

兔用心棒

# USAGI YOJIMBO™

ROLE-  
PLAYING  
GAME



*"Step by step, walk the thousand-mile road."*

-- Miyamoto Musashi, *The Book of Five Rings*

Sanguine Productions Limited in association with Stan Sakai presents:

# USAGI YOJIMBO

## 兎用心棒

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## DEDICATION

to Anna Mae Wadsworth



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# INTRODUCTION

When Stan Sakai sketched a picture of a rabbit with his ears tied in a traditional samurai top-knot, he did not suspect this doodle would become a fully-defined character, or that his rabbit samurai would become as popular and enduring as he did. The character, Miyamoto Usagi, became the hero of *Usagi Yojimbo*, a long-running comic-book series set in a fantastic version of historical Japan. In the decades since Mr. Sakai made that idle drawing, Miyamoto Usagi and his friends have been animated in cartoons, appeared in video games, and become action figures.

The game you are holding is a gateway to the fantastic world of *Usagi Yojimbo*. It will allow you to take on the role as a denizen of this world — to face the same challenges and





to experience the same triumphs as the rabbit samurai, Miyamoto Usagi. Or, if you prefer, you can create new adventures to challenge and entertain your friends.

*Usagi Yojimbo: Fantasy Role-Play* takes place at the very beginning of the Tokugawa Shogunate in feudal Japan. The general shape of history remains the same, but mythical monsters and legends that are simply fanciful tales in our world are very real here. These true legends form a dramatic backdrop for an unsettled land that is just now recovering from two-centuries of war. Goblins stalk the empty places of Japan, and spirits haunt the plains where huge armies clashed. Meanwhile, wicked lords scheme against their noble neighbors, and shadowy ninja strike at the heart of Imperial power. It is a setting where honor, courage, and obedience to ancient codes form the framework of life for even the simplest farmer.

## What You Need to Play This Game

- This book
- Polyhedral dice (four-sided, six-sided, eight-sided, ten-sided, twelve-sided, and twenty-sided)
- Pencil and paper

## If This Is Your First Role-Playing Game...

... then you should familiarize yourself with some of the concepts.

One player is the *Game Host*, who presides over all the action, like a director of a movie. The other *Players* each take on a role in this game, pretending to be *Player-Characters*, such as noble samurai, sneaky ninja, canny thieves, etc.

You can play either as one of the sample characters provided, or you can build a character of your own design using the rules described in the *Character Creation* chapter. The basic aspects of your character, such as strength, speed, and smarts, are your *Traits*. Specific training, such as Buddhist lore or sword-fighting, are your *Skills*. Amazing abilities, such as acrobatic flips, cinematic sword-play, and superior senses, are parts of your *Gifts*.

As you play out your role in the game, your Character will often get into *Combat*,

where the action will be described round by round, like a slow-motion action sequence. You and your fellow Players will each take a turn to describe what your Characters do. Combat may result in the Character's injury (or even death), and thus they will need time for *Recovery*.

Between adventures, Characters will learn new things and get better at their old tricks by gaining *Improvements* through *Experience*.

## If You've Played Role-Playing Games Before...

... then you should be familiar with the basic concepts. Here's some key differences in the *Usagi* game:

- **Dice** — you roll a lot of them, but you don't add them together. You and your opponent roll handfuls of dice, and whoever has the single highest wins. You use d20s for Damage, and the other polyhedrals for everything else.
- **Exhaustion** — Many special abilities work once, no questions asked, but there's a roll or test to see if they'll work a second or third time. When an ability stops working, we call that *Exhausting*. There are no "hit points", but there are abilities that prevent damage while becoming Exhausted in the process. As characters get worn out, they slowly lose their special talents — some fights will end without anyone getting hurt or killed, but with combatants fleeing because they're out of tricks.
- **Focus** — Combatants that don't attack, or who get encouraged by others, get *Focus*, which can be used to power special abilities, score critical hits, and interrupt others. Whether to Attack now, or get Focus and Attack later, will be a major tactical decision.
- **Reeling** — Getting hit (or even just getting attacked) can make a combatant lose their action; we call that *Reeling*. Actions that over-extend a character or make them stumble can cause Reeling as well. Some gamers aren't used to the idea that assault or injury can make their character lose their turn!

# HISTORY

While certain elements of the *Usagi Yojimbo* setting obviously diverge from that of the real world, the general shape of history remains the same.

The default period for the game is 1605, two years after the foundation of the Tokugawa Shogunate. Japan has been ruled by a divine Emperor since the days of prehistory. For eight hundred years, he has

ruled from the Imperial Palace in Kyoto, a constant and stable link with the world of the gods. However, it has been more than four centuries since the Emperor has held any real power.



---

A.D. 794-1158

## Twilight of the Heian Period

In the closing years of the *Heian* period in Japan, the noble class was paying the price for generations of introspection and for their failure to properly attend to administration. For years, they had focused on courtly intrigues and had cultivated pleasures at the expense of their government duties. The ministers of the Imperial Court had become so incompetent that by the year A.D. 1000, they no longer had the knowledge needed to issue new currency. The existing supply of coins gradually shrank, and much of Japan turned to barter economics.

At the same time, the security and prosperity of the Empire was suffering. Bandits wandered the countryside, making travel between settlements hazardous. Leaving home at night was considered a foolhardy act. Crops failed, or were simply not distributed to the hungry cities. Waves of famine and disease struck the Empire.

The nobles focused instead on the details of succession and upon their own privileged lifestyles. As peasants starved, their rulers invented new forms of poetry and perfected elaborate social rituals. Others schemed to gain power over the Chrysanthemum Throne.

By the year 1000, the Imperial succession was effectively controlled by the *Fukiwara* clan. As the noble clans schemed for political power or spent their cloistered lives in dreaming, the ability of the court to control the country weakened further.

---

A.D. 1158-1185

## Rise of the Martial Lords

The Imperial Court found itself forced to delegate more and more duties to the civilian officers and generals who kept the provinces secure. The warrior class, known as *samurai* (literally, “one who serves [the noble class]”) became responsible for much of the practical administration of the country. Over time, they organized themselves in family clans, patterned somewhat after the noble class.

In A.D. 1158, an alliance of noble clans attempted to break the *Fukiwara*’s control over Imperial succession. In the resulting

civil war, both sides made use of the clans of samurai. The supporters of *Fukiwara*’s candidate for the throne allied with the *Taira* clan, while their rivals won the support of clan *Minamoto*. In the end, *Taira*’s claimant to the Imperial throne won, though the conflict planted the seeds for future unrest. The victory also established the warrior clans as prominent political powers. The noble class needed the support of the samurai to govern, and it became apparent that their very existence depended on the sufferance of their generals.

The *Minamoto* clan did not readily forget their defeat at the hands of the *Taira*. In 1160, the clan launched a surprise attack on Kyoto. They burned the palace and abducted the Emperor. The person of the Divine Emperor was no longer considered inviolate.

However, their victory was short-lived. Within weeks, the forces of clan *Taira* had freed the Emperor and driven the *Minamoto* army into the wilderness. The *Taira* were not merciful victors — they exiled or executed many of the *Minamoto*, seizing their lands and wealth. Clan *Taira*, under the leadership of *Taira no Kiyomori* had quickly become the most political force in Japan.

In 1167, in appreciation for his martial skill and support of the Emperor, *Taira no Kiyomori* was elevated to the rank of chief government minister. *Kiyomori* quickly abandoned any pretense of obedience to the Emperor. He ordered the Emperor *Takakura* to marry his daughter. Once a son had been delivered, *Kiyomori* forced the Emperor to abdicate in favor of the infant. The child, *Emperor Antoku*, was barely a year old; naturally, *Kiyomori* himself acted as regent.

This act, combined with the sudden banishment of any rivals who held government positions, caused an uproar among the samurai and noble clans. *Prince Mochihito*, the brother of the former Emperor, called upon *Minamoto no Yoritomo*, leader of the weakened *Minamoto* clan, to make war upon the tyrannical *Kiyomori*. *Yoritomo* was eager to avenge his father and the injuries suffered by the clan, and he readily agreed. However, as his armies gathered, *Kiyomori* died of a sudden illness. *Kiyomori*’s sons were left to reap the whirlwind sown by their father — they waged war for five years against the *Minamoto* clan. They were finally destroyed in the naval *Battle of Dan-no-ura*, in the Straits



of Shimonoseki. The six-year old Emperor Antoku was cast overboard and drowned, along with his grandmother. It is said that the sword *Grasscutter*, one of the three great items of Imperial Regalia, was also lost that day. Those who believe this tale think that the sword currently claimed by the Emperor is a fake.

A.D. 1185-1467

## The First Shogunates

With the fall of the Taira clan, Minamoto ruled without contest. Yoritomo placed his own candidate for Emperor on the throne, and took on the title of *Seii Taishogun* (“generalissimo who overcomes the barbarians”), the highest ranking military lord in Japan. (This title is often abbreviated *Shogun*, “general”.)

Though the Emperor ruled in name, Yoritomo was the true master. He established a system of military government known as *bakufu* (“tent government”, implying that the army governs from their encampments), and ruled from the town of *Kamakura*. Under this system, the Shogun and his generals were responsible for the direct rule of various fiefdoms, and they were able to pass their titles and powers on to their sons. The old noble class remained but ceased to have any real influence.

As generations passed, power over the Shogunate fell into the hands of the *Hojo* samurai clan. Political battles and scheming were common, as various factions challenged the Hojo domination of the Shogunate. In the background, the Emperor and his court dreamed of the old days of power. On occasion, attempts were made to restore Imperial rule, but they rarely presented a serious

threat to the new military government.

Things came to a head in 1331, when the *Emperor Go-Daigo* hatched a plan to overthrow the *bakufu*. After being discovered and banished, he worked in exile to raise an army. He received a powerful ally when *Ashikaga Takauji*, the general sent by the Shogun to hunt him down, changed his allegiance and supported the Emperor. Together, they were able to make war on the Shogun’s forces and destroy clan Hojo.

Emperor Go-Daigo returned to the throne, and the Shogunate dissolved. However, this state of affairs did not last for long. In A.D. 1333, rebellion broke out, and *General Takauji* was dispatched to stamp it out. He succeeded, but in an effort to ease the anger of the samurai class, he granted fiefdoms to the rebels — and took the title of Shogun for himself! Though Takauji still swore his allegiance to the Emperor, the action outraged Go-Daigo — he marshaled his army and attacked Takauji. After three years of war, Takauji captured Kyoto and installed a new puppet Emperor. The *bakufu* had returned.

Takauji’s descendants ruled over a dynasty known as the *Ashikaga Shogunate*. However, this new Shogunate was weaker than the one that had come before, and almost all power lay in the hands of the *daimyo* (literally, “great name”; a powerful ruler of a feudal state) who ruled in the Shogun’s name. The central government was unable to control the local lords, and they often warred with each other in defiance of the Shogun’s will.

A.D. 1467-1560

## Sengoku: The Era of Warring States

As time passed, conflicts between lords became more frequent and more violent. In 1467, widespread civil war erupted. Invading armies damaged the Imperial capital of Kyoto — the center of government ceased to function. The Shogun no longer had even the pretence of control over his *daimyo*, many of whom openly renounced their vows of loyalty.

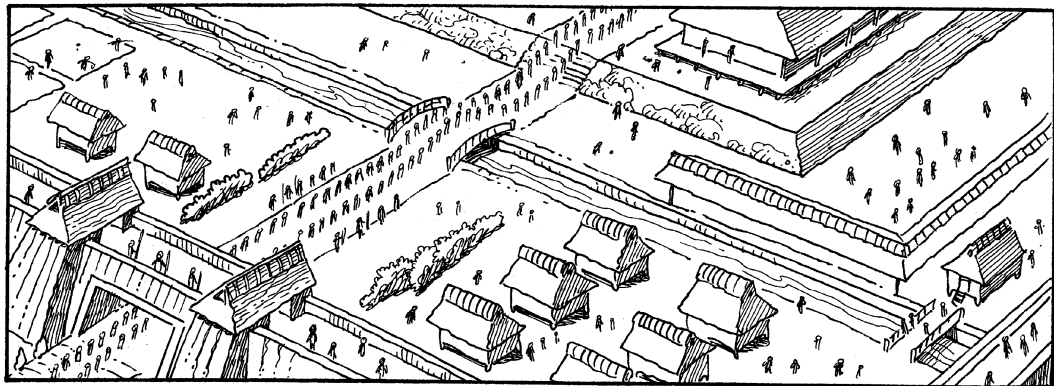
For generations, civil war dragged on as local *daimyo* declared war on their neighbors or formed patchwork alliances in a grim struggle for supremacy.



### HISTORY vs. STORY-TELLING

The history presented here is the “true history” of Japan. Sometimes, Sakai has deviated from this history for artistic license. As Game Host, you may also change or alter events to better suit the story of your game.

Also, there is no reason that your own game could not be set at a later or earlier date in Japanese history — Japan’s Heian and earlier Shogunate periods are rich backdrops for adventure. As a change of pace, your Players could play their character’s ancestors, or even their own characters in an earlier time period. (In one story, Tomoé Ame found herself traveling back in time to a battle of great historical significance to her clan.)



Each fiefdom acted as an independent kingdom. In some territories, rebelling commoners overthrew their *daimyo*, naming their own leaders. Leagues of Buddhist monks and peasants formed leagues called *ikko-ikki*, overthrew their lords, and made their own domains. (The *ikko-ikki* in Kaga province lasted over a hundred years!)

No one knows how many died in this age of war, though it is certain that millions perished not only in the battles but also from starvation and disease spread by the breakdown of society.

---

A.D. 1560-1582

## Nobunaga's Ambition

After more than two centuries of war, Japan slowly worked its way back to unity. A powerful general named *Oda Nobunaga* achieved victory after victory, forcing the lords to either swear allegiance to him or have their fiefdoms seized by his military might. He became notorious for his brutality and personal eccentricities.

Nobunaga was a canny general and great strategist. He made great use of the innovations brought by Europeans, such as their iron-clad sailing ships, their matchlock guns (*teppo*), and the military tactics that went with them. By 1560, Nobunaga was powerful enough to openly declare his intention to conquer all of Japan. He adopted a bold motto: *Tenka Fubu*, "cover that which is under the sky with the sword."

In 1568, Nobunaga's armies marched into Kyoto at the request of the last Ashikaga Shogun, who had been deposed by a rival clan. Nobunaga returned the Shogun to power but with restricted authority. When the Shogun began to plot with others to destroy Nobunaga, he was driven from the capital. Nobunaga allied with two other

powerful generals, Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu (whose roles in the later affairs are detailed below). They made sweeping alterations to the *bakufu* system of government and consolidated their power.

Even though Japan once again had strong central authority, the nation was still very much a loose mosaic of weak alliances and warring provinces. Nobunaga and his allies waged a slow, brutal, but gradually successful campaign to reunify the country.

Alas, Nobunaga did not live to see his dream realized. In 1582, Nobunaga led a failed defense of Takamatsu Castle in Bitchu Province. Surrounded and defeated, he chose to commit suicide.

---

A.D. 1582-1598

## The Regency of Toyotomi Hideyoshi

The vacuum left by Nobunaga's death was largely filled by his close ally, Toyotomi Hideyoshi. It is said that he was born a commoner, and earned his way into the samurai class with his courage. At least one European visitor claimed that Hideyoshi had two thumbs on his right hand, a curious deformity that would normally have been amputated at birth in Japan. While serving as a general under Nobunaga, some claim he was able to inspire his men to build a castle in a single night.

Hideyoshi continued the work started by Nobunaga, and inherited his ambition. He wished to become Shogun, but the Emperor refused to grant this request in light of Hideyoshi's ancestry as a commoner. Instead he took the title of *kampuku*, or Imperial Regent. In 1590, his armies destroyed the last remaining resistance to his regime. For the first time in two hundred years, Japan was at peace.



His lands secured, Hideyoshi retired from the official regency and turned the title over to his underage nephew, whom he had adopted as a son. He appointed a council of five regents to rule until his son came of age, and maintained considerable control from behind the scenes.

Hideyoshi convinced this council to order two massive (and ultimately unsuccessful) invasions of Korea. Although they did manage to capture and burn Seoul, the capital of Korea, almost a third of the Japanese army had died in first year of the invasion alone. The Koreans also inflicted terrible casualties on the Japanese navy, using iron-clad, cannon-armed “turtle ships”.

The war continued fitfully until 1598, when Hideyoshi died. When the news of his death reached Korea, the Japanese forces rapidly withdrew as the *daimyo* back in Japan feared the start of a new civil war. Their fears were not unfounded. One of the regents, *Tokugawa Ieyasu*, demanded to be made the new Shogun. The other members of the council refused, and armed for war. The actual conflict was short, but intense. It ended in a massive paroxysm of violence, one of the largest battles in Japanese history.

SEPTEMBER 15, 1600

## The Battle of Sekigahara

The armies of almost fifty lords met near the tiny village of *Sekigahara*. More than 150,000 men took part in the battle, which was marked by breath-taking acts of treachery on the part of some of the generals. As the tide of battle turned, some generals threw their lot

in with Tokugawa, hastening the destruction of their former allies. After the Battle of Sekigahara, Tokugawa Ieyasu was unquestionably the pre-eminent warlord in Japan. There was no one left to contest his claim to the Shogunate — the official title granted to him by Emperor Go-Yozei in 1603.

A.D. 1605

## The Setting of *Usagi Yojimbo*

In early 1605, Tokugawa Ieyasu turned his title and position over to his adopted son, Hidetada. However, the elder samurai continues to hold true power over the nation. Japan is at the dawn of a new era. For the first time in generations, a strong leadership has arisen, one that promises to maintain the peace for years to come. The troubles experienced by previous generations are disappearing — more and more conflicts are resolved by diplomacy than by violence.

This new era of samurai is not without its own problems. Many samurai were left without masters or estates from the previous wars, forced to wander as *ronin* (literally, “wave men”, as if cast into the ocean). Many turn to banditry; others become mercenaries, selling the services of the sword to both lords needing extra muscle and to commoners forbidden by law to take up such arms.

The era of prosperity is by no means without serious change. Commoners and artisans, emboldened by their rising wealth, scheme for power in a system that denies advancement to those not of proper birth.

As the future is bright with opportunity, it is also fraught with peril and uncertainty.

This is the beginning of the *Tokugawa* era.



## THE BATTLE OF ADACHIGAHARA PLAIN

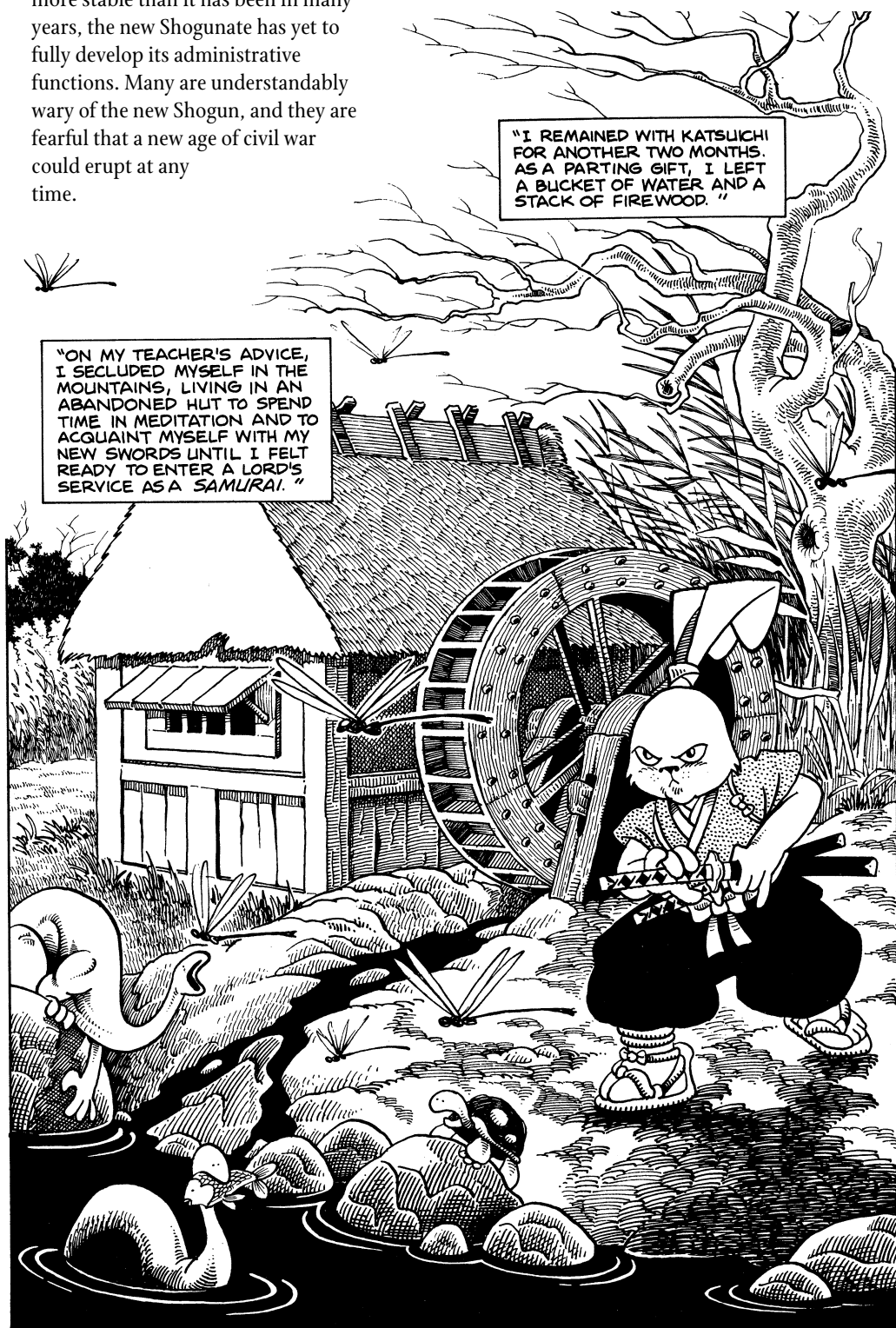
In the fictional story presented in *Usagi Yojimbo*, a similar drama was playing out, far to the north, on *Adachigahara Plain*, almost at the same time of the Battle of Sekigahara. The ambitious Lord Hikiji of Mutsu province put his army to battle against his neighbor Lord Mifune, who had sworn vengeance against Hikiji for the slaying of his family. Unfortunately, Mifune’s allies betrayed him as the tide of the battle turned towards Hikiji’s favor. Lord Mifune was slain, and his most loyal vassal, *Miyamoto Usagi*, was left a masterless, wandering *ronin*, like so many other unfortunate samurai.



## BACKGROUND

At the start of the Tokugawa Shogunate, Japan is in a period of transition. The *daimyo* waged civil war against each other for centuries and are only now being forced to adopt the habits of peace. While Japan is more stable than it has been in many years, the new Shogunate has yet to fully develop its administrative functions. Many are understandably wary of the new Shogun, and they are fearful that a new age of civil war could erupt at any time.

Even so, the Japanese people enjoy a level of peace and security almost unheard of in the rest of the world. They confidently feel themselves to be the inhabitants of the greatest empire on Earth, blessed by the



gods with wise and enlightened leaders — well, mostly blessed, anyway. Their society may not be perfect, but most believe it to be the best of all possible worlds.

---

## GOVERNMENT

The Shogun has put in place a system of feudal military rule known as *bakuhan taisei*. Under this system, the Shogun exercises supreme executive authority in the name of the Emperor. The Emperor is still considered the true leader of Japan, even if his actual powers are limited. The country is divided into a number of fiefdoms, known as *han*. Each *han* is ruled by a local lord, known as a *daimyo*, who has sworn allegiance to the Shogun. These lords are in turn required to provide service and supplies to the Shogun whenever requested, and must hand over a portion of the taxes they collect from their peasantry. However, they are also given a great deal of freedom, and each fiefdom maintains its own internal laws and economic policies. The Shogun is responsible for matters of national security and foreign relations, though he may also take direct action in local affairs if the policies of a given *daimyo* displease him.

At first glance, a feudal system based upon the loyalty of heavily armed generals, who have the freedom to make their own laws, seems inherently unstable. Certainly, the constant conflict of the Sengoku Era and inability of the earlier Shoguns to retain control would seem to prove that the *daimyo* have no particular reason to swear allegiance to a single, remote leader.

To cement control over his vassals, the new Shogunate has instituted the policy of *sankin kotai*. Under this law, all *daimyo* are required to leave their wives and heirs in Edo, the Shogun's capital. They are also required to personally attend the Shogun's court for the entirety of every second year. Though many grumble against this stringent requirement, all abide by it. If a *daimyo* refuses, he will arouse the suspicion and resentment of his neighbors. They will eagerly help to enact the will of the Shogun, particularly if this allows them to expand their own domains and settle old scores!

The practice of *sankin kotai* provides the Shogun with a pool of highly useful hostages. No *daimyo* would dare breathe a word of rebellion while his wife and eldest son are in

the power of the Shogun! And, as a final safeguard, the *daimyo* are expected to maintain a lavish lifestyle while visiting the capital. This expenditure drains much of the funds they could otherwise use to build an army capable of threatening the Shogunate.

---

## LAW AND ORDER

While the Shogun maintains the status quo through *sankin kotai*, the common people are under the direct rule of the samurai class. Japan is a highly stratified society, and commoners are forbidden to take on the accoutrements of the noble class. For example, laws forbid anyone but a samurai from carrying certain weapons — in some places, no weapons of any kind are permitted.

The Tokugawa era is notorious for the practice of *kirisutogomen* (literally, “killing and walking away”), the right of a samurai to kill any member of the lower class to avenge an insult. Therefore the untrained, unarmed underclass do their best to keep from offending members of the warrior caste.

Law and order are upheld by an extensive body of samurai and civilian officials. Every town of reasonable size will have a local magistrate, or *machi-bugyo*. He has the authority to judge criminal cases and sentence commoners, and may call upon the services of *doshin*, low-ranking samurai, to apprehend criminals. These *doshin* are in turn assisted by warriors known as *komono*, or by part-time watchmen called *goyikki*. In times of need, it is possible for the magistrate to raise a very large body of armed men, perhaps to apprehend a party of bandits or to hunt for a dangerous criminal.

From time to time, agitators will encourage the local population to rebel. These rebellions are rarely long-lived, but they can be very expensive to put down. The *daimyo* and his magistrates in every fief maintain a network of informants and spies known as *okapikki*. These unsavory individuals earn a living by listening for rumors of unrest or criminal activity and then passing them on to the *daimyo*'s men.

Samurai and nobles are not subject to the justice of a normal magistrate, and may not even be detained by watchmen. This rule can bent somewhat in the case of landless ronin. The *metsuke*, a special class of officials is authorized to detain high-ranking

personages and bring for judgment before the *daimyo*.

## SOCIAL CLASSES

*"There are four ways in which we pass through life: as gentlemen, as farmers, as artisans, and as merchants."*

— Miyamoto Musashi,  
*The Book of Five Rings*

Japanese society can be roughly divided into two categories — commoners and nobles — though each of these classes has a number of subcategories. A member of a given class can be easily identified. If a person has only one name, he or she is a commoner, no matter how wealthy and respected the person might be. If the person has a family in addition to a personal name, he or she is a member of the noble class — no matter how poor and destitute they might be!

It is important to remember that social standing in Japan is not primarily a function of wealth. A rich farmer who can afford to hire guards and a large household staff is in no way equal to a nobleman, even an impoverished one. His wealth buys him physical comforts and luxuries and the respect of his employees — but he remains a commoner.

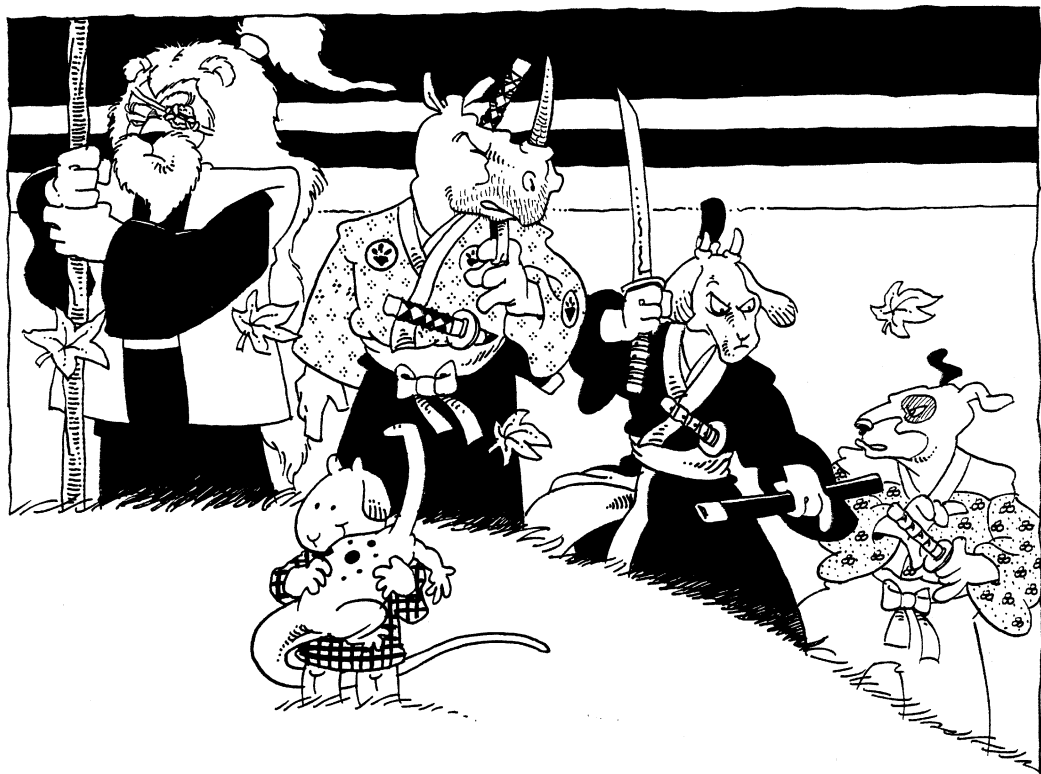
It is possible — though very hard — for a commoner to join the noble class. This

would require the performance of some great deed, or the acquisition of considerable wealth and influence. Most people consider such a thing to be an impossible dream. It is considerably easier for nobles to fall into the commoner class. Crimes of dishonor or rebellion may be punished by being stripped of name and title. Additionally, if a clan is effectively destroyed in war, the remaining family members may not retain their noble status.

## Commoners (*Heimin*)

As in any feudal land, commoners make up the bulk of the population. They live and die at the sufferance of their traditional masters, and are required to pay sometimes harsh taxes to the local lord. Still, with the new stability brought by the Shogunate, many people in this class are finding themselves able to amass wealth for the first time in their lives. Even farmers are able to purchase luxuries and to set aside money for the betterment of their children.

Unlike some other feudal systems, Japanese commoners were not restricted to the profession they were born into. The son of a farmer does not have to become a farmer himself — though opportunities to pursue a different career are not likely to present themselves.





## Farmers

**“Using agricultural instruments, he sees springs through to autumns with an eye on the changes of season.”**

— Miyamoto Musashi  
*The Book of Five Rings*

The farmer is the single most common occupation in Japan. Farmers rarely have the time, resources, or inclination to study the culture and manners of the higher classes. They can therefore appear crude or poorly mannered.

At this time, rice is the most commonly-grown crop in Japan, and it serves as the staple of nearly everyone’s diet. However, it requires very damp conditions in order to thrive. In drier parts of Japan, fruit and vegetables are grown. Turnips are a particular favorite for soups and stews. Farmers also raise livestock for meat, although this is rare as fish and rice are more popular.

## Artisans

**“The Way of the carpenter is to become proficient in the use of his tools, first to lay his plans with a true measure and then perform his work according to plan. Thus he passes through life.”**

— Miyamoto Musashi  
*The Book of Five Rings*

The artisan class includes every person who makes a living by creating something for sale. This covers everything from alcoholic beverages to sleeping mats to fine jewelry to swords. Artisans run the gamut from incompetent bunglers who produce barely useable items to skilled master craftsmen whose work is sought out by the Emperor and Shogun. Though they are commoners, skilled artisans can earn the respect of even the noble class.

## Merchants

**“The Way of the Merchant is to always live by taking profit.”**

— Miyamoto Musashi  
*The Book of Five Rings*

Merchants are those members of society who make money by selling the goods of others for a profit. They range from poor wandering peddlers who sell trinkets in the streets, to modest innkeepers and restaurateurs, to immensely-wealthy individuals who own multiple warehouses.

As peace spreads across Japan, landed samurai need increasing storage space to hold the *koku* (bushels of rice) given to them as tribute from the commoners who till their fields. If the samurai want to convert this rice into money, they also need to liquidate their assets with the help of money-changers (especially if they must support a lavish lifestyle). Merchants are quickly realizing there is much money in the endeavor of buying and selling rice.

## Nobility

**“Reading books is the work of the Imperial court, but the work of the House of Nakano is found in military valor.”**

— Yamamoto Tsunetomo  
*In the Shadow of Leaves*

There are two orders of nobility in Japan at this time, reflecting the dual-nature of political power. These orders are the *kuge* (or “public house”) and the *buke* (“warrior house”). The *kuge* are the descendants of the great families of the ancient Imperial age, while the *buke* are a newer class of martial lords that has arisen in the last few centuries. There are some similarities between these two classes. Both are entitled to a family name which is passed on to their descendants — and to the respect this entails. However, the role they play in society is quite different.

### *Remnants of Imperial Glory:*

#### The *Kuge* Class

In 1605, there are more than 130 high-ranking *kuge* families left in Japan, and many more families of minor nobility. Many can trace their lineage back eight hundred years; some claim a lineage that springs from ancestors who walked with the gods in the first days of the world.

The *kuge* retain their titles, family names, and social standing, but have lost almost all their real authority. As time passes, their wealth and influence are waning still further, though the cachet attached with possessing a family name prevents them from descending into the commoner class. The Imperial nobles value civility, learning, and proper deportment above all other things. They study the minutiae of courtly ceremony and engage in seemly pursuits such as poetry, art, or music.

The *kuge* class can be divided into two orders. The highest-ranking nobles are *dojo*, while the minor nobility are known as *jige*. The *dojo* nobles fill all the important offices of the Imperial court, while the *jige* serve as functionaries and bureaucrats, if they have a formal role at all. According to traditional law, only nobles of the *dojo* class are permitted to sit with the Emperor while visiting the court. Members of this class generally hold positions akin to that of a government minister; though in reality few of these titles still have real administrative duties attached to them.

Most *kuge* survive on a stipend they receive from the Emperor, or other high-ranking noble, in return for their “duties” to the Empire. Others have learned to supplement their income (if they have one) by sharing the benefits of a gracious education with rich commoners or willing samurai. They take on students and instruct their pupils in manners and deportment, or in courtly skills such as calligraphy and poetry. When these students have learned all that they can, they can purchase a license from their master. This license permits the student to teach the skills they have gained and attests to their competence.

Since they are noble, *kuge* are considered suitable marriage partners for the *buke* class. While some *kuge* disparage this practice, others consider union with a *buke* clan a legitimate way to reclaim past wealth and prestige. A few *kuge* chafe at the traditional restrictions on their lifestyle and have taken on the martial trappings of the samurai, effectively joining the *buke* class. Still others

devote themselves to a life of useful service, and become priests, emissaries, messengers, and diplomats in the service of the Shogun.

*Martial Lords:*

### The *Buke* Class

**“The way of the warrior lies in the resolute acceptance of death.”**

— Miyamoto Musashi  
*The Book of Five Rings*

In the old Imperial days, the word *samurai* literally meant “one who serves” — a loyalist to the noble caste. During the long ages of war, the warrior class acquired more and more power, developing durable traditions of martial discipline, called *bushido* (“the way of the warrior”). The samurai became a new class of nobles — a body of men and women who have the skills and experience needed to hold on to their power when it was threatened. They created a new Japan, a military society in which skill-at-arms is supremely important.

Though all samurai are technically members of a noble class, they vary considerably in terms of the power and respect they command. Sometimes this is obvious — a penniless *ronin* will not be treated with the same deference as *daimyo*. There are also very real differences in the standing of the samurai clans and *daimyo*, differences which stem from their role in the unification of Japan and the establishment of the Tokugawa Shogunate. A samurai from a clan that supported Ieyasu will be more honored than one from a clan who fought against the Shogun.

*Daimyo* are divided into three classes based on their support of Ieyasu. The *shinpan* are those clans who are directly related to Ieyasu. They have been given rule of the rich central provinces and positions on the grand councils that decide policy for the country. The *fudai* are clans that supported Ieyasu before the Battle of Sekigahara. Like the *shinpan*, they have been granted administration of the richest territories. The final class, the *tozama*, are those lords who submitted only in defeat. They have been punished by being given rule of remote or poor fiefdoms.

Most *buke* are ordinary samurai who serve a *daimyo*. They work as senior officers in his army, bodyguards, and general trouble-shooters throughout the fiefdom.

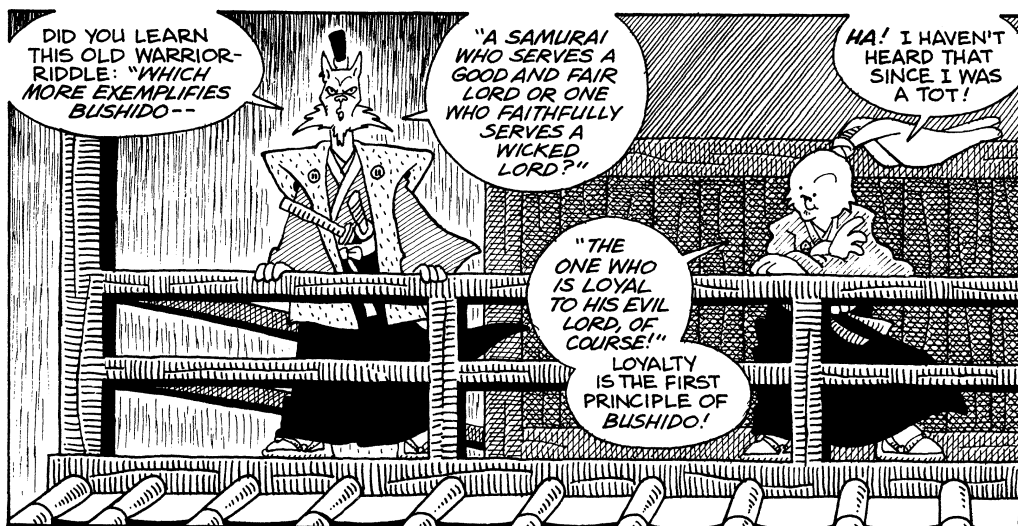


### KIRISUTOGOMEN

As you play the *Usagi* game, part of the fun is invoking the period details, which includes distinctions of class.

No single privilege demonstrates the right of the samurai class than *kirisutogomen*, which literally translates as “killing and walking away.” Simply put, a member of the *buke* (samurai) class can kill a member of the *heimin* (commoner) class to avenge an insult. This privilege was rarely invoked, and by no means was it an excuse for murder. But all commoners know that their lives are, at some level, at the sufferance of the samurai.

Players of samurai characters should use this privilege sparingly, if at all. After all, their characters are supposed to be the heroes of the story! Players of commoner or criminal characters should remember that if they kill a samurai, it can be considered murder . . . but a samurai that attacks them probably won't be found guilty.



Other samurai are given specific roles in the administration of the *han*. For example, some may serve as magistrates, or as the headman of a village. Very young or low-ranking samurai may serve as patrolmen in large towns.

Though martial skill is one of the greatest concerns for a samurai, it is far from the only one. The ideal samurai is a man of letters and learning, as well as a man of honor. No matter what his position or standing, all *buke* from the lowest *ronin* to the Shogun's elite *hatamoto* (official guard) are expected to live according to a strict warrior code known as *bushido*.

## The Way of the Warrior: *Bushido*

*"It is dangerous to lack even one of the virtues of humanity, righteousness, etiquette and wisdom ... If one is ignorant in the study of literature, he will be unable to govern. Just as Buddha preached the various laws in order to save all living beings, one must rack one's brains and never depart from the Ways of both Warrior and Literary Man"*

– *The Regulations of  
Imagawa Ryoshun*



### THE REGULATIONS OF IMAGAWA RYOSHUN

One widely-accepted code of *bushido* is found in *The Regulations of Imagawa Ryoshun*, a short document that enjoins samurai to show obedience to their superiors, respect to their servants, reverence for priests, and disdain for a life of leisure. A translation is included in the Appendix, page 176.

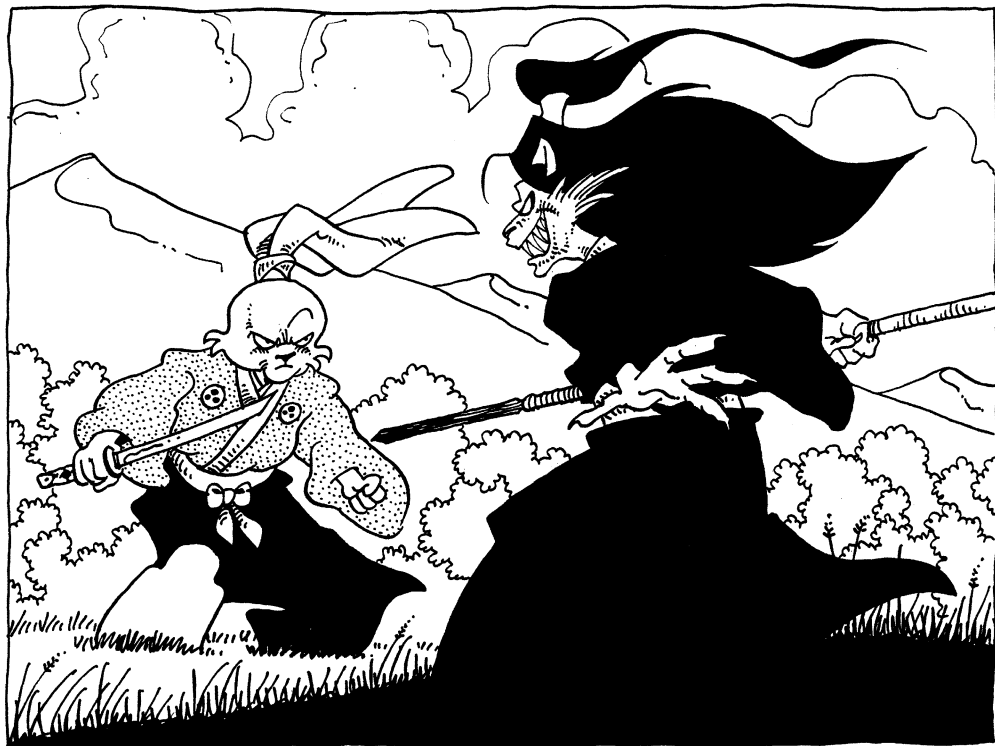
*Bushido* simply means "way of the warrior." Though it seems paradoxical, this code of the samurai class lacked rigid interpretation. While samurai in previous generations adhered to the precepts of *bushido* and adopted ideals of honor and courage unto death, they are rarely presented in a unified form. Instead, they were expressed as a collection of maxims or platitudes, sometimes even riddles worthy of Zen masters.

With the stability the new Shogun had brought to Japan, many old warriors have finally been given the opportunity to reflect on their lives of battle. They wrote down these observations to share them with each other, their descendents, and their subjects. With each passing year the code of *bushido* became more formalized. However, no matter how it is expressed, *bushido* can be described as adherence to seven principles:

- *gi* (righteousness)
- *yu* (courage)
- *jin* (benevolence)
- *rei* (respect)
- *makoto* (honesty)
- *meiyo* (honor)
- *chugi* (loyalty)

A samurai who demonstrates all of these characteristics, even in the face of death, is considered a true follower of *bushido* and worthy of respect. Samurai who fail persistently or dramatically may be expected to end their own lives – forced to commit *seppuku*, ritualized suicide with their *wakazashi*, the samurai's short sword.





## RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

The Japanese are a highly spiritual people, and shrines and temples can be found in even the smallest village. Rituals intended to please the local spirits are conducted almost daily by every person.

The two most important spiritual philosophies in Japan are *Shintoism* and *Buddhism*, which are heavily entwined with one another. The Japanese do not see any contradiction between the two faiths, as they deal with two entirely different matters. Shinto instructs one on the proper way of dealing with the gods and the world, while Buddhism teaches the proper way of achieving perfection within one's own soul, and speaks of the final destination of souls after death.

Another philosophy that has had a great deal of influence on Japanese society is

*Confucianism*. This is a code of social rites and wise administration based on the teachings of the Chinese philosopher Confucius. Though Confucianism has long been taught in Buddhist monasteries in Japan, the Shogun is now applying its principals to the problems of feudal administration.

### Shinto

*"Even the wishes of an ant reach to Heaven."*

— Traditional Shinto Saying

Shinto is the state religion of Japan, though the practice of this faith is not legally required by law. According to the principles of Shinto, all people are followers of the faith simply by birth, though not all are as well-informed or equally devout. Shinto has its roots in the ancient animist practices of pre-historical Japan. It is based on the belief that gods known as *kami* are everywhere, and that it is possible to learn rituals to please or placate this *kami* in order to win good fortune.

### Kami

*Kami* are the spirits of nature, places, things, and concepts. Additionally, when a person dies their spirit becomes *kami*. They are collectively known as *Yaoyorozu no Kami*,



## THE LIVING FAITHS OF JAPAN

It is important to remember that the beliefs described below are living faiths, not relics of ancient mythology. The entries in this book serve as a *very* basic introduction, and cannot be taken as accurate portrayal of current practices. More information can be found at your local library or on the Internet.

or the eight-million gods. The most powerful and widely revered *kami* are the gods and goddess who created the world, and the ones who personify important concepts such as war, or important parts of the physical world, such as mountains or islands. Much like the gods of ancient Greece, *kami* are far from infallible, omnipotent or omniscient.

Instead, they are rather like very powerful mortals, and are subject to many of the same desires and failings. They are also very real individuals, with physical forms, though they rarely make themselves known in the day-to-day world. The sole exception to this rule is the Emperor. He is considered a personified *kami*, as his family line can be traced back to the goddess Amaterasu. A tiny sample of the more widely revered gods are listed below.

- *Izanagi* — Father of the world.
- *Izanami* — Mother of the world. She died giving birth to the god of fire and is now the goddess of *Yomi*, the land of death.
- *Amaterasu* — The Sun goddess
- *Tsukiyomi* — God of the Moon
- *Sunsanoo* — God of Winds and Tempests
- *Kagututi* — The god of fire. He was slain by his father, Izanagi, but upon his death dozens of more gods and goddess came into being.
- *Ama-no-Uzume* — The goddess of the dawn and of revelry.
- *Iwarebiko* — A descendant of Amaterasu, the first Emperor of Japan.

The early history of Japan is largely a recounting of the exploits of these gods, and of their many battles and struggles. All Japanese are raised with these stories from youth, though the particulars may vary in different regions of the country.

*Kami* are worshipped at shrines. Most of the time, this worship takes the form of private obeisance or petition. For example, one may visit a shrine to *Yebisu*, god of fishermen, and ask him to bring a particular ship safely home or to bless it with a bountiful catch. Shrines often host festivals, which are public celebrations in honor of a god or goddess.

Most shrines are attended to by at least one Shinto priest, who cares for the upkeep of the structure and performs cleansing or petitioning rituals as required. Large shrines,

such as the ones that hold the three Imperial treasures, may have literally hundreds of priests on staff. It is also not uncommon to find small shrines in rural or wild places with no resident priests.

## Purity and Impurity

Shintoism has no definite commandments or directives as to the nature of good and evil. Followers are directed to live a balanced life, pay reverence to the *kami*, love nature, be physically clean, and have a proper respect for their family. Central to the faith are the concepts of purity and impurity. Failing to live a balanced life will cause one to become impure. Impurity is not an evil in and of itself, but it does attract bad fortune and unrest. To regain purity, one must conduct rituals of cleansing. These often involve literal washing of one's body, in particular the hands and mouth. More elaborate ceremonies, involving chanting and various other rituals, may require the presence of a priest.

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## Buddhism

**"To study the Buddha way is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be enlightened by the ten thousand things."**

— Dogen Zenji, Buddhist  
Grand Master

Buddhism is an ancient philosophy, first expressed in India around 500 BCE. It has since spread throughout Asia, and reached Japan around A.D. 700. In the intervening years, it has become deeply ingrained in Japanese philosophy and thought. It exists alongside Shintoism and Confucianism, even though some aspects of Buddhism (such as the destination of souls after death) seem to contradict Shintoism.

## The Four Truths and the Eightfold Path

The essence of Buddhism is contained within a set of precepts known as the *Four Truths*:

- The physical world is imperfect and full of suffering.
- The root of this suffering is desire and attachment.
- The way to end suffering is to eliminate desire.

- Buddhism teaches the path to the elimination of desire.

The route to total enlightenment (known as *Satori*) is comprised of eight paths. Some sects teach that each path must be attained one at a time, while most believe that it is necessary to work towards them all simultaneously.

- Right Understanding
- Right Thought
- Right Speech
- Right Action
- Right Livelihood
- Right Effort
- Right Mindfulness
- Right Concentration

## Death and Reincarnation

Buddhists believe that the path to *Satori* is very long indeed for most people, and can take many lifetimes. They hold that the soul is reincarnated after death. Before this happens, a person is judged by the Enma, the *kami* of death. If a soul is judged worthy, it spends a time among the *kami* before returning to Earth in a new body. If the soul is judged evil or unworthy, it is sent to *Meifumado*, sometimes called “Buddhist Hell”, where the dead person is subjected to terrible punishments, such as being boiled in oil. However, this punishment is not eternal — rather, it is a process of purification whereby the soul is made ready for a new reincarnation.

The achievement of *Satori* is said to be the realization that one’s identity and soul are false, simply illusions caused by consciousness and desire. Zen Buddhism teaches that all things are transitory — even the enlightenment of *Satori* is only temporary.

## Karma

Another central idea in Buddhist teaching is the concept of *karma*. This is the universal law of action and reaction that is said to rule all life. Each person creates his or her own Karma through their own actions, and these have inevitable repercussions. However, the consequences of a good or evil action may not be immediate, or even take place in this lifetime. For example, an evil lord might reap great benefit from his murderous deeds and nefarious conspiracies, yet he may never endure punishment in his lifetime. His victims can take comfort in the fact that the

lord’s actions will result in punishment in *Meifumado*, if not in some future incarnation.

## Buddhism in Japan

As might be expected of a philosophy that has spread so far and existed for long, Buddhist practice varies considerably from place to place. There are a multitude of Buddhist sects, each teaching variations on the core principles laid down thousands of years ago. Most are founded on the teachings of particular priests or wise men who are said to have discovered new truths about the path to enlightenment.

### Zen

The most notable variant of Buddhism in Japan is the *Zen* school. Zen teaches that *Satori* is best attained through mediation and direct teaching rather than study. Ordinary people are directed to meditate at least five minutes out of every day, while monks may spend many hours at this task.

These meditative times may be spent with an emptied mind, as part of an effort to overcome the illusion of self. Or, a monk may reflect on one of many puzzles known as *koan*. These are apparently contradictory or nonsensical questions that require a



## THE MARK OF EVIL

The quality of a person’s soul often has an outward expression in his physical form. If a person allows his or her spirit to become twisted by hatred or greed, the body may become twisted and ugly as well. In fact, it is quite possible for a particularly unpleasant person to become a literal monster, overnight.

For example, in the very first issue of *Usagi Yojimbo*, the hero encounters a murderous goblin. The creature is actually the wretched remnant of a samurai general who betrayed his lord. Others include *yukei* (ghosts) or *hannya* (female demons) — people so selfish, angry, or remorseful in life that they became monsters after death.

A signature character of the *Usagi* series is Jei (page 46), a mysterious and frightening figure. His weapon’s blade, the “soul of the samurai”, has turned black to reflect the evil within him. By force of his malevolence alone, Jei has superhuman senses and endurance.

Much rarer is the character who has attained such righteousness as to transcend the natural and onto the supernatural. It would appear that is easier for a soul to fall into greater evil than to rise to a greater good — however, righting wrongs makes for a good story, and fighting monsters who draw strength from their own heart of evil calls for larger-than-life heroes.

transformation in consciousness to understand. One famous *koan* is, “What is the sound of one hand clapping?”

In addition to meditation, Zen monks — at least those who are in residence at a temple or monastery — are expected to spend their days in common tasks such as cooking, cleaning and gardening. There are a number of Zen schools in Japan, each one with a different emphasis or interpretation of the path to *Satori*.

- **Soto** — The largest branch of Zen in Japan. It emphasizes meditation without thought, always in a seated position.
- **Rinzai** — Monks of this school meditate on *koan*, and believe it is possible to achieve sudden enlightenment. They strive to remove the fear of death through mediation, making this a popular school among the samurai.
- **Fuke** — Wandering *Fuke* monks travel the roads of Japan, practicing *sui zen*, meditation through the creation of music on their distinctive *shakuhachi* flutes. Many ronin become *Fuke* Buddhists. (See “Flautist Monk”, page 67.)
- **Nichiren** — Followers of this school

are fragmented into several sub-sects. They believe it is possible to achieve *Satori* within a single lifetime by chanting mantras during meditation. They believe other schools of Buddhism are false, and often attempt to convert others to their view.

### Amidism

*Amidist Buddhism*, also known as “Pure Land” Buddhism, centers around the veneration and emulation of Amitabha, an ancient king said to have abandoned his throne and become a monk. In the course of his meditations, Amitabha resolved to achieve enlightenment by making 48 vows. He then established a new kingdom in the west known as the Pure Land. All those who call on his name can be reborn into this paradise, which is said to be a land of endless happiness.

There are two schools of Amidism in Japan. *Jodo* is the basic form of Amidism, in which monks meditate on Amitabha’s name. *Jodo Shin* followers believe that people in this world are too deep in evil to achieve enlightenment on their own. They believe that it is necessary to achieve unity with Amitabha, and with his help gain *Satori*. Before the Tokugawa era, *Jodo Shin* followers were notorious for the *ikko-ikki*, alliances of monks and peasants that overthrew their lords.



