



Tips for Instructing Beginners' Kendo

Introduction

The following information has been compiled from discussions at Yudanshakai level at the Auckland Kendo Club and reflects our views on the requirements for effective teaching of kendo to beginners. Of course there will be a multitude of opinions on this subject throughout New Zealand and the world, however we believe there will also be a lot of commonality in approach.

Hopefully instructors and trainee instructors in the New Zealand Kendo Federation will find this document useful in firming up their own approaches to teaching kendo to beginners.

Our thoughts:

- 1) There are no natural kendo instructors, **anyone can learn**.
- 2) You are responsible for the **“tone”** of the class. It must be orderly, disciplined, supportive, useful etc.
- 3) You are responsible for **safety** considerations - equipment, behaviour and training environment.
- 4) You are responsible to see there is an **appropriate level of instruction** from the first-nighter through to normal beginner.
- 5) Strike a **balance** between excessive detail, yet remembering to point out the important points for this level.
- 6) Exhibit **confidence** in what you are instructing. This should come through your voice and non-verbal communication (make sure you speak clearly, loudly, slowly - do not rush your instructions).
- 7) Strike a **balance** between being encouraging, friendly and fun, whilst maintaining some of the seriousness that the martial art deserves.
- 8) Make sure your instruction follows a **sensible logical structure** with a theme for the particular lesson.
- 9) Wherever possible **demonstrate** what it is you want them to do, a picture is worth a thousand words.

- 10) **Explain** why we do certain things, so that people can understand.
- 11) **Correct bad techniques** gently and sensitively but firmly.
- 12) Find opportunities to **compliment** even small improvements.
- 13) Focus on **kiai** early on as it creates a sense of energy and strength.
- 14) Highlight the **many reasons we do kendo** - not just the physical pursuit side.
- 15) **Question the class** to get their involvement and keep them paying attention.
- 16) You can **take the mickey out of yourself** but never the students.
- 17) Use **non-kendo** examples wherever possible to assist in understanding.
- 18) **Emphasise grooming**, form, posture and attitude.
- 19) Try to strike a **balance** between boring repetition and information overload.
- 20) Inform the class at the beginning of the session what **the theme** will be.
- 21) Finish with reinforcing the main theme (**remind the class** of what they covered during the lesson).
- 22) Leave them with **something positive**, relevant and meaningful to take away with them. It can be kendo or a general observation on life.
- 23) **Avoid saying**, "I am not very good at this but ..." because it gives them permission to not be good at it as well.
- 24) **Watch** all the members to see if anyone is falling behind or confused
- 25) **Pace the class** to the median.
- 26) **Short rests** are important but don't have long periods of talking - activity and repetition is important to consolidate learning.
- 27) Be aware of **any drink or drug issues** and immediately remove offenders from the class / dojo.
- 28) **Build a tempo** to finish with a high activity period.

- 29) Use senior members as **models** in the front of the class if possible.
- 30) Use a **combination** of Japanese and English in explanations.
- 31) **Challenge students** to ask themselves what part of their body hurts, and ask them why they think it might be.
- 32) If their energy is flagging give a small rest but reinspire with **strong commands and kiai**.
- 33) If it is all getting too serious then **smile**, as it will relax the class.
- 34) **Have a plan** before you start, but if it is not working then modify it.
- 35) If you are wearing your men really **project your voice** as it is difficult for the class to hear.

Conclusion:

Being able to teach the basics of kendo to beginners is a non-negotiable part of your kendo journey once you enter the “dans”.

Don't shirk your responsibilities. You will not only be helping others become better in their kendo but your own kendo will improve.

Good luck!

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Auckland Kendo Club: www.aucklandkendoclub.co.nz
New Zealand Kendo Federation: www.kendo.org.nz