

# KENSEI

## Samurai Heroic Skirmish

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Ver 1

(System based on Games Workshop's Lord of The Rings battle game)



### Introduction

These rules are for skirmish wargames using 25mm/28mm scale miniatures in a medieval Japanese setting.

Each player controls a band of 5-20 characters. These may include “heroic characters” such as Samurai, as well as “ordinary characters” such as retainers and armed civilians.

Heroic characters may act individually and independently, but other characters may only operate in groups of 3 or more models. The members of a group must stay within 2” of each other and they function as if a single individual, e.g. they move together and shoot together at the same target.

All characters have a basic stats line that determines their strength, courage, combat ability and so on. All (non-heroic) characters in a group have the same stats.

Heroic characters have additional abilities representing their skill and learning in the martial arts. These are represented by an enhanced stats line, mastery of different weapons, named strategies either for single combat or for battle, and tokens which can be used to act out of the normal turn sequence to capture the initiative, avoid otherwise fatal attacks, etc.



## **Turn Sequence**

Play is in turns. Each turn has the following phases:

1. Roll for Initiative
2. Movement
3. Shooting
4. Close Combat

### **Roll for Initiative**

Each player rolls 1D6. The highest scorer has the Initiative for the turn. In the event of a draw, Initiative automatically changes from the previous turn.

### **Movement**

Both sides move, in order of Initiative.

### **Shooting**

Both sides shoot, in order of Initiative.

### **Close Combat**

Close combat is conducted simultaneously for all opposing models in contact.

### **Turn Sequence for Heroic Characters**

Heroic characters can make actions outside of the normal turn sequence, called Heroic Actions, by expending tokens. See the section on *Heroic Characters*.

## **Movement**

All characters can move up to 6" in the movement phase. This movement can be in any direction and can be into contact with enemy, but not out of contact unless a forced retreat.

Crossing difficult terrain is at half speed. Deduct 2" for crossing obstacles.

For movement on horseback, see the section on *Moving and Fighting on Horseback*.

## Shooting

Characters can shoot if they have moved no more than half their maximum movement allowance. Characters cannot shoot if they are engaged in close combat, neither can they shoot into a close combat.

Targets must be within the maximum range for the weapon, within a forward arc of 90 degrees and must be in line-of-sight. Heroic characters can target any enemy characters, within these restrictions. Non-heroic characters, however, must target the nearest enemy.

Each heroic character and character group has a basic shooting ability on his stats line. This number must be equalled or beaten on 1D6 to score a hit with any missile weapon. Once a target is hit, roll to wound. See *Wounding*.

If an intervening obstacle obscures the target, then roll again for any missiles that have hit their target. On a roll of 4+ the intervening obstacle is hit instead, and the shot has no effect. If the intervening obstacle is another character, then that character takes the hit.

For shooting from horseback, or shooting at mounted targets, see the section on *Moving and Fighting on Horseback*.

## Close Combat

All characters in base contact roll a number of dice equal to their Attacks characteristic (for non-heroic characters this is always 1). The party with the highest single die score wins the combat. In the case of a draw, the side with the higher Combat characteristic wins. If both sides have the same characteristic, then roll off to determine who is the winner.

For example, a Samurai is in base contact with a character group of three retainers of a rival Samurai. The Samurai has an Attacks characteristic of 2 so rolls 2 dice. The retainers roll 1 die each. The Samurai scores 2 and 5. The retainers score 1, 3 and 5. The highest score on each side is both 5, i.e. a draw. Therefore in fact the Samurai wins because he has a Combat characteristic of 5 whereas they have a Combat characteristic of 3.

The losers must retreat 1". In addition, the winners roll again with the same number of dice to determine if any of their attacks cause a wound. See *Wounding* below.

If a character or characters is surrounded by enemy, or would not be able to retreat 1" in the event of losing the combat (e.g. because of an obstacle), then the attacker gets double the normal number of attack dice.

If a character is defending an obstacle such as a wall or barricade, then the attacker suffers a -1 penalty to his dice.

