



**LEPPÄVAARAN
BUDOSEURA**

Practitioner's and instructor's path

This document describes the practitioner's path from the first training session, giving an example to those interested in the club, club members, guardians of minors and stakeholders of what a practitioner's journey with the club can be like. Each practitioner's path is unique and everyone progresses at their own pace.

The original language of this document and its appendices is Finnish. This English translation is provided to support understanding. If any part is unclear or appears inconsistent, please refer to the Finnish version.



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1. Generally

At the Leppävaara Budo Club, you can practice kendo, iaido and jodo. We recommend the minimum age of 15 for practicing all arts. There is no age limit for these hobbies, but the young person's ability to concentrate and patience must be assessed between the instructor and their guardian if they want to start training before the age of 15. Younger people who want to try it out are encouraged to try the training sessions for children and/or adolescents organised by clubs in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. With the exception of courses or sessions specifically for minors, there is no division of arts by age group or, for example, into men's and women's series, rather everyone trains together regardless of gender or age.

It is also possible to practice the arts with some physical injuries. For example, iaido is practiced a lot on one's knees, but practitioners who cannot get on their knees due to limitations are instructed to practice adapted forms of the exercises taking into account their limitations.

The beginner's courses are attended by people from different backgrounds, from young people to adults. Most practitioners are interested in Japanese culture, history, Japanese budo or martial arts, or they might simply be looking for a new hobby near their home.

All practitioners start their path through the beginner's course, so that they become familiar with the training environment, equipment, conducting oneself in the training hall and the most important exercises before joining the general exercises. The beginner's course may be organized as a course of about three months, where you practice once a week, as a weekend course or as a course lasting a few weekends. The training of each new art begins by participating in the beginner's course of the sport in question. During the basic course, the goal is to complete one or more level tests, i.e. kyu gradings, depending on the art and the duration of the basic course.

1.1. After the beginner's course

A practitioner who has completed the beginner's course may participate in all the club's training sessions in the art according to their own interests and possibilities. Usually after the beginner's course, the enthusiasts participate in 1-2 weekly training sessions and, if desired, in training camps and seminars¹. Those who have completed the beginner's course will also have the opportunity to participate in the training sessions of other member clubs of the Finnish Kendo Association, the Federation's national seminars and competitions, as well as art-specific national squads. In addition, it is possible to participate, for example, in the international seminars and competitions of the European Kendo Federation.

The nature of the arts allows all practitioners to participate in all trainings. In the weekly trainings, practitioners of all ages and levels train, from those who have just completed the basic course to the members of the national team. In the exercises, the movement and technique typical of the sport are often developed in one group. The instructors will advise

¹ Despite its name, there is no camping in a tent at the camp or sitting in an auditorium at the seminar, but these are often intensive training events lasting several days, where practice is often done from morning to evening under the guidance of high-grade teachers.



you on how to perform correctly, and the more experienced practitioners will hone their skills by performing the same exercises as the rest of the group, focusing on the more challenging and complex details of the exercises. The instructors encourage and advise practitioners to do supportive training, such as stretching and improving physical fitness outside of arts training.

1.2. "Belts" and gradings

In many budo arts, practitioners of different levels or grades can be recognized by different colored belts. Iaido, jodo and kendo also use grades, but these are not visible from external signs. The kyu and dan grades of our arts serve as milestones on the practitioners' path and they are a concrete indication of one's own progress both in the eyes of the practitioner and the whole community. When a person achieves a new grade, i.e. passes a certain level of grading (sometimes called "belt test"), they have shown that they have achieved the requirements corresponding to that level.

On the practitioner's path, the kyu and dan grades serve as intermediate goals that encourage practice and development. Gradings should not be seen as exams that you try to pass, but as demonstrations where the practitioner shows that he or she has already passed the required level.

Each practitioner sets their own goals for the grading and these should be discussed with the instructors. The club's instructors also encourage practitioners to participate in the gradings when they think the practitioner is ready to attempt the next grading.

Kyu grades

- Practitioners demonstrate their progress in kyu gradings, where new kyu grades are awarded.
- Kyu grades start at 6th kyu and end with the 1st kyu.
- Our club follows the kyu grading rules of the Finnish Kendo Association.
- Kyu gradings are held during the beginner's course and typically at the end of the spring and autumn seasons, as well as at national seminars and competitions.
- You can participate in the next kyu grading when your skill in the art is assessed to have developed to the next level and an instructor with a kyu grading license recommends the next grading.
- According to the rules, the minimum time between gradings is three months, but usually the interval is longer than the minimum between gradings.
- 1st kyu can be achieved with about two years of practice.
- Kyu grade practitioners receive a lot of guidance from the instructors

Dan grades

- Those who have attained 1st kyu can demonstrate their progress in dan gradings.
- Dan grades start at 1st dan and the highest grade is 8th dan.
- Dan grades are recognized internationally and we follow the rules of the All Japan Kendo Federation, the International Kendo Federation and the European Kendo Federation.



