



USA KARATE COMPETITION RULES

- Kumite
- Kata
- Kobudo
- Iaido
- Para Karate

NOTICE: This version of the USA Karate Rules of Competition only contains USA Karate modifications to the World Karate Federation Rules of Competition (WKF Rules). The primary source for rules is the WKF Rules, then the USA Karate Rules modifications.

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USA KARATE - COMPETITION RULES

ARTICLE 1: GENERAL RULES FOR USA KARATE COMPETITIONS

The competition rules for all tournaments, matches, and competitions sanctioned by USA National Karate-do Federation (USA Karate) shall be as stated herein. These rules shall be used in all sanctioned competitions without modification or amendment except as allowed by these rules. These rules, or any part thereof, may be modified or amended by USA Karate at any time. USA Karate may authorize additional rules for a particular event, tournament, match, or competition. Whenever a specific rule conflicts with a more general rule, the specific rule takes precedence. These rules shall apply to all athletes, officials, administrators, and other personnel for all competitions sanctioned by USA Karate.

All USA Karate Signature Event categories are subject to change or modification by the Referee Committee for a particular event. Events not classified as USA Karate Signature Events are subject to modifications as approved by the Tournament Director and/or designated Chief Referee for each event. The USA Karate Referee Committee shall designate a Chief Referee for all Signature Events and Team Trial Competitions.

These rules use the World Karate Federation (WKF) Competition Rules for Kumite and Kata (WKF Rules) for use in international competitions. For all international and elite categories and U.S. Team Trials to select United States National Karate Team athletes, the WKF/international rules, without modification, shall be used to conduct all such team selection categories. USA Karate Rules of Competition (USA Rules) will consist of the WKF Rules, modified by USA Karate, for non-Signature Events, non-international and elite categories at Signature Events, and where otherwise provided. Consult the WKF Rules first, then USA Karate Rules. Where there is no difference between the WKF Rules and USA Karate Rules, the WKF Rules are not duplicated within this document. When citing a specific rule, reference the WKF Rules, the USA Karate Rules, or both, as applicable.

Where the WKF Rules refer to a position of authority, such as the WKF Executive Committee, the equivalent position in USA Karate is used for USA Karate Rules, such as Chief Referee, Tournament Director, or Director of Sport.

ARTICLE 2: CATEGORIES FOR USA KARATE COMPETITIONS

The Kumite and Kata competitions shall be divided into appropriate categories based on age, gender, and experience. USA Karate may offer additional categories for senior male or female athletes aged thirty-five or over. USA Karate reserves the right to create categories for para-karate athletes. For USA Karate Signature Events, the bout duration and/or point spread/ceiling may be adjusted at the discretion of the Chief Referee and Tournament Director. An announcement identifying any changes shall be made at the preliminary Coach/Referee briefing.

COMPETITION AGE CATEGORIES		
USA KARATE CATEGORIES	AGE	KUMITE DURATION
Child(ren): Male/Female	11 years & younger	1:30
Junior Cadet: Male/Female	12-13 years old	1:30
Cadet: Male/Female	14-15 years old	1:30
Junior: Male/Female	16-17 years old	1:30
Senior: Male/Female	18 years and older	1:30
Masters: Male/Female	35 years and older	1:30

ARTICLE 3: EXPERIENCE CATEGORIES

The experience categories for USA Karate competition shall be as follows:

Beginner	8 th Kyu & under;	less than 1 year of training
Novice	7 th Kyu - 5 th Kyu;	1 to 2 years of training
Intermediate	4 th Kyu - 2 nd Kyu;	2+ to 4 years of training
Advanced	1 st Kyu & higher;	4+ years of training

4th – 2nd kyu must compete in Intermediate or higher categories. 1st kyu and Black Belts must compete in Advanced Categories or Elite.

An athlete who participates in an Elite Category may compete in an Advanced Category in another category. (For example, athletes may compete in Elite Kumite AND Advanced Kata but may not compete in Elite Kumite AND Advanced Kumite.) However, an athlete who will advance in categories due to changing ages between a Team Trial Event and a PKF/International Event may compete in their current age Advanced Category and the Elite Category in the same category for the next age bracket.

Athletes who medal in any skill level must move up to the next higher skill level the following year. (Ex: An Athlete who medaled in a Novice Category in 2023 must compete in the Intermediate or higher in 2024).

The placement of athletes in the correct skill level is the responsibility of the athlete and their Coach/Instructor. Should an Athlete be found to have misrepresented their skill level, actions may be taken against both the Athlete and/or the Coach/Instructor.

No athlete may compete in a category designated for members of the opposite sex unless that member has met the guidelines outlined in the USA Karate Transgender Policy.

ARTICLE 4: RULE VIOLATIONS

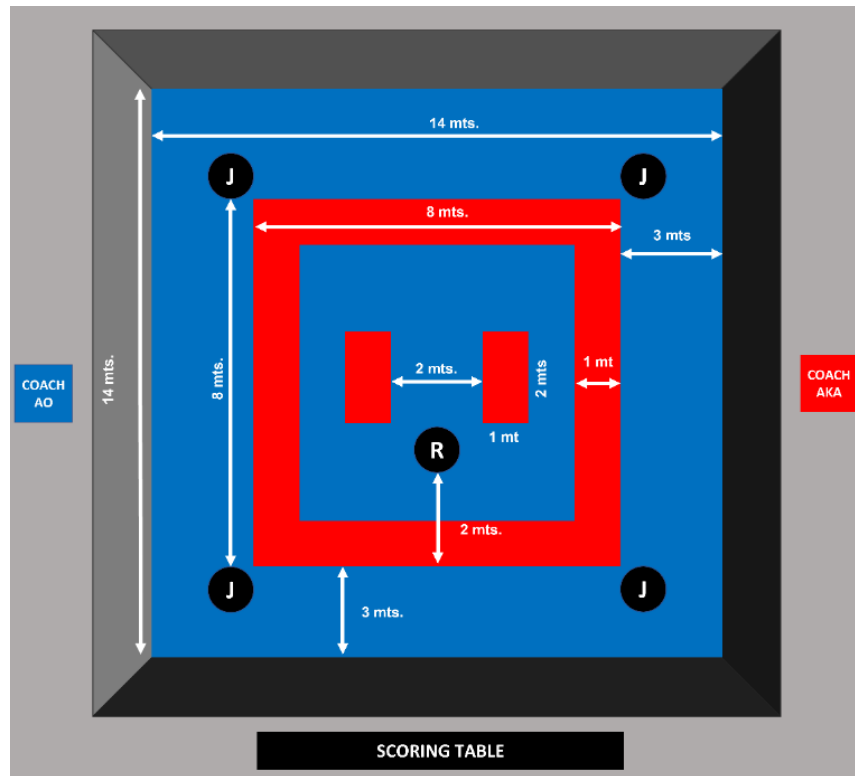
If these rules are violated, USA Karate, by and through its duly authorized representatives, may impose one or more of the following sanctions: verbal reprimand, written warning, monetary fine, disqualification, or suspension.