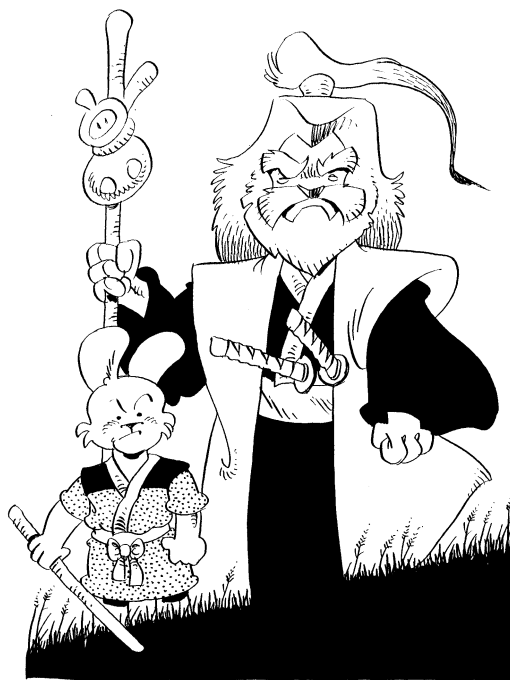
## THE SUPREME WEAPON ON THE FIELD

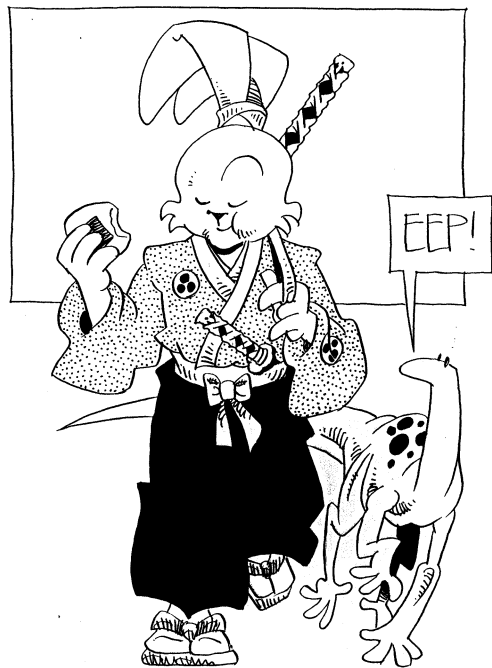
In 1605, the ranks of Shogunate’s armies were filled with large numbers of *ashigaru* gunners. Their presence transformed the practice of war in Japan. Most old warriors feared and disliked the new weapons, which gave the lowest of commoners the ability to strike down a samurai in full armor. Even Miyamoto Musashi, widely reckoned to be the greatest sword-fighter of his day, wrote that the gun was the weapon of the future, since it did not take a lifetime to master.

As years passed, and the peace of the Tokugawa Shogunate remained undisturbed, the need for peasant armies equipped with firearms receded. By 1700, guns had largely disappeared.

In the *Usagi* setting, sword-play and hand-to-hand combat are romanticized as the ultimate expression of battle. In the comic, guns make a dramatic appearance in “The Dragon Bellow Conspiracy” — and never again.

In keeping with the romantic tradition of the stories, this game presents the sword and spear as the ultimate weapons, with *teppo* made all the more awesome by their rarity. Game Hosts who want greater historical accuracy in their campaign might change this.





## Japanese Confucianism

*"... [A]lign with virtue, abide by benevolence, and immerse yourself in the arts."*

— Confucius

Confucianism is a social philosophy and collection of moral teachings developed almost 2000 years ago in China by Confucius, a philosopher and government justice minister. Though no direct writings of Confucius have survived, many of his oral teachings and anecdotes were written down by his disciples. As these maxims were not recorded in a unified form, Confucians often differ as to the interpretation of reasoning behind these maxims, and different schools of the philosophy have arisen in different countries. In some schools it is little more than a description of an ideal government. In others, it is a full-blown system of religious and metaphysical thought.

In Japan, Confucian ideas have been blended into Buddhism. Monks are required to study Confucius, and the philosophy is engrained in Japanese thought.

### Basic Principles

Confucianism is an essentially conservative philosophy which emphasizes devotion to one's family and ancestors, the pursuit of justice, and the establishment of

an orderly and peaceful government. It can be expressed with six general ideals.

- Respect for propriety, ritual and tradition
- Love for family and respect for elders
- Righteousness
- Honesty and reliability
- Kindness to others
- Loyalty to the monarch and state

It is thought that dedication to these principles will bring about the best of all possible worlds, and every educated person is at least aware of them. The former Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu believed that Confucianism provided an excellent basis for government. He began the creation of a large body of bureaucracy founded on Confucian ideals. This work is being continued by his son, the new Shogun.

## Christianity

*"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"*

— Jesus of Nazareth

Catholic missionaries from Europe and the Philippines have been actively spreading the Christian faith throughout Asia, and have achieved a great measure of success in Japan. In 1605, Japan is home to about 300,000 Christians, most of them living in the coastal areas of Kyushu or in the city of Yamaguchi. Almost all of them are commoners, though a few members of the noble class have also converted.

Christianity teaches a belief in a transcendent creator God who has three aspects — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The son, Jesus Christ (or *Kirisuto Iesu* as he is called in Japan) was personified in human form and executed. After death, he took punishment for the evils of mankind, then returned to life before ascending into Heaven.

Christians believe their God is infinitely perfect and wise. Failure to worship this God results in the eternal damnation of the soul, while faith is rewarded with immortality in Paradise. There are no other gods in Christianity, and Catholic missionaries often teach that the *kami* worshipped in Japan are demons masquerading as gods. Model Christians operate according to a highly codified set of moral principles that are quite familiar to the Japanese. In particular, the



“Golden Rule” of Christianity (that one should act towards others as you would have them do to the self) fits in well with the ideals of Confucianism and Buddhism.

The Japanese attitude towards spirituality means that many new converts have simply added belief in *Kirisuto* to their existing faith in *kami*. Christian missionaries and priests consider this heresy, and try very hard to stamp out the idea. The official attitude towards the religion is changing rapidly from one of toleration to open hostility. The Shogun is of the opinion that Catholic missionaries are spies for the European powers. His fears are fanned by many of his councilors and priests, who either resent the intrusion of Christianity, or consider it to be a dangerous false religion. Edicts placing strict limitations on Christianity were issued in 1606, and the faith was entirely outlawed a decade later.

## FOREIGN RELATIONS

***“They eat with their fingers instead of with chopsticks such as we use. They show their feelings without any self-control. They cannot understand the meaning of written characters”***

*—Japanese description of European visitors during the Edo Period*

While Japan had a long history of trade with mainland Asia, in recent years the country has been exposed to seafarers from much farther away. Travelers from European colonies in the Pacific and the New World first arrived in Japan in 1543, and are now regular visitors to Japanese ports.

The Japanese at this time are an advanced and urbanized people, with an unbroken line of monarchy that stretches back to the European Dark Ages. They consider Europeans to be ill-mannered and uncivilized, and refer to them as *nanban*, or “barbarians.” However, they have still picked up some important innovations from their uncivilized visitors.

When the first Portuguese sailors — a lost, bedraggled trio aboard a Chinese ship — arrived in Japan in the 1540s, they brought with them a form of European musket known as an *arquebus*. Though the Japanese already had a heavy, tubular gun known as *teppo*, the arquebus represented a significant advance over locally-made

weapons. The European weapons were far lighter than the *teppo*, and used a innovative matchlock firing mechanism. Within a year, Japanese craftsmen had reproduced the European firearms and produced thousands of copies for the armies of the warring *daimyo*. By 1605, the armies of Japan boasted more guns than any other nation on Earth.

At this time in history, Europeans were undertaking unprecedented explorations of the world. They have developed a high level of skill in shipbuilding and navigation. The Japanese rightfully admire these traits, and are learning the art of European shipbuilding. At first, they simply hired Portuguese sailors to undertake this construction. Later, Japanese shipwrights incorporated some of the more revolutionary elements of European vessels into traditional Japanese designs.

Scholarly characters may have some knowledge about the customs, religion, and politics of Europe. However, unless they have contacts with the Shogun or Imperial Court (or through those few merchants who deal with Europeans) this information will be extremely dated and second-hand.



## THE FUTURE OF FOREIGN RELATIONS

The *Usagi* role-playing game is set in 1605. Historically, Japan was about to have some serious changes with how they dealt with the outside world . . .

In 1609, the Satsuma clan invades what is now Okinawa, creating an independent nation, the *Ryukyu Kingdom*. As Japan slowly closes off relations with the rest of the world, Okinawa remains a separate, open nation until 1879.

Japanese sailors experienced a brief golden age of exploration. In 1614, a Japanese galleon built to European specifications (and named the *San Juan Bautista!*) reaches the Spanish colonies in Mexico and established an embassy in North America. The same vessel sails to Europe in 1617, bearing an ambassador to Rome to meet with Pope Paul V. Later, trade and international travel will be restricted to a few specially licensed vessels, known as *the Red Seal Ships*.

After the Shimbara Rebellion in 1637, the *bakufu* government progressively closes off trade with the rest of the world, restricting all trade to Dejima port in Nagasaki, and only with China and with the Dutch East India Company. Landing on Japanese shores without authorization becomes punishable by death!

## GAZETTEER

The empire of Japan is comprised of four large islands and thousands of smaller ones. The four main islands are (from north to south) *Ezo*, *Honshu*, *Shikoku*, and *Kyushu*. The largest island by far is Honshu, and it is here that most of the action in *Usagi Yojimbo* takes place.

All four islands are extremely mountainous, a factor which can dramatically slow travel, and one which makes cultivation difficult in many parts of the country. Peasant farmers are often obliged to dig terraces in the hillsides to squeeze more arable acreage from their land. There are few places on any of the islands where one is entirely out of sight of mountains or hills.



The main range of mountains on Honshu runs north and south through the middle of the island. As a result of this chain, the coasts on either side of Honshu range experience very different weather. The eastern coast is dry and warm, while the west coast is relatively cool, and often enjoys heavy rainfall. The island of Shikoku is similarly divided, while Ezo and Kyushu are mountainous throughout, with the exception of coastal plains.

Japan is a well-settled and relatively stable land, particularly in the fiefdoms near Kyoto and Edo. Maintained roads connect most provinces, and a traveler can expect to find public lodgings in all but the smallest of communities. Even amenities such as restaurants and bath houses are common. Almost every community will employ a number of armed watchmen who patrol the roads at irregular times, searching for bandits and fugitives. Larger forces can be quickly raised by calling out the local *ashigaru* militia.

## THE TWO CAPITALS

With the establishment of the new Shogunate in 1603, Japan now has two capitals. Emperor Go-Yozei resides in the city of *Kyoto*, which has been home to the Imperial court for nearly nine hundred years. However, his rule is largely ceremonial, and he has little real power that is not offered at the sufferance of the Shogunate. The Shogun, Tokugawa Hidetada, holds the real reins of power. He resides in *Edo*, which is a large and well-fortified city to the northwest of Kyoto. Edo is the military and executive center of power in Japan, and the Shogun is often mistaken for the Emperor by foreign visitors. This time period in Japan's history is sometimes called the *Edo era*.

*Daimyo*, high-ranking court officials, and other important personages are often required to travel from the Imperial court to that of the Shogun. They bear messages and gifts from one to the other, or simply travel on private pilgrimages in order to pay obeisance in person to the temporal and spiritual leaders of Japan. The volume of traffic between Edo and Kyoto is such that two highways, known as the *Nakasendo Road* and the *Tokaido Road*, are specifically maintained as a connection between the cities. The Tokaido road is much busier, though the Nakasendo road is sometimes favored for its scenic diversions.

## REGIONS & PROVINCES OF EDO-ERA JAPAN

Until the end of the old Imperial era, Japan was formally divided into administrative areas known as *kuni* (provinces). With the establishment of the Kamakura Shogunate in A.D. 1192, these provincial divisions became less important, as the military rulers of Japan took over many of the former administrative functions of the Imperial government.

By the end of the age of war, the old provinces had been splintered and separated into countless smaller holdings by the competing *daimyo*. Often, the old administrative cities were destroyed, or abandoned following multiple sieges. In other cases, they were eclipsed in importance by the castle towns that had grown around the fortifications built by the *daimyo*. From their castles, each *daimyo* ruled an area known as a *han* (fiefdom). The borders of these *han* changed dramatically as the fortunes of their rulers rose and fell.

In the short years since Tokugawa Ieyasu became Shogun, the existing fiefdoms have been recognized as the basic administrative area. Their size and borders are frozen, except in the case of clan alliances through marriage, or open warfare — which grows less common as the Shogun solidifies his hold on the country. A *han* is now defined as an area which can produce at least 10,000 *koku* of rice per year. One *koku* of rice (about five bushels) is required to feed one man per year. There are exceptions to this number, and some very large fiefdoms have an annual assessment in excess of 1,000,000 *koku*. These regions are ruled by very senior and powerful lords, while the smallest are ruled by low-ranking *daimyo*.

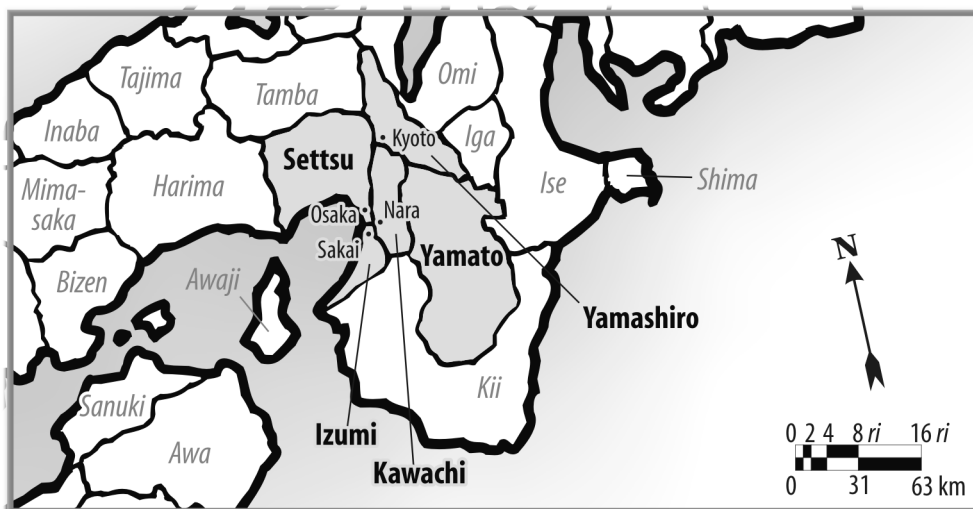
Some *daimyos* may have more than one *han* under their rule — they may appoint a civilian administrator or samurai to oversee their additional fiefs. Most provinces are home to a number of samurai clans. Each clan rules their fiefdom from a fortified castle town, though despite the name this settlement may be little more than a village with a small keep. The new Shogun has decreed that there should be only one castle per province. It is not certain how this decree will be enforced in provinces with more than one existing castle.

Although the provinces no longer have any administrative function, they are still recognized as geographic areas. In addition to long tradition, the provincial divisions are simply easier to remember than the *han*. There are more than 300 fiefdoms, and their borders still change periodically. If you ask a peasant to identify his place of residence, he

will likely mention his province before mentioning his *han*.

During the Edo Period, the provinces were further grouped into eight regions, known as “routes”: *Kinai*, *Tosando*, *Tokaido*, *Hokurikudo*, *San’indo*, *San’yodo*, *Nankaido*, and *Saikaido*. Each grouping of provinces (with the exception of *Kinai*) indicated a route into the capital region.

### The Capital Region: **Kinai**



Kinai is perhaps the most important area of Japan, as it contains the Imperial capital of Kyoto and many large cities. Kinai is comprised of five small provinces — Yamashiro (the seat of imperial power), Yamato, Kawachi, Izumi, and Settsu. Many large settlements can be found in Kinai, and the region has a significant urban population. Notable cities include Kyoto (home to the Emperor), the merchant city of Osaka, the holy city of Nara, and the port of Sakai.

Kinai is a hub of activity and attention. Visitors from every province of Japan can be found here, as well as diplomats and merchants from foreign lands. Exotic characters from barbarian lands, such as Jesuit missionaries from distant Rome or merchants from India, may be encountered in the busy marketplaces and byways of Sakai.

People from this area have a peculiar accent that often causes them to sound rather brusque and fierce, even in casual conversation. This trait is the subject of many jokes in other areas of Japan, and makes it very easy to spot visitors from the capital region.

### **Yamashiro**

Though small in size, Yamashiro province holds considerable importance. Kyoto and the Imperial court are located here. It is the very heart and soul of Japan. The entire province exists to serve the city of Kyoto. The local peasantry till rich soil, proudly producing the vegetables that feed the Emperor and his household.

Kyoto itself lies in a valley, surrounded on all sides by green mountains. These hills are beautiful, but also create a local pocket of extremely still air. Kyoto is notoriously humid, particularly in midsummer. It is a large city with many thousands of inhabitants, and the rarefied manners and odd customs of the locals can overwhelm country visitors as much as the sight of the grand shrines and palaces. Travelers from all over Japan — and occasionally from much farther abroad — walk these streets, along with puppeteers, dancers, top-spinners, priests, pedagogues, warriors, lords, and rogues of every class and stripe.

The city is home to literally hundreds of remarkable buildings, shrines, and temples. Here may be seen the grand temple of *Toji*, with a pagoda that towers 180 feet into the air, and the brilliant shrine of *Kinkaku-ji*, the



walls of which are painted with real gold. Visitors seeking a vision of peace can regard the serene rock gardens of *Ryoanji*, which are said to provide insight into the very shape of the universe. Of course, the grandest sight of all is the *Kokyo*, the Imperial Palace. It is said that gardens of serene beauty lie behind its walls, as well as glorious buildings. Few can confirm these reports — almost no one is allowed to enter.

Though Kyoto is a magnificent city, it has not yet fully recovered from the age of war. Here and there the scars of past sieges can be seen, both in the architecture and in the faces of the maimed peasants and veterans who beg for coins in the street. Keen-eyed travelers may also notice that the city seems smaller than it once was — the suburbs around the city are filled with overgrown lots, some with abandoned buildings or burned out homes, the relics of past invasions.

## Yamato

Yamato is located just south of Yamashiro. It is a rich area of fertile farmland and busy villages. The residents feel their province is the heartland of Japan, and that their customs and lifestyles typify all that it is to be Japanese. This attitude is not limited to this province — many Japanese refer to the whole of the empire as “Great Yamato.”

There are a number of important towns in Yamato, perhaps the most notable of which is Okayama, home to a magnificent black castle.

## Kawachi

Kawachi is a small province, with few large settlements. The entire area is ruled from Osaka castle in nearby Settsu province. Travelers will find mostly well-tended farmland, tidy villages, and neat shrines. Of course, bandits and more unearthly threats are rumored to lie on the lonely mountain tracks. Before the capital moved to Kyoto in A.D. 784, the city of Nara was home to the Imperial family, where they built many

temples in honor of the new state religion, Buddhism. In the Edo era, the Emperor may have moved on, but Nara still has the oldest and most influential Buddhist temples.

## Izumi

Izumi is a tiny province, though important for the sheltered bays offered by its coastline. The port of Sakai is by far the most prominent settlement in Izumi. Sakai was a center for international trade for several hundred years, and was unique among Japanese cities in that it was ruled by an independent merchant class.

The city was famed for the freedoms enjoyed by the inhabitants. During the Sengoku period of warring states the merchant rulers enriched themselves by selling guns to anyone with the cash to pay for them. Sakai’s unique status ended when the *daimyo* Oda Nobunaga decided to seize the city for his own. The residents took up arms against his forces, but the city was quickly overrun and burned.

Today, Sakai is well on the way to recovering from the desolation wrought by Nobunaga’s army. However, it is still a ghost of its former self, and it is unlikely to regain the freedoms once enjoyed by the citizenry.

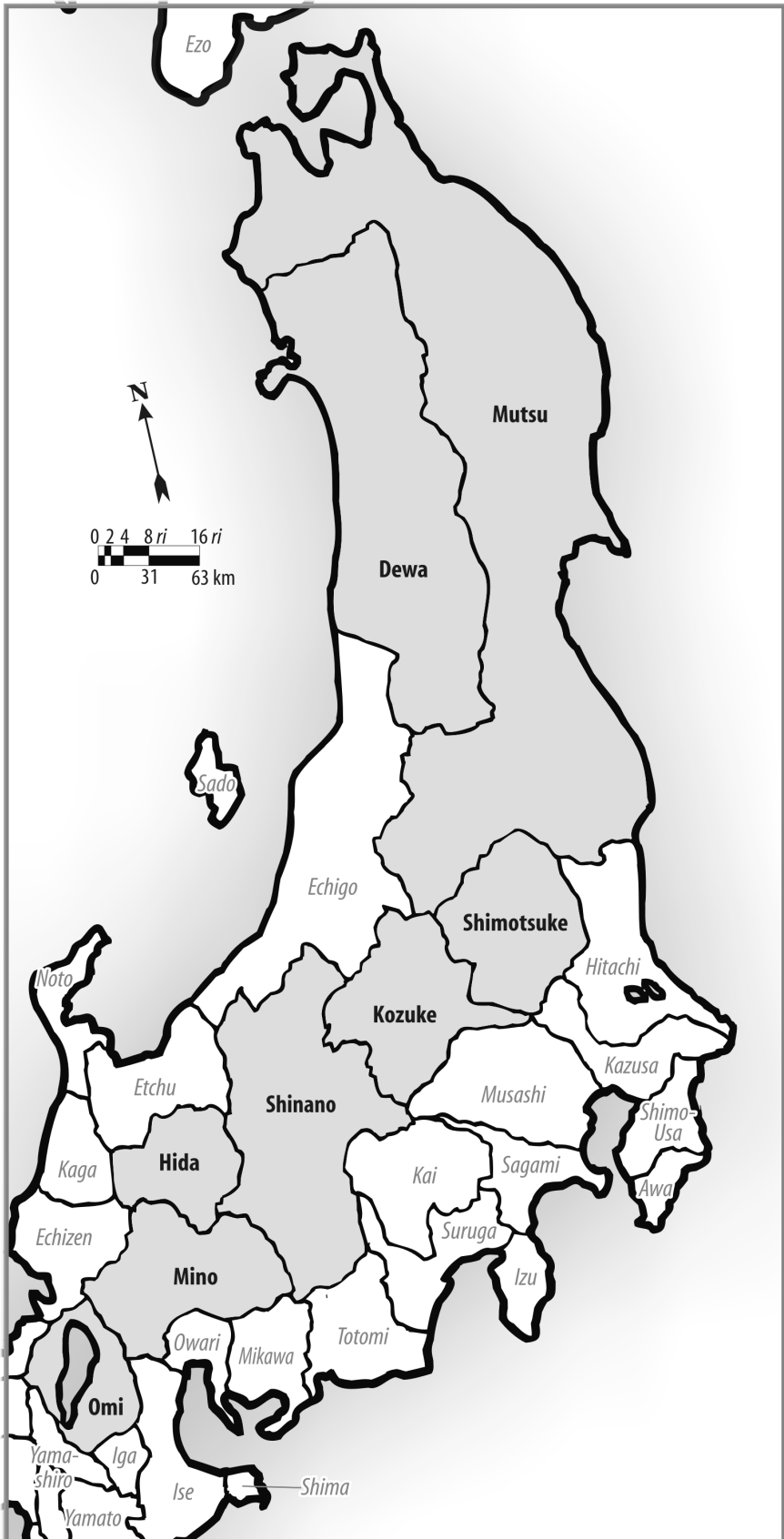
## Settsu

Settsu is located northwest of Kyoto. The province is an important corridor for travel to the cities and farms of southern Honshu. It is ruled by relatives of Tokugawa Hidetada, from the castle town of Osaka. They also count the provinces of Izumi and Kawachi as part of their fiefdom.

Osaka Castle was built on the ruins of a fortified Buddhist temple of the *Jodo Shinsu* sect. Oda Nobunaga razed the temple after a four-year siege, and ordered the construction of the castle. Some whisper that the ghosts of the dead priests still linger in the basements of the castle, a series of dungeons that descend three levels into the depths.



The East Mountain Route: **Tosando**



Tosando is the east mountain route. From Kinai, one travels east to Omi, and then north via the mountains through Mino, Hida, Shinano, Kozuke, Shimotsuke, finally coming to Mutsu and Dewa in the far north of Honshu. The terrain varies greatly as one proceeds northward, becoming progressively rougher and less settled.

## Omi

Omi is home to Lake Biwa, which is by far Japan's largest lake. The shores of Lake Biwa are home to many fishing communities, and its waters are rumored to be the home of many legendary creatures. Omi is also an important stop on the Tokaido road, and there are a number of impressive castles here.

## Mino

Mino was one of the original provinces ruled by Oda Nobunaga, and served as an important base in his drive for power. It is also the site of Castle Gifu, a major fortification. In 1600, the west edge of this province was the site of the Battle of Sekigahara, a major clash between the daimyo loyal to Tokugawa, and those who supported the other regents. Farmers from the tiny village of Sekigahara still find bones and rusted weaponry, leftovers of the battle. The area has an unusually dense population of fireflies — these are often said to be the souls of the dead soldiers, lingering on at the site of their doom.

## Hida

Hida is a heavily forested province, and also heavily traveled. Banditry is common as brigands can easily retreat into the security of the forests. It is said that many *kami* dwell in the depths of the woods, both good and evil.

## Shinano

Shinano province is extremely mountainous and is famous for its picturesque views. Perhaps the most important town in this area is Matsumoto, home to the famous Crow Castle. This castle is so named because of its black-painted walls, and the spreading “wings” that extend from the main structure. The city is also famous for its *onsen* (hot springs) which draw many rich and noble visitors. Other important castle towns in Shinano include Ina, Ueda, and Komoro.

## Kozuke

The main town in mountainous Kozuke province is Takasaki. This settlement is known as the home of the *daruma* doll. These curious wooden dolls represent the Indian sage Bodhidharma, the founder of Zen Buddhism. According to tradition, the dolls are capable of granting wishes. When they are made, their eyes have no pupils. The owner makes a wish, and then colors in one of the eyes. When the wish comes true, the second eye may be colored in. These dolls may be purchased in a variety of sizes and degrees of ornamentation from Buddhist temples in this region. It is considered improper to own more than one *daruma* at a time. When a given wish is fulfilled, another *daruma* may be bought.

## Shimotsuke

Shimotsuke is located just north of the Shogun's seat of power in Edo. As such, this province has been the site of many battles, and until living memory it was divided into many small territories, each the domain of a different *daimyo*. The province is noted for its many beautiful waterfalls and shrines. The small town of Nikko is home to a particularly ancient Shinto shrine, *Futarasan*, which was built nearly a thousand years ago. The current Shogun, Tokugawa Hidetada, has commissioned the construction of many shrines throughout Japan, and some of the most elaborate are being built in Shimotsuke.

## Mutsu

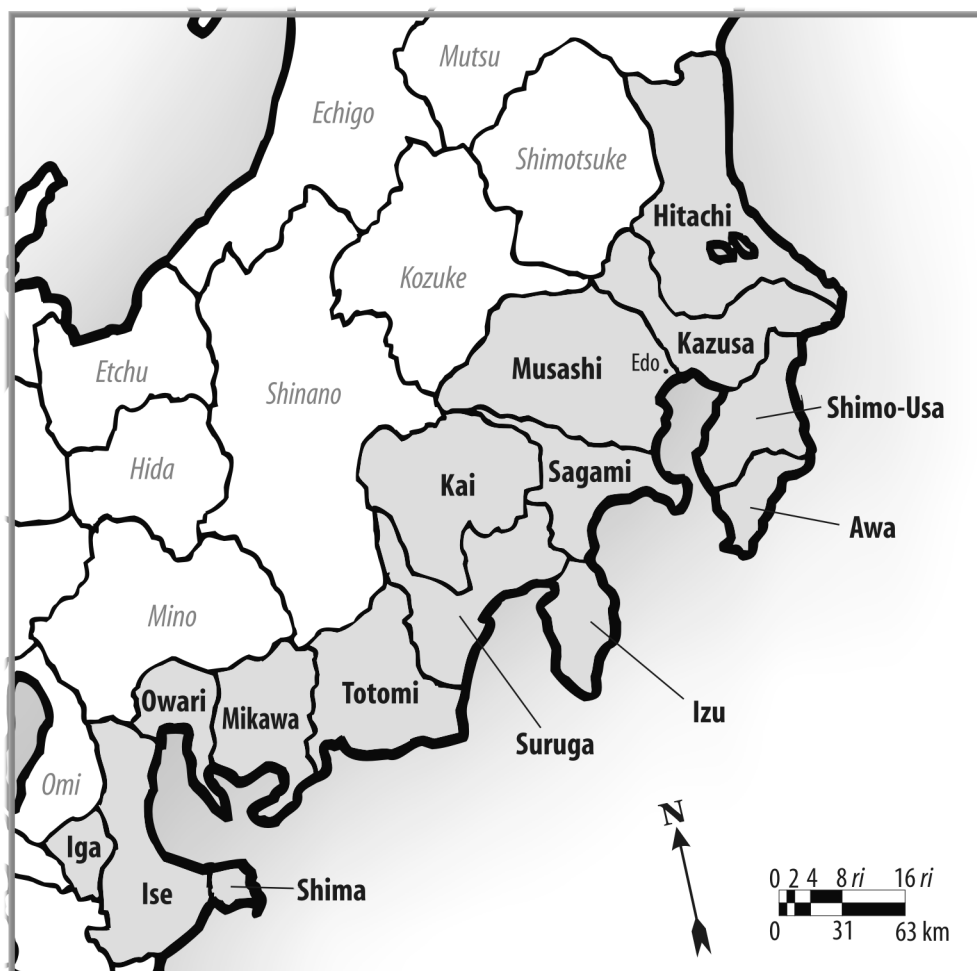
Mutsu is by far the largest province in all of Japan. It was one of the last to be formed as Japanese settlers displaced the native *Ainu* people over a number of years. The northern limits of the province still have very much the character of a frontier territory. The climate of the province varies fairly dramatically as one travels inland. It is temperate and warm at the eastern shore, and the narrow central plains are extremely fertile, home to many farming communities. The western side of the province is dominated by rocky mountains where many beautiful lakes can be found. The mountain regions and the north coasts are notable for their harsh winter weather.

Several different clans occupy this province, existing in a state of watchful peace. They rule from a number of prominent castle towns, most notably Aizuwakamatsu, Kozukata, and Sendai. A short journey from Sendai, a traveler may view the legendary beauty of Matsushima Bay, wherein lie more than 250 tiny islands, dotted with graceful pines. The bay is considered one of the three most beautiful places in Japan.

## Dewa

Like Mutsu, Dewa was settled gradually as Japanese colonists displaced the native peoples. In the years since, it has been relatively well-settled, and is noted for its silk production. Important towns include Akita in the north, and Yamagata in the south. The southern part of the province is also home to the Ryushaku-ji Temple, which was carved out of the side of a stone mountain hundreds of years ago. The priests continue to dig new tunnels into the mountain to this day. Dewa is also home to three mountains sacred to Shintoism — Mount Haguro, Mount Gassan, and Mount Yuduno.

## The East Sea Route: Tokaido



The region of Tokaido should not be confused with the Tokaido road, which runs between the imperial capital of Kyoto and the military capital of Edo. The region extends northward from Kinai along the warm eastern coast of Japan. It is mountainous and forested along the western half,

with stretches of flat land along the eastern coast. The largest of these, the Kanto Plain, spreads across several provinces. In many other places the mountains run almost to the ocean. The Tokaido region incorporates a large number of small (though important) provinces. In approximate order from north

to south, they are Iga, Shima, Ise, Owari, Mikawa, Totomi, Suruga, Izu, Kai, Sagami, Musashi, Awa, Kazusa, Shimo-Usa, and Hitachi. Much of Tokaido is ruled directly by the Shogun, or by clans closely allied to him.

## Iga

Although it is close to the bustling Kansai region, Iga is a tiny and rather inaccessible province. Most of the residents dwell in a flat basin, surrounded on all side by mountains. The settled region is linked to the outside world by poorly maintained roads through the mountain passes. Iga is said to be the birthplace of the art of *ninjutsu* and home to the first and oldest ninja clan.

## Shima

Tiny Shima province is located on a peninsula that extends outward into the ocean. It is a major center for fishing and pearl collection. The most important town in Shima is Ise, which is home to both a famous castle and an extensive Shinto shrine. The shrine, which is dedicated to the sun goddess *Amaterasu*, consists of over 100 individual shrines. Each shrine is demolished and rebuilt once every 20 years. The shrines are not accessible to commoners, and are said to house the sacred mirror, *Yata no kagami*. The mirror is one of the three imperial treasures, and is said to grant wisdom to the Emperor.

## Ise

Ise (not to be confused with the castle town of Ise in Shima province) is dominated by forested mountains, with most residents living along the coast. Castle towns include Tsu (a popular stopping point for pilgrims to the Ise Shrine), Kuwana, and Matusaka.

## Owari

Owari was the home of the warlords Oba Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and continues to be an important base of power for the current Shogun. However, the province is perhaps best known as the home of the famous sword *Kusanagi-no-Tsurugi* ("Grasscutter"), which is one of the three imperial treasures. The sword is kept at the Atsuta shrine in the castle town of Nagoya.

## Mikawa

Mikawa was the original fief of the current Shogun. The principal castle towns are located at Okazaki and Yoshida. The

province is famous for its production of fireworks, and it is currently the only province in Japan in which gunpowder can legally be manufactured.

## Totomi

Like much of the Tokaido region, this province is dominated by large mountains. Until a few decades ago, it was ruled by the Imagawa clan, but the clan lost their holdings and currently serves as the masters of ceremony to Tokugawa. Hamamatsu is the province's most notable castle town.

## Suruga

Suruga's geography varies from mountains in the south to smaller hills in the north. Suruga is one of the provinces directly administered by the Shogun, by his representatives in the castle town of Shizuoka.

## Izu

The province of Izu is composed of a relatively small peninsula that juts southward from the mainland into the ocean. The most dramatic and famous landmark in Izu is sacred Mount Fuji, the tallest mountain in Japan. It is easily visible for many miles around, and can even be seen from Edo on a clear day. Mount Fuji is the goal of many pilgrims, though women are forbidden to climb to the peak. The most notable town in Izu is Mishima, which is home to three important shrines.

## Kai

The province of Kai is entirely landlocked, and is home to many dramatic peaks and lush valleys. The capital of the province is the castle town of Kofu, which is also the site of the *Kai-Zenkou* Buddhist temple.

## Sagami

Sagami is an important leg of the Tokaido road from Edo to Kyoto, and has long held a strategic importance. Control of Sagami is an important part of maintaining the connection between the two capitals. The province is dotted with major fortifications and castle towns. Odawara castle in particular watches over the Tokaido road.

Sagami is mountainous in the west and south, but much of the rest of the province is a flat and fertile plain dominated by rice farms and crisscrossed by rivers. Near the mountain town of Hakone, travelers may

encounter a strange area known as the Great Boiling Valley, a starkly beautiful place of bare stone and boiling geysers.

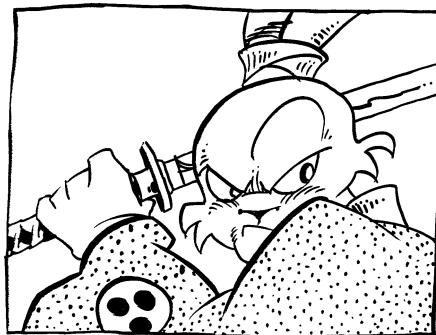
The important city of Kamakura is found on the coast of Sagami. This city is surrounded on three sides by mountains, and on the fourth side by water, making it an impressive natural fortress. The city is home to a number of shrines and temples, including the warrior shrine of *Tsurugaoka Hachiman*. Pilgrims from all over Japan are also drawn to an enormous bronze Buddha.

## Musashi

Musashi, seat of the Shogunate, has long been an important province. It lies on the fertile Kanto Plain, and is dominated by rich farmland and rice fields. Numerous villages and towns can be found, rarely separated by more than a few hours travel. Of course, the most important settlement is Edo, which lies on the coast. It is here that the Shogun holds court, in Edo Castle.

Edo is the largest city in Tokugawa-era Japan. Most of the citizens dwell in small wooden houses known as *machiya*, which are heated by charcoal ovens.

Almost anything can be found in Edo, even strange and wonderful artifacts from distant Europe or the depths of Asia. In addition to countless shrines and temples of all sizes, courtesans offer discreet services to the citizenry in the streets of *Yoshiwaru*, the red-light district. Ronin are forbidden to enter this part of the city, and the prostitutes are forbidden to leave, except once a year to view cherry blossoms in the countryside. The city also boasts a regular police force, as well as fire-fighters. These last are kept busy, as fires are common and flames spread quickly through the close-set wooden residences. The inhabitants of Edo are known as *Eddoko*, and are famed



throughout Japan for their abrupt manner and capacity for creating inventive curses.

## Awa

Tiny Awa provinces lies at the southern tip of the Boso Peninsula, and it is surrounded on three sides by the ocean. Although close to the bustling towns of Musashi, Awa is thinly populated, and has few settlements larger than a village. Fishing and rice farming are the principal occupations. More than one adventurer has retired to sleepy Awa ... or hidden there while avoiding their enemies.

## Kazusa

Kazusa occupies the majority of the Boso Peninsula, a hilly region with a relatively small population. The only settlement of importance to visitors is the castle town of Otaki. Though Kazusa is a relatively quiet area, the locals can spin terrifying tales about monsters and spirits that dwell in the windy hills.

## Shimo-Usa

Shimo-Usa is geographically dominated by the Kanto Plain, and ruled by the Shogun in Edo. The province has been the site of many battles, and has changed hands from clan to clan many times in its history. The principal settlement is the castle town of Sakura.

## Hitachi

Located at the northern edge of the Tokaido region, Hitachi also represents the northern limits of the Kanto Plain. While the southern half of the province is dominated by grasslands dotted with lakes, the north turns once again into mountains.

Hitachi was ruled by several competing *daimyo* until fairly recently, most ruling from the castle town of Mito. A day's journey from Mito, one may find sacred Mount Tsubuka, on which is built an ancient Shinto shrine in the shape of a toad.



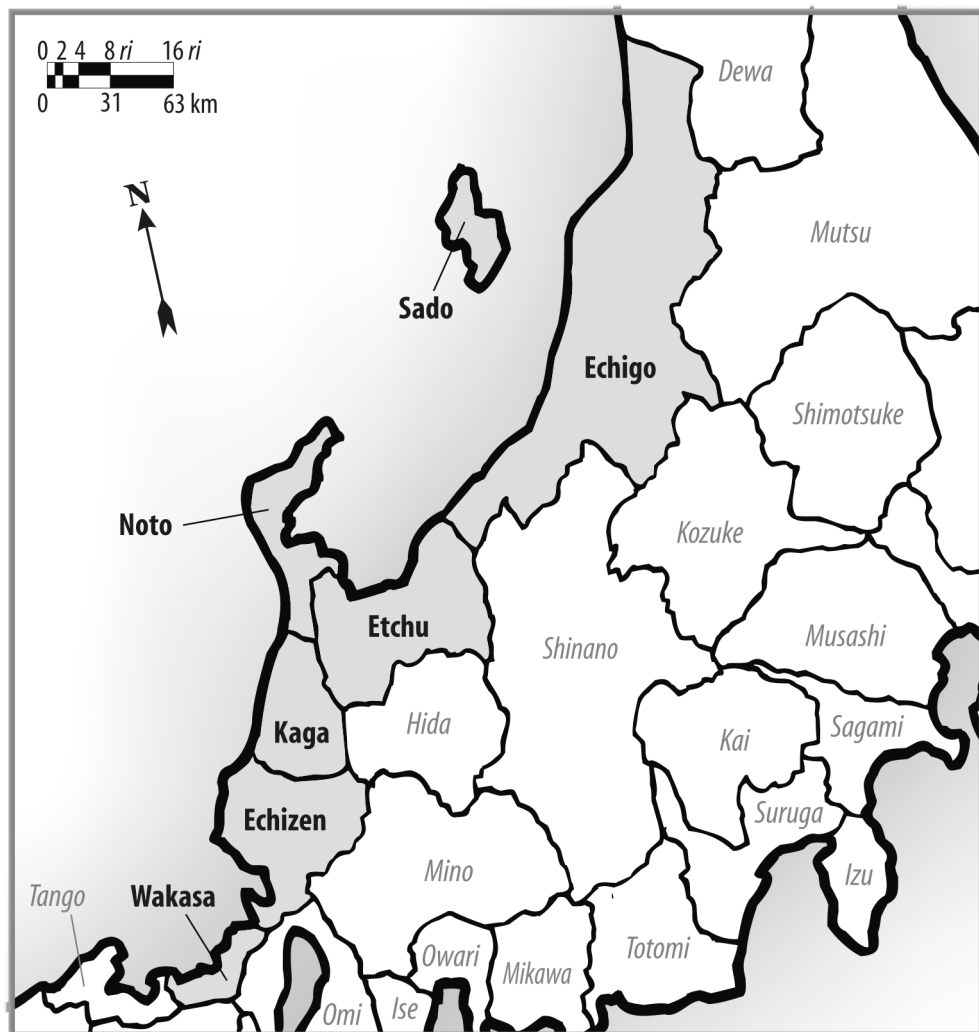
## THE FLOATING WORLD

The Tokaido Road in general, and Yoshiwaru in particular, are romanticized as the Ukiyo ("floating world") — the common man's daily pleasures of Kabuki plays, Geisha houses, illicit gambling, drinking sake (rice wine), and other recreations.

Wood-block printings of art depicting these places are called Ukiyo-e. The most famous Ukiyo-e is "The Great Wave Off Kanagawa." While these pictures were made almost 100 years later, they remain iconic, powerful images of the early Tokugawa era.



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*The North Land Route:* **Hokurikudo**

Hokurikudo follows the western coast of Japan northward, creeping along the spine of the country until it reaches Dewa. Hokurikudo is composed of the provinces of Wakasa, Echizen, Kaga, Noto, Etchu, Echigo, and Sado. The inhabitants of these provinces are often considered unsophisticated rustics by residents of more central areas. However, they are also recognized throughout Japan as skilled artisans.

**Wakasa**

Wakasa is little more than a narrow plain between the mountains in the east, and the Sea of Japan in the west. The provincial capital is in the castle town of Obama. The province is thinly settled otherwise.

**Echizen**

Echizen is similar to Wakasa in many respects, but boasts a much broader and more fertile area of plains. The main town of Fukui is famed for its artisans, who produce very high quality paper and unique ceramics. The inhabitants speak in a curiously accented “sing-song” variation of standard Japanese known as *Fukui-ben*. This accent (along with several local colloquialisms) may mark the speaker as a country bumpkin elsewhere in Japan, particularly in Kansai.

**Kaga**

Most of Kaga is heavily mountainous, and the majority of inhabitants live on the northern coastal plain. The most important city is Kanazawa, a large settlement that is as a haunt for secretive ninja, and was seat

of power for the Maeda clan that ruled this province. About ten years ago, workers completed construction of *Oyama-jinja*, a beautiful Shinto shrine west of the city. Craftsmen from this area are famed for their pottery glazes, silk printing, and talents at making gold leaf and metal inlays. Denizens of the province are even known to drink tea salted with gold leaf!

## Noto

This province is dominated by a large coastal plain. For much of recent history, Noto was ruled by whichever *daimyo* held sway in Kanazawa. The provincial capital is Nanao, home to many pleasant hot springs.

## Etchu

Bounded on three sides by mountains and by the sea on a fourth, Etchu is an enormous natural basin. The mountains are home to many mining operations, and the province is a major source of bronze and items made from it. The principal town of Takaoka is dotted with structures and statues made from bronze, including an enormous statue of Buddha.

Etchu's northern shore leads into Toyama Bay, a body of water of marked beauty. The bay is also famous for the strange sights that may be seen on and under the waves. Travelers report seeing sunken forests and strange mirages. A more reliable spectacle is the annual arrival of vast schools of glowing squid, which eerily illuminate the waters on spring nights.

## Echigo

Niigata, the largest city and port on the western coast of Japan, is located in Echigo. This long, thin province stretches a great distance north and south. The eastern edge is mountainous, and the remainder of the province consists of fertile coastal plain. The province is the home of the *koi*, or ornamental carp, which can be found in the decorative ponds throughout the region. Echigo is also famed for the quality (if not quantity) of the rice grown there.

## Sado

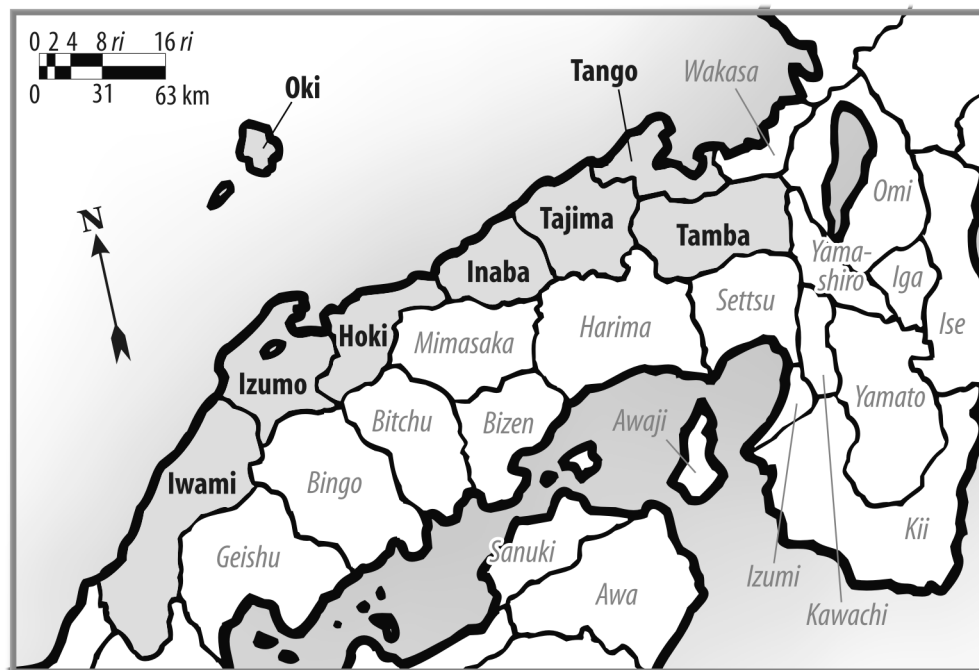
Although Sado is considered part of the Hokurikudo route, this province is actually an island separated from Honshu by miles of open ocean. It is a green and pleasant place of rolling hills in summer, but the winters are very harsh.

Sado has a grim reputation as a place where political exiles are sent to die. The leaders of failed rebellions, criminal nobles, difficult priests, and even a former emperor have all called Sado their final home.

One of the more famous residents was the monk Nichiren, who founded a particularly militant school of Buddhism that remains popular to this day among samurai. Sado is home to many shrines to his memory. Recently, gold was discovered in Sado's green hills. Though this news has yet to make its way back to the Shogun or Emperor, it seems likely that the province's status as a island of exiles will soon change.



## The Mountain Back Route: **San'indo**



The San'indo route follows the west coast of Japan southward from the Kinai region towards Nagato province. It is a thinly settled area for much of its length. San'indo is a cool and dry region, quite pleasant in summer, but known for sometimes severe winter weather. Though the temperature rarely drops much below freezing, heavy snowfalls are common. During the early Edo period, this region often suffered through famines and peasant uprisings.

### Tamba

The eastern-most portions of Tamba border on the Yamashiro and Settsu provinces of Kinai, and share many of the cultural and geographic characteristics of the Japanese heartland. As one travels west, Tamba becomes much more rural, and there are few settlements. The highlands in the southern portion of the province are almost entirely uninhabited.

### Tango

Tango is a small province, nothing more than a narrow, U-shaped strip of land that follows the coastline. It is a very mountainous area, but quite fertile. Unfortunately, the coastal plain is almost non-existent in Tango and farmers must grow their crops on the sides of hills. The province has a couple of important fishing ports, notably Maizuru and Miyazu.

Maizuru lies on the shore of Maizuru Bay, an extremely well-sheltered body of water that is connected to ocean via a relatively narrow channel. The bay is noted for its extreme beauty. However, even Maizuru Bay fades in comparison to Miyazu's *Amano-hashidate*, or "Bridge of Heaven." This a narrow sandbar, covered with graceful pine trees, that crosses Miyazu Bay. According to tradition, visitors should turn their back on the sandbar and view it upside down by putting their head between their legs — and thus see it as a bridge in the heavens. The sandbar, along with Matsushima Bay and the shrine at Itsukushima, is considered one of the three most beautiful sights in Japan.

### Tajima

Tajima, like much of the San'indo region, is a thinly-settled and mountainous area. Izushi is the provincial capital and main castle town, though Hidaka is also an important local center. Tajima is known for its numerous hot springs and snow-capped peaks. Forestry is an important industry.

### Inaba

Inaba is an important agricultural region, noted for its pears, scallions, and watermelons. The local capital is the city of Tottori. Every year, the city hosts the *Shan-shan* umbrella festival, during which teams of colorfully-

dressed performers dance and march with large umbrellas, which are decorated with bits of tinkling metal. The city is also known for the many sand dunes found nearby.

## Hoki

Fruit and rice farming are important trades in Hoki, and significant logging takes place in the southern part of the province. Kurayoshi and Yonago (the provincial capital) are the major population centers. Yonago is a thriving port, and the only place in Japan that offers ferry service to the remote ocean province of Oki.

## Izumo

In ancient times, Izumo was a powerful and independent kingdom, and it is dotted with the sites of ancient battles and ruined castles. According to legend, the gods themselves battled here in the first days of the world. As such, the province holds an important place in Shinto beliefs and folklore. It is colloquially known as the "Home of the Gods."

Centuries ago, the province boasted a tremendous wooden shrine. According to ancient writings, the great shrine stood neatly 300 feet in height. No man has laid eyes on this shrine in nearly 400 years, and some suspect that it never existed. Others say it remains hidden in a secret grove of pines in some lost valley, or that perhaps the gods took it away from this world.

Though Izumo has declined in importance, it is said that the land still remembers its golden age. Shrines to the memory of old warriors and powerful *kami*

can be found in the most unexpected places. Izumo is an independent fief ruled from the castle town of Matsue. A new castle is being built in the town, made from black-painted timbers that have already given the structure the nickname "Plover Castle."

## Iwami

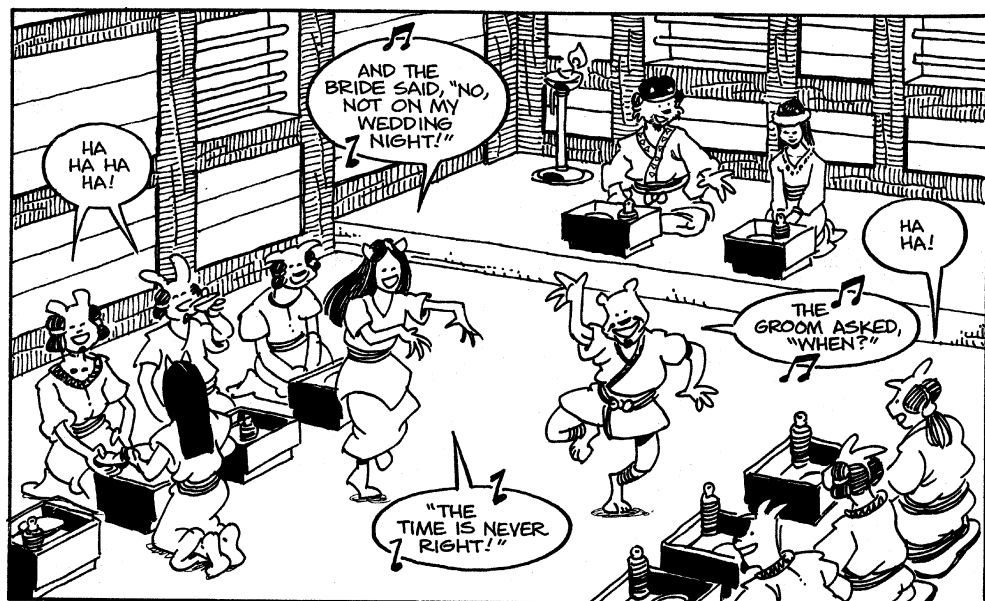
The mountains of Iwami run straight to the coast, and are home to many silver mines. These unpleasant tunnels descend hundreds of feet into the ground, and are worked by the most desperate of peasants. As the mines tend to be located in fairly remote areas, there is a constant need for caravan guards who help bring the silver safely back to civilization.

Iwami has few settlements, and none larger than the small towns of Yanotsu and Masuda. Yanotsu is home to a famous hot spring, which is said to have healing powers.

