

BRITISH
SHORINJI KEMPO
FEDERATION

EMBU PACK

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Abbey Dojo
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RULES AND INFORMATION FOR EMBU

- (1) Members aged 14 and above are eligible.
- (2) Competition and judging shall be conducted according to the rules of the World Shorinji Kempo Organisation.
- (3) Participants should be a member of the BSKF
- (4) A participant should compete in the same category that they originally applied, even if they have since obtained a new rank.
- (5) A kenshi may not participate in more than one category.
- (6) As a general rule, kenshi of the same rank should perform together. However, if this is not the case then the pair will be entered into the category of the highest grade of the pair (e.g. a 1 dan and 1 kyu pair will be entered in the 1 dan category). Differences in grade should not be more than one grade (e.g. a 1 kyu and 2 kyu pair are acceptable but not a 1 kyu and 3 kyu).
- (7) If a pair consists of a male and female kenshi, they should participate in the mens category.
- (8) All embu should be free-style kumi (paired) embu or 3 kenshi group embu.
- (9) Techniques used by participants should be up to and within the range of their grade. The same applies for pairs of differing grades (e.g. a 1 kyu and 2 kyu pair, where the 2 kyu kenshi can only do techniques up to 2 kyu).
- (10) The participants should wear normal Dogi with a BSKF badge.
- (11) Participants are prohibited from wearing any jewellery or any such item which may harm their partner.
- (12) Participants should not wear supporters except where to protect injuries. The use of Do (abdominal protector) is permitted but not recommended.
- (13) The use of weapons are not allowed.
- (14) Embu time should be between 90 seconds and 2 minutes, including Gassho Rei at the beginning and end. Penalties will be given outside of these times.
- (15) The embu area of performance will be a 7m square with line widths of between 5 and 10cm. Participants should not exit from this area during their performance as penalties may be given.

If you are uncertain of any of these rules please consult a member of the technical committee.

GUIDANCE FOR CONSTRUCTING EMBU

(by Sensei George Hyde, UCL/ULU Branch master 2002)

With taikai aplenty on the horizon, Mizuno Sensei recently took the opportunity to spell out the basic requirements for constructing embu that is both acceptable and impressive. In addition to clarifying some of the points which make for good embu and the elements that should be avoided, he emphasised that balance is key to the whole process. The following covers these and other topics raised by Mizuno Sensei over the years.

Getting Started:

When laying the foundations of the embu, strive for simplicity. The majority of the content should be based on sound hokei. Partners should choose techniques with which both are familiar and confident. The ren hanko, which connects these techniques, should be natural, practical and fluid. Take care to ensure that ren hanko does not become henka (adapted hokei) or even worse, invented techniques. If simplicity and practicality are applied, this should not become a problem.

In terms of execution, the most obvious faults occur in timing, distance and accuracy. The tendency to generally increase attacking distance in favour of safety and speed results in atemi falling short of its target. As a consequence, tai sabaki becomes unnecessary and the embu loses the essential requirement of realism. Similar problems are caused by over anticipating the atemi. Ateni should be seen to be aimed at specific targets - not blocks - and blocks should be seen to be necessary.

Once the content of the sequences is agreed, partners should practice them repeatedly at very low speeds, paying close attention to distance, timing, targets and tai sabaki. This will aid mental retention of the sequences and ensure that none of the required accuracy is lost in favour of speed in the final performance.

Balance:

The issue of balance applies to every aspect of the embu in terms of content, execution and overall appearance. Specifically, this includes:

Goho and Juho: Visually, any over emphasis on goho or juho will be very obvious. Even if the techniques are executed well, the overall appearance of the embu will suffer due to this lack of balance.

General Content: When choosing the range of hokei techniques, at least 40% of the content should come from the current syllabus of the partners involved. Avoid producing an embu based on techniques primarily from either end of the syllabus range. Higher kyu grades may be tempted to employ only the more interesting and visually impressive techniques from their current syllabus. Once again, this would create an obvious imbalance and should be avoided.