All such disciplinary sanctions imposed shall be subject to review according to Section 14 of the Bylaws of this Federation but shall be effective immediately upon imposition. Any athlete who is disqualified for violation of any regulations of prohibited substances shall forfeit any titles and/or honors awarded and shall promptly return any medal and/or other awards. Examples of prohibited behaviors that would merit the imposition of sanctions include making a false or fraudulent statement regarding age or experience, entering under an assumed name, grossly unsportsmanlike conduct, theft, or any other act contrary to the recognized principles of karate-do.

ARTICLE 1: KUMITE COMPETITION AREA [WKF Rules Article 1]

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- The diagram illustrates the layout of a Judo dojo, which is 12 meters by 12 meters. The layout is divided into several zones:
- COACH AO (Blue):** Located at the top center of the dojo.
 - COACH AKA (Red):** Located at the top center of the dojo, adjacent to COACH AO.
 - J (Judges):** Four judges are positioned at the corners of the 12m x 12m area.
 - TATAMI 1 (Red):** A central 8m x 8m area.
 - TATAMI 2 (Red):** A smaller area on the right side of the dojo.
 - R (Referee):** Positioned in the center of the 8m x 8m area.
 - SCORING TABLE (Black):** Located at the bottom center of the dojo.
- Distances are indicated by arrows:
- 12 mts. (Total width and height of the dojo)
 - 8 mts. (Width and height of TATAMI 1)
 - 2 mts. (Distance from the outer edge to the inner edge of TATAMI 1)
 - 1 mt. (Distance between the two red rectangles in the center)
 - 4 mts. (Distance from the center of TATAMI 1 to the center of TATAMI 2)

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- 1.3 Coaches' chairs (safety area or waiting area) are provided for and should only be occupied by credentialed Coaches whose athletes are actively engaged in competition in any given tatami. Athletes may not be seated on the coaches' chairs.

ARTICLE 2: ATTIRE AND PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT [WKF Rules Article 2]

2.1 REFEREES AND JUDGES

- 2.1.1 The official uniform for Referees and Judges shall be as provided in WKF Rules Article 2.1 and:
- a) USA Karate Official's badge.
- 2.1.2 In cases of minor deviation from the official uniform, the Chief Referee may allow participation of the Official or athlete, provided that the deviation does not distract from the dignity of the competition or prejudice any other Official or athlete .
- 2.1.3 Voluntary religious headwear that USA Karate has approved.

2.2 ATHLETES

- 2.2.1 USA Karate-approved equipment may be substituted for WKF-approved equipment.
- 2.2.2 Athletes may wear a white unmarked Karategi without stripes, piping, or personal embroidery. Approved USA Karate patch will be worn at the USA Karate National Championships. USA Karate athletes will wear the approved USA Karate patch or the USA flag at the USA Open Karate Championships and Junior International Cup. The patch must be worn on the jacket's left breast and shall not exceed an overall size of 12cm by 8cm. These dimensions may apply to either height or width.

Enforcement of the patch is at the discretion of the Tournament Director. In addition, an identifying number issued by the Chief Referee and Tournament Director may be worn on the back, sleeve, or breast area of the Karategi jacket.

2.2.3 One athlete must wear a red belt and the other a blue belt.

2.2.4 Hair slides ("scrunchies") are prohibited, as are metal hair grips ("barrettes"). Ribbons and other decorations are prohibited. One or two discreet plain hair ties on a single ponytail are permitted.

2.2.5 USA Karate may also accept attire and protective equipment approved by WKF that does not conflict with the specific requirements of individual Signature Events. A USA Karate/WKF-approved competition Karategi without shoulder colors, i.e., solid white or with red or blue shoulder markings, is allowed. A Karategi with red or blue shoulder markings must match the position assigned on the charting, either Aka or Ao.

2.2.6 Protective Equipment: [WKF Rules 2.2.7]

- a) Although approved red and blue fist pads are required, athletes may use the white USA Karate-approved shin pads and instep protectors.
- b) USA Karate-approved headgear is required for athletes under 14 years of age. Approved headgear may be announced in the Signature Event bulletin; otherwise, white, without metal bars/guards, is allowed, for example, white dipped foam head protection.
- c) External chest protectors are required for all athletes under 14 years of age.
- d) Athletes, at their own risk, may elect to wear shatter-proof, athletic safety goggles of an approved design.
- e) WKF approved safety equipment is permitted.

2.2.7 If an athlete comes into the match area inappropriately dressed, the athlete shall be given two minutes to remedy matters. If the athlete is identified as inappropriately dressed, the Coach, based on a report from the Chief Referee, will be referred to the Chairperson of the USA Karate Technical Committee for a recommendation on remedial action. That recommendation may include suspending the ability to coach at USA Karate events for up to six months, including other possible recommendations.

2.3 COACHES

2.3.1 While on the competition floor or staging area, Coaches shall always wear a tracksuit and visibly display their official identification.

2.3.2 The Chief Referee can allow Coaches to use an official Team t-shirt or a plain colored t-shirt without writing or logos instead of the tracksuit jacket.

2.3.3 Cameras and phones may not be used while Coaches are on the competition floor.

ARTICLE 3: ORGANIZATION OF KUMITE COMPETITION [WKF Rules Article 3]

3.1 Definitions

- 3.1.1 A "**round**" is a discrete stage in a competition leading to the eventual identification of finalists. In an elimination Kumite competition, a round eliminates fifty percent of athletes within it, counting byes as athletes. In this context, the round can apply equally to either the primary elimination or repechage stage.
- 3.2 The Kumite competition consists of individual categories (divided by age, gender, weight, and experience categories) and team competitions divided by gender (without weight categories).
- 3.3 No athlete may be replaced by another in an individual bout.
- 3.4 **Team Matches: [WKF Rules 3.5-3.6]**
- 3.4.1 Male teams must have at least three athletes, and female teams must have at least two athletes. A team with less than the required number of athletes shall forfeit the match (**KIKEN**).
- 3.4.2 The athletes are all members of a team. There are no fixed reserves.
- 3.4.3 **Fighting order for Teams:** See WKF Rules 3.6
- 3.4.4 **Tournament Systems:** The tournament systems used in USA Karate include, but are not limited to, Single Elimination, Double Elimination, Repechage and Round Robin (Pool Play). The USA Karate Referee Committee and the Tournament Director may adjust the tournament system used for a competition or individual categories within the competition. The following tournament systems are planned to be used at USA Karate Signature Events:
- 3.4.5 Junior International Cup – Single Elimination
- 3.4.6 USA Open – Repechage
- 3.4.7 National Championships – Repechage

ARTICLE 4: THE REFEREE PANEL [WKF Rules Article 4]

- 4.1 Conflicts of Interests: Officials may not referee an athlete from the Official's dojo, karate organization or have any other affiliation. Officials shall not officiate any athlete with whom their relationship may project an appearance of bias or conflict of interest. Example: your best friend's son or daughter or someone you vacation with. It remains the duty of any official to self-report any possible conflict of interest before the bout or match starts.
- 4.2 As needed, due to the availability of Officials, the Referee Panel may consist of two (2) instead of four (4) Judges as determined by the Chief Referee. The two (2) Judges will sit in the Judge 2 and Judge 3 locations. If the two-judge system is utilized, the rules are found in APPENDIX 3.

