

KENDO KIHON WAZA PRACTICE METHOD USING BOKUTŌ (BASIC TECHNIQUE) (WOODEN SWORD)

Purpose:

- 1) To sense that Shinai is a sword that cuts with blade and to learn about principle of Katana and Riai of Kendo
- 2) To learn Kendo Kihon Waza by handling Bokutō and to develop practical application of the Kendo Waza
- 3) To make it easy to switch to sword for “Japan Kendo Kata” by practicing this Kendo Kihon Waza with Bokutō

Format: This Kihon Waza Practice Method has the same format as “Japan Kendo Kata” with the following differences:

- 1) “Japan Kendo Kata” uses sword with metal blade; whereas, the Kihon Waza Practice uses Bokutō (or Bokken)
- 2) **Uchidachi** in “Japan Kendo Kata” is called **Motodachi** in the Kihon Waza Practice
- 3) **Shidachi** in “Japan Kendo Kata” is called **Kakarite** in the Kihon Waza Practice
- 4) **Yā & Tō** are called in “Japan Kendo Kata”; whereas, actual name of Waza is called in the Kihon Waza Practice
- 5) Kihon Waza Practice uses Chūdan stance exclusively; whereas, “Japan Kendo Kata” uses various stances (postures)

Reiho: Way of bowing followed by Kendo courtesy with Sonkyo to show respect. The method of practicing Kihon Waza has exactly the same Reiho as “Japan Kendo Kata”

Zarei: Face your partner at about 3 steps apart. Sit down from left foot by pulling left leg back and dropping left knee next to your right foot. Put your sword down from the tip on your right side facing the cutting edge toward you and the Tsuba in line with your knees. Bow in sitting down position from your hip keeping your butt down and making your back horizontal from hip to tip of your head. Your hand is placed on the floor in front of you forming a triangle with your thumbs and index fingers. Breathe out (exhale) as you bow, hold breath for one breath time when down and then breathe in (inhale) as you get up. Your nose should be above the center of the triangle when bowed properly. Stand up from right foot and then walk diagonally to the distance about 9 steps away from your partner and face Kamiza (or head table) to get ready for **Ritsurei**. **Zarei** is often omitted.

Ritsurei: Bow in standing position facing Kamiza (or head table) by bending your body about 30 degrees from your hip with the sword in Teito or Sageto position (holding sword on your right hand with the arm extended and sword about 45 degree down). And then face each other and bow at about 15 degrees with your eye contact to your partner.

Switch the sword (referred to Bokutō from here on) from right hand to left hand in front of you after the mutual Ritsurei. When the Bokutō is switched to left hand, stand in Taitō posture (Place your left hand with your thumb on your Tsuba at your left waist with the Bokutō keeping it diagonally down with Tsuka-Gashira (tip) at center line of your body). You hold on to the Tsuba with your thumb to prevent from accidental fall of blade assuming it is real sword. Take three steps forward from right foot and start drawing Bokutō diagonally over your partner’s shoulder at the third step while at the same time making Sonkyō (Squatting posture on your toes with your right foot a bit forward of the left, buttocks lowered, knees opened outward, and upper body upright). This posture Sonkyō with the Bokutō in Chūdan position is to show mutual respect and to show you are ready. The distance between you and your partner should be Yokote no Maai (See Note 4C). Stand up together with your partner with Chūdan posture, open the stance so that the tip of Bokutō goes diagonally to your lower right corner with the tip at about an inch lower than your knee height and the Hasuji (cutting edge) toward left & diagonally down, and then take five small steps back from left foot to return to your starting position (9 steps away from your partner).

Kendo Kihon Waza Practice Method:

Kihon #1: Ippon Uchi (One strike)Waza: Men, Kote, Dō and Tsuki

Motodachi: Open **Men** by moving the tip of your Bokutō slightly to your right side from Chūdan posture

Kakarite: Step in with big Suriashi and execute Okuriashi-Men. Take one small step back for Zanshin and another step back to return to the starting position (Issoku-Itto no Ma-ai)

Motodachi: Open **Kote** by raising your wrists and the tip of your Bokutō up from Chūdan posture

Kakarite: Step in with Suriashi so that your right foot stepped in is in line with Motodachi’s right foot and execute Okuriashi-Kote. Take one small step back for Zanshin and another step back to return to the starting position (Issoku-Itto no Ma-ai)

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Kendo Kihon Waza Practice Method: Continued

Kihon #1: Continued

Motodachi: Open **Dō** by raising your both arms above your eyes from Chūdan posture

Kakarite: Step in with big Suriashi and execute Okuriashi-Dō. Take one small step back for Zanshin and another step back to return to the starting position (Issoku-Itto no Ma-ai)

Motodachi: Open **Tsuki** by dropping the tip of your Bokutō down to your right side from Chūdan posture. Take one step back at the same time as Kakarite thrusts for Tsuki. Take one step forward as Kakarite takes 2ND step back.

