

Kendo training at the Defense Arts Center (DAC) dojo

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(1) What is Kendo?

For detailed information, please refer to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia site at (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kendo>)

Kendo (剣道 *kendō*, lit. "sword way") is a modern Japanese martial art, which descended from swordsmanship (*kenjutsu*) and uses bamboo swords (*shinai*) and protective armour (*bōgu*). Today, it is widely practiced within Japan, Korea and many other nations across the world.

Kendo is an activity that combines martial arts practices and values with strenuous sport-like physical activity.

Kendo (剣道)



Two *kendōka* in the 2005 European Championships

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Focus | Weaponry |
| Hardness | Full-Contact |
| Country of origin | Japan |
| Creator | - |
| Parenthood | kenjutsu |
| Olympic sport | No |
| Official website | International Kendo Federation: http://www.kendo-fik.org/ |

(2) What do you expect to gain from practicing Kendo – Concept and Purposes

Concept:

- Kendo is a way to discipline the human character through the application of the principles of the *katana* (a long, single-edged sword used by Japanese samurai).

Purposes:

- To mold the mind and body.
- To cultivate a vigorous spirit,
- And through correct and rigid training,
- To strive for improvement in the art of Kendo.
- To hold in esteem human courtesy and honor.
- To associate with others with sincerity.
- And to forever pursue the cultivation of oneself.
- Thus will one be able:
- To love one's country and society;
- To contribute to the development of culture;
- And to promote peace and prosperity among all peoples.

(3) Age limits at this Dojo

Pre-teen, Teen, Adults, Seniors.

Due to difficulty in utilizing swords and level of understanding and following instructions, we, at DAC dojo, usually accepts beginner youth from age 9. For older people, we encourage all age beginners. There are some examples that a person who started Kendo after 50, and became 5th Dan and higher after 15 years of practice.

(4) Expected Course of Kendo Learning

- The first 3 months:
 - Learn basic movements – moving body and basic strikes
- The 2nd 3 months:
 - Begin to wear Boku (Armor protector) and practice basic strikes against others
- The 3rd 3 months:
 - Begin free sparring using various basic waza (techniques) types
- The 4th 3 months:
 - Combines Kendo Kata learning with vigorous training
- From this point on:
 - Repeated training to improve spirit, speed, forces, timing etc.

(5) What do you have to have on the first day of Kendo practice

Kendo learning and teaching is a serious matter, and it usually takes a long term commitment on both learning side and teaching staff to help achieve for learners to get to a certain level of abilities. To ensure a commitment from a beginner, we ask you to have ready necessary equipment on the first day. They are:

- White Keikogi (jacket): \$35
- Dark Navy or Black Hakama (Wide Pants, a garment separated in the middle to form two wide trouser legs): Polyester \$45, or 100% Cotton #10,000 \$120
- Shinai (Bamboo sword): Regular \$30, or better quality \$45, or Best Quality \$60
- Boken (Wooden Sword): Regular \$15, or White Oak \$35
- Shinai Carrying Case: Regular \$20, or Deluxe (carries 5) \$40

Before you begin, we encourage you to visit our Kendo class and watch to see if Kendo is what you truly want to have in your body and soul. When you are finally determined to devote at least 2 years of your time, then please call our dojo, so that we can have above items ready for you. To determine appropriate length of your Shinai and size of your Hakama, we will need your (1) Age and (2) Height.

(Note) At our dojo, beginners wear white color keikogi. When a person achieves a black belt, then he/she will have a privilege to wear a black (dark navy) keikogi.

(6) Equipment you need to have throughout the life of Kendo practice

- The [shinai](#) is meant to represent a Japanese sword ([katana](#)) and is made up of four [bamboo](#) slats, which are held together by leather fittings. A modern variation of a *shinai* with [carbon fiber](#) reinforced resin slats is also used.^[25]
- *Kendōka* (Kendoist, Kendo practitioner) also use hard wooden swords (木刀 [bokutō](#)) to practice [kata](#).^[26]
- Kendo employs strikes involving both one edge and the tip of the *shinai* or *bokutō*.
- Protective armor is worn to protect specified target areas on the head, arms and body. The head is protected by a stylised helmet, called *men* (面), with a metal grille (面金 *men-gane*) to protect the face, a series of hard leather and fabric flaps (突垂れ *tsuki-dare*) to protect the throat, and padded fabric flaps (面垂れ *men-dare*) to protect the side of the neck and shoulders. The forearms, wrists, and hands are protected by long, thickly padded fabric gloves called *kote* (小手). The torso is protected by a [breastplate](#) (胴 *dō*), while the waist and groin area is protected by the *tare* (垂れ), consisting of three thick vertical fabric flaps or [faulds](#).