ARTICLE 5: DURATION OF A BOUT [WKF Rules Article 5]

- 5.1 The duration of kumite bouts for all USA Karate categories is one minute thirty seconds (1:30).

- 5.2 Timekeeping shall be by "stop time"; however, the Chief Referee may determine that "running time" may be used in beginner, novice, or intermediate categories.
- 5.3 Athletes are entitled to one minute thirty seconds (1:30) between bouts for rest and equipment changes. When the color of the equipment is being changed, the time is extended to three minutes.

ARTICLE 6: KIKEN – FAILURE TO APPEAR AT THE TATAMI [WKF Rules Article 6]

ARTICLE 7: STARTING, SUSPENDING AND ENDING OF MATCHES [WKF Rules Article 7]

- 7.1 For each round, there will be a bowing ceremony starting with the Referee first having athletes and officials face the United States Flag or the Head Table and bow **SHOMEN NI REI** followed by a bow to each other, **OTAGAI NI REI**. The Referee Panel will then bow to each other and take up their positions. At the end of the bout(s) the bowing ceremony is done in the opposite sequence.
- 7.2 In situations where there is more than one reason for stopping the match, the Referee will address each situation in turn. For example, where there has been a score from one athlete and a contact from the other, or where there has been a **MUBOBI** and an exaggeration of injury from the same athlete. In circumstances in which there has been a score from one athlete and contact from the other, the point should be awarded first, followed by the warning or penalty.

ARTICLE 8: SCORING [WKF Rules Article 8]

8.1 Scoring Areas:

- 8.1.1 A technique that lands on the shoulder blades may score.

8.2 Proper Distance:

- 8.2.1 When determining the amount of contact, the age and experience level of the athletes must be considered.

ARTICLE 9: PROHIBITED BEHAVIOR [WKF Rules Article 9]

ARTICLE 10: WARNINGS & PENALTIES [WKF Rules Article 10]

10.1 Penalties

- 10.1.2 Serious violation of conduct, discipline, or malicious behavior on or outside the competition area by the athlete or his entourage may cause further disciplinary action from the USA Karate Ethics Committee .
- 10.2 **Excessive celebration, political or religious demonstration:** Athletes are expected to respect the ceremony of salutations before and after the bout or match. Any excessive celebration, such as falling on one's knees etc., political, or religious expressions, during or immediately after the bout or match, are prohibited and may be subject to a fine equal to the amount determined by the Board of Directors for the protest fee.

ARTICLE 11: INJURIES AND ACCIDENTS IN COMPETITION [WKF Rules Article 11]

- 11.1 An injured athlete who has been declared unfit to fight by the tournament doctor cannot fight again in that competition. This will not prevent the athlete from competing in another category, such as Kata or Kobudo.

ARTICLE 12: CRITERIA FOR DECISION [WKF Rules Article 12]

ARTICLE 13: OFFICIAL PROTEST [WKF Rules Article 13]

13.1 General Provisions

- 13.1.1 The intent to protest must be declared as soon as the bout is finished. The written protest must be completed, and the protest fee submitted, within 5 minutes after receiving the protest form from the Tatami Manager. The protest fee of **\$350 (USD cash)** must be submitted to the Tatami Manager upon submission of the protest form.
- 13.1.2 The protest must list the name, state, and country of the athletes and the precise details of what is being protested.
- 13.1.3 The decision of the Appeals Jury is final. It may only be overruled by a unanimous decision of the Chief Referee of the USA, the USA Karate Board of Directors Chairperson, and the USA Karate CEO.

13.2 Composition of the Appeals Jury:

- 13.2.1 The Referee Committee will assign three senior Referees as members of the Appeals Jury for all USA Karate Signature Events. No two members may be appointed from the same state or karate organization.
- 13.2.2 There is no conflict of interest by a member of the Appeals Jury for being from the same state as a member of the referee panel. The relevant conflict is with athletes, or another relevant actual conflict.

13.3 Appeals Evaluation Process:

- 13.3.1 It is the responsibility of the Tatami Manager receiving the protest to gather the Appeals Jury and deposit the protest sum with the USA Karate Chairperson for any declined protest.

13.4 Incident report

- 13.4.1 The report should be signed by all three members of the Appeals Jury and submitted to the Chief Referee and the Referee Committee Chairperson. Abstentions are not acceptable.

ARTICLE 14: VIDEO REVIEW REQUEST [WKF Rules Article 14]

There is no video review request in the USA Karate non-Elite categories.

ARTICLE 15: POWERS AND DUTIES OF OFFICIALS [WKF Rules Article 15]

15.1 Chief Referee and the Referee Committee [WKF Rules 15.1]

15.1.1 The Chief Referee's powers and duties shall be as follows:

- a) To facilitate the smooth operation of the tournament and to make any necessary adjustments to the tournament operations.
- b) Act as the liaison between the Appeals Jury and the Coach or Official Representative when a protest is submitted.
- c) To work with the Tournament Director to adjust categories and procedures based on the participation of athletes and the availability of Officials.
- d) To pass the final judgment on matters of a technical nature that may arise during a given bout and for which there are no stipulations in the rules.
- e) At the conclusion of the Tournament, prepare a written report regarding the event, which will be presented to the USA Karate Director of Sport for evaluation.

15.2 Tatami Managers and Tatami Manager Assistants [WKF Rules 15.2]

15.2.1 The Tatami Managers' powers and duties shall be as follows:

- a) To prepare a daily written report on the performance of each Official under their supervision, together with their recommendations, if any, to the Referee Committee.

15.2 Referees [WKF Rules 15.3]

15.4 Judges [WKF Rules 15.4]

15.4.1 Match Supervisors (KANSA) [WKF Rules 15.5]

15.5 Score Supervisors [WKF Rules 15.6]

KATA RULES

ARTICLE 1: KATA COMPETITION AREA [WKF Rules Article 1]

ARTICLE 2: OFFICIAL ATTIRE [WKF Rules Article 2]

- 2.1 Athletes and Judges must wear the official uniform as defined in the USA Karate Kumite Rules of Competition.
- 2.2 Any person who does not comply with this regulation may be disbarred.
- 2.3 If an athlete comes into the match area inappropriately dressed, the athlete shall be given one minute to remedy matters. If the athlete is identified as inappropriately dressed, the Coach based on a report from the Chief Referee will be referred to the Chairperson of the USA Karate Technical Committee for a recommendation on remedial action. That recommendation may include a suspension of the ability to coach at USA Karate events for up to six months, including other possible recommendations.

