi-kaburi - the position of the arms DOES NOT change when swinging up, they only extend during striking.
- Also, many people do not swing up and forward enough, especially striking Men. Make sure kensen is raised above target slightly before striking.
- So-called Sashi-men is an action where kensen is pushed onto the target with a wrist flick action. That is NOT small striking. It results in a strike too light. It is not cutting action - think of using a real sword.

## Appendix E: Equipment

### 竹刀各部の名称・Structure of the *Shinai*



## Shinai

The complete list of physical parts of a shinai is as follows, including the ones not explicitly highlighted in the above diagram.

- Sakigawa: The leather cap on the tip of the shinai.
- Sakigomu: The rubber mushroom-shaped stopper that prevents the **take** (bamboo) from poking through the **sakigawa**.
- Take: Take is four bamboo slats of which the body of the shinai is made.
- Tsuru: The cord that holds together the sakigawa and **tsukagawa**. It represents the back of the blade.
- Nakayui: The strip of leather that ties the **take** together.

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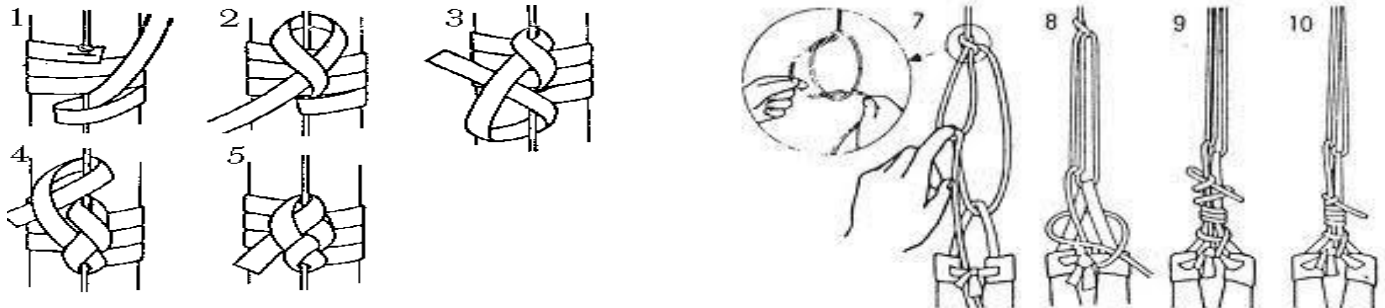
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- Tsuba: The sword guard.
- Tsubadome: The stopper that prevents the tsuba from slipping.
- Tsukagawa: The leather cover of the tsuka.
- Chigiri: The small square metal plate embedded inside the shinai at the base of the tsuka to hold the four slats of bamboo together.

Your shinai must be maintained well to prevent accidents. You should check it for any splits or damage to the **take**, and re-tie loose **naka-yui** and **tsuru**.



## Kendo-gi.

The **kendo-gi**, also called **keiko-gi** or **do-gi**, is a jacket-like garment made of thickly quilted cotton fabric. The resiliency of the material provides a level of protection from bumps and stray strikes that may be encountered during a kendo practice. The quilting helps absorb perspiration and facilitates drying. Kengo-gi can be found in several different colors and patterns; the most common are solid colors of white and dark indigo blue.

### **Wearing Kendo-gi:**

- 1) Wear the keiko-gi with the left lapel overlapping the right.
- 2) Secure the kendo-gi with the **maehimo** (front cords), tying the end in a bowknot. Be sure the knot is tied such that the loops rest in a horizontal position.

## Hakama

The hakama resembles a pleated skirt in its outward appearance but is a trouser-like garment with individual pant legs. The hakama is well suited for kendo as it allows good air circulation around the legs and lower body and permits unrestricted movement. Hakama made for kendo are of cotton or a polyester material and are most commonly found in solid colors of white and indigo blue. The pleats of the hakama are symbolic of six fundamental virtues. Viewing the hakama from the front and identifying the pleats from left to right, the first five virtues are **Jin** (mercy), **Gi** (righteousness or Justice), **Rei** (etiquette), **Chi** (intelligence or Wisdom), and **Shin** (trust). The back pleat represents the sixth virtue of **Makoto/Chu-kou** (loyalty/allegiance).