Shinai (竹刀)



Bokutō (木刀)



Men (面)



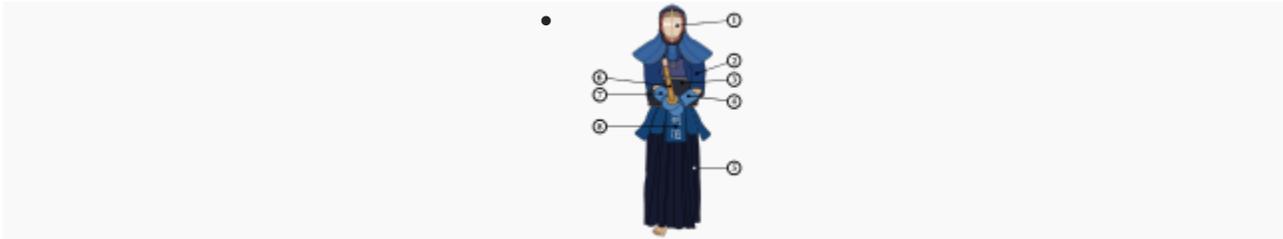
Dō (胴)



Tare (垂れ)



Kote (小手)



Armor and clothing components

(7) Ranks/Grades – the stepping stones in progressing in Kendo skills

Technical achievement in kendo is measured by advancement in grade, rank or level. The *kyū* (級) and *dan* (段) grading system, created in 1883,^[33] is used to indicate one's proficiency in kendo.

The *dan* levels are from first-dan (初段 *sho-dan*) to tenth-dan (十段 *jū-dan*). There are usually six grades below first-dan, known as *kyū*. At USKL dojo, there are nine grades *Kyū*.

The *kyū* numbering is in reverse order, with first *kyū* (一級 *ikkyū*) being the grade immediately below first dan, and sixth *kyū* (六級 *rokkyū*) being the lowest grade.

Generally, there are no visible differences in dress between kendo grades; those below dan-level may dress the same as those above dan-level. However at our dojo, we force below dan-level to wear white tops (jackets).

Eighth-dan (八段 *hachi-dan*) is the highest *dan* grade attainable through a test of physical kendo skills. In the AJKF the grades of ninth-dan (九段 *kyū-dan*) and tenth-dan are no longer awarded, but ninth-dan *kendōka* are still active in Japanese kendo. [International Kendo Federation](#) (FIK) grading rules allow national kendo organisations to establish a special committee to consider the award of those grades.

All candidates for examination face a panel of examiners. A larger, more qualified panel is usually assembled to assess the higher *dan* grades. Kendo examinations typically consist of *jitsugi*, a demonstration of the skill of the applicants, *Nihon Kendo Kata* and a written exam. The eighth-dan kendo exam is extremely difficult, with a reported pass rate of less than 1 percent.^[35]

Requirements for *dan* grade examination within FIK affiliated organisations.

| Grade | Requirement | Age requirement |
|--------------|---|------------------------|
| 1-dan | 1-kyū | At least 13 years old |
| 2-dan | At least 1 year of training after receiving 1-dan | |
| 3-dan | At least 2 years of training after receiving 2-dan | |
| 4-dan | At least 3 years of training after receiving 3-dan | |
| 5-dan | At least 4 years of training after receiving 4-dan | |
| 6-dan | At least 5 years of training after receiving 5-dan | |
| 7-dan | At least 6 years of training after receiving 6-dan | |
| 8-dan | At least 10 years of training after receiving 7-dan | At least 46 years old |

(8) Affiliated Kendo Organizations and Rank awarding organization

Our dojo - DAC Kendo, will be part of the SCKO (Southern California Kendo Organization <http://www.scko.org> or SCKO on Youtube <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCD2-lz7Wzdi1OjavIO1qY1Q>).

For a rank test from 6 kyu to 4-Dan, you can take it from SCKO, twice a year – once on April and on November.

From 5th Dan and above, you can take a test conducted by the AUSKF (All United States Kendo Federation <http://www.auskf.info/>). Testing locations are changing every time to have in the East, West, and Middle of USA, so to be fair to all living in different parts of the US.

All Ranks awarded are authorized and printed under the name AUSKF, and they are recognized/honored by the FIK (International Kendo Federation <https://www.kendo-fik.org/>)

(9) Tournaments and Championships opportunities

Regardless of your rank level, there are many opportunities to participate in various tournaments and championships.

In SCKO alone, there are two official Kendo tournaments and one Year End Holiday tournaments. They are:

- Memorial Day Kendo Tournaments (Around Memorial Day, 3 Team match)
- SCKO Individual Kendo Championship (Around late October, Individual and Team match)
- Year End Holiday Tournament (Around mid-December, Individual and Team match)

Besides these, there are other open tournaments sponsored by other kendo organization locally (such as SCKF: Southern California Kendo Federation) and throughout the US including All US National Kendo Championship held once in 3 years, and All US National Junior Kendo Championship held every year.

There is a World Kendo Championship sponsored by FIK. To be an US national team member, you have to compete and be selected by the evaluation committee based on performance, commitment, and leadership in kendo community.