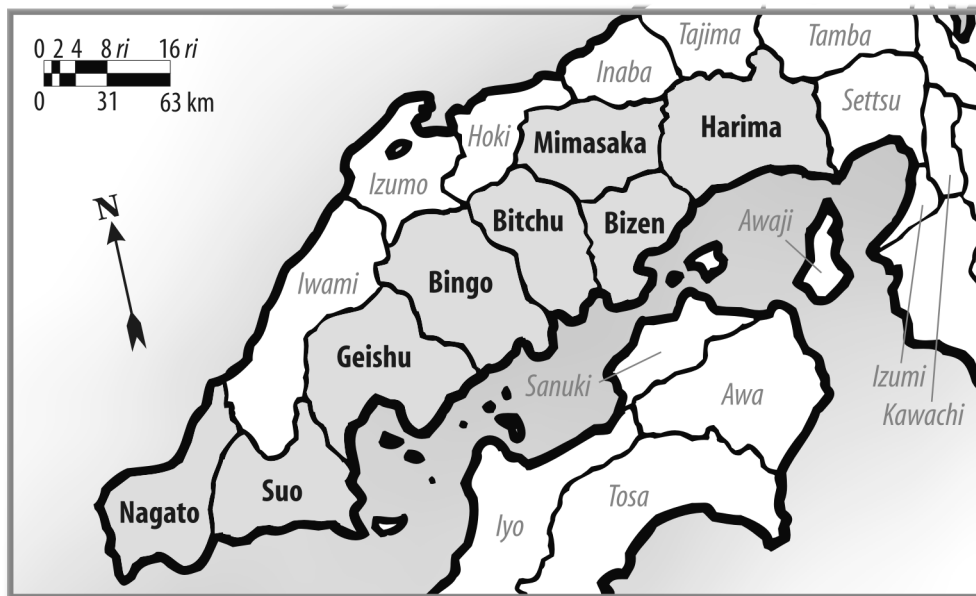
## Oki

Oki province is a collection of several tiny islands, about 80 kilometers from the coast of Honshu. The three largest islands are home to the vast majority of the inhabitants. Oki is directly ruled by the Shogun, and governed on his behalf by the Matsue clan. Like Sado to the north, Oki is known as a traditional destination for political exiles, including two Emperors.

Though small, the islands of Oki produce a substantial crop of rice for their size — though not enough to technically qualify as a *han*. The smaller islands are notable for their breathtaking cliffs and curious rock structures.



## The Mountain Front Route: **San'yodo**



The San'yodo region is comprised of those provinces that follow the eastern coastal plain southward from Kinai, down to the very tip of Honshu. San'yodo is separated from the island of Shikoku by a narrow body of water known as the Seto Sea. This sea is almost entirely inland, as it is connected to the ocean by only three straits. As such, it is an extremely sheltered and peaceful sea and an excellent fishing ground. There are more than three thousand islands in this sea, but only a very few are inhabited. Most are simply specks of land, home to seabirds and a few trees. Fishermen will occasionally spin tales about the strange spirits and creatures that dwell on the more remote of these islands.

The Seto Sea has a moderating effect on weather, and San'yodo is a region of bright sunshine and blue skies. Though little rain falls here, the area is rarely stricken with drought. This is thanks to the many rivers that flow down from the mountains.

### **Harima**

Harima is hot and humid throughout much of the year, and receives relatively little rain even in winter. The northern part of the province is entirely mountainous, gradually turning into a broad coastal plain as one heads southward. The capital is Himeji, home to the magnificent Himeji Castle, which is one of the largest and oldest in Japan. This enormous fortress is often

known as the *Hakurojo*, or "Snowy Heron," because of its brilliant white walls. The new Shogun has ordered a major expansion to the current structure.

### **Mimasaka**

Mimasaka is a place of mountains, tiny lakes, and many rivers. The mountains conceal at least one plateau, where a number of isolated villages may be found. The important settlements include Tsuyama, Yubara, and Yunogo. These last two are home to several hot springs.

Although the majority of the province is landlocked, with no coastline, the island of Shodoshima in the Seto Sea is considered a part of Mimasaka. The island is thinly populated.

### **Bizen**

Bizen has been famous since time immemorial for the skill of its swordsmiths, and the quality of their wares. It is also famous for the many battles that have been fought here, and for the number of times the province has switched hands from one clan to another!

The provincial capital is Okayama. The town is dominated by the menacing black walls of Okayama Castle. Visitors from many parts of Japan also come here to view the famous *Korakuen* gardens, considered one of the three finest gardens in Japan.



## Bitchu

The province of Bitchu is not dominated by any one clan and is instead divided up into several tiny fiefdoms. The former capital of Soja is home to many shrines and ancient structures, but has recently been eclipsed in importance by the port city of Kurashiki. This picturesque city is lined with canals, and is the best place to find passage to the island province of Awaji, as well as the Nankaido region.

## Bingo

Bingo lies directly across from the island of Shikoku, with its coastline situated at the widest part of the Seto Sea. The province is blessed with fertile coastal plains and abundant fisheries. The ancient capital of Fuchu remains an important center.

## Geishu

Geishu (sometimes known as Aki) is a fertile province, producing more than 400,000 *koku* of rice in a given year. The provincial capital is the castle town of Hiroshima. The youthful Lord Noriyuki rules from here. Though it is less than 30 years old, Hiroshima has already grown into a bustling port.

Just off the coast of is the holy island of Itsukushima, sacred to the Shinto religion. No one may be born on this island, and no one may die. Not even trees may be felled. Those who do perish from sudden injury or illness must be taken to the mainland — there are no cemeteries here. The island is home to one of the three holiest shrines in Japan, though the gates and buildings of the shrine are actually constructed just offshore. At high tide they appear to float on the waves. So remarkable is this effect that the shrine is also considered on the three most beautiful views in Japan.

## Suo

Suo is noted for its beautiful coral trees and peach orchards. It is divided by the Saba, a wide river that flows down from the mountains through the coastal plains and into the Seto Sea.

The most important cities are Hofu, and the provincial capital of Yamaguchi. Hofu is noted for the *Hofu Tenmangu* shrine, said to be one of the oldest in Japan. Yamaguchi is an important center for commerce and

politics, and is sometimes referred to as the Kyoto of the west. The sobriquet is well-earned — Yamaguchi was founded in the 14<sup>th</sup> century by a samurai lord who admired Kyoto and wished to create a new town in its image.

The city is home to numerous shrines and temples, most notably the *Rurikoji* temple, which boasts a five-story pagoda. In 1550, the city was visited by Saint Frances Xavier, one of the founders of the Catholic Jesuit order. He spent several months in the area, and established a number of Christian congregations.

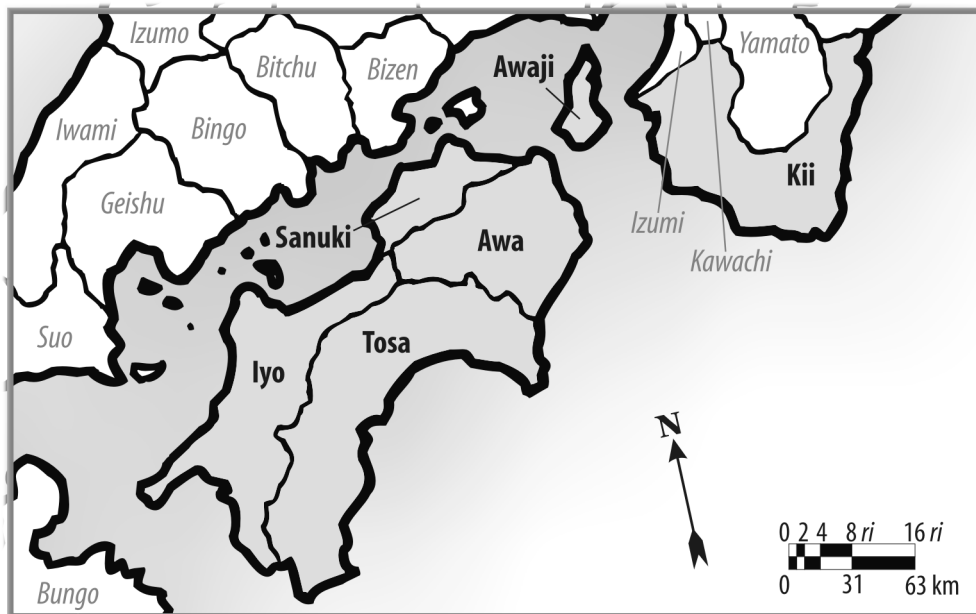
## Nagato

Nagato lies at the extreme south-western tip of Honshu, and is surrounded on three sides by open ocean. The center of the province is dominated by mountains and is thinly populated. One peak, Mount Toganoh, is home to the *Kozanji* temple, site of the first tea garden in Japan.

The castle town of Hagi lies on the north coast, while the old city of Shimonoseki lies to the south. Shimonoseki is the closest settlement to the island of Kyushu, which it faces across the Kanmon Straits. In 1185, this coast was the site of a mighty naval battle between the Taira and Minamoto samurai clans. Thousands of sailors died here, and their spirits are said to inhabit a species of crab that lives in the area. These crabs have patterns on their shells that strongly resemble the faces of warriors. They are never eaten, for fearing of angering the *kami* of the sea.



## The South Sea Route: Nankaido



Nankaido is the smallest region of Japan. It encompasses most of the Kii Peninsula on Honshu, and the entirety of Shikoku. The provinces of Shikoku are separated into north and south by low, forested mountains. None are tall enough to have permanent snow caps, but the terrain is very rough, and the center of the island is nearly uninhabited.

The southern half of Shikoku is exposed to the sometimes fierce weather that blows in from the Pacific Ocean, and has very little flat land. As such, the majority of residents live on the north coastal plain, in the provinces of Iyo and Sanuki.

### Kii

Kii is the only part of Nankaido that is on the main island of Japan. It is situated on a wide peninsula that dips southward from Kinai into the ocean. The province is covered with low, forested mountains. Many say these mist-shrouded peaks are homes of the gods, and certainly any number of ancient shrines may be found here. The valleys are extensively cultivated, and the province is a major producer of peaches, Mandarin oranges, and rice.

The peninsula is home to a number of bustling towns and fishing ports. Kii is ruled by a branch of the Tokugawa clan, from their castle in the northern city of Wakayama. Other major centers include Shirohama and Shigu.

Mount Koya in the north of the province is topped with a small plateau that is home to the most important Shingon Buddhist temple in all of Japan. The temple was founded by Kukai, an ancient Buddhist priest who founded the Shingon sect. His tomb is also on the mountaintop, and it is surrounded by the countless graves of his followers.

For much of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the mountainous Yoshino area of Kii was home to the southern imperial court. However, this area has since been reclaimed by the wilderness, and is said to be inhabited only by bandits, mad hermits, and the ghosts of ancient nobles and courtiers.

### Awaji

Awaji is a small island province, whose name simply means "Road to Awa." It is separated from Honshu and Shikoku by two extremely narrow straits. The western coast lies on the tranquil Seto Sea, while the east faces the open ocean. It has been inhabited for many thousands of years, and the wild places of the island are marked with burial mounds and crumbling ruins of unknown origin. These mysterious remains support the belief that the island was the first born son of the creator goddess Izanami and her husband Izanagi.

Awaji is a mostly rural province, and it is ruled from the castle town in Awa. Like Oki and Sado Islands, Awaji is often the final

destination of political exiles, and it has been for nearly a thousand years.

## Awa

Awa lies in the western third of Shikoku, and serves as the main route to the mainland. Awa, and nearby Awaji, are ruled from the castle town of Tokushima. The town is notable for its thriving indigo dye industry and its distinctive dances. Once a year, almost every resident takes part in a day-long festival of highly-choreographed dance, the likes of which cannot be seen elsewhere in Japan. If stuffy visitors refuse to take part, the locals chide them with a traditional expression — *"The dancing fool and the watching fool are both fools, so why not dance?"*

## Sanuki

Though small in size, Sanuki is divided amongst the *han* of no less than five *daimyos*. This odd situation is a remnant of the age of war, when the province was often a battle ground.

The most important towns are Takamatsu, Sakaide (the old capital), Marugame, and Tadotsu. Marugame Castle is surrounded by the highest stone walls in all of Japan. The slopes of nearby Mount Inoyama are home to many images of the Buddha, and lucky travelers may see an

enormous stone that is said to be the footprint of a legendary giant.

## Iyo

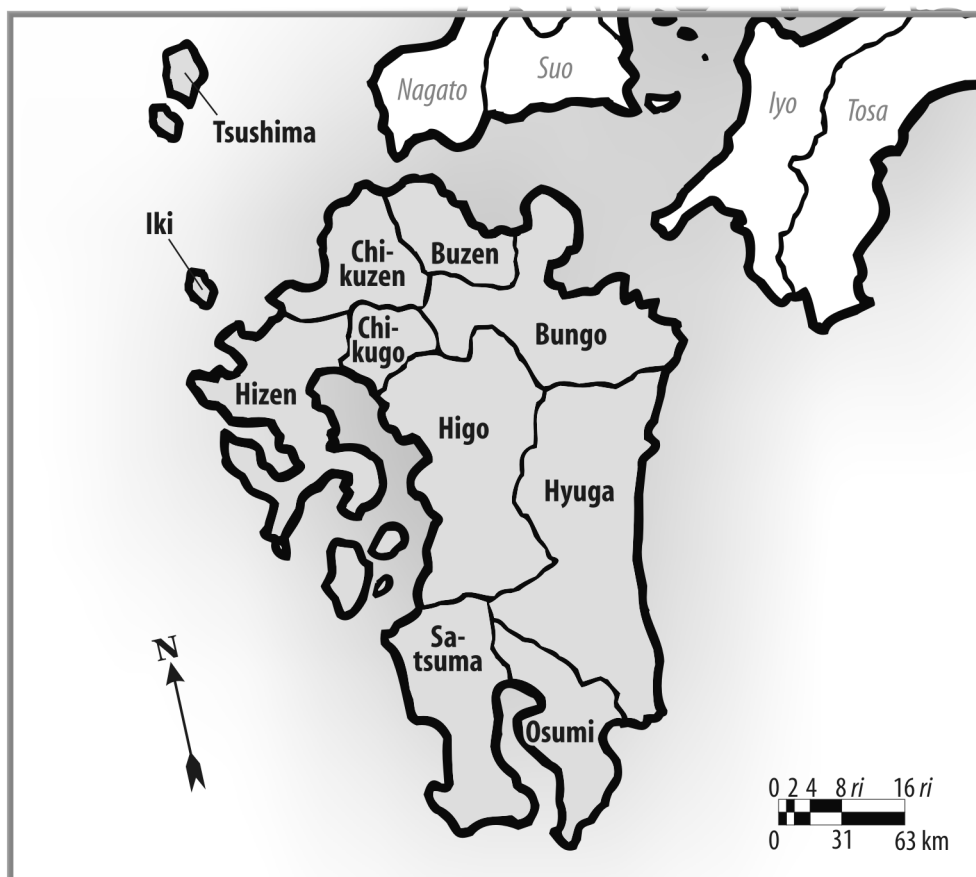
Like Sanuki, Iyo was once divided into several tiny fiefdoms. However, shortly before the establishment of the new Shogunate, the province was unified under a single clan. Iyo is a pleasant land of gentle rains and warm breezes. A fertile plain follows the coast, and many busy port cities can be found along its length.

Matsuyama is the biggest settlement by far, and home to *Dogo Onsen*, the oldest known hot spring in Japan. The *daimyo* in charge of the city has recently begun construction of a magnificent multi-winged castle, which will be the largest on Shikoku.

## Tosa

Tosa is a poor province, and lacks any well-populated center or strong castle town. It is most notable for its many rivers, and rugged mountains. Pilgrims often come to the province to visit its fifteen shrines. This pilgrimage is considered an act of self-imposed hardship, because of the difficulty in traveling to the remote shrine locations. Recently, the Shogun has ordered the foundation of a new castle in the village of Kochi.



The West Sea Route: **Saikaido**

Saikaido encompasses the entire island of Kyushu and tiny islands of the Tsushima and Iki provinces. Kyushu is dominated by rocky mountains, some of which are active volcanoes. The most notable of these is Mount Aso in Higo province. Much of Kyushu is subtropical, and the pines of Honshu here give way to palms and ferns in many of the lowland forests. The Tsushima islands lie off the coast of Kyushu. Iki island is located about halfway between Kyushu and Tsushima, and serves as a waypoint for travelers. These islands have few inhabitants, and have historically been a base for Korean and Japanese pirates.

### Chikuzen

Chikuzen is located on the northwest coast of Kyushu. It is remembered as the site of a massive Mongol invasion in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century. The rocky coast is the site of many sea caves and bizarre rock formations.

The province holds a curious pair of towns: Hakata and Fukuoka. Hakata is home to many important merchants, while Fukuoka is the residence of several noble

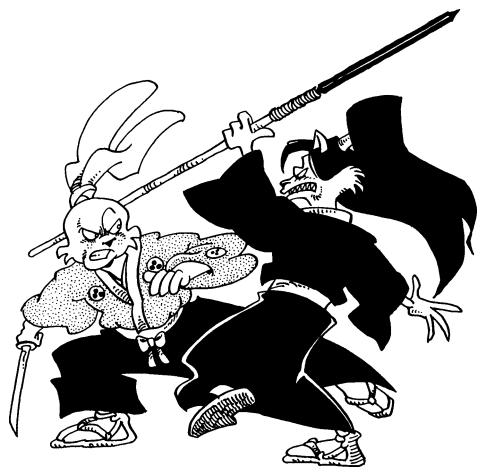
families. The two towns are very close together, but residence in each is traditionally limited to members of the appropriate class. Near Hakata Bay, travelers can still see the miles-long stone wall constructed to guard against the Mongol invasion.

### Chikugo

This small province is nestled between Hizen and Higo, and is nearly landlocked. The entirety of its coastline lies along the sheltered Ariake Inland sea. Chikugo is divided into two fiefs. The Tachibana clan rule from the castle town of Yanagawa, and the Arima dwell in Kurume. The province is known for its dyed cloths and its bone soup.

### Buzen

Buzen is located on the northeast tip of Kyushu. It enjoys a close connection to the mainland, and is separated from Nagato province by the Straits of Shimonoseki. This ocean passage is watched by the castle town of Kokura, which also serves as the seat of power for the local *daimyo*.



## Bungo

Bungo lies on the eastern coast of Kyushu, across from the island of Shikoku. The province is famed for its countless hot springs. Bungo is ruled from the castle town of Kitakyushu, in the north part of the province. Fairly close to Kitakyushu, a traveler can find the town of Beppo, home to thousands of hot springs.

Nine of those springs have peculiar aspects and are known as the Nine Hells, or *jigoku*. Some have an extraordinary color, like the bright blue Sea Hell and the scarlet waters of the Blood Hell. Others simply boil intensely, or shoot out enormous geysers at regular intervals. One of the more unusual springs is actually pool of bubbling hot gray mud, named the *Oniishibozu Jigoku* because the bubbles resemble the shaven heads of monks.

## Hizen

Hizen, on the extreme western edge of Kyushu, has a reputation as a very cosmopolitan province. It has several castles, and its ports act as the gateway to Japan for European and Indian traders. Hizen also served as a major base of operations during the seven-year war with Korea.

Nagoya, Karatsu and Saga are the principal castle towns, though the new port of Nagasaki is becoming the principal trading port. Visitors may well meet Portuguese and Dutch traders in Nagasaki, as well as missionaries from distant Rome.

## Higo

Higo lies on the western coast of Kyushu. It is dominated by mountains, which descend to an alluvial plain that follows the coastline. The majority of the inhabitants dwell on this plain. The coast of Higo lies

along the Ariake Sea, a small body of water that is almost entirely enclosed by the Hizen Peninsula and the Amakusa Archipelago. The Amakusa islands are considered part of the province.

The old provincial capital of Kumamoto continues to be an important center for trade and administration. The city is dominated by the enormous bulk of Kumamoto Castle, one of the largest in Japan. This magnificent fortification has 49 towers and 29 gates, and covers several square miles.

The Amakusa Archipelago lies a few miles offshore, and consists of numerous small islands. The largest of these, Amakusa Island, is extremely hilly. The natives are forced to build artificial terraces in the sides of the hills in order to grow rice.

Higo is also home to Japan's largest active volcano, Mount Aso. The broad and tall peak covers an enormous area, and almost daily belches forth smoke and flame. Aso is regarded with a mixture of awe and reverence by the people of Higo.

## Hyuga

Hyuga is an important province, in terms of history and legend. It is said to have been the original home of the gods, and that almost every landmark in the region is connected to a famous legend. Ancient burial mounds and ruins add to veracity to these old tales.

Physically, the province is dominated by an area of volcanic peaks known as the Kirishima. As in most of Japan, most of the inhabitants live on the coastal plains that lie at the base of these mountains.

Until recently, the province was divided into two fiefs, and the two castle towns remain influential centers. In the north is Agata Castle, and in the south lies Obi. Hyuga is home to numerous shrines, some of them located at the very places the gods are said to have lived.

## Osumi

The southern most tip of Kyushu is found in Osumi, and the entire province has a nearly tropical environment. Winters are extremely mild, while the summers are long and humid. Osumi is dotted with mountains, but also with a large number of gray volcanic plateaus. This is one of the most volcanically active regions in the

world, though forceful eruptions are thankfully quite rare.

Osumi is ruled from nearby Satsuma, and does not have a castle town or administrative center. Consequently, the old capital of Kokubu is the most important town.

## Satsuma

Satsuma lies far from Kyoto and Edo, yet it is a surprisingly cosmopolitan province, with brisk trade with the outside world. Japan's very first gun arrived here, washed ashore with a Portuguese sailor.

The province is administered from Kagoshima, a port located at the southern tip of the province. Kagoshima lies in the shadow of Mount Sakurajima, the most active volcano in Japan. It continually emits ash and smoke, and on many days the inhabitants of Kagoshima must carry umbrellas to protect themselves from the constant rain of volcanic dust. Scholars claim that the volcanic ash has gifted the soil with unusual fertility. Certainly, local farmers are proud of their radishes, which are known to grow up to a foot in diameter.

Far to the south of Satsuma's coast is



Yakushima Island. This island simply consists of forty large mountains, the tallest of which are the highest peaks by far in the Sokaïdo Region. The mountains are covered almost to their peaks by dense forests of *Yaku-sugi* pines.

## Iki

Tiny Iki province lies several miles to the north of Kyushu, almost exactly halfway to Tsushima. The inhabitants are mostly poor farmers and fishermen, though large numbers of pirates are suspect to have bases in hidden coves. Iki has no castle town, nor any large settlements to speak of.

## Tsushima

The province of Tsushima lies at the extreme south-western edge of Japanese power. Tsushima consists of two small islands, separated by a narrow and deep channel, yet linked by an impressive natural stone causeway.

Tsushima has a curious history. While it has been a province of Japan for nearly a thousand years, in A.D. 1400 inhabitants sought aid from the King Taejong of Korea. They were being oppressed by a large force of pirates who had made a base on the islands. King Taejong sent thousands of soldiers to Tsushima, and began formally colonizing the islands soon after, in defiance of a Japanese claim. In the 1590s, the great Toyotomi Hideyoshi started a seven-year war with Korea, and invaded the peninsula on two occasions. In the course of this war, Tsushima fell once again into Japanese hands. Currently, the island is being used as a major naval base and shipyard in preparation of a planned invasion of China.



## ezo, THE LAND OF AINU

Ezo is the northernmost island of Japan. For most Japanese, Ezo is a mysterious land of barbarians and monsters, almost unknown except through tales. Though it is counted as part of the Empire, this claim has very little basis in fact. The Japanese currently control only the southernmost tip of the island, where the Kakizaki clan rules a small fief from the castle town of Matsumae and the port of Hakodate.

The remainder of the island is something of an enigma to the Japanese. They have mapped the coasts, and have even made occasional incursions deep into the interior. However, Ezo is still very much the domain of the Ainu, a tribal people who are fiercely independent and very cautious of the Japanese — with good reason.

The Ainu once dwelled throughout northern Honshu. In the past several hundred years, they were gradually forced northward. Ezo is their last homeland.

Ezo is known to be heavily forested and mountainous, though there are a number of small plateaus. The Ainu people are scattered in many small villages through, and they swear allegiance to a number of local chiefs (and thus have no centralized authority).

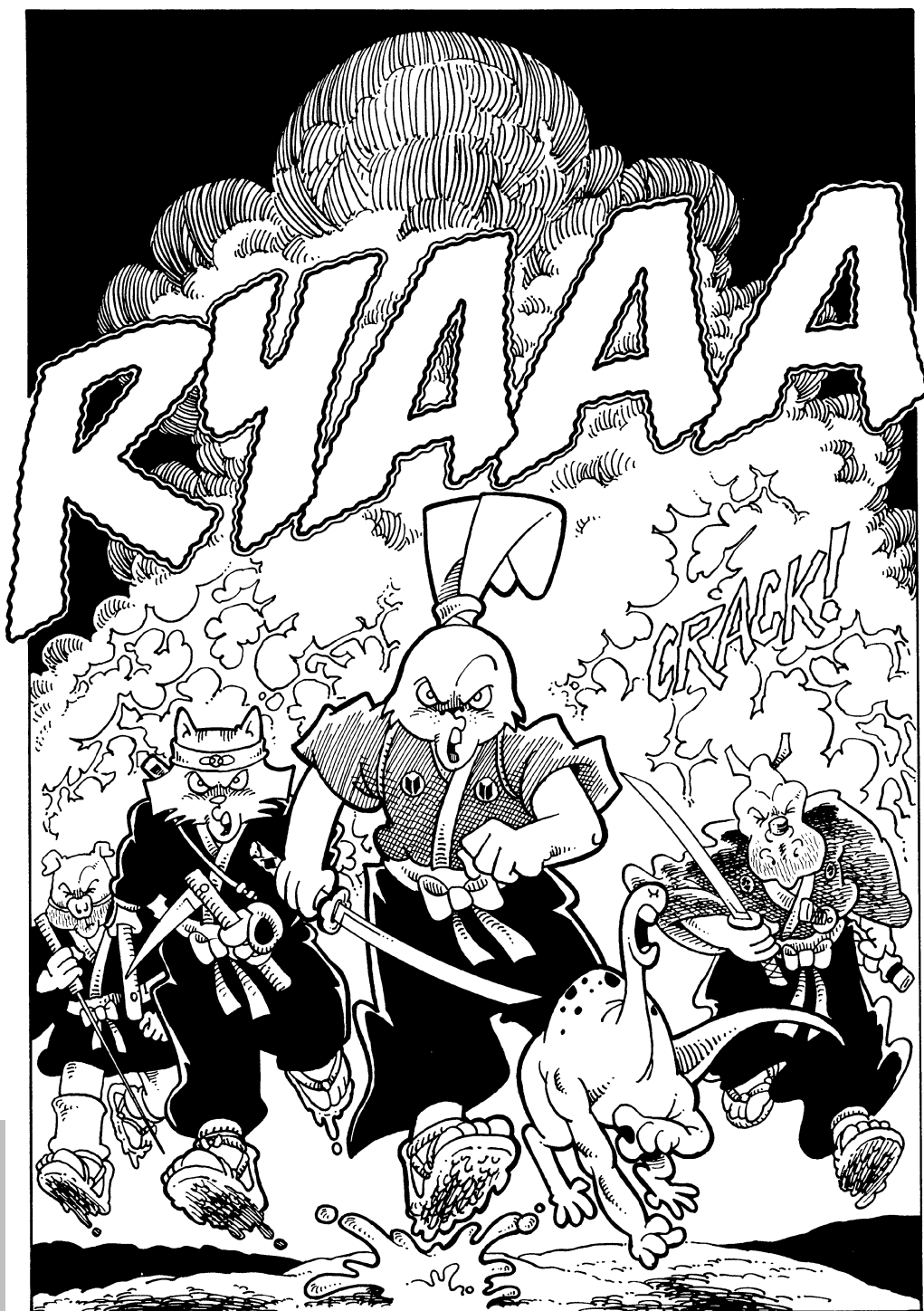
Ezo is much colder than the rest of Japan, and winters on the northern coast are extremely harsh. The oceans surrounding the northern side of the island have been known to freeze out to several miles in the coldest seasons.



# SELECTED CAST OF CHARACTERS

The following is a list of some of the more important characters who have appeared in the *Usagi Yojimbo* comic book. Most can be easily incorporated into any game. This list is by no means exhaustive –

over the years, dozens of characters have appeared. As Game Host, you should use these characters as models for your own ... or perhaps tell new stories with them.



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**Ando***(Male Dog Peasant)*

Ando is the headman of a small village, who lost his son in a ninja siege. With the assistance of Miyamoto Usagi, Ando was able to rally his villagers against the attackers. Ando may well require wandering adventurers for similar tasks in the future.

---

**Councilor Arimura***(Male Bear Minister of Protocol, Clan Geishu)*

The treacherous Councillor Arimura was once Minister of Protocol to young Lord Noriyuki of Clan Geishu. Arimura was swayed by promises of wealth from Lord Hikiji. In an effort to slay his own lord, he assigned incompetent fighters to Lord Noriyuki's entourage, in the full knowledge that Noriyuki's party would be ambushed. Luckily for Lord Noriyuki, his bodyguard Tomoé Ame was able to fight off the attackers long enough for the two to join forces with Miyamoto Usagi, the famous ronin. Arimura's villainy did not go unpunished. He was slain by an arrow during a second ambush.

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**Lady Asano***(Female Cat Noble)*

Lady Asano was once the wife of the powerful Lord Asano. She was left a widow when a treacherous servant named Oda killed her husband, and spent the rest of her life and wealth in pursuit of the cowardly vassal. She turned her back on her noble lifestyle and wandered the countryside with a lone retainer, forced to beg for food and shelter.

After many years, she found Oda serving as a town magistrate. At the same time, she crossed paths with the ronin Miyamoto Usagi, and his bounty hunter friend Gennosuké. Lady Asano mistook Gen for his father, the famous general Murakami who had served her clan loyally. While he initially refused to help her, both he and Usagi came to her aid when Oda unjustly imprisoned her. Upon her rescue Lady Asano immediately attacked Oda, and was slain. However, she was able to kill the corrupt magistrate with her dying breath.

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**Atsuo***(Male Cat Merchant)*

The son of a respected money-lender, Atsuo has quickly squandered the good reputation of his family by charging outrageous interest rates. Those who can not pay are beaten (or worse) by hired thugs.

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**Chizu***(Female Cat Rogue Ninja)*

The sister to the esteemed Shingen, Chizu inherited the title of *kashira* from her brother after his demise at Castle Tamakuro. After many misadventures (no thanks in part to the meddling of Usagi and his friends), factionalism tore apart the Neko clan. Kagamaru used these failures to his advantage; he declared Chizu a traitor to the Neko and ordered her to be slain. But Chizu was as crafty as her brother and escaped, even with the entire clan after her. With no home and no allies, Chizu walks the earth as a *nukenin*, a rogue ninja.

---

**General Fujii***(Male Cat Bandit Leader)*

A bandit leader who styles himself a general, Fujii is a cruel and driven man. He is also extremely cunning. He convinced a village to hire him as his men as "protectors" from bandits, when in fact Fujii's men were the bandits themselves!

General Fujii crossed swords with the ronin Miyamoto Usagi and his bounty-hunter companion Gennosuké, and defeated them both. He tortured Usagi for several days, and stole the rabbit's swords, but could not break the ronin. Fujii was eventually slain by Usagi.

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**Gorogoro***(Male Goat Bounty-Hunter in Training)*

Gorogoro is an extremely young goat, the toddler son of the famous bounty hunter Yagi. His father has trained Gorogoro to assist in his trade with certain tricks and traps that take advantage of his son's age to add an element of surprise.

**Gunichi***(Male Pig Retainer)*

An apparently brave and loyal retainer to the now-dead Lord Mifune, Gunichi was a firm friend of Miyamoto Usagi, who was also in service to Mifune. The two friends fought valiantly together at the Battle of Adachigahara. However, when the tide of battle turned, Gunichi revealed his true colors and fled from the field, deserting his lord. Years later, he encountered Usagi, and paid for his cowardice.

**Hanako***(Female Cat Peasant)*

Hanako is a simple peasant girl, who had the misfortune to live in the village chosen by General Fujii for his predations. She helped Usagi and the bounty hunters Gennosuké and Inukai by leading them to Fujii's lair. She was later taken hostage by the canine bounty hunter, Inukai, but was swiftly released.

**Hatsu***(Male Cat Gambler)*

Hatsu is a dishonest gambler, who almost invariably cheats. He often runs afoul of the law and his fellow gamblers. He is currently on the run from the law, angry gamblers, and those he has fleeced.

**Lord Hebi***(Male Serpent Lord)*

Lord Hikiji's most trusted servant, the imposing Lord Hebi is one of the few serpent folk

found in Usagi's Japan, and the only one featured in the stories. It is hard to say which is greater – his ruthlessness for power or his fighting prowess from his unusual size.

As Lord Hikiji remains “The Shadow Lord”, it is Lord Hebi who puts all the plans in motion.

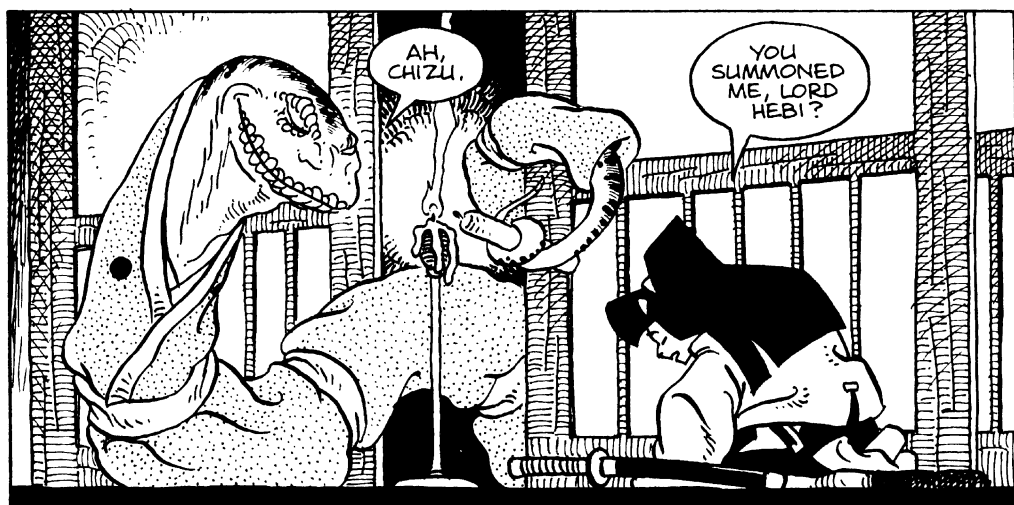
**Higashimori***(Male Cat Sensei)*

This arrogant fencing instructor believed that his Dogora Fencing School was the greatest of all. He hated and feared his chief rival, the old lion fencing master Katsuichi. His bitterness became uncontrollable when Katsuichi's star pupil, Miyamoto Usagi, defeated the best Dogoro students easily. Higashimori collected a small army of his pupils and attacked Katsuichi, forcing the old teacher off a cliff. Higashimori was later slain by Usagi.

**Lord Hikiji***(Male Unknown Daimyo)*

The wicked and power-hungry Lord Hikiji rules an expansive fiefdom in the northern half of Honshu. He aspires to much more. He wishes to become the undisputed master of all Japan. He has enacted many plans and fought many battles to achieve this goal.

Hikiji's ambition was directed first at his neighbor, Lord Mifune. He hired ninja assassins to slay Mifune's wife and young son in the knowledge that this would surely spur Mifune to war. En route to battle, Hikiji's men raided villages, plundering food and killing all who stood in their way. One



man who stood up to him was Usagi's father, Miyamoto, the headman of a village. Miyamoto coldly told Hikiji that there was no food to be spared for his army. Incensed, Hikiji beheaded Miyamoto and appointed Kenichi as the new headman before riding on to challenge Mifune in Battle of Adachigahara Plain.

The battle would surely have been won by Lord Mifune, were it not for the treachery of Toda, one of his generals. Toda switched allegiance to Hikiji during the battle in the hopes of being rewarded with a position of power in Hikiji's expanded regime. His change of allegiance tipped the battle in favor of Lord Hikiji, and Mifune was slain.

However, Hikiji had no use for traitors in his service, and Toda's treachery was rewarded with torture and banishment.

Since defeating Mifune, Lord Hikiji has turned his attentions to the young lord of Clan Geishu, Noriyuki. Hikiji is using more cunning methods to defeat Lord Noriyuki, and often employs ninja to undertake shadowy operations against the clan. Hikiji plans his conspiracies so meticulously that there is never any solid evidence to connect him to any misdeeds. As such, the Shogun has yet to take action against him.

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## **Lady Hirano Kinuko** *(Female Cat Noble of Clan Hirano)*

Born into the Takamatsu clan, as a young princess Lady Kinuko was forced into an arranged marriage with a man of the Hirano clan. Miyamoto Usagi, who at that time was still in the service of Lord Mifune, led her caravan and enormous entourage to the wedding.

En route, caravan was attacked by ninjas of the Neko clan, seeking to disrupt the alliance that would result from the wedding. Only she and Miyamoto Usagi survived the attack. The rabbit led her to safety on horseback, with the ninja in close pursuit. The two disguised themselves as peasants to evade capture.

While she initially mistrusted Usagi, she soon began to respect him. Indeed, they fell in love, and talked openly of running away

together. In the end, a rescue party led by General Gunichi found the couple, and Kinuko resigned herself to a loveless marriage. She has not forgotten Usagi, however.

---

## **Ikeda** *(Male Bear Farmer)*

Ikeda was once a general in the employ of Lord Araki, who started a revolt against Lord Noriyuki's father in an effort to gain control of Clan Geishu. The rebellion failed, and Ikeda's army scattered to the winds. Ikeda, who was seriously wounded, fled and took up life as a simple farmer.

Ikeda intended to make a return to power someday, but over the years he came to appreciate the new life he had forged for himself. Indeed, when the opportunity later arose for him to strike at the son of his old foe, he refused and protected Lord Noriyuki at great risk to his own life. Later, he died fighting ninjas, while Usagi returned the famous blade Grasscutter to its shrine.

---

## **Inazuma** *(Female Cat Ronin)*

Inazuma is something of a mystery. She is a swordswoman with lightning fast reflexes and ambiguous morals. She often seems to be on the run, and has crossed paths with Usagi on more than one occasion. If she appears, trouble is certain to quickly follow.

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## **Inspector Ishida** *(Male Bear Magistrate)*

Inspector Ishida works with the police in a village often visited by Miyamoto Usagi. With his polite expression, impeccable manners, and keen observations, Ishida is a respected city official and a canny opponent for law-breakers.

Because cultural restrictions do not permit Ishida to inspect corpses directly, he has to rely on his keen investigative skills and insightful inquiry. Recently, Ishida has been vexed by the gentleman-thief known only as "Nezumi", who is tarnishing his otherwise impeccable record.



Ishida carries the *jitte*, the forked iron rod used to disarm with minimal contact — the signature weapon of his office.

## Inukai

*(Male Dog Bounty Hunter)*

Inukai is a gruff loner who rarely seeks help from any person. While in pursuit of General Fujii, he allied with Usagi and the rhinoceros bounty hunter, Gen. At the conclusion of this quest, Inukai seemed to show his true colors when he took a young girl hostage in order to force Gen and Usagi

to allow him to keep the entirety of Fujii's bounty. However, it later transpired that Inukai used this money for the creation of an orphanage. Inukai continued wandering the highways of Japan in search of criminals.

## Jei

*(Male Wolf Wanderer)*

The terrifying creature known as Jei claims to be a divine emissary. Certainly, he has some magical skills, a frightening competence at arms, and the uncanny ability to escape from apparently certain death. His curious eyes and chilling voice also lend credence to his claims.

Jei says that he has been sent into the world to destroy all evil, yet he often seems to be the root of evil. He will often judge people he meets, and slay them if he feels they have any evil within their souls... but has also been known to employ black-hearted brigands as assistants! Jei is obsessed with the belief that slaying the ronin Usagi will allow him to attain godhood. No deed is too black for him to perform in the pursuit of this goal.





## Jotaro

*(Male Rabbit Student Warrior)*

Jotaro is an earnest and good-hearted young rabbit, with a soul for adventure. He lives in a small village with his mother, Mariko, and father Kenichi. He idolizes Miyamoto Usagi, and considers him to be his uncle. Jotaro hopes to become a mighty warrior, just like Usagi. He has already had a number of brushes with danger, and displayed remarkable courage and cleverness in escaping.

Jotaro is unaware that Usagi is his true father, the product of a brief romance before Mariko was wed to Kenichi. Neither Mariko nor Usagi have any intention of telling the boy the truth.

## Juzo

*(Male Cat Samurai)*

Juzo was the drunken brother of a corrupt magistrate, Sueoka. The two of them hired a gang of thugs to chase away or kill villagers who had discovered gold in a nearby valley, so that they could claim it for themselves. Juzo also secretly hired them to slay his brother, so that he would not have to share the treasure. In the end, Juzo killed his brother himself, but was slain in turn by his brother's guards.

## Kaiko

*(Male Unknown Merchant)*

Kaiko is an arrogant and greedy silk merchant, who always drives the hardest bargains. He is openly contemptuous of the poor peasants who create the silk he sells, but is not an actively evil man.

## Sensei Katsuichi

*(Male Cat Sensei)*

Katsuichi is a skilled sword master who felt that the eight common styles of fencing were inadequate. He formed his own school, and took only the most talented students. His standards were so high that the school was forced to close down, and Katsuichi became a hermit near a mountain village.

While a hermit, he took a young rabbit named Miyamoto Usagi under his tutelage, and taught him many lessons about life and honor, as well as swordsmanship. Usagi went on to defeat the star pupils from the nearby Dogora fencing school, a fact which infuriated the leader of the academy, Higashimori. A band of students attacked Katsuichi, led by Higashimori, who put out Katsuichi's eye and pushed him over a cliff to his apparent death. It later transpired that Katsuichi survived this fall. Though very old, he continues to train worthy souls who come to him for instruction.

## Kenichi

*(Male Rabbit Hetman)*

Kenichi is the stern but honest headman of a small village in Mutsu. He was thrust suddenly into his position of authority when the previous headman, a rabbit named Miyamoto, was callously slain by Lord Hikiji. While Hikiji had selected Kenichi at random, the young rabbit proved to be an excellent choice. Kenichi takes his responsibilities extremely seriously, in both his personal and professional life. While he is not a genial man, he is a loyal husband, father, and protector of the village.

Kenichi has one failing. He harbors an intense dislike for the ronin Usagi, even though Usagi has saved the village from disaster on more than one occasion. This dislike stems from their childhood rivalry in arms, as well as for the affection of Mariko. However, Kenichi is honorable enough to put



this dislike aside long enough to accept Usagi's help when it counts, and even thank him for it.

## Kitsune

(Female Fox Street Entertainer)

Kitsune is a charming scoundrel who may be found in any village or town. Officially she is a busker and street entertainer, but this income is supplemented from time to time with petty theft.

While she has a casual attitude towards personal property, Kitsune lives by her own code of honor. She will never take from those less fortunate than herself, nor from someone who would be badly hurt by the loss of what



she takes. In the past, she served as a kind of guardian to a mute noodle seller, and she may take on this role for any person she feels is in need of a hand.

## Mariko

(Female Rabbit Samurai)

Mariko is the dutiful wife of Kenichi, though she still harbors fond feelings for Usagi, her former lover. Mariko is of the samurai caste, and upholds the *bushido* code as fiercely as any warrior. She will not betray her duty to Kenichi, or her son Jotaro.

## Yoriki Masuda

(Male Cat Assistant Magistrate)

Though pledged to serve the law, Masuda has no real respect for anything that does not line his own pockets. Masuda is an inveterate gambler, and uses his influence over the local police force in his town to keep them from entering certain areas where his *yakuza* (organized crime) associates rob travelers in order to pay for Masuda's gambling debts.

## Lord Mifune

(Male Tiger Daimyo)

Though now dead, the memory of Lord Mifune continues to hold a powerful influence over his former subjects and retainers. He is remembered for his devotion to the ideals of *bushido*, and his recognition of the fact that a good lord has as many duties to his retainers as they do to him.

He fell in battle with Lord Hikiji, after being betrayed by one of his own generals. His former samurai, Usagi, took his master's head, and buried in secret. Though a wandering ronin, Usagi is still loyal to the memory of Mifune.

## Magistrate Miyamoto

(Male Rabbit Hetman)

Miyamoto was a fair and honorable man, who was regarded with a great deal of respect by the people of his village. His loyalty to Lord Mifune cost him his life. While his son Usagi was away with Lord Mifune's army, Miyamoto coldly refused to aid Lord Hikiji's army. Hikiji beheaded the old rabbit for the sleight.



## Miyamoto Usagi

*(Male Rabbit Bodyguard)*

Miyamoto Usagi was born in a small northern village, the son of the headman. Early in his youth he showed promise as a future samurai, and was sent to train with the hermit sword master, Katsuichi. Throughout his childhood years, Usagi also maintained a fierce rivalry with Kenichi, another local boy. Usagi always managed to gain the upper hand in their contests (if only slightly), and this created a bitterness on the part of Kenichi that has not died.

Usagi excelled in his training, and went into the service of Lord Mifune, shortly before Lord Hikiji decided to make war with Clan Mifune. In the resulting conflict, Clan Mifune fell. Usagi was left masterless.

Since that time, he has wandered Japan seeking employment as a bodyguard. He often works for Clan Geishu and is also prone to taking on noble causes and quests with no promise of reward. Though he may wander far and wide, Usagi has never forgotten his master's betrayal, or the evil of Lord Hikiji. His eventual goal is to bring Hikiji to justice, either before the Shogun or on the field of battle. On the single occasion the two met face to face, Hikiji left Usagi with a terrible scar over his left eye.

Usagi is a brilliant swordsman, certainly one of the best in living memory. He is also an intensely honorable and moral fellow, and will not kill when it is not necessary. Though he is a pleasant and urbane companion, Usagi seems drawn by fate into conflicts — if you meet him, it is likely that something important (and dangerous!) is about to happen.



## Murakami Gennosuké

(Male Rhinoceros Bounty Hunter)

Gennosuké (known to his friends as “Gen”) might have been born into a life of relative leisure, as a the son of a prominent samurai, General Murakami. His father served Lord Asano of Clan Shirogeta, who had been slain years ago by a treacherous vassal named Oda. Murakami had sworn to find and punish Oda, his loyalty to his dead lord overcoming even his feelings for his wife and young son. After his wife died, General Murakami began relentlessly training Gennosuké in *kenjutsu*. Under his harsh tutelage, Gen grew to resent and even hate his father. When he learned all he could from Murakami, he left and started his own career as a bounty hunter. Murakami’s fate is unclear, though it is believed that he finally found Oda the traitor, only to be slain.

In the time since then, Gen has had many adventures, often in the company of Miyamoto Usagi. Shortly after meeting Usagi, the two of them encountered the man who slew Gennosuké’s father, and assisted in bringing him to justice.

Gennosuké is a gruff and sometimes crude fellow, who at first glance may seem motivated entirely by greed. Those who travel with him will learn that he is capable of loyalty, and is as often actuated by honor as he is by the lure of money. The most noticeable thing about

Gennosuké is his broken horn — it was cut off in a duel with the blind swords-pig, Zato-Ino.

## Lord Noriyuki

(Male Panda Lord of  
Clan Geishu)

Lord Noriyuki found himself leading Clan Geishu after his father was murdered by agents of Lord Hikiji. His own life has been threatened several times by Hikiji’s plots, though Noriyuki always manages to pull through, thanks to the skilled help of his bodyguard, Tomoé Ame, and his friend Usagi.

Lord Noriyuki is in his early teens. Though young, he normally presents himself with obvious authority, at least when dealing with outsiders. He is a wise and capable ruler, and he knows when to seek advice. The burden of rule has hardened him somewhat, but he is still quite capable of expressing childish glee.

## Magistrate Oda

(Male Cat Magistrate)

Oda rose to his current rank of magistrate through an act of craven treachery. He was once a retainer of Lord Asano of Clan Shirogeta. Enraged because he was passed over for a promotion, Oda agreed to assassinate his own lord in exchange for money. Afterwards, he fled, pursued by the Lord Asano’s widow, as well as General Murakami. Sadly, many years would pass before Oda was punished for his crime.

## Sanshobo

(Male Bear Bonze)

Formerly a priest in General Ikeda’s army, Sanshobo was scarred by the death of his son and the son of a friend. He left the army, changed his name, and became a simple bonze. He is a sad fellow, but willing to help those in need.



## Shingen

(Male Cat Ninja)

One of the greatest ninja warriors who ever lived, Shingen became the *kashira* (chief) of the Neko Ninja clan. Even though Usagi had foiled his plans previously, the two reconciled their conflict — their personal codes of honor, *ninpo* and *bushido*, took precedence over their personal issues, and both fought as allies against the Dragon-Bellow Conspiracy. Mortally wounded, Shingen detonated the kegs of black powder beneath Castle Tamakuro, destroying Lord Takamura, the castle, and himself.



## Tomoé Ame

(Female Cat Samurai)

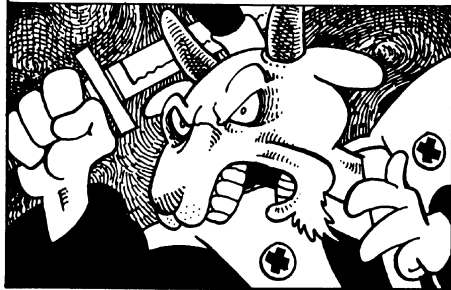
Tomoé Ame is the chief retainer to Lord Noriyuki of the Geishu Clan. She is a fierce warrior, skilled in the Falling Rain school of swordsmanship. Tomoé-San (she uses Tomoé as her first name, rather than her family name, for reasons of her own) has thwarted many plots and conspiracies against her young master.

## Yagi

(Male Goat Assassin)

Yagi was once a skilled general in the service of Clan Higashi. He was framed for treason, and fled his punishment after slaying forty men single-handedly. He took his infant son Gorogoro with him in exile, and began a new career as an assassin. He is highly skilled in this new profession, and is raising his son to assist in his contracts. Yagi is unlikely to be

"THE FIRST VICTIM WAS THE LATE LORD'S PERSONAL BODYGUARD, YAGI. DOCUMENTS WERE PLANTED IN HIS HOUSEHOLD TO MAKE IT SEEM LIKE HE WAS A TRAITOR TO OUR CLAN. TO AVENGE HIS LOST HONOR, YAGI SLEW MANY OF THESE CONSPIRATORS. NOW HE IS AN OUTCAST, HUNTED BY LORD HIRONE'S SAMURAI."



moved by mercy — those who encounter him would be wise to be wary.

## Zato Ino

(Male Pig Masseur)

A blind, traveling masseur, Zato Ino longed for a simple life, free of complications. Yet he found himself feared and hunted, in part thanks to his own paranoia and mistrust of his incredible skill with the sword — he used his keen scent to guide his blade. Ino became a well-known outlaw, though not through any desire of his own.

Ino encountered Usagi on the road one day, and the two became friendly traveling companions for a time. However, when Usagi realized that Ino was a wanted criminal, Ino attempted to kill Usagi. The rabbit sliced off Ino's nose, effectively blinding the pig. He was soon able to obtain a wooden replacement, and swore vengeance on Usagi.

The two crossed swords on a few occasions, and once Ino duelled with Gennosuké, slicing off the rhino's horn. Later, he made his peace with Usagi and Gen, and even assisted them on a quest.

During this partnership, Ino was shot and gravely wounded. Though he survived, his friends put out word that he had been slain. This allowed Ino to start a new life in a remote village, where he lives to this day with his wife.

# CHARACTER CREATION

Now that you've read through the source material in this book and in the *Usagi* comic, you're probably ready to start making your own character for your own stories.

例 Let's make a character together. Inspired by our own house pet, let's go with "cat ninja".

## Choose Your Starting Traits; Add Two Starting Gifts

Every character starts with five *Traits*. These Traits are assigned dice that will determine your character's basic ability to perform physical, mental, and social feats. The starting Trait Dice are one d8, three d6s,



and one d4 – one Trait will be the highest, and one will be the lowest, and three will be average.

## Body

A measure of your character's physical size and health, *Body* is used for melee combat and for resisting injury. High *Body* gives increased strength, improved toughness, and athletic prowess.

Characters with *Body* as their highest-starting Trait will begin the game with the Gifts of *Might* and *Brushing Aside*.

## Speed

A measure of your character's dexterity, quickness, and agility, *Speed* is used for movement, for ranged combat, and for dodging. High *Speed* grants faster running, improved reaction time, last-minute saves.

Characters with *Speed* as their highest-starting Trait will begin the game with the Gifts of *Quickness* and *Speed Save*.

## Mind

A measure of your character's knowledge, wits, and senses, *Mind* is used for observing, remembering, knowing, and reasoning. High *Mind* allows for craftier scheming, heigh-

tened senses, and improved awareness.

Characters with *Mind* as their highest-starting Trait will begin the game with Gifts of *Cleverness* and *Combat Sense*.

## Will

A measure of your character's stubbornness, resolve, and determination, *Will* is used to resist being influenced by others and to keep one's mind on the task at hand. High *Will* grants improved resistance, greater courage, and increased tolerance for pain.

Characters with *Will* as their highest-starting Trait will begin the game with the Gifts of *Grit* and *Fighting Spirit*.

## Career [of Choice]

A measure of your character's training in a job, *Career* is general capacity in a narrow field. Unlike the other four basic traits, not all *Careers* are the same — two characters can have completely different *Career* Traits.

A character can have *multiple Careers* — multiple Traits that can apply to different or to the same Skills. This is explained in greater detail in the *Gifts* chapter, page 68.

Characters with *Career* as their highest starting Trait will begin the game with the Gift of *Luck*. They may choose *one* of the



## RANDOM GENERATION OF TRAITS

Instead of choosing your Traits, you can roll randomly. Roll a twenty-sided die and copy down the appropriate scheme.

d20 roll	Description	Body	Speed	Mind	Will	Career	Starting Gifts
1	Animated	d6	d8	d6	d6	d4	Quickness, Speed Save
2	Athletic	d6	d8	d4	d6	d6	Quickness, Speed Save
3	Bookish	d4	d6	d8	d6	d6	Cleverness, Combat Sense
4	Brutish	d8	d6	d6	d6	d4	Might, Brushing Aside
5	Calculating	d6	d6	d8	d6	d4	Cleverness, Combat Sense
6	Devoted	d6	d6	d4	d6	d8	Luck, Fighting Spirit
7	Energetic	d6	d8	d6	d4	d6	Quickness, Speed Save
8	Extroverted	d6	d6	d4	d8	d6	Grit, Fighting Spirit
9	Hulking	d8	d4	d6	d6	d6	Might, Brushing Aside
10	Insightful	d6	d4	d6	d8	d6	Grit, Fighting Spirit
11	Introverted	d6	d6	d8	d4	d6	Cleverness, Combat Sense
12	Lively	d4	d6	d6	d6	d8	Luck, Speed Save
13	Methodical	d6	d4	d8	d6	d6	Cleverness, Combat Sense
14	Ornery	d4	d6	d6	d8	d6	Grit, Fighting Spirit
15	Rugged	d8	d6	d6	d4	d6	Might, Brushing Aside
16	Stalwart	d8	d6	d4	d6	d6	Might, Brushing Aside
17	Stubborn	d6	d6	d6	d8	d4	Grit, Fighting Spirit
18	Studious	d6	d6	d6	d4	d8	Luck, Combat Sense
19	Tenacious	d6	d4	d6	d6	d8	Luck, Brushing Aside
20	Wiry	d4	d8	d6	d6	d6	Quickness, Speed Save



following Gifts: *Brushing Aside*; *Combat Sense*; *Fighting Spirit*; or *Speed Save*.

