

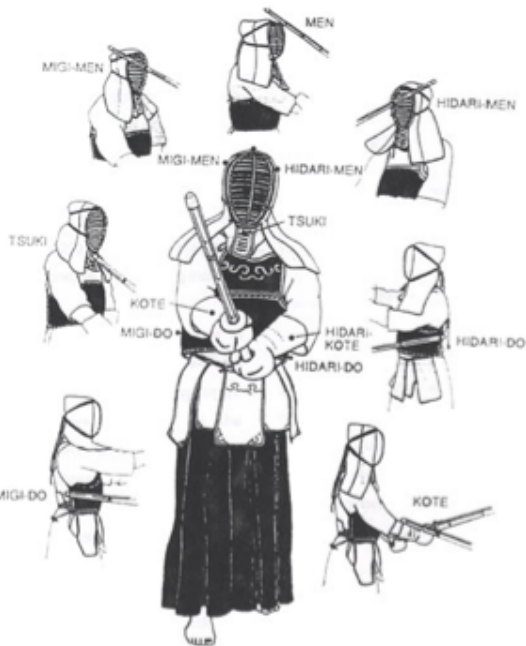
Renbu Dojo 101: Starting Kendo

What is Kendo? What is the purpose of Kendo?

Kendo is Japanese fencing. It dates back to the fundamentals of Japanese sword training and over the decades has developed into a modern style. With kendo we learn to discipline the human character.

Is Kendo right for me? Am I too young or too old to start?

Only you can really answer that question for yourself. Kendo is a full contact martial art played at high speed, yet practiced under a very stringent set of rules. Training is very demanding and requires a lot of dedication. If you are looking to take Kendo simply because it's 'cool' to wave a sword, or because you want to become a ninja/samurai, then look elsewhere. We highly suggest anyone who is interested in Kendo to watch a practice session before joining. This will give a better understanding of what to expect during training and Renbu Dojo. New students are accepted any time throughout the year. At Renbu Dojo, we have a wide range of ages in members, including those as young as 5 years old to others that are in their 60+ still actively practicing.



What do I need to start Kendo?

If you are interested in starting, there are only two things required. A shinai (bamboo sword – can be purchased through our Dojo) and gym attire (Sweats, t-shirt, etc.) Shoes and socks are not worn during practice, and you will not require a uniform (hakama and kendogi) and bogu (armor) until the instructor gives you the approval.

How much does Kendo cost?

Renbu Dojo is a non-profitable organization. There is no charge for lessons. The only costs members are responsible for are:

Yearly fee:

- o Family Pass. \$600
- o Adults (18 & up) \$480
- o Children (17 & younger) \$420

These fees go directly to pay for gym rental, liability insurance and general supplies that are required to administer the dojo. Our instructors are all strictly volunteers and do not receive any payment or stipends of any kind. In fact, our instructors also pay a yearly fee to the club as well!

Equipment and Gear:

You will have other purchases that you are expected to make (although not all at once) These are:

- SHINAI: This is a split bamboo sword. You will need two (one for regular use and one as a spare). Shinais frequently break and will need to be replaced on a frequent basis. Each shinai is about \$30+ depending on length and quality.
- KENDO GI and HAKAMA: This is your top and bottom. You should plan to spend about \$150 to \$500, depending on the material (cotton/synthetic), layer thickness, (single/double), style, and other features.
- BOGU: This is your protective armor. Again, varying quality will affect the prices. Typically about \$500 to over \$3000.

Tip: Before purchasing your own bogu, ask your instructors and senior students for advice. With proper care and maintenance, your equipment and gear will give you many years of service.

Local Kendo Gear Suppliers:

BOGUSHOP 10531 Odlin Road, Richmond, BC, V6X1E3, www.bogushop.com (604) 303-0033
Budogu Zen www.budogu-zen.ca

What can I expect of Kendo training at the beginning?

Class begins with souji (cleaning the floor). We clean the floor with towels to remove any debris that may cause injuries and also to prepare our body and mind for learning. The gymnasium (also referred to as the *dojo*) is our training space and should be treated with respect. After souji class will begin with group warm-up exercises. Warm-up is important as proper stretching can help avoid injury. After warm-ups, the class will be divided between beginners and the more experienced kenshi. One of the instructors will take the beginner's group for basic fundamental training. Fundamental training includes: kamae (kendo stance), footwork, how to hold/grip the shinai and basic swings with the shinai. These basics are vitally important to building a strong foundation of kendo skills. Beginners should expect a lot of repetition but it is very important to understand the foundation of kendo in order to avoid developing bad habits. Beginners can expect to stay in this stage for about 2 to 4 months. The progress for advancement depends on the individual's ability to grasp the fundamentals. Since class meets only 3 times a week, students are expected to practice on their own and attend classes regularly so they can be properly guided by the instructors.

Renbu Dojo Etiquette and Expectations

- Clear your minds of all external thoughts and feelings, as soon as you enter the dojo. You cannot learn properly, if you are thinking about something else.
- Be an active listener and participant. Always acknowledge that you understand the instructions given, if you don't understand, let your sensei know.
- Practice with enthusiasm and commitment.
- Never give up, with practice you will succeed.
- Loud kiai. Kiai is a strong explosive yell coming from the lower abdomen. It is used to focus your energy, mind, and body together. Your kiai also signifies your spirit.
- Always move forward.
- Always observe proper manner and etiquette.
- Be responsible, courteous and considerate of others.

Kendo Ranks and Grading

There is no external sign of rank worn by Kendo players, so no one can know for sure who has what rank. For this reason, it is important that everyone is treated with equality. Etiquette is a very large and important part of Kendo. Please keep this in mind. Grading will only be granted if your instructor advises you are ready.

Renbu Dojo Events: Work hard, Play hard

At Renbu Dojo we work hard, play hard. We have many social events planned throughout the year. Outings, picnics, Christmas and New Years party are to name a few. We welcome suggestions for activities!

Some Additional Resources (Books & websites):

The Heart of Kendo, Darrell Max Craig
Kendo The definitive guide, Hiroshi Ozawa
The Way of Kendo and Kenjitsu: Soul of the Samurai, Darrell Max Craig
Kendo Equipment Guide <http://www6.big.or.jp/~budogu/manu/topm.htm>
YouTube: Shinai Maintenance <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eyJNAluiOKY>
The Kendo Reader, Noma Hisashi <http://judoinfo.com/pdf/KendoReader.pdf>
Canadian Kendo Federation <http://www.kendo-canada.com>

Our website: <http://www.renbudojo.com>