- Dan gradings are held at important national seminars and competitions, as well as at international seminars and competitions.
- You can participate in the next dan grading when your skill in the art is assessed to have developed to the next level and an experienced instructor recommends the next grading.
- The level of 1st dan is achievable with 2-3 years of practice.
- The minimum time between dan gradings is equal to the number of years corresponding to the practitioner's current dan grade. For example, you can participate in the 3rd dan grading two years after passing the 2nd dan grading.
- Dan grade practitioners will continue to receive guidance, but will gradually take more responsibility for their own development.
- Dan grade practitioners are expected to set a good example and are encouraged to start on the instructor's path.

1.3. Preparing for the next grading

Preparations for gradings are made by regularly participating in weekly training sessions and, if possible, by participating in camps and seminars.

Kyu gradings have clear requirements for the techniques to be mastered and the equipment used in the gradings. These techniques and the use of equipment are practiced well in advance of the grading so that the knowledge of the art is assessed to be at the required level to pass the grading and so that the practitioner himself or herself has confidence in participating in the grading. Before participating in the first grading examinations, the practitioners familiarise themselves with the grading situation and practise the grading situation under the guidance of the instructors.

1.4. Personal wellbeing

The path of a budoka can be lifelong, and naturally it includes easy and difficult stages. Our club strives to make it easier to cope through difficult phases with a good atmosphere and team spirit. If you are worried about your own coping or progress, turn to the instructors or the board. Peer support is important and often brings a new perspective to your own development!

1.5. Events

Each practitioner registers for gradings, seminars and competitions themselves, and registrations are mainly made in the SuomiSport service. The instructors and the club will inform you about upcoming events and the instructors will encourage you to participate in the events in connection with the training. Especially for practitioners at the beginning of their path, the instructors recommend participating in the gradings when they see that the practitioner is ready for them. More experienced practitioners approach the instructors themselves to ask for recommendations on when to participate in the next grading.

During or after gradings, camps and competitions, the instructors try to encourage participants to discuss their experiences and performance.



2. Competitions

Competing is a way to challenge one's own skills under pressure and an opportunity to surpass oneself. It doesn't interest everyone, but for some, it gives deep motivation to develop. Participation in competitions is supported (Lebudo has trained many Finnish and European champions!), but no one is pressured to do so.

In kendo, competitions are held on Finnish Championship, European Championship and World Championship levels. In iaido and jodo, competitions are held on Finnish Championship and European Championship levels. In addition to these, there are several opportunities to participate in competition activities at events held abroad. The judges are practitioners and teachers who have achieved a high dan rank.

Competition training is organized in our club's trainings, although participation in competitions is each practitioner's own choice.

3. Practitioner's path

There are many types of practitioners, but roughly speaking, certain stages are common to the majority. Figure 1 depicts typical types of practitioners and the path of a practitioner. It is important to note that the path is not a linear "straight line from start to finish", but it has many side paths, some of which also lead elsewhere, away from our club's arts. Even when a person who has participated in the beginner's course decides to move to another art of the club or change the hobby completely, the experiment has probably been successful, and we also welcome those who just want to try the arts!

The typical stages shown in Figure 1 do not always lead to the next stage, and this is not the intention either, but the different paths have been outlined to be mindful of them developing the club.

The aim is to support practitioners in all "transitions", even when it involves leaving the club. More experienced practitioners are often able to recommend other clubs to someone moving away, for example, for work or studies, or to consider what kind of other art could be suitable for the person if the club's own arts do not feel like one's own. A member who practices several times a week or several arts is in no way more valuable or shouldn't receive better treatment than a member who practices once a month; The aim is to support everyone in the way they need.

In addition to the arts or competitions, there are two slightly separate paths available for members: the instructor's and the club volunteers paths, which are described below. Instructors, beginner's course instructors, board members and the like are a small part of the membership, but since the club's activities and development largely rely on their volunteer work, the existence of these "paths" should also be kept in mind as board work or participating in instructor training can be valuable and desirable ways for many to develop themselves in addition to practicing the arts.



4. Instructor's path

One of the principles of our arts is to support the continuity of tradition. In practice, this means attracting new members and instructing them. Our club encourages members to participate in the continuation of the tradition, for example, by becoming instructors. The instructors plan and lead weekly training sessions, advise and support those participating in the training, and encourage them to participate in seminars and competitions.