**例 Example:** Cat ninjas should be fast. Let's put the d8 in Speed. That d4 has to go somewhere, so we'll put it in Will. Our character looks like the impulsive type who is quick to act.

Our character starts with two Gifts already: *Quickness* (to power Gifts) and *Speed Save* (the ability to reduce a deadly injury to a superficial one.)

## Choose your Race; Add Racial Gifts

Each Race comes with two Racial Gifts. Write those on your Character Sheet. A listing of Races begins on page 58.

**例 Example:** We had already decided on cat. Consulting the Races chapter, this gives us another *Quickness* (it's okay, you can have multiples of certain Gifts) and *Night Vision* (the ability to see in the dark). We already sound like a ninja and we've not even chosen that Career yet.

## Choose your Career; Add Career Gifts

Each Career comes with three Career Gifts.

Write those on your Character Sheet.

Your Career Trait is included with at least four Skills. Whenever you make Skill Rolls, you can include your Career Trait.

The Career Trait does not *add* to Skill Marks in any way. It is a separate die; it gets its own column on the Character Sheet.

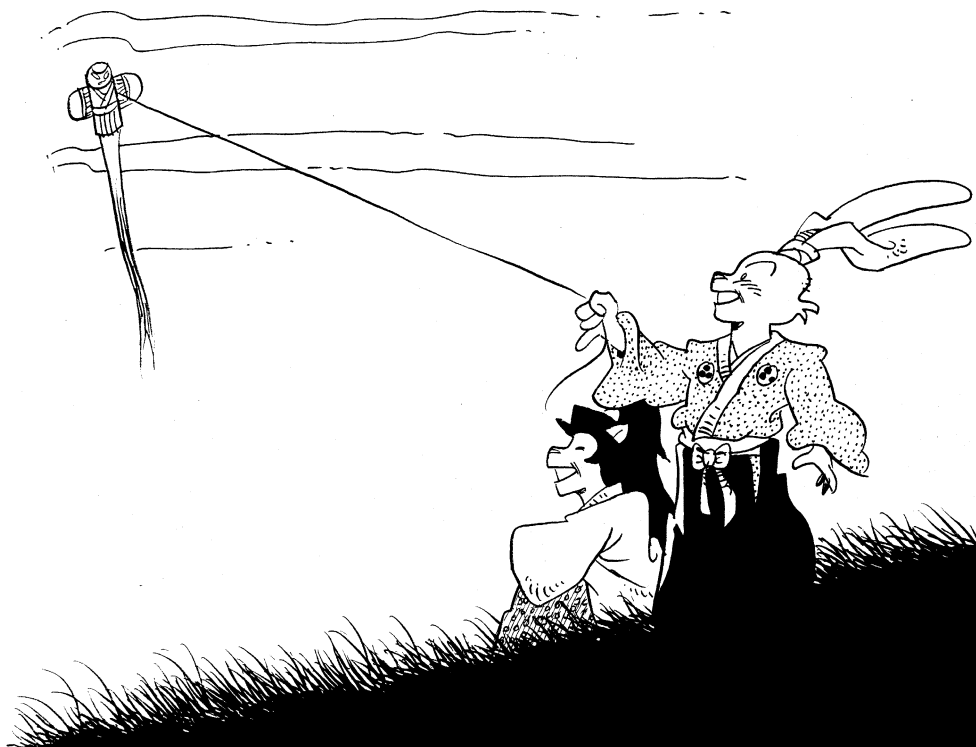
**例 Example:** The question is what *kind* of ninja? We want our character to be more of a willful spirit, so we choose *Rogue*. We'll come up with a reason *why* she left home, later. But for now, we add the Gifts of *Danger Sense* (a handy talent, that!), *Resolve* (the ability to not lose one's action from injury), and *Ninjutsu* (crafty ninja stuff).

Our Career Trait of d6 is included with the four Ninja skills of Deceit, Hiding, Observation, and Stealth. We already know how to do four things, and we've not even done the Skills yet. Our character is shaping up nicely.

## SKILLS

You begin the game with 13 Marks in Skills. You may apply these to *any* Skills you want, but you may not increase any skill past 5 Marks.

*At this time, you cannot add more than 5 Marks to any one skill.* The only way to begin the game with 6 or more Marks in a Skill is to



begin play with a Gift that adds more Marks, such as *Belligerent* or *Sneaky*.

**例 Example:** We see this character as more of a talker than as a sneak — someone who loves to talk to people and get to the bottom of what's going on. Let's put 3 Marks in Gossip.

Since we have *Resolve*, we should probably learn how to fight, too. The *kusarigama* (sickle with chain) is a nice, crafty ninja weapon. It's a Combination Weapon, so it needs two Skills to use. Let's put 2 Marks in *Axe* and 2 Marks in *Fighting-Rope*.

We also don't want to get hit in combat, so let's put 3 Marks in *Dodge*.

We need a few more skills to round the character out. Let's put 2 Marks in *Climbing* and 1 Mark in *Observation*.

The dice granted from these skills will stack with the *Rogue Ninja Career Dice*. For example, we now have d6, d4 in *Observation*. That extra dice will raise our average rolls and let us score more successes .... but we're getting ahead of ourselves. Back to character creation!

## CHOOSE ANY THREE GIFTS

You may now add three Gifts. It can be any Gift you qualify for, after performing all of the above steps.

You can take any Basic Gift, no questions asked. You can also take any Cleverness Gift, Guile Gift, Might Gift, or Quickness Gift, but those abilities work better if you have certain other Gifts, first.

Advanced Gifts have *Requirements*, marked with asterisks (\*) — you cannot take these Gifts unless you meet each and every requirement, first.

You can only take *Okugi* Gifts (p. 132) if you have special permission from the Game Host.

**例 Example:** There're so many Gifts, and most of them look good. Let's start with *Luck* — that could help our cat ninja in almost any situation.

Our cat ninja is shaping up to be a keen look-out; let's add the Gift of *Perceptive*, which adds 1 Mark to the five Skills of *Gossip* (raising it to 4!), *Inquiry*, *Observation* (up to 2), *Searching*, and *Survival*.

Finally, some sort of nifty combat move would be good, preferably one that takes advantage of all that *Quickness*. Let's take *Spring Attack* — it's powered by *Quickness*, which we've got plenty of! This Gift lets us jump into a fight, strike at a target, then jump right out again, which sounds a lot like something cat ninjas would do.

## PERSONALIZING YOUR CHARACTER

### Personal Name

Like a Western first name, your character's *Personal Name* is how people casually refer to your character. All characters have a personal name. You can use historical reference to choose a name, or choose one from the chart below. You can even use a twenty-sided die and roll randomly.

	Female Names	Male Names
1	Ai ("love")	Akira ("intelligence")
2	Akako ("red")	Botan ("peony")
3	Ami ("friend")	Gen ("Spring")
4	Ayame ("stag flower")	Goro ("fifth son")
5	Cho ("butterfly")	Hiroshi ("generous")
6	Hana ("blossom")	Ichiro ("first son")
7	Hide ("excellent")	Jiro ("second son")
8	Hitomi ("eye")	Ken ("strong")
9	Izumi ("fountain")	Mitsu ("light")
10	Kei ("reverent")	Rin ("park")
11	Kiku ("chrysanthemum")	Ryu ("dragon")
12	Mai ("brightness")	Saburo ("third son")
13	Megumi ("charity")	Sanyu ("happiness")
14	Nami ("wave")	Shin ("virtue")
15	Naomi ("pleasant one")	Shiro ("fourth son")
16	Nozomi ("hope")	Tanaka ("from the rice field")
17	Sachi ("blessed")	Tomi ("rich")
18	Sakura ("cherry")	Toshi ("mirror image")
19	Shinobu ("perseverance")	Udo ("ginseng")
20	Sumi ("elegant")	Yoshi ("best")

The English translations offered here might not be the same for all versions of the name — different characters can give different meanings. Players are encouraged to look to historical sources or Japanese dictionaries for more ideas.

## Modifiers to Personal Names

For variety, a personal name can have a suffix added. For female names, common suffixes are *-ko* (meaning “child”) or *-mi* (“beauty”). Noble, unmarried women might have *-hime* (“princess”). For male names: the suffix *-ichi* or *-kazu* means “the first son”; *-ji*, the second son; and *-zo*, the third son. For example, “Shinzo” means “The third son of Shin”.

## Surnames

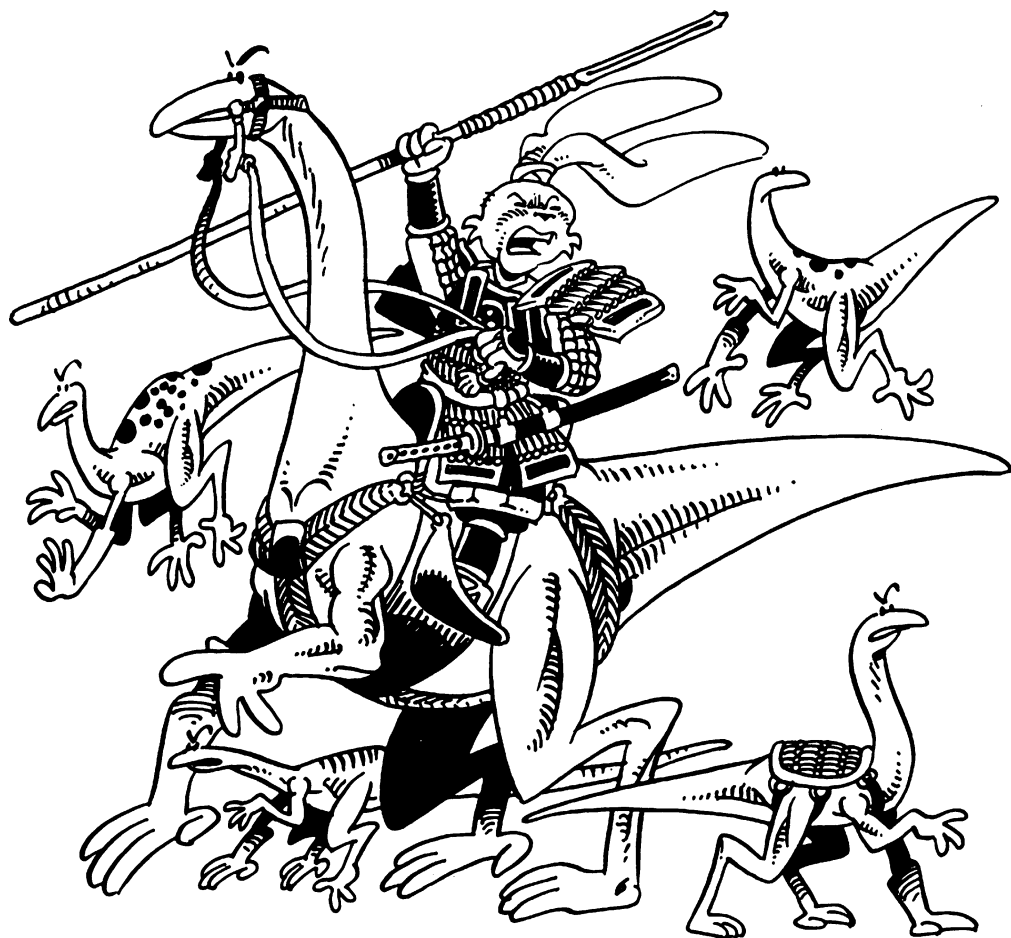
If your character is a Samurai, you will have a *Surname*. In the Tokugawa era, there are thousands of noble surnames, often many times removed from their original language.

When making your character, you can choose a historical example, or you can make one up using the chart below. Roll twice and combine the two halves.

Roll of d12	Roll of d6		
	1-2	3-4	5-6
1	Aki	Mochi	Tada
2	Fuji	Mori	Taka
3	Fumi	Moto	Toki
4	Hide	Mune	Tomo
5	Hisa	Mushi	Toshi
6	Ichi	Naga	Tsugu
7	Kage	Nobu	Tsuna
8	Kane	Nori	Uji
9	Katsu	Sada	Yama
10	Kuni	Sane	Yasu
11	Masa	Shige	Yori
12	Mitsu	Suke	Yoshi

## Telling the Commoners Apart

Merchants, peasants, and other commoners are legally prohibited from having a surname. Some characters may distinguish themselves by their occupation (e.g. Akira the Tailor), their place of origin (e.g. Daishuso from Geishu), their physical characteristics (e.g. Big Ano), or their disposition (e.g. Angry Kaede).



**例 Example:** At the suggestion of a Japanese-speaking friend, we choose the name “Kamatoto”, a slang term for a woman who plays dumb when they know better. It sounds very appropriate for a cat ninja who gets others to talk about themselves.

Since Kamatoto is not a samurai, she only has one name.

## Appearance

What does your character look like? Traits and Gifts will suggest general things – for example, characters with a high Body Trait will be bigger and healthier, while folks with lots of Quickness will be nimble. Your Race determines things such as fur, hair, and eyes.

**例 Example:** We already established Kamatoto is a cat. We decide that she is a calico, with brown and white spots, with friendly yellow eyes.

## Motivation

Most people with sense would stay home and live out an honest, peaceful life. So why does your character wander the countryside, getting into fights and into situations where they don’t belong? *Motivation* is a hook for the Game Host to write adventures that would involve your Character. By providing Motivation, the stories will feel less contrived and more personal.

Some possible motivations:

- Strong sense of honor
- Improving combat skill
- Defending the helpless
- Looking for a lost loved one
- On the run from a clan, organization, or powerful individual
- Seeking revenge against a clan, organization, or powerful individual
- Money
- On a quest or pilgrimage, such as to wash one’s sword in the waters surrounding all four main islands of Japan, or to visit one hundred shrines

Your character should have at least one Motivation, but many more can be added later. Some might disappear — for example, after vanquishing the enemies who sought to murder your character, you are no longer motivated to be on the run from them. Changes in motivation can spur changes in Career or Gifts — see “Experience”, page 125.

**例 Example:** So why did Kamatoto leave her ninja clan? We decide that while on a spying mission, she returned home to find her ninja village burned the ground and no trace of any survivors. Where did they go? And what are her new orders? Without a mission, Kamatoto wanders Japan constantly looking for clues.

## Disposition

The most memorable characters in stories have distinctive traits, personality, and dialogue. Your Character in a role-playing game should be no different. What is your Character like? Are they friendly, shy, defensive, or angry? Do they enjoy the company of others, or do they sit in silent meditation? Do they drink and enjoy good food, or do they eschew such things? When others describe the character, what would be the first things they say? The *Disposition* of the character is their most lasting impression. Try to describe in one line how the character looks, acts, or behaves. You don’t have to be very specific — this is just a rough guide to the Game Host and your fellow Players to tell them what your character is about.

After playing the role for many sessions, the way you seek to portray your Character might change. That’s fine — many authors alter the presentation of their characters after a few episodes are out. You should change the Disposition of your Character in any ways that “feel natural” to their development. After a major plot point (such as surviving a Devastating injury, or discovering that one’s father has been plotting the overthrow of the Shogun, or falling in love with a humble peasant), most Characters will have a radical change in their Disposition to reflect the changes in their life.

**例 Example:** Now that we’ve filled out more details of Kamatoto’s character, we’ve got some more information about her personality. Under *Disposition*, we write “gregarious and shy”; people enjoy talking to her, and those who know her better know that she knows more than she lets on.

# EIGHT STEPS TO CHARACTER CREATION

### Step 1:

Choose your five starting Traits (page 52). This gives you your two Starting Gifts. Write your Body, Speed, Mind, and Will in the circles, and your Career Trait next to its name, below.

### Step 2:

Choose your Race (page 59). This gives you two Racial Gifts.

### Step 3:

Choose your Career (page 62). This gives you three Career Gifts. Write your Career Die in the blank.

### Step 4:

Put 13 Marks in any Skills you want, putting no more than 5 in any one Skill. (Yes, you can only go above 5 Marks if you have a Gift that gives you Marks.) The Skills begins on page 83. Write your Career Die in the right-most blank next to the four Skills it's included with.

### Step 5:

Choose three more Gifts. This will bring your total up to 10. (The Gifts chapter starts on page 68.) These can be any Gift you meet the Requirements for, even the exotic *Okugi* Gifts (page 132).

### Step 6:

Personalize your character with a name, description, and background (page 55).

### Step 8:

Fill out your combat statistics. These are described in the Combat chapter (page 99).

**USAGI YOJIMBO**  
Fantasy Role-Playing Game

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Name: **MOTO USAGI**

Body: **d6** Speed: **d6**

Mind: **d6** Will: **d6**

Race: **RABBIT** Gender: **M**  
Career: **GOODWARD** (Die Size: **d6**)  
Eyes: **PINK** Pelt: **WHITE** Hair: **MOON**  
Distinguishing Characteristics: **SCAR OVER LEFT EYE**  
Disposition: **ATHLETIC**

Motivation for Adventuring: **DEFEND THE HELPLESS**

Initiative: **18, d6** (Speed & Mind Dice)  
Stride: **1** (1) Sprint: **d8** (Speed Die)  
Dash: **6** (Speed d4=4, d6=5, d8=7, d10=7, d12=8)  
Run: **24** (3 × Maximized Speed Die)

Primary Weapon: **KATANA (DAI NEDAI)**  
Attack Roll: **d12, 2d6**  
(With Melee: Body & Weapon Dice; With Ranged: Speed & Weapon Dice)  
Damage Dice: **2d20**  
Criticals: **SLASH, STAB**

Backup Weapon: **WAKITASHI (MOTOSAGI)**  
Attack Roll: **d12, 2d6**  
(With Melee: Body & Weapon Dice; With Ranged: Speed & Weapon Dice)  
Damage Dice:  
Criticals:

Dodge Roll: **18** (Dice & Dodge Skill Dice)  
Soak: **6** (Maximized Body Dice)

Stats:  
 Wounded  Crippled  Incapacitated  Devastated  Afraid  Confused  Enraged  Unconscious

Experience Improvement  
○○○○○○○○○○  
○○○○○○○○○○  
○○○○○○○○○○  
○○○○○○○○○○

RED USE: WITH USAGI-MOEDA (FAVORITE WEAPON)

Skills	Marks	Dice	Career
Climbing			
Craft:			
Deceit			
Diplomacy (w/ <i>COMMON FOLK</i> )	1	d4	
Dodge			
Empty Hand			
Gossip			
Hilting			
Inquiry			
Jumping			
Leadership			d6
Literacy			d6
Lore: <b>BUSHI DOO</b>	1	d4	
Lore:			
Medicine	1	d4	
Navigation			
Observation	1111	d10	
Persuasion			
Presence			
Riding			
Searching			
Stealth			
Survival			
Swimming			
Tactics			
Trade:			
Weapon: <b>BLADE*</b>	1111	d12	d6
Weapon:			

Gifts	Name	Page	✓
<input type="checkbox"/>	ABIDEXTERITY	73	
<input type="checkbox"/>	BODY GUARD	73	
<input type="checkbox"/>	INCREASED TRAIT: MIND	72	
<input type="checkbox"/>	IMPROVED PARAD	72	
<input type="checkbox"/>	PARRY ARROWS	81	
<input type="checkbox"/>	KEEN EARS	72	
<input type="checkbox"/>	QUICKNESS	74	
<input type="checkbox"/>	QUICKNESS	74	
<input type="checkbox"/>	SAMURAI	81	
<input type="checkbox"/>	SPEED SAVE	78	



### Step 7:

Choose your weapons. The listing begins on page 147. You can start with as many Cheap and Average items as you want. You can only start with Expensive items if you have a Gift such as Samurai that lets you.

In the *Usagi* stories, Japan is populated by a multitude of intelligent species, all based on real-world animals. The entire world is like this, and it has the effect of making it impossible to identify a foreigner simply by his or her appearance. Purely racial bias does not exist. This does not mean that the people of *Usagi* are free from prejudice against other people and nations. This prejudice is simply based on cultural and national differences, rather than physical appearance.

Note that there is no particular real-world logic to appearance of animal species in this setting. Animals that are native to the real-world Japan are not necessarily more common than animals from any

other corner of the world. One of the most important characters in the series is a rhinoceros, and lions also make appearances. If one were to ask a sage or scholar about this, one would simply be told that the gods created everyone as they are, and placed them according to their whim or divine plan.

While they live in a fairly homogenous culture, each species is typified by different characteristics that make them unique. Some of these are obvious physical traits — bears tend to be much larger and stronger than mice. Others are personality quirks, or tendencies towards certain kinds of behavior. For example, dogs are usually quite loyal, while cats are independently minded. These traits should not be taken as universal, but rather as stereotypical attitudes. There is no reason that a player could not make a loyal



and subservient cat, for example, or even a physically weak bear.

The various races do not consider themselves to be “animals,” and would regard such a suggestion as insulting. As noted above, each species has a tendency towards certain traits, but they otherwise function as “people” and generally treat species as something that is simply not an issue. In fact, it is considered somewhat impolite to dwell on the matter in conversation.

## Bear

Stereotypically large and slow, bears are often fierce warriors. However, their generally staid outlook on life and enjoyment of simple pleasures means that they are just as likely to crave a life of quiet farming or trade. It is not uncommon to see young bears employed as guards or warriors, though nearly as many may be found serving as priests.

- Gift: Grit
- Gift: Might

## Canines

Dogs are among the most common of species in Japan. Every real-world breed is represented, ranging from the tiniest of terriers to the largest wolfhound. Though they differ greatly in physical capacities, canines tend to have similar outlooks on life. They enjoy simple pleasures and socialization, and tend to have a great deal of loyalty to their superiors. Dogs are often excellent samurai and bodyguards.

- Gift: Choose one [Might or Quickness]
- Gift: Choose one [Keen Ears or Keen Nose]

## Cat

Cats are nearly as diverse in body type as canines, and vary in size from petite Sand Cats and house cats to imposing Tigers. Cats are stereotypically reserved and aloof, and prefer to socialize in

small groups of friends. Smaller cats are famous for their stealthy tread and nimble paws.

- Gift: Night Vision
- Gift: Choose one [Might or Quickness]

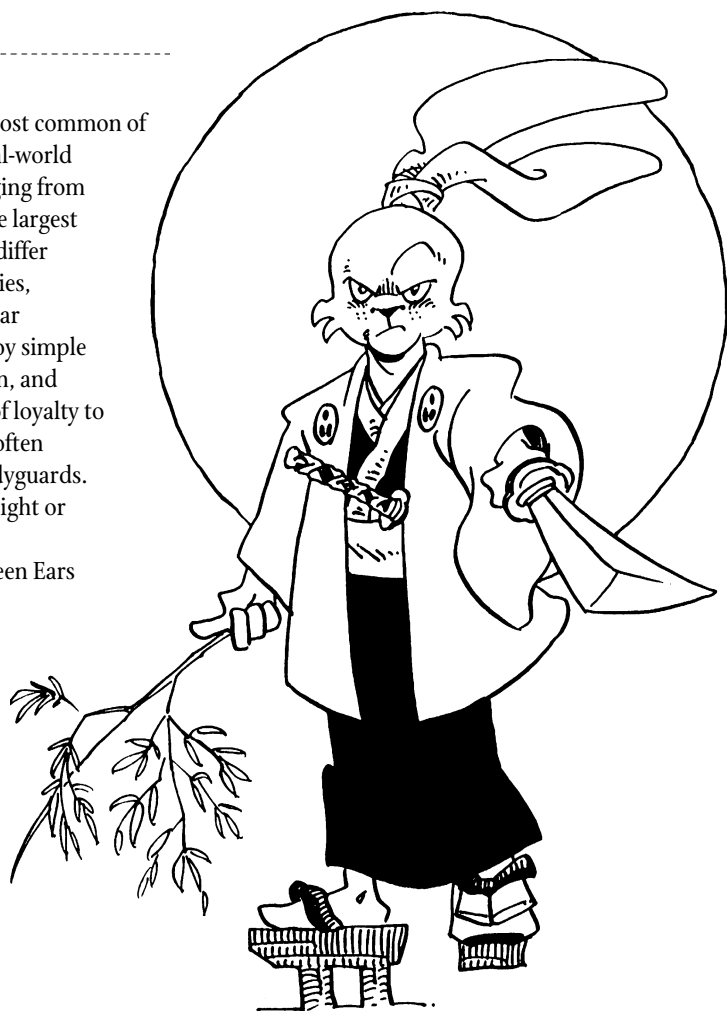
## Cattle

Tough and sturdy bovines have a reputation for stubbornness as well as strength. Though not widely known as great thinkers, they often have forceful personalities that make them excellent samurai or leaders of men.

- Gift: Might
- Gift: Quickness

## Fox

Though similar to dogs in many ways, foxes tend to be much smaller and lighter. They also tend to have much larger ears, and quick, dexterous movements. They are often loners, although they are noted for their charm and





ability to get along well in a group.

- Gift: Cleverness
- Gift: Danger Sense

## Goat

Goats are, more than anything else, survivors. They take the rough with the smooth, and work to make the best of a given situation. This attitude makes them naturally predisposed to some of the more ascetic holy orders. Males of this species have prominent horns, of which they are often inordinately proud.

- Gift: Grit
- Gift: Sure-Footed

## Monkey

Monkeys are gregarious creatures, who enjoy living in boisterous communities. They have a reputation for being somewhat foolish and high-spirited, but few will question their inventiveness. Monkeys are often artisans or entertainers.

- Gift: Cleverness
- Gift: Sure-Footed

## Panda

Though physically similar to bears, pandas are very different creatures. They are somewhat less muscular, and smaller in size. Pandas are often cautious and contemplative creatures. As such, they make fine magistrates and administrators, though they are not as often remembered for their skill in battle.

- Gift: Might
- Gift: Night Vision

## Pig

Pigs are burly animals, often squat and barrel-like in build. They rarely have more than a thin, bristly coat of fur. They tend to be very tough, with surprising reserves of stamina. The common view is that pigs are often stubborn creatures, with little use for the high ideals and abstract thought of religion. They are also known as very self-indulgent people, prone to eat and drink huge amounts whenever they can. All Pigs have a very keen sense of smell.

- Gift: Grit
- Gift: Keen Nose

## Rabbit

Rabbits can be found in every part of Japan. They are often characterized by their strong sense of family and community. They recognize the need for a strong society, and work together to achieve this. Physically, they are notable for their keen ears and powerful legs. Few people can run faster or jump higher than a rabbit.

- Gift: Keen Ears
- Gift: Quickness

## Rodent

Though nearly identical in body shape, rats and mice differ notably in size, and somewhat in their view of the world. Rats are usually loners, and rarely stay in one place for long. They are not renowned as warriors, but have a reputation for fighting viciously if cornered. For their part, mice tend to be somewhat quieter, and more gregarious. Still, individuals of both species tend to be survivors, and have a sense of curiosity that can get them into trouble.

- Gift: Cleverness
- Gift: Keen Ears

## Rhinoceros

Large and muscular, and boasting a prominent horn, rhinos have historically been some of the most famous warriors in Japanese history. If they have a failing, it is that they tend to be driven relentlessly by some goal, often to the short-sighted exclusion of all other considerations.

- Gift: Might
- Gift: Toughness

## Unknown

*Usagi's* Japan is populated by a large number of people who belong to no particular species. These individuals are simply “fuzzy” people, who develop their own affinities and traits based on their upbringing. Their lack of specific species is rarely the subject of commentary. Indeed, it would be impolite to mention it.

- Gifts: Choose any two [Cleverness, Grit, Might, or Quickness]

## CAREERS

The purpose of a *Career* is to give every character one basic set of skills and abilities to begin the game. Career Traits represent general training in a variety of things and a

lifetime of experience, not just the four Skills listed. Players and the Game Host should come up with new uses for the Career Trait dice as they deem appropriate.



## WARRIORS (*BUSHI*)

In the Tokugawa era, the highest of all castes are the warriors. One must be born a Samurai in order to carry the *katana* (long sword).

For purposes of the setting, all warrior Player Characters are assumed to be *ronin* — samurai without masters, land, or duty. Perhaps their lord was killed in battle. Perhaps the estate was sold off or otherwise removed, and the samurai were dismissed.

## Bodyguard (*Yojimbo*)

Commoners are not permitted to carry the larger weapons, and most lack any sort of combat training. Rich merchants often hire *ronin* to protect themselves against attack. With their ability to defend others and their capacity for rallying folks otherwise too stunned to react, Bodyguard characters are a great asset to any group of adventurers.

- Include with:
  - [Weapon Skill of Choice, usually Blade]
  - Leadership
  - Literacy
  - Observation
- Gift: Bodyguard
- Gift: Resolve
- Gift: Samurai

## Bounty Hunter (*Shoukin-Kasegi*)

Despite the peace of the Tokugawa Shogunate, dangerous scofflaws, roustabouts, and assassins continue to exist. The Bounty Hunter combines a capacity for finding criminals with samurai training and privilege to perform this dangerous duty. Bounty Hunter characters bring investigative skills and combat training to any party.

- Include with:
  - [Weapon Skill of Choice, usually Blade]
  - Inquiry
  - Literacy
  - Searching

- Gift: Resolve
- Gift: Samurai
- Gift: Streetwise

## Wanderer (*Roshi*)

During the Tokugawa era, samurai are not permitted to take employment with a new master without the previous one's permission, nor are they allowed to take up another trade. Some samurai, afflicted with great poverty, choose to endure the lasting shame of leaving their master to make their fortunes elsewhere. Wanderer samurai often suffer humiliation and shame at the hands of other samurai, but they are still permitted to carry the weapons of war and they may still have the strong code of *bushido*. Wanderer characters bring pragmatic combat skills to any party needing more muscle.

- Include with:
  - [Weapon Skill of Choice, usually Blade]
  - Hiking
  - Literacy
  - Tactics
- Gift: Danger Sense
- Gift: Resolve
- Gift: Samurai

## Sumo Wrestler (*Sumotori*)

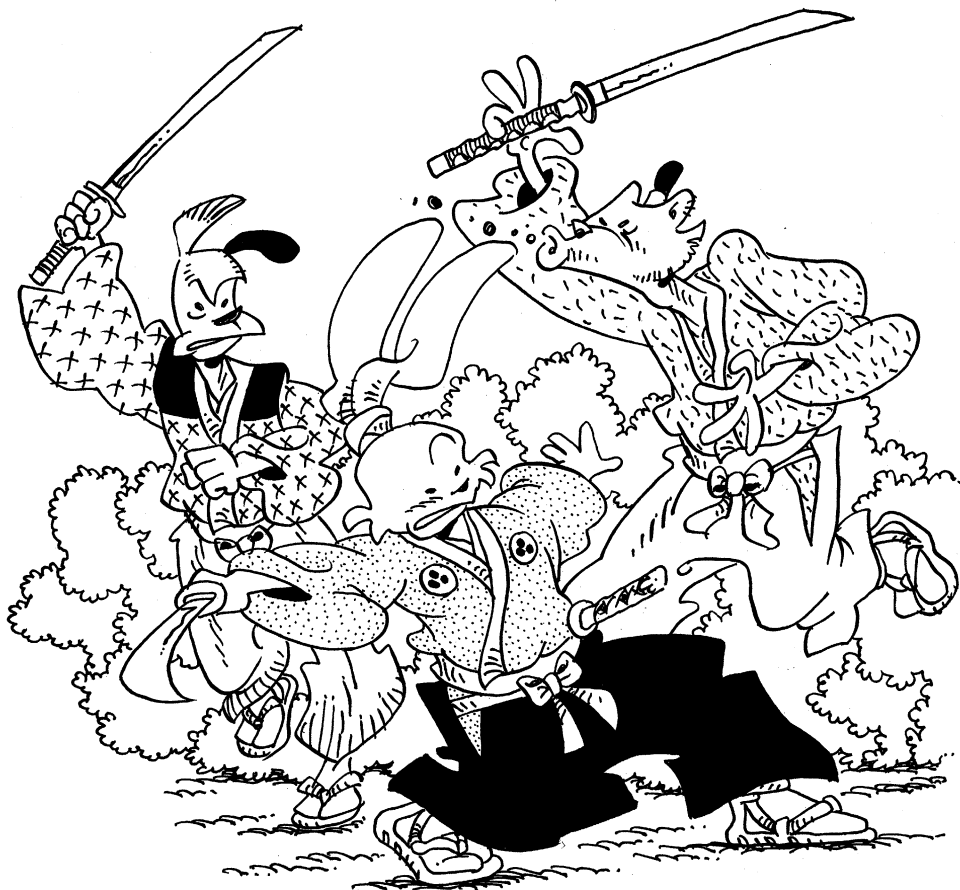
Forbidden to take on other jobs, some *ronin* turned to the practice of “street corner sumo” — wrestling matches in seedy locations for prize money. A good match can bring in lots of tourists for trade, and sometimes temples host matches to raise money. The sumo wrestlers of this period are big, stout martial artists who have to fight in a variety of situations, not the overly-developed specialists seen today. *Sumotori* bring practical muscle to any party.

- Include with:
  - Empty Hand
  - Lore: Sumo
  - Medicine
  - Presence
- Gift: Empty-Hand Mastery
- Gift: Samurai
- Gift: Strength



## ALTERNATIVE CAREERS

The Careers listed here are considered to be the most appropriate ones for Player Characters. You can consult the Variant Rules for more Careers on page 174. Ask your Game Host for permission before taking any Variant Careers.



## COMMONERS (HEIMIN)

Almost all common folk are farmers, growing rice and other crops for their own sustenance as well as for the lords. Since farming isn't really the exciting stuff of adventures, Player Characters will usually be the bolder types.

### Militia (*Kyukaku*)

While law forbids commoners from taking up the long sword, there are still those who learn the ways of fighting to protect themselves from bandits and from abusive *ronin*. Nobles dislike the existence of Militia men and women — they can rise up in peasant rebellions. The best Militia have their own code of honor: *kikotsu*, which was very similar to the samurai's code of *bushido* in advocating discipline, loyalty, and spiritual advancement. Successful Militia have trade skills, combat experience, and just enough guile to stay out of the officials' eyes — talents useful for adventurers.

- Include with:
  - Choose one: [Any one Craft or any one Trade]
  - Deceit
  - Tactics
  - Weapon: [of Choice]
- Gift: Belligerent
- Gift: Resolve
- Gift: Sneaky

### Veteran (*Kohei*)

While the era of warring states is just a memory, there are many who fought as *ashigaru*, the rank-and-file spear carriers. Even though it may have been many years since they have seen a battle, these Veterans still have skills honed by the fires of combat. Veteran adventurers will most likely be social misfits who cannot return to a peaceful life.

- Include with:
  - Hiking
  - Medicine
  - Tactics
  - Weapon: Polearm
- Gift: Resolve
- Gift: Rustic
- Gift: Toughness

## Vigilante (*Otokodate*)

In the previous era of warring states, the nobles were powerless, the samurai were fighting each other, and marauders exploited the lawlessness to prey on the weak. A few brave men and women stood up to fight injustice, and they were called *otokodate*, Vigilantes.

In early Tokugawa-era, Vigilantes are rare and must keep a low profile lest they anger proper samurai. Years later, when abuses by the noble class run rampant, *otokodate* will be romanticized in stories and in *kabuki* theater as Robin Hoods who avenge the commoners. Vigilante characters bring combat strength and pragmatic skills to any party.

- Include with:
  - Hiking
  - Survival
  - Tactics
  - Weapon: [of Choice]
- Gift: Athletic
- Gift: Belligerent
- Gift: Resolve

## CRIMINALS (*HININ*)

Not everyone in feudal Japan lives a respected life. Many schemers and scoundrels, live hand to mouth, scraping by however they can. While many criminals are brutish louts without morality, Players are encouraged to be romanticized criminals — ones who see themselves as misunderstood heroes.

### Gambler (*Bakuto*)

Although gambling is illegal, that doesn't stop some from doing it. When not risking their money at games of chance, Gamblers are incredible gossips, learning more than just where the next game is going to happen. Some Gamblers like to think of themselves as heroes who only gamble to support themselves when not righting wrongs. A Gambler character can bring conversational skills to a party, as well as a little luck.

- Include with:
  - Deceit
  - Gossip
  - Observation
  - Trade: Gambler
- Gift: Luck
- Gift: Perceptive
- Gift: Streetwise

## Street Entertainer (*Taidou-Geijin*)

Puppet shows (*bunraku*), top-spinning (*koma asobi*), and joke-telling (*karukuchi*) are a welcome sight along the busier roads and cities of feudal Japan. By living on the street, Entertainers must be quick to put legal officials at ease, or they'll find themselves run out of town as undesirables. Entertainer characters bring strong people skills and a little improvisation to any party.

- Include with:
  - Gossip
  - Persuasion
  - Presence
  - Trade: Choose one [Joke-Telling, Puppetry, Top-Spinning, or other entertainment]
- Gift: Choose one [Cleverness or Quickness]
- Gift: Choose one [Acrobat; Athletic; Ambidexterity; Charismatic; Perceptive; Sneaky; Sympathetic; or Talkative]
- Gift: Streetwise

## Thief (*Dorobou*)

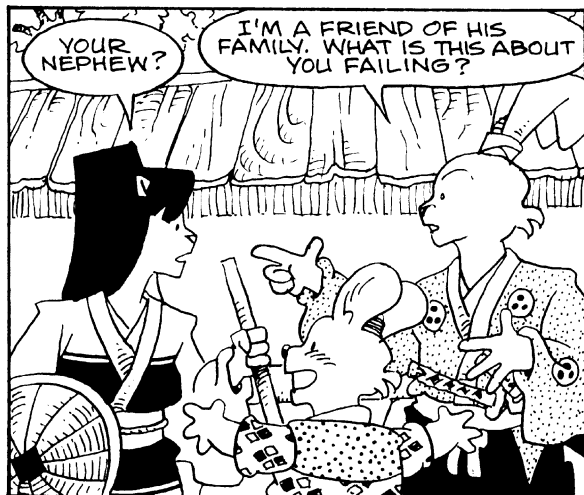
A romantic figure among the commoners, the Thief robs from the rich to give to the poor ... while keeping a little something for expenses. Some thieves will wear disguises, so they can walk openly during the day, safe in their “secret identity”. For adventuring parties, Thief characters complement a band of warriors well, by bringing a subtle hand into the mix.

- Include with:
  - Climbing
  - Deceit
  - Jumping
  - Stealth
- Gift: Athletic
- Gift: Sneaky
- Gift: Streetwise



### WHERE ARE THE WIZARDS?

Sorry, there aren't any magic-using Careers for Player-Characters! When magic does appear in *Usagi Yojimbo*, it is very rarely in the hands of mortals, and its use often has terrible consequences. The focus of the *Usagi* role-playing game is on *bushido* and on the warrior class.



## NINJA (*SHINOBI*)

Like the samurai, Ninjas have been romanticized as skilled warriors and masters of fantastic stealth. But where the Samurai are masters of combat, Ninja are supreme at stealth and misdirection. In the rigid-caste society of the Tokugawa era, the Ninja are both despised for acting outside of “normal” channels and seen as a necessary tool for espionage and surveillance. Like the Samurai, Ninjas have a code of honor — *ninpo* — that they are expected to observe.

### Undercover Agent (*Oniwabanshu*)

The most typical role of a Ninja is that of a secret agent planted within the household. Few would suspect a humble gardener of being trained in the arts of eavesdropping, much less hand-to-hand combat. *Oniwabanshu* Characters are best when paired up with an important samurai or noble as a secret bodyguard.

- Include with:
  - Deceit
  - Observation
  - Stealth
  - Trade: [of Choice, usually Gardener]
- Gift: Choose one [Fast-Draw or Empty-Hand Mastery]
- Gift: *Ninjutsu*
- Gift: Resolve

### Rogue (*Nukenin*)

By the Ninja’s code, the worst crime is to leave one’s clan against orders and to not return. The runaway *Nukenin* knows no

allies. The other ninja of the clan have a duty to bring their wayward ally home — dead or alive. However, the training that allows ninja to blend into their surroundings also lets the *Nukenin* hide from their pursuers. *Nukenin* Characters work well for Players who want to have a mysterious past, and to have a mix of combat and stealth abilities.

- Include with:
  - Deceit
  - Hiking
  - Observation
  - Stealth
- Gift: Danger Sense
- Gift: Resolve
- Gift: *Ninjutsu*

## PRIESTS (*SEISHOKUSHA*)

In the warring-states era, Buddhist warrior-monks known as *sohei* wielded significant influence. Sometimes numbering in the thousands, these monks were a formidable fighting array. Many generals struggled against them, but it was not until Tokugawa Ieyasu’s powerful military rose to power that these warrior-monasteries were finally abolished.

### Bonze (*Bouzou*)

The typical Buddhist priest, a *Bonze* is what most people think of when they think of Buddhist monks, with their shaved heads, simple robe, and ascetic lifestyle. Before Tokugawa, Buddhist monasteries had many warriors and had strong political influence; in Usagi’s time, their power has been broken and the remaining bonzeries are few and far

between, mostly small shrines. More than one bonze is a former samurai or criminal who has given up a life of violence and has taken on a new name. Bonze characters bring useful healing skills to a party, as well as a serious education.

- Include with:
  - Literacy
  - Medicine
  - Lore: Religion
  - Trade: Priest
- Gift: Doctor
- Gift: Educated
- Gift: Hospitality

---

## Flautist Monk (*Komuso*)

Unlike the jovial Mendicant (below), the Flute Player seeks detachment from worldly concerns. Masters of the *shakuhachi* (bamboo flute), they practice flute-playing as a form of meditation — *sui zen* (“blowing Zen”). To symbolize their detachment from the world, they wear the *tengai*, a basket helmet that obscures the face. Not all Komuso are as innocent as they might appear — before the Shogunate, some worked as spies, and many bamboo flutes are long and stout enough to be used as a club. Flautist Monk characters should bring a voice of reason and restraint to what might otherwise be a hot-tempered crew.

- Include with:
  - Literacy
  - Lore: Religion
  - Trade: Flute-Playing
  - Weapon: Truncheon
- Gift: Doctor
- Gift: Hospitality
- Gift: Choose one: [Educated or Sneaky]

---

## Mendicant (*Takuhatsuzou*)

Following the example of Hotei, a great monk from centuries ago, the *Mendicant* wanders the countryside to bring cheer and prosperity. Villages too small to support a full-time priest will be happy to receive the Mendicant in return for badly-needed services such as the presiding for a wedding ceremony, the neutral judging of a land dispute, or the banishing of ghosts and the blessing of the crops. Mendicant Characters



should have a jovial outlook and look on the bright side of things.

- Include with:
  - Diplomacy
  - Leadership
  - Literacy
  - Lore: Religion
- Gift: Doctor
- Gift: Hospitality
- Gift: Talkative

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## Mountain Warrior (*Yamabushi*)

Living in seclusion, a *Yamabushi* (“mountain-warrior”) studies the martial arts as a way to spiritual enlightenment. Some Yamabushi serve as advisors to generals; a few aid ninjas and other spies. Though a mere shadow of the *sohei* that came before them, Yamabushi still train with the *naginata* (long-bladed polearm) or the *bo* (staff). Yamabushi Characters will be afforded respect out of religious reverence, but they are still not true samurai and best not cause much trouble when they wander into civilized lands.

- Include with:
  - Empty Hand
  - Literacy
  - Lore: Religion
  - Weapon: Choose one [Polearm or Truncheon]
- Gift: Empty-Hand Mastery
- Gift: Hospitality
- Gift: Resolve



# GIFTS

Skills represent training or aptitude for common tasks, rated in ever-increasing dice. *Gifts* are special abilities characters can have. Some will be social aspects, such as the rank

of samurai or increased wealth. Some will be physical, such as greater resistance to injury or an uncanny knack to turn aside a fatal blow. Others will be mental, such as



improved senses or heightened awareness.

Some Gifts have limitations on how often they can be used. Physical Gifts can be so demanding that the character gets too tired to continue using them. Mental Gifts can tax the spirit. Social Gifts can be pushed too far before people are more insulted than impressed. And sometimes, fate can only be pushed so far before karma comes around again. In game terms, some Gifts become *Exhausted* after use and must be recovered before they can be used again. (See *Recovery*, page 123.)

## EXPLANATION OF GIFTS

*Flavor Text:* some Gifts have an opening paragraph in italics, offering advice or philosophy.

Requires: You must meet all these requirements before taking the Gift.

Each \* indicates one Requirement.

[Choice] — When you first take this Gift, you must choose something to fill in the [Choice], such as a Skill name. Once chosen, substitute that choice in the ability's description.

X (auto) — *After* you use this ability, the Gift *automatically* becomes Exhausted. Once Exhausted, you cannot use this or any other of the Gift's X abilities.

X (Tie) — *After* you use this ability, this Gift becomes Exhausted ... *unless* your use of the ability scores a *Tie* or better. Listings like this will always be followed by a die-rolling contest, such as an attack roll or a Skill roll. Once Exhausted, you cannot use this or any other of the Gift's X abilities.

X (Dice vs. Target) — *After* using this ability, roll the appropriate dice vs. the target. If you *Tie* or better, you can continue to use

the Gift. If you *Fail*, the Gift becomes Exhausted. Once Exhausted, you cannot use this or any other of the Gift's X abilities.

X (Special) — This ability Exhausts under special conditions. Read the Gift's description for details.

Spend — You must have something to spend to claim this ability. You can get *Focus* by taking an action in combat. Other things, like *Might*, *Quickness*, *Cleverness*, or *Grit*, come from other Gifts. You can still use this ability even if the Gift is Exhausted.

Always — you always have this ability; you don't have to Spend anything, and this ability works even when the Gift is Exhausted. Note that the ability might have other conditions that must be met first, though.

Multiple — You can take this Gift multiple times. Each instance of the Gift Exhausts separately. For example, if you have "Cleverness ×2", then when one Cleverness becomes Exhausted, you have a second that's still useable. *Only* Gifts with "Multiple" in their descriptions can be taken multiple times in this way.

Manifold — This Gift has a [Choice] option. You can take this Gift multiple times, picking a different [Choice] each time. Different choices are different Gifts. For example, "Extra Career: Bodyguard" is a completely different Gift from "Extra Career: Gambler." In some cases, a Manifold Gift is also Multiple, such as "Increased Trait [of Choice]" — once again, each Manifold is different, so "Increased Trait: Body ×2" (two Gifts) is different from "Increased Trait: Speed" (a third Gift).

## BASIC GIFTS

These Gifts have no requirements. Any character can take them.

### Athletic

Always — Add 1 Mark to the following Skills:  
Climbing; Dodge; Hiking; Jumping;  
Swimming.

### Belligerent

Always — Add 1 Mark to the following Skills:  
Empty Hand; Leadership; Persuasion;  
Presence; Tactics.



## EXHAUSTION TESTS YOU CANNOT PASS

Sometimes, a Gift will have an Exhaustion Test that you can't possibly pass. For example, "Cleverness" requires Mind vs. 5. What if you're only rolling a d4? Can you still take the Gift?

The answer is yes, you can. *First*, you use the Gift's ability; *then*, you test for Exhaustion. So even if you can't pass the Exhaustion Test, you will always get one use out of the Gift, guaranteed.

Remember that even if a Gift is Exhausted, you can still Spend things like Focus or Cleverness to power abilities that need them, and you can always use an "Always" ability.

## Bushido Training

Always — Add 1 Mark to the following Skills: Literacy; Lore: *Bushido*; Riding;  
Weapon: Blade; Weapon: Bow

## Charismatic

Always — Add 1 Mark to the following Skills:  
Diplomacy; Gossip; Leadership;  
Persuasion; Presence.

## Cleverness

X (Mind vs. 5) — Power one ability that requires you to Spend *Cleverness*.  
Multiple — You can take this Gift multiple times.

## Danger Sense (Dairokkan)

X (auto) — If after rolling initiative (p. 101), you failed to gain *Focus*, Exhaust this Gift to claim *Focus* anyway.

X (auto) — negate surprise on yourself

(unless you are helpless or otherwise unable to recover on your own). This will prevent others from claiming a d12 surprise bonus to hit you.

X (auto) — When denied a Counter-Attack because of concealment, negate the concealment and Counter-Attack anyway, this one time, as if your target had *no* concealment.

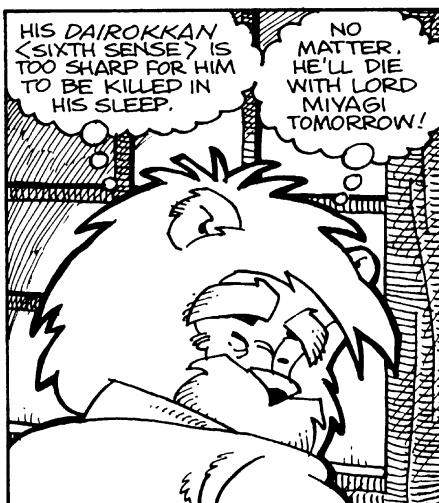
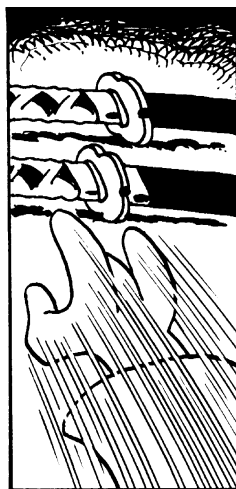
X (auto) — Wake up from a deep sleep just before someone attacks you.

Multiple — You can take this Gift multiple times.

## Divine Wind

Always — From your last turn (or the start of the fight) to the end of your current turn, if you dished out less damage than you took yourself, then you immediately gain *Focus*. If you cannot gain *Focus* because you are Reeling, recover from Reeling, instead.

Note — “Less damage” means that the single *best* result you suffered was better than



what you dished out yourself. Even if you hit three people for “Wound” results, if someone scored a “Cripple” result on you, you’re still taking more than you’re giving. Otherwise, count the number of results. In case of ties, you don’t get the Focus.

Note — Tally results *before* you use any injury-reducing abilities — it’s what they scored on you, not what you reduced it to.

Note — Tally results from *after* the end of your last turn to the end of your *current* turn. (If the fight just started, tally the results from the start of the fight to the end of your current turn.) You must have suffered *more* damage results than you were dishing out to claim the ability of Divine Wind. And since you gain the benefit at the *end* of your turn, you do not *start* your turn with Focus — you *end* your turn with Focus.

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## Doctor

X (Mind & Medicine vs. 9) — Take one hour to halve the healing quota for any one injured character. (See page 124.)

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## Educated

Always — Add 1 Mark to the following Skills: Literacy; Lore [any two]; Medicine; Trade: Scholar.




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## Empty-Hand Mastery

Always — Through personal devotion and hard work, you have honed your body into a weapon. Whenever an ability requires a *Easy Melee Weapon*, you can substitute your *Fist* with Empty-Hand skill, instead. (Normally, Empty-Hand is not considered a *Weapon Skill*.)

Always — Your bare-handed attacks are more effective. Add the *Disarm*, *Grapple* and *Trip* Criticals to your bare-handed attacks.

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## Grit

X (Will vs. 5) — Power one ability that requires you to Spend *Grit*.

Multiple — You can take this Gift multiple times.

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## Honor

Always — You have a personal code of honor, such as *bushido*. If you ever act dishonorably, immediately Exhaust all your *Honor* Gifts. This includes betraying someone’s confidence, failing to execute your sworn duty, or anything other role-playing that the Game Host declares to be dishonorable.

Always — Swear, on your honor, to perform a specific task or duty for someone. If



## UNARMED COMBAT

As with the many schools of swordsmanship, the unarmed combat of Edo-period Japan had many rigid rules of training and different implementations. The focus of these early schools was not so much on how to make empty hands deadlier, but on how to use the entire body as a weapon to give any possible edge over a foe — and one edge can be using greater flexibility to wrestle or throw someone in heavier armor.

For most folks, unarmed combat was called *jujutsu*, “gentle or yielding art”, and it was anything but gentle. Edo-period *jujutsu* focused on *atemi waza*, striking the vital points of the body. Advanced practitioners learned *nage-waza* (throws) and *katame waza* (grappling and controlling moves). A distinct unarmed combat style, *sumo wrestling* specializes in using lower-body strength to push or throw an opponent.

In game terms, anyone with Empty Hand knows bare-handed striking techniques and some grapples. A combatant with the Gift of *Empty-Hand Master* (page 71) knows quite a bit more.

you ever fail in your duty, Exhaust all your *Honor* Gifts and release yourself from that duty.

- X (auto) — As a Reaction, challenge any one opponent. For the rest of the fight, you gain a bonus d12 when Reacting against any opponent *except* the one you challenged. This Bonus ends: if you Act (not React) against any opponent other than your challenged one; if you act dishonorably as dictated by your code; or if your challenged foe becomes Incapacitated or worse.
- X (auto) — after having sworn to perform a specific task for someone, when performing that service, Power one ability that requires you to Spend *Might*, *Quickness*, or *Grit*.
- X (auto) — After having sworn, on your honor, to perform a specific task or duty for someone, Exhaust this Gift to overcome some odds that would normally hinder you. This includes, but is not limited to: (1) negating Unconsciousness or Reeling; (2) negating Confusion, Fear, or some other condition that would prevent you from your duty.
- X (auto) — As a Reaction, when someone attempts to Spend *Might*, *Quickness*, or *Grit* to do something against you directly, you negate their Spending.
- Multiple — You can take this Gift multiple times. (Note that if you act dishonorably, *all* your Honor Gifts will become Exhausted.)