Particular weapons or martial strategies can enhance a character's Attacks characteristic. Likewise, weapons and strategies can confer modifiers on the dice rolled for close combat. These modifiers are called combat dice modifiers.

For close combat on horseback, see the section on *Moving and Fighting on Horseback*.

## Wounding

Cross-reference the attacker's Strength with the defender's Defence characteristic on the Wound Table below. The result is the score that must be equalled or beaten on 1D6 in order to cause a wound.

Strength represents physical strength and penetrating ability. Defence represents ability to withstand blows, especially armour protection. In the case of close combat, Strength is the Strength characteristic of the attacking character. In the case of shooting, Strength is the Strength of the particular missile weapon being used.

Particular weapons or martial strategies can enhance both Strength and Defence.

### Wound Table

<i>Strength</i>	<i>Defence</i>							
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>1</i>	4	5	6	6	-	-	-	-
<i>2</i>	3	4	5	6	6	-	-	-
<i>3</i>	2	3	4	5	6	6	-	-
<i>4</i>	2	2	3	4	5	6	6	-
<i>5</i>	2	2	2	3	4	5	6	6
<i>6</i>	2	2	2	2	3	4	5	6
<i>7</i>	2	2	2	2	2	3	4	5
<i>8</i>	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	4

Non-heroic characters have a Wounds characteristic of 1 and are therefore killed if they receive a wound. A heroic character frequently has multiple wounds, in which case the character loses one wound from his Wounds characteristic but may otherwise continue as normal. When all of his wounds are removed then the character is killed.



## Character Stats Line

Every character has a basic stats line with the following characteristics:

Characteristic	Typical Value
Combat	3
Shooting	5+
Strength	3
Defence	3
Wounds	1
Attacks	1
Courage	3

These characteristics represent the latent ability of the individual. Weapons or armour may enhance the values of some characteristics. For example, certain weapons can improve the effective Strength value. See the section on *Weapons and Armour*.

## Morale

Heroic characters are assumed to be heroic and therefore not subject to normal morale results. However, the following rules apply to all non-heroic character groups.

If casualties reduce a character group to half or less of its start number, or reduce a group to less than the minimum number of characters permitted for the group, then the group must take a Courage Test. If the test is failed then the group flees the battlefield.

For example, Ashigaru must operate in groups of at least 3 characters. If a group of 5 Ashigaru falls below 3 then they must take a Courage Test.

If the group passes the Courage Test, then the next time the group takes casualties it must test again.

Likewise, if casualties reduce an entire band to half or less of its start number, then each character group in the band must take a Courage Test. If the test is failed then the group flees the battlefield.

To take a Courage Test, roll 2D6 and add the score to the character group's Courage characteristic. If the total is 10 or more then the test is passed.

Fleeing character groups get one free move at full speed towards the nearest friendly table edge. In subsequent turns, the group must continue to move at full speed towards this table edge until they leave the battlefield altogether.

Fleeing characters caught by mounted enemy are automatically destroyed. Fleeing characters caught by enemy on foot will turn to fight, but at -2 on their combat dice and -1 Strength.

Character groups must also take a Courage Test if they wish to charge enemy which outnumber them or have higher Courage. If they fail the test, they may not approach this enemy this turn, but otherwise may act as normal.



## Weapons and Armour

### Weapons

The combat rules assume that each character is armed with a basic weapon such as a short sword, a crude club, a short bamboo spear, a farmer's pitchfork, or similar. This category also includes sticks (Jo) and wooden swords (Bokken).

The following specialist weapons have additional combat effects. Note that a character can only wield one weapon at a time.

