

Study Questions for Iaido Shinsa



These questions are sample questions which have been used in the past. Future tests may use different questions. Please use these as study guides for answering future questions.

Each applicant testing for 1st kyu and above will be required to answer any two of the three test questions given for the rank they are testing for.

1st Kyu:

1. Name and briefly describe the five basic on-guard postures (kamae) in swordsmanship.
2. Discuss Metsuke.
3. What is zanshin?

Shodan

1. List the names of all 12 All Japan Kendo Federation Iaido kata.
2. Define Mono-uchi and describe its function.
3. What is Jo-Ha-Kyu?

Nidan

1. What is the purpose of chiburi?
2. Draw a simple diagram of a katana and identify the following:
 - a. habaki
 - b. kisaki
 - c. tsuba
 - d. fuchi (fuchi-gane)
 - e. tsuka
 - f. mune
 - g. mono-uchi
 - h. kashira (tsuka-gashira)
 - i. shinogi
3. Explain ki-ken-tai-ichi and give two examples of its application in the All Japan Kendo Federation Iaido kata.

Sandan

1. What do you hope to gain through the study of Iaido?
2. What is suki and why should you avoid its occurrence in your practice of Iaido?
3. What is kirioroshi? Describe its use in one All Japan Kendo Federation Iaido kata.

Yondan

1. Is it important, or is it not important to participate in Iaido Competitions? Explain your rationale.
2. Write what you know about kokyu (breath control) in Iaido.
3. Describe the three kinds of sen.

Godan

1. Discuss the concept of fudo-shin.
2. Tsuki (thrusts) occur in five of the All Japan Kendo Federation Iaido kata. Name the five kata and identify the target area of the tsuki.
3. Discuss the importance of rei-ho in the practice of Iaido.

Rokudan

1. Explain the philosophy of shu-ha-ri.
2. What are ma and maai? Describe their application in one or two All Japan Kendo Federation Iaido kata.
3. There are key points to watch for when judging Iaido. List the key points for two of the All Japan Kendo Federation Iaido kata.

5 Kamae

Gedan-no-kamae:

The posture in which the tip of the sword is lowered from chudan-no-kamae (middle guard position) down to the level of the opponent's kneecap. This posture is considered suitable for defense.

Chudan-no-kamae:

The posture in which the right foot is forward, the sword is held with both hands so that the tsuka-gashira is in front of the tanden and the sword is aimed so that the extension of the sword points to the opponent's throat/face. This posture is suitable for both offense and defense. It is sometimes also called seigan-no-kamae.

Waki-gamae:

Posture in which the right foot is behind, in a hidari-hanmi (left side forward, half turned) position and the sword is held below the right armpit, with the tip of the sword pointing backward and the edge of the blade facing diagonally down to the right. The level of the tip is a little lower than it is in gedan-no-kamae.

Jodan-no-kamae:

The posture where the sword is held above the head. The most offensive posture among the kendo postures. The posture where the sword

is held with both hands and the left foot is forward is called morote-hidari-jodan-no-kamae. The posture in which the sword is held with both hands and the right foot is forward is called morote-migi-jodan-no-kamae.

There are katate (one hand holds the sword) versions of both jodan kamae.

Hasso-no-kamae:

The posture where the sword is held with both hands near the face. The left hand stays on the body's center line, and the right hand is about one fist width away from the mouth. The kissaki is pointing upward to the right rear, and the edge faces the opponent. The left foot is forward and the body is in hidari-hanmi (left side forward, half turned) position.

Metsuke:

Positioning of the eyes. The act of paying attention to the opponent's whole body while looking into his/her eyes.

Enzan-no-metsuke:

A term meaning it is important to look at the figure of the opponent as a whole rather than at a particular point, as if looking at a far away mountain.

Kan-ken-no-metsuke:

Kan-no-me is the way of seeing with which one sees the essence of things, while ken-no-me is the way of seeing with which one sees only the surface phenomenon. In Gorin no Sho (The Book of Five Rings) swordsman Miyamoto Musashi said, "Kan-no-me is strong, ken-no-me is weak." As this teaching implies, the term kan-ken-no-metsuke emphasizes the importance of having a keen eye which can not only see the opponent's appearance but which can also perceive the opponent's abilities and state of mind through his/her posture and appearance.

Zan-shin:

The body posture and state of mind in which even after striking, one is alert and ready to respond instantly to any counterattack by the opponent. Zanshin is the state in which, after striking with full power and without hesitation, one faces the opponent with full spirit and with the ability to respond naturally.

Mono-uchi:

The part of the sword which exerts the most force upon contact. This part of the sword begins from the kissaki and extends for approximately 6-8 inches toward the other (back) end.

12 Sei Tei Kata Names

1. MAE
2. UESHIRO
3. UKE NAGASHI
4. TSUKA ATE
5. KESA GIRI
6. MOROTE TSUKI
7. SANPO GIRI
8. GANMEN ATE
9. SOETE TSUKI
10. SHIHOJU GIRI
11. SOU GIRI
12. NUKI UCHI

Jo-Ha-Kyu:

Jo-ha-kyu is the continuous acceleration applied to the execution of most sword drawing techniques. Each movement of a kata begins slowly, gradually gets faster and until maximum speed is attained. This increase of speed produces sharp technique. The first technique of the first kata (nukitsuke in Mae) is a good example of the use of jo-ha-kyu.

Chiburi:

The purpose of chiburi is to clean the end of the blade of anything left on it from cutting. Chiburi also has a spiritual meaning of cleaning one's soul.

