

Glossary of Terms in Kendo

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Pronunciation Aids. Many Japanese terms have been *artificially* hyphenated to aid in pronunciation, and some common rules for writing terms in English have been replaced, e.g., writing a Latin Ō vs. an OU for a long *oh* sound. Also, the IPA convention for indicating a silent or voiceless vowel, e.g., u for a voiceless *u*, is used. This is *not* normally done when writing Japanese terms in English and is purely a convention used here.

Any errors are solely those of the author.

DOJO COMMANDS

H

Hajime (始め) Begin/start.

K

Kamae-tō (構え刀) Assume your stance.

M

Men (w)o tore (面を取れ) Take off your [men](#).

Men (w)o tsuke (面を付け) Put on your [men](#).

Mokushō (黙想) Begin meditation.

O

Osame-tō (納め刀) Put away your weapon.

Otagai ni rei (お互いに礼) Bow to your peers.

S

Seiretsu (整列) Line up.

Seiza (正座) Assume [seiza](#).

Sensei ni rei (先生に礼) Bow to the [sensei](#).

Shōmen ni rei (正面に礼) Bow to the [shōmen](#).

Sonkyo (蹲踞) Assume [sonkyo](#).

T

Tai-tō (帯刀) Bring your weapon to the ready position at your hip.

Y

Yame (止め) Stop.

Yasume (休め) Break/rest period.

SHIAI TERMS & COMMANDS

C

Chūken (中堅) Third player on a team match.

E

Enchō (延長) “*Extension.*” Enchō extends of duration of a (tied) match when the allotted time runs out; the next point wins.

F

Fukushin (副審) A sub-referee in a court during [shiai](#).

Fukushō (副将) Fourth player on a team match.

Fusen-gachi (不戦勝ち) Player wins a match by default or disqualification.

G

Gōgi (合議) “*Judges conference.*” [Shinpan](#) meet to quickly discuss application of the rules and/or judgments mid-match. Players [osame-tō](#), step back to the edge of the court and assume [sonkyo](#) until over.

H

Hajime (始め) Begin a match.

Hansoku (反則) A “foul/penalty” (in sports). Match stops, and players return to their starting positions.

Hansoku ikkai (反則一回) “First foul.”

Hansoku nikai (反則二回) “Second foul.” A second foul results in one point awarded to the opponent; the foul counter is reset.

Hantei (判定) “Judgment, decision.”

Hiki-wake (引き分け) “Draw, tie.”

J

Jihō (次鋒) Second player on a team match.

Jikan desu (時間です) The time keeper’s signal to indicate “time-up”. Players return to starting positions.

M

Mejirushi (目印) A colored flag worn by players.

N

Nihonme (二本目) Begin round two.

S

Senpō (先鋒) First player on a team match.

Shinpan (審判) A judge or referee in a tournament.

Shinpan-chō (審判長) The referee director for a tournament.

Shinpan-shunin (審判主任) The court specific referee director.

Shōbu (勝負) Begin final round of a match.

Shōbu-ari (勝負あり) Match point. Players assume [sonkyo](#), [osame-tō](#), [ritsu-rei](#), and exit the court.

Shushin (主審) The lead judge during a match.

T

Taishō (大將) Fifth player on a team match.

Tasuki See [Mejirushi](#).

W

Wakare (分かれ) Players separate to [issoku ittō no maai](#), but maintain relative court positions.

Y

Yame (止め) Stop the match. Players return to center.

GENERAL TERMS

A

Age-tō (上げ刀) “Raised sword.” A [katate](#) variant of [jōdan no kamae](#).

Ai (1) (prefix) (相) “Mutual, balanced, joint.” (2) (suffix) (合い) “Union, integration, match (together).”

Ai-chūdan (相中段) “Mutual chūdan.” Both opponent’s face each other in [chūdan no kamae](#).

Ai-kakari geiko (相掛稽古) “Mutual attack practice.” Two [kendōka](#) do [kakari geiko](#) simultaneously.

Ai-te (相手) “Opponent.”

Ai-uchi (相打ち) “Mutual” or “simultaneous strikes.”

Ashi (足) “Foot” or “leg.”

Ashi-gamae (足構え) “Foot Position.”

Ashi-sabaki (足捌き) “Foot control/footwork.” See [ayumi-ashi](#), [fukumi-ashi](#), [fumi-komi](#), [hiraki-ashi](#), [nusumi-ashi](#), [okuri-ashi](#), [suri-ashi](#), and [tsugi-ashi](#).

Ayumi-ashi (歩み足) “Walking foot.” A normal walking motion where the feet cross one another. However in [kendō](#) [ayumi-ashi](#) is still done as [suri-ashi](#).

B

Bokken (木剣) “Wooden sword.” See [bokutō](#).

Bokutō (木刀) “Wooden sword.” The [bokutō](#), [tachi](#) and [kodachi](#), are used for [nihon kendō no kata](#). The [tachi](#) is used for [bokutō waza](#) and sometimes [suburi](#).

Bokutō ni yoru kendō kihon waza keiko hō (木刀による剣道基本技稽古法) “Practice of fundamental [kendō](#) techniques with a [bokutō](#).” See [bokutō waza](#).

Bokutō waza (木刀技) “Wooden sword techniques.” Abbreviation for **bokutō ni yoru kendō kihon waza keiko hō**. A series of forms created to practice fundamental **shinai kendō** techniques with **bokutō**.

Bōgu (防具) “Kendō armor.” Consisting of the **men**, **kote**, **dō**, and **tare**. Also called **kendō-gu**.

Budō (武道) “Martial art” or “martial way.” Budō are martial arts where the focus is placed on bettering oneself instead of pure combative victory.

Bujutsu (武術) “Martial art” or “military art.” Bujutsu is a martial art where the focus is placed on learning effective combat skills for defeating an opponent.

Bushi (武士) “War/military gentleman.” A **samurai**. Often translated as *warrior*, this overlooks the meaning of the character **shi** (士): “gentleman, scholar” implying a level of formality and refinement.

Bushidō (武士道) “The way of the samurai.” A code of ethics, morals, and conduct for **samurai**.

C

Chi no kamae (地の構え) The “kamae of earth.” See **gedan no kamae**.

Chiisai (小さい) “Small.”

Chiisai waza (小さい技) “Small techniques.” A term used to refer to small strikes.

Chika-ma (近間) “Short interval.” A distance that is shorter than **issoku ittō no maai**.

Chōtan-itchi-mi ((長短一身)) “Strong point, weak point, one body.” The concept that everything has both strengths and weaknesses in the same package.

Chūdan hanmi no kamae (中段半身の構え) A variant of **chūdan no kamae** used in the **kodachi kata**. See **hanmi kamae**.

Chūdan no kamae (中段の構え) “Mid level stance.” Chūdan is known as the “kamae of water” due to its adaptability for offensive and defensive **waza**. Chūdan is the fundamental **kamae** in **kendō**.

Complimentary stepping Complimentary stepping is the generalized method of footwork in **kendō**. Beginning with the feet in their starting positions, when taking a *single step* both the forward and rear feet are moved consecutively, in quick succession, to re-assume the starting positions upon completion, e.g., **okuri-ashi** is commonly a *right-left* motion. Exceptions are found in the **kata** or during specialized **waza**.

Connection **En** in Japanese, meaning a “link, relationship, or connection.” In **kendō** this implies a mental and physical connection to the opponent. Mentally this implies one perceives how the opponent will act, their intents, level of focus, **ki-ken-tai-itchi**, and **zanshin**. Physically this allows one to respond to movement, maintain distance, adjust **kamae**, etc. A connection is essential to understanding the **rhythm**.

D

Daitō (大刀) The name used to refer to the “long sword” when using **nitō**.

Dan (段) “Step” or “level.”