Attack and defence: In an embu of six sequences, each partner should initiate the attack 3 times. In all cases, the person who initiates the attack at the beginning of a sequence should be seen to be the recipient of the counter at the end of the sequence.

Difficulty: An embu consisting entirely of complex, difficult techniques, despite the performance, should be avoided in the same manner as an embu consisting of basic, simple techniques. Partners should be able to demonstrate a range of ability. Another common fault is for partners to avoid difficult techniques, to over simplify ren hanko by avoiding jodan geri, or to minimise katame in favour of a quick clean finish to a sequence. Whilst this may reduce

the possibility of mistakes and consequent loss of marks, it will inevitably reduce the overall impact of the embu.

Telling a Story:

This is perhaps the most difficult requirement to pin down. Strict adherence to the above guidelines should put an embu well on the way towards telling an 'interesting story', but for further guidance?

Avoid predictability: In most cases a sequence will begin with goho, follow with ren hanko and end with juho or go-ju, involving two or three individual techniques in all. Whilst this is a reliable model, partners should explore practical, acceptable ways of breaking this mould. For example: providing it does not upset the overall balance of the embu, it is entirely acceptable for at least one sequence to consist entirely of goho, or juho. It is also acceptable for a sequence to consist of nothing more than a single well executed technique.

Another area to explore is resistance to katame and ways to deal with it.

Other embu are an excellent source of inspiration. However, rather than reproduce an impressive sequence seen in another embu, partners should seek to recreate the essence of what made it a good sequence.

Balance the embu with a dynamic opening and a dynamic close. Immediately following rei, adopt kamae with explosive ki-ai, then change stance to adopt the correct starting distance for the opening technique and execute the first sequence without further delay. Avoid the temptation to delay the opening with slow, considered unpo-ho. However well executed, this will give the overall impression of hesitation. This kind of approach is best left to the interior of the embu when participants will most appreciate the opportunity to regain breath and energy, especially prior to the closing sequence which should be as explosive and energetic as the first, if not more so.

The interior of the embu should demonstrate a variety of speed and intensity.

General Points:

Ki-haku: The presence of ki energy in the embu is known as ki-haku. To simply say that ki-haku represents a "spirited performance" is an insufficient definition, since any performance can be spirited despite a lack of technical accuracy. Ki-haku is primarily evidenced by a combination of good zanshin, continuous eye contact, heijo shin, observation and management of distance, efficient unpo-ho, happo moku, breathing control and of course, good ki-ai.

The transition between sequences is where ki-haku, or the lack of it, is most evident. Take time to observe relative positions at the conclusion of each sequence and give serious consideration to your movements towards, and preparation for the following sequence. Keep unpo-ho simple, sharp and smooth. Do not walk around the space, adopt unnecessary kamae or change from hidari to migi unnecessarily.

When adjusting distance to prepare for the next sequence, never advance in ichiji gamae. Even when the opening technique requires the attacker to adopt ichiji gamae, advance with a closed fist and then adopt ichiji gamae.

The transitional elements should be used to ensure that the embu occupies the whole court. Avoid a linear exchange of sequences.

Ki-ai: Use ki-ai to punctuate and emphasise your movements. Do not ki-ai on every strike, this reduces the overall importance and effectiveness of ki-ai and drastically reduces the level of ki-haku in the embu.

Explore and employ a full variety of ki-ai. Use sharp ki-ai for atemi and fukumi gi-ai (de-voiced ki-ai) whilst adjusting stance, applying katame waza and attacking in juho waza. Use long ki-ai whilst performing nage waza and nage ukemi and use intense, decisive ki-ai for kime. To help in choosing the appropriate ki-ai, imagine that the audience cannot see the embu and use your ki-ai to describe the technique you are performing. Having said this, if ki-ai is performed correctly, to unify thought and action, it should vary quite naturally.