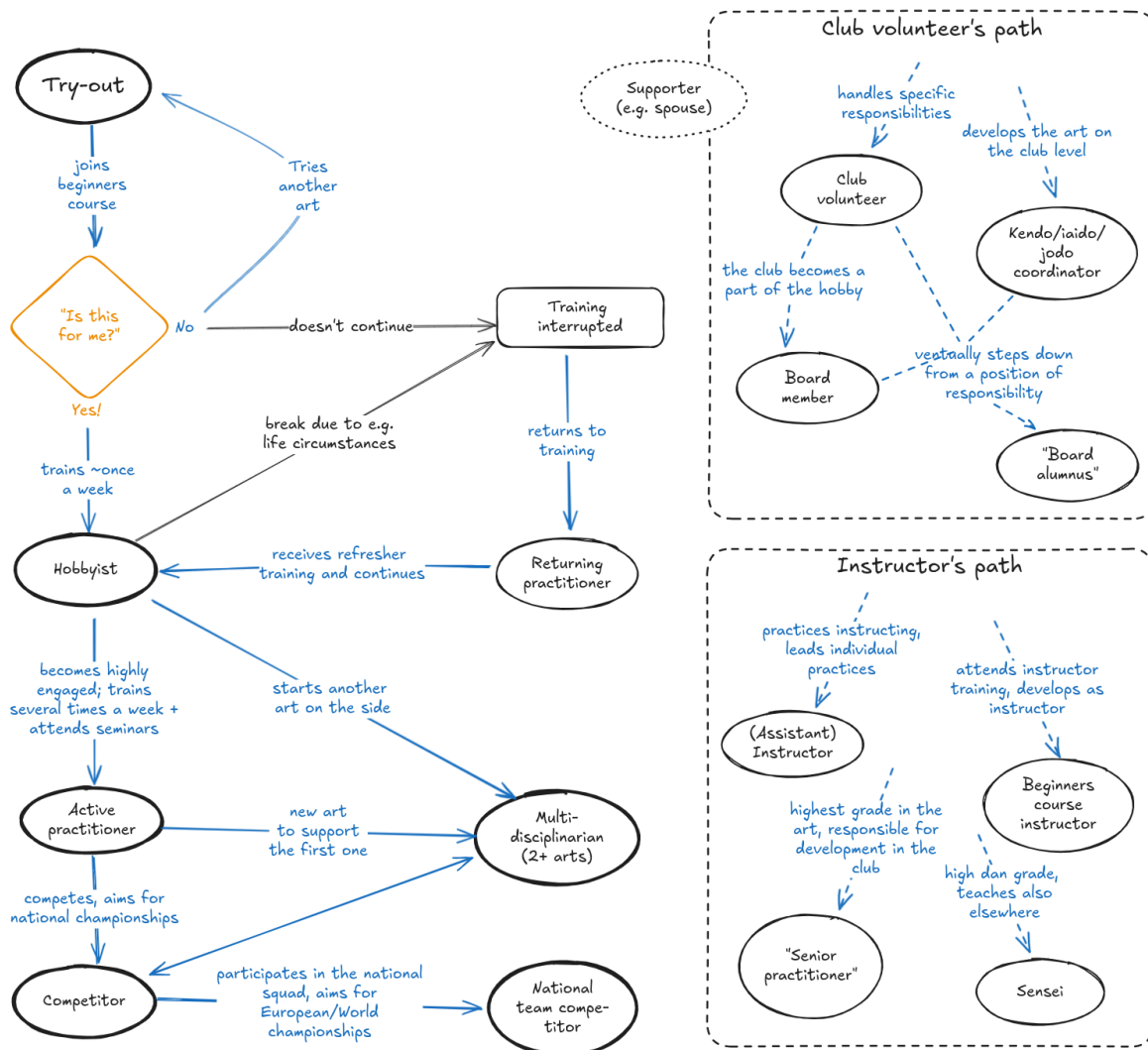


Figure 1: Typical practitioner's paths from Try-out to Practitioner, and possibly to a Competitor. The names of the practitioner types are only illustrative, and even though the arrows between the practitioner types indicate a typical direction on the path, following them is not an end in itself, but full-fledged training can be carried out regardless of labels. The roles of club volunteer's and instructor "side paths" are possible for those who are interested in them.

Anyone interested in the instructor's path should approach the club's art coordinator and tell them about their wishes. Usually, those interested are given the opportunity to lead warm-ups and guide parts of the weekly exercises. Performances and guidance are discussed with a more experienced instructor and development suggestions are received.



For those who are going on the instructor's path, it is recommended to complete instructor training, such as VOK-1. The VOK-1 provides the ability to instruct individual exercises and teach guidance techniques and movement theory. Experienced instructors can complete the VOK-2, which gives them the ability to plan and lead a series of sessions or longer sessions, such as a training season and camp.

The instructors familiarize themselves with and commit to the club's coaching principles and art-specific curricula, and try to develop their guidance on their own initiative by discussing with their peers and more experienced instructors, familiarizing themselves with the literature on learning and teaching, and participating in training.

5. Helping out with club activities

In addition to practicing arts, the running of the club requires multiple active members in the club's board and as officials and helpers. Many members have also found this "side path" to their liking and have joined the board or taken on other responsibilities (see *Appendix 5 - Role descriptions*). These are typically fixed-term appointments or short projects through which a member can gain valuable experience in organisational activities. To some extent, this category also includes non-practitioners participating in the activities, often a family member or such, who may help with the organization of competitions or supporting the organization. Such supporters are an important group whose participation in the activities should be encouraged.

It is important to note that this aspect of club activities is not interesting or even suitable for everyone, and it is not really related to the budo arts practiced in the club. It is also not the same kind of continuum as participating in instructor activities is for an experienced practitioner. Although everyone is encouraged to participate in association activities within the framework of their skills and/or interests, no one is pressured to do so either.

Change log

Date	Section	Change	Author
13.1.2026		The operating manual was approved at the board meeting.	Board of Directors of the Leppävaara Budo Club