Dan-i (段位) “Rank.” This refers to the set of **dan** ranks in **kendō**, commonly equated with the rank of “black belt”. In modern **kendō** **dan** ranks range from first to eighth.

Datotsu (打突) A “strike” or “thrust.” **Shinai kendō** is a **datotsu** style of fencing as compared to a **zantotsu** style if a **katana** were used.

Datotsu-bu (打突部) “Striking section.” The portion of the **shinai** strikes are made with; the **mono-uchi**.

Datotsu-bui (打突部位) “Striking position.” Portion of the **bōgu** where one may strike.

De (出) From the verb **deru**, “start, begin, (just) coming out”, i.e., just as something is being initiated or started.

Dead See **dead sword** and **dead hands**.

Dead hands Similar to a **dead sword**, however in this case it is caused specifically by the hands or forearms being in an improper position to control one’s weapon or strike/cut effectively.

Dead sword A term describing one’s weapon when the ability for offensive and defensive action is eliminated via parry or control; **shinitachi**.

Debana (出ばな) From **de** “Come out, start, begin.” and **bana** “moment, situation”, i.e., the moment something begins.

Debana waza (出ばな技) Techniques used to strike as the opponent’s attack is being initiated.

Dō (1) (道) “The way”, i.e. a way of enlightenment, or of bettering oneself, e.g., **kendō**. (2) (胴) The abdominal protector worn in **kendō**. See **kendō-gu**. (3) The name of the target when striking the abdomen.

Dō-chikawa (胴乳皮) Leather loops on the **dō-kawa**

used to attach the [dō-himo](#).

Dō-himo (胴紐) The strings used to tie the [dō](#).

Dōjō (道場) “Practice hall.” A place or location where one practices [budō](#).

Dō-kawa (胴皮) The lower portion of the [dō](#) covering the abdomen, the left and right sides of which makes up the striking area of the [dō](#).

Dō-mune (胴胸) The chest portion of the [dō](#).

Dōmo-arigato-gozai-mashita
(どうも有賀とご座いました) “Thank you” (polite).

E

En (縁) A “link, relationship, connection.” See [connection](#).

Enbu (演武) A “martial arts demonstration.”

Enzan no metsuke (遠山の目付け) “Fixing your eyes on a distant mountain.” See [metsuke](#).

F

Four sicknesses The four sicknesses (*shi-kai*), or admonitions, are *ku* (恐怖) “fear”, *gi* (疑) “doubt”, *kyu* (驚) “surprise”, and *waku* (惑) “confusion.”

Fukumi-ashi (含み足) “Hidden” footwork. This is when one moves forward unnoticed by the opponent while maintaining [ashi-gamae](#). It’s done by, e.g., curling and uncurling the toes to slowly pull oneself forward. This is an advanced application of footwork.

Fumi-komi (踏み込み) The shortened term for *fumi-komi-ashi* meaning “stepping” or “rushing into” footwork. *Fumi-komi* is a *lunging okuri-ashi* style step that momentarily forgoes [suri-ashi](#) as the leading foot leaves the ground during the step. This footwork is known for the stomping sound as the foot claps the floor on landing.

Furi-kaburi (振り被り) “To hold aloft (e.g. a sword); to brandish.” This refers to raising one’s weapon overhead in preparation to strike; the upswing prior to striking.

G

Gedan no kamae (下段の構え) The “low level” [kamae](#), also known as the “*kamae of earth*.” *Gedan* can be considered a *kamae* of waiting, inviting the opponent, but it also applies [seme](#) from below by threatening a thrust.

Gedan hanmi no kamae (下段半身の構え) A variation of [gedan no kamae](#) used in the [kodachi kata](#). See [hanmi kamae](#).

Geiko (稽古) See [keiko](#).

Gi (着) The traditional practice jacket worn in [kendō](#). Also known as a *kendō-gi*, *dō-gi*, or *keiko-gi*.

Go no sen Sometimes called *go sen no sen*. See [mitsu no sen](#).

Gyaku (逆) “Reversed” or “opposite.”

Gyaku-dō (逆胴) “Reverse *dō*.” This refers to the left [datotsu-bui](#) of the [dō](#). Formerly a non-standard target, with the popularization of [san-pō-mamori](#) awarding [ippon](#) for *gyaku-dō* is now common.

Gyo (行) “Stream.” See [yuku](#) and [shin-gyo-so](#).

H

Ha (刃) The “blade/edge” of a sword.

Hajime (始め) “Begin/start.”

Hakama (袴) The traditional practice pants, worn with a [gi](#), in [kendō](#).

Half-step A half-step is when a [kendōka](#) only moves one of their feet instead of the usual [complimentary stepping](#). Half-steps are relatively uncommon but can be found in the [kata](#), [bokutō waza](#), or specialized [waza](#).

Hanmi (半身) “Half body.”

Hanmi kamae (半身構え) “Half body stance.” When assuming a *hanmi kamae* the torso is turned so it is only half exposed to the opponent.

Hara (腹) The “intestines” or “gut.” Located three fingers width below the navel.

Harai (払い) “Sweep away” or “brush off.”

Harai waza (払い技) “Sweeping aside” [waza](#). A *waza* where one pushes the opponents weapon aside, breaking their [kamae](#), to create a [suki](#).

Harai-ageru (払い上げる) “Sweep and knock upward.” A specific version of [harai waza](#) where the opponent’s [kamae](#) is swept to diagonal up-left or up-right.

Harai-otoshi (払い落とし) “Sweep and knock downward.” A specific version of [harai waza](#) where the opponent’s [kamae](#) is pushed to the down-left or down-

right.

Hasaki (刃先) A sword's "cutting edge."

Hassō no kamae (八相の構え) The "eight position stance." Also known as the "kamae of wood" and sometimes in no kamae, it is a variant of jōdan no kamae.

Haya suburi (速素振り) "Quick/swift" suburi, or "jumping" suburi, is a common warm-up exercise.

Heijōshin (平常心) "Common" or "everyday mind." A basic definition of this is keeping one's mind in a normal state, unaffected by things around you; your mindset during regular or common situations.

Hi no kamae (火の構え) The kamae of "fire." See jōdan no kamae.

Hidari (左) "Left". Relative direction, e.g., right & left.

Hidari shizentai See shizentai.

Hidari-te (左手) "Left-hand(ed)."

Hiki (引き) "Pull."

Hiki-age (引き上げ) "Pulling rise." Hiki-age refers to pulling up the hands upon hitting a target. This is considered improper as the shinai is no longer in the position to emulate a cut. A subtle exception is striking men via hiki-waza. The zanshin for this strike brings the shinai up into migi jōdan no kamae however this is done after the kendōka moves backward with the shinai in the proper cutting position first and assuming jōdan as they move back during zanshin.

Hiki-tsuke (引き付け) "Pull into place; to draw near."

Hiki-waza (ひき技) "Pulling (away) techniques." Techniques where one strikes while moving backward. Also called hikibana waza.

Himo (紐) "String", "cord", or "strap."

Hiraki (開き) "To open" or "unfold."

Hiraki-ashi (開き足) "Opening foot." This is a semi-circular step to the left or right.

Hira-seigan no takai (平正眼の高い) A "high, tall" variant of "flat, common, ordinary" seigan no kamae. The variant of seigan written as (正眼) is equivalent to chūdan no kamae. This term then refers to altering one's chūdan to be higher. Specifically this kamae is used against an opponent that assumes hidari jōdan no kamae.

Hira-uchi (平打ち) Strike with the flat side of a blade. In kendō, striking with the side of the shinai.

Honshō (1) (本勝) "Base victory", (2) (本生) "born in the present", (3) (本正) "true base." A term used in the ittō-Ryū school to describe certain types of attack methods related to the kata.

Hōshin (放心) "Released mind." Musashi (Machida (2013)) describes two interchanging states of mind, zanshin and hōshin. While zanshin indicates a state of sustained alertness, hōshin indicates one releases the mind from specific active focus, i.e., from focusing on a particular action or event, back to a neutral, ready state.

