

Using an abbreviated version of the AJKF Kihon Dosa to teach beginners

Explanation for following approach .

I have chosen only 9 points from the 12 points of Kihon Dosa . At the beginning stage I don't feel it necessary to teach kirikashi and prefer to see this wait until the beginner is in bogu. At that stage kirikashi, tai Atari and tsubazeriai can be taught safety and effectively. The Kihon Dosa is something that can be taught at completely different levels using the same heading, e.g ma-ai can be explained to a beginner of 6 months but it can also be taught to 3rd dan with 8 years experience .It can used to teach Kata or "keiko" Kendo . Your responsibility as an instructor of Kendo in NZ is to make sure YOU understand the 12 points well enough to teach them correctly at your dojo. Use this as a guide to approach the teaching of beginners but please also use it as test for yourself .Can you explain /teach the 12 points well to a group of the same grade or higher?

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Kihon Dosa - 12 Basic as outlined by the the AJKF

The 12 points of basics needed to be mastered in order to perform Kendo.

1. **Shi sei** *Posture*
2. **Kamae** *Stance* **Metsuke** *Use of eyes*
3. **Kamae kata and osame kata** *drawing and returning of shinai*
4. **Ashi sabaki** *footwork* ..Tsugi ashi, Okuri ashi aruki ashi (Ayumi ashi)
5. **Suburi** *swinging the shinai*
6. **Kake goe** *Vocalizations*
7. **Ma-ai** *establishing an appropriate distance between oneself and the opponent*
8. **Uchi kata** *which takes tsuki kata and uke kata into account*
9. **Kirikaeshi** *consecutive striking*
10. **Tai Atari** *body thrust*
11. **Tsubazeriai**
12. **Zan shin** *correct mental and physical posture after striking*

Shisei *Posture*

Explanation to instructors

Please consider shise to be the most important message to get across to beginners during their first few weeks as it is the foundation from which they can build good strong and confident kendo.

Points to teach

- ✓ Shise takes into account the way that you walk , stand in a relaxed natural stance and generally move around the dojo including in and out of bowing positions.

- ✓ Shise is directly connected to breathing but you will find that with without correct *Shise* then done of the other 11 points are possible to understand and master .

- ✓ Shise is the frame in which your Kendo is displayed , it must be straight and natural .

Notes:

Kamae S t a n c e *Metsuke* U s e o f e y e s

Explanation to instructors: Always have beginners run check lists in their mind when taking up kamae(in this case chudan) , start from the left heel and work up to the top of the head .

- ✓ Kamae and Metsuke follow some left rules
 - Left heel ,left knee ,left hand
 - Left eye to left eye
- ✓ Kamae follows some 30/70 rules...
 - 30 % of your weight on the flat of your right foot and 70% on the ball of your left foot .
 - 30% of power in your right hand and 70% of the power in the 3 fingers of your left hand .
 - 30% of your breathing power to stay in your hara and 70% to be used for kiai.

Draw on what you have taught in Shise to assist with kamae and metsuke

Notes:

Kamae kata and osame kata *drawing and returning of shinai*

Explanation to instructors: This is an opportunity to emphasize how serious Kendo is and how this simple set of movements are so much more than a show of respect to your opponent . Performing this part of your keiko correctly and with a clear mind sets the tone for the complete exchange with your opponent.

Emphasis Kendo is not a sport it's an art ...

Steps to teach

1. Practice taking 3 steps forward drawing and returning the shinai . This should be practiced standing at first. Emphasis angle of blade and final kamae (left heel height etc)
2. Incorporate the importance of shise as you have them practice sonkyo, firstly **without** the shinai , beginners tend to use the shinai as a balancing tool at this stage . You need them to understand they must be in control before drawing the shinai completely.
3. Allow them to use the shinai , emphasis the need to control the physical side by not breathing during the sonkyo movement and allowing the stillness of their hara to give them focus and balance .
4. The full movement must be performed with a clear mind and an intention to keep a strong straight back .