Weapon	Effect
Bow (Dai-kyu)	Range 24" Strength 4
Short Bow (Kyu)	Range 16" Strength 3
Arquebus (Teppo)	Range 24" Strength 5, -2 to hit, 1 turn of no other activity to reload
Long Sword (Tachi or Katana)	+1 Strength
Great Sword (No-dachi)	-1 combat modifier, +2 Strength
Spear (Yari)	+1 combat modifier if mounted or against mounted opponents, can attack from second rank on foot at -1 combat modifier
Halberd (Naginata)	+1 combat modifier against mounted opponents, +1 Strength against all
Club or Maul (e.g. Testubo)	-1 combat modifier, +1 Strength
Flail (various types)	+2 Defence
Staff (Bo)	+1 Defence, -1 Strength against opponents in medium or heavy armour
Pavise	Special (see below)

### Pavises

Pavises are large shields that are placed in the ground to form a defensive screen, normally to protect missile-armed Ashigaru. One pavise is large enough to shield a single character immediately behind it.

A pavise counts as an intervening obstacle when the character behind is shot at. It has no effect on movement or close combat.

It takes two turns of Movement to set up or take down a pavise.

## Armour

The combat rules and basic character stats line assume that characters are unarmoured. The following types of armour are available, with the corresponding improvement to the character's Defence characteristic.

Armour	Effect
Heavy armour (O-yoroi)	+3 Defence
Medium armour (e.g. Do-maru)	+2 Defence
Light armour (e.g. Hara-ate)	+1 Defence

Heavy armour is cumbersome and confers a -1 combat dice modifier, as well as restricting movement on foot to a maximum 5" instead of 6". It does not restrict use of the Bow or other missile weapons.

## Moving and Fighting on Horseback

Some characters (both heroic and non-heroic) may move and fight on horseback. Additionally, heroic characters can have the Mastery of Horsemanship strategy that gives them improved abilities on horseback. See the section on *Heroic Characters*. The following rules apply to all characters on horseback.

### Moving on Horseback

Mounted characters have a move characteristic of 12". They are subject to the same movement restrictions and penalties as characters on foot.

Mounting or dismounting takes half a turn's movement allowance and is only possible if either there is a retainer to hold the horse or a post to tie the horse.

If a rider is forcibly dismounted, for example by having his horse shot from underneath him, then for the rest of the current turn he counts -2 in combat. Next turn the rider may move and fight on foot with no penalty.

### Shooting from Horseback

A character can shoot a Bow or Short Bow from horseback with no penalty if he has moved no more than half his maximum movement allowance. If the character has moved more than half his maximum movement allowance, then he can still fire but at a penalty of -2 to hit.

A mounted character's arc of fire is 360 degrees if unarmoured or wearing light armour, but 90 degrees to the left hand side only if wearing medium or heavy armour.

### **Shooting at Mounted Characters**

A mounted character presents a large target. However, a mounted character can also present a fast-moving target. If a mounted character is shot at who is moving at half or less of his maximum movement allowance, then the shooter benefits from a +1 to-hit modifier.

In any case, if the target is hit, roll again. On a score of 3+ the rider is hit as normal. On a score of 1 to 2 the horse is hit instead. The horse is assumed to be disabled by the shot and the rider forcibly dismounted.

### **Close Combat on Horseback**

Most weapons can be used mounted as well as on foot. The only weapon that cannot be used mounted is "Two swords". All weapons used from horseback confer a +1 Strength advantage. Furthermore, characters charging into combat while mounted count +1 on their combat dice, unless charging spear or halberd-armed infantry.

Non-heroic characters charged by heroic characters must make a Courage test. If they fail this test, they flee as normal. If the rider has sufficient movement allowance to catch the fleeing characters, then they are cut down and killed automatically.

Where mounted characters are in close combat and their opponents retreat, the mounted characters must follow up to renew the combat next turn.

Characters who win combat against a mounted opponent may attempt to wound the horse instead of the rider. The horse counts a Defence value of 3. All attacks must be made against the horse, they cannot be split between horse and rider. If the horse is killed, the rider is forcibly dismounted.



## Heroic Characters

Heroic characters have additional abilities representing their skill and learning in the martial arts.