Hyō-hō (兵法) "Strategy, tactics, art of war." Also hei-hō.

I

I no kokoro (意のこころ) "Outward spirit, active intention." This concept, discussed by Musashi (Machida (ibid.)), is tied to shin no kokoro.

Iaidō (居合道) "The way of the state of being present." Interpreted as "the way of mental presence and immediate reaction". As an oversimplification, iaidō is a kata based martial art focused on the drawing of, striking with, and sheathing of a real sword in an optimal way, while maintaining focus and zanshin.

Ichi byōshi (一拍子) "One [musical] time; beat." A term used to indicate a motion or action that is to be done as one smooth motion, without pauses. Also translated as "in one breath." For example, in kendō the movements of an attack, i.e., lifting the shinai or boku-tō overhead and swinging to attack the target, should be done as one motion without pause.

Ichidan suburi (一段素振り) "One step" suburi.

In no kamae (陰の構え) "Waiting/still" kamae. The antithesis of yō no kamae. See hassō no kamae.

Insō (印相) "Hand sign." See mudrā.

Invading the maai The act of moving into the striking range of the opponent with the purpose of (1) pressuring them, (2) crowding them making attacks awkward, or (3) making them feel exposed. This is used in the nihon kendō no kata in tachi kata #3 & #6 and is the intent behind iri-mi in the kodachi kata. See kurai-zume.

In-yō (陰陽) The Japanese reading for the individual characters for yin-yang. The term as a whole is correctly pronounced as onmyō, meaning "dual cosmic forces."

Ippon (一本) “One point” or “one strike.”

Iri-mi (入り身) “Entering body”, often translated as “entering directly.” This is the intent while using the [kodachi](#). The action of spiritually threatening and physically moving into your opponents [maai](#) to attack.

Iri-mi no kamae (入り身の構え) “Entering body stance.” The [kamae](#) taken when [invading the maai](#) through [iri-mi](#); the [kodachi](#) is in [chūdan no kamae](#), blade downward, [kensen](#) directed toward the opponent’s throat.

Ire-zuki (入れ突き) “Entering thrust.” See [nayashi ire-zuki](#).

Issoku ittō no maai (一足一刀の間合) The “one step, one sword distance.” The distance where one can launch, or evade, an attack by taking one step; the fundamental [maai](#) of [kendō](#). While there are approximations, often described as the distance where opponents’ sword tips cross, each individual has their own *unique* issoku ittō no maai due to the fact that each person’s physique defines a different length for “one-step”.

Issun no seme (一寸の攻め) “One sun” [seme](#). Sun is an old Japanese unit of measurement, approximately three centimeters long. Issun no seme refers to applying [seme](#) by consistently moving forward toward the opponent one sun at a time, i.e., slowly but surely creeping forward while threatening a strike.

Ittō-Ryū (一刀流) “One cut school/style.” Ittō-Ryū was a sword school founded by Ito Ittōsai Kagehisa which branched into several sub-schools. This school has heavily influenced modern [kendō](#).

J

Ji-geiko (地稽古) “Foundation practice.” Free sparring practice allowing the student to work on their own strengths, weaknesses, and spirit. See [keiko](#).

Jin-bu (刃部) “Blade part.” The side of a [shinai](#) designated as the blade.

Jishū-geiko (自習稽古) “Self-learning practice.” To actively learn by watching, reading, contemplating what was taught, etc.

Jōdan no kamae (上段の構え) The “high level” [kamae](#). As [jōdan](#) is spiritually aggressive, the terms [ten no kamae](#) and [hi no kamae](#) are used to describe the spirit and intent required to be effective.

Jō-ge buri (上下振り) “Up-down swing.” A basic form of swing practice to teach beginners how to swing in large motions along their centerline. It is also often used as a warm-up to help loosen up the shoulders.

K

Kaeshi (返し) “Return, reversal.”

Kaeshi waza (返し技) “Return” [waza](#). Techniques where one momentarily receives the opponent’s strike and then, changing the direction of the weapon, *immediately* counter-attacks.

Kakari geiko (掛稽古) “Attack practice.” This drill is very common as it builds endurance and spirit. [Kendōka](#) attempt to attack quickly and continuously, flowing from one strike to the next, while still maintaining proper form and [zanshin](#). With [kakari geiko](#) the [zanshin](#) can sometimes be more spiritual than physical, depending on the situation.

Kakari-te (掛手) “Attacking hand.” (1) [Kakari-te](#) is the one who attacks during drill practice. (2) The person performing [waza](#) during the [bokutō waza](#).

Kakegoe (掛け声) “Yell.” Although having very different meanings this is often interchanged with [kiaï](#).

Kamae (構え) “Stance” or “position.” In [kendō](#), this term has an obvious physical meaning, but it also has mental or spiritual implications. There are five classical [kamae](#): [chūdan no kamae](#), [jōdan no kamae](#), [gedan no kamae](#), [hassō no kamae](#), and [waki-gamae](#).

Kamae-tō (構え刀) Literally “stance sword”, this is the term used to indicate one should bring the sword into [kamae](#) if in a relaxed position. It also refers to drawing the sword from the [tai-tō](#) position.

Kamae (w)o toku (構えを解く) [Kamae](#) “untie, unfasten, undo.” This term is used to refer to the breaking of [kamae](#) at the end of each of the [nihon kendō no kata](#) or [bokutō waza](#).

Kan-kyū-kyō-jaku (緩急強弱) “Slow-quick-strong-soft.” The timing, power, tension, speed, etc., that come together to give a [waza](#) its rhythm. This is not an artificially imposed rhythm as each technique has its own unique rhythm in accordance with the opponent, their attack, and the [waza](#) being used.

Kane (金) “Metal.”

Kane no kamae (金の構え) The “[kamae](#) of metal.” See [waki-gamae](#).

Kata (形) See [nihon kendō no kata](#).

Katana (刀) “Sword.” Also pronounced as [tō](#).

Katate (片手) “One hand(ed).”

Katate waza (片手技) “One handed” techniques.

Katsugi waza (担ぎ技) “Shouldering the sword” technique. The sword is brought over the shoulder before striking. The overt motion is to create a *suki* in your opponent while still being in a position to attack.

Katsujin-ken (活人剣) “The life-giving sword.” In sword arts “life-giving” does not refer to not killing the opponent, but to not kill their attacking spirit, i.e., allowing the opponent to act (attack). By manipulating the opponent and allowing them to feel free to attack, opportunities for *ōji waza* can be created. Using a katsujin-ken then refers to a particular type of strategy for defeating the opponent. “Katsujin-ken... involves a sophisticated manipulation of the opponent and his actions by means of utter selflessness; properly conducted it is virtually undefeatable”, Friday (1997). This is a central strategy in *Yagyū Shinkage-Ryū* and other descendants of *Shinkage-Ryū*. The antithesis of katsujin-ken is *setsunin-tō*.

Keiko (稽古) “Practice”, “training”, or “study.” Often used by *kendōka* to imply sparring practice in *bōgu*.

Ken (1) (剣) “Sword”, (2) (懸) “Be trapped, begin, attack.”

Kendō (剣道) “The way of the sword.”

Kendō-gu (剣道具) “Kendō protective equipment”, see *bōgu*.

Kendōka (剣道家) A *kendō* practitioner.

Kenjutsu (剣術) “Sword art/technique.”

Kensen (剣先) “Tip/point of a sword.” The tip of the *shinai* or *bokutō*; also called the *kissaki*.

Ken-tai-itchi (懸待一致) “Attack and waiting in unison.” This covers many ideas that relate to the application of *seme* toward the opponent to set up an opportunity to strike. Simply put, one pressures the opponent through *seme* (attack) and then holds to see their reaction (waiting), calmly preparing to attack or counter depending on the result, i.e., *seme-tame*. *Ken* in this instance translates to “attack; oppose”, but it also can mean “to begin” or to “be trapped”. This implies forcing the opponent, via threat of attack, into a situation they must respond to. See *sente*.

