

KOBUDO

Kobudo is an Okinawan term that refers to ancient weapon art. In 1477, during the Second Sho Dynasty, swords and other weapons were banned from Okinawa and the Ryukyu islands by Emperor Shoshin. All weapons on the island were collected and garrisoned in his royal castle in Shuri on Okinawa. It was as a direct result of Shoshin's edict that Okinawans turned to the development of karate (open hand) fighting. Although kobudo weapons are not really a part of karate, their development has shadowed the development and evolution of karate to the degree that they are almost inseparable. Okinawans developed complex weapons such as Bo, the Sai, the Tuifa, the Kama and the Nunchakus.

In our dojo we practice the Katana (Bokken and Iaito), Nunchaku and Jo.

KATANA (Bokken and Iaito Practice Swords)

The katana emerged in the sixteenth century as a curved, single-edged weapon of the Samurai warrior class in Japan. When paired with a shoto (short sword) such as a wakizashi or the dagger-like tanto, the result is a daisho, a pair of swords worn representing the honor, social power and the very soul of the Samurai warrior. The longer katana was used in open combat primarily for cutting, slashing, and parrying maneuvers, while the shorter blades were used for close-quarters stabbing as well as seppuku, or ritual suicide. Katana swords were traditionally worn the edge facing up, and the art of drawing and attacking an enemy, known as iaido took years to master its many intricacies.



Antique Japanese (samurai) *daisho*, the traditional pairing of two Japanese swords which were the symbol of the samurai. showing the traditional Japanese sword cases (*koshirae*) and the difference in size between the *katana* (top) and the smaller

"Katana" was originally used as a general term for a single-edged sword having a "sori" or curvature of the blade. While the "sugata" or form can take many shapes, including double edged, the term is

now used incorrectly to describe *nibontō* that are 2 shaku (606 mm / 24 in) and longer, also known as "dai" or "daito" among Western sword enthusiasts.



A Japanese Edo period wood block print of a samurai with a *tachi*. The katana evolved as a more sleek and compact alternative to the tachi. Its origins go at least as far back as the Kamakura Period, with several blades dated from that time residing in various national repositories.

Its growth in popularity is believed to have been due to the changing nature of close-combat warfare. The quicker draw of the sword was well suited to combat where victory depended heavily on fast response times. The katana further facilitated this by being worn thrust through a belt-like sash (obi) with the bladed edge facing upwards. Ideally, samurai could draw the sword and strike down the enemy in a single motion.^[5] Previously, the curved tachi had been worn with the edge of the blade facing down and suspended from a belt.

The length of the blade varied considerably during the course of its history. In the late 14th and early 15th centuries, katana blades tended to be between 70 to 73 cm (27.6 to 28.7 in) in length. While during the early 16th century, the average length was closer to 60 cm (23.6 in). By the late 16th century, the average length returned to approximately 73 cm (28.7 in).

The katana was often paired with a similar smaller companion sword, such as a *wakizashi* or it could also be worn with the *tantō*, an even smaller similarly shaped sword. The pairing of a katana with a smaller sword is called the *daishō*. The *daishō* could only be worn by samurai and it represented the social power and personal honor of the samurai.

The authentic Japanese sword is made from a specialized Japanese steel called "Tamahagane"^[10] which consist of combinations of hard, high carbon steel and tough, low carbon steel.^[11] There are benefits and limitations to each type of steel. High-carbon steel is harder and able to hold a sharper edge than low-carbon steel but it is more brittle and may break in combat. Having a small amount of carbon will allow the steel to be more malleable, making it able to absorb impacts without breaking but becoming blunt in the process. The makers of a katana take advantage of the best attributes of both kinds of steel. The maker begins by folding and welding a pieces of high and low carbon steel several times to work out most of the impurities. The High carbon steel is then formed into a U-shape and a billet of soft steel is placed in its center. The resulting block of steel is then drawn out to form a rough blank of the sword. At this stage it is only slightly curved or may have no curve at all. The gentle curvature of a katana is attained by a process of quenching; the sword maker coats the blade with several layers of a wet clay slurry which is a special concoction unique to each sword maker, but generally composed of clay, water, and sometimes ash, grinding stone powder and/or rust. The edge of the blade is coated with a thinner layer than the sides and spine of the sword, then it is heated and then quenched in water (some sword makers use oil to quench the blade). The clay slurry provides heat insulation so that only the blade's edge will be hardened with quenching and it also causes the blade to curve due to reduced lattice strain along the spine. This process also creates the distinct swerving line down the center of the blade called the *hamon* which can only be seen after it is polished; each *hamon* is distinct and serves as a katana forger's signature.^[5]