Kakarite: Step in with big Suriashi, thrust Okuriashi-Tsuki and pull back Bokutō slightly. It is a good practice to tilt the Bokutō about 45 degrees inward as you extend your arms for Tsuki. Take one small step back for Zanshin and another step (2ND) back to return to the starting position (Issoku-Itto no Ma-ai)

Kihon #2: Renzoku 2-Dan Waza: Kote-Men

Motodachi: Open **Kote** by raising your wrists and the tip of your Bokutō up from Chūdan posture. Open **Men** as you step back from your left foot by moving the tip of your Bokutō to your right side when Kakarite swings his arms up for Men strike. Returns to Chūdan posture as Kakarite takes 2ND step back and step forward as Kakarite takes last 3RD step back to the starting position (Issoku-Itto no Ma-ai)

Kakarite: Step in with Suriashi so that your right foot stepped in is in line with Motodachi's right foot and execute Okuriashi-Kote. Raise your both arms above your eyes as you take another step forward and execute Okuriashi-Men. Take one small step back for Zanshin, 2ND and 3RD steps back to return to the starting position (Issoku-Itto no Ma-ai).

Kihon #3: Harai Waza: Harai-Men (an example from Omote side: Swing Left-Up in circular motion)

Motodachi: Keep Chūdan posture

Kakarite: Take one step forward with big Suriashi and execute Okuriashi Harai-Men. The "Harai" must be done in one count with the Men as you step forward with left-up circular motion using Shinogi (raised ridge) of Bokutō and the Motodachi's Bokutō must be deflected to Kakarite's left side. Take one small step back for Zanshin and another step back to return to the starting position (Issoku-Itto no Ma-ai).

Kihon #4: Hiki Waza: Hiki-Dō (Motodachi's right side-Referred to as Migi-Dō)

Kakarite: Take one step forward to strike for Men, take a small step forward as soon as the Men is parried by Motodachi and go to Tsubazeriai. Push Motodachi's Kamae (stance or posture) down immediately to have his reaction to move his arms upward, swing your Bokutō up above your eyes as you take a big step back with your left foot, and then strike his Migi-Dō at the same as your right foot is pulled to your left foot. Take one small step back for Zanshin and another step back to return to the starting position (Issoku-Itto no Ma-ai)

Motodachi: Parry the Kakarite's Men and immediately go to Tsubazeriai together. Raise your arms up in response to Kakarite's push and let Kakarite strike your Migi-Dō. Go to Chūdan posture as you step back when Kakarite takes 2ND step back where he started (Issoku-Itto no Ma-ai)

Kihon #5: Nuki Waza: Men Nuki-Dō (Motodachi's right side-Referred to as Migi-Dō)

Motodachi: Step in with big Suriashi and execute Okuriashi-Men and hold the Men posture. Make your eye contacts with Kakarite as he strikes your Migi-Dō. Face him with Chūdan posture, take one step back with Kakarite and take another step to your left where you started (Issoku-Itto no Ma-ai).

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Kendo Kihon Waza Practice Method: Continued

Kihon #5: Nuki Waza: Men Nuki-Dō (Motodachi's right side-Refered to as Migi-Dō) -Continued-

Kakarite: Avoid Motodachi's Men strike by moving your body slightly forward diagonally right facing Motodachi and strike his Migi-Dō with correct Hasuji, posture and foot work (Your toes must be directed toward Motodachi with your eye contact and angle of cut should be about 45 degrees). Hold the Dō posture and wait for Motodachi to face you with Chūdan posture. Take one step back for Zanshin and another step to your left where you started (Issoku-Itto no Ma-ai).

Kihon #6: Suriage Waza: Kote Suriage-Men (from Ura side)

Motodachi: Step in with Suriashi so that your right foot stepped in is in line with Kakarite's right foot and go for Okuriashi-Kote. After Kakarite executes Suriage-Men, go to Chūdan position as you take one big step back where you started (Issoku-Itto no Ma-ai). Do this together with Kakarite.

Kakarite: Step back and parry Motodachi's Kote using Ura Suriage motion (Using your wrist from Chūdan position rotate Bokutō counter clockwise to 45 degree angle as you swing up in circular motion) and step in with big Suriashi and execute Okuriashi-Men. Take one big step back together with Motodachi to return to the starting position (Issoku-Itto no Ma-ai).

Kihon #7: Debana Waza: Debana-Kote (Ura side)

Motodachi: Move your right foot slightly forward raising your wrists and Bokutō up to show gesture of Men strike. After Kakarite executes Debana-Kote, move your right foot back when Kakarite takes 2ND step back to where he started (Issoku-Itto no Ma-ai).