Ken (w)o korosu (剣を殺す) “Kill their sword.” See *san-sappō*.

Kera (けら) Horizontal padding on the fist of the *kote*.

Ki (気) “Mind”, “spirit”, or “energy.”

Ki (w)o mite (機を見る) “To see the opportunity [to strike], seizing the [correct] moment [to strike].” In the

nihon kendō no kata, *tachi* kata #1–7, *uchidachi* strikes *shidachi* at the correct moment, defined as “...the chance coming from the shifts in the opponent’s spirit, body, and technique”, AJKF (2002) and “the instant separating mental and physical transformation on the verge of an attack. In other words, the opening that is created as a result of the shifts in body, spirit, and technique”, Y. Inoue (2003).

Kiai (気合い) “Energy integration.” The vocal expression of a unified mental & physical intent. Although one’s “fighting spirit” can be expressed through *kakegoe*, *kiai* and *kakegoe* are not the same.

Kiarasoi (気争い) “Spirit of mutual combat.” Overcome an opponent through a vigorous spirit, pressing forward to break their guard.

Ki-atari (気当たり) “Spirit/energy hit/prediction.” Displaying an offensive stance or intent to strike, then observing or anticipating the opponent’s reactions.

Kigurai (気位) “Presence, bearing, pride, dignity.” AJKF (2011) defines *kigurai* as “the strength or commanding presence derived from confidence acquired through repeated training.”

Kihaku (気迫) “Spiritual force.”

Kihon (基本) “Fundamental.”

Kihon bokutō waza (基本木刀技) See *bokutō waza*.

Kikai (気海) “The sea of energy.”

Ki-ken-tai-itchi (気剣体一致) “Spirit, sword, body, in unison.” Ki-ken-tai-itchi is a modern umbrella term for several ideas, e.g. *shin-ki-ryoku-itchi* and *shin-gi-tai-itchi*, each of which are specific instances of the more general meaning. As such, *ki-ken-tai-itchi* takes on different meanings depending on one’s experience in *kendō*. The general meaning, unified action of a *kendōka*’s intent/sprit, sword, and body is a fundamental tenet of *kendō*.

Kiri-kaeshi (切り返し) “Returning cuts.” A partnered practice of *men*, *tai-atari*, and *sayū-men*. One of the most important drills in *kendō*, it’s often done as the initial and final drill of a practice.

Kiri-oroshi (切り下ろし) “To cut downward” (with a sword). This is the basic, large overhead cut used in *iaidō* which aims to cut the opponent from the head down to the navel. This cut is also used in the *nihon kendō no kata*.

Kiri-otoshi (切り落とし) “Knock down while cutting.” A *waza* for when two strikes occur in a potential *ai-uchi*, one strike pushes the other aside, by the act of cutting,

and lands on the opponent.

Kiri-tsuke (切り付け) “Cut or slash” (at something).

Kissaki (切先) See [kensen](#).

Ki (w)o korosu (気を殺す) “Kill their spirit.” See [san-sappō](#).

Kōbō (攻防) “Offense & defense.” This term is used to describe the general combative aspects of [chūdan no kamae](#), specifically referring to the ease with which both offensive and defensive [waza](#) can be used.

Kōbō-itchi (攻防一致) “Unified offense & defense.” This is often translated the same as [ken-tai-itchi](#): [ken](#) means to “attack” while [tai](#) has the meaning of “wait” which AJKF (2011) indicates means to “wait while observing the opponent’s movement calmly”, i.e., being ready to defend while attacking and vice versa. [Kōbō](#) is made up of the characters [kō](#) (攻), “aggression, attack”, and [bō](#) (防), “ward off, defend, protect”. [Kōbō](#) implicitly has a more physical or [waza](#) oriented meaning for offense and defense, e.g., actively striking and parrying. The inferred meaning here is that [kōbō-itchi](#) refers to a [waza](#) or action that is used to *simultaneously* attack and defend.

Kobushi (拳) “Fist.”

Kodachi (小太刀) The “short sword” used in the [nihon kendō no kata](#).

Kodachi kata (小太刀形) A subset of the [nihon kendō no kata](#) using the [kodachi](#).

Ko-dare (小垂) Small inner flaps on the [tare](#).

Kohai (後輩) A “junior.” This is a relative term relating to experience and not necessarily ones age.

Kōken-chiai (交剣知愛) “Mixing swords-know love/compassion.” Translated as bettering oneself by learning compassion and understanding of humanity through [kendō](#). This is one of the ideals underlying the “Mindset of Kendō Instruction”.

Kokoro (心) “Spirit” or “mind.”

Kokoro no kamae (心の構え) A “spiritual” or “mental stance”; a mindset or attitude.

Komono (小物) “Small part.” This refers to the small piece of leather sometimes attached to the [tsuru](#) which is used in attaching the [tsuru](#) to the [tsuka-gawa](#) of a [shinai](#).

Koshi (腰) “Hips, waist, or lower back.” Often translated simply as “hips”, a broader translation is the term “core.”

Koshiita (腰板) “Back” or “waist plate.” The firm plate on the back of the [hakama](#).

Kote (小手) “Forearm.” (1) The protective gloves worn in [kendō](#), see [kendō-gu](#). (2) The name of the forearm target.

Kote-gashira (小手頭) “Top/head of the kote.” The hand portion of the [kote](#).

Kurai (位) “Rank” or “level” of something. Also an “amount” of something.

Kurai-zume (位詰め) “Level (of) rebuke.” Pressure the opponent into disadvantage by physical and/or spiritual intimidation. Pressuring and [invading the maai](#) of the opponent by the strength of one’s spirit, posture, [kamae](#), etc. Used by [shidachi](#) in [tachi kata](#) #3.

Kyūsa (草) “Grass, weeds.” An alternate reading of [so](#).

Kyo-jitsu (虚実) “Truth and illusion.” A complex term with many interpretations, but the most basic is that when one is in a state of [jitsū](#) (実), “truth, preparedness, reality” they are prepared, and when unprepared they are in a state of [kyō](#) (虚), “unpreparedness, falsehood, fake.” Opportunities to strike occur when one is in a state of [jitsū](#) and the opponent is in that of [kyō](#). A more complex situation of [kyō-jitsū](#) is that one can present a weakness or expose an opening *purposely* as a lure to the opponent ([kyō](#)) but the true intent is to strike as they react ([jitsū](#)). Or one can have their outward [kamae](#) or posture be in a state of [kyō](#), again as a lure or deception, but keep their mind in a state of [jitsū](#) in order to take advantage of the opponent’s actions. These complex examples are directly linked to [seme](#), [tame](#), [ken-tai-itchi](#), and the [mitsu no sen](#). Both the basic and advanced use of [kyō-jitsū](#) requires a [connection](#) to the opponent.

Kyū (級) “Rank”, “class.” In [kendō](#) this is used as a ranking system for beginners, i.e., those who are below the [dan](#) ranks. Kyū ranks usually begin at sixth kyu advancing up to first kyu, however in some [dōjō](#) younger [kendōka](#) may begin at tenth kyu.

M

Ma (間) “Space.” Used in terms referring to distance.

Maai (間合) “Spacial integration.” Often interpreted simply as “distance”, [maai](#) includes many variables from both oneself and the opponent: speed, reaction time, power, distance, [kamae](#), etc.

Mae (前) “Front” or “forward.” Mae refers to a direction, e.g., moving forward.

Mae-obi (前帯) “Front belt.” See [tare-obi](#).

Maki (巻き) (v) To “roll up”, “hoist”, “lift up.”