ARTICLE 3: ORGANIZATION OF KATA COMPETITION [WKF Rules Article 3]

3.1 Definitions

- 3.1.1 A "**performance**" refers to an individual's or a team's performance of a kata.
- 3.1.2 A "**round**" is a discrete stage in a competition leading to the eventual identification of finalists. In an elimination Kata competition, a round eliminates fifty percent of athletes within it, counting byes as athletes. In this context, the round can apply equally to either the primary elimination or repechage stage. In a matrix, or "Round-robin" competition, a round allows all athletes in a group one performance against each of the other athletes.

3.2 Permissible Kata

- 3.2.1 Any kata on the **Official Kata List** may be performed in the appropriate categories. Weapons kata (**KOBUDO**) can only be performed in weapons kata categories.
- 3.2.2 In all Advanced categories, of every age category, athletes must perform a kata different from the previous round. The minimum number of katas required is 2, which can be repeated but not twice in a row. Athletes in all other categories may repeat the same kata in every round.
- 3.2.3 Beginner and Novice categories may perform only the Katas on their respective list in the Official Kata List, Appendix 7.
- 3.2.4 Intermediate categories may **only** perform the Kata identified as Beginner, Novice, ~~Kata~~, or Intermediate Kata on the **Official Kata List, Appendix 7**.
- 3.2.5 Advanced categories may perform any kata from the **Official Kata List** in Appendix 7, which includes the WKF Official Kata List..
- 3.2.6 When the Beginner and Novice categories are combined, the athletes may perform any kata from either the Beginner or Novice Official Kata List in the appendix.

- 3.2.7 When the Intermediate and Advanced categories are combined, the athletes may perform any kata from the Official Kata List and repeat the same kata in every round.
- 3.3 It is the sole responsibility of the Coach or the athlete to ensure that the Kata as notified to the score table, is appropriate for that round.
- 3.4 **Team Kata [WKF Rules 3.5]**

ARTICLE 4: THE JUDGING PANEL [WKF Rules Article 4]

- 4.1 In USA Karate Signature Events, if sufficient personnel are available, a panel of five (5) Judges for each match shall be designated by the Tatami Manager. Otherwise, at the discretion of the Chief Referee, a panel may consist of three (3) Judges.
- 4.2 A scorekeeper and a caller/announcer timekeeper will be appointed.
- 4.3 Officials may not judge an athlete from the Official's dojo karate organization or have any other affiliation. Officials shall not officiate any athlete with whom their relationship may project an appearance of bias or conflict of interest. Example: your best friend's son or daughter or someone you vacation with. It remains the duty of any official to self-report any possible conflict of interest before the bout or match starts.

ARTICLE 5: EVALUATION [WKF Rules Article 5]

5 Disqualification:

- 5.1 An athlete or team of athletes may be disqualified for the following reasons, including those in WKF Kata Rules Article 5.8.
- 5.1.1 An Advanced athlete who repeats the previously performed Kata two rounds in a row, in contravention of Rule 3.2.2.

ARTICLE 6: OPERATION OF MATCHES

- 6.1 At the start of each bout and in answer to their names, the two athletes, one wearing a red belt (**AKA**) and the other wearing a blue belt (**AO**), shall line up at the match area perimeter facing Judge 1.
- 6.2 The Tournament Director shall determine if athletes will perform kata individually or simultaneously.
- 6.3 The starting point for kata performance is anywhere within the perimeter of the competition area.
- 6.4 Individual Execution:**
- 6.4.1 Following a bow by both athletes to the Judging Panel and then to each other, **AO** shall then step back out of the match area.
- 6.4.2 After moving to the starting position, **AKA** will bow and make a clear announcement of the name of the Kata that will be performed and begin the Kata.

- 6.4.3 Upon completion of the Kata and after bowing at the end of the Kata, **AKA** shall leave the area to await the performance of AO, who will follow the same procedure. After **AO's** Kata has been completed, both shall return to the match area perimeter and await the Panel's decision.

6.5 Simultaneous Execution:

- 6.5.1 Following a bow by both athletes to the Judging Panel, and to each other, both athletes shall enter the match area and space themselves to avoid collision or interference in the performance of their Kata.
- 6.5.2 After moving to their starting positions, both will bow and then make a clear announcement of the names of their Kata to be performed, and both athletes shall begin their Kata.
- 6.5.3 On completion of their Kata and bow at the end of the Kata, the athlete shall stand side-by-side in the match area and await the decision from the Panel.

6.6 Disqualification:

- 6.6.1 If Judge 1 is of the opinion that an athlete should be disqualified, such as if the Kata does not conform to the rules, or there is some other irregularity, Judge 1 may call the other Judges (**SHUGO**) to reach a verdict.
- 6.6.2 If an athlete is disqualified, Judge 1 shall cross and uncross the flags (as in Kumite Torimasen signal) and raise the flag indicating the winner.

6.7 Procedure for Decisions

- 6.7.1 Kata competition may be conducted using the flag system of judging. Unless otherwise decided by the Tournament Director and Chief Referee, the flag system shall always be used.
- 6.7.2 After completion of both Kata, the athletes will stand side by side on the perimeter. Judge 1 shall call for a decision (**HANTEI**) and blow a two-tone blast on the whistle, whereupon the Judges will cast their votes. The flags shall be raised at the same time.
- 6.7.3 Judge 1 shall blow a further short blast on the whistle, whereupon the flags shall be lowered.
- 6.7.4 The decision shall be for **AKA** or **AO**. No ties are permitted. The athlete who receives the majority of votes shall be declared the winner by the caller/announcer.
- 6.7.5 The athletes shall bow to each other, then to the Judging Panel, and leave the area.
- 6.7.6 In instances where both **AKA** and **AO** are disqualified in the same match, their opponents scheduled for the next round will win by Bye (and no result is announced), unless the double disqualification applies to a medal bout, in which case the winner will be declared by **HANTEI**.

6.8 Kiken

- 6.8.1 Individual athletes or teams that do not present themselves when called will be disqualified (**KIKEN**) from that category. Disqualification by **KIKEN** means that the athletes are disqualified from that category, although it does not affect participation in another category.

- 6.8.2 When announcing disqualification by **KIKEN**, the Chief Judge will be required to signal by pointing with the flag towards the starting position of the athlete in question and then signal **KACHI** (win) for the opponent.

KOBUDO RULES

ARTICLE 1: APPLICABILITY OF KATA RULES

The provisions of the Rules of Kata Competition, except for the rules concerning flag-system matches, also apply to Kobudo competition, with the modifications provided in these Kobudo rules.

ARTICLE 2: OFFICIAL DRESS

Article 2 of the USA Karate Kata Rules applies, but for Kobudo competition, athletes may elect to wear a white, blue, or black jacket and hakama. The jacket and hakama colors may differ. However, if the athlete chooses to wear a Karategi, both the jacket and the trousers must be solid white without stripes, piping or AKA/AO brand markings. No emblem or logo indicating the athlete's affiliation may be worn in either case. The approved USA Karate patch shall be worn at USA Karate National Championships.