Kakarite: Sense Motodachi's wrist-move and immediately step forward (your right foot in line with Motodachi's right foot) to strike a small Kote using your wrists. Try to strike before Motodachi's right foot touches floor. Take one small step back for Zanshin and another step back to return to the starting position (Issoku-Itto no Ma-ai).

Kihon #8: Kaeshi Waza: Men Kaeshi-Dō (Motodachi's right side-Refered to as Migi-Dō)

Motodachi: Step in with big Suriashi and execute Okuriashi-Men and hold the Men posture. Make your eye contacts with Kakarite as he executes Men Kaeshi-Dō. Face him with Chūdan posture, take one step back with Kakarite and take another step to your left where you started (Issoku-Itto no Ma-ai).

Kakarite: Parry Motodachi's Men strike from Omote side as you take a little step forward diagonally right facing Motodachi and strike Migi-Dō with correct Hasuji, posture and foot work (Your toes must be directed toward Motodachi with your eye contact and angle of cut should be about 45 degrees). Hold and wait for Motodachi to face you with Chūdan posture. Take one step back for Zanshin and another step to your left where you started (Issoku-Itto no Ma-ai).

Kihon #9: Uchiotoshi Waza: Dō(Migi-Dō) Uchiotoshi-Men

Motodachi: Step straight in with big Suriashi and execute Okuriashi-Dō. Make your eye contacts with Kakarite as he makes Uchiotoshi Men. Face him with Chūdan posture, take one step back with Kakarite and take another step to your right where you started (Issoku-Itto no Ma-ai).

Kakarite: Parry Motodachi's Dō strike by knocking down Motodachi's Bokutō from top using cutting edge (it is preferred to use Shinogi rather than using blade) as you take a small step back diagonally left and then step in with big Suriashi and execute Okuriashi-Men. Hold and wait for Motodachi to face you with Chūdan posture. Take one step back for Zanshin and another step to your right where you started (Issoku-Itto no Ma-ai).

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NOTES:

1. Hand Grip

Left Hand: Hold from top at the end of Tsuka (Hilt) starting from your little finger at edge of Tsuka and grip firmly in the sequence of the little finger, ring finger and middle finger in such a way that your index finger and thumb are loose so that there is a space between Tsuka and the joint of the thumb and index fingers when you are Chūdan stance.

Right Hand: Similar to Left Hand Grip except: 1) Do not grip hard, but hold lightly, 2) Support some weight with your index finger and thumb, like a coat hanger holds cloth, when you are Chūdan stance, 3) Tip of your index finger should be touching Tsuba, and 4) There should be a space between Tsuba and the joint of the thumb and index fingers

2. Kamae (Stance or Posture) -- Chūdan

Feet: Left foot is slightly behind (about length of foot) your right foot, spaced by width of your body and stand on your balls of your feet without bending your left knee.

Posture: Stand straight upright and lean slightly forward so that your right shoulder is above your ball of the right foot.

Left Hand: Left hand is one to 1½ fist distance away from your belly button and the first joint of your thumb should be at the same height as your belly button.

Ken-Saki: Ken-Saki (Tip of Bokūto) should be directed so that the extension, when mutually standing at Issoku-Itto-no Maai with your partner, reaches to the partner's left eye or in between his two eyes.

3. Metsuke (Eye Contact): Look at overall body with partner's face as center as you make eye to eye contacts

4. Maai (Distance between you and your partner):

- A) Starting distance is about nine (9) steps apart with your partner.
- B) Striking distance is Issoku-Itto no Maai, but this distance varies by individual
- C) When you do SonKyo or Kamae at beginning and end of Waza Practice, the distance is such that Yokote is crossed. Yokote is about 1 inch from the pointed tip of sword or Bokutō from where the width becomes uniform.

5. Datotsu (Striking)

- A) You must strike with full spirit calling name of Waza, with full extension of your right arm and with correct Hasuji (cutting edge-blade perpendicular to target), strike target at Monouchi (cutting portion) in one count swing (Ikkyōdo) using Okuriashi timing.
- B) The Bokūto swing is Kūkan-Datotsu (Strike in air and stop); therefore, you must stop at an inch or two before reaching the target. You must learn this method and meaning of cut or thrust with sword
- C) Speed of the Bokutō tip must be increasing toward the target
- D) You must learn when to strike timing with different Motodachi

6. Zanshin (Kamae after strike with full Sprit remaining):

Go to Chūdan stance after each strike with state of mind that you can defend or counter attack any time.

7. Okuriashi Men: Men Strike with rhythm timing as left foot (Okuriashi) is pulled to the right foot after stepped in.

8. Fumikomiashi Men (or Tobikomi Men): Men Strike with rhythm timing as right foot (Fumikomiashi) is stepped in. Fumikomiashi Men is not used for this Kihon Waza Practice Method using Bokutō