Maki-kaeshi (巻き返し) The [kaeshi waza](#) used in the fourth [nihon kendō no kata](#). The [bokutō](#) is lifted upward from underneath the incoming thrust; the [bokutō](#) begins on the right side of the thrust and ends on the left, at which point the counter strike is made.

Maki-osae (巻き押さえ) From [maki](#), “to roll, wind”, and [osae](#), “to hold down, suppress”. Maki-osae [tsuki](#) is the technique [uchidachi](#) uses in the fourth [tachi kata](#) to suppress [shidachi](#)’s [bokutō](#), take center, and thrust.

Men (面) (1) “Mask; face guard”; the helmet worn in [kendō](#), see [kendō-gu](#). (2) The name of the head target.

Men-buton (面ぶとん) The pressed cotton portion of the [men](#) covering the top and sides of the head.

Men-chikawa (面乳皮) The small leather loops used to attach the [men-himo](#) onto the [men](#). There are two types of men-chikawa used depending on the method used for wearing the men.

Men-dare (面垂) The large flaps of the [men-buton](#) which protect the shoulders.

Men-gane (面金) The metal grill that covers the face in the [men](#).

Men-himo (面紐) Strings used to tie the [men](#).

Men-tate-gane (面縦金) The large vertical bar of the [men-gane](#).

Men-yoko-gane (面横金) The horizontal bars of the [men-gane](#).

Metsyke (目付け) “Point of observation.” The full term is “[enzan no metsyke](#)” or “fixing your eyes on a distant mountain”. This refers to where one looks while engaging an opponent, likening looking at the opponent to looking at a mountain, the opponent’s eyes being the peak. Focusing directly at the peak limits the view to just the peak, look *toward* the peak and the entire mountain can be viewed.

Migi (右) “Right.” Relative direction, e.g., right & left.

Migi shizentai See [shizentai](#).

Migi-te (右手) “Right-hand(ed).”

Mitori geiko (見取り稽古) “Observational practice.” Quite literally, learning by watching.

Mitsu no sen (三つの先) “The three sens.” This refers to the three initiatives giving your attack an advantage. The first, [sen sen no sen](#) (先々の先), refers to having prior knowledge of your opponents intentions and, using this knowledge, draw out their attack capitalizing on it. The second, [sen no sen](#) (先の先), refers to attacking at the very moment your opponent is about to attack. Third is [go no sen](#) (後の先). This refers to counter-striking your opponent after they have made their attack. The opponent is countered as in [sen sen no sen](#), but knowledge of the opponents intentions are not known beforehand.

Mizu no kamae (水の構え) The “kamae of water.” See [chūdan no kamae](#).

Mogitō (模擬刀) “Practice sword.” Mogitō are blunt metal swords with a sheathe used in formal demonstrations of the [nihon kendō no kata](#).

Mokuy no kamae (木の構え) The “kamae of wood.” See [hassō no kamae](#).

Mokushō (黙想) The “meditation” done at the beginning and end of a [kendō](#) practice.

Mono-uchi (物打) “Hitting part.” The upper ¼ length of a [shinai](#) measured from the [kensen](#) down, see [datotsu-bu](#). For a [bokutō](#) ([tachi](#)) it is “the part of the blade of a sword which cuts best, said to be about 10cm from the tip”, AJKF (2002).

Morote (諸手) “Two handed.”

Motodachi (元立ち) ‘Moto’, “origin or cause”, ‘tachi’, “standing.” The motodachi is the one who attacks or creates an opening for the [kakari-te](#) to practice striking or some type of [waza](#).

Motodachi geiko (元立ち稽古) Also termed [uchi-komi geiko](#), this is when a [kendōka](#) strikes targets offered by an opponent.

Mu (無) “Not” or “no.” A prefix indicating a negation.

Mudrā (Sanskrit: मुद्रा, “gesture”, Japanese: [insō](#)) The mudrā (International Phonetic Alphabet: /muˈdrɑː/, International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration: mudrā) are hand positions used to symbolize various Buddhist concepts and meanings. There are a number of such hand positions, however in [kendō](#) we only use one: [zenjō-in](#), the mudrā of meditation during [mokushō](#) before and after practice.

Mu-gamae (無構え) “No kamae” or the “void kamae.” This stance expresses independence from a rigid [kamae](#); one able to freely adapt and use any kamae as needed.

Mune (1) (棟) “Ridge.” The back of a *katana*, also “mine.” (2) (胸) “Chest.” The chest of the *dō*; *dō-mune*.

Mune-chikawa (胸乳皮) The leather loops on the *dō-mune* used when tying the upper set of *himo*.

Mushin (無心) “No mind.” In very basic terms, mushin is acting with a natural, calm state of mind, i.e., not distracted by over thinking. Mushin is directly related to the concept *heijōshin*.

Mutō no kokoro ((無刀の心)) “Heart of no sword.” The idea that the strength of one’s ability doesn’t depend on the type of weapon or *kamae* used, but on one’s spirit.

N

Nafuda (名札) The name tag worn on a *kendōka*’s *ō-dare*. Also known as a *zekken*.

Nagasu (流す) “Drain, pour, set adrift.” See *uke-nagashi*.

Nakayui (中結) The leather tie on the *shinai* ¼ the length of the *shinai* from the top.

Naname buri (斜め振り) “Diagonal swing.” Similar to *jō-ge buri* but with the strikes angled at about 30°–45°.

Nayashi (萎し) “Wither, droop; to be lame.”

Nayashi ire-zuki (萎し入れ突き) *Shidachi*’s parry and counter in the third *tachi kata*. *Shidachi* deflects *uchidachi*’s thrust (*nayashi*) and counters with a thrust (*ire-zuki*).

Nidan (二段) “Two step” or “two level.”

Nidan suburi (二段素振り) “Two step” *suburi*.

Nidan waza (二段技) “Two step” *waza*.

Nihon kendō no kata (日本剣道の形) “The Japanese *kendō* forms.” In a formal context, the *Nippon Kendō no Kata*, informally *kata*. These are the official standardized set of partnered, predetermined encounters designed to teach techniques and, in particular, the principles of swordsmanship derived from several traditional Japanese sword schools. These principles form the basis of modern *shinai kendō*.

Nitō (二刀) “Two sword(s).” A common term referring to *nitō kamae*.

Nitō kamae (二刀構え) “Two sword stance.” A style of *kendō* where one uses both a long and short sword, *daitō* and *shōtō* respectively, simultaneously. This style has its own variations of the five classic *kamae*.

Nuki (抜き) To “escape.”

Nuki waza (抜き技) *Waza* where you simultaneously dodge a strike and execute a counter-attack.

Nusumi (盗み) “Stealing.” From *nusumu*, “to steal.”

Nusumi-ashi (盗み足) “Stealing/stealthy footwork.” Positioning the feet for an unexpected style of footwork, e.g., positioning for *tsugi-ashi*, without alerting the opponent. See H. Inoue (2003).

O

Obi (帯) “Belt.” The belt (optionally) worn with the *hakama* and *gi* to hold a sword and *saya* at the waist.

Ō-dare (大垂) The large outer flaps on the *tare*.

Ōji (応じ) “To respond.”

Ōji waza (応じ技) Counter-attacking *waza*, i.e., techniques used in response to your opponent’s attack.

Okuri-ashi (送り足) “Sending out (the) feet.” The standard footwork used in *kendō* where one makes complimentary steps, most commonly a “right–left” motion, using *suri-ashi*, without crossing the feet.

Omote (表) “Front”, “outside”, or “visible side.” This refers to the left side of the *shinai* or *bokutō*.

Onegai-shimasu (御願います) “Please” (do me the said favor).

Orishiki (折り敷き) “Kneeling.”

Orishiki dō (折り敷き胴) “Kneeling *dō*.” In the seventh *tachi kata* a *nuki dō* is followed by kneeling. This style of *zanshin* is unused in modern *kendō*.

