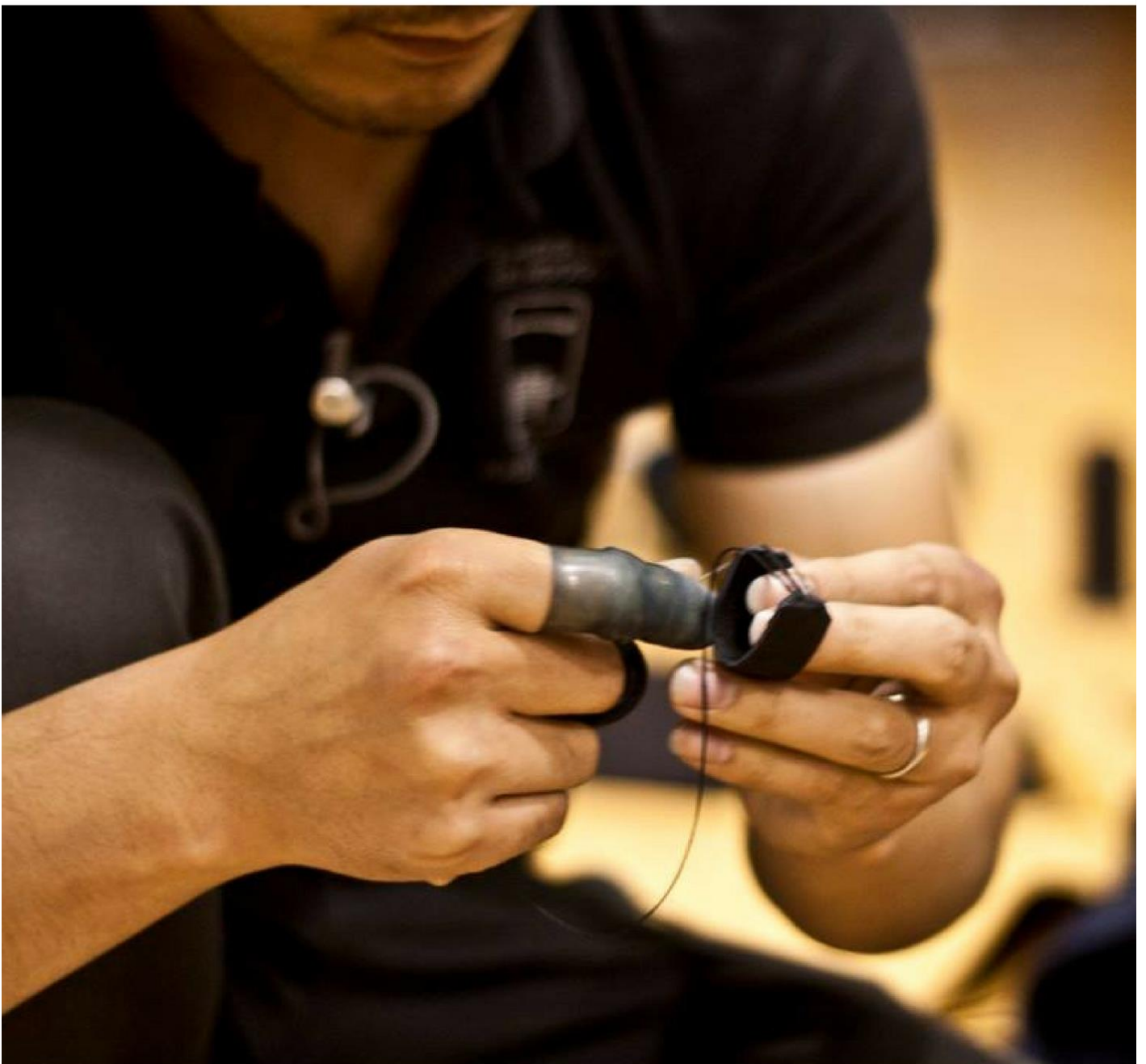


THE 5 SECRETS TO INCREASING THE LIFE OF YOUR KOTE

*Learn what a Japanese craftsman recommends
as the best ways to prolong the life of your kote*




SHOGUN KENDO GU

Introduction

Have you ever wondered if there was anything you could do to prolong the life of your *kote* (gloves)?

This e-book will take you through five simple steps that will help you to care for your *kote* in between trainings. By drawing on the knowledge of an experienced Japanese craftsman you will learn how to maintain the leather palms of your *kote*, and shape each glove to the contour of your hands to maximise your control over the *shinai* (sword) for an optimised performance.

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The 5 Steps

Let's get straight to it! The 5 secrets to maintaining the life of your *kote* are:

Step #1 – Wipe your *kote*

Step #2 – Gently stretch the leather

Step #3 – Hang in a ventilated area

Step #4 – Avoid direct sunlight

Step #5 – Ensure your *kote* are as dry as possible before using them

Keep reading to see helpful pictures and find out more information to help you to prolong the life of your *kote*.

"I am committed to making kote that stand the tests of time and training. This is my contribution to kendo, and it is what drives me to do this every day."

Hiroki Kunugihara – Chief Craftsman at Shogun Kendogu

Step #1 – Wipe your *kote*

Having finished a tough training, your *kote* are likely to be pretty wet. It is critical that you dry out the leather on each glove as best as you can before storing them away between trainings. In order to assist the drying process, we suggest that you:

1. use your *tenugui* (head towel) to wipe out the inside of your *kote*. This may be slightly awkward to begin with, however we have found it to be the most effective way in which to remove any excess sweat that would slow the drying process.