Notes:

Ashi sabaki *Foot work*

Suburi *swinging the shinai*

Uchi kata *which takes tsuki kata and uke kata into account*

Kake goe *Vocalizations*

Explanation for instructors :

1. Ashi sabaki we understand as footwork , carrying our bodies from A~B in a way that allows us to perform correct well balanced Kendo
2. Suburi is the ability to swing a shinai in a relaxed correct fashion creating a well formed arc through the air with the kensen , it is not a complete cut.
3. Uchi kata is the final blow , the snap , the way of making a cutting movement (which incorporates Te No Uchi as well as Ki Ken Tai Ichi) into a killing strike
4. Kake goe * is not Kiai however to save confusion for beginners the word Kiai needs to be used when describing any shout / kake goe during Kendo .

- * Simply shouting KOTE as you are about to strike does not mean it is a kiai

Steps to teach the above

- ✓ Use 3, 2 and 1 stage men cut as a basic exercise
- ✓ Incorporate all the elements above in while emphasizing the following .

3 stage men

1. Shout " ichi " (kake goe) ,raise the arms up as the right foot goes forward (Shise)

2. Swing the shinai forward shouting "ni" (Kake goe) to about men height (suburi) while following up with the left foot (ashi sabaki) , and finish the cut with impact (Uchi kata) .

3. Draw back into chu dan (kamae) keeping your head straight (metsuke) shouting "san" (kake goe)

Once up to 1 stage men has been taught then you can continue into cutting through movements on motodachi or a cutting dummy

Notes:

Ma-ai *establishing an appropriate distance between oneself and the opponent*

Ashi sabaki *footwork ..Tsugi ashi, Okuri ashi*

Explanation to instructors

Ma-ai and Ashi sabaki can be introduced together , at the beginning level it is only necessary to teach Tsugi ashi and Okuri ashi . Aiyumi ashi will come naturally without confusing people at this stage .

Explain very briefly Tou Ma-ai, Isoku I tou no ma-ai and chi ka Ma-ai and the use for them all .

Steps to teach

- ✓ Partner up in Chu dan
- ✓ Shout an order of direction mai (forward), ato(back) or migi / hidari (right / left)
- ✓ Check tsugi ashi is used
- ✓ Check Isoku itou mo ma ai is maintained
- ✓ Check shise and metsuke
- ✓ Check Kamae

Notes:

Zanshin *correct mental and physical posture after striking*

Explanation to instructors :

Once you start to teach cutting through using okuri ashi and turning you need to explain/introduce Zanshin.

Introduce levels of kiai (kake goe) so that beginners start to understand that kiai is not just a shout but it has meaning and changes to reflect Zanshin as well as condition of you and your opponents mental state .

Steps to teach .