Osae (押さえ) “To hold down, suppress.”

R

Rei (礼) (1) “Bow”, or the act of bowing. (2) “Manners; etiquette” A term referring to general etiquette.

Rei-gi (礼儀) “Bow/thanks rule/ceremony.” *Rei-gi* refers to the reasons behind *rei*, i.e., “why”, “who”, and “when” we are to perform the actions of *rei-hō*.

Rei-hō (礼法) “Bow/thanks law/principle.” The formal systematization of the movements and actions of etiquette and formality.

Renzoku (連続) “Continuous, repeating.”

Renzoku waza (連続技) “Repeated techniques.” This implies striking multiple times in succession.

Rhythm A term frequently used to describe the unique flow and/or timing(s) associated with multiple aspects of an encounter. *“There are a variety of rhythms in strategy. First of all, understanding the matching rhythm and distinguishing from the rhythm which does not match, and from among rhythms large and small, slow and fast, understanding the rhythm of hitting the mark, understanding the rhythm of intervals, and understanding the rhythm that goes against rhythm – these are the most essential things in strategy. If you do not get how to discern the rhythm of opposition, your strategy will never be certain”, Musashi (2012).*

Riai (理合) “Principles behind.” The condition under which an action or actions are rational, purposeful.

Ritsu-rei (立礼) A “standing bow” which is done at 15° or 30°, depending on context.

Ryoku (力) “Strength, power, proficiency, ability.”

S

Sae (冴え) “Clearness, clarity.” With correct [te-no-uchi](#) a [shinai](#) strike with sae has a characteristic “pop” on landing while appearing effortless.

Sage-tō (下げ刀) “Hanging sword.” The relaxed standing position with one’s weapon held at their side.

Saki-gawa (先革) The leather cap on the tip of the [shinai](#).

Saki-gomu (先ゴム) The insert in the tip of the [shinai](#).

Samurai (侍) See [bushi](#).

Sandan (三段) “Three step” or “three level.”

Sandan suburi (三段素振り) “Three step” [suburi](#).

San-pō-mamori (三方守り) “Three point defense.” A position, made popular in [shiai](#), used to block attacks to [men](#), [kote](#), and [migi dō](#) simultaneously. San-pō-mamori leaves [gyaku-dō](#) and potentially [tsuki](#) open to attack.

San-sappō (三殺法) “Three killing laws.” Three methods for overwhelming an opponent using a sword; (1) *ken (w) o korosu*: kill their sword, (2) *ki (w) o korosu*: kill their spirit, and (3) *waza (w) o korosu*: kill their techniques. The basic idea is that killing the opponent’s spirit implies overwhelming them with your own, causing hesitation and doubt. See [four sicknesses](#). Killing the opponent’s sword implies controlling their ability to manipulate their weapon for offensive or

defensive purposes. Finally, killing the opponent’s techniques implies countering or anticipating the opponent’s intentions, removing their ability to effectively attack.

Sasae-zuki (支え突き) From the verb *sasaeru*, (1) “to support, to prop; to defend”, (2) “to hold at bay, to check, to stem.” This is the thrust used by [shidachi](#) in [tachi kata](#) #7 against [uchidachi](#)’s initial thrust. Shidachi induces a stalemate against uchidachi’s initial aggression by stepping back while pressing uchidachi’s thrust upward slightly from beneath using their left [shinogi](#).

Sashi (刺し) “Pierce, stab, thrust.” Sashi style strikes in [kendō](#) refer to attacks that use minimal wrist and shoulder motion, i.e., “thrusting” the [shinai](#) onto the target. Popularized in [shiai](#), this style is discouraged as it doesn’t incorporate a cutting motion. This term is sometimes incorrectly used to refer to [chiisai waza](#).

Saya (鞘) “Sword sheathe.”

Sayū-men (左右面) “Left and right” [men](#). An angled strike to the upper left or right [men](#).

Seigan no kamae Most commonly written as (正眼の構え) “Correct eye stance” or (晴眼の構え) “clear eye stance.” Often translated as “aiming at the eyes.” There are several variations of seigan, each a slightly different [kamae](#) with respect to the position of the [kensens](#), and each written with different characters, Shigeoka (1977) and Imafuji (2019). Previously in the [nihon kendō no kata](#) the term seigan was common and the variant used was to be understood from the context. In modern [kendō](#) the term has been eliminated from the official kata descriptions. One specific variant is still used in response to [jōdan no kamae](#) and is often called seigan or [hira-seigan no takai](#), H. Inoue (2003), but in the kata descriptions it is referred to as “a *chūdan position*”, AJKF (2002), with notes on how to assume it correctly.

Seiza (正座) “Correct sitting” (position). The Japanese formal seated position.

Seme (攻め) An “attack” or “offense.” From the verb *semeru* meaning “to attack” or “to assault”, seme is most often interpreted as “pressure”, e.g., pressure put on the opponent. The intent is to make them *perceive* that there is imminent attack from you that they *must* respond to immediately. This *need* to respond results in a momentary loss of their composure creating various opportunities for you to strike.

Seme-ai (攻め合い) “Union of pressure.” Seme-ai is the point where two opponents actively pressure one another in an attempt to create an opening. Seme-ai, realistically, only occurs when in combative range.

Seme-komu (攻め込む) “To invade; to attack.” The forward step taken by *shidachi* while invading the *maai* of *uchidachi* during the second *kodachi kata*.

Seme-kuzushi (攻め崩し) An “unbalancing” or a “disruptive pressure.” Seme-kuzushi can be likened to the final nudge inducing the opponent to react.

Sen (先) (1) “First move”, is synonymous with *sente* and *sen (w)o toru*. (2) “Previous; former.”

Sen (w)o toru (先を取る) “Take the lead” (initiative) and attack by anticipating the opponent.

Sen no sen See *mitsu no sen*.

Sen sen no sen See *mitsu no sen*.

Senpai (先輩) “Senior.” Literally “previous people.” In *kendō* this can also be a relative term relating to experience in something, not necessarily just age.

Sensei (先生) “Born previous”, usually interpreted as “teacher”, i.e., somebody older than you and hence has more experience. In *kendō* experience and rank are also taken into account regarding this term.

Sente (先手) “Forestalling; (seizing the) initiative.” In *kendō* *sente* refers to an action used to seize the initiative against the opponent. This then forces the opponent to have to react. In particular they must act at a pace they do not set. See also *sen* and *sen (w)o toru*.

Setsunin-tō (殺人刀) “The killing sword.” In sword arts this does not refer to killing the opponent, but to killing their attacking spirit. By overwhelming the opponent’s spirit they are unable to attack or cope with attacks. *Setsunin-tō* is then a specific strategy for facing an opponent. “*Setsunin-to is an egoistic and risky approach to combat—the slightest miscalculation will result in the swordsman walking straight into the opponent’s counter-attack*”, Friday (1997). *Setsunin-tō* is the antithesis of *katsujin-ken*.

Shi (1) (仕) “To serve” or “to do” in a polite context. (2) (士) “Samurai; man, gentleman, scholar”. (3) As a suffix *-shi* is used for academic degrees, e.g., *shōgō*.

Shiai (試合) “Match, game, bout, contest.” A match where points are scored to determine a winner.

Shiai-jō (試合場) “Match area.” The court for a *shiai*.

Shidachi (仕太刀) “The doing/serving sword.” The role of the “student” in the *nihon kendō no kata*.

Shi-kai (四戒) “Four admonitions.” See *four sicknesses*.

Shikake (仕掛け) “Start, begin, commence.”

Shikake waza (仕掛け技) Ways to initiate a strike.

Shin-ki-ryoku-itchi (心気力一致) “Mind, spirit, and action as one.” The *shin*, a heart or mind able to predict an opponent’s action through a state of *mushin*, guides one’s *ki*, the dynamic mental state of one’s spirit, which in turn dictates one’s *ryoku*, physical actions in the form of technique.