2. be sure to reach in to the corners, the thumb area, and the finger tips.



3. wipe the sweat from the inside of the forearm area.



Once you have wiped away as much sweat as possible from the inside of your *kote*, you are ready to move on to the next simple, yet important step.

Step #2 – Gently stretch the leather

The next step is critical to help the maintain leather as it dries.

You will notice that there are several wrinkles that form on the *tenouchi* (palms) where your fingers grip your *shinai*. As the leather dries, becomes wet with sweat, and dries again, these wrinkled areas will gradually become weaker and holes or tears will begin to appear.



Find the wrinkles on the tenouchi

In order to overcome this, we recommend that you:

1. use your thumb and forefinger to gently stretch the leather in a downwards motion.
2. be sure not to pull too hard on the leather as it is still damp and therefore vulnerable (see Step #5).
3. concentrate on the areas where your fingers grip the *shinai*. This helps the *tenouchi* to 'learn' how you hold your *shinai*.

By extending the leather in these key areas, you will be improving the flexibility of the *kote* and ensuring that they mould to the contours of your hands.

We also recommend that you gently stretch the leather out prior to using new *kote*, as the leather is particularly stiff in the earlier stages of use.



Using your thumb and forefinger



Gently pull down on the leather

Step #3 – Ensure each glove is a ventilated area

Once you have wiped and stretched the *tenouchi* of your *kote*, they can be left to dry naturally. However, rather than leaving them inside your *bogu* (equipment) bag, we encourage you to:

1. place them in a well ventilated area.
2. keep them separated (i.e. not left inside) your *men* (helmet) as this will also require ventilation for adequate drying.
3. hang them up to maximise the circulation of air around the *tenouchi*.



Hangers such as this can be used for many purposes, and are available from Shogun Kendogu for US\$25 including shipping.

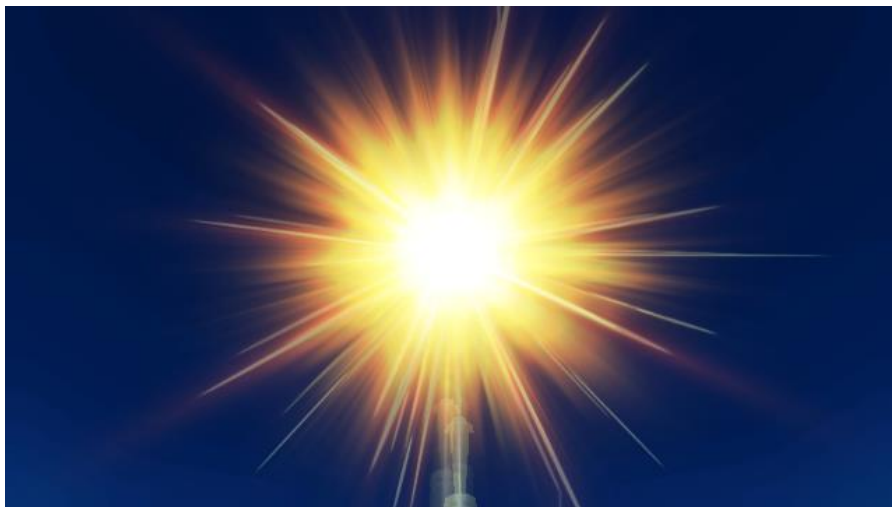
Placing your *kote* in a spot where air can circulate around them is far more favourable than leaving them inside a bag or your *men* as the leather should be totally dry before your next practice (see Step #5).

Step #4 – Keep each glove out of direct sunlight

When hanging your *kote* to dry, find a spot that is well shaded. This is important because:

1. direct sunlight can be harsh on the leather and cause it to become brittle.
2. direct sunlight also causes the blue fabric of the *kote* to lose its colour. This is the primary cause of kendo equipment turning to a purple colour, and although re-dyeing your gear is possible, it is also avoidable.

This simple step will go a long way to ensuring your *kote* stay in good condition. But there is one more step that can significantly help to prolong the life of your *kote*...



Keep your kote out of direct sunlight to maintain their colour

Step #5 – Ensure your *kote* are as dry as possible before using them

Perhaps the most important step of all, it is paramount that your *kote* are as dry as possible before using them in training or competition. This is important because:

1. the forces placed on the leather, and in particular, the thread holding the *tenouchi* and trim in place are extremely tough on the *kote* – especially in the areas where the *shinai* moves about, and where your fingers are pressed against the edges of the glove.



6mm, hand crafted 'Red Label' kote

2. as the thread used in a pair of Japanese made *kote* is exceptionally strong for the abovementioned reason, using *kote* while wet increases the chances of this thread tearing the leather it is sewed into.



Custom made 'Fujioka Deer Skin' kote

For these simple reasons, using *kote* when wet drastically reduces their lifespan. While it may seem expensive to buy two pairs of *kote*, it is often a very wise investment to have a spare set so that you can rotate them for prolonged use.

Let us know...

If you have any ideas or suggestions for future e-books related to kendo equipment, please let us know!

For more information about the maintenance and care of your kendo armour, or for details about the products featured in this e-book, please check out our webstore at www.shogunkendogu.com

Thanks for reading!

Shogun Kendogu.