The hardening of steel involves altering the microstructure or crystalline structure of that material through quenching it from a heat above 800 °C (1,472 °F) (bright red glow), ideally no higher than yellow hot. If cooled slowly, the material will break back down into iron and carbon and the molecular structure will return to its previous state. However, if cooled quickly, the steel's molecular structure is permanently altered. The reason for the formation of the curve in a properly hardened Japanese blade is that iron carbide, formed during heating and retained through quenching, has a lesser density than its root materials have separately.^[5]

After the blade is forged it is then sent to be polished. The polishing takes between one and three weeks. The polisher uses finer and finer grains of polishing stones until the blade has a mirror finish in a process called *glazing*.^[12] This makes the blade extremely sharp and reduces drag making it easier to cut with. The blade curvature also adds to the cutting power.

Iaido. Iaido is the art of smooth, controlled movement of drawing a katana from its sheath, cutting an opponent, removing the blood off the blade, and placing the sword back to the sheath. It teaches the use of real or actual weapons and includes training in Japanese prearranged exercises called *kata*. The word *iaido* means "the way of mental presence and immediate action". This martial art trains a practitioner (*iaidoka*) to quickly respond to attacks. It does not perform sparring of any kind but only involves practicing against imaginary opponents. Practice weapons in *iaido* include *bokken*, unsharpened katanas, and the katana replica *iaito*. More advanced *iaido* practitioners would also use a real Japanese sword (*shinken*).

Bokken. The term *bokken* comes from the Japanese words *bok(u)* meaning "wood" and *ken* which means "sword". It is the most commonly used wooden practice sword for many Japanese martial arts. It is usually made of Asian red oak for better quality but there are also foam sparring *bokkens* for novice practitioners.

Iaito Training Swords. *Iaito* has been traditionally used in many sword drawing martial arts (e.g. *iaido*). It is very similar to a real katana in terms of weight, shape, fittings, and furnishing which makes it very suitable for practicing katana usage. This training sword is usually made of aluminum-zinc alloy and does not have sharp cutting edge. *Iaito* is not intended for contact and sword combat techniques because of its low quality material. It can only be used for solo drills.

Kendo (剣道 *kendo*²), meaning "Way of The Sword", is a modern Japanese martial art of sword-fighting based on traditional samurai swordsmanship, or kenjutsu.^[2] Kendo is a physically and mentally challenging activity that combines strong martial arts values with sport-like physical elements

The *tsuka-gashira* (the end of the grip) must be kept within your body. It should not be outside the body.

When you hear a command "*Tai-toh!*", lift your left hand to the hipbone. This is actually an imitation of a samurai who carries a sword.

Samurai used to carry their swords putting the swords in their belt.

Kendo Basics: Kendo Beginners Guide

Kendo basics are the most important part of kendo. Basic Training Outline

SWORD EXERCISES

1. Mae
2. Ushiro
3. Hidari
4. Migi
5. Omote
6. Ura
7. Chudan
8. Jodan
9. Ate
10. Tsuki



The Training Outline for the Beginners

Two Phases

- *Tandoku Dosa* (Training along): 3 days/week x 4 months (About 48 days)

- *Sohtai Dosa* (Pair Training): 3 days/week x 2 months (about 24 days)

* Gradually putting on armour (bogu).

So so-called beginners training goes for 6 months. These phases are the most important in kendo.

If we, adults, mess up the basics at this phase, it is hard for us to get back to the right track.

Tandoku Dosa (Training Along)

First of all, the beginners all learn basic movements without having a partner. This includes:

1. Reigi-Saho: etiquette/manners
2. Shizentai: Shizentai is a posture we all have to learn at the beginning.
3. Taito: to wear your sword
4. Chudan: how to take chudan, how to put your sword back
5. Footwork: suri ashi, okuri ashi, hiraki ashi, ayumi ashi, tsugi ashi
6. Suburi: joge buri, naname (sayu) joge buri
7. Men Uchi: san-kyodo, ni-kyodo, ikkyodo
8. Kote Uchi: san-kyodo, ni-kyodo, ikkyodo
9. Do Uchi: san-kyodo, ni-kyodo, ikkyodo (only the right do strike)
10. Ni Dan Uchi: zenshin kotai shomen uchi, niho zenshin niho kotai shomen uchi, kote-and-men, kote-and-do
11. Sayu Men Uchi
12. Fumikomi: Learning Fumikomi for the First Time
13. Chohyaku Shomen Uchi (a.k.a. Haya Suburi)

This tandoku dosa was practiced 3 days/week x 4 months (About 48 days). The longer the better.

Sohtai Dosa (Pair Training)

Once the beginners learned the tandoku dosa, they learn pair training.