These are reflected in five areas, corresponding to the Buddhist “Go Dai”:

Element	Heroic Character Abilities
Ground	Enhanced character stats line
Water	Named strategies for single combat
Fire	Named strategies for battle
Wind	Mastery of different weapons
Void	Zen Tokens

Zen Tokens can be used to act out of the normal turn sequence to capture the initiative, avoid otherwise fatal attacks, etc.

### Enhanced Character Stats Line

The basis of the character’s abilities is a general mastery of the martial Way. This is represented by an enhanced stats line. Heroic characters frequently have high Shooting and Combat characteristics, multiple Attacks and multiple Wounds.

### Water Strategies (Named Strategies for Single Combat)

A heroic character may have learned a number of named strategies for single combat. Their names and effects are as follows:

Strategy	Effect
Hit in One Timing	+1 combat modifier +1 Strength in first round
The Abdomen Timing of Two	If opponent scores 1, you add +1 to your score
No Design, No Conception	Disrupt enemy rhythm. Enemy suffers -1 Attacks in the first round of close combat.
Flowing Water Cut	Cancel one of your opponent's combat strategies
Continuous Cut	If win combat, get 1 extra die to wound
The Red Leaves Cut	Disarm opponent on 5+ at start of combat. Opponent may draw another weapon.
The Body in Place of the Sword	Trade -1 Strength for +1 Attacks
Stickiness	+1 Attacks when following up a retreating enemy
Body Strike	Can move an extra 3" if into contact with enemy
Stab at the Heart	+1 combat modifier when retreat is obstructed
Scold	Opponent must re-roll one Attack die of your choosing
Many Enemies	If outnumbered, opponents suffer -1 combat modifier
One Cut	Exchange all Attacks for 1 Attack at +1 combat modifier + 1 Strength
Shout	If you charge, opponent must pass a Courage Test or fight at -2 combat modifier
Choose the Place	Disengage from combat on 4+. Move back 2"

## Fire Strategies (Named Battle Strategies)

A heroic character may have learned a number of named battle strategies. Their names and effects are as follows:

Strategy	Effect
Hold Down a Pillow	Add +1 to your Initiative die roll
Become the Enemy	All your troops have +1 Courage
Hold Down a Shadow	You may set up your troops after your opponent
Frighten	All enemy troops suffer -1 Courage
Mountain-Sea Change	Once only, confuse the enemy. All enemy character groups take a Courage Test. If they fail, they cannot move in that turn.
Rat's Head, Ox's Neck	On an Initiative roll draw, you can choose whether to take the Initiative or pass the Initiative
Body of a Rock	Character groups within command radius automatically pass all Courage Tests
Mastery of Command	Special (see below)

### Mastery of Command

Fire Strategies include Mastery of Command as a type of battle strategy. Characters with this strategy can lead other characters, both heroic characters and non-heroic character groups.

This is reflected in two ways. Firstly, characters who are within command radius of the heroic character can use his Courage characteristic for their Courage tests. Secondly, when the heroic character makes a Heroic Move, other characters within command radius can move with him, so long as they stay within command radius.

Command radius depends on the level of Mastery of Command, as follows:

Mastery Level	Command Radius
1	4"
2	6"
3	8"
4	12"

Although heroic characters are not normally subject to morale effects, if a heroic character is leading a character group and that group fails a Courage Test (i.e. the character group uses the heroic character's Courage characteristic but still fail the test), then the result must also be applied to the heroic character. Next turn the heroic character can choose to leave the character group.

If a heroic character is with a character group that are fleeing from mounted enemy and they are caught and ridden down, the heroic character is not ridden down but may fight back with a -2 combat dice modifier, just as if caught by enemy on foot.

### Wind Strategies (Mastery of Different Weapons)

Wind Strategies represent a heroic character's ability with different weapons or different schools. A character may have specified levels of mastery of named weapons.

