

Sport Kenjutsu

International Competition rules

Explanation of the match rules
Referee guidelines



These competition rules supersede all previous rules. They are therefore invalid.

This new version is effective as of September 1, 2025. These rules can be viewed on the IMAF Europe website.

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1. Conditions of Participation

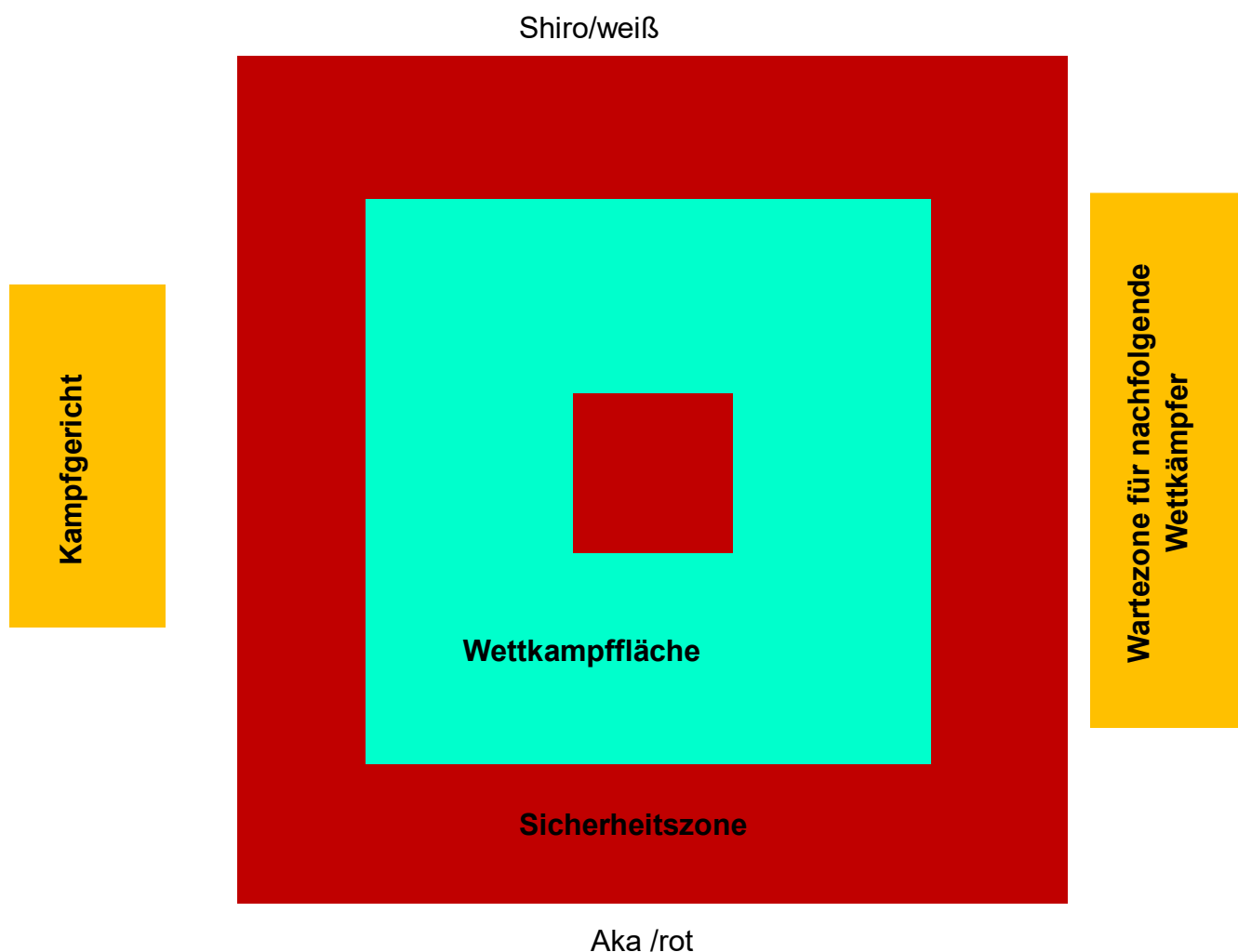
Requirements for participation:

- ⇒ A medical examination, i.e., approval from a sports doctor to participate in karate, must be completed. **Participants must be less than 12 months old.**
- ⇒ This examination must be recorded in the passport or medical record.
- ⇒ If the information in the sports and health record is illegible, crossed out, or if dates and signatures are crossed out or corrected, the certificate is automatically invalidated.
- ⇒ **Accident insurance for the participant.**
- ⇒ Signed consent from a parent or guardian for minors.
- ⇒ The following IMAF Europe competition rules apply.