## HONOR

Few aspects of Tokugawa era's Japan stand out more than the concept of *bushido*, the "way of the warrior." *Bushido* draws heavily upon Confucian precepts (such as loyalty), Shintoism (triumphs of the spirit and karma), and Rinzaï-school Zen Buddhism (austerity and detachment from worldly affairs). A greater discussion of *bushido* is found on page 15.

Not much is known about *ninpo* (the ninja's code of honor) or *kikotsu* (a code of honor among commoner militias), but they were probably much like *bushido*.

In game terms, the Gift of *Honor* allows a character to swear to perform some task or duty, and the strength of their devotion gives them advantages to make it come true. If they fail in this duty, the Gift becomes Exhausted . . . but there should also be social consequences as well, which should be role-played.

## Improved Parry

- Always — With a *Favorite Melee Weapon*, there is no limit to the number of times you may Parry. (Characters without this Gift can only Parry once per weapon per Round.) With Improved Parry, your Parry *does not use up* your Counter Attack for the round. (You can still only Counter-Attack once per weapon, though.) You can even Parry *after* you've used up your Counter-Attack.
- X (Tie) — As above, only with *any* Melee Weapon, not just a Favorite. You may continue to Parry until you Fail or worse; then this Gift becomes Exhausted.

## Increased Trait [of Choice]

- Always — Pick one Trait: Body, Speed, Mind, Will, or Career. Raise that Trait by one die size, up to d12. (If you have multiple Careers, each Career Trait must be increased separately.)
- Multiple — You may take this Gift multiple times, increasing a Trait even further.
- Manifold — You may take this Gift multiple times, to increase different Traits.

## Keen Ears

- Always — You have better hearing. Treat all sounds as one level louder.
- X (auto) — When trying to hear something, *Maximize* your Mind & Observation Dice, even after rolling.

## Keen Eyes

- Always — You have better eyesight. For purposes of seeing things, treat all ranges as one step closer.
- X (auto) — When trying to see something, *Maximize* your Mind & Observation Dice, even after rolling.

## Keen Nose

- Always — You have a better sense of smell. When rolling to smell something, treat all scents as one step stronger.
- X (auto) — When foraging (p. 142), do not roll — *Maximize* your dice instead.
- X (auto) — When trying to smell something, *Maximize* your Mind & Observation Dice, even after rolling.

## Luck

X (auto) — After any die roll, pick up any one die — either one you rolled or one your opposition rolled — and roll it two more times. From the three rolls, keep any one roll that you like. You may only modify one die per contest, and it must be one that involves your character.

Multiple — You can take this Gift multiple times. You can use two Luck Gifts to re-roll the same die *four* times and take the best roll, but you may *not* re-roll two dice.

Note — “Dice that involve your character” are subject to review by the Game Host. For example, *your* Initiative roll personally involves you, but someone else’s doesn’t. Likewise, a foe rallying another foe to attack you isn’t a contest that personally involves you, either — the attack roll they make against you does. Luck should involve good fortune or miracle saves, not be a hammer that a character uses to have their way.

## Melee Fervor

Always — With a *Favorite Melee Weapon*, you can use *Will and Weapon Skill Dice* (instead of Body and Weapon Skill) when Attacking, Counter-Attacking, and Parrying.

X (Tie) — With *any* Melee Weapon, you can use *Will and Weapon Skill Dice* (instead of Body and Weapon Skill) when Attacking, Counter-Attacking, and Parrying. (If you ever Fail on a roll with the weapon, Exhaust this Gift and go back to using Body.)

Note — You can only use Melee Fervor with Empty Hand Skill if you have the Gift of *Empty-Hand Mastery* (p. 71).

## Melee Finesse

Always — With a *Favorite Melee Weapon*, you can use *Speed and Weapon Skill Dice* (instead of Body and Weapon Skill) when Attacking, Counter-Attacking, and Parrying.

X (Tie) — With *any* Melee Weapon, you can use *Speed and Weapon Skill* (instead of Body and Weapon Skill) when Attacking, Counter-Attacking, and Parrying. (If you ever Fail on a roll with the weapon, Exhaust this Gift and go back to using Body.)

Note — You can only use Melee Finesse with Empty Hand Skill if you have the Gift of *Empty-Hand Mastery* (p. 71).

Note — Because Encumbrance can limit Speed Dice (see p. 139), when using Melee Finesse, *your Speed Dice and Weapon Dice* will be limited as well.

## Melee Guile

Always — With a *Favorite Melee Weapon*, you can use *Mind and Weapon Skill* (instead of Body and Skill) when Attacking, Counter-Attacking, and Parrying.

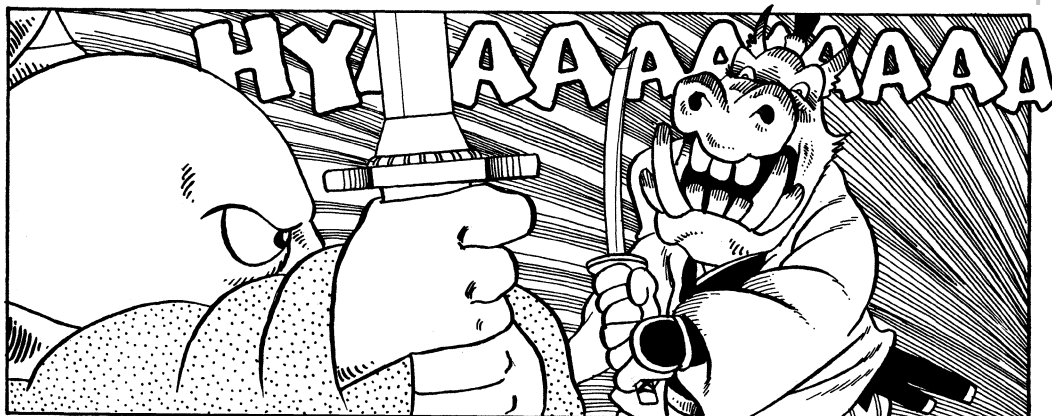
X (Tie) — With *any* Melee Weapon, you can use *Mind and Weapon Skill* (instead of Body and Weapon Skill) when Attacking, Counter-Attacking, and Parrying. (If you ever Fail on a roll with the weapon, Exhaust this Gift and go back to using Body.)

Note — You can only use Melee Guile with Empty Hand Skill if you have the Gift of *Empty-Hand Mastery* (p. 71).

## Might

X (Body vs. 5) — Power one ability that requires you to Spend *Might*.

Multiple — You can take this Gift multiple times.



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## Mob Fighter

Always — When anyone Attacks you and includes Tactics Dice with their attack roll, you can include your *own* Tactics skill with your Counter-Attack, Parry, or Dodge. (Normally, you can only include Tactics skill with an Attack against a Flanked opponent, not for defenses. See *Flanking*, p. 112.)

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## Night Vision

Always — You can see better in the dark than others. For spotting and attack purposes, treat poor lighting as fair lighting. Night Vision does not compensate for total darkness (like in a cave) or for being blind.

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## Pennywise

Always — Whenever you roll dice to buy something, your roll enjoys *Favor*; you may re-roll one 1. (See “Purchasing Items”, page 140.)

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## Perceptive

Always — Add 1 Mark to the following Skills: Gossip; Inquiry; Observation; Searching; Survival.

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## Quickness

X (Speed vs. 5) — Power one ability that requires you to Spend *Quickness*.  
Multiple — You can take this Gift multiple times.

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## Rustic

Always — Add 1 Mark to the following Skills: Climbing; Hiking; Riding; Survival; Swimming.

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## Sharpshooter

Always — For your Ranged Attacks, the penalty *Range Dice* are only d10s, not d12s. (See “Range”, p. 145.) This Gift does not affect Thrown Weapons.

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## Sneaky

Always — Add 1 Mark to the following Skills: Deceit; Dodge; Observation; Persuasion; Stealth.

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## Sympathetic

Always — Add 1 Mark to the following Skills: Diplomacy; Gossip; Inquiry; Medicine; Persuasion.

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## Talkative

Always — Add 1 Mark to the following Skills: Deceit; Diplomacy; Gossip; Inquiry Persuasion.

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## Toughness

X (auto) — Before any Damage is rolled against you, declare that the roll is *Enervated*. (Any Damage Dice that score higher than your Soak are re-rolled; the second result stands — see page 116.)  
Multiple — You can buy this Gift multiple times. However, you can only use Toughness *once* per Damage Roll.

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## Well-Traveled

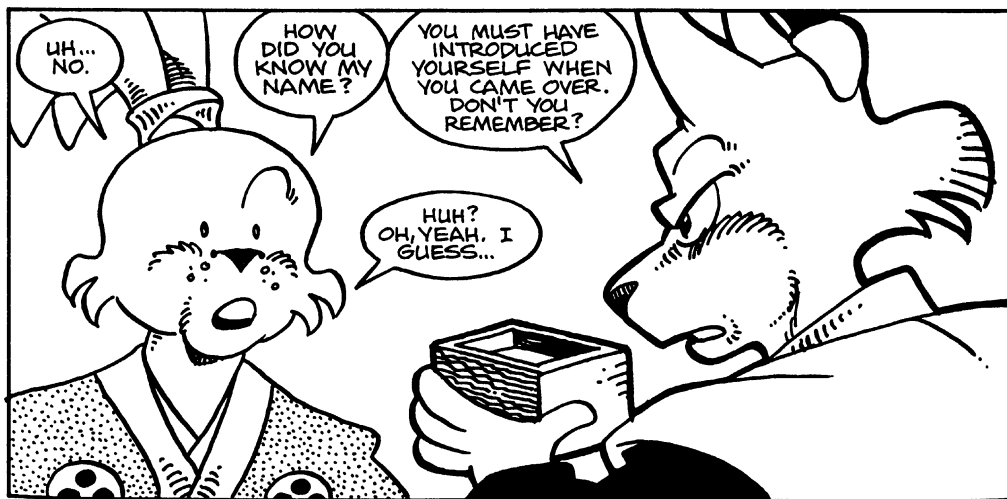
Always — Add 1 Mark to the following Skills: Gossip; Literacy; Lore; Geography; Lore: History; Lore: Nobility

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## Yielding Deflection

Always — After Failing to Counter-Attack or Parry with a *Favorite Weapon*, and after suffering injury, you become Disarmed. Reduce any Devastating, Incapacitating, or Crippling injury you just suffered to Wounding.  
X (auto) — As above, but with *any* Melee Weapon, not just a Favorite.  
Note — Since you cannot become Disarmed of your own Fists, you *cannot* use this Gift with Empty-Hand Mastery.  
Note — Yielding Deflection *can* be used with *Parry Arrows* (p. 81) against thrown and ranged objects. You are *not* automatically Reeling, regardless of your weapon’s weight — but you must still test your Resolve, as normal.





## CLEVERNESS GIFTS

Each of these Gifts has at least one ability that can be powered by Spending *Cleverness* (p. 70).

### Bodyguard

Always — If you are able to Parry, you can Parry (but not Counter-Attack) for someone else. That someone must be within striking reach of your weapon, though the attacker you're Parrying need not be. That someone must also let you defend for them — if they decide to use their own defense, then you can't Parry for them.

Spend Focus, Cleverness, or Quickness, or X (auto) — As a Reaction, when a friend within your Stride is about to take Damage, move to where that friend is, push that friend 1 pace away, and take the hit instead. You automatically take the hit as if you attempted to Parry and Failed (but you may use other Gifts to reduce the Damage). You suffer any Critical Hits that they would suffer, yourself.

### Canny Defense

Spend Focus or Cleverness, or X (Mind vs. 7) — Include your Mind Dice with any Dodge.

Spend Focus or Cleverness, or X (Mind vs. 7) — Include your Mind Dice with any Parry (provided you are not already doing so, such as with Melee Guile). You *cannot* use this ability with Attacks or Counter-Attacks.

### Combat Sense

Spend Focus or Cleverness, or X (Mind vs. 5) — After *Overwhelmingly* failing an Attack, Counter-Attack, Parry, or Dodge (and thus about to suffer one or more Criticals), you can claim that you were ready for it and thus can reduce the effect. Negate any and all Criticals — the attacker only scores a regular hit.

### Knockdown Maneuver

Spend Focus, Cleverness, or Might — Declare you are using Knockdown before you roll a melee attack. If your attack is successful, your foe is knocked down, regardless of how much Damage (if any) that you score.

### Sly Maneuver

Spend Focus or Cleverness — When Attacking, Counter-Attacking, or Parrying, force your opponent in the contest to use their Mind with their Skill (instead of Body, Speed, or Will).

### Streetwise

Always — You can Gossip with other Streetwise folks more easily.

Spend Cleverness, or X (auto) — When trying to impress criminals and other lowlifes with Skills like Diplomacy or Presence, do not roll your dice — *maximize* them, instead.

## GRIT GIFTS

Each of these Gifts has at least one ability that can be powered by Spending *Grit* (p. 71).

### Fighting Spirit

Spend Focus or Grit, or X (auto) — As a Reaction, you can become *Enraged*. While Enraged, you can take normal actions while Crippled (instead of the limited set of crippled actions). If you would become *Fearful*, *Terrified*, or *Unconscious*, instead negate the effect *and* your Rage. (Yes, this will keep you from falling unconscious when Incapacitated.)

Note — After the scene is over (which is about five minutes), the *Rage* will wear off. To become Enraged again, you will have to use Fighting Spirit again

### Headlong Sprint

Spend Focus or Grit, or X (Will vs. 5) — When Sprinting or Charging, do not roll — instead, *Maximize* your Speed die.

### Improved Aggression

Spend Focus or Grit, or X (auto) — When Attacking Aggressively with any Melee Weapon, do *not* automatically send yourself Reeling after resolving the attack. (See “Aggressive Attack”, p. 105)

### Resolve

X (special) — When you suffer a *Scratched* injury, you are *not* automatically sent Reeling. (Characters without this Gift are sent Reeling even when Scratched.) Using this ability does *not* Exhaust this Gift in and of itself ... but if the Gift becomes Exhausted for any other reason (such as below), then you can't use this ability either.

Spend Focus or Grit, or X (Will vs. 5) — When you suffer *any* injury, you are *not* automatically sent Reeling.

### True Leader

Always — You can Rally an ally who is anywhere from 6 to 100 paces away from you, provided they can hear your voice. The target is only 7. (Normally, the difficulty is 1+distance.) See “Rally”, page 106.

Spend Grit, or X (auto) — score one success on an attempt to Rally, *after* you have

rolled. This can turn a Tie or Failure into a Success!

### Zeal

Spend Grit, or X (auto) — *After* you complete your Action for the turn, gain Focus. You must be able to have Focus.

## MIGHT GIFTS

Each of these Gifts has at least one ability that can be powered by Spending *Might* (p. 73).

### Brushing Aside

Spend Focus or Might, or X (Body vs. 5) — When your Melee Attack, Counter-Attack or Parry fails, *after* Damage is rolled, you can use your superior strength to push part of the attack away. The Damage Roll against you is *Enervated*. (Any Damage Dice that score higher than your Soak are re-rolled; the second result stands — see page 116.)

### Knockdown Maneuver

This is the same Gift listed under “Cleverness Gifts” — see page 75.

### Mighty Blow

Spend Focus or Might — As an Action, move no more than your Stride towards a target, then use a Melee or Thrown Attack. If you hit, your Damage is *Slaying* (p. 116) —pick up any d20s that failed to beat the target's Soak, and roll those again; the second roll stands.

### Strength

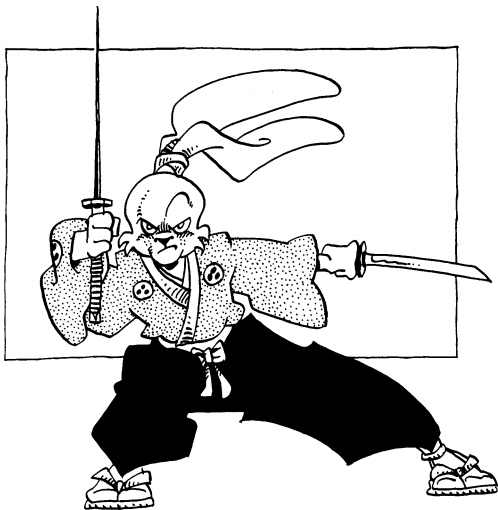
Always — you can *always* claim a Crush Critical, whenever you can claim Criticals.

Always — You can carry more weight. See “Encumbrance”, page 139.

Always — Whenever you would *Tie* on a contest of strength or a grapple, you claim 1 success instead.

Spend Focus or Might, or X (Body vs. 7) — When someone directly uses the Gift of Strength against you, negate that use.

Spend Focus or Might, or X (auto) — when in a contest of strength, or when making a *pin*, automatically *Maximize* your dice.



Spend Focus or Might, or X (auto) — when someone attempts to knock you down (such as with *Knockdown Maneuver*), negate being knocked down.

Spend Focus or Might, or X (Body vs. 7) — When entangled (p. 113), Stride or Retreat away from your entangler. They must either fall down or disentangle you (as a Reaction).

Spend Focus or Might, or X (Body vs. 7) — Use any Light Melee Weapon as if it were a *Thrown Weapon*.

Spend Focus or Might, or X (auto) — Use any Medium Melee Weapon as if it were a *Thrown Weapon*.

## QUICKNESS GIFTS

Each of these Gifts has at least one ability that can be powered by Spending *Quickness* (p. 74).

### Acrobat

Spend Focus, Quickness, or X (Speed & Jumping vs. 7) — as a Reaction, leap to your feet.

Always — When Dashing, there is no limit to the number of times you can leap, as long as you keep landing on good footing between leaps. (See “Jumping”, page 138.)

Always — As an Action, you can take the *Tumbling* maneuver. Move any distance up to your Dash. You can only Parry or Dodge, not Counter-Attack or Attack. Until the beginning of your next turn, include your *Jumping* dice with all Parries and Dodges.

## Ambidexterity

Always — You can fight with either hand with no penalty. You can only use one weapon or the other, not both at the same time. (Characters without this Gift suffer a d12 penalty for using a weapon in the wrong hand.) If you carry two weapons, you get *two* Counter-Attacks — one with the weapon in your left hand, and one with the weapon in your right.

Spend Focus or Quickness — In one Action, you can Attack with two one-handed weapons, *provided that the second one is Easy*. First, declare that you are making two Attacks. Second, resolve an Attack with one weapon. Third, if you are still able, resolve the Attack with the second, Easy weapon.

Spend Focus or Quickness — In one Action, you can Attack with *both* ends of a Combo Weapon (p. 114). First, declare that you are making two Attacks. Second, resolve an Attack with one part of the Combo Weapon. Third, if you are still able, resolve the Attack with the second part of the Combo Weapon. Remember that some Combo Weapons use two different Weapon Skills for different parts!

## Bodyguard

This is the same Gift listed under “Cleverness Gifts” — see page 75.

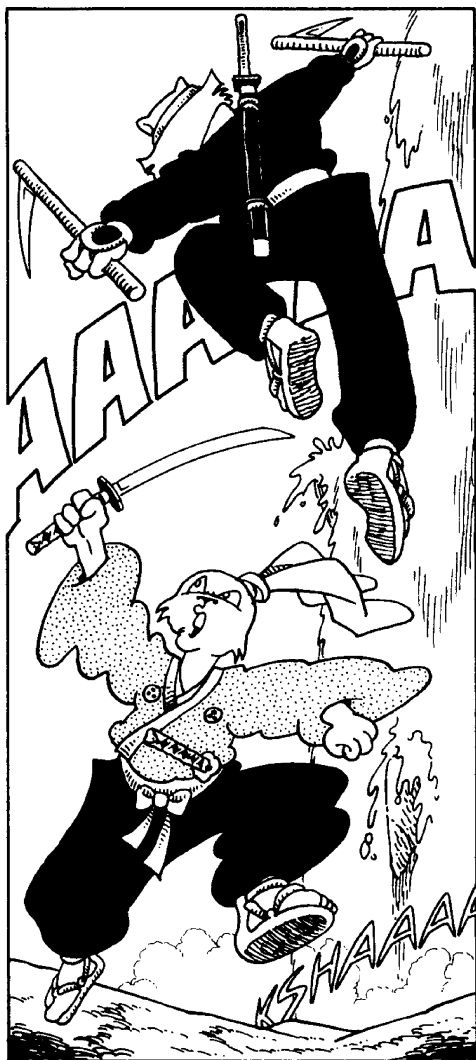
## Fast-Draw (*Iaijutsu*)

Always — as a Reaction, you can quickly draw a sheathed *katana*, *wakizashi*, or *ninja-to* for Attacking, Counter-Attacking and Parrying. (Without this Gift, other people caught without their weapon ready cannot use it to defend until their Action.)

Spend Focus or Quickness — As a Reaction, sheathe any *katana*, *wakizashi*, or *ninja-to*.

Spend Focus or Quickness — As an Action or Reaction, you can quickly draw a sheathed *katana*, *wakizashi*, or *ninja-to* to Attack, Counter-Attack, or Parry. If you hit, your attack is *Slaying*, in addition to other effects from Criticals. After executing this attack, your weapon is out and ready. You will have to take an Action (or spend Focus or Quickness, as above) to sheathe it again.

Note — The Fast-Draw is one-handed; therefore, the strike is one-handed as well.



With a katana, a one-handed strike causes 2d20 damage. For rules on Slaying Damage, see page 116.

## Improved Movement

Always — Your movement increases. Add 1 to your Stride. Add 2 to your Dash. Add 6 to your Run.

Spend Focus or Quickness — Add *another* 2 to your Dash. You can declare this ability multiple times for one Dash (by using more Quickness), but your increased Dash cannot exceed your Maximized Speed Die.

Spend Focus or Quickness — Add *another* 6 to your Run. You can declare this ability multiple times for one Dash (by using more Quickness), but your increased Run

cannot exceed six times your Maximized Speed Die.

Note — Dash and Run are explained under “Movement”, page 104.

## Speed Save

Speed Focus or Quickness, or X (auto) —

When you Attack, Counter-Attack, Parry or Dodge fails, and you just suffered a Damage Roll, you may immediately Retreat and reduce a Devastating, Incapacitating, or Crippling Injury to merely Wounded. You cannot use this ability if you cannot (or do not) Retreat.

## Spring Attack

Spend Focus or Quickness — As an Action, declare a path from you to any spot, no longer than your Dash. (This path need not be a straight line.) Move to engage the foe and resolve one Attack (Melee, Ranged, or Thrown) against one target. After the Attack, if you aren't Reeling, Crippled, Unconscious, knocked down or otherwise unable to move, bounce back to exactly where you were standing when you first declared the Spring Attack.

## Sure-Footed

Always — You can run over bad footing with no loss to Dash or Stride.

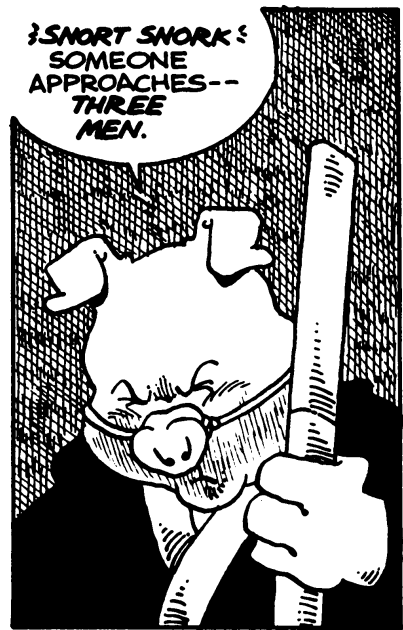
Always — when rolling to Sprint, you have *Favor*; if you roll a 1, re-roll.

Spend Focus or Quickness, or X (auto) — Move up to your Dash over a tight-rope, fence, or any other narrow surface.

## ADVANCED GIFTS

These Gifts have *Requirements*. Each \* means one Requirement. Requirements can be minimum Trait Dice, other Gifts, Marks in Skills, or even more exotic things. If you cannot meet the Requirements of a Gift, you cannot add it to your character. You cannot even *begin* to learn an Advanced Gift with Experience (p. 125) until you have met the Requirements.

Exhausting a Gift does *not* prevent you from using another Gift that Requires it.



## Blind Fighting\*

Requires: Keen Ears *or* Keen Nose

Always — others cannot claim Surprise against you simply because you can't see them. To claim this ability, the Game Host may ask you to make Mind & Observation rolls to hear or to smell an attacker.

Spend Focus or Cleverness, or X (auto) — you can strike at a foe as if you could see them with no concealment.

## Bo Mastery\*\* (Bojutsu)

Requires: Body d8 or better & 3 or more Marks in Weapon: Truncheon Skill

Always — You can use a *Favorite bo* or *konsaibo* as a Heavy, Flexible Weapon (instead of as a Combo Close Weapon.) On your Action, declare one of the two ways you will use the weapon; the weapon stays that way until your next Action.

## Desperate Attack\*

Requires: Mind d8 or better

X (special) — As an Action, move your Dash towards any target and roll a Melee Attack against them, with a bonus d12 on the attack roll. If you *Tie* or better, Exhaust this Gift, as you are no longer desperate.

## Dramatic Disheveling\*\*\*\*

Requires: Body d8 or better & Speed d8 or better & Mind d8 or better & Will d8 or better

X (auto) — Your clothes (and armor) are torn to useless shreds, and you become a mess. When you suffer a Crippling or Incapacitating Injury, reduce it to Wounded.

## Easy Rebound\*

Requires: The Gift of Resolve

Always — Whenever you Counter-Attack with an *Easy, Favorite Weapon*, you may choose as one of your Criticals to *Rebound* — by choosing this, you do *not* spend your Counter-Attack, and can thus Counter-Attack again before your next turn. You can only use this ability with *Easy* weapons, *not* with Awkward ones.

Note — Normally, only certain weapons can Rebound. See “Critical Hits”, page 112. You can only rebound with your barehands if you have the Gift of *Empty-Hand Mastery* (p. 71).

## Easy Riposte\*

Requires: Improved Parry

Spend Focus or Cleverness, or X (auto) — After Successfully Parrying an opponent with an *Easy Weapon*, retroactively convert that Parry to a Counter-Attack. This uses

your Counter-Attack. Your foe must be at the appropriate range for striking with your weapon. You can only use this ability with *Easy* weapons, *not* with *Awkward* ones.

Note — This might not sound that great, until you realize you can use this *after* rolling to see just how many successes your Parry scored, which now all become Criticals. And yes, you *can* use this ability with Bodyguard (page 75). You can only riposte with your bare-hands if you have the Gift of *Empty-Hand Mastery* (p. 71).

## Extra Career [of Choice]\*\*\*

Requires: the starting three Gifts of that Career

Always — You gain another Career Trait, starting at d4. (You can use the Gift of Increased Trait, p. 72, to increase this to d6, then d8, then d10, then d12.) You can include the Career Trait Dice to any of the four skills listed with that Career. Yes, this can lead to rolling two Career Dice with the same Skill.

Manifold — You can take this Gift multiple times, choosing a new Career each time. Every time you take a new Career, you must have its three starting Gifts.

Note — You can use the Gift of Increased Trait (p. 72) to raise your extra Career die.

## Fighting-Rope Mastery\*\* (*Kusarijutsu*)

Requires: Speed d8 or better & 3 or more Marks in Weapon: Flail Skill

Always — In your hands, a *Favorite kaginawa* or *kusari* is a *Far-Reaching* weapon — you may strike at foes 1, 2, 3, or 4 paces away. (In hands less adept than yours, these weapons can only strike at 1 or 2 paces.) You also can strike at *Far-Reaching Range* with the Flail parts of the Combo Weapons *kusarigama*, *kyoketsu shogi*, and *manrikigusari*.

## Flying Grip\*\* (*Nigiri ga Tondeoru*)

Requires: Body d8 or better & Will d8 or better

Always — With a *Favorite, Heavy Weapon*, you can use it in one hand instead. The weapon is still considered *Awkward*.

Always — With a *Favorite, Medium Weapon*, when using the weapon in one hand, the weapon is considered *Easy* and not *Awkward*. (However, you do not get the extra 1d20 damage for using both hands.)

X (Tie) — Use either of the abilities above, but with *any* Medium or Heavy Weapon, not just a *Favorite*. If you Fail on any Weapon Dice roll when claiming Flying Grip, Exhaust this Gift.



## Full-Moon Stroke\*\*\*\* (*Engetsugiri*)

Requires: Might & Quickness & Cleverness & Grit

Spend Focus *and* Might *and* Quickness *and* Cleverness *and* Grit — As an Action, move your Dash and Attack one foe with a Melee Weapon. Do not roll your Attack Dice — *Maximize* them instead. If you hit, roll your Damage Dice normally (with any Criticals, of course.)

## Giant\*

Requires: Body d12

Always — you are *huge*, more than two meters tall. Cover and concealment are less effective for you. You stick out in a crowd. Clothes require custom tailoring. Armor weighs twice as much for you.

Always — You can use *Medium* Weapons in one hand as if they were *Easy*, and you still get a bonus d20 damage as if you used two hands.



Always — You can use *Heavy Weapons* as if they were *Medium Weapons* (that is, either in one hand as *Awkward*, or in two hands as *Easy* and with 1d20 extra damage).

Always — You can carry more weight. See "Encumbrance", page 139.

Always — You are so big and obvious that others get a bonus d12 to detect you with *Observation*.

Always — when you are in *Melee Combat* with someone else who is not a *Giant*, others can strike at you with *Ranged Attacks* without fear of hitting the wrong target.

Spend *Focus* or *Might*, or *X (Tie)* — Use a *Close Weapon* as if it were *Reach*, or a *Reach Weapon* as if it were *Far-Reaching*. (If your *Attack roll Fails*, you fail the test for *Exhaustion*, when appropriate.)

*X (Body vs. 9)* — Power one ability that requires you to Spend *Might*.

Note — *Giant* is better than and does not stack with *Flying Grip* (p. 80).

## Horse-Cutter Maneuver\*\* (Zanzin Zamba)

Requires: *Speed* of d8 or better & *Will* d8 or better

Spend *Focus*, *Might*, or *Quickness* — as an *Action*, declare a target no farther from you than your *Dash*. Then, roll your *Body*, *Weapon Dice*, and *Jumping Dice (if any)*. If your score is less than the distance between you and the target, move yourself towards the target that many paces and stop. Otherwise, move yourself next to the target and use what you just rolled as your *attack roll*; your target defends normally. If your *attack hits*, you roll an extra 1d20 damage. Your movement is a leap into the air — ignore any terrain and low barriers between you and the target.

## Ninjutsu\*

Requires: A *Career* in trickery, such as a *Ninja* or a *Thief*.

Always — You begin the game with nine *shuriken* and four smoke bombs. You may choose to have one of the following: *ninjato*, *kaginawa*, *kusari*, or *kama*.

Always — You can execute a *Ninjutsu Attack*. As an *Action*, move your *Stride* towards a foe and declare any *Melee* or *Ranged Attack*. Include your *Deceit Dice* with your *attack roll*. Your foe includes their *Inquiry Dice (if any)* and their *Observation Dice (if any)* with their *Counter-Attack*, *Parry*, or *Dodge*.

*X (auto)* — using a distraction such as a smoke bomb, escape from a fight. You can make *Stealth* rolls in conditions where others would not.

## Parry Arrows\*

Requires: *Improved Parry*

Always — You can use your *Speed and Weapon Dice* with to *Parry* arrows and thrown objects with a *Favorite Melee Weapon*.

*X (Tie)* — As above, but with any *Weapon*, not just a *Favorite*. If your *Parry Fails*, Exhaust this Gift.

Note — *Flails cannot Parry*. You can only *Parry Arrows* with your bare-hands if you have the Gift of *Empty-Hand Mastery* (p. 71).

Note — You must use *Speed* with your *Weapon Dice*, not *Body*, *Mind*, or *Will*

(even if you have a Gift that normally lets you use those to Parry). Encumbrance (p. 139) may limit your dice.

## Priestly Investiture\*

Requires: A Priest career. You *cannot* have the Gift of Samurai.

Always — You are a monk. People treat you with respect. You can regularly depend on people's charity.

Always — You have the right to preside over marriage ceremonies.

## Samurai\*

Requires: A Samurai career, which means being born a samurai. You *cannot* have the Gift of Priestly Investiture.

Always — You are a samurai. You begin the game with a *wakizashi* and a *tanto*. You also begin with one of the following weapons: *daikyu*, *katana*, *nodachi*, *kusarigama*, *naginata*, or *yari*.

Always — You can Gossip (p. 88) with other

Samurai more easily.

Always — You have the rights and privileges of the *buke* class.

Note — One is born into the Samurai class, but one can later give the title up, such as by becoming a Priest or Criminal. See *Character Growth*, page 125.

## Setting the Gaze on the Target\*\* (*Monomi o Sadameru*)

Requires: Mind d8 or better & 3 or more Marks in Weapon: Bow Skill

Spend Focus or Cleverness, or X (Mind vs. 7) — Before rolling your Weapon: Bow dice, negate one Range Die granted to the defense of your target. If you have multiple resources to Spend, you can use this Gift multiple times to remove more Range Dice.

## Shuriken Mastery\*\* (*Shurikenjutsu*)

Requires: Mind d8 or better & 3 or more Marks in Weapon: Throw Skill

Always — In your hands, a *shuriken* is more deadly. Add *Slash* to your list of possible Criticals with a shuriken.

## Wealth\*

Requires: An appropriate background and career.

Always — You begin the game with two Expensive items.

Always — When rolling to purchase items, you have a bonus d12. (See "Purchasing Items", p. 140.)

## Secret Teachings: OKUGI GIFTS

In addition to the Gifts listed above, there are also the hidden mysteries of the various *dojo* (schools of martial arts). The secrets of these Gifts are closely guarded, and not taught to just anyone. These abilities are called *okugi* (secret techniques of the martial arts).

At their discretion, the Game Host may allow characters to start the game with *Okugi* Gifts. Most are very difficult to qualify for. The listing of these Gifts starts on page 132.

*Okugi* Gifts are usually learned later in the game, with experience. See *Character Growth*, page 125.

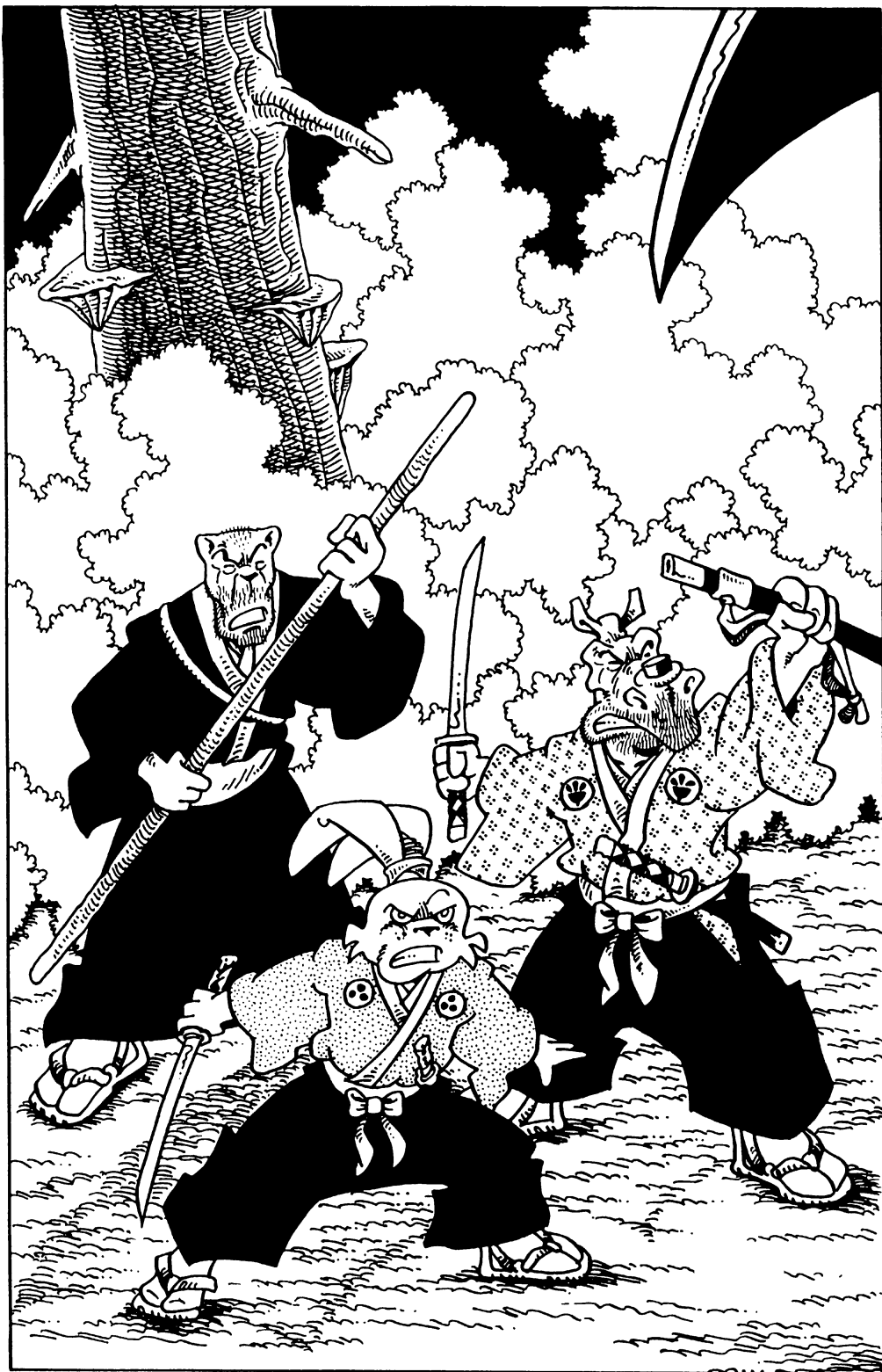




# SKILLS

Ordinary tasks like walking, talking and other unskilled activities will not require any special training. When a character tries to perform a task such as climb a wall, swing

a sword, convince someone not to swing a sword, etc., they will have to draw upon their *Skills*.



## MARKS AND DICE

Skills are rated in *Marks* — the more you have, the bigger dice you get to roll, and the more you get to roll.

Marks	Skill Dice
None	None
1	d4
2	d6
3	d8
4	d10
5	d12
6	d12, d4
7	d12, d6
8	d12, d8
9	d12, d10
10	2d12
11	2d12, d4
12	2d12, d6
13	2d12, d8
14	2d12, d10
15	3d12
16	3d12, d4
17	3d12, d6
18	3d12, d8
19	3d12, d10
20	4d12
21	4d12, d4

In summary, to calculate skill, for every 5 full Marks, you get a d12, with a remainder of 1 to 4 giving a bonus die from d4 to d10.

Three Marks in a skill is considered competent — if you have that many, you know what you're doing. Six Marks are rare but not unusual — true expertise. Nine Marks identifies one as a master — few ever attain this level of Skill.

*Skill Dice are not added together.* Remember that each die is compared separately. Of course, rolling more dice raises your average, and it gives the possibility of more Overwhelms.

### Skill Rolls Without Marks

Sometimes, a character will try to do something where they lack training. In that case, they should roll what dice they can. For example, anyone could try to reason with others, rolling just their Mind Trait — folks with Skill in Diplomacy and Persuasion will just be better at it.

Remember that rolling all ones is a *Botch* — the worst possible result. (See page 96.) Folks rolling only one die are much more likely to Botch than someone with even one Mark's worth of training!



## INCLUDING CAREER TRAITS

Every Player Character begins the game with at least one Career Trait. Each Career Trait's Dice is included with the use of at least four Skills.

Career Traits represent broad life experience — more than just the four Skills listed. Players are encouraged to come up with new uses for their Career Traits. For example, a Game Host might allow a Bonze to include his Career Trait when Gossiping with other Bonzes, by swapping stories about their experiences of being a priest. The Game Host should take care that Careers aren't included with *everything*, though — only for uses appropriate for such training.

Remember, Career Traits don't *add* to Skills, they are *included with* Skill Dice. For example, a Ninja with a Rogue Trait of d6, and 3 Marks in Deceit, has total Skill Dice of d8, d6 (and *not* d12).

Sometimes, you may be rolling two skills at once. If a Career Trait is included with both Skills, then you get twice as many Career Dice to roll.

## SKILLS OF CHOICE

Some Skills, such as Craft, Trade, and Lore, aren't just one skill but many different ones with a *Choice*. Each Choice is bought as a completely separate Skill. For example, "Craft: Carpentry" is a different skill from "Craft: Armory". The Marks from one Choice don't affect the Marks of a different Choice.

### Favored Use

Unlike Traits, which represent general capacity, Skills are specialized training ... and they can be even more specialized. A character with at least one Mark in a Skill can learn a *Favored Use* — one aspect of the Skill that the character excels at.

When rolling Skill Dice towards your Favored Use, your roll is *Favored* — you can re-roll any one die that comes up "1".

**例 Example:** Kaede grew up in the forests of Ezo, so she's no stranger to scaling trees. She buys 3 Marks in "Climbing" with "Favored Use: Trees". Later, when trying to get a better look around, Kaede decides to climb a tree. She rolls her Body & Climbing of d8, d6 and they come up 1 and 3. However, since she has a Favored Use for climbing trees, she re-rolls the 1 — and the re-roll comes 7. Kaede scores 7 & 3.

You don't have to choose a Favored Use if you don't want to. A Skill without a Favored Use can have one assigned to it at any time, up to and including after you've rolled the dice and a "1" is right there in front of you. Once a Favored Use is chosen, it costs Experience to change it.

Each Skill can only have one Favored Use at a time. Note that Skills of Choice are different, though — you can have a different Favored Use for "Weapon: Truncheon" from "Weapon: War Fan."

### Favorite Weapon

A special type of Favored Use is "with my *Favorite Weapon*." The character designates



one particular weapon to be the Favorite. This weapon is unique — no other weapon has the same edge, heft, and balance quite like this Favorite.

Many Gifts work better with a Favorite Weapon. Other weapons are difficult to work with and exhaust fighting abilities. Only a

weapon the character has trained many hours with, a weapon that has become an extension of the character's soul, can be wielded with consummate grace and skill. In game terms, some Gifts *Always* work with *Favorite Weapons* but can become Exhausted when used with other, lesser weapons.

Using a Favored Weapon grants Favor to Attack Rolls, Counter-Attack Rolls, and Parry Rolls made with the weapon. Favored Weapons do *not* have Favored Damage Rolls.

A Combination Weapon that requires two Skills is only a Favorite Weapon if *both* Skills have that particular weapon specified as a Favorite.

Since Favorite Weapons are so personal, characters are encouraged to give such weapons fancy names.



## SKILL DESCRIPTIONS

Each Skill description includes some suggestions on what Basic Traits (Body, Speed, Mind, or Will) should be included.

Players and the Game Host are encouraged to come up with different combinations of Traits and Skills for the unique situations that arise in their games. Use these descriptions as a starting point to your own applications.

### Climbing

Use Climbing Skill to climb ladders and maneuver over objects.

As an Action, use *Body, Speed & Climbing* to climb over things — see the Spot Rules chapter for more details, page 138.

All Climbing Dice can be limited by Encumbrance — see page 139.

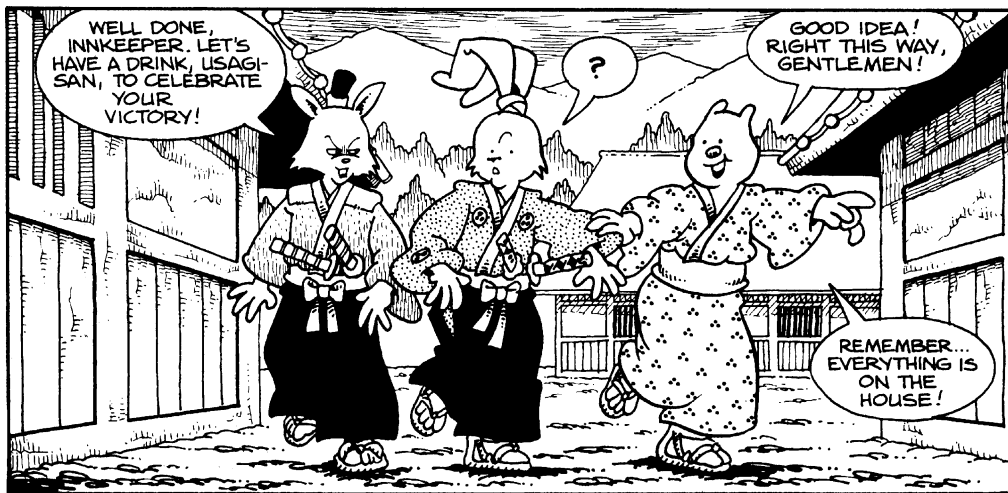
*Favored Uses* include: trees; rocks and cliffs; rooftops.

### Craft [of Choice]

Craft skill is necessary to build, repair, or create things. A Craft produces a material item that can be used or sold — as opposed to a Trade (p. 92), which performs a service.

Use *Mind & Craft* to repair things. Use *Mind, Will & Craft* when working long jobs. Physically strenuous crafts, like blacksmithing, might use Body as well. See the Spot Rules chapter for more ideas.

*Favored Uses* include: with my favorite tools; with a particular kind of good.



## Deceit

A necessity for spies, Deceit is used to lie to others, to pretend to be something else, and to play anyone false for any reason. Deceit can be used for imposture as different social classes, positions, or even races.

Take a round being Inactive to hide a small object on your person. Others must use *Mind & Searching* vs. your *Body & Deceit* to find it.

Take one Action to use *Speed, Will & Deceit* vs. observers' *Speed, Mind & Observation* to pocket a palm-sized object without others noticing.

When speaking, use *Will & Deceit* vs. observers' *Mind & Inquiry* to lie to others. The Game Host should give observers bonus dice to see through really outrageous lies.

Take one hour to use *Mind, Will & Deceit* vs. observers' *Mind, Inquiry & Observation* to disguise yourself as another profession, or even another race or gender. The Game Host may give one Bonus (or more) for implausible disguises.

Take one Action to use *Will, Deceit & Persuasion* vs. an interrogator's *Mind, Inquiry & Presence* to lie in response to a question. The Game Host should apply Penalties for particularly implausible lies.

*Favored Uses* include: palming objects; lying; disguises; about matters of money; about matters of the heart.

## Diplomacy

This is the skill of tactful negotiations.

Take five minutes to use *Mind & Diplomacy* to convince others to listen to your position. The Game Host should

assign a difficulty, from 2d4 for reasonable requests to 2d12 or worse for unlikely ones.

Take five minutes or longer to use *Mind, Diplomacy & Persuasion* to convince a minor non-player character to your way of thinking. The Game Host should assign a difficulty, as above, and encourage you to role-play for a few minutes of how you would make your request. Major characters probably won't be swayed by mere die rolls but will require role-played interaction.

Take five minutes to use *Mind, Deceit, and Diplomacy* to use lies or false information. The difficulty remains the same, but the others may include their *Mind & Inquiry* to see through you — and if they do, they will most likely become hostile.

While speaking, use *Mind & Diplomacy* vs. 6 to relay a message to a close ally, using innuendo and slang that only you and they would understand. Observers must roll their *Mind & Inquiry* vs. your score to pick up on your messages.

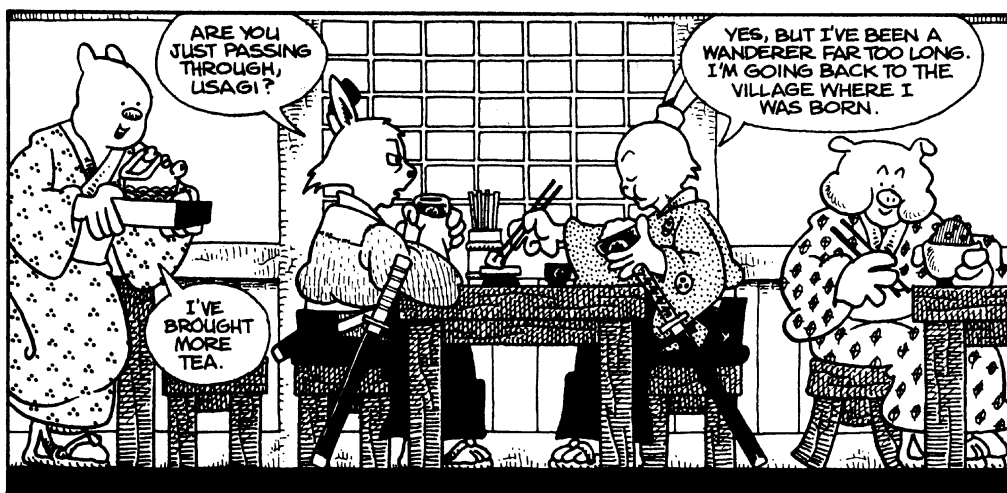
*Favored Uses* include: military dialogue; over tea ceremony; passing secret messages.

## Dodge

A popular skill with those who fight — use *Speed & Dodge* vs. attack rolls to avoid being hit. See “Dodging”, page 111.

All Dodge Dice can be limited by Encumbrance — see page 139.

*Favored Uses* include: when Retreating; vs. ranged attacks; vs. melee attacks; vs. Empty-Hand attacks.



## Empty Hand

While not the stylized *karate* known today, the art of fighting with the bare hands is well known in the Tokugawa era. Empty Hand skill covers all punching, kicking, wrestling, and other bare-handed attacks.

As an attack, use *Body & Empty Hand* vs. a foe's defense to strike them with your bare hands. See the Combat chapter for more details. Unlike Weapon Skills, Empty Hand can't normally be used to Counter-Attack.

As an attack, you can *grapple* — use your bare hands to wrestle, pin, or throw someone down. See the Spot Rules chapter for more details, page 144.

Empty Hand Skill does a lot more if you have the Gift of *Empty-Hand Mastery* (p. 71).

## Gossip

In social situations, one can Gossip with other folks. This Skill allows one to host a successful party or other social event. It also allows one to glean information in a relaxed setting.

Take one hour to use *Mind & Gossip* vs. 2d8 to speak to a crowd of people and gain five minutes' worth of useful information. The difficulty drops to 2d4 if you and your gossip partners both share the *Samurai* gift, or the *Streetwise* gift.

*Favored Uses* include: in bars; while gambling; while walking in the countryside.

## Hiking

Almost all long-distance travel in *Usagi's* world is done by walking.

Use *Body & Hiking* to walk longer than eight hours in a day. See the Spot Rules chapter for more details, page 138.

All Hiking Dice can be limited by Encumbrance — see page 139.

*Favored Uses* include: in the mountains; on the plains; through the forest.

## Inquiry

The Skill of knowing the right question to ask and the quality of the answers given, Inquiry is a popular Skill with adventurers.

Take one Action to use *Mind, Inquiry & Persuasion* to ask a question of an unwilling subject. They must roll *Will & Presence* to refuse to answer ... or *Will & Deceit* to instead lie to you. The Game Host may impose Bonuses or Penalties based on how loyal the subject is, the inducements you offer to get them to talk, how implausible their deceit (if any) is, etc.

Inquiry opposes almost all uses of *Deceit* (page 87) and many other skills intended to sway your opinion.

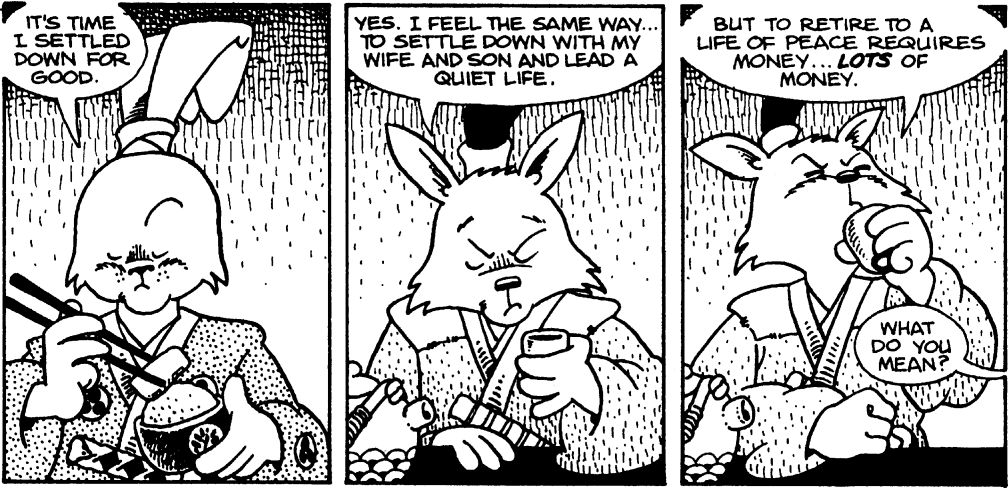
## Jumping

Eventually, it happens—someone has to jump a gap or leap to grab something.

Use *Body & Jumping* to leap great distances. Use *Body, Speed & Jumping* to reduce falling damage. See the Spot Rules chapter for more details, page 138.

All Jumping Dice can be limited by Encumbrance — see page 139.

*Favored Uses* include: from rooftop to rooftop; to reduce falling damage; with the Horse-Cutter Maneuver; with Acrobatics.



## Leadership

Essential for any general, Leadership skill is used to convince others to not lose hope and to face dire peril.

Take five minutes to use *Mind, Will & Leadership* to make an impassioned speech to your soldiers to put their minds at ease.

As an Action, use *Will & Leadership* to Rally others — see “Rally” in the Combat chapter, page 106.

*Favored Uses* include: removing Reeling; adding Focus; with my subordinates.

## Literacy

In our modern era, people take public education for granted. In the world of *Usagi*, many peasants are illiterate.

When working with written materials, *no die you roll can be bigger than your largest Literacy Die*. (Yes, that means if you don’t have any Literacy, you can’t roll any dice.)

Take one hour to use *Mind, Literacy & Lore* when working in a library doing research.