### **Wearing hakama:**

- 1) Holding the front of the hakama, step into the garment, first with the left foot. When removing the garment, step out on the right foot first.
- 2) Place the front of the hakama at waist level and wrap the **maehimo** (front cords) around the back of the body and around to the front. Bring the maehimo across the front of the body about 6 to 10 cm below the top edge of the hakama. At a point in front of the right hip, fold the himo that is coming around from the right side of the body over the maehimo that is coming across from the left side. Bring the maehimo around to the back and secure the ends together with a horizontal bowknot.
- 3) Bring the **koshiita** just above the knot of the maehimo and wrap the **ushirohimo** around to the front of the body.
- 4) Crossing the left **ushirohimo** over the right, wrap it under and around all of the hakama himo.
- 5) Tie the **ushirohimo** in a square knot and neatly tuck the ends in the back.
- 6) Reach inside the side openings of the hakama and straighten the coattails of the kendo-gi. Pull any slack on the backside of the keiko-gi to the sides so that the kendo-gi is neatly fitted to the back with no vertical wrinkles.



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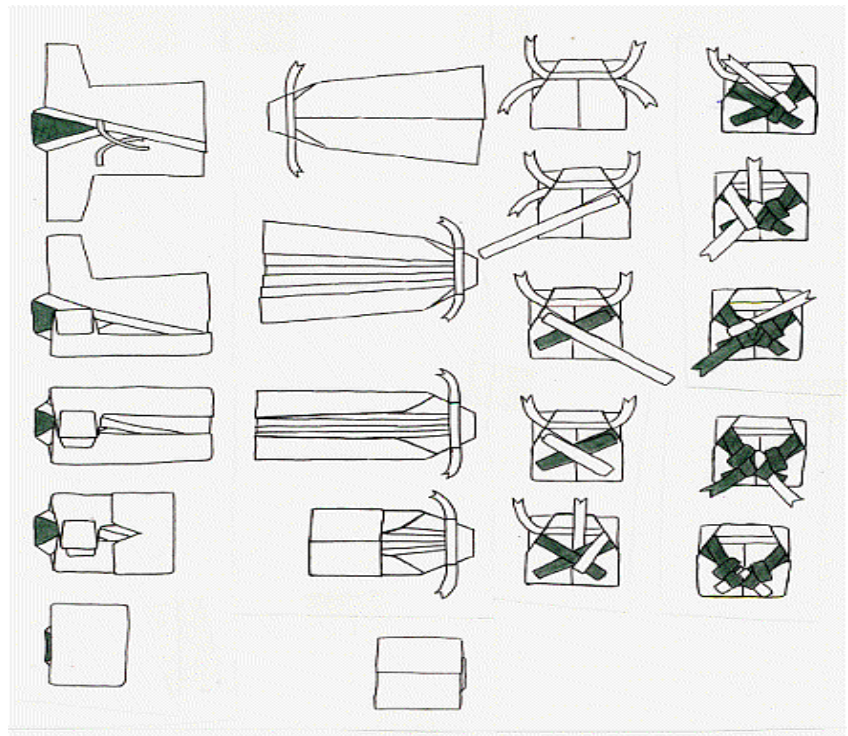
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## Folding

See the pictures on the right. Read the pictures from left top to down.