Katame & Kime: This is one area where attention to detail can make a great deal of difference. Ensure that the transition between technique and katame is smooth and natural. Never adjust or alter your hold. Maintain katame until your partner 'taps-out' clearly indicating submission. Do not 'tap-out' until the katame is fully applied.

Following katame, ensure that kime is sharp, precise and directed at the correct target at the correct angle. Avoid using jun geri for kime. Atemi should snap back quickly. Do not leave the striking foot or fist in contact with your partner.

When finishing, strike the hand down decisively and cover with uchi harai uke whilst stepping out with hiraki sagatte. As your partner executes ukemi to regain stance, ensure that you follow, maintaining a neutral distance. Allowing a large distance to be created introduces an unnecessary lull in the proceedings while neutral distance is re-established and damages ki-haku.

When executing ukemi of any kind, make a considered effort to maintain eye contact with your partner throughout. This will sharpen your movement and ensure that good ki-haku is maintained.

Zanshin: Whilst essential throughout the embu, good zanshin is most important at the conclusion of sequences. It is an outward expression of continuous domination over an opponent. It expresses complete and continuous concentration and is evidenced in mental attitude and physical posture. Essentially, continuous eye contact, breathing control and management of distance during and following the katame waza will express good zanshin.

Nage: Remember, nage is throwing, not flying. Good nage ukemi comes from correct application of juho waza. Avoid the temptation to 'jump' or throw yourself. This is very obvious and simply demonstrates that the technique failed. Allow your partner to perform the technique correctly so that the nage ukemi becomes necessary. Make necessary adjustments in tai sabaki to create the best possible position from which to perform good nage and good nage ukemi, but do not change the execution of the technique in favour of a clear flight path and a soft landing. If you can't perform acceptable nage ukemi from a correctly applied technique, then change the technique.

In execution, nage ukemi should be high and straight. Avoid the temptation to fly low and flat. However, if despite repeated practice, nage ukemi is just too difficult, conclude sequences with techniques that require other ukemi. Kari ashi and tsuki taoshi are good options and also help to introduce variety.

Fluidity: Whilst it is not unacceptable, adopting certain kamae (such as taiki gamae, or hasso gamae) mid-sequence is sometimes unnatural, often difficult and can interrupt the flow significantly. It is therefore best avoided. However, adopting such kamae at the beginning of a sequence can provide an ideal opportunity to express good ki-haku and adds variety to the overall presentation.

Mid-sequence, if ren hanko leaves you in tai gamae and you need to be in hiraki gamae for the next technique, gyaku mawashi geri to chudan, meeting jun sagari, harai uke, is a smooth and effective way to adopt hiraki gamae without making radical or complicated

changes to ren hanko. Also, pay close attention to how kumo ashi, hiraki sagatte and sashikae ashi can be used to manage distance efficiently.

Without reducing the commitment of the attack, or the timing of the counter, show an attempt to block all atemi. Whilst this will inevitably not always be possible, it will help to sustain ki-haku and maintain a sharp, consistent rhythm.

Drama: Whilst every effort should be made to avoid acting, partners will find embu replete with opportunities to create drama and introduce tension. One area to explore is the refusal. It is common to drop the refusal in juho waza in favour of uninterrupted execution. However, a refusal, followed by rapid, accurate, explosive atemi helps to heighten tension, add variety, hold the interest of the audience and is very good ki-haku.

Practice:

Maintaining continuous embu practice is essential and often difficult, depending on the everyday schedule of the partners. Communicate regularly with your partner and make every effort to ensure that you are both available at the same time. Having done this, don't be afraid to ask your instructor to set time aside in the session for embu practice. It's easily overlooked. If you can't get together at your regular sessions, make an effort to meet at another dojo.