*Favored Uses* include: reading classic literature; reading legal documents; when left alone in peace and quiet without any silly adventurers constantly interrupting.

## Lore [of Choice]

There are all kinds of things to know, and Lore is the skill to know it.

As a Reaction, use *Mind & Lore* to remember something — more specifically, the Game Host may ask you to roll those dice to see if your *Character* knows something that your *Player* logically should.

Here are some choices for Lore skill. This list is by no means exhaustive — the Game Host and Players should come up with more.

- *Geography* (the layout of Japan; major roads; cities and their populations & make-up)
- *History* (key dates and places; timelines of wars; pre-history and the time of myths)
- *Nobility* (identifying the *mon*, or crest, of certain houses; lineages; current and past standings of the clans with the Shogun or the Emperor)
- *Religion* (Buddhism; Shintoism; Confucian ancestor-worship; supernatural monsters)
- *Sumo* (famous sumo wrestlers and matches; the stylized rituals before a match; the history of sumo; popular places for sumo)
- *Tea Ceremony* (a precise ritual for presenting and drinking tea)

As a Reaction, use *Lore* alone to know some really obscure secret. (Yes, this means characters without any Lore dice won’t have any chance to know such things.)

Take one hour to use *Mind, Literacy & Lore* when working in a library doing research.

*Favored Uses* include: a particular time period; a particular geographical region; when meditating.

## Medicine

In the dangerous world of *Usagi*, folks are always getting into some kind of trouble. Medicine skill can be used to heal others. See “Healing”, page 123.

*Favored Uses* include: on a particular Race; when using my medicine pouch.



## Observation

The skill of knowing what's going on around you. Most adventurers get as much Observation skill as they can.

As a Reaction, use *Mind & Observation* to see things around you, or to hear things, or to smell scents. See the Spot Rules chapter for more details. The Gifts of Keen Eyes, Keen Ears, and Keen Nose will help.

Observation is always passive — “just looking around” as it were. To actively investigate something, use the Searching Skill, below.

*Favored Uses* include: seeing things; hearing things; smelling things; when in the mountains; when in the plains; when in the forest; when in crowds; when all alone; when in darkness.

## Persuasion

Persuasion Skill is used to convince characters to do things your way, or for you, or to bring them over to your point of view.

As a Reaction, use *Will & Persuasion* vs. a minor character's *Mind, Will & Inquiry* to convince them to Focus instead of perform some other action.

Take one Action to use *Mind & Persuasion* vs. a minor character's *Will & Inquiry* to “fast-talk” them into doing something they normally wouldn't do.

Take five minutes or longer to use *Mind, Diplomacy & Persuasion* to convince a minor character to your way of thinking. The Game Host should assign a difficulty, as above, and encourage you to role-play for a few minutes of how you would make your request. Major characters probably won't

be swayed by mere die rolls but will require role-played interaction.

The Game Host should usually only permit Persuasion to be used once or twice per encounter. Using Persuasion too often will come off as pushy and will tax the patience of other characters.

Persuasion is usually used only on the Game Host's Characters. Player Characters can make up their own minds ... but is usually considered good role-playing if a Player allows their character to be Persuaded.

*Favored Uses* include: when lying; when fast-talking; with a particular race; with samurai; with streetwise folks.

## Presence

To properly show off to others, especially in a public setting, use the Presence skill, especially for shows of acting or bravado. Presence also works defensively — the more confident you are in yourself, the less effect the presence of other people has upon you.

Take five minutes to use *Mind, Diplomacy & Presence* to speak before a crowd. The Game Host should assign a difficulty based on how hostile or friendly the crowd is.

As an Action, use *Body & Presence* vs. *Body, Will & Presence* against any one target (no farther from you than your Dash) to intimidate them, preventing them from coming any closer. The Game Host should usually only permit this roll in likely circumstances — the adrenaline rush of combat will probably keep this from working twice.

For five minutes or more, use *Will, Presence & an appropriate Trade* to entertain a crowd.

*Favored Uses* include: public speaking; intimidation; against the lower classes.



## Riding

The world of *Usagi* includes horses to Ride into combat.

Use *Speed & Riding* to stay in the saddle or to urge your mount to perform complex maneuvers — see the Spot Rules chapter for more details, page 138.

*Favored Uses* include: with my favorite horse; when riding full-tilt.

## Searching

Methodically going through someone's pockets, their room, or an area is covered by the Search Skill. Unlike Observation (above), searching means getting in there and poking, prodding, digging, and generally moving things around.

Take an Action to pat an Inactive combatant down, to use *Mind & Searching* vs. their *Body & Deceit* to find a small object hidden on their person.

To follow a trail in the wilderness, use *Mind, Searching & Survival* vs. an opponent's *Speed, Stealth, & Survival*, checking once per hour of travel.

Take an Action to use *Mind & Searching* to search an area no bigger than 1 pace in any direction. The Game Host should assign a difficulty based on whether you know what you're looking for, how concealable the object is, etc.

Take five minutes to use *Body, Speed, Mind & Searching* to ransack a 4-pace by 4-pace room (and making a loud noise in the process). The Game Host should assign difficulty, as above.

*Favored Uses* include: for finding valuables; for finding contraband; tracking.

## Stealth

Another Skill popular with adventurers, Stealth is used for moving past folks without being detected.

As an Action, when you have at least partial concealment, you can use *Speed & Stealth* vs. observers' *Mind & Observation* to slip past them unnoticed. See the Spot Rules chapter for more details.

*Favored Uses* include: in darkness; when wearing the black ninja outfit; against folks being distracted.

## Survival

The skill of finding food and supplies in all sorts of climates, Survival includes trapping, fishing, knowing which roots and berries are poisonous, and orienteering.

Take four hours to use *Body, Mind & Survival* vs. the difficulty of the climate to find food. See the Spot Rules chapter for more details.

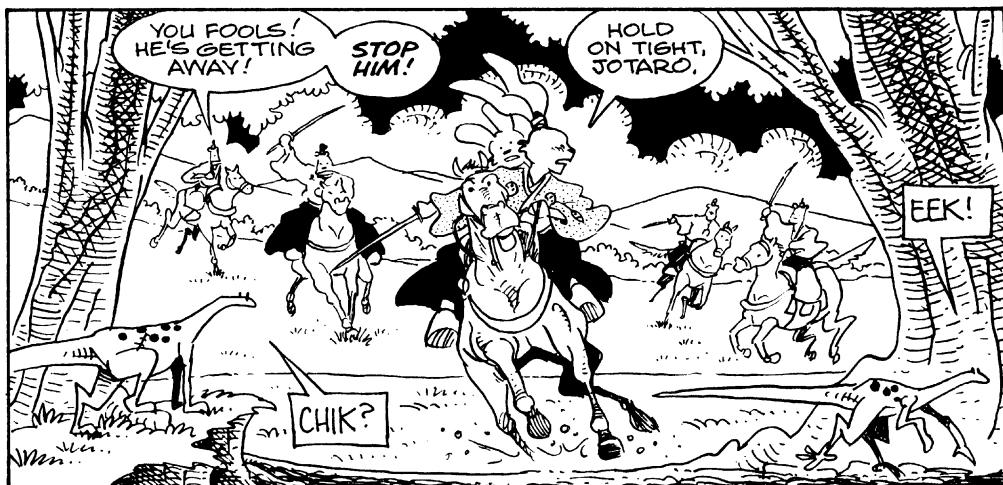
To avoid getting lost in the wilderness, roll *Mind, Lore: Geography, & Survival* vs. an appropriate difficulty set by the Host.

*Favored Uses* include: fishing; trapping; when in the mountains; when on the plains; when in the forest.

## Swimming

Japan is an island nation — the skill of Swimming is very common, especially as exercise. Many warriors train to swim in full armor.

As an Action, use *Body & Swimming* to avoid drowning or being swept away by strong currents. As an Action, use *Speed & Swimming* to move through water. See the



Spot Rules chapter for more details, page 138.

*Favored Uses* include: avoiding drowning; swimming for distance.

## Tactics

In a fight, numbers can be used to advantage.

When you are flanking an opponent, you can include Tactics with your Attack Dice (but not with Counter-Attack, Parry, or Dodge) — see “Flanking”, page 112.

Use *Mind & Tactics* to form sophisticated battle plans involving a dozen individuals or less.

## Trade [of choice]

Trade covers any occupational service that doesn't result in something tangible.

Use *Mind & Trade* for quick jobs taking no longer than five minutes. Use *Mind, Will & Trade* when working longer jobs.

Physically strenuous trades, such as porting items, may use *Body* as well. See the Spot Rules chapter for more ideas.

*Favored Uses* include: with my specialty; when charging too much money.

## Weapon [of Choice]

Each weapon in the *Usagi* game requires one or more skills. Weapons are divided into categories, each with a different skill.

- **Axe** — unbalanced cutting or slashing weapons with a haft, such as the *kama*, *kusarigama*, *masakari*, and *ono*.
- **Blade** — balanced cutting and stabbing weapons with an edge, such as the *bokken*, *hachiwari*, *katana*, *kodachi*, *kunai*, *kyoketsu shogi*, *ninja-to*, *no-dachi*, *tanto*, and *wakizashi*.
- **Bow** — flexible wood with a taut string used to launch arrows, such as the *daikyu* and *hankyu*.
- **Flail** — ropes and chains with striking surfaces, such as the *kaginawa*, *kusari*, *kusarigama*, *kyoketsu shogi*, *manriki-gusari*, and *nunchaku*. Flails are good for offense but not so much for defense — in game terms, they can Counter-Attack but cannot Parry.
- **Polearm** — long poles with sharp surfaces on the end, such as the *naginata* and *yari*.



- **Thrown** — small weapons thrown to cause injury, such as the *gussen*, *kunai*, and *shuriken*. All thrown weapons use this skill when thrown, but a different skill when used in hand-to-hand combat.
- **Truncheon** — heavy clubs or cudgels, such as the *bo*, *buke-zukuri*, *jitte*, *jo*, *keibo*, *kiseru*, *shakuhachi*, and *tetsubo*.
- **War Fan** — dress fans toughened for use in combat, such as the *gunsen* and *tessen*.

Melee Weapons (in hand-to-hand combat) use *Body & Weapon* vs. an opponent's defense. Ranged and Thrown Weapons use *Speed & Weapon* vs. an opponent's defense. See the Combat chapter for more details.

Particularly complicated weapons — *Combination Weapons* — can require more than one Skill to use. For example, the *kusarigama* uses both *Weapon: Axe* and *Weapon: Flail*.

Thrown weapons use *Weapon: Thrown* Skill when thrown, but a different skill when used for hand-to-hand combat.

If you have one or more Marks in a Weapon Skill, you can declare a *Favorite Weapon* — see page 85.

# BASIC RULES

The *Usagi Yojimbo* role-playing game has some basic rules that apply to most things you will do in the game. This chapter is where most of the action happens, so read this section carefully.

## HOSTS, PLAYERS, AND CHARACTERS

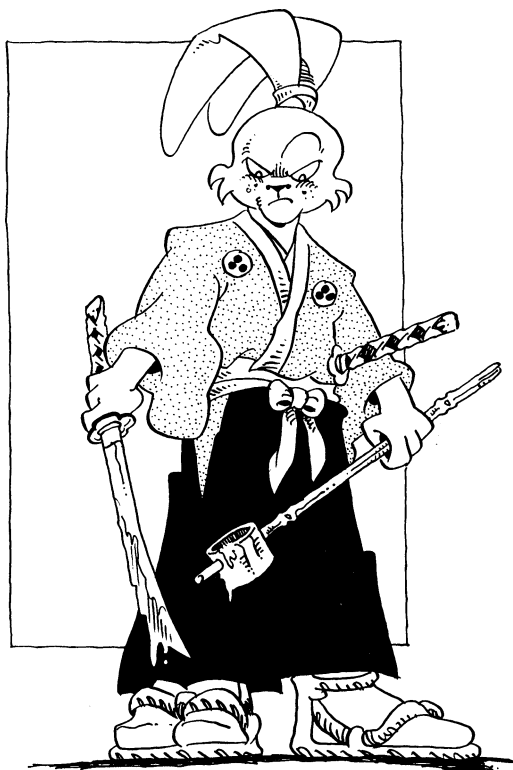
One player is the *Game Host*, who is a lot like a director of a movie or play. The Game Host moderates all the action and describes the scenes to the other *Players*.



Each Player controls one *Player Character*. By describing the Character's actions and responses to events in the game's world, the Players act out the roles of the heroes of the story.

The Game Host not only acts as director, but also assumes the roles of the supporting cast, both *Major Characters* (villains and allies in the story, fully detailed) and *Minor Characters* (bit parts or extras from a movie).

While the Game Host is the final authority on what happens in the game, part of being a good Host is making sure that all the Players are having fun.



## GAME TERMS

To make sure that everyone has the same idea of what's going on, here are some of the terms used in the *Usagi* game and what they mean.

**Declare:** to say to the Game Host that you want to do something or to claim some advantage for your character. "I declare that I attack." "I declare that I will Interrupt that guy before he says anything." "I declare that I will Spend Might to power a Mighty Blow." For the most part, you don't have to use the word;

you can just say, "I attack" or "I attack with Sly Maneuver." When the rules say you have to *declare* something, it means you have to tell the Game Host — such abilities don't automatically happen. You must declare things *before* rolling any dice.

**Claim:** Many modifiers in the game are optional — you can choose whether to claim them or not. For example, you might not want to claim cover against an attack ... if that cover is the diplomat you're guarding! The Game Host should ask the Player what claims they want to make before rolling any contest. You don't have to claim things before rolling any dice — you can claim them afterwards.

**Contest:** A lot of things your character does in the game, like walking and talking, will be assumed to work just fine. When two characters dispute something or strive for advantage, a *contest* may be called. In a contest, you roll some dice and try to beat your opponent.

**Dice:** The funny-shaped things with numbers on them. Dice have four, six, eight, ten, twelve, or even twenty sides. Dice are abbreviated with a lower-case "d" — for example, "d20" means "roll a twenty-sided die." Multiple-die sizes are separated by a comma, and listed biggest to smallest, such as "d8, d4". Multiples of the same size will have a number in front — for example, "3d6" means "roll three six-sided dice."

Unlike most other role-playing games, dice aren't added together.

**Target:** another character that you are using your ability against.

**Ability:** Player-Characters will have lots of special *abilities* that they will want to use. The sequence is: (1) declare the ability you will use to the Game Host; (2) Spend anything required to activate the ability; (3) use the ability and play out any results; (4) resolve any tests for Exhaustion. Unless otherwise stated, each use of a Gift is only for one thing (Action or Reaction) — the Gift must be declared a second time to use it again. If you can't spend the resources that an ability needs, or you Exhausted the Gift that gives it to you, then you can't use it.

**Exhausting (X):** Many Gifts have abilities that can become “used up” after one use — that is, they become *Exhausted*. When a Gift is Exhausted, you cannot use any of the special abilities that require Exhaustion any more. (You cannot use any special abilities listed after “X”.) You can still use abilities that Always work, and you can still use abilities that require you to Spend something if you have that something to Spend.

**Negating:** Sometimes you will prevent something from happening. A negated Action simply doesn’t happen — it’s as if the character taking the Action chose to do nothing, instead. A negated Reaction does not happen, either; if that Reaction is a defense, the target may quickly attempt a different Reaction if they can, but the Reaction they just had negated is still used up. When an ability is negated, the target must *still* follow the rules for Exhaustion, just as for regular use. (If that ability has an “X (Tie)” condition, it is automatically Exhausted.) A negated condition (such as *Reeling* or *Confusion*) is removed and no longer affects play.

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## Game Time

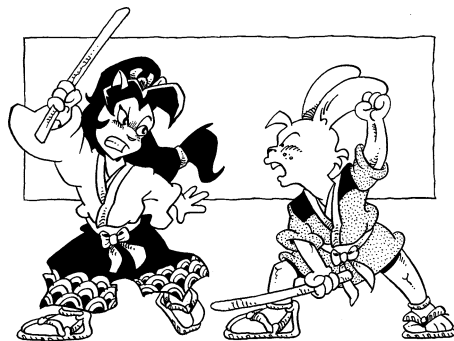
Much like a novel might compress or expand events, role-playing games will have different measures of time. *Game time* refers to how fast events are progressing for the Characters, unlike the “real time” passing for the people playing the game.

For example, the Game Host might say, “And then the night passes without

incident.” This phrase covers several hours of game-time for the Characters, but since nothing interesting is going on, everyone would agree that it’s time to move on to the next incident.

The typical amount of time in the *Usagi* game is the *Scene*, the amount of time it takes to play out a minor incident. Unless otherwise specified, a Scene is five minutes. Something that lasts “until the end of the Scene” lasts no longer than five minutes.

In the *Usagi* comic, when a fight begins, many panels might be used to express only a few seconds of time. When playing the *Usagi* game, time might be compressed into *Rounds*. Rounds aren’t a fixed length of time, but they’re about the time it takes for everyone involved to get to do one thing. If exact timing is needed, a Round can be assumed to be six seconds.




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## Game Distance

The standard unit of distance is the *pace*, which is about one meter long. (Users of Imperial measurement can assume a pace is one yard long.) Characters in *Usagi*’s world might say that a pace was three *shyaku* long.

For purposes of combat, range is divided into several *bands*. These ranges are discussed in greater detail in the *Spot Rules* chapter, page 145.

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## ROLLING DICE

For many things, you won’t have to roll dice — walking into town, idly chatting with friends, and other mundane activities can be assumed to work just fine.

It’s when things get uncertain and dramatic that *dice* will become involved. Can you climb that tall tree? Will your jump take you to the other side of that chasm? Can you convince the angry mob not to run you out of town? Will you find the hidden clue that will tell you where they



### USE ONCE, THEN EXHAUST

Remember — you use the ability first, *then* test for Exhaustion. Even if you can’t pass the test, you still get to use the ability at least once.

If the ability can be powered by *Spending*, and you have the resource to Spend, then you don’t have to test for Exhaustion on the Gift.

Getting the resource to Spend might exhaust its own Gift, though. For example, the Gift of Cleverness grants you Cleverness to Spend; after Spending it, roll to see if you Exhaust the Gift. If you pass the test, you can use it again.

Exhaustion represents your character getting tired, pushed too far, overworked, and running out of luck. Getting Gifts back is explained in the *Recovery* chapter, page 123.

took the innkeeper's daughter? Can you prevail against the villain who would run you through with his fearsome blade? To add drama and uncertainty, *dice* are rolled.

## What Dice You Roll

When the situation requires it, your Game Host will tell you to roll some dice. Dice come in several kinds:

- *Basic Trait Dice*, such as Body, Speed, Mind, and Will. Almost every task will include one of these.
- *Skill Dice*, learned abilities such as sword-fighting, history, crafts, and trades. Sometimes, more than one skill can apply to a situation.
- *Career Trait Dice*. Every character has at least one Career. This Career die is included with at least four Skills, and possibly more.
- *Bonus Dice*, when a situation is easier for some reason, such as attacking an unaware target.

After rolling your dice, the number on top is the *number showing*. The highest of these numbers is sometimes called your *score*. Rolling higher numbers is better.

You will compare your dice to your *opposition* — either a fixed target number or dice rolled by your opponent. The result of this comparison is the *outcome* — it could be a success, failure, or something more complicated.

### A Simple Win: Success

*If your highest-showing die is greater than your opponent's highest-showing die, you have scored a Success.* Victory is yours! You climb that tree, jump that gap, persuade the crowd, break the code, spot the clue, or hit the target.

If your opponent's highest die is higher than yours, then they have Succeeded, and you have *Failed*. You are still on the ground, are falling into the gap, are ignored by the crowd, are stumped by the code, are oblivious to the clue, or no threat to your opponent.

If your highest-showing die is the same as your opponent's, then you have *Tied*. A Tie is between a Success and a Failure, neither as good or as bad. The Game Host may rule that a Tie results in a marginal success or an almost-made-it failure.

### When Two or More of Your Dice Roll Higher Than Their Single Best: Overwhelming Success

It's possible to score multiple successes. If your second-highest die is *also* higher than the highest-scoring die opposing you, you have *Overwhelmed*. You easily bound into the top of the tree, glide effortlessly over the jump, win the hearts and souls of the crowd, decipher the code in record time, find a clue that lesser detectives would miss, or strike your foe in a critical spot.

In game terms, Overwhelming Success is usually better than regular Success.

*Only your opponent's highest die matters* for purposes of Overwhelming. For example, if you roll 7 and 3, and your opponent rolls 6 and 2, then you've still only got one success. (Your 7 is higher than 6, but your 3 isn't. Your opponent's 2 doesn't even enter into it.)

### Number of Successes

Sometimes, such as in the case of Damage Rolls, the *number of successes* is important. Simply put, every die that beats your opponent's highest die is 1 success. You can score as many Successes as you have dice.

Two or more successes can simply be called an Overwhelm. For short-hand, you can say "Overwhelmed (by 2)", "Overwhelmed (by 3)", etc.

Multiple successes are also called *hits*, especially in the case of Damage Rolls.

### Overwhelming Failure

The opposite is true, too. If your opponent's *two best dice* have scored higher than your *single best die*, then you're suffering from *Overwhelming Failure*. You could fall from the tree and injure yourself; you could stumble right off the edge of the chasm; you could make the mob even angrier with what you say to them, etc.

Overwhelming failure doesn't always have side effects. For example, either you find that clue or you don't.

### Worst of All Worlds: Botching

A roll of all ones is the worst you can do. Such a roll is called a *Botch*, and is the worst

you can possibly roll. Some contests may have specific results for Botches.

As you might imagine, Botches don't happen often when you're rolling two or three dice. They happen even less often when claiming *Favored Use* (p. 85) with a Skill, as you perform your specialty. Botches are most common when a character is improvising without a skill, "defaulting" by using one attribute. Such Botches should result in a display of terrible incompetence, making the character regret not having any training in the appropriate Skill.

At the very least, a Botch counts as *one success for your opponent*. Since you rolled all ones, your foe's dice will probably score many more successes on top of yours.

If your roll is a Botch, and your opponent's roll is a Botch, the result should be a group failure so spectacular as to be the subject of jokes for days to come.



## OTHER ASPECTS OF DIE ROLLS

Die rolls can be modified, in terms of what's rolled, what's done to what's rolled, and exactly what you're looking for.

### Bonus Dice

Sometimes, things are going better for you. In game terms, you may receive *bonus* dice. Unless otherwise stated, a bonus gives you an extra d12 to roll.

### Penalty Dice

And sometimes, things go worse for you. The game rules may impose *penalty* dice on you.

Penalty dice are dice for the other side. For example, if your attack has a d12 Ranged Dice Penalty, then your target includes an extra d12 with their defense dice to defeat your own attack.

### Re-roll One 1:

#### Favor

Sometimes, a roll enjoys a minor little advantage. A roll that has *Favor* lets you re-roll one 1. After rolling the dice, if any are showing "1", pick up *one* of them up and re-roll it. The second roll stands. You will usually pick the biggest die to re-roll, but it's always up to you.

You can claim Favor when you have a *Favored Use* with a Skill. A common Favored Use is a *Favorite Weapon*.

### No Dice Beyond a Certain Size:

#### Limit

A Limit can impose a maximum die size. For example, if you have a Limit of d8, then none of your dice can be larger than d8 — replace any d10s or d12s with d8s.

Common limits include:

- *Encumbrance Limit*: when carrying too many things, some dice like Speed can be diminished.
- *Literacy Limit*: when reading or writing, no dice can be larger than your biggest Literacy die.
- *Riding Limit*: when riding, none of your attack dice can be larger than your biggest Riding die.
- *Swimming Limit*: when in waist-deep water, your fighting skills are limited by your highest Swimming die.

### Automatic Best Roll:

#### Maximizing

Sometimes, you may have your dice *Maximized*. On such occasions, don't bother rolling them — instead, assume they came out as the highest you could possibly roll. For example, if you have d12, 2d8, d4 Maximized, then your roll automatically becomes 12, 8, 8, 4.

### Fixed Target Numbers

You won't always be rolling to beat other dice. Sometimes, you're just trying to beat *fixed target numbers*.

Fixed target numbers are like dice that come up the same number every time. They can't be re-rolled to come up as anything different. Modifiers like *Favor* have no effect on them.

Fixed targets are written out from highest to lowest, separated by a comma, such as "8,4". Since there's no dice involved, there is no letter "d".

Just like a contest above, if you defeat the highest number, you have Succeeded, and if you have two or more dice defeat it, you have Overwhelmingly Succeeded. Likewise, if your highest die rolls under the highest fixed target, you have Failed, and if your highest rolled under the second-highest, then you've Overwhelmingly Failed.

Fixed targets might be mixed with dice. For example, if you have a penalty to your roll, then you might be rolling against "d12, 8, 4". Mechanically, this would work as if the d12 was with two other dice that just happened to come up 8 and 4. As a general rule, rolls with fixed targets in them don't Botch.

A common place you'll be rolling against fixed target numbers is when testing a Gift for Exhaustion.

## Damage Rolls and Soak Rolls

Skill and Trait dice only vary from d4 to d12. You use twenty-sided dice for *Damage Rolls*.

Damage Rolls are another common roll against a fixed target number — another combatant's Soak. Each die you roll that comes up greater than the Soak target number is a special kind of success called a *hit*. One hit *Wounds*; two hits *Cripple*; three hits *Incapacitate*; four hits or more *Devastate*. These are discussed in greater detail in the "Injury" section, page 116.

## Long-Term Goals: Quotas

Sometimes, just one roll isn't enough. You might have to make multiple successes to reach your goal. For example, it might take several rolls to break down the castle gate, to decipher the ancient manuscript, or to forge a katana worthy of the *shogun* himself.

In game terms, an objective might require a *quota* of successes. For each success scored, the quota goes down by one. Once the quota is met, the task is finished.

**例 Example:** Daishuso reads a book describing Nobunaga's campaign to unite Japan. The book isn't particularly difficult, requiring only a 3, but it will require 50 successes to finish, with one try every eight hours.

Daishuso has a Mind die of d8 and a Literacy dice of d10. He rolls 7 and 5, scoring two successes. He reduces his quota to 48. At this rate, he'll be done in half the time!

At the Game Host's discretion, an *Overwhelming Failure* will completely wipe out all progress, resetting the quota and forcing the character to start over. A *Botch* will probably not only reset the quota but may even cause some horrible disaster.

Common quotas include attempting to buy something expensive (see "Purchasing Items", p. 140), and healing from grievous injury (see page 123).

Many long tasks that require quotas can have more than one person working on it. The Game Host can rule that two, three, or more persons can contribute to meeting a quota. One Botch by any character can ruin the whole total for everyone!



## STANDARD DIFFICULTIES

Okay, so you know how to roll a contest against someone — you roll your dice, and they roll theirs. The question is, how difficult should your targets be? The Game Host should decide if they want to use difficulty dice (which takes more time to roll) or fixed targets (which may lock out folks with lower dice).

**Trivial:** 1d4 or 2. You're really only seeing if you botch. Usually not even worth rolling dice for; the Game Host could rule you automatically succeed.

**Routine:** 2d4 or 3. This is something anyone with even average training can get after a few tries.

**Easy:** 2d6 or 4. A professional with d6 Career and d6 Skill can do this more than half the time., while anyone else might take a half-dozen tries.

**Medium:** 2d8 or 5, 3. Most people can do this once, if they're lucky. With two fixed targets, Overwhelming Failure is a possibility.

**Hard:** 2d10 or 6, 4. A Medium task with complications.

**Very Hard:** 2d12 or 7, 4. The equivalent of a d12 Career and d12 Skill — only a master should consider something this difficult.

**Nigh-Impossible:** 3d12 or 8, 5. Even the masters can only pull this off once in a while.

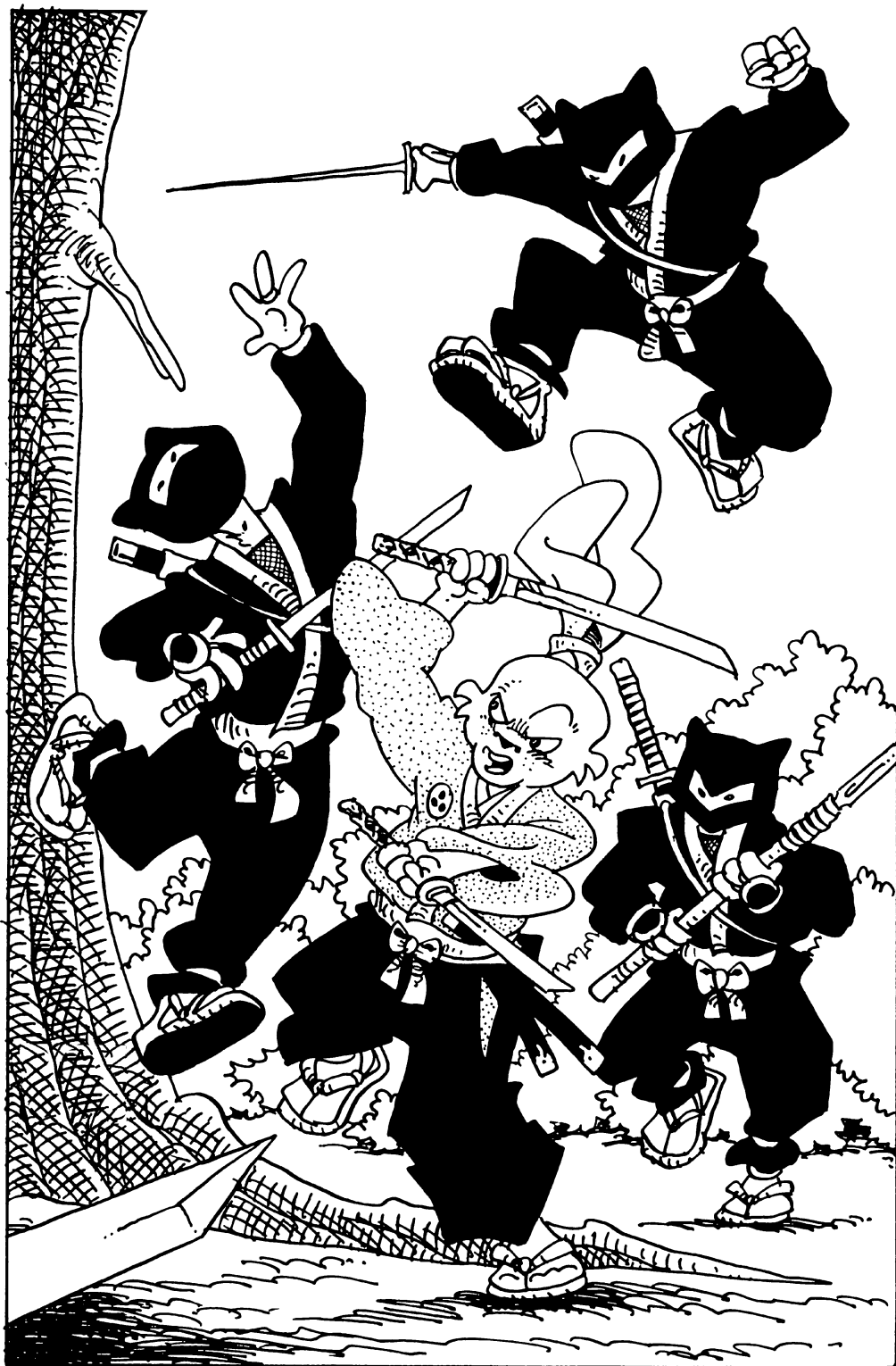


# COMBAT RULES

The shout of the war-cry ... the rustling of the grass ... the clash of steel ... the hiss of a death-rattle ... these are all the hallmarks of violent confrontation called *Combat*.

In the world of *Usagi*, combat is a

common occurrence, but it is hardly trivial. Violence, especially deadly violence, can often result in tragedy. The Game Host should make every fight essential to the story.



## GAME TERMS

**You:** Sometimes, “You” refers to the Player controlling the character; other times, “You” refers to the role of the character and its own status. When in doubt, assume “you” means the character.

**Figure:** If you are using miniatures on a tactical map, the *figure* is the object that represents the character. Figures may have *tokens* placed next to them to indicate conditions or status.

**Round:** Short for “one round of everyone getting to do something”, the *Round* is the standard unit of time in the game. A Round’s exact time is flexible, depending on how many people are involved and what’s going on, but it’s about six seconds of time.

**Turn:** When you are the Active Character, you’re taking your *turn* in the sequence. When something lasts “until the beginning of your next turn,” that thing is in play until you become Active again. When something lasts “until the end of your next turn”, that thing is in play until you become Active again, finish your action, and then formally end your turn.

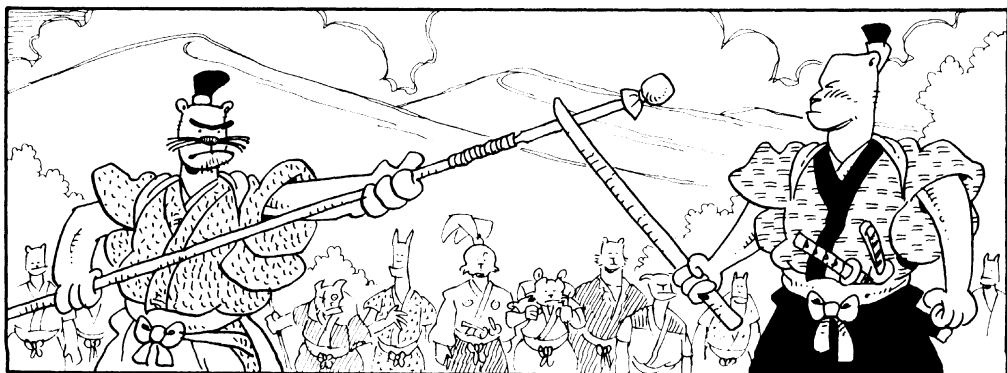
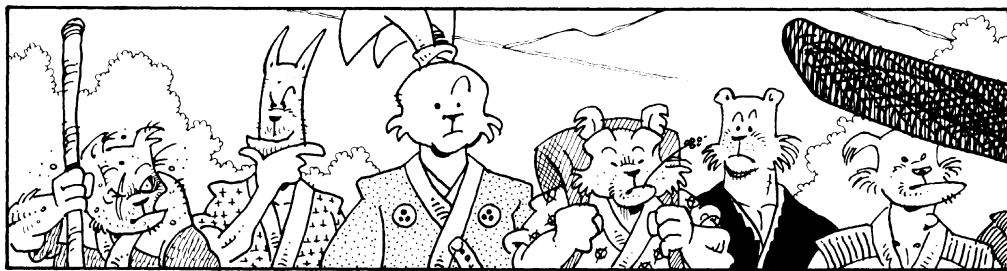
**Scene:** The next unit of time after a round is the *Scene*. Like a Round, the Scene is pretty flexible, being how long it takes to resolve one fight, or one encounter. For timing purposes, a Scene is assumed to be five minutes long. An effect that lasts “for the rest of this Scene” continues until the fight is over and all loose ends are

resolved. The Game Host should declare when one Scene ends and another begins, using five minutes as a guide.

**Sequence:** In a Round, everyone will get to do something in order – the *sequence* of battle. Usually, the Player Characters each become Active, then the Game Host’s Characters become Active. Once the sequence is completed and everyone takes their turn, the Round comes to an end.

**Active:** When it’s your turn, your character is *Active*. (Everyone else, waiting for you to do something, is at best *Reactive* – see below.) The Active Character may perform one *Action*, such as running or attacking. When an ability says it’s performed “as an Action”, you can only use it when you are Active, and it’s what you choose to do as your one Action.

**Reactive:** Most characters, waiting for something to happen and observant of what’s going on around them, are *Reactive*. When an ability says it’s performed “as a Reaction,” you can only use it when you’re Active or Reactive, but not when you’re Inactive. The most common Reactions are *defenses*, such as the *Dodge* (to avoid an Attack), the *Parry* (to deflect an attack with your weapon) and the *Counter-Attack* (to both deflect an attack and harm the attacker).



**Guarding:** A special kind of Reactive state, a Guarding combatant cannot Counter-Attack, but they can Parry and Dodge – and they get a bonus d12 for doing so. A Guarding combatant can also use other Reactions, as long as they don't grant them Attack rolls or Counter-Attacks.

**Inactive:** Sometimes, a combatant is distracted, off-balance, or surprised that a fight just broke out. An *Inactive* combatant can only defend themselves by Dodging. Attacks made against an Inactive opponent claim a bonus d12.

**Reeling:** Even worse than Inactive, a *Reeling* combatant can only defend by Dodging, they cannot use other Reactions, and they must spend their next Action to Recover from Reeling. Attacks made against Reeling opponents claim a bonus d12, just like Inactive ones.

**Helpless:** Unconscious people, incapacitated foes, tied-up prisoners, and inanimate objects are *Helpless*. Helpless combatants can't React or defend at all. Attacks made against Helpless opponents roll vs. 2 and claim a bonus d12 on the roll.

- Players roll Initiative (Speed & Mind) vs. the Initiative target. Those that succeed gain Focus. (If using miniatures, place a *green* Focus token next to the Player-Character's figure.)

## INITIATIVE

A basic concept of “who goes first”, *Initiative* gives a slight edge to the alert.

In the sequence, Players always take their Characters' turns before the Game Host does ... but *Focus* allows folks to Interrupt one another. Counter-Attacks can also make a difference, as well as how the Game Host lays out the original battle map.

When a fight starts, the battle should be divided into two or more *sides*. Usually, one side is the Players' Characters, and the other side is a mob controlled by the Game Host. Each side must decide how they want to roll their Initiative.

### Who Got the Drop on Who: Initiative Difficulty

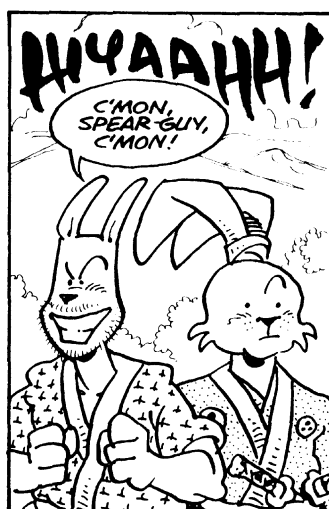
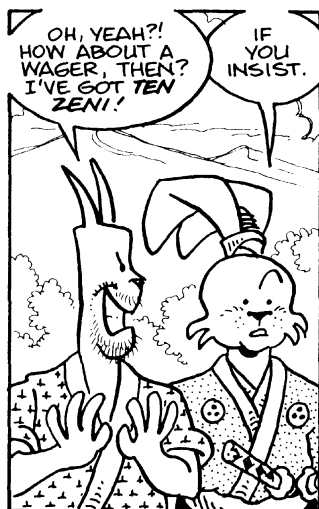
There are basically two ways to start a fight:

**Neutral Stand-off:** Both sides are aware of each others' intent. Maybe negotiations have broken down and a fight is starting. Or both sides may have seen each other from a way's off. Rushing in to help someone who's already in a fight is also a stand-off.

**Ambush:** One party successfully gets the drop on another. Bandits often attack by surprise. Deceitful ninjas disguise themselves as innocent peasants, only to suddenly lash out by surprise. To

## SET-UP FOR BATTLE

- The Game Host sets up the battle-map (if any) and describes the scene. The Host asks the Players if they need any more explanation.
- The Game Host may declare one or more combatants to be *Reeling* or *Inactive*. (If using miniatures, place a *red* token next to Reeling figures and a *blue* token next to Inactive ones.)
- The Game Host announces that the battle has started.



successfully ambush, one side must somehow sneak up on the other, using either Sneak vs. Observation or Deceit vs. Inquiry.

Initiative: Start of Fight	Initiative Difficulty
Ambushed!	8, 4
Neutral stand-off	4
Doing the ambush yourself	2

### Default for Player-Characters: Individual Initiative

Unless the Players agree otherwise, assume that each Player wants to roll their character's initiative individually.

Each character rolls their *Speed and Mind* vs. the Difficulty, as appropriate.

Individual Initiative Result	Outcome
Botch, Overwhelming Failure	Reeling
Failure	Reactive
Tie, Success, Overwhelming Success	Focus

Reeling characters are Reeling until their action comes up in the sequence, when they Recover.

Reactive characters can only React until they become Active.

Focused characters can not only React, but they can Interrupt (p. 107).

In rare cases, the Game Host may rule that some combatants who fail the Initiative test still aren't Reactive. For example, someone running down a road would have been Inactive during a combat, so they would start any fight Inactive, as well.

### Default for Minor Characters: Group Initiative

For large mobs of Minor Characters, it would be very difficult for the Game Host to roll dice for all of them.

In some large groups, all combatants will have the same Traits. The Game Host can roll *Speed and Mind* once for the entire group, against the Initiative Difficulty.

Group Initiative Result	Outcome
Botch	1 in 2 are Reeling
Overwhelming Failure	1 in 4 are Reeling
Failure	1 in 4 have Focus
Tie	1 in 3 have Focus
Success	1 in 2 have Focus
Overwhelming Success	3 in 4 have Focus

If using miniatures, the Game Host should gather up the appropriate number of red Reeling tokens or green Focus tokens and distribute them among the group's figures, *rounding up*. The Host can distribute the tokens to the combatants any way they see fit.

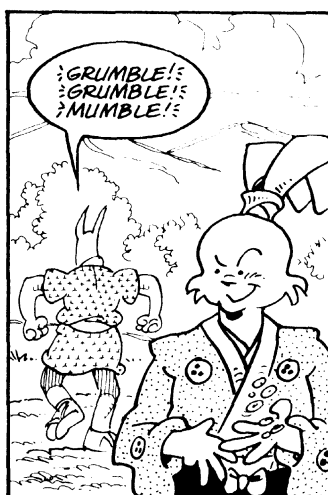
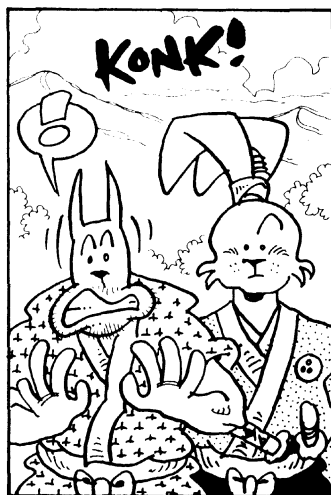
Any combatant that isn't Reeling or Focused is assumed to be Reactive.

### When Major Characters Are In Command:

#### Leader Initiative

Often a side will have someone who is the undisputed *leader*. Sides with a Leader roll initiative differently.

Instead of the usual dice, *roll the leader's Leadership Skill Dice and the lowest Tactics Skill Dice of anyone on the side*. (In large groups of Minor Characters with the same statistics, an



entire mob will all have the same Tactics dice.) Do *not* use Speed or Mind Dice with Leader Initiative.

Compare the result of the dice to the Group Initiative chart above. The leader chooses how to assign the Reeling and Focus to the subordinates. Most leaders will assign Focus to themselves first!

In some cases, a Player-Character might be the leader of a band of minor characters, or even other Player-Characters. In order to take advantage of Leader Initiative, every subordinate must agree to abide by the leader's roll and assignment of Focus and Surprise *before* the roll. Otherwise, "break-away" combatants should roll Speed and Mind.

## SEQUENCE OF BATTLE

- The Game Host declares the *Beginning of the Round*.
- The side that *started the fight* goes first. Characters each act in turn. If these are Player-Characters, their order in the sequence should be one agreed on before battle, such as the seating order around the table, moving clockwise. (Resolve disputes of who goes first by comparing Initiative rolls.)
- Note that when a character acts, any other combatant may *Interrupt* by spending Focus. (Remove the Focus token from an Interrupting figure.) A character may negate one Interruption by spending their own Focus (if any).
- When a character becomes Active, they may perform one *Action*. Actions may

include movement – move any miniatures on the map, appropriately.

- Move on to the next character, in turn.
- When all the characters on one side have acted, move on to the *opposing side*. As above each combatant gets one Action, and Focused combatants can Interrupt, as above.
- The Game Host declares the *End of the Round*. Any house-keeping or time-sensitive issues are dealt with.
- A new Round begins, and the sequence of battle is repeated.

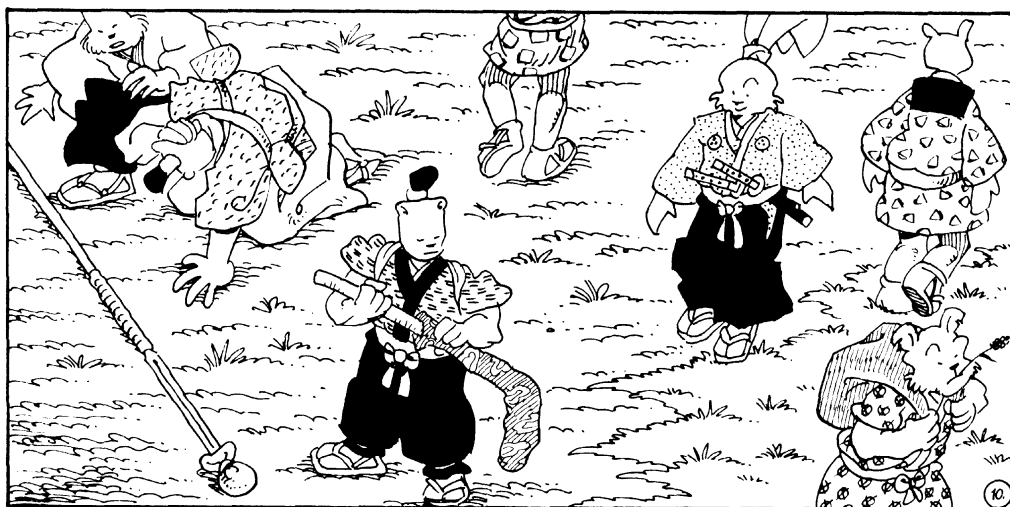
## Who Goes First?

In some circumstances, it will be clear who starts a fight. Bandits can make threats of violence ... ninjas can attack by surprise ... samurai can challenge to a duel.

In a typical stand-off fight, the Game Host is encouraged to let the Player Characters' side go first. The Game Hosts' characters should only go first if they clearly started the combat.

The combatants who "started the fight" act first in the sequence when it makes the most sense. Given a choice, most Players will *always* want to act first, and that doesn't always make sense. In case of disputes, the Game Host should rule on the sequence of battle ... and in unclear cases, they can always roll dice.

In the *Usagi* rules, going first isn't always necessary. Characters with *Focus* can Interrupt their attackers, and combatants fighting hand-to-hand get Counter-Attacks to strike down their assailants before their turns come up.



## MOVEMENT

Your character's movement is based on their *Speed Trait*. Characters can move as part of an action, or possibly for a Retreat.

Speed Trait	Stride	Dash	Sprint	Run
d4	1	4	+d4	12
d6	1	5	+d6	18
d8	1	6	+d8	24
d10	1	7	+d10	30
d12	1	8	+d12	36

**Stride:** Complicated actions and Retreats let you move no further than your Stride.

For most characters, this is 1 pace.

**Dash:** Most maneuvers, such as Attack, allow a character to move up to their Dash.

**Sprint:** Sometimes, you just need an extra boost. A character can attempt a *Sprint* to gain a random bonus to their movement.

**Run:** And sometimes, you just need to get somewhere fast. Running combatants are *Inactive* — they cannot defend against attacks.

## Bad Footing

Not all ground is clean and level. Loose gravel, running water, stairs, inclines, bodies of the fallen, and spilled blood all create *bad footing*.

When moving over bad footing, all movement is halved. (For example, instead of moving 3 paces, a combatant would only move 1 ½ paces.) A combatant that Retreats onto bad footing automatically falls down.

The Gift of *Sure-Footed* (p. 78) removes the bad footing disadvantages for that character.

## Moving Through Combatants

A combatant is assumed to take up a space 1 pace on every side. If you are using miniatures, some tactical maps provide squares or hexes so you can show the space thus occupied.

If a comrade permits you, you can move through the space occupied by someone on your side. This movement is bad footing — so it costs at least 3 paces of movement to go through someone (2 for their space, and 1 to move out.)

If you Retreat into space occupied by an ally, you fall down. You immediately become bad footing for your ally!

You cannot move through the space of enemy combatants. You will have to grapple with them, first — see page 144.

Unconscious, helpless, or dead characters are treated as bad footing, above.



## STANDARD ACTIONS

### Attack

During this Action, you are *Reactive*. You may React to any threats.

Move up to your Dash, in paces. While moving, you may React to any attacks against you.

At the end of your movement, pick a target within striking distance of your weapon. Your target may defend with any defense available to them. See *Attacking*, page 109.

If you began your Action with Focus, then just before rolling your Attack's dice, you may declare the attack to be *Focused* — remove the Focus, and if your Attack succeeds, you will score one extra Critical.

After resolving the Attack, you may move your Stride in any direction. (If your target Retreated, Striding towards them is called "Pressing the Attack".)

After you're done, you are *Reactive* until your next turn.

## Aggressive Attack

During this Action, you are *Reactive*. You may React to any threats.

Move up to your Dash, in paces. You may React against any attacks.

Pick one combatant in reach of your weapon and Attack, as above. *For your Attack Roll, you have one bonus d12.* Your target may defend normally. (See *Attacking*, page 109.)

If you had Focus at the beginning of your Action, you may declare a Focused Attack, as above.

After resolving the attack, you are immediately sent *Reeling*. (If your target Retreated, you may *not* Press the attack.) On your next turn, you will have to *Recover*.

## Charge

During this Action, you are *Reactive*. You may React to any threats.

First, declare a target. *The target must be at least one pace farther away from you than your Dash.* You must also be able to move in a *straight line* towards that target.

Second, Move your Dash, in paces, directly towards the target, in a straight line.

Third, roll your *Sprint die*. If the score on the Sprint die is equal to or more than the distance you need to move to reach the target with your Melee Attack, you *must* immediately move to within Reach your target and resolve an Attack. After resolving the attack, you are automatically sent *Reeling*. (Even if you roll more movement than you need, you still stop when you get to striking distance.)

If the score on the Sprint die is *less* than the distance you need to reach your target, then you may stay where you are, or move 1 or more paces closer (but no more paces than what you rolled), and stop. In this instance, you are *not* sent *Reeling* and you are *Reactive* until your next turn.

There's no point in charging a target within range of your Dash — you could simply just Attack, as above.

If all you wanted to do was move more than your Dash and still be able to defend, don't choose this Action — choose *Sprint*, below.

## Stand Up

During this Action, you are *Reactive*. You may React to any threats.

You may stand up, and move your Stride in any direction. (If you are using miniatures, set your figure on its base.)

After you're done, you are *Reactive* until your next turn.

If you have the Gift of "Acrobat" (p. 77), you can stand up as a Reaction.

## Focus

During this Action, you are *Reactive*. You may React to any threats.

Move up to your Stride, and gain Focus. Focus can be used to Interrupt others, to add a Critical to a successful attack, and to power certain abilities. See "Focus", page 107.

After you're done, you are *Reactive* (and Focused!) until your next turn.

## Recover from Reeling

*When your turn comes up in the sequence, if your character is Reeling, "Recover from Reeling" is the only action your character can take.*

During this Action, you are *Reactive*. You may React to any threats.

Remove any Reeling effect from your character. Then, Move up to your Stride, in paces.

After you're done, you are *Reactive* until your next turn.



## ATTACKING AND FOCUSING

The usual drill is to Attack, then Counter-Attack when Attacked. But what if you have Focus? You can wait until someone runs up to you, then spend your Focus to Interrupt. Resolve *your* Attack first — your foe will probably choose to Counter-Attack. Then, when they close with you, you defend yourself. Finally, when your turn comes up in the sequence, you will be facing a foe who has *already used* their Counter-Attack against your Interrupt *earlier in the sequence*, and can only Dodge.

How can you keep your foes from pulling the same trick on you? If you move no more than your Stride, you can take the Focus Action yourself, slowly close, and spend your Focus to Counter the Interrupt. Remember: a combatant that spends their Focus to Interrupt is *not* spending that Focus to make a Focused Attack on you.

The Game Host should use Focus to build drama. A dozen steely-eyed warriors, blades held at the ready, slowly approaching our band of heroes, clustered back-to-back as they bide their time, waiting for the inevitable frenzy of interrupts and counter-interrupts, is a staple of the genre.

## Rally

During this Action, you are *Reactive*. You may React to any threats.

Move up to your Stride, in paces.

You may attempt to help an ally out of dire straits. Choose one combatant on your side. The difficulty to Rally your friend is one plus the distance they are from you, in paces. For example, to Rally a friend 4 paces away, your target is 5.

Roll your *Will Dice* and *Leadership Dice* (if any) vs. the target number. For each *Success* that you score, you may choose one of the following effects:

- Remove *Reeling* from your ally.
- Remove *Confusion* from your ally.
- Remove *Fear* from your ally.
- Add *Focus* to your ally. (Your ally must be able to receive Focus; if they are Reeling, Confused, etc., you will need *two* Successes — one to remove the bad status, one to add Focus.)

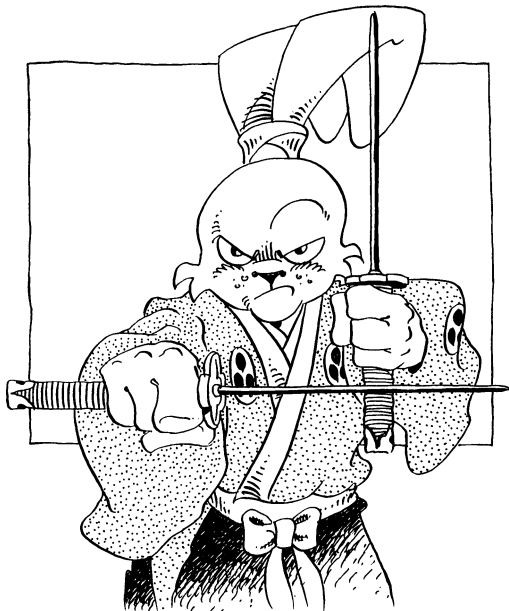
## Guard

During this Action, you are *Reactive*. You may React to any threats, but you *may not Counter-Attack* — and you have a bonus d12 with all Parries and Dodges.