ARTICLE 3: ORGANIZATION OF COMPETITION

- 3.1 Kobudo competition consists of long-weapons competition and short-weapons competition. Eku (also called "Kai" or "Kai Bo") is regarded as a type of Bo and is included in Bo competition. Short weapons include traditional Okinawan weapons of Sai, Tonfa, Kama, and Nunchaku.
- 3.2 Kobudo competition takes the form of team and individual matches. Team matches consist of competition between 3-person teams. The individual match consists of individual performance in separate male and female categories.
- 3.3 In Kobudo competition, the athletes must perform a Kobudo Kata from the official Kobudo Kata List in Appendix 8.

ARTICLE 4: WEAPON SPECIFICATIONS

- 4.1 Weapons must be of traditional design and any decision as to a weapon's eligibility will be made by the Chief Referee and Tournament Director.
- 4.2 Weapons are in two categories:
 - 4.2.1 Long weapons consist of Bo (Kun/Kon) and Nunti Bo.
 - 4.2.2 Short weapons consist of the following traditional Okinawan weapons: Kama (2) (wooden handle), Sai (2), Tonfa (2), or Nunchaku (1 or 2). No weapons variations are allowed unless otherwise approved in advance by the Chief Referee and Tournament Director.

ARTICLE 5: THE JUDGING PANEL

- 5.1 The panel of three or five (3 or 5) Judges for each match shall be designated by the Tatami Manager before the match.
- 5.2 Judges sit in the same positions as Kata Judges, whether three or five Judges are used.

- 5.3 In addition, for the purpose of facilitating the operation of Kobudo competitions, scorekeepers and caller/announcers shall be appointed.
- 5.4 The panel should, as far as availability permits, contain a cross section of both regional affiliations and Kobudo styles.

ARTICLE 6: SCORING

6.1 Point System Scoring:

- 6.1.1 The following scoring range shall be used for the specified experience levels:

Beginner:	5.0 – 7.0
Novice:	5.0 – 7.0
Intermediate:	6.0 – 8.0
Advanced:	7.0 – 9.0

- 6.2 The Kobudo competition is organized into a single round.
- 6.3 Each Kobudo Judge displays the score by means of points. The card bearing the points is held in the right hand.
- 6.4 To minimize point score ties generally, a wider variation in point scores is encouraged.
- 6.5 When the scorekeeper summates the scores of five Judges for each athlete in a round, the highest and lowest scores awarded are deleted for all further purposes, and the remaining three scores are added to produce a final score. When only three Judges are used, all three scores shall be counted.
- 6.6 When all athletes have performed, the highest scores shall determine the first, second, third and (and if applicable) fourth place winners.
- 6.7 In the event of a point score tie, the low score from the remaining scores shall be added to the final score. If the tie persists, the high score from the remaining scores is added to the final score. In the event of a continuing tie, the athlete must perform a further Kata. If the point scores for the tiebreaker Kata are tied, Judge 1 shall call for a decision by **HANTEI**, at which time the Judges shall each indicate their choice of either **AKA** or **AO** as the winner.
- 6.8 If Judge 1 is of the opinion that an athlete should be disqualified, or the Kata does not conform to the rules, or there is some other irregularity, Judge 1 may call the other Judges to reach a verdict.
- 6.9 **Flag System Scoring:** Flag system scoring, if implemented, shall be conducted in accordance with USA Karate Rules of Kata Competition. Athletes may repeat the same Kobudo Kata in each round, including the final/medal rounds.
- 6.10 The Chief Referee and Tournament Director shall decide what precise system will be used for each competition.

ARTICLE 7: CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

7.1 Assessment:

In assessing the performance of an athlete or team the Judges will evaluate the performance based on:

Kobudo Performance
1. Stances
2. Techniques
3. Transitional movements
4. Timing and synchronization
5. Correct breathing
6. Focus (KIME)
7. Conformance: Consistence in the performance of the KIHON
8. Strength
9. Speed
10. Balance

7.2 Assessment - Kobudo Team Kata:

- 7.2.1 In team competition, the athletes must start their Kata with all three team members facing the same direction, toward Judge 1. In addition, the athletes must use the same types of weapons.
- 7.3 All those elements inherent in the criteria for Individual Kata must be present.
- 7.4 The Kata must not alter in rhythm or timing for the sake of synchronization. It must demonstrate correct dynamics of Kata as if performed by an individual.
- 7.5 No external cues (e.g., audible breathing) should be given during the Kata as an aid to synchronization.
- 7.6 A mistake in synchronization of Team Kata requires the same numerical deduction as a technical mistake in individual Kata. The movements must initiate in unison, as well as end in unison.

7.7 Penalty/Disqualification Criteria:

In assessing the performance of an athlete or team in a Kobudo category, the following criteria must be considered:

- 7.7.1 The athlete must always maintain control of the weapons during the performance. An athlete shall be disqualified if he/she drops a weapon during the performance.
- 7.7.2 An athlete shall be disqualified if he/she interrupts or varies the Kata or performs a Kata different from that drawn or announced. The athlete shall also be disqualified if the performance is brought to a halt.
- 7.7.3 If the athlete loses balance completely and/or falls, a disqualification shall result.
- 7.7.4 An athlete shall be disqualified if he/she uses a dangerous technique that jeopardizes the safety of the Judges or other athletes.
- 7.8 When assessing how many points should be deducted for a foul, the following is recommended:

- 7.8.1 For a momentary hesitation in the smooth performance of the Kata, quickly remedied, 0.1 should be deducted from the final score.
- 7.8.2 For a momentary but discernible pause, 0.2 points should be deducted.
- 7.8.3 For a distinct halt, disqualification results.
- 7.8.4 Momentary imbalance with barely a wobble, quickly remedied, shall result in a deduction in the range of 0.1 – 0.3 points.
- 7.8.5 Actual instabilities where there is a distinct but recoverable loss of balance shall merit a deduction in the range 0.2 – 0.4.
- 7.8.6 If the weapon touches the floor anytime during the performance, 0.2 – 0.3 points should be deducted (unless the touch is called for by the Kata, as in some Bo Katas).
- 7.8.7 If the athlete momentarily loses a grip of the weapon, 0.1 – 0.3 points should be deducted.

IAI-DO RULES

ARTICLE 1: APPLICABILITY OF KATA RULES

The provisions of the Rules of Kata Competition, except for the rules concerning flag-system matches, also apply to Iai-Do competition, with the modifications provided in these Iai-Do rules.

ARTICLE 2: OFFICIAL DRESS

- 2.1 USA Karate Kata Rules apply, but for Iai-Do competition, athletes may elect to wear a traditional Iaidogi (jacket and pants), or an Iaidogi jacket and hakama.
- 2.2 The jacket and hakama colors may differ.
- 2.3 The use of a Sageo (fastening cord) is optional.
- 2.4 Tabi are allowed but are not required.