The weapons and the effects of different levels of mastery for each are as follows:

Weapon	Mastery Level			
	1	2	3	4
Bow	2 shots	Choice of arrowheads, 2 shots, +1 Strength	Choice of arrowheads, 3 shots, +1 Strength	Choice of arrowheads, 3 shots, +2 Strength
Long Sword	+1 combat modifier, +1 Strength	+1 combat modifier, +2 Strength	+2 combat modifier, +2 Strength	+2 combat modifier, +3 Strength
Two Swords	+1 Attacks, +1 Defence	+1 Attacks, +2 Defence	+2 Attacks, +2 Defence, Never outnumbered	+2 Attacks, +2 Defence, +1 combat modifier, Never outnumbered
Great Sword	+2 Strength	+1 combat modifier, +2 Strength	+1 combat modifier, +3 Strength	-
Spear	+1 Strength in addition to normal rules for the spear	+2 Strength in addition to normal rules for the spear	-	-
Halberd	+2 combat modifier against mounted, +1 Strength	+2 combat modifier against mounted, +1 combat modifier against foot, +1 Strength	+2 combat modifier against mounted, +1 combat modifier against foot, +2 Strength	-
Staff	+2 Defence, -1 Strength against opponents in heavy armour	+1 combat modifier, +2 Defence	+1 combat modifier, +3 Defence	-
Improvised Weapons	+1 Defence	+1 Attacks, +1 Defence	+1 Attacks, +2 Defence	-
Mastery of Horsemanship	Special (see below)	Special (see below)	Special (see below)	Special (see below)

*Choice of arrowheads* gives the character the option to shoot non-lethal “humming” arrows. These must be the first arrows shot during the battle. They have the effect of reducing the Courage characteristic by 1 of all non-heroic characters within 6” of the point of aim. The effect lasts for the duration of the battle.

*Never outnumbered* implies that the rule for being outnumbered in close combat is ignored, i.e. opponents do not get double the normal number of Attacks dice. However, this benefit does not apply if the character has a blocked retreat.

*Two Swords* implies simultaneous use of the Dai-sho (katana long sword and wakizashi companion sword). *Improvised Weapons* implies any implement at all, including effectively unarmed combat. Both of these weapon options are not listed in the main Weapons and Armour list because they are only available to heroic characters with specialised martial training.

All Samurai heroic characters should have at least Mastery Level 1 with Bow and Mastery of Horsemanship, as these are the basic weapons of Samurai martial training. After c.1300 Samurai heroic characters should also have Mastery Level 1 of the Long Sword (katana).

### **Mastery of Horsemanship**

Wind Strategies include Mastery of Horsemanship as a type of weapon strategy. This enables the character to move and fight on horseback. The rules in section *Moving and Fighting on Horseback* apply as normal. However, the character benefits from additional abilities depending on his mastery level, as follows:

Weapon	Mastery Level			
	1	2	3	4
Mastery of Horsemanship	Mounting & dismounting is at no penalty	Mounting & dismounting at no penalty, +D6” movement	Mounting & dismounting at no penalty, +D6” movement, Shooting while moving modifier reduced to -1	Mounting & dismounting at no penalty, +D6” movement, Shooting modifier reduced to -1, +1 combat modifier while on horseback

## **Zen Tokens**

Zen Tokens represent a heroic character's level of attainment in the Zen of the martial arts. This attainment provides something akin to a "sixth sense" of perception and timing so that the character is able to anticipate actions before they occur, and to be able to perceive the large picture simultaneously with the small picture, to be aware of everything and yet to have an unclouded spirit. This is what is called the Void spirit.

A heroic character may begin the game with a fixed number of tokens. Once a token is played, it is discarded and cannot be used again.

Tokens can be used for one of three purposes:

1. To alter any die roll by 1 when the character performs an action
2. To perform a Heroic Action
3. To attempt to save any wound against the character, needing a 4+ on 1D6 for success.

Zen Tokens can be used at any time, but only one token can be used for a particular action. For example, a heroic character with 3 tokens who suffers his last wound can use one of the tokens to attempt to nullify the wound. However, if this fails he cannot try again with his other tokens.

