

ミシガン大学 剣道部

The University of Michigan Kendo Club FAQ (ver. 2.00)

What is Kendo?

- Kendo is a Japanese martial art which literally translates to “The Way of the Sword”.
- An athletic sport which is played by means of one-on-one striking between opponents using shinai (sword made from bamboo slats) while wearing kendo-gu (protective armor).
- A form of martial art which aims to train the mind and body while cultivating one’s character through continuing practice. Kendo was formally known as gekken and kenjutsu.

Where are practices?

- Our club practices at the CCRB (Central Campus Recreational Building) in Dance room (3275). The CCRB is located in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

When are practices?

- For the Fall semester, our practices are Saturdays starting at 8:30 AM to 10:00. The CCRB generally opens at 8:00 AM, so we strongly encourage everyone to arrive early enough to have time to change and to be ready well before the practice starts.

How much does it cost to join?

- Since we are a student organization, the active student members elect annual officers who administer the club and collect semester dues to be able to rent our practice space. In order to accomplish this, all students contribute a semester fee of \$50 in order for us to be able to pay for our practice space from the university. Our instructors teach us as volunteers to the club with no financial support for their time in training our club members. So please come consistently to show your appreciation of their time and teaching efforts. Checks are the easiest way for us to accept your support for the club, but we can also accept cash. Please make checks out to “Kendo Club” and give it to the club treasurer or any attending club officer present.
- The university requires that all non-students purchase access to the recreational facility. Information regarding memberships can be found at any of the Business Offices of Rec Sports at the CCRB/NCRB or IMRB. More information can be found at:
(<http://www.recsports.umich.edu/members/purchase.html>)

If we do not receive support from our students, the club will cease to be.

I'm a community member and it says that I need to get a sponsor. How do I do that?

- Ask any of our club members who are university affiliates (faculty, staff, students or alumni). There is no limit to the number of people an affiliate can sponsor, but the sponsor will have to be there with you when you first purchase your membership or day pass.

What is the stuff you guys wear?

- The armor collectively is called "bogu" or more formally "kendo-gu".
- The two piece uniform that we wear under the bogu is called the "keiko-gi" for the top and the bottom is called "hakama".

Do I need to buy any equipment right away?

- Not right away. Like many sports, there is a portion of your progress that will be dependent on how much time you put into training, but the typical adage remains true that the more often and consistently you train, the faster you will advance. That being said, everyone is different and some will advance faster than others. To learn the basics, you do not need the armor (bogu). For the first few practices all you will need is clothing that allows you freedom of movement and a shinai.

- You will probably want to purchase your own bamboo sword (shinai) and a uniform before getting into bogu though, so the next question is when should you buy a uniform? There is no particular point at which you need to purchase a uniform, so whenever you want to start wearing a uniform then please go for it. If you have questions, we will always be happy to help guide you for sizing and options where to purchase from as well.

Isn't bogu expensive?

- Bogu comes in a very wide range of prices and the price depends on many things like its country of manufacture, the amount of work done by hand, level of customization, and the quality of materials used in its construction.

New good beginner sets can be found online from around \$550 and up.

- Beginners are not encouraged to purchase bogu until they have integrated with the general practice. This is for a variety of reasons, the most important being for your safety. There is not a direct correlation between price and quality. For example, bogu made for advanced users is often advertised as being "lighter to increase performance", but this also presupposes that the wearer already knows how to move actively avoid strong hits, and so the quality of the bogu may actually offers less protection for static drills where you open a target for your partner to strike in general practice.

Will anyone help me find the right bogu when I am ready for it?

-The instructors and senior members will always be willing to help you or direct you for how to get correct measurements and give you feedback while you are shopping to help you become a more informed and aware buyer. When you want to buy, we want you to have all the understanding needed to make a well thought out and informed purchase. We also have some connections to help you

Do you use real swords?

- Kendo uses three different types of swords. For general practice and competition, the bamboo sword (shinai) is used. For practicing forms in Kata workshops and for testing, we will generally use a wooden sword to more closely approximate the shape and weight of a sword. During demonstrations we may use metal swords, but because of the possibility of injury this is not common.

How to tell rank in Kendo, do you use belts?