ARTICLE 3: ORGANIZATION OF COMPETITION

- 3.1 Iai-Do competitions will follow a similar structure as Traditional/Classical Karate Kata (forms) competition.
- 3.2 Iai-Do competition takes the form of individual matches. The individual match consists of individual performance in separate male, female, or mixed gender category.
- 3.3 In Iai-Do competition, the athletes must perform a traditional Iai-Do Kata.

ARTICLE 4: WEAPON SPECIFICATIONS

- 4.1 Sword (**KATANA**) should be an Iaito (unsharpened sword) and must be of traditional design.
- 4.2 Shinken (sharpened sword) are not allowed.

ARTICLE 5: THE JUDGING PANEL

- 5.1 The panel of three or five (3 or 5) Judges for each match shall be designated by the Tatami Manager before the match.
- 5.2 Iai-Do Judges sit in the same positions as Kata Judges, whether three or five Judges are used.
- 5.3 The panel should, as far as availability permits, contain a cross-section of both regional affiliations and Iai-Do styles.
- 5.4 In addition, for the purpose of facilitating the operation of Iai-Do competitions, scorekeepers and caller/announcers shall be appointed.

ARTICLE 6: SCORING

6.1 Point System Scoring:

The following scoring range shall be used for the specified experience levels:

Beginner:	5.0 – 7.0
Novice:	5.0 – 7.0
Intermediate:	6.0 – 8.0
Advanced:	7.0 – 9.0

- 6.2 A maximum of 4 traditional Iai-do kata may be performed by each athlete.
- 6.3 It is not necessary to announce the names of the kata.
- 6.4 Athletes will begin their competition with a standing bow (**RITSUREI**) for purposes of saving time.
- 6.5 A formal seated bow (**ZAREI**) may be used once an athlete has completed his/her kata set.
- 6.6 In the case of a tie, after all normal tie-breaking procedures have been followed, a single kata may be performed by each tied athlete to determine the winner.

PARA KARATE RULES [WKF Rules 1.1.2026]

ARTICLE 1: PARA KARATE KATA COMPETITION [WKF Rules Article 1]

- 1.1 The following Rules and Regulations are mandatory for all USA Karate Para Karate events, as well as for other USA Karate-recognized competitions. Any competition that does not follow the standards of these sets of Rules cannot be recognized as a USA Karate Para Karate Competition.
- 1.2 The Chief Referee and Tournament Director may create additional categories and sport classes, and may publish additional rules or regulations, to accommodate the needs of any specific tournament or circumstances.

ARTICLE 2: DISCIPLINE, CATEGORIES, AND SPORT CLASSES [WKF Rules Article 2]

ARTICLE 3: KATA COMPETITION AREA [WKF Rules Article 3]

ARTICLE 4: OFFICIAL DRESS AND EQUIPMENT [WKF Rules Article 4]

4.1 General Rules

- 4.1.1 Athletes and Judges must wear the official uniform as defined in the USA Karate Kumite Rules of Competition.
- 4.1.2 Any person who does not comply with this regulation may be disbarred.
- 4.1.3 Athletes who present themselves incorrectly dressed shall be given **two-minutes** in which to remedy matters.

4.2 Athletes - Athletes' equipment and medical service animals

- 4.2.1 WKF Rule "**4.4.3 Blindfolds** 4.4.3.1 Athletes of the Visually Impaired Class (K10) are required to wear International Blind Sports Federation (IBSA) approved black-out glasses for blind sports" is not applicable to USA Karate non-Elite events.

ARTICLE 5: ORGANIZATION OF KATA COMPETITION [WKF Rules Article 5]

ARTICLE 6: THE JUDGING PANEL [WKF Rules Article 6]

- 6.1 In USA Karate Signature Events, if sufficient personnel are available, a panel of five (5) Judges for each match shall be designated by the Tatami Manager. Otherwise, at the discretion of the Chief Referee, a panel may consist of three (3) Judges.
- 6.2 Judge 1 will sit in the center position facing the athlete, and the other four Judges will be seated at the corners of the competition area. Each Judge will be holding a red and a blue flag.
- 6.3 Officials may not judge an athlete who is from the Official's dojo, karate organization, or has any other affiliation. Officials shall not officiate any athlete with whom their relationship may project an appearance of bias or conflict of interest. Example: your best friend's son or daughter, or someone with

whom you vacation. It remains the duty of any official to self-report on any possible conflict of interest before the bout or match starts.

ARTICLE 7: SCORING [WKF Rules Article 7]

7.1 Permissible Kata

- 7.1.1 Any kata on the **Official Kata List** may be performed in kata categories.
- 7.1.2 In all Advanced categories, of every age category, athletes must perform a kata different from the previous round. The minimum number of katas required is 2, which can be repeated but not twice in a row. Athletes in all other categories may repeat the same kata in every round, except for athletes in the Intellectual Impairment categories.
- 7.1.3 Beginner and Novice categories may perform only the Katas on their respective list in the Official Kata List, Appendix 7.
- 7.1.4 Intermediate categories may **only** perform the Kata identified as Beginner/Novice Kata or Intermediate Kata on the **Official Kata List**, Appendix 7.
- 7.1.5 Advanced categories may perform any kata from the **Official Kata List** contained in Appendix 7.
- 7.1.6 When the Beginner and Novice categories are combined, the athletes may perform any kata from either the Beginner or Novice Official Kata List in the appendix.
- 7.1.7 When Intermediate and Advanced categories are combined, the athletes may perform any kata from the Official Kata List and may repeat the same kata in every round.
- 7.1.8 It is the sole responsibility of the Coach or the athlete to ensure that the Kata as notified to the score table is appropriate for that round.

ARTICLE 8: OPERATION OF MATCHES [WKF Rules Article 8]

- 8.1 At the start of each bout and in answer to their names, the two athletes, one wearing a red belt (**AKA**) and the other wearing a blue belt (**AO**), shall line up at the match area perimeter facing Judge 1.
- 8.2 The Tournament Director shall determine if athletes will perform Kata Individually.
- 8.3 The starting point for Kata performance is anywhere within the perimeter of the competition area.
- 8.4 Individual Execution:**
 - 8.4.1 Following a bow by both athletes to the Judging Panel, and then to each other, **AO** shall then step back out of the match area.
 - 8.4.2 After moving to the starting position, **AKA** will bow and make a clear announcement of the name of the Kata that is to be performed and begin the Kata.
 - 8.4.3 On completion of the Kata and after bowing at the end of the Kata, **AKA** shall leave the area to await the performance of **AO** who will follow the same procedure. After **AO's** Kata has been completed, both shall return to the match area perimeter and await the decision from the Panel.
- 8.5 Disqualification:**

- 8.5.1 If Judge 1 is of the opinion that an athlete should be disqualified, if the Kata does not conform to the rules, or there is some other irregularity, Judge 1 may call the other Judges (**SHUGO**) in order to reach a verdict.
- 8.5.2 If an athlete is disqualified Judge 1 shall cross and uncross the flags (as in Kumite Torimasen signal) and raise the flag indicating the winner.