## **Heroic Actions**

Heroic Actions can be one of the following:

- Heroic Movement
- Heroic Shooting
- Heroic Combat

Heroic Movement is an additional free move.

Heroic Shooting is an additional free shot.

Heroic Combat is an additional round of close combat. In addition, if the character kills all his opponents, then he can make a free move into a new combat within 6". The new combat is resolved as normal during the Close Combat phase.

Heroic actions must be declared at the start of their respective phases. For example, Heroic Movement must be declared before normal movement and Heroic Shooting must be declared before normal shooting. First the player with Initiative may declare a single Heroic Action for one of his heroic characters, then the other player, and then the first player may declare a heroic action for a different heroic character, and so on, until there are no more Heroic Actions to be declared.

## **Warrior Attendants**

Samurai heroic characters may have a character group of warrior attendants (Genin). Their purpose, unlike infantry retainers, is primarily non-combative. They would

perform tasks such as holding their master's Sashimono while he fought personal combat, pass their master changes of weapon, but may also capture outnumbered opponents for their master to dispatch.

Warrior attendants function like normal character groups, but must attempt to stay within command radius of their master. The Samurai does not need to have the Mastery of Command strategy to have attendants. If he does not, use the default command radius of 4".

The attendants may not be equipped with weapons or armour other than the basic or improvised weapons that all characters are assumed to possess. They can fight, but if they kill an opponent, it is assumed that instead it was their master who actually made the killing blow. If they kill an opponent when outside of the command radius then it is assumed instead that the opponent is driven off fleeing, just as if he had failed a Courage Test.

If the Samurai is within 2" of any member of the attendants group during the Movement phase, he may change weapons. This only applies to two-handed weapons such as the Bow and Halberd.

### **Bushido**

Heroic characters may or may not follow the code of Bushido, depending on their background. For example, a character may be a member of the Samurai nobility who is a strict adherent of Bushido, or he may be a mercenary or assassin who does not follow any code of honour.

Samurai heroic characters who are "honourable" have the following special rules:

An honourable heroic character cannot assault non-heroic character groups in preference to other heroic characters.

An honourable heroic character may not join a close combat between two heroic characters until the combat is resolved, i.e. until one heroic character is killed.

## Example Heroic Characters

### “Yamanaka Hideoshi”

War veteran, Ronin, seeks employment. Preferred weapon is the No-dachi. He is high on experience, less so on formal training.

Equipment:

Do-maru armour  
Dai-sho  
No-dachi  
Concealed dagger

Stats Line:

Combat	Shooting	Strength	Defence	Wounds	Attacks	Courage
4	4+	3	3	2	2	7

Water Strategies:

“Body Strike”  
“Shout”

Fire Strategies:

“Mastery of Command” 3

Wind Strategies:

Mastery of Bow 1  
Mastery of Horsemanship 1  
Mastery of Long Sword 1  
Mastery of No-dachi 1

Void Spirit:

Zen 2

Special:

Leg wound (limps with movement 5” instead of 6”)

**“Yamada Suzuki, Grandson of Yamada no Shoji Yukisue”**

Noble warrior, proud Samurai, aristocrat. Preferred weapon is the Bow (Dai-kyu). He is motivated by honour and fights for his family and his clan. He has an income through his family. He is high on formal training, low on experience.

Equipment:

O-yoroi armour

Dai-sho

Bow (Dai-kyu)

Medicinal Herbs

Family Mon

Stats Line:

<b>Combat</b>	<b>Shooting</b>	<b>Strength</b>	<b>Defence</b>	<b>Wounds</b>	<b>Attacks</b>	<b>Courage</b>
4	4+	3	3	1	1	8

Water Strategies:

“No Design, No Conception”

“Choose the Place”

Fire Strategies:

“Mastery of Command” 3

Wind Strategies:

Mastery of Bow 2

Mastery of Horsemanship 2

Mastery of Long Sword 1

Void Spirit:

Zen 2

Special:

Honourable Samurai