- Like many other Japanese martial arts, Kendo uses a kyu/dan ranking system, with 10 kyu ranks and 8 dan ranks. Although dan ranks are considered “black belts”, kendoists do not wear any sort of colored belts or any other outward sign of ranking. So the easiest way to find out someone’s rank is to ask them.

How long will it take to earn a black belt and beyond?

- That will depend entirely on you. After you develop an acceptable level of competence, which may take weeks or months, you will join the general practice. From there you will receive feedback and pointers at the end of practices. When you feel that you are confident in what you are learning, ask for permission to test. The instructors will give you an objective assessment of your progress, highlight areas to work on, or give you permission to test. Testing is typically held after tournaments which provides for 2-3 opportunities to test within the federation each year. Once you begin testing, moving through the kyu ranks can be done pretty quickly. Things will slow down once you pass your first dan rank, as there is a mandatory waiting period required before being eligible to test for the next dan rank that increases proportionally adding one year for each new level. From 1dan to 2dan is a 1 year wait, 2dan to 3dan is a 2 year wait, 3dan to 4dan is a 3 year wait period and so on. Many adult learners of Kendo start their grading progression from 3kyu or 2kyu. Sticking to a consistent training schedule and some elbow grease on your part, could take you to make black belt in Kendo in very little time. For people entering Kendo with no previous experience, the first test establishes their ranking.

I have no experience, nor am I really physically fit. Will that be a problem?

- Kendo does not have any distinctions between young or old, men or women, athletic or not. Our practices can be challenging, but they will always also be self-paced for safety. If it takes you longer to reach your potential and you are making an effort to get there, we will all be supporting you. Everyone has to start somewhere and every one of us has also at some point been a beginner too. Once you learn the fundamentals, then you will control the speed of your progress. If you have an aggressive agenda and commit to faster progress, we can also support you through the paces too. The key is to understand your own comfort zone and progressively push yourself to improve and move that zone forward and outward. Keep an open mind as you will find your physical limitations challenged in what may seem as awkward and new movements, but you will make the final decision as to what you can do and how far you wish to push your own limits.

I have a high ranking belt in another martial art. Can I jump ranks?

- Although many martial arts share some of the same or similar fundamentals, this is not a license to consider them as the same. So even if you are the all powerful, all knowing, super grand master of (insert martial art here), you will start at a similar introduction level in Kendo. How long you stay at that level is up to you and your dedication.

Will previous training hinder me?

- Previous experience is not a hindrance, but not having an open mind to a different perspective could be... If you have learned Kumdo, Iaido, or Kenjitsu there will be many similarities – and that is helpful for some people, but there will also be subtle differences. Keep an open mind to these differences and give them the same respect as your previous experience. This attitude will help you go far in Kendo and in life.

If you come from a Kumdo background, under certain situations, you may be considered to hold a comparable rank in Kendo. Please talk with Sensei about this after practice and bring documentation of your current rank for verification.

Do I need to be able to ... in Japanese?

- Although Kendo is a Japanese martial art, much of the practices are taught in English. As you become more familiar with the repetition of use in Japanese terms, you may find the common terms are easier to use than English at conveying complex ideas. We will help you with each step you take. We also have resources connected with our website to assist you outside of practice.

Do you guys compete?

- Yes, kendo is a martial art with a very active competition component. Our club members, and our sister club at Eastern Michigan University actively compete in three or more tournaments a year. One of the best ways to meet new friends can be during tournaments either as a volunteer or competitor.

Doesn't getting hit hurt?

- Although the armor that we wear is light, it does provide excellent protection. On occasion, if your opponent misses the correct target area, it can sting a little. So you will always be able to outfit your equipment with additional pads that can be purchased for your comfort as you deem necessary.

It looks dangerous, will I get injured?

–As with any sport or activity there is always some level of risk involved. Since Kendoists are generally more protected than other fighting arts such as judo or karate, injuries are actually quite rare. The shinai (sword) is designed to bend to reduce kinetic impact and will break if excessive force is used in a strike. The bogu (armor) is designed to properly absorb impacts to protect the user as well. Equipment care and maintenance is an important part of our club culture too, so we will also help you to learn how to care and inspect your equipment for safety as well. Protecting yourself and others from accidental harm is very important in Kendo. There is generally a greater concern that one will hurt themselves by not stretching sufficiently, then while actually participating in Kendo.

Please reference our website for additional information and assistance at
<http://www.umich.edu/~umkendo>