## Care and Washing

The kendo-gi and hakama should always be kept clean and presentable. They should be replaced if they become faded, discolored, worn, or in any way unsightly. Proper care and storage of the uniform will prolong the life of the garments and keep them looking crisp. Polyester hakama should be cared for in the same manner as other permanent press garments. Prompt removal from the dryer and immediate folding will help preserve the pleats and keep the garment looking pressed neatly. Dyed cotton hakama and kendo-gi require a level of special handling. Dyed uniforms should always be washed separate from another laundry, as the indigo dye will bleed from the material throughout the life of the garments. New hakama and kendo-gi should be soaked overnight in a bath of vinegar and water. Add about ½ cup of vinegar to every 4 liters of water. The acidity of the bath will set the dye and help reduce fading. After soaking, wash the garments using cold or lukewarm water and mild detergent; old fashion soap flakes work well. Sequent washings may include additional vinegar to further slow fading. Hand washing is recommended for maximum color preservation – the bath converts to the perfect washtub for this task. After air-drying, the hakama and kendo-gi should be properly folded and stored to maintain a smartly pressed look. (Damp folding the hakama and letting dry on a clean, flat surface will help set the pleats and reduce wrinkling.)



## Appendix F: Training

Kendo training consists of Kata-geiko, Kihon-geiko, and Jigeiko. All three elements are part of Kendo and do not exist separately. They should all be connected fundamentally, and all come together to allow us to learn and develop complete Kendo.

### Kata-geiko

Here, the term includes all bokutō practice such as **Bokutō ni yoru Kendo kihon waza keiko hō**, Nihon Kendo Kata and Koryu (such as Mizoguchi-ha ittō Ryu). The use of the Bokutō emphasizes the practice of techniques about using a real sword. We can see the correct path of the blade, and the shape of the sword. We learn waza that can be applied to Shinai practices, and practice correct abdominal breathing.

### Kihon-geiko

Here, repeated practice of striking and waza is performed under predetermined situations. We become proficient with the strikes and thrust made using the shinai and practice striking the Bogu accurately. We should develop full ki-ai, good posture, and master **ki-ken-tai-itchi** when striking.

### Jigeiko

As mention in previous chapters, this is where you can learn to make effective seme, and to recognize opportunities to strike. Only by testing the techniques learned in other practice in unrestricted situations will you learn if your kendo if effective. All three Geiko must be practiced throughout your kendo training and must be balanced according to the stages of learning. Whether everything is practiced in all sessions or averaged over an ongoing practice plan is a matter of choice. The balance and content of training will vary according to the aim of the practice. The Coaches should have regular discussions to the content and time allocated to each area. That will vary according to members and upcoming Shiai and gradings.

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A normal training session should include warm-up/stretching before practice begins, and a cool down to finish.

Normally all suburi, kihon-geiko, Jigeiko and Kata-geiko will be practiced after rei. An example of a lesson plan:

## Warm up (5)

- Brisk walking, gentle jogging, squats and jumps lasting for about 5 minutes
- Going from rest to hard exercise is bad for the body, so make sure to warm up
- Static stretches are far more effective after a correct warm-up

## Stretching (5)

- Static stretches are performed for Calf muscles, Thighs, lower back, upper back, shoulder/triceps, arms, elbows, wrists, and neck.
- Ease into and out of all stretches; do not “bounce” during them.
- Hold each one for 10-30 seconds, and repeat several times.
- Breathe out naturally while performing them.
- Stretch each side of the body equally.
- Boost your spirit with shouts - leader counts “ichi, ni, san, shi!” then others count “go, roku, shichi, hachi!” – Use this to include breathing out requirement. Counting this sequence twice will take about 20 seconds, so you can use it to time stretching.

## Rei

- Everyone will line up and perform rei – see chapter 1. (page 2)

## Suburi and Ashi-sabaki (10)

- Perform the different Suburi types as required. Use Shinai or bokutō as required.
- Practice the different footwork types alone, or as part of above practice.
- Consider paired practice for Katate and te-no-uchi practice.

Normally, unless doing Bokutō exercises, we now take seiza and put on Bogu ready for practice.