8.6 Procedure for Decisions

- 8.6.1 Kata competition may be conducted using the flag system of judging. Unless otherwise decided by the Tournament Director and Chief Referee, the flag system shall always be used.
- 8.6.2 After completion of both Kata, the athletes will stand side by side on the perimeter. Judge 1 shall call for a decision (**HANTEI**) and blow a two-tone blast on the whistle whereupon the Judges will cast their votes. The flags shall be raised at the same time.
- 8.6.3 Judge 1 shall blow a further short blast on the whistle, whereupon the flags shall be lowered.
- 8.6.4 The decision shall be for **AKA** or **AO**. No ties are permitted. The athlete who receives the majority of votes shall be declared the winner by the caller/announcer.
- 8.6.5 The athletes shall bow to each other, then to the Judging Panel, and leave the area.
- 8.6.6 In instances where both **AKA** and **AO** are disqualified in the same match, their opponents scheduled for the next round will win by Bye (and no result is announced), unless the double disqualification applies to a medal bout, in which case the winner will be declared by **HANTEI**.

8.6.7 Kiken

- 8.6.8 Individual athletes or teams that do not present themselves when called will be disqualified (**KIKEN**) from that category. Disqualification by **KIKEN** means that the athletes are disqualified from that category, although it does not affect participation in another category.
- 8.6.9 When announcing disqualification by **KIKEN** the Chief Judge will be required to signal by pointing with the flag towards the starting position of the athlete in question, and then signal **KACHI** (win) for the opponent.

APPENDIX 1: THE TERMINOLOGY [WKF RULES – Kumite: Appendix 1]

APPENDIX 2: GESTURES AND FLAG SIGNALS [WKF RULES – Kumite: Appendix 2]

APPENDIX 3: PROCEDURE FOR REFEREEING KUMITE WITH ONLY TWO CORNER JUDGES [WKF RULES – Kumite: Appendix 5]

APPENDIX 4: USA KARATE – PROTEST FORM

Date	Event/Location	Time of Protest
/ /		

Category #	Category Name
------------	---------------

Athletes			
Ao	Country/State	Aka	Country/State

Protest Description

If you require more space, please use the other side of this form

Protester's Name	Title	Signature

For Official Use Only:

Tatami #			M.S./Kansa		
Panel	Referee	Judge 1	Judge 2	Judge 3	Judge 4
Name					
Country/State					

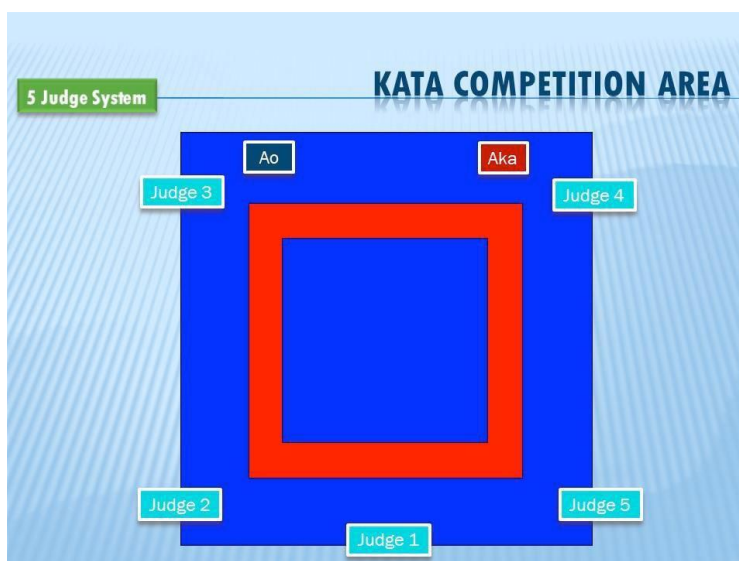
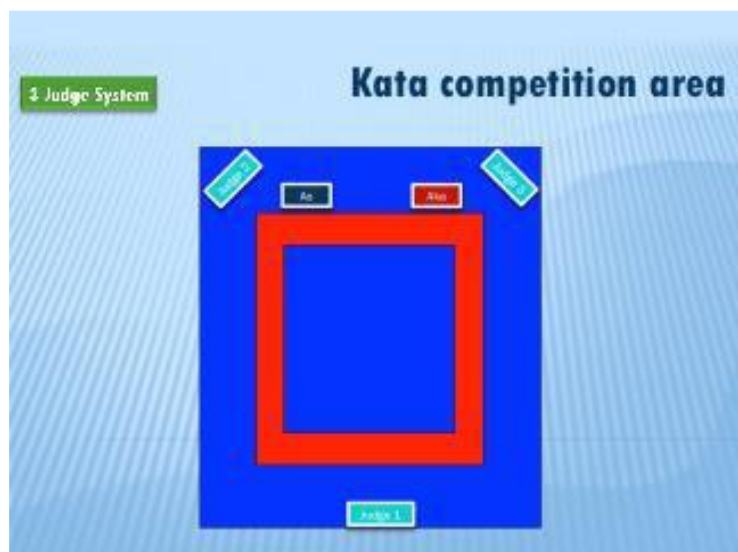
Appeal Jury	# _____	# _____	# _____
Country/State			
Signature			

Protest Accepted	Protest Denied

APPENDIX 5: OFFICIAL TEAM KUMITE COMPETITION FORM

Team/Club Name:		
AKA/AO	Category:	Round:
Order	Athlete's Name	Athlete #
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
Coach/Representative's Signature:		

APPENDIX 6: LAYOUT OF THE KATA COMPETITION AREA



APPENDIX 7:
OFFICIAL KATA LIST
For USA Karate Beginner, Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced Categories

Beginner: 0-1 Year Experience		Novice: 1-2 Years Experience	
Chi No Kata	Junino	Beginner List Kata and:	Heian Godan
Gekisai Daichi	Kihon Kata	Gekisai Dai San	Pinan Sandan
Gekisai Daini	Pinan Shodan	Heian Sandan	Pinan Yondan
Fukyu Daichi	Pinan Nidan	Heian Yondan	Pinan Godan
Fukyu Daini	Taikyoku		
Heian Shodan	Ten No Kata		
Heian Nidan			

Intermediate: 2-4 Years Experience	
<i>All katas from Beginner and Novice categories above plus the following</i>	
Ananko	Naifanchin Nidan
Ananku	Naifanchin Sandan
Aoyagi	Naihanchi
Bassai	Nijushiho
Bassai Dai	Niseishi
Bassai Sho	Pachu
Chinte	Passai
Enpi	Rohai
Garyu	Saifa
Hangetsu / Seisan (Not Goju)	Sanchin
Hauffa (Haffa)	Sanseiru
Ishimine Bassai	Sanseru
Itosu Rohai Shodan	Seichin
Itosu Rohai Nidan	Seienchin (Seiyunchin)
Itosu Rohai Sandan	Seipai
Jiin	Seiryu
Jion	Shinpa
Jitte	Shinsei
Juroku	Shisochin
Kanku Dai	Tekki Shodan
Kousoukun Dai	Tekki Nidan
Kusanku (Only Wado Kata)	Tekki Sandan
Matsukaze	Tensho
Matsumura Rohai	Wankan
Meikyo	Wanshu
Myojo	Wanshin (Kobayashi)
Naifanchin Shodan	