Ki-ken-tai-itchi:

A term which expresses an important element in moving for offense and defense; it is mainly used in teaching striking moves. Ki is spirit, ken refers to the handling of the sword, and tai refers to body movements and posture. When these three elements harmonize and function together with correct timing, they create the conditions for a valid strike. Also called Shin-ki-ryoku itchi.

Suki:

A weakness of the mind caused by astonishment, fear, doubt or hesitation. Also a weakness in one's action or posture which results from losing control of the center.

Suki provide an opening for attack by one's opponent.

Kiri-oroshi:

The term kiri-oroshi means cutting down. Usually it is a 2-handed cut down from over the head. Many, though not all, of the All Japan Kendo Federation style kata have kiri-oroshi.

Kiri-oroshi is contrasted with nukitsuke, the cut made, in one continuous motion, from drawing the sword. Kiri-oroshi requires that the sword already be drawn.

Kokyuu:

The act of inhaling and exhaling. In kendo this term also means to predict the opponent's movement and adjust one's moves accordingly as part of the interaction with the opponent.

Kokyuu-hou:

There are two ways of breathing. One is chest breathing by the motion of the ribs and the intercostal muscles and the other is abdominal breathing by the elasticity of the diaphragm. One type of abdominal breathing is tanden-kokyuu in which one exhales and expands the abdomen and then maintains this state with exhaling. This tanden-kokyuu breathing is considered very important in kendo and iaido.

In iaido, as a general rule, you begin to move on the third breath's inhalation. It is desirable to complete each technique as you finish a breath. Breathe silently, without raising your shoulders, so as not to alert your opponent. Don't wait too long between techniques, but don't go too fast either. For beginners, this is difficult, Continued practice using the 3 breath timing will lead to improvement.

Mitsu-no-sen:

The three sen. In kendo it is of paramount importance to suppress the opponent's move at the moment it begins. It may be said that the competition to take sen decides the match. There are said to be three sen (mitsu-no-sen) in sen. In the book titled Kendo written by Sasaburo Takano, the mitsu-no-sen are explained as sen-sen-no-sen, sen and go-no-sen. These three can be summarized as follows:

Sen-sen-no-sen: When facing an opponent in a match, having the keen insight to quickly recognize the opponent's start, and then attack immediately, thus forestalling the opponent's move. This act of attacking faster than the opponent's sen is the most important in kendo. Also called kakari-no-sen.

Sen: When the opponent sees a suki (weakness/opening) and initiates an attack, winning by striking in turn before the opponent's strike is successful. Also called tai-no-sen.

Go-no-sen: When the opponent sees a suki and initiates an attack, winning by first striking down the opponent's sword or parrying, then attacking strongly when the opponent has become discouraged. Also called tai-no-sen.

Fudou-shin:

A state of mind which is not moved or distracted by anything; a flexible state of mind able to respond to various changing situations.

Five All Japan Kendo Federation kata use the technique of thrusting (tsuki).

They are:

4. Tsuka ate: thrust (blade is horizontal, edge faces away from your chest) to the rear opponent's sui getsu/ mizu ochi/ solar plexus.
6. Morote tsuki: thrust (blade is vertical, edge faces down) to the front opponent's sui getsu/ mizu ochi/ solar plexus.
8. Gan men ate: thrust (blade tilts upward from horizontal, edge faces to your right) to the rear opponent's sui getsu/ mizu ochi/ solar plexus.
9. Soete tsuki: thrust (blade is vertical, edge down) to the (single, on the left side) opponent's abdomen at about waist level.
10. Shihou giri: thrust (blade tilts slightly downward from horizontal, edge faces away from your chest) to the second (to the left rear) opponent's sui getsu/ mizu ochi/ solar plexus.

Reihou:

Reigi sahou is very important. Budo begins and ends in reihou.

Reihou is the form we use to express respect—for our teachers, our dojo, for our fellow students, and for our own practice.

Shu-ha-ri:

A teaching which explains the levels of training in kendo. Shu is the level where one obeys the principles of one's master and learns them solidly. Ha is the level where one adds one's own ideas to what one learned in the previous level and develops one's technique. Ri is the level where one rises above what one learned in the previous two levels, further develops one's technique and establishes a new personal style.

Ma:

The space of distance between two objects, events or times. An important and distinctive concept focusing awareness on time and space; the term which expresses this concept. In kendo, ma more or less refers to temporal distance, and ma-ai is used in contrast when referring to spatial distance. The term ma-zumori refers to the proper creation and measurement of ma in time and space. The act of missing the proper distance or a chance to attack is called ma-hazure, while the act of intentionally avoiding the opponent's attacking distance or chance is called ma-hazushi.

Ma-ai:

The spatial distance between one's self and the opponent. The gap between two opponents. The establishment of ma-ai through the relationship with the opponent is a subtle and important matter.

Chika-ma:

Generally called chikai-ma-ai (closer distance). A smaller distance than issoku-no-ma-ai. At this distance one's strike can easily reach the opponent, but the same holds for the opponent's strike.

Issoku-itto-no-ma-ai:

This is the distance which enables a player to strike the opponent by taking one step forward and to evade the opponent by taking one step backward. The fundamental spatial distance in kendo.

Tou-ma:

Generally referred to as tou-ma-ai. A distance which is farther than issoku-ittou-no-ma-ai. A distance from which the opponent's strike cannot reach you, and, at the same time, your strike cannot reach the opponent.

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