2. The Competition Area

The competition area must be square, measuring 6 x 6 m (children) to 8 x 8 m (adults). A 2-meter safety zone must be established around the competition area. The competition area must be designed in such a way that any danger to the competitors is excluded.

The competition can also be held without mats. In this case, the competition area must be taped off according to the dimensions.



3. Clothing

Referees:

Referees wear a black hakama and a budo gi.

Jury:

White polo shirt/shirt, white blouse, black long pants, or a black skirt.

Competitors:

- ⇒ Budo GI, patch on the chest or left sleeve (association and dojo).
- ⇒ Wearing a black hakama is permitted.
- ⇒ The wearing of hard contact lenses and jewelry of any kind is prohibited.
- ⇒ Fingernails and toenails must be kept short.
- ⇒ Bandages, etc., are only permitted if medically necessary. This must be reported to the referee in advance.
- ⇒ Wearing protective equipment is not mandatory, but may be worn. The referee must be informed.
- ⇒ Helmets are mandatory for ages 16 and under.
- ⇒ Competitors with braces must wear a helmet with a visor.
- ⇒ For non-official clothing, a one-minute grace period may be granted to change clothes.
- ⇒ The starter must bring their own weapons.
- ⇒ Long swords (103 cm) and short swords (68 cm) made of soft material are used. In competitions for children up to 140 cm tall, short swords are used. The swords must have a safety certificate; their condition is inspected and assessed by the judges before the match.

4. Competition Forms

- ⇒ Individual Matches
- ⇒ Team Matches

5. Competition Methods

A knockout system will be used. Matches can be held as individual or team competitions (however, for team competitions, age and height categories must be established to ensure a level playing field).

6. Team Matches

- ⇒ The number of competitors in a team is three competitors and one alternate.
- ⇒ The winning team will be determined based on the number of points achieved.
- ⇒ In the event of a tie, the winning team will be determined by an additional match between two selected competitors (one from each team).
- ⇒ In the event of a further tie, the referees will decide.

7. Weight Classes

- ⇒ If a class is over- or under-represented, the organizer may combine or separate weight classes.
- ⇒ If there are not enough participants in a weight class, both body measurements of the weight class can be combined.

Sport Kenjutsu fighting classes				
Age categorie	Starting class male	Code	Starting class female	Code
10 – 12 years	Until 140cm	SK001	Until 140cm	SK027
10 – 12 years	Until 150cm	SK002	Until 150cm	SK028
10 – 12 years	Until 160cm	SK003	Until 160cm	SK029
10 – 12 years	Above 160cm	SK004	Above 160cm	SK030
13 – 15 years	Until 150cm	SK005	Until 150cm	SK031
13 – 15 years	Until 160cm	SK006	Until 160cm	SK032
13 – 15 years	Until 170cm	SK007	Until 170cm	SK033
13 – 15 years	Above 170cm	SK008	Above 170cm	SK034
16 - 17 years	Until 160cm	SK009	Until 160cm	SK035
16 - 17 years	Until 170cm	SK010	Until 170cm	SK036
16 - 17 years	Until 180cm	SK011	Until 180cm	SK037
16 - 17 years	Above 180	SK012	Above 180	SK038
18 - 34 years	Until 160cm	SK013	Until 160cm	SK039
18 - 34 years	Until 170cm	SK014	Until 170cm	SK040
18 - 34 years	Until 180 cm	SK015	Until 180 cm	SK041
18 - 34 years	Until 190 cm	SK016	Until 190 cm	SK042
18 - 34 years	Above 190cm	SK017	Above 190cm	SK043
+35 years	Until 175cm	SK018	Until 175cm	SK044
+35 years	Above 175cm	SK019	Above 175cm	SK045
Black belts	Until 160cm	SK020	Until 160cm	SK046
Black belts	Until 170cm	SK021	Until 170cm	SK047
Black belts	Until 180 cm	SK022	Until 180 cm	SK048
Black belts	Until 190 cm	SK023	Until 190 cm	SK049
Black belts	Above 190cm	SK024	Above 190cm	SK050
Black belts Veterans +35	Until 175cm	SK025	Until 175cm	SK051
Black belts Veterans +35	Above 175cm	SK026	Above 175cm	SK052

8. Conduct of Competitions

- ⇒ The match is directed by the referee and the assistant referee ("mirror"), both of whom are located on the mat.
- ⇒ The scorecard operator and the timekeeper monitor the match at the scoreboard.
- ⇒ An experienced referee observer is permitted at the scoreboard to assess the accuracy of each judge's work. In the event of any dispute or doubt, the referee may be called upon for advice.