Shimoza (下座) “The lower seat” or “seat at the bottom.” In a modern *dōjō* the *shimoza* refers to two areas: where the entrance/exit is located, and opposite the *shōmen*. Both are “low rank” positions.

Shin (1) (心) “Mind”, “heart”, or “spirit.” (2) (真) “Truth.” See *shin-gyo-so*.

Shin no kokoro (心のこころ) “Inner core, deeper spirit or mind.” Musashi, Machida (2013), describes two distinct types of spirit: the external spirit and the internal. These can be interpreted as one’s will and thought, respectively. According to Musashi, and along with the ideas of *zanshin* and *hōshin*: “*Whilst holding the sword you should usually let go the outer spirit and hold back the inner spirit. But in the moment when you strike the opponent in earnest, you should let go the inner spirit and hold back inside the outer spirit.*”. This implies a cyclic interchange of *zanshin* and *hōshin* with *i no kokoro* and *shin no kokoro*.

Shinai (竹刀) “Bamboo sword.”

Shin-gi-tai-itchi (心技体一致) “The mind and one’s ability as one.” The ability to put one’s intent into effective action.

Shin-gyo-so (真行草) Shin: “truth”, Gyo: “stream”, and So: “grass.” The three feelings which *shidachi* embodies in the *kodachi kata*. From the *ittō-Ryū* school, these correspond to three different methods of attack. These also correspond to the ideas of three phases or transitions, for example *formal*, *semi-formal*, *informal*. Another example refers to shapes or forms where *shin* is the true shape, so is the essence of the shape, and *gyo* is the transition between the two. These feelings also correspond to *shu-ha-ri*.

Shinitachi (死に太刀) “Dead sword.” See *dead sword*.

Shinogi (鐔) The raised ridge on either side of a *katana* and *bokutō* used for deflecting or manipulating the opponent’s weapon.

Shinogi (w)o kezuru (鐔を削る) “Shaving/scraping the shinogi.” This is done in the fourth *tachi kata* after *uchidachi* and *shidachi*’s *ai-uchi*. Keeping a sense of combative tension while lowering to *chūdan no kamae* each fights for center to prevent a *suki* their opponent can take. This is the essence of *tsuba-zeriai*.

Shinpan (審判) “Referee, judge.” A [shiai](#) referee.

Shinsa (審査) “Judging, inspection, examination.” A grading or test done before a panel of judges.

Shisei (姿勢) “Position.” A physical position, e.g., “*tai-tō shisei*” is a specific (named) position. See [tai-tō](#).

Shishin (止心) “Stopped mind.” This refers to the mind being focused on one thing inhibiting free action.

Shizentai (自然体) The “natural body.” A natural (proper) posture, i.e., standing straight and extending the spine, shoulders back, arms hanging naturally, feet shoulder width, and the core engaged. [Migi](#) and [hidari shizentai](#) is when the right or left foot is forward, respectively, and the opposite shoulder is pulled slightly backward. This is not to be confused with a [hanmi kamae](#).

Shitsurei-shimasu (失礼します) “Excuse me.” Said prior to taking [jōdan no kamae](#) against a senior.

Shōgō (称号) “Rank, degree, title.” Shōgō are a set of titles awarded to [kendōka](#) of sufficient rank, 6th, 7th, and 8th [dan](#); age, and experience. The titles, listed in ascending order, are [renshi](#) (錬士), [kyōshi](#) (教士), and [hanshi](#) (範士). [Shi](#) refers to an academic degree, [ren](#) translates to “refined”, [kyō](#) is “teach”, and [han](#) is “example, model”.

Shōmen (正面) “Front.” (1) The frontal target area of the [men](#). (2) The symbolic head/front of the [dōjō](#).

Shoshin (初心) “Beginners Mind.” The idea of not letting experience dilute the vigor one has for learning even simple things as when inexperienced.

Shōtō (小刀) The “short sword” used in [nitō](#).

Shu-ha-ri (守破離) Shu: “protect, obey”; Ha: “detach, digress”; and Ri: “leave, separate.” Shu-ha-ri describes the stages of progress in many arts. The first, Shu, has the practitioner obeying the teacher in every detail without change. The second, Ha, is when the student has learned enough to incorporate their own ideas alongside their teacher’s. The third, Ri, is when the student is able to leave specific teachings behind them; all actions are in accord with the core principles and theory of their art. The [nihon kendō no kata](#) are said to embody shu-ha-ri in [tachi kata](#) #1–3, and in [kodachi kata](#) #1–3.

So (草) “Grass.” See [kūsa](#) and [shin-gyo-so](#).

Sonkyo (蹲踞) “Crouching.” The formal crouching position in [kendō](#).

Suburi (素振り) “Elementary swing.” Various swing practices or exercises which make up a fundamental

part of basic [kendō](#). [Kendōka](#) will *easily* perform many thousands of practice strikes in their training, learning proper technique through repetition.

Suki (隙) “Interval”, “gap”, “opportunity.” This refers to an opening in your or your opponent’s defenses, or a gap between thoughts or actions.

Suri-age (すり上げ) “Sliding” while “rising.”

Suri-age waza (すり上げ技) A “rising slide” [waza](#). Used to deflect an attack by sliding your weapon along the opponent’s making a small, half-circle motion as you lift your weapon into the path of the attack. This rising-slide motion is not to be confused with hitting or knocking the opponent’s weapon out of the way.

Suri-ashi (すり足) “Sliding foot/leg.” Footwork where [kendōka](#) slide their feet on the floor as they move.

Suri-komi (すり込み) “Sliding step.” This [waza](#) is used during the third [kodachi kata](#). [Shidachi](#) slides their blade along the [uchidachi](#)’s, controlling it, as they step into [uchidachi](#)’s [maai](#).

Suri-nagashi (すり流し) “Slide and ward off.” The motion is often likened to allowing water to “pour off” of something. This [waza](#) is used during the third [kodachi kata](#).

Suri-otoshi (すり落とし) “Slide and knock down.” Used during the third [kodachi kata](#). [Shidachi](#) pushes their [bokutō](#) down and to the left, sliding it along [uchidachi](#)’s, pushing their strike down and away.

Sytemi (捨て身) “Body abandoning”. Sytemi refers to the mentality needed while striking, i.e., that one will either kill or be killed during the attempt but by placing one’s life on the line, without hesitation or reservations, one’s strike will become effective.

T

Tachi (太刀) “Long sword.” Used in the [nihon kendō no kata](#).

Tachi kata (太刀形) A subset of the [kata](#) using [tachi](#).

Tachi-ai no maai (立会いの間合) “Distance between competitors.” The distance between [kendōka](#) for the [ritsu-rei](#) in the [nihon kendō no kata](#), [bokutō waza](#), [shiai](#), and [shinsa](#); roughly nine steps apart.

Tai (1) (体) “Body.” (2) (待) “Wait.” (3) (帯) “Belt/sash.”

Tai-atari (体当り) “Body blow”, “ramming attack.” Used to create a [suki](#) in the opponent by momentarily upsetting their balance via a specific type of push.

Tai-sō (体操) “Gymnastics, calisthenics.” A term used to refer to a warm-up.

Tame (溜め) To “store, amass, accumulate.” AJKF (2011) defines tame as “the condition of being composed both mentally and physically and maintaining a spiritually replete state despite the tense situation.” In a basic sense tame is the continuation of *seme*; one observes the opponent’s reaction(s) to *seme* while maintaining an attacking spirit. It has a broader meaning over the duration of a match: *kendōka* amass their spirit but have the patience to act at their own pace.

Tanden (丹田) “Energy farm/field.” In Eastern martial arts this is where one develops *ki*. Located roughly three fingers width below the navel centered inside of body. This is the center of gravity of the human body.