Move up to your Dash, in paces. You may React against any attacks.

After you're done, you are *Guarding* (defending only with Parries or Dodges, with a bonus d12) until your next turn.

If you are using miniatures, place a *white Guarding* token next to your figure.



## Sprint

During this Action, you are *Reactive*. You may react to any threats.

First, move up to your Dash, in paces. Then, roll your Sprint die. You may move up to this distance again, in paces.

## Run

Sometimes, you have to get somewhere in a hurry. During this Action, you are *Inactive*. (The only Reaction you can take is to Dodge, and other combatants have a bonus d12 to strike you.)

Move your “Run” distance across the battlefield.

After you're done, you are *Inactive* until your next turn.

## Ready a Weapon

During this Action, you are *Reactive*. You may React to any threats (including Counter-Attack and Parry with the weapon you are readying — see below.)

Immediately ready a weapon.

If the weapon was at the ready (such as a katana in its scabbard), you can move up to your Dash, in paces. If the weapon was concealed (e.g., a short bow or dagger tucked in a sleeve, a *shuriken* used as a hairpin, etc.), or picked up off the ground, then you can only move up to your Stride.

## Other Actions

Characters will try to do all kinds of things. The Game Host should decide what kinds of actions characters can take, and how long they take.

Movement will vary from action to action. As a general rule, a simple action that can be done in one quick motion (e.g. opening a door, shining a lantern on a dark spot, banging sticks together to sound the alarm, sliding a bar in place to seal a door, drawing a weapon for use in combat, etc.) allows for a *Dash*. Actions that require complex or precise moves (unlocking a door with the right key, searching a spot for clues, picking up a fallen ally to carry them to safety, sheathing a sword, picking a weapon off the floor, etc.) allows for a *Stride*.

Some tasks might take more than one Action. For example, it might take several rounds to find the right key to lock the gatehouse door or to search the room for the



secret plans to assassinate the Shogun. The Game Host can require die rolls to see how long it takes an action to be finished, or they might simply rule that some things take longer than others.

As a general rule, once an Action is finished, a character becomes *Reactive*. Longer actions with great concentration involved might leave a character *Inactive*.

## Free Actions

Some things might require no specific Action on the part of the character, such as dropping a weapon to the ground or calling out for help. The Game Host may rule that some activities are “free actions”, and can be performed in addition to the usual Action in the sequence.

The Game Host should discourage players from taking too many free actions — combat rounds are no more than six seconds, and the Action is even shorter than that!

As a general rule, while talking is free, a conversation is not. Characters should be allowed to speak a sentence or two on their action, but any responses will have to wait for the other character’s turn to come up in the sequence.

## REELING

Characters who are taken unawares, who over-extend themselves, who charge heedlessly into battle, or who suffer injury can be sent *Reeling*. In game terms, Reeling is a catch-all for a variety of effects when a combatant isn’t at their best fighting form.

*A character who is Reeling cannot have Focus.* A Focused character who is sent Reeling for any reason loses the Focus, in addition to suffering from Reeling.

Reeling combatants cannot Counter-Attack, Parry, or use other Reactions. They can only Dodge. Attacks against a Reeling opponent claim an extra d12. Reeling combatants can still Retreat (p. 111), but if they do so, they fall down. Reeling combatants are considered *Inactive* until their turn comes up.

When a Reeling character’s turn comes up in the sequence, their *only* action can be to Recover from Reeling. If for any reason they cannot take this action, then they remain Reeling.

## FOCUS

A character can have Focus by taking an Action that gives them Focus, by being Rallied, or by invoking a Gift that grants it.

### How You Can Get Focus

#### *Take the “Focus” Action*

When you become the Active Player, you may choose the Action of “Focus”. You instantly gain Focus, and you may React.

When you can’t decide what to do, choosing Focus is a good thing.

#### *Use a Gift*

Some Gifts can grant you Focus whenever you are able to React.

#### *Be Rallied*

A Leader can give you Focus by Rallying you. The Leader must be on the same side.

### What Focus Can Do

#### Interrupt

A combatant with Focus may *Interrupt* at any time. A Player that seeks to Interrupt should raise their hand or otherwise indicate to the Game Host that they want to interrupt.

Interrupting does *not* prevent you from acting on your turn in the sequence of battle.

An Interrupting combatant can do the following things:

- ***Interrupt to Attack:*** Move your Stride towards any opponent and Attack. Your foe may React any way they can.
- ***Interrupt to Dash:*** Move your Dash in any direction. Since this Interruption can increase the range between you an attacker, it can make attacks more difficult or even prevent them entirely. You can only Interrupt to Dash once in a round.
- ***Interrupt to Rally:*** Move your Stride and Rally (p. 106) one combatant on your side.
- ***Interrupt to Guard:*** Move your Stride and immediately begin *Guarding* (p. 106).
- ***Interrupt for something else:*** At the Game Host’s discretion, you can Interrupt to do one quick action, like open a door, put away a sword, light a

fuse, or drop a smoke bomb. You can move no more than your Stride.

One way to prevent an Interruption is to use Focus to Interrupt the Interruption. (Yes, this can spark a frenzy where a bunch of Focused combatants spend their Interrupts against one another.) Another way is to *Counter-Interrupt*, below.

#### **When two combatants Interrupt, who goes first?**

The combatant that moved the least distance goes first. In case of a tie, roll Speed vs. Speed: the winner goes first; on a Tie, both combatants act simultaneously.

### **Counter-Interrupt**

If you are the Active combatant and you have Focus, and someone attempts to Interrupt you, you can immediately spend your Focus to act before that Interruption. First, resolve your Action; then resolve the Interruption.

If *two* foes with Focus declare to Interrupt you, you can only Counter-Interrupt *one* of them, unless you can somehow get more Focus.

### **Focused Attack**

A *Focused Attack* is one that, if successful, will yield at least one Critical result.

You must have Focus before you make your Attack Roll. First, declare that you are making a *Focused Attack* and spend the Focus. Then, make the attack roll.

If the attack is successful, you *automatically score one Critical hit, above and beyond any other Critical hits.*

Since you must spend Focus to Interrupt, you cannot normally Interrupt to make a Focused Attack ... unless you have special Gifts that spontaneously grant Focus.

Focus is only for Attacks — *never* for Counter-Attacks. You can either save your Focus for your next Action (unless you're sent Reeling and lose it!), or you can spend your Focus to Interrupt your attacker — either attack them first, or to flee by Dashing in the opposite direction.

### **Enable Certain Gifts**

Some Gifts can be powered by Focus. Many abilities can still be used even when the

Gift is Exhausted, if Focus is spent to power it. Spending Focus to power an ability does not force an Exhaustion test.

Remember that when you Spend Focus to enable a Gift, you cannot use the same Focus to Interrupt.

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## **How Long Focus Lasts**

When you choose the Action “Focus”, you have Focus from the beginning of your action to the *end* of your next Active turn.

Otherwise, when you gain Focus, you have it until the end of your turn. If you don't use your Focus to Interrupt, to make a Focused Attack, or to power a Gift, you lose it at the end of your turn.

The only way to “stay Focused” is to keep taking the “Focus” Action every turn. A common combat technique is to Stride towards a target, Focusing each turn, waiting for an opportunity.

If a character is sent *Reeling* for any reason, they also lose any *Focus* they might have.

Only characters who are competent and confident can have Focus. If a character suffers *Confusion*, *Fear*, or other debilitating conditions, they also lose Focus. See “Abnormal Status”, page 146.

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## **SPENDING**

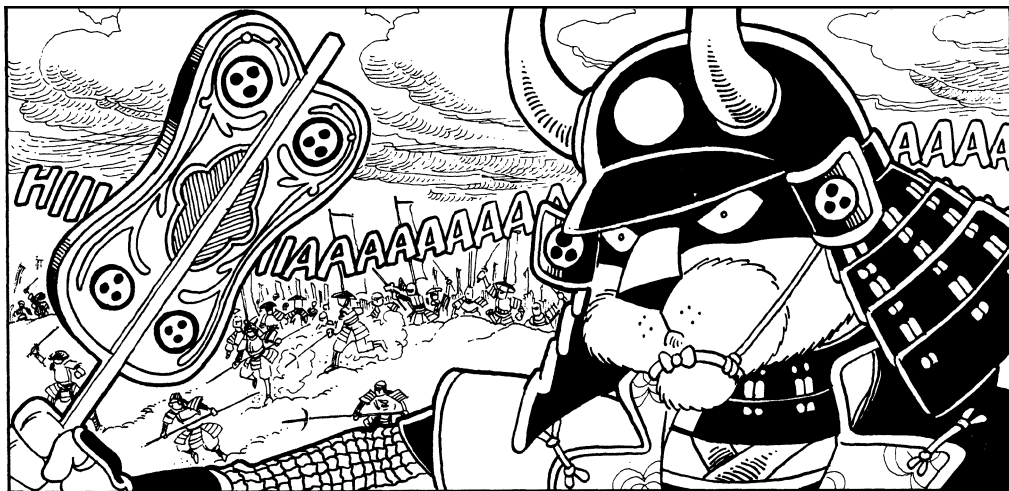
Some special abilities granted by Gifts require that something else be spent in order for it to work. The expenditure is called *Spending*.

Some Gifts can be powered by Spending *Focus*. The common way to get Focus is to take the “Focus” action. You must begin your turn with the Focus.

Other common expenditures include:

- Might
- Quickness
- Cleverness
- Grit

Declaring a Gift's use to power another Gift takes no time on its own — it's something you do as part of using the powered ability.



## ATTACKING

Many actions involve declaring an *Attack* against someone. In brief, an Attack is rolling dice against a foe's defense in order to cause damage or engage in some other violent activity.

### Melee Attack

Swords, spears, clubs, and other hand-to-hand combat weapons are called *Melee Weapons*.

When attacking with *Melee Weapons*, include the following dice:

- Your character's *Body Die*. (Gifts such as *Melee Fervor*, *Melee Finesse*, and *Melee Guile* remove the *Body Die* and replace it with *Speed*, *Mind*, or *Will*, respectively.)
- Your character's *Skill Dice* with the appropriate weapon. This includes all *Career Dice* that are included with the appropriate Skill.
- Any extra dice you get.

Your target will defend if they can! Your target may React by Counter-Attacking, Parrying, or Dodging.

### Empty-Hand Attack

A special kind of *Melee Attack* is an *Empty-Hand Attack* — striking with one's fist. Attacking with a fist uses *Body Dice* and *Empty Hand Dice*, with any usual bonus dice from circumstance.

Fists are not normally considered *Weapons* — they cannot benefit from Gifts that enhance weapon use. The Gift of *Empty-Hand Mastery* (page 71) changes that.

### Ranged and Thrown Attacks

Bows, shuriken, throwing knives, and the like can attack at range. When attacking with *Ranged* or *Thrown Weapons*, include the following dice:

- Your character's *Speed Die*
- Your character's *Skill Dice* with the appropriate weapon. (Bows use *Weapon: Bow Skill*. *Thrown Weapons* use *Weapon: Thrown Skill*.) This includes all *Career Dice* that are included with the appropriate Skill.
- Any extra dice you get.

Targets at *Range* will claim extra *Defense Dice*, known as *Range Dice* — normally an extra d12 for each range band. Ranges are described in greater detail in the *Spot Rules* chapter under "Range", page 145.

### Modifiers to Attacks

An *Aggressive Attack* (p. 105) rolls a bonus d12 with your Attack.

Attacking with your *off-hand* imposes a d12 penalty for most weapons. The Gift of *Ambidexterity* (p. 77) negates this penalty for all weapons. *Weapons* used in two hands (including all *Combo Weapons*) do *not* suffer the off-hand penalty.

If you are lying down, your attack suffers a d12 penalty.

See the *Spot Rules* chapter, page 138, for many more modifiers.

## REACTING TO ATTACKS

When attacked, a Reactive combatant can choose to defend. There are three common defenses: the *Counter-Attack*, the *Parry*, and the *Dodge*.

### *The Best Defense is a Strong Offense:* **Counter-Attack**

Every combatant can Counter-Attack once per round, before or after they have acted. Counter-Attacks are always Melee Attacks, *never* Ranged Attacks.

You can Counter-Attack anyone who attacks you, within reach of your weapon. As a general rule, Close weapons can counter other Close weapons, and Reaching Weapons can counter other Reaching weapons.

Yes, if someone with a Ranged Weapon attacks you while they are in reach of your Melee Weapon, you can Counter-Attack them. No, Ranged Weapons such as bows do *not* get a Counter-Attack against Melee Weapons.

When Counter-Attacking, the defender rolls their Attack Dice, just as if they were attacking. (These dice are usually Body and all Skill Dice.)

Counter-Attacking with your *off-hand* imposes a d12 penalty for most weapons. The Gift of *Ambidexterity* (p. 77) negates this penalty for all weapons. The exception is the *War Fan*, which can Counter-Attack in the off hand at no penalty.

A combatant with no weapons may not Counter-Attack — they must Dodge, instead. (The Gift of *Empty-Hand Mastery*, page 71, allows a combatant to Counter-Attack with their fists.)



### REBOUNding WITH A COUNTER-ATTACK

The *Rebound* is a special Critical Hit, described on page 113, that allows you to keep your Counter-Attack. The Rebound is a reward for superior skill, but using it means not claiming other Criticals, such as Crush, Puncture, Slash, or Smash, that cause more damage. Rebounding allows a highly-skilled warrior to cut down multiple attackers.

Anyone can Rebound with the *gunsen*, *naginata*, *tessen*, or *yari*. Combatants with the Gift of *Easy Rebound* (p. 79) can Rebound with all Light Weapons, and with Medium Weapons used in two hands.

Attack vs. Counter-Attack Result	Outcome
Attack Overwhelmingly Succeeds	Defender is hit and suffers a Critical result. The Defender suffers one Critical for each success after the first. Roll Damage and resolve other effects.
Attack Succeeds	Defender is hit. Roll Damage.
Attack and Counter-Attack Tie	Outcome uncertain! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First, the Defender may declare a <i>Retreat</i> (p. 111). If so, neither takes damage.</li> <li>• Second, the Attacker may declare a <i>Retreat</i>. If so, neither takes damage.</li> <li>• Otherwise, both Attacker and Defender hit each other. Roll Damage against each other.</li> </ul>
Counter-Attack Succeeds	Attacker is hit. Roll Damage.
Counter-Attack Overwhelmingly Succeeds	Attacker is hit and suffers a Critical result. The Attacker suffers one Critical for each success after the first. Roll Damage and resolve other effects.

Normally, you may only Counter-Attack once per round. Some weapons may be able to claim a Critical known as a *Rebound*, which allows you to Counter-Attack once again — in that case, you can use your Counter-Attack once again. As long as you keep Rebounding, you can keep Counter-Attacking.

When you are knocked or lying down, all your Counter-Attacks suffer a d12 penalty.

### *When You Can't Counter-Attack:* **Parry**

A special kind of Counter-Attack, a *Parry* uses up your Counter-Attack for the weapon.

A Parry uses the same dice as a Melee Counter-Attack (Body and Skill). You must declare that you are using Parry as a Defense before rolling.

### Exceptions to Parrying

Flail Weapons may *not* Parry. They can only Counter-Attack.

Normal combatants cannot Parry with their bare-hands. However, if you have the Gift of *Empty-Hand Mastery* (p. 71), then your hands are treated like weapons, and you can use Empty-Hand to Parry.

Attack vs. Parry Result	Outcome
Attack Overwhelmingly Succeeds	Defender is hit and suffers a Critical result. The Defender suffers one Critical for each success after the first. Roll Damage and resolve other effects.
Attack Succeeds	Defender is hit. Roll Damage.
Attack and Parry Tie	Defender is hit, unless they declare a Retreat — see page 111.
Parry Succeeds	Defender turns the attack aside.
Parry Overwhelmingly Succeeds	Defender turns the attack aside without breaking a sweat.

### Defending at All Ranges:

## Dodge

There is no limit to the number of times a Reactive combatant can Dodge.

Your Dodge Dice are your Speed Die and your Dodge Skill Dice (if any).

Dodging works against both Melee Attacks and Ranged Attacks. It is the only defense you can use when *Inactive* or *Reeling*.

All Dodge Dice can be limited by Encumbrance — see page 139.

Attack vs. Dodge Result	Outcome
Attack Overwhelmingly Succeeds	Defender is hit and suffers a Critical result. Roll damage and resolve other effects. The Defender suffers one Critical for each success after the first.
Attack Succeeds	Defender is hit. Roll Damage.
Attack and Dodger Tie	Defender is hit, unless they declare a Retreat — see page 111.
Dodge Succeeds	Defender is missed.
Dodge Overwhelmingly Succeeds	Defender is missed.

## No Defenses

Targets that are helpless (such as Unconscious ones) have *no defenses*. The target number to hit such combatants is only 2. Attackers gain a bonus d12 against helpless foes.

## RETREATING

After failing any Defense, a Reactive combatant may choose to *Retreat*. Only standing, Reactive combatants can Retreat.

(In rare cases, an Attacker may also Retreat, to prevent damage from a Tie vs. a Counter-Attack.)

A Retreat is a move (out of the regular turn sequence) no greater than the retreator's stride. The retreator must move at least 1 pace away from the Attacker, increasing the distance between the Attacker and retreator.

A target can Retreat at one of four opportunities:

- When the target *Ties* vs. an Melee Attack Roll;
- When the target *Ties* vs. a Ranged Attack Roll and there is *Cover* to retreat behind;
- When the target is threatened by a Stab or Impale Critical;
- When the target uses a Gift's ability that requires a Retreat, such as *Speed Save*.

There are conditions that prevent a Retreat, such as:

- A combatant that has been knocked down cannot Retreat.
- When grappling (p. 144) neither combatant can Retreat.
- A combatant cannot Retreat when entangled (p. 113).
- Walls and other obstacles that prevent moving away also prevent Retreat.
- When a defender's Parry, Counter-Attack, or Dodge *Succeeds*, no Retreat is necessary, and thus no Retreat is possible. (It is assumed the character is spending all their time and effort warding off the attack, where they stand.) Retreating should only be used at appropriate opportunities.

There are some special conditions that modify a Retreat:

- If you are *Reeling*, you can still Retreat, but you fall down at the end of the



## WHY PARRY AND NOT COUNTER-ATTACK?

If you have the Gift of *Improved Parry* (p. 72), you can Parry *any number* of times, not just once. You can even Parry after you've used up your Counter-Attack.

If your opponent is attacking at Reach Range, and you only have a Close Weapon, then you *can't* Counter-Attack, but you can still Parry. The same thing goes for attackers at Close Range when you have a Reach Weapon. (Flexible Weapons do not have this problem — they can Attack and Counter-Attack at both ranges.)

When lying down, Counter-Attacks suffer a d12 penalty, but *Parries* do not.

Retreat.

- If your Retreat takes you to ground that is bad footing (such as a sloped roof, moving river, or even off a cliff), you fall down at the end of the Retreat. (The Gift of *Sure-Footed* negates this falling down.)

The Retreat must be a minimum of 1 Pace and a maximum distance of the retreaters' Stride.

Some Critical hits, such as Stab or Impale, are negated if the target Retreats

## Press

After Retreating, the Attacker who caused the Retreat may *Press* — move to close the gap that was just created. The Attacker may move any distance *towards* the Retreater, up to their Stride. (Against fast defenders, the Attacker may not be able to close the distance.)

## FLANKING

When a combatant has two people on either side, that combatant is *flanked*. The two combatants must be on either side of the target they claim to flank.

When you are Attacking a flanked opponent, you may *include your Tactics Dice with your attack dice*. (This may lead to some Career Dice being included twice — once with Tactics and once with Weapon Skill.)

You only include Tactics Dice with Attacks, *not* Counter-Attacks or Parries. (Unless you have the Gift of *Mob Fighter* — see page 74.)

Attackers without Tactics Dice gain no dice advantage. (Without proper training, multiple attackers are an undisciplined,

clumsy affair — certainly not the refined warriors worthy of great commanders!)

However, outnumbering an opponent can be its own reward, since targets usually only get one Counter-Attack, and allies can take advantage of Reeling foes more readily.

## CRITICAL HITS

An Attack that Overwhelming Succeeds can claim a *Critical*. You can claim one Critical for every success after the first. For example, if you scored three successes, then you hit your foe and you can claim two Criticals.

The weapon you use determines what Criticals you can claim. Certain Gifts can add more Criticals in certain circumstances.

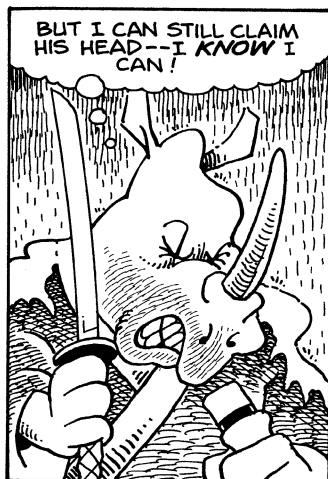
You do *not* have to declare what Criticals you want before you roll. Choose which Criticals you want after hitting the target. You can even choose to inflict no Criticals at all.

You can also choose to negate your own weapon damage and to *only* claim Criticals. For example, you might claim only a Stab critical if you want to force a foe to Retreat. Some Criticals, if chosen, automatically negate your weapon's damage.

*You cannot claim the same Critical twice.* For example, if you score two Criticals with a katana, you may choose to Slash and Stab, but you can't choose to Slash twice.

## Crush

Almost any weapon can deliver a good hit. When claiming the *Crush* Critical, include a bonus 1d20 Damage.



## Concuss

Bludgeoning weapons can rattle the brain and send foes sprawling.

When claiming the *Concuss* Critical, your target is automatically sent Reeling, regardless of the damage they suffer and regardless if they have the Gift of *Resolve*.

If they were already Reeling, they must test Body & Will vs. 7, 4. On a *Failure*, they fall down. On an *Overwhelming Failure* or *Botch*, they become Unconscious.

## Cleave

Some weapons are heavy and can deliver nasty attacks. When claiming the *Cleave* critical, include a bonus 3d20 Damage.

## Disarm

Weapons such as the jitte specialize in disarming foes. Claiming the *Disarm* critical has different effects when you compare different weapons:

- If your weapon weighs more than your target's weapon, you automatically Disarm them *and* you include your Weapon's Damage Dice (i.e., Damage as normal.)
- If your weapon weighs the same or less, and you want to claim this critical, then your target is Disarmed, and you may *not* include your weapon's Damage Dice. (You may include any Damage Dice from other Criticals, though.)

For most weapons, Disarming is a special kind of attack, not just a Critical — see page 144.

## Entangle

If you claim the *Entangle* Critical, *do not roll your Weapon's Damage Dice*. You can still roll Damage Dice from other Criticals, if any.

Your weapon wraps an arm or a leg of your target — choose one now.

If you wrap the foe's *arm*, they cannot use weapons that require that arm; they cannot move farther away from you than your weapon's Reach. If you entangle the foe's *leg*, they cannot move at all.

In either case, the entangled foe can break free by Disarming you (p. 144) or by breaking free (Succeeding on a contest of Body & Speed vs. your Body & Speed).

While the foe is entangled, *you* cannot move farther away from your foe than your weapon's Reach, and you cannot use the weapon to Attack, Counter-Attack, or Parry. (In the case of *Combination Weapons*, such as the kusarigama, you cannot use the entangling part of the weapon, but you can still use the other part freely.)

## Grapple

*You must have a free hand to claim this Critical.*

If you claim the *Grapple* Critical, *do not roll your Weapon's Damage Dice*. You can still roll Damage Dice from other Criticals, if any.

You instantly initiate a Grapple (p. 144).

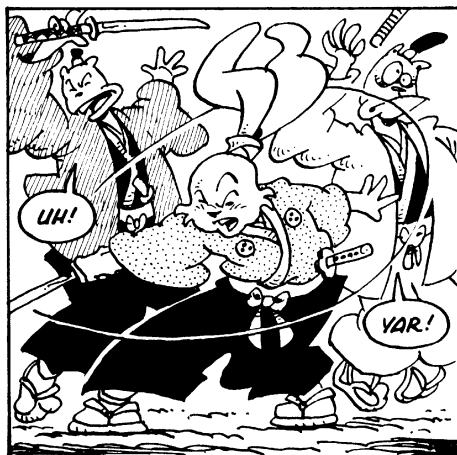
## Impale

Also called “running the target through”, long stabbing weapons can penetrate clear through to the other side of the target.

When claiming the *Impale* Critical, *if your target does not immediately Retreat*, you automatically claim *two extra hits* on your Damage Roll, above and beyond any that you roll. (Naturally, the Impale Critical works great on combatants who cannot Retreat.) If your target successfully Retreats, there is no extra Damage.

## Puncture

Arrows and spear-points can cause severe injuries if they strike the target right. When claiming the *Puncture* Critical, include a bonus 1d20 Damage.



## Rebound (Counter-Attack Only)

A Rebound does not add any damage to the attack, but rather lets you keep your own

advantage. If you claim a Rebound, you do *not* lose your Counter-Attack — you can Counter-Attack once more. As long as you keep scoring Rebound Criticals, you can keep Counter-Attacking.

---

## Stab

Many weapons have sharp points that can pierce a target, injuring vital organs.

When claiming the *Stab* Critical, *if* your target does *not* immediately Retreat, you automatically claim *one extra hit* on your Damage Roll, above and beyond any that you roll. (Naturally, the Stab Critical works great on combatants who cannot Retreat.) If your target successfully Retreats, there is no extra Damage.

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## Slash

Many weapons have a terrible edge that can be drawn across a foe. You score a bonus 2d20 Damage.

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## Smash

Heavy, blunt weapons often have a “sweet spot” that, if it hits the target right, delivers impressive results. When claiming the *Smash* critical, include a bonus 2d20 Damage.

---

## Trip

If you claim the *Trip* Critical, *do not roll your Weapon’s Damage Dice*. You can still roll Damage Dice from other Criticals, if any.

Your target falls down. (Fallen targets cannot Stride, Dash, or Retreat, until they get up.)

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# WEAPONS

For purposes of weight, Thrown Weapons are assumed to weigh 0.3 kg; Light Weapons, 0.6 kg; Medium Weapons, 1.2 kg; Combo Weapons, 2.4 kg; and Heavy Weapons, 4.8 kg.

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*Size of Weapons:*

## Thrown, Light, Medium, Heavy, Combo

*Thrown Weapons* are the lightest of all weapons. They can only be used in one hand. When thrown, they use Speed & Weapon: Thrown Skill. Some Thrown Weapons (like

the *kunai*) can be used as a Melee Weapon, with Body and the appropriate Weapon Skill. Thrown Weapons are always *Easy* to use. Popular Thrown Weapons include the shuriken.

*Light Weapons* are balanced, short weapons used in one hand exclusively. They are always *Easy* to use. Popular Light Weapons include the *tanto* and the *wakizashi*.

*Medium Weapon* are very flexible. They can be used in one hand as an *Awkward Weapon*. Or they can be used in two hands as an *Easy Weapon*. In addition, a *Medium Weapon used in two hands does another d20 damage*. The katana is a popular Medium Weapon.

*Heavy Weapons* are difficult but often damaging. They *must* be used in two hands, and they are always *Awkward Weapons*. Popular Heavy Weapons include the *naginata* and the *yari*.

## Combo Weapons

Combination (*Combo*) Weapons are two weapons merged together. A famous one is the *kusarigama* — a sickle (*kama*) with a long chain (*kusari*) attached. Fighting staves, such as the *bo*, are held in the middle with both ends used for striking — effectively a Combination of two *jo* sticks.

Combo Weapons sometimes require *two Skills* to properly use. For example, the *kusarigama* uses Axe skill for the *kama* part, and Flail skill for the *kusari* part.

*You can normally only Attack with one part of a Combo Weapon*. For example, if you fight with the Flail part of a *kusarigama*, then you can’t use the Axe part in the same attack. To strike with *both* ends simultaneously, you must use the special ability of *Ambidexterity* (p. 77). There is no off-hand penalty when using either part of a Combo Weapon to attack.

Combo Weapons *always* require two hands.

A Combo Weapon gives you *two Counter-Attacks* — one for each end. Note that different parts might use different Skills. There is no off-hand penalty when using either part of a Combo Weapon for defense.

You can also Parry with a Combo Weapon, if possible. Remember that Flails *cannot Parry* — for example, a *kusarigama* user will have to Parry with the Axe part, not the Flail part.



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*Ease of Use:***Easy or Awkward**

*Easy Weapons* are fast, flexible, and responsive. *Awkward Weapons* are slow, limited, and difficult. In game terms, the difference between Easy and Awkward mostly concerns which Gifts work with a weapon. For example, *Easy Rebound* only works with Easy Weapons.

Thrown Weapons and Light Weapons are always *Easy* to use.

A Medium Weapon is *Easy* if it's used in two hands; otherwise, it is *Awkward*.

Heavy Weapons and Combo Weapons are always *Awkward*.

---

*Distance of Striking:***Range****Melee Weapons**

A *Close Melee Weapon* requires that two combatants be no further than 1 pace from each other. When using miniatures, put Close combatants in base-to-base contact. Most weapons, such as *katana*, *kama*, *wakizashi*, and bare fists are Close Weapons.

A *Reaching (or "Reach") Melee Weapon* strikes at 2 paces away or more, but *not* at 1 pace or less. If an opponent is too close, you may have to back up before you can hit them with your Reaching Weapon. The *naginata* and the *yari* are two common Reaching Weapons.

A *Flexible Melee Weapon* can strike at targets 1 or 2 paces away. A *kusari* is a common Flexible Weapon.

A few weapons can be made *Far-Reaching* with the Gift of *Fighting-Rope Mastery* (p. 80). Far-Reaching Weapons can hit foes anywhere from 1 to 4 paces away.

**You Can Only Counter-Attack****Combatants You Can Reach**

If you're not at the appropriate striking distance for your target, then you *cannot* Counter-Attack — you will have to Parry or Dodge, instead. For example, when fighting with a *kama*, you can't Counter-Attack someone who strikes at you with a *naginata* from two paces away — your weapon is Close and that weapon has Reach.

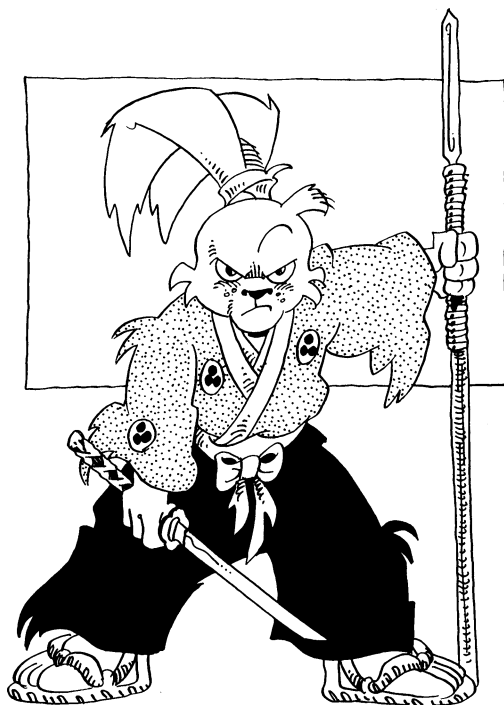
You can *always* Parry with a Melee Weapon against an attack, even if you could not Attack them. Parrying represents interposing your weapon in the space

between you and your opponent, denying them avenues of attack,

**Ranged & Thrown Weapons**

Ranged and Thrown Weapons can strike at longer distances, such as *Short*, *Medium*, *Long*, and *Extreme*. See "Range", page 145, for more details.

Unlike Melee Weapons, Ranged and Thrown Weapons do not Parry or Counter-Attack. (Some weapons, like the *kunai*, can be used either as a Thrown Weapon or a Melee Weapon.)



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**SOAK**

All targets resist damage with a fixed number. Tougher characters resist damage better than weaker ones. Your Soak is your Maximized Body Dice.

Body Trait	Soak
d4	4
d6	6
d8	8
d10	10
d12 or more	12

While rarely worn, armor can add to Soak — see page 140.

## DAMAGE

Roll the weapon's Damage Dice vs. the target's Soak. Damage Dice are always twenty-sided dice.

Damage vs. Soak Result	Outcome
Damage scores no successes	Scratched
Damage Succeeds (by 1)	Wounded
Damage Overwhelms (by 2)	Crippled
Damage Overwhelms (by 3)	Incapacitated
Damage Overwhelms (by 4)	Devastated

## Modifiers to Damage

Certain circumstances will affect the number of dice and how damage is rolled.

Circumstance	Modifier
Target is <i>Wounded</i> or worse	Extra 1d20
Target is helpless	Extra 1d20
Attack has a Critical	Apply Critical effects
Damage was <i>Slaying</i>	Re-roll all d20s that rolled <i>less than or equal to Soak</i> once more
Damage was <i>Enervated</i>	Re-roll all d20s that rolled more than Soak once more

## Slaying and Enervated Damage

A Damage roll that is *Slaying* is more likely to injure a target. After rolling, take any d20s that failed to score hits (that is, didn't roll higher than the Soak number) and re-roll them. The second roll stands.

A Damage roll that is *Enervated* is less likely to injure a target. After rolling, take any d20s that successfully scored hits (that is, rolled higher than the Soak number) and re-

roll them. The second roll stands.

A Damage roll cannot be *Slaying* and *Enervated* at the same time — the two cancel each other out.

In rare cases, an attack can be *doubly Slaying* (thus re-rolling failed dice twice) or *doubly Enervated* (thus re-rolling succeeding dice twice).

## INJURY

The most common result with a weapon attack is to cause *Injury* to the target.

Any successful hit causes *Reeling* on a target, even if no lasting Injury results. The Gift of Resolve can negate this Reeling.

### Scratched

Sometimes, an attack can connect but fail to cause lasting harm to the target. Sure, clothes might be torn, or flesh can be cut or bruised, but the only lasting harm is to pride. Every successful attack at least *Scratches* the target. A Damage Roll that fails to score even one hit against a target's Soak still gets a "Scratched" Result.

A Scratch still inflicts pain and trauma. If you suffer a Scratched result, you are sent *Reeling*. (The Gift of *Resolve*, while not Exhausted, negates this Reeling.) Otherwise, there is no other effect.

### Wounded

More severe than Scratched, a target can suffer a minor fracture or severe puncture — in other words, become *Wounded*. A Damage Roll that only scores 1 hit against a target's Soak gets a "Wounded" result.

Just like a Scratched result, if you are

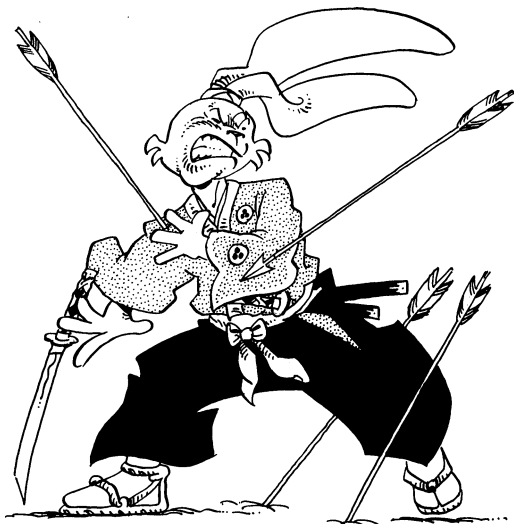


## REELING AND RESOLVE

For most folks, getting assaulted is a traumatic experience — enough to make them flinch, cower, or flee. In game terms, most people are sent *Reeling* by any successful hit.

True warriors, however, learn how to keep going. The Gift of *Resolve* keeps a character from being sent *Reeling*. A mere Scratched result does not force an Exhaustion test, but Wounded results or worse force a test of Will vs. 5. Once the Gift becomes Exhausted, though, even Scratched results send the character *Reeling*. The character will have to use Focus or Grit (if they have it) to power the Resolve to prevent future Reelings.

Exhausted Resolve is also called "Broken Resolve".



Wounded you are sent *Reeling*. (The Gift of *Resolve* can negate this *Reeling*.)

A *Wounded* target suffers an extra 1d20 on all further *Damage Rolls* against them. A *Wounded* character is in constant discomfort, and in constant danger of becoming worse.

## Crippled

Even worse than *Wounded*, a *Crippled* target is racked with pain and suffering. A *Damage Roll* that scores 2 hits against a target's *Soak* gets a "Crippled" result.

A *Crippled* target suffers a bonus d20 on future *Damage Rolls*, just like being *Wounded*.

A *Crippled* combatant cannot gain *Focus*.

They lack the confidence and competence to have *Focus*. They can still be *Rallied* to remove other effects, such as *Reeling*.

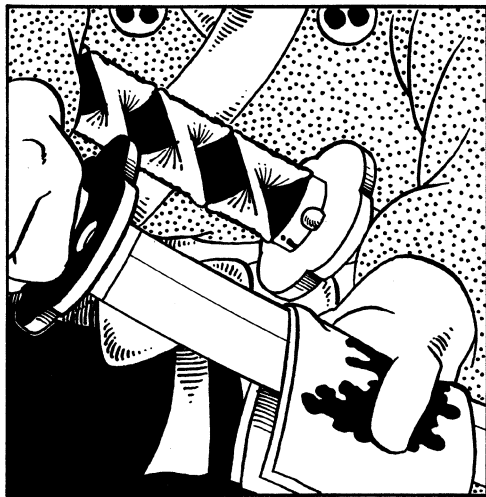
*Crippled* combatants cannot take typical actions like other combatants — they are limited to the following:

- *Reckless Attack*: Move up to your *Dash* towards any opponent and *Attack*. Afterwards, you are sent *Reeling*.
- *Guard*: Move your *Stride* and claim a bonus d12 on *Parry* and *Dodge Rolls*. You cannot *Counter-Attack* until your next turn.
- *Stagger*: Move your *Dash* in any direction and take no action.

At the Game Host's discretion, *Crippled* combatants can take other actions. With rare exceptions, such actions should send the

combatant *Reeling* from pain.

A combatant that is *Enraged* may take regular actions, even when *Crippled*. *Enraged*, *Crippled* combatants have the confidence and competence to have *Focus*.



## Incapacitated

Grievous harm indeed, an *Incapacitating Injury* takes all but the hardest combatants out of the fight. A *Damage Roll* that scores 3 hits against a target's *Soak* gets an "Incapacitated" result.

An *Incapacitated* combatant instantly falls *Unconscious*. Any effect that negates *Unconsciousness* (such as *Rage*) will prevent this *Unconsciousness*.

### Fighting While Incapacitated

An *Incapacitated* combatant who is conscious (for whatever reason) can only take *Crippled Actions*, as described above. *Incapacitated* combatants lack the confidence and competence to gain *Focus*.

If the *Incapacitated* combatant becomes *Reeling* for any reason, they also suffer *Unconsciousness*. Negating the *Unconsciousness* does *not* negate the *Reeling* — that effect must be dealt with separately.

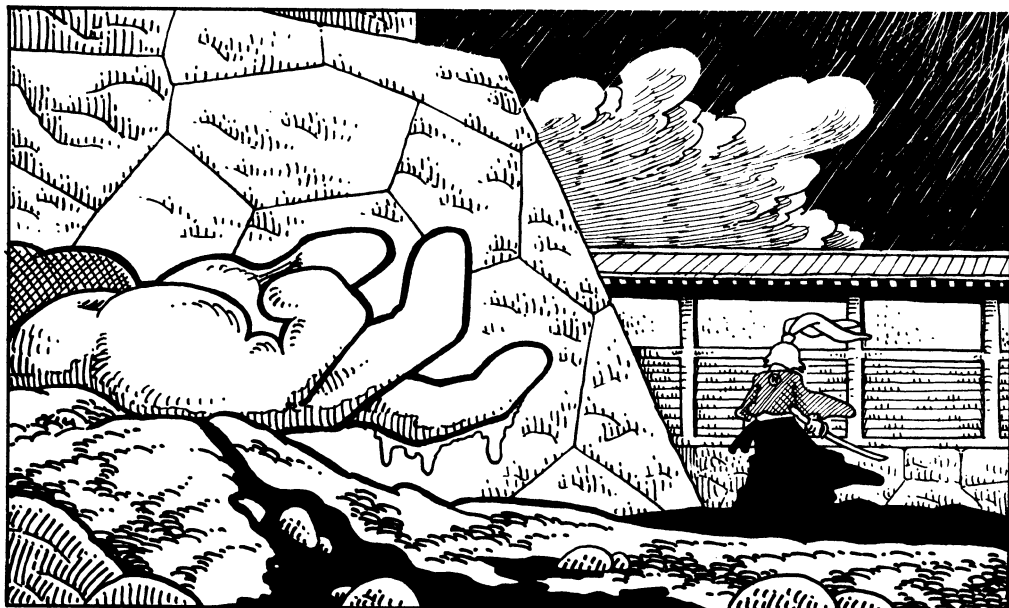
An *Incapacitated* target suffers a bonus d20 on future *Damage Rolls*, just like being *Wounded*. In addition, an *Unconscious* target is *Helpless* — the target number to hit them is only 2.

A combatant that is *Enraged* may take regular actions, even when *Incapacitated*. (Note that using *Rage* to negate *Unconsciousness* also removes the *Rage* — the combatant will have to become *Enraged* a second time.) *Enraged*, *Incapacitated*



## GIFTS THAT REDUCE INJURY

- *Brushing Aside* (p. 76) makes a *Melee Attack's* *Damage roll* *Enervated*, forcing all scoring d20s to be re-rolled.
- *Combat Sense* (p. 75) negates *Critical hits*, changing a successful attack against you into a regular hit.
- *Fighting Spirit* (p. 75) changes your status to *Enraged*, which allows you to fight normally when *Crippled* or *Incapacitated*.
- *Luck* (p. 70) can be used to re-roll any one *Damage Die* two more times, so you can nullify it.
- *Speed Save* (p. 78) reduces an *Injury* from a failed defense roll to "Wounded" if and only if you can *Retreat*.
- *Toughness* (p. 74) makes any *Damage roll* *Enervated*, forcing all scoring d20s to be re-rolled.
- *Yielding Deflection* (p. 74) reduces an *Injury* from a failed *Counter-Attack* or *Parry* to "Wounded" if you choose to be *Disarmed*.



combatants have the confidence and competence to have Focus.

## Devastated

The worst possible result — a Damage Roll that scores 4 or more hits against a target's Soak gets a “Devastated” result. Unless the Game Host rules otherwise, a Devastated target is killed instantly.

If the Game Host rules that a Devastated character is still alive, they are still *Unconscious*. No natural force can revive a Devastated combatant from their Unconsciousness. Devastated characters that survive may lose Skills or Gifts permanently.

A Devastated target suffers a bonus d20 on future Damage Rolls, just like being Wounded. In addition, an Unconscious target is Helpless — the target number to hit them is only 2.

## MINIATURES

*Miniatures* are tiny figures that can be used to give your battles a visual dimension. *Usagi* encourages the use of miniatures for larger battles.

Miniatures require that a scale be used, such as 10mm. The *Usagi* game encourages a scale where 1 cm of real distance equals 1 pace (= 1 m) of distance for the figurines — also known as 12mm scale.

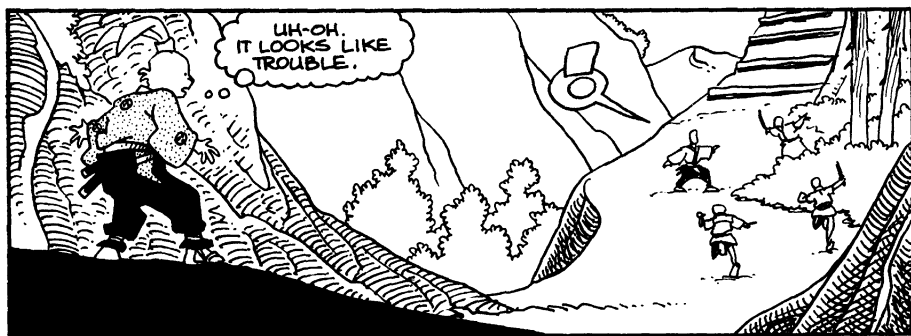
When fighting with miniatures, the term “figure” is often used interchangeably with “combatant”.

To indicate the status of figure, colored *tokens* can be used, such as the glass-bead tokens for sale in many hobby stores.

Here are ways you can use miniatures to simplify record-keeping and make battles more visual:

Miniature	Figure's Status is ...
Figure is lying face down	<i>Unconscious</i> : This figure is Incapacitated or Concussed.
Figure is lying face up	<i>Knocked Down</i> : This figure cannot Retreat. All their Attacks and Counter-Attacks suffer a d12 penalty.
Figure is next to a red token	<i>Reeling</i> : This figure can only Dodge, and attacks against them have a bonus d12.
Figure is next to a yellow token	<i>Broken</i> : This figure either has no Resolve or Exhausted Resolve. Any hit — even a Scratch — sends this figure Reeling
Figure is next to a green token	<i>Focused</i> : This figure can Interrupt others.
Figure is next to a black token	<i>Wounded</i> : This figure suffers an extra d20 on future Damage rolls
Figure is next to two black tokens	<i>Crippled</i> : This figure suffers an extra d20 Damage on future Damage Rolls and can only take Crippled Actions.
Figure is next to a white token	<i>Guarding</i> : This figure can only Parry or Dodge — but with a bonus d12.
Replaced with a “corpse” marker	<i>Devastated</i> : This figure is no longer a viable combatant.

## EXAMPLE OF COMBAT



例 While hiking through a mountain pass, **Usagi** (male Rabbit Bodyguard) sees his acquaintance **Koyama**, (male Bear Wanderer) ambushed by three Brigands in the mountains. The Game Host declares that Usagi is 15 paces away the fight starts, but the Brigands are only 5 Paces from Koyama.

Initiative dice are rolled. Koyama rolls 5 and 2; since he is being ambushed, he has to beat an 8. He didn't, but at least he beat the 4 and isn't sent Reeling. (See "Initiative", page 101.) Usagi's dice come up 7 and 3; he only has to beat a 4, because he's neutral.

The Brigands use Group Initiative. Their leader rolls 7 and 1 – that's a simple success, so 1 of every 2 of them (rounding up) will start with Focus. The Game Host rules that the Brigand Leader and his closest ally will have Focus.

Since the Brigands clearly started the fight, they act first in the sequence.



例 The Game Host tells Koyama's Player that Koyama recognizes one of the Brigands as one of the men who murdered his father, then asks Koyama's Player to act out Koyama's response. Assuming a dramatic tone, Koyama's player says "I know you – you're one of the murderers I'm looking for!" Playing the role of the Brigands, the Game Host responds, "You're the murderer!" "You killed our comrade!" Each character says one line before the turn sequence begins in earnest.

例 The first Brigand moves his Dash and Attacks Koyama with his Katana. The Brigand has Focus – he spends it to make a Focused Attack; if it hits, Koyama will suffer a Critical Hit. (See "What Focus Can Do", page 107.)

The Brigand rolls his Attack Dice, which are his Body of d6, and his Career Die of d6, which is included with all rolls of Weapon: Blade. (See "Career" under Traits, page 53.) His dice come up 5 and 3.

Koyama must defend himself. Since he's alert and aware, he can React to Attacks against him. He's caught with his guard down – with a weapon ready, he could only Dodge and hope for the best. (See "Ready a Weapon", page 106 and "Dodge", page 111.)

Fortunately for Koyama, he has a special rule – he has a Gift called "Fast-Draw" that lets him ready his weapon instantly. (For more on Gifts, see page 68.) Drawing his sword instantly, he chooses to Counter-Attack. (See page 110 for more details on the Counter-Attack Defense.)

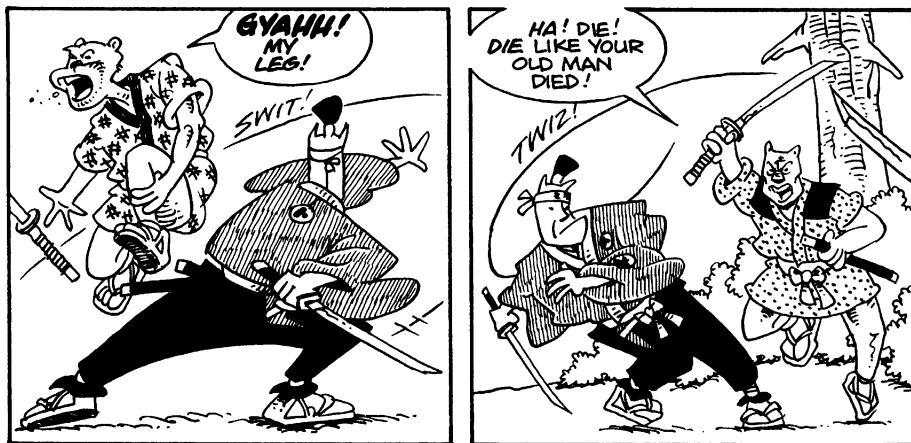
Koyama is a much more formidable fighter than the Brigand. Koyama combines his Body of d8 with his Career Die of d8 (which, as a Wanderer, is included with Weapon: Blade); even better, Koyama has trained separately in the Skill of Weapon: Blade, for another d12. (See “Skills”, page 84). Koyama’s dice come up 11, 7, and 4.

Koyama’s best die (11) is higher than the Brigand’s best die (5). Koyama is the winner of the contest. His weapon scores a regular hit on the foe. He will get to roll the katana’s Damage Dice to attempt to injure the Brigand. (The katana is described in the Weapons chapter, which begins on page 147).

In fact, Koyama’s second-best die (7) is higher than the Brigand’s best die, too. That’s two successes – Overwhelming Success! (See page 96 in the Basic Rules chapter for the rules on this kind of comparison.) Since Koyama has one extra Success, he gets to pick one Critical to apply to his Attack. (Note that Koyama’s player doesn’t have to declare the Critical before he rolls; only bother with Criticals if the attack is good enough to claim them.) Using a katana, Koyama can choose between the Slash and Stab Criticals. He chooses Slash, to add two more dice of damage.

Koyama’s player now rolls Damage. He started with 2d20 for using a Katana, and he adds another 2d20 from the Critical. His target is the Brigand’s Soak (page 115); with a Body of d6, the Brigand’s Soak is 6. Koyama’s Damage Dice come up 19, 7, 6, and 1. Two of the Damage Dice are greater than the Brigand’s Soak, so that scores two hits worth of Injury. Consulting the Injury table on page 116, we see that two hits are good enough to Cripple the target.

Since the Brigand suffered damage, he is sent Reeling – the pain and injury will make the Brigand lose his turn in the sequence. (For more on Reeling, see page 107.) Playing the role of the Brigand, the Game Host says, “Gyahh! My leg!”



**例** Now the Brigand Leader chooses to act. The Brigand Leader moves his Dash (5 paces) and Attacks Koyama – and he also has Focus, so he also spends it to make a Focused Attack. He rolls his Attack dice of 3d10 and scores 9, 4, and 2.

Koyama is only permitted one Counter-Attack per turn. However, he has the Gift of Improved Parry, which allows him to use Parries even when he’s used up his Counter-Attack. This will let him use his superior Weapon Dice to defend himself; unfortunately, successful parries only ward off attacks, they don’t counter. Koyama rolls his dice and gets 9, 8, and 2.

Koyama has Tied with the Brigand. Ties are a special case -- the Game Host asks Koyama’s player if he wants Koyama to Retreat. He does – if he doesn’t, that Focused Attack will score a Critical hit on him! Unfortunately, the rocky mountain path proves slippery, and Koyama retreats onto bad footing and falls down. (For more on Retreating, see page 111.)

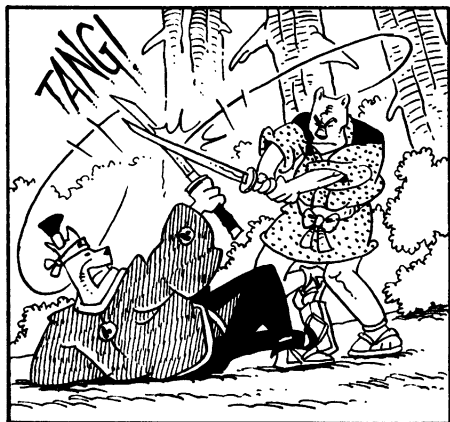
The third Brigand bides his time – he Strides 1 Pace and takes Focus. Next round, he’ll be able to deliver one of those Focused Attacks, himself.

**例** Whew! After all that, Koyama’s turn finally comes up in the sequence. Rather than waste his action to get up, Koyama simply swings at the Brigand Leader. Koyama’s Player rolls his Blade Dice, and they come up 5, 4, and 2.

Because Koyama is attacking when he is lying down, the Brigand Leader gets a bonus die of d12. He rolls that die in with the rest of his dice. He rolls 7, 6, 5, and 1. That’s two dice over Koyama’s best – the Brigand Leader has scored one Critical Hit! Since the Brigand is using a katana, he can also choose the Slash and Stab Criticals; he chooses Slash, as he wants the most Damage Dice to injure his foe.

The Brigand Leader, using a Katana in two hands, rolls 5d20, and they come up 18, 17, 14, 12, and 11. All of those are higher than Koyama's Soak – four or more hits is good for a Devastating Injury. That could kill Koyama instantly! Fortunately, Koyama has another Gift to use: “Brushing Aside”. He can use Brushing Aside whenever he fails an Attack, to force all Damage Dice that rolled over his Soak to be re-rolled. The Brigand Leader re-rolls all four dice and gets 20, 4, 4, 3, and 1. That's only 1 hit, so it's only a Wounding injury. Whew! (To read more about Enervated Damage, turn to page 116.) The Player and the Game Host describe the action as Koyama's blade locks with the Brigand Leader's, while Koyama silently reflects on the transitory nature of life.

Koyama was successfully hit for Damage – normally, he would become Reeling. Koyama also has the Gift of “Resolve” – he declares he will use that to avoid being sent Reeling.