1. Changing Directions
2. Shomen Uchi

3. Kote Uchi
4. Do Uchi
5. Ni Dan Uchi: kote-and-men, kote-and-do, men-taiatari, men-taiatari-men, men-taiatari-kote, men-taiatari-do
6. Uchikomi Kirikaeshi
7. Uchikomi Geiko
8. Kakari Geiko

I think 6 months of the basic training is good. In old days, apparently it was one year or more to learn the basics. Let's make the basics interesting, so that the beginners are happy to learn the basics so they will improve more quickly in the future.

References : <http://www.kendo-guide.com/> www.stenudd.com

双節棍 Nunchaku

The Japanese word *nunchaku* is the Kun'yomi

The Nunchaku was originally a tool for thrashing rice, wheat or other grains. To the Japanese it appeared to be two harmless wooden sticks connected with a length of rope, braided horse hair or chain.

The Nunchaku were utilized to strike, block and trap an opponent. Stances utilized with the Nunchaku were the same as those utilized in karate so, again, the development of the two closely paralleled each other. Use of the Nunchaku required the martial artist to be equally proficient with either hand. During it's use the weapons could be switched from one hand to the other as needed.

Most occidentals were introduced to the Nunchaku by Bruce Lee in the 1970s. Since that time the Nunchaku has been closely aligned to Okinawan and Japanese karate. It can be a "flashy" weapons and because of this it is frequently seen in Karate demonstrations. Many police departments carry Nunchakus.



Parts of the nunchaku

- **Himo**, the rope which connects the two handles of some *nunchaku*.
- **Ana**, the hole on the *kontoh* of each handle for the *himo* to pass through, only *nunchaku* that are connected by *himo* have an *ana*.
- **Kusari**, the chain which connects the two handles of some *nunchaku*.
- **Kontoh**, the top of each handle is called the *kontoh* and if there is a hole for rope to go through that is called the *ana*.
- **Jukon-bu**, the upper area of the handle.

- **Chukon-bu**, the center part of the handle.
- **Kikon-bu**, the lower part of the handle.
- **Kontei**, the bottom of the handles.^[8]

Grip

The grip is the basic technique of nunchaku-do. It is a relative easy technique. A participant should be able to perform this technique at high speed. A beginner should be able to “grip” 40 times in 30 seconds, an expert should be able to grip 60 times in 30 seconds.

Basic Strikes

The basic strikes cover the most techniques. They are divided in:

- 8 upward strikes
- 8 downward strikes
- 8 sideward strikes
- 6 extension strikes
- 5 variation strikes
- 4 forward strikes

A great proportion of the basic strikes have a rotation. When a strike has a rotation, the nunchaku makes one whole turn.

Basic combinations

A basic combination is a sequence of basic strikes. Every basic combination starts and ends with a ceremony. The exam-rulebook contains 5 basic combinations. For the brown graduation, a participant must be able to demonstrate two self designed basic combinations.

Basic blocks

It is allowed to block an attack of an opponent during a kumite-match.

The exam-rulebook contains 10 basic blocks.

JO (杖:じょう?)

The techniques for jō were reportedly invented by Musō Gonnosuke Katsuyoshi (夢想 權之助 勝吉, fl. c.1605, date of death unknown) after he was defeated by the famous swordsman, Miyamoto Musashi (宮本 武蔵, 1584–1645). They fought each other in a duel sometime between 1608 and 1611, according to Kenji Tokitsu. The record mentioning this duel, the *Nitenki*, recounts:

"When Musashi was in Edo, he met an adept named Musō Gonnosuke, who asked to fight him. Gonnosuke used a wooden sword. Musashi was in the process of making a small bow; he picked up a piece of firewood. Gonnosuke attacked him without even bowing, but he received a blow from Musashi that made him fall down. He was impressed and left."

A jō (杖:じょう?) is another early weapon of Okinawa. It differed in that it was utilized by peasants, monks and samurai alike. Fashioned of Okinawan hardwood, the Bo is 6 feet long and 1 1/2 to 2 inches in diameter. Many present day Bos taper at the ends. This is probably not the traditional style as the bo was utilized to carry water buckets and other items. If the original Bo was indeed tapered at the ends it would have been more difficult to keep items on it. Because of this original Bos are felt to have been non-tapered. The Bo's size makes it a good weapon to use against swords and to disarm an opponent while allowing the Bo practitioner to remain at a safer distance. Manipulation of the weapon requires a thorough knowledge of basic karate stances and techniques

JO STAFF EXERCISES

1. Mae
2. Ushiro
3. Hidari
4. Migi
5. Omote
6. Ura
7. Chudan
8. Jodan
9. Ate
10. Tsuki

References: <http://www.stenudd.com/aikido/jo31kata.htm> (text, videos)