

Disadvantages: Bloodlust; Obsession (Perfect sword skills); Odious Personal Habit (Bad manners); Reputation (User of unconventional strategies).

Skills: Breath Control; Broadsword Art; Fast-Draw (Sword); Jitte/Sai; Meditation; Philosophy (Zen Buddhism); Savoir-Faire (Dojo); Staff; Tactics; Two-Handed Sword.

KNIGHTLY MOUNTED COMBAT

Medieval European knights studied the martial arts intensively. From an early age, they practiced mounted and foot combat, alone and in groups. Their fighting styles evolved over time to keep up with increasingly heavy armor and larger mounts, and the weapons that accompanied those developments.

Early Medieval

6 points

Following the demise of the Roman Empire, mounted warriors gradually came to dominate European warfare. These early knights were armed with the spear and the broadsword (which was both a status symbol and their main weapon). Stirrups were common, but the saddles of the time didn't provide sufficient support for true "couched lance" techniques. Protection consisted of mail armor and a medium or large shield.

These early knights used the spear overhand – or, occasionally, couched under the right arm – to attack their enemies' vulnerable face, neck, and vitals. When wielding the broadsword, they generally dealt overhand slashing blows, although thrusting attacks weren't unknown. When using *either* weapon, they preferred to block with the shield rather than parry. Close in, they employed wrestling moves – both to prevent the enemy from using his weapons and to disable attackers when they were themselves disarmed.

Legends of knightly combat often mention fierce battle cries that terrified lesser foes – a Western version of *Kiai*. Legends also tell of knights cleaving foes in half, killing horses with a single blow, and other feats worthy of Power Blow.

Kendo

4 points

Samurai disappointed with *kata*-only practice developed Kendo as a form of contact training less risky than sparring with bokken. Their efforts yielded specialized light armor, the *shinai* (split-bamboo sword), and rules intended to prevent injury while allowing contact.

Kendo is a sport, not a combat form. Limited targets, light weapons, and strong protection contribute to the participants' safety. Players may strike the protected face, neck, torso, and hands. In order to score, they must declare their target as they attack. They're allowed to shove, but only sword blows score. Many Kendo moves would get you killed in a real swordfight.

One Kendo variant – based on *Nito Ryu* (pp. 174-175) – uses *two* swords. Replace Two-Handed Sword Sport with Broadsword Sport and Shortsword Sport; change the techniques to match; add Dual-Weapon Attack (Broadsword Sport or Shortsword Sport) to cinematic techniques; and include Off-Hand Weapon Training (Shortsword Sport) and Unusual Training (Dual-Weapon Attack, Both attacks must target the same foe) as Style Perks. Style cost becomes 5 points. Players use Dual-Weapon Attack to feint and attack, since only one attack counts for scoring purposes. Striking twice can invalidate both scores!

Kendo was briefly banned during the Allied Occupation of Japan, but was restored in 1947. Since the 1960s, it has become an international sport. Today, it's widely popular in Japan, where it's a common sport in school. Korea's *Kumdo* is identical, but uses Korean etiquette and nomenclature.

Skills: Games (Kendo); Savoir-Faire (Dojo); Two-Handed Sword Sport.

Techniques: Feint (Two-Handed Sword Sport); Targeted Attack (Two-Handed Sword Sport Swing/Arm); Targeted Attack (Two-Handed Sword Sport Swing/Skull); Targeted Attack (Two-Handed Sword Sport Thrust/Neck).

Cinematic Skills: *Kiai*; Immovable Stance; Mental Strength; Power Blow.

Cinematic Techniques: Dual-Weapon Defense (Two-Handed Sword Sport); Whirlwind Attack (Two-Handed Sword Sport).

Optional Traits

Advantages: Enhanced Parry (Two-Handed Sword).

Disadvantages: Delusions.

Skills: Breath Control; Meditation; Philosophy (Zen Buddhism); Shortsword Art; Two-Handed Sword Art.

Iaido

5 points

Iaido is the *-do* form of Iaijutsu (p. 174). Like Kendo, it started life as a way to cope with the loss of combat conditions under which to practice. Unlike Kendo, it focuses on *kata* and drill, not free sparring. Stylists often use an unsharpened sword.

Skills: Broadsword Art; Fast-Draw (Sword); Savoir-Faire (Dojo); Two-Handed Sword Art.

Techniques: Low Fighting (Broadsword Art or Two-Handed Sword Art).

Cinematic Skills: Mental Strength.

Cinematic Techniques: Springing Attack (Broadsword Art or Two-Handed Sword Art).

Perks: Grip Mastery (Katana); Quick-Sheathe (Sword); Shtick (Chiburi).

Optional Traits

Secondary Characteristics: Improved Basic Speed and Per.

Advantages: Combat Reflexes.

Disadvantages: Delusions.

Skills: Meditation; Shortsword Art.