Tare (垂) “Hang, suspend.” The “skirt of a coat.” The waist protector worn in *kendō*. See *bōgu*.

Tare-himo (垂紐) The thin, long belts attached to either side of the *tare-obi*.

Tare-obi (垂帯) The waistband of the *tare*. Also the *mae-obi*.

Ten (天) “Sky, heavens.”

Ten no kamae (天の構え) “Kamae of heaven.” See *jōdan no kamae*.

Te-no-uchi (手の内) “Palm, skill.” In *kendō* the specific method of handling the sword upon striking, transferring power to the *kensen* while maintaining control.

Te-no-uchikawa (手の内皮) The palms of the *kote*.

Tenugui (手拭い) “Hand towel.” A cloth worn on the head underneath the *men*.

Tō (刀) “Sword.” A Japanese sword; *katana*.

Tobi-komi (飛び込み) “Burst into.”

Tobi-komi waza (飛び込み技). Making a powerful attack the moment the opponent’s spirit falters.

Toku (解く) To “untie, unfasten, undo.” See *kamae (w) o toku*.

Tokui waza (得意技) “Strong point” or “specialty technique”, refers to one’s strongest *waza*.

Tō-ma (遠間) A distance longer than *issoku ittō no maai*. Also called *tōi-maai*.

Tsuba (鐔) The “sword guard” on a *shinai* or *bokutō*.

Tsuba-dome (鐔止め) “Stopper” holding the *tsuba* in place.

Tsuba-zeriai (鐔ぜり合い) “Urging/forcing (while) *tsubas* are joined together.” The position when two *kendōka* are in close proximity, *tsuba* against *tsuba*, attempting to create an opening to strike.

Tsūchi no kamae (土の構え) The “kamae of earth.” See *gedan no kamae*.

Tsugi (継ぎ) “Patch, join, successor.”

Tsugi-ashi (継ぎ足) “Adding/extending/elongating” footwork. This style of footwork is a variation of *okuri-ashi*, where the *kendōka* brings both feet side by side before taking the *okuri-ashi* step. This motion helps to build momentum and is often used to cover very large distances.

Tsuka (柄) “Handgrip.” The handle of the *shinai* or *bokutō*.

Tsuka-gashira (柄頭) The “Top/head” of the *tsuka*.

Tsuka-gawa (柄革) Literally “*tsuka*-leather”, the *tsuka-gawa* is the leather sheath covering the handle of the *shinai*.

Tsuka-himo (柄紐) The small leather “cord” at the top of the *tsuka-gawa* the *tsuru* attaches to.

Tsuki (突き) (1) “Thrust.” (2) The name of the target when thrusting to the throat.

Tsuki-dare (突き垂) The throat protector on the *men*, see *kendō-gu*, for receiving *tsuki* attacks.

Tsuru (弦) The string connecting the *saki-gawa* and *tsuka-himo* on the top side of the *shinai*.

Tsutsu (筒) “Cylinder, pipe, tube.” Area of the *kote* one may strike. Also called the *kote-tsutsu*.

U

Uchi (打) (1) “To hit; strike”, (2) “to present something.”

Uchi-ma (打ち間) “Striking distance.” The spatial distance at which one can strike the opponent. While *ma* has a distinct meaning from *maai*, *uchi-ma* is implicitly related to the three general *maai*: *issoku ittō no maai*, *chika-ma*, and *tō-ma*.

Uchidachi (打太刀) “The striking sword” or “the presenting sword.” The role of “teacher” in the *nihon kendō no kata*.

Uchi-komi (打ち込み) Striking practice using [fumi-komi](#).

Uchi-otoshi (打ち落とし) To “knock/hit down.”

Uchi-otoshi waza (打ち落とし技). Techniques for striking the opponents weapon downward, midway through their attack, redirecting it.

Uke (受け) “Receive, catch, defend.” The temporary block/deflection in several [ōji waza](#). The opponent’s strike is momentarily received/deflected and, in a single continuous motion, a counter-attack is made. This is different than blocking as the intent here is to attack.

Uke-nagashi (受け流し) “Receive and ward off.” Used in the first and second [kodachi kata](#). The [uchidachi](#)’s attack is received on the [shinogi](#) redirecting it while at the same time moving to the side via [hiraki-ashi](#).

Ura (裏) “Inside.” The right side of the [shinai](#) or [bokutō](#).

Ushiro (後) “Backward.” Ushiro refers to a direction.

W

Waki-gamae (脇構え) “Side stance.” Known as the “kamae of metal”, or [yō no kamae](#), it’s a variant of [gedan no kamae](#).

Waza (技) “Technique(s).” Fencing techniques used against an opponent.

Waza (w)o korosu (技を殺す) “Kill their Waza.” See [san-sappō](#).

Y

Yagyū Shinkage-Ryū (柳生新陰流) Yagyū Shinkage-Ryū is one of the oldest [kenjutsu](#) schools in Japan. Descendant from Shinkage-Ryū, founded by Kamiizumi Nobutsuna, the Yagyū Shinkage-Ryū was founded by Yagyū Munetoshi and is still practiced.

Yin-yang (陰陽) Individually the characters are read as [in-yō](#) in Japanese, this term is from Chinese Taoism dealing with opposites and/or duality; the definition of one is dependent on the definition of its opposite. The idea of yin-yang also embodies the idea of a dynamic balance of opposites or opposing aspects throughout nature, e.g., still/moving, negative/positive, defense/attack, etc.

Yoko-men (横面) “Sideways” or “horizontal” men. A sideways [katate](#) strike to the right or left side of the [men](#). Some use this term to refer to a [sayū-men](#) strike.

Yokote (横手) The area on a [katana](#) where the tip ends and the blade proper begins.

Yokote-kōsa (横手交差) “Intersection of the yokote.” The position [kendōka](#) meet at when they will perform formality based motions, e.g., [kamae \(w\)o toku](#) or [sonkyo](#), in the [nihon kendō no kata](#) and [bokutō waza](#).

Yō no kamae (陽の構え) “Attacking kamae.” The antithesis of [in no kamae](#). See [waki-gamae](#).

Yūkō-datotsu (有効打突) “Effective strike.” In [kendō](#), [yūkō-datotsu](#) is an accurate, i.e., made in the same direction as the [jin-bu](#), strike or thrust (1) onto the [datotsu-bui](#) of the opponent’s [kendō-gu](#) with the [shinai](#) at the [datotsu-bu](#), (2) in high spirits and correct posture, and (3) followed by [zanshin](#).

Yuku (行) “To proceed, to flow.” Yuku is another reading of the term [gyo](#).

Z

Zanshin (残心) “Remaining mind.” In the context of [kendō](#) this is, simply put, interpreted as sustaining both mental and physical readiness with every action in order to be able to respond or cope with the opponent; a sustained alertness. This is related to [hōshin](#).

Zantotsu (斬突) “Cut” or “thrust.” Similar to [datotsu](#), however [zantotsu](#) applies to cutting, e.g., with a sword, where as [datotsu](#) refers to hitting, e.g., with a [shinai](#). Modern [kendō](#) is a [datotsu](#) style, however the mentality and intent should mimic that of a [zantotsu](#) style. This is made explicit in the *Concept & Purpose of Kendō* by “... application of the principles of the katana.”

Za-rei (座礼) “Seated bow” from the [seiza](#) position.

Za-zen (座禅) “Seated Zen” (meditation).

Zekken (ゼッケン) Name tag worn on the [tare](#). Also termed a [nafuda](#).

Zen (禅). See [za-zen](#).

Zenjō-in (禅定印) “Zen meditation hand position.” See [mudrā](#).

Zen-kei shisei (前傾姿勢) “Forward leaning position.” The occurs several times in the [kata](#) after [uchidachi](#) strikes and/or is countered by [shidachi](#). Specifically [tachi kata](#) #1, #4, #7, and [kodachi kata](#) #1-2.

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