9. Beginning, Interruption, and Ending of a Match

- ⇒ Competitors enter the match wearing a gi and a blue (ao) or red (aka) belt.
- ⇒ At the beginning of the match, the competitors face each other and, after a greeting ceremony (bow), cross their swords with both hands at blade height.
- ⇒ The match will resume from the same position after an interruption. The fight begins with the command "Hajime" and is interrupted by the referee with the command "Yame" / "Mate" to award a point, impose a penalty, issue another verdict or in any other situation that the referee deems necessary.

10. Target Areas

- ⇒ Slashing and stabbing techniques may be executed on any part of the body (except sword thrusts to the face, neck, or groin). The technique must be "clean."
- ⇒ Conform to the kenjutsu and mastery of the ancient samurai, controlled in force and direction, and executed with the sword in both hands.
- ⇒ The wrists are a valid attack zone (no penalty for hits), but attacks to this zone do not count.

11. Conduct of the Competition

- ⇒ Stabs are executed with the kissaki (in this case, the tip of the sword), while cuts are executed with the monouchi (a section of the sword approximately 15–20 cm from the tip). Techniques below the monouchi do not count.
- ⇒ Blocks and guards may be executed with the sword held one-handed.
- ⇒ The contest will be stopped after each successful attack.

12. Scoring

- ⇒ For a successful attack, the fighter receives Ippon, 1 point.
- ⇒ If Aiuchi strikes are delivered simultaneously, neither fighter receives a point.

13. Competition Times/Extra Time

- ⇒ The effective fight time is 3 minutes.
- ⇒ The time spent assisting an injured fighter and the time spent advising the referee are not counted towards the effective fight time.
- ⇒ A one-minute extra time will be administered until the first point is scored. In the event of a tie, the smaller competitor wins.
- ⇒ Penalties imposed do not carry over into the extra time.

14. Win or Loss

- ⇒ The fight is won if the first fighter scores 3 points before the end of the fight time.
- ⇒ The fighter who has scored the most points at the end of the fight time.
- ⇒ The fight can also be won by disqualification or by the opponent's submission.

15. Rights and Responsibilities of the Referee

The referee is responsible for the efficient and safe conduct of the competition for the participants and for the participants' compliance with the IMAF Competition Rules.

Safety means assessing the condition of the competition area before the bout, checking the participants' equipment and clothing (especially swords and helmets), and immediately responding to situations during the bout that could pose a danger to the participants.

The referee conducts the pre-bout welcoming ceremony, directs the bout by giving orders to the fighters, awarding points and penalties, and announcing the final verdict.

The referee's decisions are final and can only be changed by an official protest to the head referee from the responsible trainer, team captain, or coach.

The referee may discuss his or her decisions with the assistant referee and the observer.

16. Powers and Duties of the Assistant Referee

The assistant referee assists the referee in judging the match. They move on the opposite side of the mat from the referee. They communicate their observations regarding techniques, prohibited situations, and other incidents using discreet, less expansive hand gestures. They do not issue instructions. The referee may consult the assistant referee after the bout has been stopped to discuss their decision.

17. Duties of the Scoreboard Operator

The WTB operates the scoreboard, which displays points and penalties. The scoreboard serves as a visual aid for referees, competitors, and spectators.

18. Duties of the Scorekeeper

The scorekeeper records the names of the winners of previous bouts for subsequent rounds and records the points and penalties awarded by the referee.

19. Duties of the Timekeeper

The timekeeper is responsible for operating the stopwatch. They signal the end of the bout with a gong or by throwing a beanbag.

20. Observer

An experienced observer may assist the other referees in their work at the scoreboard. They may express their reservations to the presiding referee and, at the presiding referee's request, advise in the event of disputes or doubts regarding decisions in certain situations.

21. Prohibited Actions and Techniques

- ⇒ Thrusts (strikes) to the face, neck, or groin.
- ⇒ Techniques using hands or feet.
- ⇒ Techniques that are uncontrolled in terms of force (powerful strikes, "inactive" cuts that extend well beyond the opponent's body, etc.) and direction (chaotically executed techniques, turning away during execution, etc.).
- ⇒ Disregarding the referee's instructions.
- ⇒ Behavior considered socially unacceptable or unworthy of an athlete (including unnecessary conversations or gestures toward the referees, the opponent, and their coach).
- ⇒ Any behavior that detracts from the art of karate (applies to coaches, team captains, and anyone whose actions are related to a competitor's participation in the tournament). **Yellow and red cards are awarded here.**

22. Penalties

Violations of any of the above-mentioned rules of conduct are considered violations of the competition rules. The following penalties will be imposed for violations:

- ⇒ Warning
- ⇒ Minus point (point deduction)
- ⇒ Disqualification
- ⇒ For violations of the same type, the penalties will be more severe. For example, a minus point will only be imposed after the competitor has left the competition area three times, even if the competitor has previously received warnings or admonitions for other rule violations.
- ⇒ For serious violations, penalties may be waived (including immediate disqualification). The decision rests with the referee.