Advanced: 4+ Years Experience
<i>All kata from Beginner, Novice and Intermediate categories above as well as all kata listed on the WKF Official Kata list</i>

APPENDIX 8: OFFICIAL KOBUDO KATA LIST

List 1 – Long Weapons

Bo (Kun/Kon) and Nunti Bo:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 1. Arakaki No Kun | 28. Sakugawa No Kun Sho / Dai |
| 2. Chatanyara No Kun | 29. Shushi No Kun Sho / Dai |
| 3. Chinenshikiyanaka No Kun | 30. Shirataru No Kun |
| 4. Chikinsunakake | 31. Shirataru No Kun Sho- Dai Shuratei |
| 5. Chikin (Tsuken) Bo (1, 2, 3) | 32. Shimajiri No Kun Sho / Dai |
| 6. Chong Shi No Kun | 33. Sho No Kun |
| 7. Chong Shi Bong Sool | 34. Soeishi (Shishi) No Kun |
| 8. Choun No Kun | 35. Shushi (Suji) No Kun |
| 9. Choun No Kun Sho | 36. Sunakake No Kun (Bo 1) |
| 10. Donyukon Ichi/ Ni | 37. Sueyoshi (Shishi) No Kun |
| 11. Ginowan No Kun | 38. Tawada no Kun |
| 12. Gyasho No Kun | 39. Tokushin No Nunti Bo no Kun |
| 13. Hantugua No Kun | 40. Tokushin No Yari no Kun |
| 14. Kashin No Kun (Kashinbo) | 41. Tokushin No Bo |
| 15. Kubo No Kun | 42. Tokumine No Kun /Chatanyara Sho No Kun |
| 16. Kongo No Kun | 43. Tomari Shirotaru No Kun |
| 17. Kudaka No Kun | 44. Tsukensunakake No Kun |
| 18. Kochinda No Kun | 45. Tsuyoshi No Nuntibo |
| 19. Matayoshi No Nuntibo (1,2) | 46. Rohai No Kun |
| 20. Matsumura No Kun | 47. Ruru No Kun |
| 21. Matsukaze No Kun | 48. Ryubi No Kun |
| 22. Matsuhiga No Kun Sho / Dai | 49. Ufutun No Kun |
| 23. Miyazato No Kun | 50. Ufutun No Kun / Ufugosuku No Kun |
| 24. Oshiro (Ogusuku) No Kun | 51. Uhugushiku (Ogusuku) No Nuntibo |
| 25. Sakiyama No Kun | 52. Urashi (Urasoe) No Kun |
| 26. Sakugawa No Kun | 53. Yunigawa (Yonekawa) No Kun |
| 27. Sesoko No Kun | |

Eku Bo:

1. Akahachi no Ekubo
2. Chin No Kata
3. Chikin Sunakake (Tsukensunakake) No Ekkubo
4. Hato No Ekubo
5. Irei No Ekubo
6. Matsumura No Ekubo
7. Shima Ura No Eku Sho
8. Ten No Kata
9. Tokushin No Eku
10. Tsukenakachu no Ekubo
11. Ufuchiku No Ekubo
12. Yabiku-Nago No Ekubo

List 2 – Short Weapons:

Sai:

1. Ananku No Sai
2. Arakaki No Sai
3. Agena No Sai
4. Chatanyara No Sai
5. Chikinshitahaku (Tsukenshitahaku) No Sai
6. Chihara No Sai
7. Chotoku Kyan No Sai
8. Haketsuru No Sai
9. Hantagua (Hakutagawa Kouragua) no Sai
10. Hamahiga No Sai
11. Ishikawagua No Sai
12. Jigen No Manjisa
13. Kishaba No SaiDai/Sho
14. Kina No Sai
- 15.. Kugusuku (Kojo) No Sai
15. KuniyoshiNo Sai
17. Kyan No Sai(Chomo Hanashiro No Sai) '
18. Kyan No Sai (Ryuku Kenpo)
19. Matsuhiga No Sai
20. Matsumura No Sai
21. Nakandakari No Sai
22. Ogusuku / Uhugushiku No Manjisai
23. Rohan No Sai
24. Sai San
25. Sai Ichi No Dan
26. Sai Ni No Dan
27. Sai San No Dan
28. Sancho No Sai
29. Shimabukuro Sai Ichi/ Ni
30. Shishiryu (Kudaka) No Sai
31. Shihohai No Sai
32. Shinbaru No Sai/ Senbaru No Sai
33. Soken No Sai 1,2
34. Tawada No Sai Sho (Mabuni No Sai)
35. Tawada No Sai
35. Toyei (Chatanyara Sho) No Sai
37. Tokuyama no Sai
38. Tokushin No Nunti Sai
39. Tsukenshitahaku No Sai
40. Ufuchiku No Nuntetu (Manjisai)
41. Utuchiku No Sai
42. Yakaa No Sai

Nunchaku:

1. Akamine No Nunchaku
2. Denko Nunchaku
3. Irei No Nunchaku
4. Kina no Nunchaku
5. Kuniyoshi No Nunchaku 1, 2
6. Maetzato (Miyazato / Taira) No Nunchaku
7. Nichonunchaku
8. Ogusuku (Uhugushiku / Kihon) No Nunchaku
9. Sakagami No Nunchaku
10. San bon Nunchaku
11. Shihohai No Nunchaku
12. Shinzato No Nunchaku

Kama:

1. Irei No Nichogama
2. Kingawa (Kanegawa) No Nicho Gama Sho / Dai
3. Kina No Nichogama
4. Kishaba No Nichogama
5. Kuro Matsu No Kama
6. Kuniyoshi No Nichogama
7. Kuzushi Sho / Dai No Nichogama
8. Matayoshi (Gushikawa Tairagua No Nichogama)
No Nichogama 1, 2
9. Moha Gama (Kama No Ti)
10. Ogusuku (Uhugushiku) No Nichogama
11. Soken No Nichogama
12. Toyama (Tozan) No Nicho Gama

Tonfa:

1. Chikina No Tonfa
2. Hama Higa No Tonfa
3. Ishimine No Tonfa
4. Kina No Tonfa
5. Kuniba No Tonfa
6. Kuzushi Sho / Dai No Tonfa
7. Matayoshi No Tonfa 1, 2
8. Matsuhiga No Tonfa
9. Nakazato No Tonfa.
10. Shikina No Tunfa
11. Tuifa Jutsu
12. Ufuchiku No Tonfa