Wherever possible, practice along side other embu pairs. Take turns to perform a sequence and then, whilst catching your breath, observe the other pair. Then make an effort to share comments and advice. To avoid vague responses, examine particular elements, such as tai sabaki, distance or atemi, one at a time. This allows for continuous productive practice and makes the most of the time available to both pairs.

Take one sequence at a time and run through it five times beginning very slowly and achieving full speed on the fifth. This will aid the transition to full speed without losing sight of the important elements as things speed up.

The transitional pieces between sequences require the same kind of attention as the sequences themselves. When practising an individual sequence, begin from the end of the previous sequence (in most cases this will be from katame/ukemi) and finish with the preparatory stance for the following sequence. Avoid practising sequences in isolation, as this tends to diminish the importance of the transitions.

Take every opportunity to perform the embu in front of an audience and pay close attention their reactions and comments. If opportunities don't arise, create them.

When performing the embu proper, aim for ½ full speed. In reality you will probably perform at full speed, but this approach is helpful to reduce nerves and avoid haste.

General Thoughts:

Embu should, above all else, be technically accurate, realistic and fluid. However, it should also be dynamic, exciting and full of energy. Make the most of the transition between sequences to emphasise ki-haku and inject tension and drama. Take risks creating unusual, exciting sequences and rely on your instructors to decide whether or not they are acceptable. Even if you go too far, you will usually find a way of recreating the essence of your ideas with more acceptable techniques.

Finally, it is easy to assume that tai kai is the only reason for creating embu. This is not so. Embu is the epitome of Shorinji Kempo practice and the embodiment of Kongo Zen ideals. It is invaluable as an aid to your technical progress and good embu is excellent meditative practice. Whatever grade you may be, it's never too early or too late to start creating embu.

EXAMPLES OF KUMI EMBU

Set	5 kyu	4 kyu	3 kyu	2 kyu	1 kyu
1	Uwa uke geri renhanko Kote nuki	Tsuki ten ichi renhanko Katate okuri gote	Gassho nuki renhanko	Tsubame gaeshi renhanko Juji uke geri Johaku dori	Harai uke geri renhanko Kote maki gaeshi
2	Gyaku gote Mae yubi gatame	Gyaku gote Mae yubi gatame	Tsubame gaeshi renhanko Juji uke geri Tenshin geri	Giwaken dai ichi (so tai) Kusshin geri	Keri ten san Juji uke geri Furi ten ni
3	Ushiro ryusui geri Katate yori nuki	Shita uke geri Katate maki nuki	Gyaku gote Mae yubi gatame	Gyaku gote Ura gaeshi nage Ura gatame	Morote maki gote Mae tembin gatame
4	Ude juji gatame Tate gassho gatame	Ude juji gatame Tate gassho gatame	Chidori gaeshi Kari ashi	Soto oshi uke zuki renhanko Katate okuri gote	Sambo uke nami gaeshi renhanko Morote juji gote Juji gatame
5	Uchi uke zuki renhanko Mae ryusui geri	Uwa uke zuki renhanko Mae ryusui geri	Tsuki ten ichi renhanko Katate juji gote Juji gatame	Tsuki ten ichi renhanko Katamuna otoshi	Tsubame gaeshi renhanko Gyaku gote Ura gaeshi nage

Set	1 dan	2 dan
1	Tai ten ichi renhanko Juji uke geri Uwa uke nage	Chudan gaeshi renhanko Uwa uke nage Kannuki gatame
2	Gyaku geri chi san renhanko Katate kiri gote Kiri kaeshi tembin	Dan geri sambo uke dan geri gaeshi Hangetsu gaeshi Sukui kubi nage
3	Maki otoshi Ura gatame	Konoha gaeshi
4	Gyaku ten ni renhanko Keri ten ichi Sukui kubi nage	Gedan gaeshi renhanko Shita uke geri kote nage Tembin gatame
5	Tsuki ten ni renhanko Shita uke geri kote nage Tembin gatame	Uwa uke zuki Ippon se nage Furisute omote nage

Set	EMBU
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	