Appendix

Referee Guidelines. Commands and Fight Conduct

1. The referee and assistant referee take up their positions in the center of the mat, facing each other. The competitors (aka – red, ao – blue) line up outside the mat, with the choke to their left, ready to enter.
2. When both competitors are ready, the referee signals their starting positions in the center of the mat with hand gestures and the command "Motonoichi." The competitors stand at attention (Musubi Dachi stance) and, at the referee's command (Rei!), alternately bow: to each other, to the assistant referee, and to the referee (it is advisable to also signal bows with hand gestures to ensure the correct order of competitors).
3. At the referee's command "Kamae," the competitors assume the Chudan no Kamae fighting position, with their choke crossed at the level of their Mono Uchi. The referee announces the fight as "Shiai Sanbon Shobu" (sporting fight to three points) and opens it with the command "Hajime!"
4. Both referees observe the bout and move across the mat facing each other, avoiding obstructing the competitors and maintaining a clear view of the fight. The assistant referee signals his observations with moderate hand gestures. Only the referee interrupts the bout, always deeming this necessary by calling "Mate!"
5. After the bout has ended and the competitors and referees return to their positions (the competitors assume the Musubi Dachi position with the choke on the left side), the referee if necessary after consulting with the assistant referee) makes further decisions.

The most common:

- ⇒ Awarding a point – aka / ao ippon! (optionally, the specification of a scored technique – name and attack zone – is also possible);
- ⇒ Missing a technique (and no point) – torimasen ("nothing happens");
- ⇒ Signaling a simultaneous attack by both competitors (and no point) – aiuchi;
- ⇒ Violation of the rules of sportsmanship by a competitor: keikoku (warning), chui (warning), shido (penalty, negative point), hansoku make (disqualification);
- ⇒ In other situations, the competitor may be informed of his comments and observations without additional instructions in the form of a warning (especially in the lower age groups).
- ⇒ Resumption of the bout: kamae, tsuzukete hajime!
- ⇒ End of the bout (after the command "Checkmate"):
- ⇒ If the first fighter scores three points – aka / ao no kachi!
- ⇒ In case of a tie after the time runs out – hikiwake. Overtime – Encho Sen.
- ⇒ Disqualification – Hansoku Make and declaration of winner – aka / ao no kachi.
- ⇒ Victory by submission – Fusen Kachi.

23. Protests

A fighter may never lodge a protest in person. Protests must be submitted by the coach, if a coach was present, or by the coach to the relevant referee, the referee, or the umpire. Protests must be submitted in writing. If a match inspector is present, they may decide on the oral presentation of the complaint. The complainant must provide evidence of the protest.

24. Injuries

In the event of an injury, the referee will involve the first aid team or doctor. They must rely on their judgment. "Kicken" is the appropriate command, which may be given before a partner is disqualified to signal forfeit. If a fighter sustains an injury, the other fighter must kneel in a turned-down position.

Competition list

Tournament

Weight class

Mode

- ☐ Main Round
- ☐ Consolation round
- ☐ Men
- ☐ Women
- ☐ Children
- ☐ Youth
- ☐ Adult
- ☐ Veteran

	Place 1	Place 2	Place 3	Place 4
First name				
Last name				
Club				
Born date				



Club Name

1	
2*	
3	
4*	
5	
6*	
7	
8*	
9	
10*	
11	
12*	
13	
14*	
15	
16*	

3rd place

Battle area: _____
List leader: _____
Date: _____



Protest sheet

Sport Kenjutsu competition



Tournament and date: _____

Protest leader	
Name of team captain/coach	
Club/Association Country	
Competitor's name	

Protest opponents	
Name of team captain/coach	
Club/Association Country	
Competitor's name	

Official	
Chief referee	
Referee	
Scoring table operator/side judge	

Details of the protest. Use the back cover if necessary.

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Decision: The protest is upheld ☐ Yes ☐ No

Protest fee of _____ € has been paid.

Signature of Chief Referee _____

Signature of all involved	
Chief referee	
Referee	
Scoring table operator/side judge	
Competitor's name Protest leader	
Competitor's name Protest opponents	