Have them cut through with a "long" strong kiai

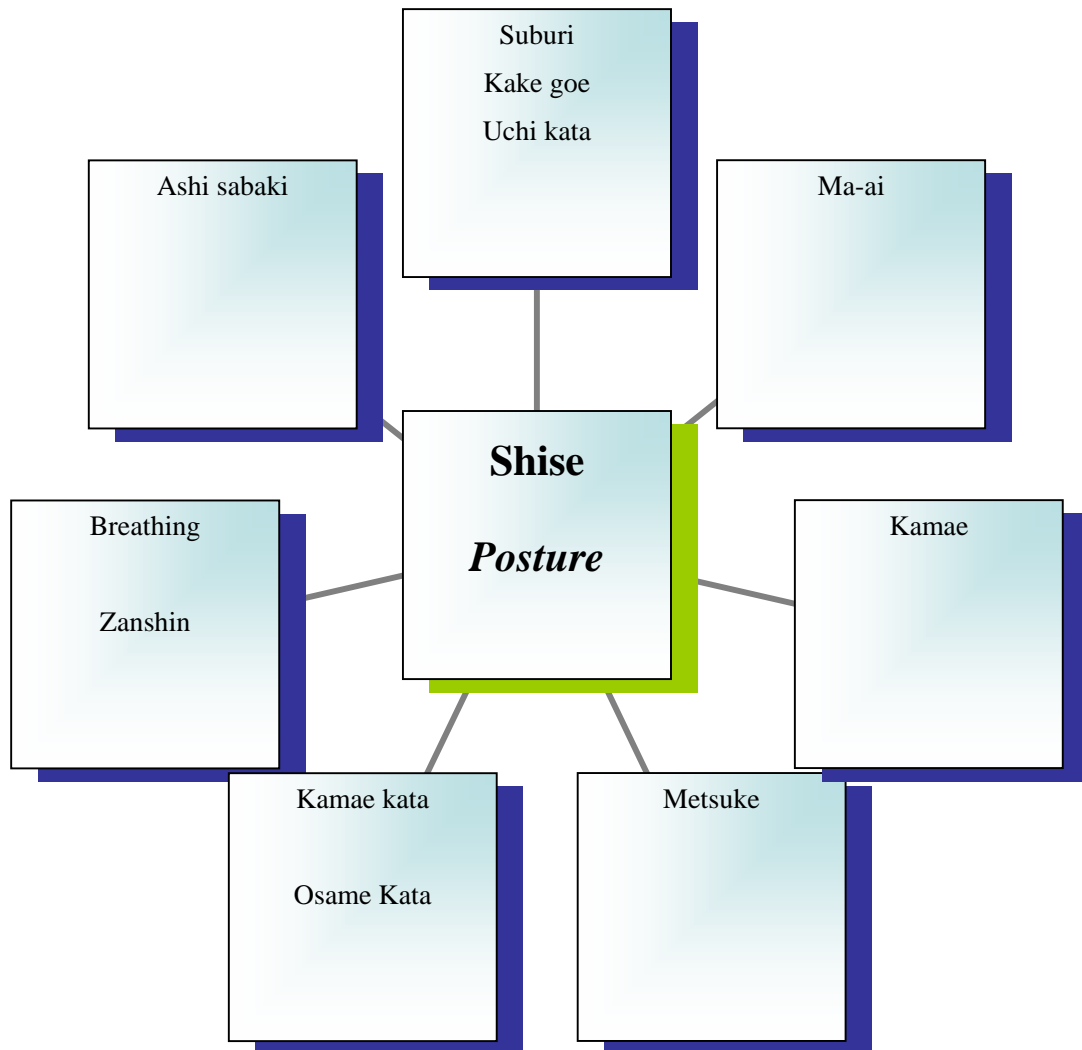
Turn in controlled sharp manner

Coincide the shinai taking up chudan after the turn with the a change in tone of the kiai

Aim to explain that your kiai is connected to your physical movement (shinai/cut etc) and mental state (zanshin)

Notes:

Beginners kihon dosa



Use Shise as a basis to teach beginners in their first 6 months of training .
As soon as bogu is introduced then the full AJKF 12 point Kihon Dosa can be taught .

Summary

I have deleted Tai Atari , Kirikaeshi and Tsubazeriai from the beginners level Kihon Dosa as well as kept the explanations of some normally very detailed points down to a real minimum.

It is now your responsibility to memorize the way you wish to get this message across, to do that you too must have a good understanding of the material .

ASK IF YOU ARE NOT SUREDON'T GUESS

You must be aware of the level of your class, beginners are beginners but even within the first 3 ~ 4 months of practice you will see big gabs appear in skill levels plus you have the added problem (good problem for the dojo) of new beginners starting.

From all the points above it is ALWAYS possible to have a certain percentage of the class work as a combined group !!!! please do not jump in and separate complete beginners straight away . Make them feel part of the practice and chose a review for the points above that will allow them participate straight from the start .When a beginner has finished a session its good for them to see that in a matter of weeks they too could be doing XYZ at that level .

Good luck and if stuck think carefully back to how you learnt a certain skill , choose the closest Kihon Dosa point and go ahead a show them how its done .

Graham