## Kihon-geiko (20-30)

- Kiri-kaeshi practice: This should be tailored to the experience level of Kendoka.
- Basic Striking practice: Large Men, Kote, Do (and Tsuki if suitable for experience levels)
- Basic Waza practice: Concentrate on Shikake waza such as Nidan-waza, harai-waza, hiki-waza, etc.

**NB:** Consider practicing using opening waza to make Men / Kote-Men strikes (x3), leading onto Kakari-geiko.

- Applied Waza: Practice different seme. Have motodachi strikes at various targets, where you can practice the various counters to them, including any Oji-waza you know.

## Check Shinai and Bogu while in seiza. That may be a good time for fluid intake. (5)

- The BKA make clear the need for adequate breaks for fluid intake during training sessions.
- Breaks will be provided as required, do not just stop training, unless invited.

## Striking Practice (5-10)

- Perform Kakari-geiko for about 20 seconds each in several rounds.
- Uchikomi-geiko with a fast pace may be more beneficial to beginners. Check Shinai and Bogu while in seiza.

## Combined Practice (Jigeiko) (20)

- Senior members will normally act as motodachi.
- Practice Jigeiko for 2-5 minute with opponents.
- Beginners without Bogu may practice uchikomi-geiko, kakari-geiko or Kiri-kaeshi against motodachi, or combination of them all.
- Let Beginners practice, but after one or two rounds, they can perform **Mitori-geiko** (watching practice) while seniors practice together.

## Basics and Kiri-kaeshi (5)

- Perform Basic large striking exercises, such as Uchikomi - 5 x Men uchi (continuous action) and Kiri-kaeshi.
- That helps the correct body and mental attitude after Jigeiko. A short jog and brisk walk will help the body cool down.

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## Rei (5)

- Line up and remove Bogu.
- Use Mokuso as part of the regulated breathing, so this should last a minute or more.
- Rei, then listen to advice from sensei.

## Kata-geiko

The numbers in brackets are an estimate of the number of minutes required for the tasks. That equates to 1 hour 30-40 minutes. That leaves 20-30 minutes for Kata-geiko. Kata-geiko is sometimes performed before warm up and rei, but as it is an essential part of practice, I like to practice after we have warmed up and performed Rei. The practice of **Bokutō ni yoru Kendo kihon waza keiko hō** is best practiced before any Kihon training, as it is often used to introduce techniques to be practiced later with Shinai. In this case, it makes the most sense to perform relevant suburi using the Bokutō also. The Nihon Kendo Kata can be practiced before (as above) or after Jigeiko. Performing at the end can be beneficial as a way of correcting posture, and a good way to cool the body down slowly. That is only a basic lesson plan idea, and even the best-made plans will be subject to ongoing changes depending on the circumstances. A usual lesson plan could be thus:

- Warm up and stretching
- Rei
- Suburi
- Bogu on: (all repeated twice)
- Kirikaeshi – without tai-atari
- Kirikaeshi
- Men x3
- Kote x3
- Do x3
- (Tsuki x3)
- Kote-Men x3
- Kote- Do x3
- Hiki- men x3 (add kote and do)
- Men – tai-atari – hikimen x3
- (Uchikomi geiko: Men-Kote/Men-Kote/Do-Men tai-atari- hiki men, kote, do, Men)
- Use waza to make opening for Men x3 (Seme, osae, harai, nayashi, etc.)
- Use waza to make opening for Kote x3 (Seme- press/release, osae, harai, etc.)
- Kakari-geiko: 3 attacks, 5 attacks, 5 attacks with some hiki waza. Etc
- Waza: Motodachi step into uchima – strike Men: Kakarite use Harai, Debana, Nuki, etc. to strike men, kote, do
- Waza: Motodachi step in to strike Kote - Kakarite use Debana, Nuki, Suriage, etc. to strike men, kote, do
- Jigeiko: Mawari geiko 2-3 minute rounds

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