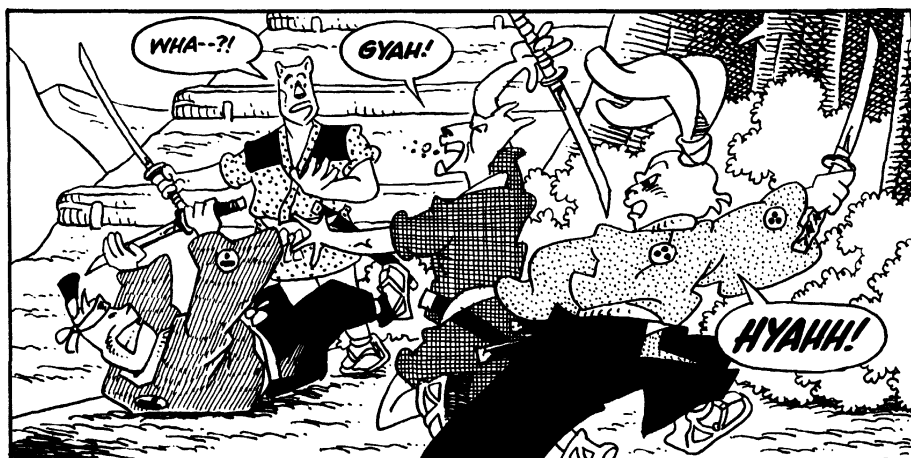


Unfortunately, these Gifts don't last forever. Koyama must now test for Exhaustion. First, he must roll his Body die of d8 vs. 5 to avoid Exhausting his Brushing Aside; he rolls an 8, and succeeds. He can use Brushing Aside against another Damage Roll. Now, to test Resolve – he rolls his Will die of d6 against 5, but scores a 1. Koyama grimaces in pain -- he's fine now, but with his Resolve broken, any future hit will send him Reeling. Things don't look good for Koyama.

例 However, hope is on the way – the last person to act in the sequence is Usagi. First, Usagi Interrupts the sequence to Dash 6 Paces. This spends Usagi's Focus, so he can't use it for a Focused Attack or anything else. Then, on his proper Action, Usagi Charges the last bandit. First, he moves his Dash of 6 paces towards the bandit. Then, he roll his Sprint die of d8, and scores a 7. In a burst of speed, Usagi has moved a total of 19 paces and can now strike at the Brigand.

Usagi rolls his Blade Dice and scores 10, 2, and 1. Usagi also has a Favored Use on his Weapon: Blade skill, “When fighting with my Favorite Katana, *Yagi-no-Eda*”. This allows him to claim Favor on his roll, and to re-roll one 1. He re-rolls the 1 and scores a 6, instead. (For more on Favored Use, see page 85. For more on Favor, see page 97)

The Brigand Counter-Attacks, but only scores 3, 3, and 2. With a miserable roll like that, the Game Host rules that Usagi catches the Brigand almost totally unaware. Usagi scored two successes, so he also scores a Critical; he chooses Slash. He rolls 4d20, and scores 3 successes against the Brigand's Soak.

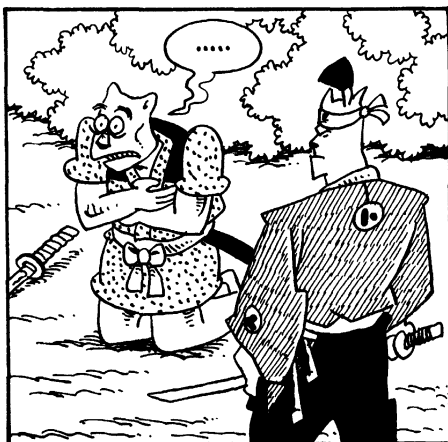
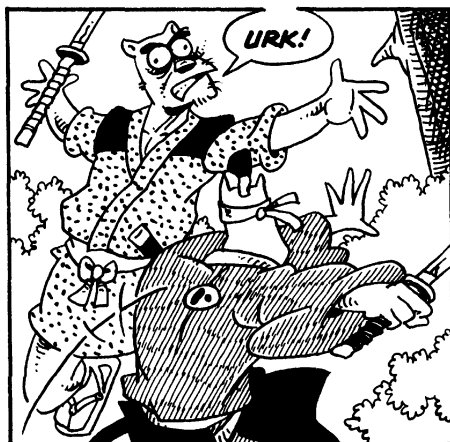


Three hits is enough for an Incapacitating injury – the Brigand goes down.

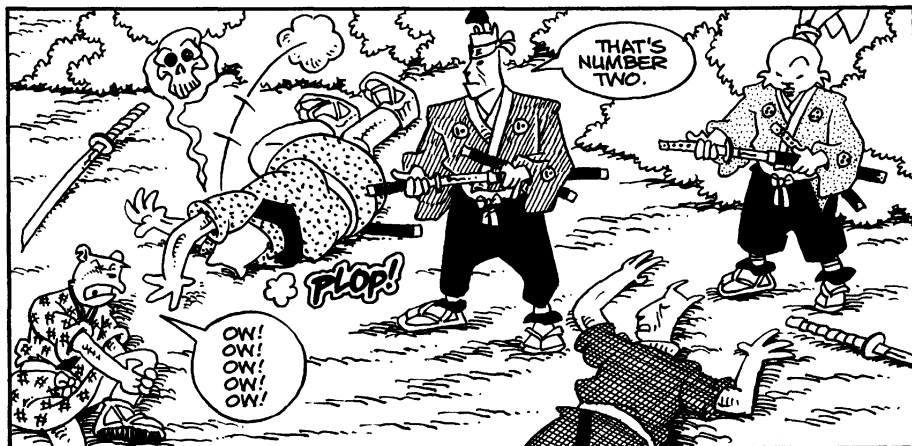
Since Usagi Charged a foe and Attacked them, he is sent Reeling. (His Gift of Resolve is only for Reeling caused by being struck in combat, not for Charging.) That was a desperate move on his part – if he'd failed to hit, he would have left himself open for the Brigand to strike at him. (Of course, that means the Brigand would attack Usagi and not Koyama. Putting himself at risk to save someone he just met – how heroic!)

All that action, and it's still only the first round. In "game time", only six seconds has elapsed.

Round Two begins. The Game Host doesn't have much more to do. The Crippled Brigand was sent Reeling, so his only action is to Recover. The Incapacitated Brigand is Unconscious; he takes no actions. The Brigand Leader, dismayed at the turn of events, chooses to Guard – he will roll an extra d12 with all his Parries and Dodges. (Guarding is described in detail on page 106.)



- 例 Koyama is out for vengeance. Calling upon one of his Gifts, he declares a Mighty Blow against his foe, despite how the Brigand Leader has two bonus dice – one d12 for Guarding, and one d12 because of Koyama's penalty for being on the ground. (However, Koyama doesn't fear a Counter-Attack, since Guarding foes can't Counter-Attack.) Koyama's Attack Dice come up 10, 7, and 5. The Brigand rolls his 3d10 and his bonus 2d12, but he still only gets 5, 5, 4, 3, and 2. Koyama scores a Critical hit, and chooses to Slash. He rolls his 4d20 and scores 12, 9, 6, and 5. Since his attack was a Mighty Blow, it causes Slaying Damage, the opposite of Enervated. Koyama re-rolls the three dice that failed to score hits. His new roll is 19, 19, 15, and 12 – four hits, enough for a Devastating Injury.
- 例 Unlike Koyama, the poor Brigand has no special Gifts to reduce damage. The Game Host rules that the Brigand Leader falls to his knees, clutching his wound. A moment later, he collapses and expires.
- 例 The Game Host rules that the combat is over. Rounds are no longer counted off. Non-combat role-playing resumes, with Koyama grimly declaring, "That's number two." Another step of his vendetta is complete.





After a fight or any protracted encounter, characters will want to rest and get back their resources. In game terms, *Recovery* is when a character *Rests* to remove Exhaustion and Injury.

## REST PERIODS

The *Usagi* game defines rest periods as follows:

**Breather:** fifteen minutes of sitting around (while looking about nervously for would-be assassins). The typical pause that follows, “I think we lost them” — long enough to recover a bit, but not as long as one might like. A character cannot take another Breather until they have had a Proper Rest or better.

**Short Rest:** an hour long rest, with a drink of water. The usual mid-day rest when walking. A character cannot take another Short Rest until they have had a Proper Rest or better.

**Proper Rest:** eight hours of rest and a square meal, followed by sixteen hours of strenuous activity (like travel or a fight). The usual night’s sleep when on the road.

**Long Rest:** eight hours of rest, followed by sixteen hours of light activity (no travel, fighting, or foraging) and three square meals. The typical nice night at home, often denied to adventurers. Yes, this means that if characters seeking a Long Rest get the sixteen hours after their eight hours of sleep interrupted, their Long Rest is “ruined” and becomes only a Proper Rest.

## RECOVERING FROM EXHAUSTION

The number of Exhaustions recovered depends on the kind of rest you take, and what the status of your Injury is.

Recovery Status	Breather	Short Rest	Proper Rest	Long Rest
No injury	Only 1	1 in 2	All	All
Wounded	Only 1	1 in 3	1 in 2	All
Crippled	None	1 in 5	1 in 3	1 in 2
Incapacitated	None	Only 1	1 in 5	1 in 3
Devastated	None	None	None	None

# RECOVERY

**Only 1:** You recover one Exhaustion. It can be any Gift that is currently Exhausted.

**1 in 2:** For every 2 Exhaustions (or fraction thereof) that you have, you may recover 1 of them. The Player chooses which Exhaustions their Character recovers. Since you round up, you always recover at least one.

**1 in 3; 1 in 5:** As above, only for every 3 Exhaustions or every 5 Exhaustions (rounding up). You always recover at least one.

**None:** You are not entitled to recover *any* Exhaustions. Either take a longer rest or get heal to a lesser injured status.

For another theory about how to Recover Exhaustions, see the Variant Rule of “Complex Recovery”, page 171.

## HEALING INJURY

Recovering from an Injury takes time and care. An injured character has to score a minimum quota of *healing successes* to reduce injury status.

Only *Proper Rests* and *Long Rests* contribute to healing. When healing, all four Basic Traits (Body, Speed, Mind, and Will) are used.

For a *Proper Rest*, roll all four dice. For a *Long Rest*, maximize all four dice.

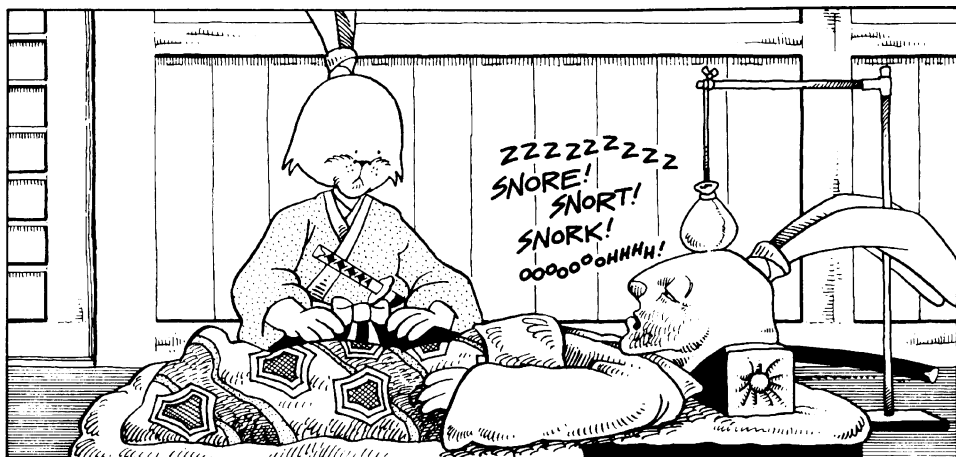
Length of Rest	Healing Roll
Breather, Short Rest	none
Proper Rest	roll Body, Speed, Mind, Will
Long Rest	maximize Body, Speed, Mind, Will

For each *success* scored, reduce the quota needed to heal to the lesser injury by 1.

Healing uses the quota rules described on page 98.

Healing	Difficulty	Quota
Devastated to Incapacitated	9, 6	1200
Incapacitated to Crippled	7, 5	200
Crippled to Wounded	5, 4	50
Wounded to no injury	3, 2	10

If you pass the quota with room to spare, apply any overflow to the next level. Yes, this means it takes (200+50+10=) 260 successes to heal from Incapacitated all the way down to no injury.



**例 Example:** Kaede is currently Incapacitated. She needs 200 successes to heal to Crippled status. Her basic traits are Body d10, Speed d8, Mind d4, and Will d6.

With a Proper Rest, she would roll d10, d8, d6, d4. With a Long Rest, she maximizes the dice to score 10, 8, 6, and 4.

The difficulty of healing from Incapacitated to Crippled is 7,5. If Kaede performs a Long Rest every day, she'll score 2 successes. One hundred days later, she'll have healed from Incapacitated to Crippled, where the difficulty drops to 5,4. With her maximized dice, Kaede's Long Rests will score 3 successes, and a mere 17 days later, she'll have dropped to Wounded status.

A character that goes 24 hours without a Proper Rest or Long Rest *still* must roll their Body, Speed, Mind and Will — but instead of scoring any successes for healing, they roll only to see if they Botch or Overwhelmingly Fail, causing a *backslide* (see below); no healing is possible.

### **Backsliding**

A character that scores an *Overwhelming Failure* on their healing test suffers a *backslide*. The details of a backslide are up to the Game Host — ligaments can be torn, fevers worsen, wounds become infected. In any event, the character drops to the next worst injury status.

A backslide completely wipes out the healing quota — the character must start over again from scratch.

A character that *Botches* their healing test drops to the next worst injury status. Devastated characters that Botch a healing test expire.

## **Nursing and Doctoring**

Any character can *nurse* another back to health, by taking one hour to gather medicine and food, to bind and clean wounds, and to make life more comfortable for the healing character.

Include the nurse's *Mind & Medicine Dice* with the healing dice. Note that nursing doesn't help if the character doesn't get any proper rest!

While characters can nurse themselves back to health, there are two issues. First, they are already including their own Mind Dice, so don't include that twice. Secondly, the labor of nursing prevents a character from a Long Rest — only a Proper Rest would be possible.

As a general rule, a healing character can only benefit from one nurse at a time.

A character with the Gift of *Doctor* (page 71) can work wonders with injured characters. The doctor can take one hour and apply care that halves the starting quota. The quota to heal to Incapacitated drops to 600; to Crippled, 100; to Wounded, 25; and to no injury, only 5.

*A doctor can only halve the starting quota, not the current quota.* For example, if you've already healed your Incapacitated-to-Crippled quota down to 120, being treated by a doctor can only reduce it to 100 — *not* halve your current quota to 60. And if you've already healed down to 90, then a Doctor's special ability can't help you. However, a doctor can treat a patient once at every step of the way, so an Incapacitated character can be treated three times (once for Incapacitated-to-Crippled, once for Crippled-to-Wounded, and once for Wounded-to-none).

Doctors can also be nurses, thus contributing their dice for more Successes.

# CHARACTER GROWTH



As you play the *Usagi* game, your characters will have all kinds of adventures. They will win helpful allies and make powerful enemies. They will survive great dangers and reap great rewards. Most importantly, their learning experiences will make them better, stronger heroes.

## EXPERIENCE

After each play session, the Game Host should give out *Experience* in the form of *Rewards*. Rewards are indivisible units of Experience. Each has to be added in whole chunks to a separate improvement.

Typical Rewards from a session are 4, 3, 2, and 1. Add the sum of all your Rewards to “Experience Earned” on your character sheet. For example, if you earned 4, 3, 2, and 1, then you increase your total Experience by 10.

## Improvement

On the *Usagi* character sheet, there are four blanks for *Improvement*. Add each Reward to a separate Improvement.

It costs 5 Experience to buy a new Mark in a Skill, and 15 Experience to buy a new Gift.

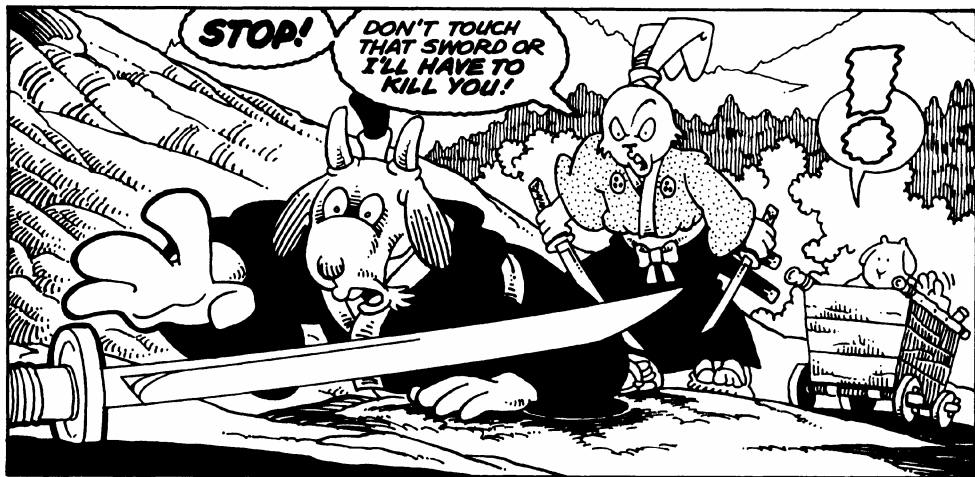
Each Gift or Skill is a separate improvement. You cannot list the same improvement twice on two lines, nor can you put two Rewards from one session in the same improvement.

Change to Character	Experience Required	Total Earned
Add a Favored Use or Weapon	none — see page 85	none
Change a Favored Use or Weapon	Costs 1	+1
Add one Mark to a Skill	Costs 5	+5
Buy a new Gift	Costs 15	+15
Remove one Mark of a Skill	+1 to any two Improvements	-3
Remove one Gift	+4 to any two Improvements	-7
Add a Career	Costs 15 (see “Extra Career”, page 80)	+15
Studying a <i>School of Martial Arts</i> (see below)	Improvement stacks with another on list	none

**例 Example:** Daishuso’s player has just finished a play session — it’s time to reap his rewards. Since this session lasted about four hours of real-time and some major plot points were addressed, the Game Host decides to give out an average amount of Rewards: 4, 3, 2, and 1.

While Daishuso would just love to put all 10 points of Rewards into “Gift: Resolve”, that’s not how the Improvements work. Four Rewards means he must buy four separate things.

Daishuso fills out his Improvement list, with “Gift: Resolve”, “Gift: Increased Trait — Mind to d8”, “Skill: Literacy”, and “Favorite Use for Weapon: Blade skill: With my new Favorite Tanto that I Just



Bought to Replace *The One That I Threw Into the Chest of the Bandit King Who Then Callously Fell Off the Cliff and Into the Sea of Japan, Taking It With Him To A Watery Grave*.

Daishuso then applies the Rewards to his Improvements. On the Character Sheet, he crosses off one circle for each point. He applies 4 to Resolve, 3 to Increased Trait, 2 to Literacy, and 1 to changing his Favorite Use.

Since the last item only costs 1, Daishuso has accomplished his goal. He notes the change under his Skills and erases the Improvement. Now he has a free blank for something else.

However, there is one way to flood Experience into a specific course for rapid advancement — see “Schools of Study”, below.

## Letting Things Go

As your character adventures, they will use certain abilities while letting others slide. And as a writer might change his mind about what a character can and cannot do, so you might change your mind about your character.

After applying your Rewards, ask your Game Host if you can remove a Gift or Mark from your character sheet. You should be removing Gifts Skills that have fallen into disuse, or ones that are no longer appropriate. *Always ask your Game Host before cashing in Gifts or Marks for more Experience.*

After removing a Gift, add 4 Experience to any two Improvements. After removing a Mark, add 1 to any two Improvements.

Cashing in old things to learn new ones is inefficient. Removing a Gift results in a net loss of 7 Experience to the total earned; removing a Mark results in a net loss of 3 Experience. Adjust your totals accordingly.

At the Game Host’s discretion, you can cash in two or more items. Major changes in a character’s life, such as suffering a Devastated injury or cutting off one’s top-knot to become a Buddhist priest, can make radical changes in a character.

**例 Example 1:** After a typical gaming session, Kaede earns four Experience Rewards of 4, 3, 2, and 1. She puts 4 points in “Increased Trait: Body”, 3 points in “Parry Arrows”, 2 points in “Weapon: Truncheon”, and 1 point in changing her Favored Use in Climbing from “trees” to “rooftops”.



## DRAMATIC CHANGE

In the *Usagi* saga, many characters have had dramatic changes in their lives. Ikeda (page 45) has retired from commanding armies and has settled down to be a famer. Sanshobo (page 50) is a former samurai who has cut off his top-knot and has become a priest. Chizu (p. 43) is no longer an allied ninja but a rogue, hunted by those who once numbered her among her allies.

Player-Characters may have similar shake-ups in their lives. The rule for exchanging old abilities for new ones should represent major changes in a character’s life.

Note that one’s starting Career and Trait Dice cannot be changed — so characters will always be recognizable. For example, Sanshobo may wear the robes of a priest, but he still carries with him the tactical planning and weapon skills worthy of a warrior. (Extra Careers and Increased Traits come from Gifts — those can be exchanged as appropriate.)



Since it only costs 1 point to change a Favored Use, the change to Climbing happens instantly. It's going to take another 3 points to buy a Mark in "Weapon: Truncheon", 12 more points to buy "Parry Arrows", and 11 more points to buy "Increased Trait: Body". Four more sessions, and she should be there.

**例 Example 2:** Daishuso has been an adventurer for quite some time. Even though he started with the Gift of Cleverness that all rodents have, his adventuring career has caused him to focus on other pursuits.

Daishuso elects to cash in his Gift of Cleverness. This gives him +4 Experience to two Improvements. He chooses to put 4r in buying "Resolve" and the other 4 in buying "Weapon: War Fan". These Experience points stack with the Rewards he just earned, but not with each other.

Hissshi puts 4 Experience in "Resolve" and 3 Experience in "School: Touchu Shin Ryu."

A few adventures later, Hissshi has 9 points in "Resolve" and 7 points in "School: Touchu Shin Ryu." Because Resolve is the lowest-level item he hasn't bought yet, he combines 6 of the School's points with Resolve's points. He now has the Resolve gift. Hissshi has  $(7-6=)$  1 point remaining in the Self-Improvement "School: Touchu Shin Ryu".

Next on the list is "Yielding Deflection". And since Hissshi has 1 point already in the School, he's only 14 points away.

Schools allow a character to advance faster, but only in the School's program of study. Schools "stack" rewards on top of each other, flooding to learn things faster.

Characters who don't find a school they like can just add to four Improvements, normally.

A character can only be learning one school at a time.

Very few students will progress all the way to the end of a school's teachings. Most will learn what they find to be practical and then move on. There is no penalty in the rules for giving up a school early, but there might be social consequences. Japan has a long tradition of wandering *yamabushi* (mountain warriors) who seek to learn every technique they can master.

## SCHOOLS OF STUDY

When investing Experience in a School, the points in the School stack with other improvements in the school. In this way, you can learn things twice as fast.

You must buy the School's improvements in order from top to bottom. However, you don't have to buy things twice. If you already have a lower improvement, mark it off.

**例 Example:** Hissshi is a student of Touchu Shin Ryu. He already has a Body of d8 and 5 Marks in Weapon: Blade, so he marks those items off. The first item he has to buy is Resolve.



### ***Endai Shin Ryu***

The art of fighting with the bow has a long tradition. This school first emphasizes being able to hit one's target, and then later to think strategically about the fight as a whole. Experienced students will learn how to fire arrows while riding horses at full-tilt.

- Speed d8
- Weapon: Bow — 3 Marks
- Resolve
- Mind d8
- Sharpshooter
- Riding — 3 Marks
- Cleverness
- Canny Defense
- Will d8
- Keen Eyes
- Setting the Gaze on the Target
- Speed Save
- Holding Down a Shadow
- Weapon: Bow — 6 Marks
- Strategic Gaze
- Grit
- Riding — 6 Marks
- Weapon: Bow — 9 Marks
- Striving for Height

### ***Suiei Undou Ryu***

Not all schools teach only fighting. This school is one of many that emphasizes top physical fitness. Among other techniques, warriors are taught methods of how to swim in full suits of armor.

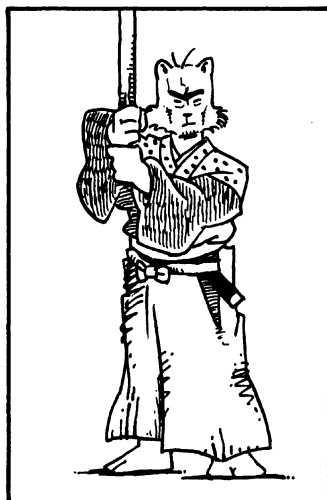
- Body d8
- Resolve
- Athletic
- Speed d8
- Empty Hand — 3 Marks

- Improved Movement
- Empty-Hand Mastery
- Toughness
- Grit
- Swimming — 3 Marks
- Headlong Sprint
- Body in Place of the Sword
- Quickness
- Toughness ×2
- Will d8
- Empty Hand — 6 Marks
- Improved Aggression
- Might
- Swimming — 6 Marks
- Body of the Rock
- Mind d8
- Dramatic Disheveling
- Renewal
- Cleverness
- Full Moon Stroke

### ***Jo-jutsu Shin Ryu***

While not as fancy or as ritualized as the *dojo* of the upper class samurai, many schools like this one exist in villages off the beaten path, where commoners learn to defend themselves. *Bo* staffs are cheap and easy to make, and learning these techniques requires patience and endurance — two qualities common to farming folk.

- Body d8
- Weapon: Truncheon — 3 Marks
- Resolve
- Bo Mastery
- Will d8
- Athletic
- Grit
- Weapon: Truncheon — 6 Marks
- Speed d8



- Sure-Footed
- Winding Mountain Path
- Mind d8
- Striking the Corners
- Improved Movement
- Weapon: Truncheon — 9 Marks
- Dramatic Disheveling

### ***Kusari Emono Ryu***

This school specializes in using “fighting ropes” such as the *kusari* and *kaginawa*. More than one samurai has used the teachings of this school to pull a foe off their horse and finish them with a blade.

- Speed d8
- Resolve
- Weapon: Flail — 3 Marks
- Quickness
- Mind d8
- Causing Confusion
- Improved Movement
- Body d8
- Weapon: Flail — 6 Marks
- Sure Footed
- Fighting-Rope Mastery
- Will d8
- Ambidexterity
- Weapon: Flail — 9 Marks
- Dramatic Disheveling
- Causing Fright

### ***Shinobijutsu no Neko Ryu***

The preferred *ninjutsu* of the Neko clan, this school teaches fighting techniques with the *kama* (scythe), as well as advanced

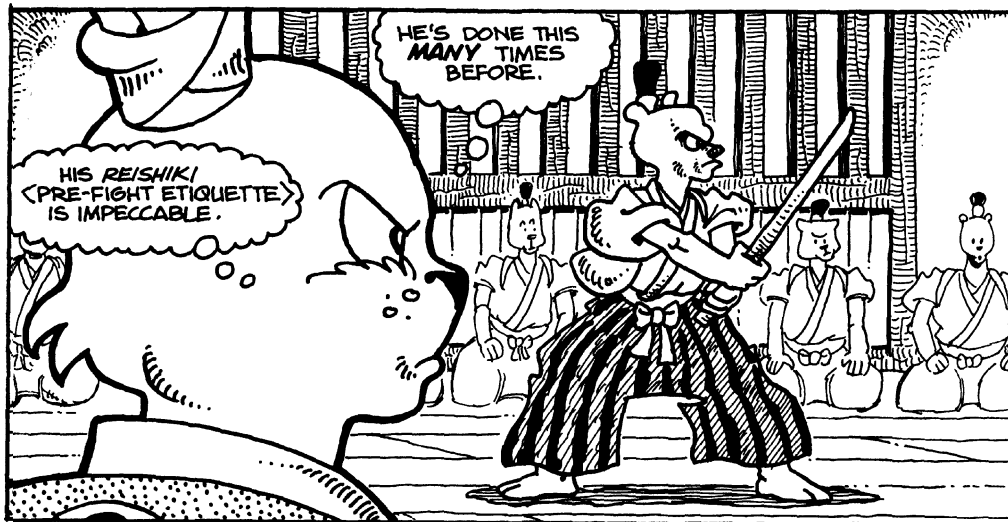
assassination methods with the throwing star, the *shuriken*.

- Resolve
- Ninjutsu*
- Speed d8
- Weapon: Axe — 3 Marks
- Yielding Deflection
- Sure-Footed
- Acrobat
- Weapon: Throwing — 3 Marks
- Mind d8
- Cleverness
- Weapon: Axe — 6 Marks
- Shuriken Mastery
- Quickness
- Empty-Hand Mastery
- Will d8
- Weapon: Throwing — 6 Marks
- Yin-Yang Feet
- Causing Confusion
- Body d8
- Striking the Corners
- Weapon: Axe — 9 Marks
- Body of the Rock

### ***Shoushin Ryu***

Although the spear is a weapon found among peasants, that doesn't mean there aren't schools that train the *buke* caste in its advanced techniques. Most students of this school will not advance to the later ranks, which teach strategy to future field commanders.

- Speed d8
- Resolve
- Weapon: Polearm — 3 Marks
- Quickness
- Mind d8



- Weapon: Polearm — 6 Marks
- Improved Movement
- Will d8
- Living Hands
- Tactics — 3 Marks
- Mob Fighter
- Flowing Water Cut
- True Leader
- Weapon: Polearm — 9 Marks
- Body d8
- Tactics — 6 Marks
- Crushing the Weakened Foes
- Dramatic Disheveling
- Rat's Head, Ox's Neck
- Body in Place of the Sword
- Timing of Two
- Empty Hand — 6 Marks
- Might
- Dramatic Disheveling
- Flowing Water Cut

## ***Shikona no Sumo Ryu***

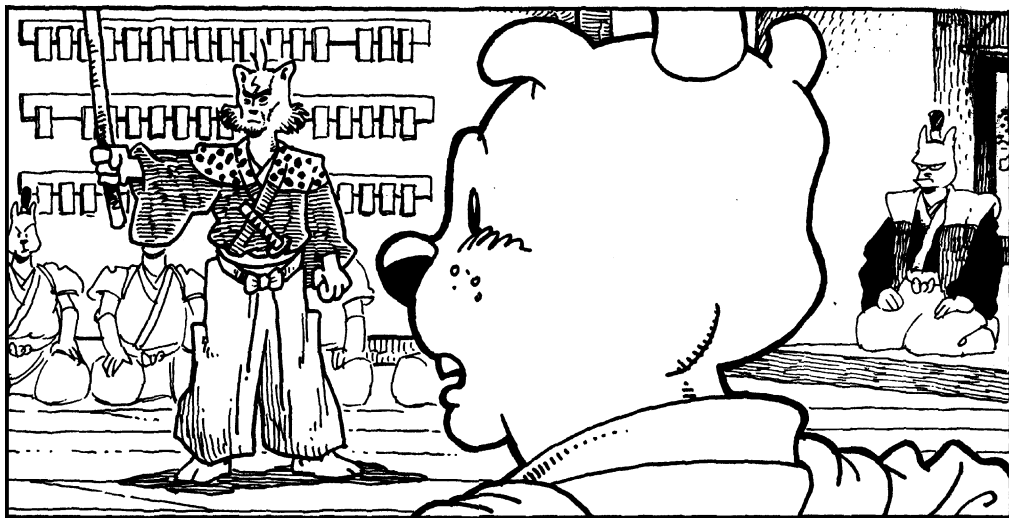
This school teaches techniques used by any *sumotori* (professional sumo wrestler). During the early Edo period, sumo is becoming a popular spectator sport.

## ***Kyuso Shin Ryu***

This school teaches warriors to fight in close quarters. The emphasis is on hitting your foes with anything available at any time. Samurai trained in these methods are ready for trouble and dangerous when cornered.

- Speed d8
- Resolve
- Weapon: Blade — 3 Marks
- Belligerent
- Mind d8
- Weapon: War Fan — 3 Marks
- Binding
- Quickness
- Empty Hand — 3 Marks
- Danger Sense
- Body d8
- Weapon: Blade — 6 Marks
- Empty-Hand Mastery
- Will d8
- Weapon: War Fan — 6 Marks
- Body d8
- Empty Hand — 3 Marks
- Might
- Toughness
- Empty-Hand Mastery
- Strength
- Resolve
- Indoor Techniques
- Will d8
- Toughness ×2
- Empty Hand — 6 Marks
- Knockdown Maneuver
- Strength
- Treading Down the Sword
- Toughness ×3
- Mighty Blow
- Body of the Rock
- Empty Hand — 9 Marks
- Toughness
- Might ×2
- Causing Fright
- Toughness ×4





## ***Toshou Ryu***

Another school typical of the period, this one emphasizes both sword-fighting and spear-fighting, training field marshals from the rank and file.

- Body d8
- Resolve
- Weapon: Blade — 3 Marks
- Will d8
- Grit
- Weapon: Polearm — 3 Marks
- Treading Down the Sword
- Speed d8
- Fighting Spirit
- Weapon: Blade — 6 Marks
- Horse-Cutter Maneuver
- Weapon: Polearm — 6 Marks
- True Leader
- Flying Grip

- Mind d8
- Renewal
- Dramatic Disheveling
- Knowing the Enemy's Troops
- Rat's Head, Ox's Neck

## ***Touchu Shin Ryu***

This school is your basic *kenjutsu* — fighting with the sword. Other swordsmanship schools will have a list of teachings similar to this one.

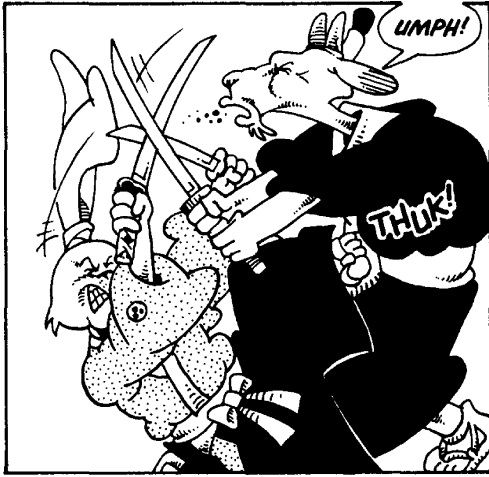
- Body d8
- Resolve
- Weapon: Blade — 3 Marks
- Yielding Deflection
- Easy Rebound
- Improved Parry
- Mob Fighter
- Speed d8
- Fast-Draw
- Ambidexterity
- Grit
- Easy Riposte
- Weapon: Blade — 6 Marks
- Parry Arrows
- Improved Aggression
- Crushing the Weakened Foes
- Improved Movement
- Will d8
- Quickness
- Fires and Stones Cut
- Treading Down the Sword
- Horse-Cutter Maneuver
- Mind d8
- Weapon: Blade — 9 Marks
- Dramatic Disheveling
- Red Leaves Cut
- Renewal



## **HISTORICAL SCHOOLS**

The schools presented here are fiction, but they are not unlike the training programs of the day. Most of those teachings were verbal instruction, and without written records, it's hard to say which school was teaching what techniques. Today, the oldest schools include the Itto Ryu and Yagyū Ryu theories of swordsmanship, with their many variations — but the curricula of these schools came about hundreds of years after the Tokugawa era.

The Game Host (with encouragement from Players) may make up new schools for study. As a general rule, Schools should emphasize teaching complex techniques (I.E., Gifts with difficult Requirements), so new lists should include Basic Traits at d8, experience at being beaten repeatedly (I.E. the Gift of Resolve), several powering Gifts like Might or Grit, and all the Requirements for the really nifty Gifts at the very end.



## OKUGI GIFTS (Hidden Mysteries)

Although these Gifts are difficult to qualify for (with two or more Requirements), many samurai aspire to learn them all. Not only must a character meet the Requirements of the game mechanics, they must also have a reason in the context of the story. Were they taught them by a *sensei*? Was it described in a book and learned through diligent practice? Did the character walk the *musha-shugyo* (warrior's pilgrimage) in meditation? *Okugi* Gifts should be an important part of any character's story.

### Binding\*\*

*When the enemy attacks and you also attack, you should go in with a sticky feeling and fix your weapon against the enemy's. The spirit of stickiness is not hitting very strongly, but hitting so the weapons do not separate easily.*

Requires: Speed d8 or better & Mind d8 or better

Spend Focus, Might, or Grit — as an Action, Dash towards your opponent and Attack. If you *Fail* or *Overwhelmingly Fail*, your opponent does not hit you; instead, your weapons slide against each other and become bound up. Both of you become Inactive, *unless* one of you Retreats from the Bind — which provokes a Counter-Attack Reaction from the other combatant *that can only be Dodged*.

### Body in Place of the Sword\*\*

*According to the enemy's cutting method, you can dash against them with your body first, then*

*afterwards cut them with your blade.*

Requires: Body d8 or better & Speed d8 or better

X (Body vs. 7) — After losing an Attack or Counter-Attack, you may declare this ability. Firstly, that attack is negated. Secondly, perform a Melee Attack of your Body & Empty Hand Dice vs. whatever defense your foe has left. If you are successful, strike your foe with your Empty Hand. If there is a weapon in your off-hand, you must drop it; if you are using a Heavy or Combo weapon, you must drop it.

Always — When someone declares Body in Place of Sword against you, negate that use.

### Body of the Rock\*\*

*When you have mastered strategy, ten thousand things cannot touch you, and you will not be moved. This is the body of a rock.*

Requires: Body d8 or better & Will d8 or better

X (Body & Will vs. 7) — As a Reaction, you can steel yourself against any failing of the body or the spirit. This includes, but is not limited to, negating any condition of *Confusion*, *Fear*, or *Unconsciousness*.

### Causing Confusion\*\*

*You can confuse the enemy by attacking with varied techniques when the chance arises. Feint a thrust or cut, or make the enemy think you are going to close. This is the essence of fighting.*

Requires: Speed d8 or better & Mind d8 or better

X (Tie) — You have mastered varied techniques for feinting, bluffing, and confusing opponents. As an Action, Stride and choose an opponent no farther from you than your Dash. Roll your Speed & Mind vs. the target's Speed & Mind. If you *Succeed*, the target is *Confused* for the rest of the Scene. If you *Fail*, Exhaust this Gift.



## THE BOOK OF FIVE RINGS

These *Okugi* Gifts are inspired by *The Book of Five Rings*, by Miyamoto Musashi. The founder of Nito-Ryu, or "Two Swords School", Musashi advocated always being ready for change at every moment. His techniques taught how to use the *katana* (long sword) and *wakizashi* (companion sword) simultaneously for maximum flexibility. Musashi was the inspiration for much of the samurai genre, as well as Miyamoto Usagi, our hero.



## Holding Down a Shadow\*\*

*When you can see into an enemy's spirit, you can "hold down their shadows" — defeat them by forestalling them with superior timing.*

Requires: Speed d8 or better & Mind d8 or better  
Spend Focus, Quickness, Cleverness, or Grit —

You can see into the spirit of your foes. As your Action, Stride and pick an opponent no farther than Short Range (12 paces). If that opponent attacks someone on your side, you can automatically Rally your attacked ally as a Reaction (with 1 success).

## Indoor Techniques

*If you learn "indoor techniques" in a dojo [school of swordsmanship], with too much formality and ritual, you will have difficulty in actual encounters.*

Always — Against other Reactive opponents with Indoor Techniques, you roll a bonus d12 with all Attacks, Counter-Attacks, and Parries. Your ritualized dojo training is no good against "real" opponents.

X (Will & Lore: Dojo vs. 7) — In a *dojo* setting or at a match, impress others with your etiquette and discipline.

## Knowing the Enemy's Troops\*\*\*

*Know the enemy's disposition in battle. Is it flourishing or waning? By observing the spirit of the enemy's men, you can move your soldiers accordingly.*

Requires: Speed d8 or better & True Leader

Always — As a Reaction, whenever anyone Rallies on the opposing side, immediately roll your *own* Mind, Will & Lea-

dership Dice against your foe's roll. For each Success you score, you can Rally a target on *your* side, within Medium Range (36 paces). You must be able to see and hear the rallying enemy.

## Living Hands\*\*

*When you grip a sword, you must be pliable and ready to adapt. A fixed hand is a dead hand.*

Requires: Speed d8 or better & Mind d8 or better  
X (Speed & Mind vs. 7) — Your flexible weapons technique readily adapts to others. As a Reaction, when an opponent with reach of your weapon attempts to Spend Focus, Might, Quickness, Cleverness, or Grit to power an ability that will be used against you, negate that Spending.

X (Body & Mind vs. 7) — When someone else claims a Disarm Critical and disarms you, negate the Disarming.

Always — When an opponent declares Living Hands against you, negate that use.

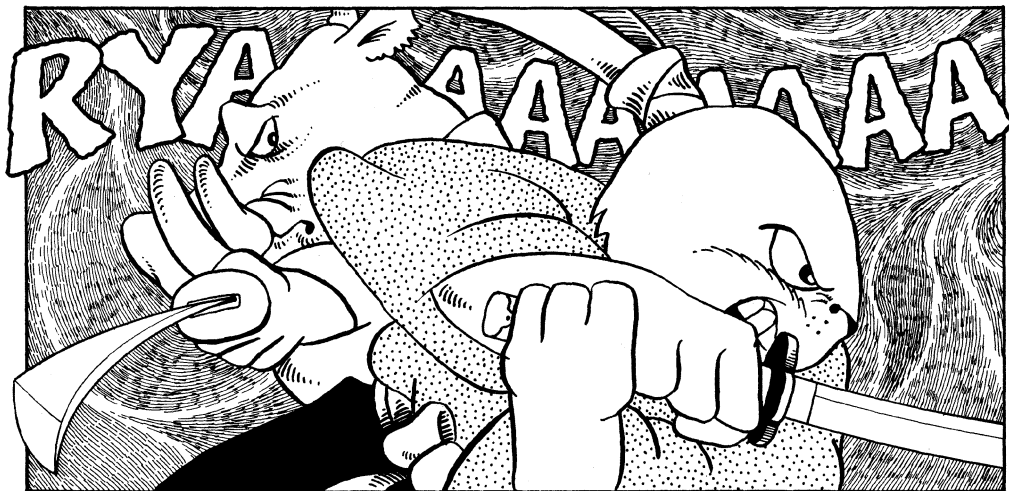
## Rat's Head, Ox's Neck\*\*

*"Rat's Head, Ox's Neck" means that when we become preoccupied with small details, we must suddenly change into a large spirit, interchanging large with small. This is one of the essences of strategy.*

Requires: Mind d8 or better & True Leader

X (Tie) — When you are the leader, as an Action, roll your Mind, Will, and Leadership Dice vs. 7. For each Success you score, Rally one combatant on your side. (Resolve each Rally attempt separately — see page 106.) If you Fail, Exhaust this Gift.





### Red Leaves Cut\*\*\*

*When the enemy is in front of you, intent on cutting, hitting, or parrying, strongly hit the enemy's sword with the Fire and Stones Cut. If you practice this gut, it will become easy to make them drop the sword.*

Requires: Body d8 or better & Will d8 or better & Fires and Stones Cut

X (Body & Will vs. 7) — After using the *Fire and Stones Cut*, if you hit your foe on the second contest, you *also* Disarm your opponent.

X (Body & Will vs. 7) — When someone declares Red Leaves Cut against you, negate that use.

### Renewal\*\*\*\*

*When our spirit becomes fettered, when we feel there is no possible resolution, we must abandon our efforts and think with a fresh spirit to win with a new rhythm.*

Requires: Body d8 or better & Speed d8 or better & Mind d8 or better & Will d8 or better

X (auto) — As an Action, pick any one Gift you've already Exhausted, and recover it instantly.

### Strategic Gaze\*\*

*In strategy, it is necessary to look to both sides without moving the eyeballs.*

Requires: Mind d8 or better & Will d8 or better  
Always — While you have Focus, you have

a d12 bonus to all Parries and Counter-Attacks.

### Striking the Corners\*\*\*

*It is difficult to move strong things by pushing directly — you should “injure the corners”. In single combat, strike at the corners of the foe's body (arms, legs, hands and feet) and weaken them. It is important to know how to do this, so you much research this thoroughly.*

Requires: Body d8 or better & Speed d8 or better & Mind d8 or better

Always — You know how to strike a foe more precisely. As long as you keep Acting the same opponent, your results stack. On the same foe, two consecutive “Scratched” results become “Wounded”. Two consecutive “Wounded” results become “Crippled.” Two consecutive “Crippled” results become “Incapacitated”. (Yes, this means that four “Scratched” results would become two “Wounded” results, which would become one “Incapacitated” result.) This ability only works on one foe at a time — if you Act against a new foe, or the combat ends, you must start all over again. (When Reacting, you can only Parry or Dodge — and *not* Counter-Attack against anyone *but* your chosen foe — or you will break the cycle.)

Note – Without this Gift, Damage results don't stack.

## Striving for Height\*\*

*When you close with the enemy, strive for superior height without cringing. Stretch your legs, stretch your hips, and stretch your neck to be face to face with him — then, thrust in strongly.*

Requires: Mind d8 or better & Will d8 or better  
X (Tie) — As an Action, choose a foe within Medium Range (36 paces). Roll your Will & Presence Skill vs. your foe's Mind, Will & Presence Skill. If you Tie or better, you have a d12 bonus to strike that foe until the end of your next Action.

Always — When someone declares Striving for Height against you, negate that use.

## Timing of Two\*\*

*When your enemy retreats, as you see them tense, you must feint a cut. Then, as they relax, follow up and hit them. This is the "Timing of Two."*

Requires: Body d8 or better & Speed d8 or better

X (Speed vs. 7) — You have mastered the technique of fooling your opponent into thinking they have retreated to a safe distance, only to exploit the moment of weakness. After rolling a Tie on an Attack or Counter-Attack, when a foe Retreats from you to negate the attack, not only do you hit him, you score a Critical Hit. (This ability is only used on Ties — it has no effect on other Retreats, such as to avoid Criticals or to use *Speed Save*.)

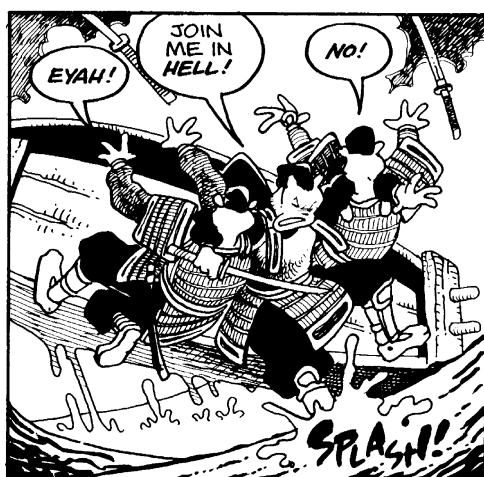
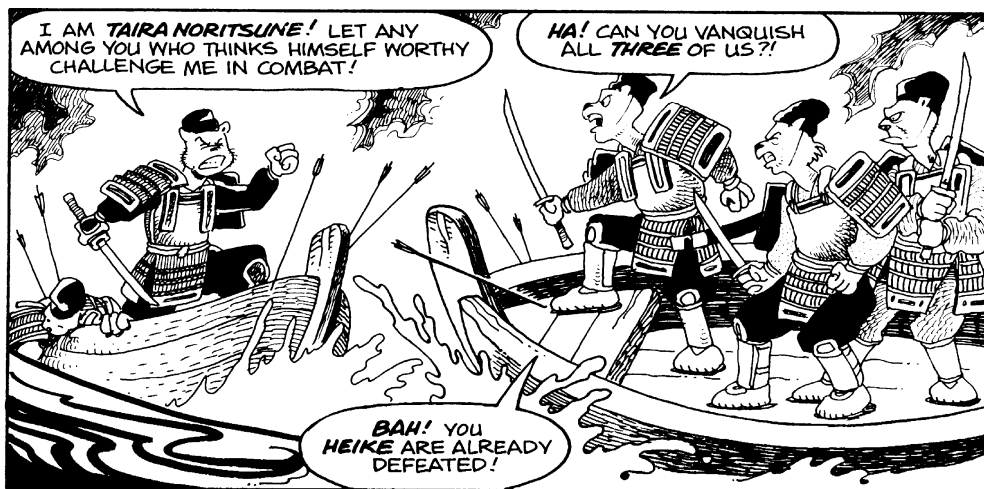
Always — When someone declares Timing of Two against you, negate that use.

## Treading Down the Sword\*\*

*The spirit is to win as we are treading down the attack. Not just with the feet, but with the body, the spirit, and, of course, tread and cut with the long sword. You must achieve the spirit of not letting the enemy attack a second time.*

Requires: Body d8 or better & Will d8 or better





X (auto) — After *Failing* or *Overwhelmingly Failing* to Counter-Attack, use this ability to claim a simple Success attack on your attacker. (That is, just use your regular weapon damage.) You still suffer Damage (and Criticals) from your foe's attack.

Note — You *cannot* use this ability on an Attack, Parry or Dodge. You cannot use this ability if you *Botched*.

## Winding Mountain Path\*\*

*You must understand the spirit of advancing and becoming engaged with the enemy, and not withdrawing even one step. Attack the enemy's strong points.*

Requires: Will d8 or better & Sure-Footed  
Spend Focus, Might, Quickness, or Grit — As an Action, declare a path no longer than your Dash that takes you within reach of one or more targets. In order, resolve one Attack against each one. (If you Tie, you effectively *Retreat* on to the next target.) If you Fail and are Counter-Attacked, but

*not* sent Reeling (or otherwise prevented from movement), you continue on to the next target. (If you are sent Reeling, knocked down, etc., you stop where you are and your Action ends.) After resolving all attacks this way, move to the end of your path.

## Yin-Yang Feet\*\*

*You should not move one foot preferentially. When moving fast or slow, with large or small steps, your feet should always move as in normal walking.*

Requires: Speed d8 or better & Sure-Footed  
Always — Increase your Stride by 1 pace (not to exceed your Dash).

X (special) — As an Action, you can *Run* and still React. Before your next turn, if you React to someone and Fail, Exhaust this Gift.

This chapter includes rules for those little things that crop up once in a while. The Game Host may have to make up new Spot Rules as the situations come up.

## MOVEMENT

Movement can be hindered by *Encumbrance* — see page 139.

### Climbing

Walking *down* a 30-degree incline or less is good footing. Walking up a 30-degree incline is bad footing. Walking *up or down* stairs, or up or down a 45-degree incline, is bad footing.

The Gift of *Sure-Footed* negates the movement penalty for walking *up* a 30-degree incline, and for walking *down* a 45-degree incline or down stairs. Not even *Sure-Footing* negates that it costs double to walk up stairs or up a 45-degree incline, but *Sure-Footed* characters don't treat that ground as "bad footing" for *Retreating*.

Greater inclines must be *climbed*. As an Action, roll *Body & Climbing* vs. 2d4 for a ladder, 2d8 for a rough surface with handholds or a climbing rope, or 2d12 or worse for castle walls. Each success moves the character 1 pace vertically. While Climbing, a character is *Inactive*. A character can cling to a wall with one hand and Counter-Attack or Parry with a weapon in the other hand; the game host may call for *Body & Climbing* rolls to prevent falling from the wall, and *Retreat* will be impossible.

All Climbing Dice can be limited by *Encumbrance* — see page 139.

### Hiking

In *Usagi*, the most popular method of moving from place to place will be walking. Characters can move about one *ri* (=3.927 km) in an hour, so characters that hike for eight hours will cross about 31 km of distance. Hiking assumes a leisurely pace.

Healthy characters — ones that are not *Wounded* or worse — can push themselves to hike more than eight hours. Roll *Body & Hiking* vs. 2d4 for the first hour, 2d6 for the second hour, etc. (to 2d12). On a *Tie* or better, the character hikes for one more hour

# SPOT RULES

and one *ri*. On a *Failure*, the character becomes too tired to continue onwards. On an *Overwhelming Failure* or *Botch*, the character strains themselves and becomes *Wounded*.

Healthy characters can also push themselves to hike faster. A character who marches at double rate (2 *ri* or 7.854 km/hour) rolls *Body & Hiking* vs. 2d4 for the first hour, 2d6 for the second hour, etc., just as if they were marching longer. These hours stack.

These marching rates assume good lighting, fair weather, and well-maintained and level roads. At night, hike at half speed. In rain or snow, hike at half speed. On the plains or on mountain roads, hike at half speed. In swamps, mountains, or the like, hike at quarter speed or worse. All these modifiers stack.

If a character is riding a horse or *daitokagé*, use the character's *Riding Skill* and the *mount's* *Body*, instead. On an *Overwhelming Failure*, the mount takes damage; on a *Botch*, the mount falls on the rider, inflicting 4d20 *Damage*.

All Hiking Dice can be limited by *Encumbrance* — see page 139.

### Jumping

**Leaping:** As part of any *Maneuver* that involves a character's *Dash*, a character can leap over *one* gap no greater than their own *Stride*, or over any one low barrier (no greater than one *shyaku* in height, about 30 cm). For two or more leaps, the character will have to take the *Run* maneuver.

**Distance Jumping:** As an Action, a character can attempt to leap a greater distance. First, the character moves at least 3 paces but no more than their *Dash*. At the end, the character leaps into the air. Roll *Body & Jumping Dice*, and note the score (the highest die). The character clears that many paces of distance. (The minimum height for a long jump is 1/10 the distance.) If the character lands on bad footing, they immediately fall down (*Sure-Footed* negates this). You are *Inactive* during the Action, and then you are *Reactive* until your next turn.



**Vaulting:** As an Action, a character can leap for height. Use the rules for distance jumping, above, only *halve* the distance and *double* the height (to 1/5 the score instead of 1/10). To grab onto a railing or ledge use *Body & Climbing* — on a Success, grab on and climb up next turn; on an *Overwhelming Success*, climb up immediately and stand at the top.

All Jumping Dice are limited by Encumbrance — see page 139.



## Riding

While riding, most dice are subject to the *Riding Limit* — no die can be larger than your character's single highest Riding Die (whether from Skill or from Career). This includes, but is not limited to, Attack Dice, Counter-Attack Dice, Parry Dice, and Dodge Dice. In a pinch, a Game Host may raise the Riding Limit to d4 for characters with no Riding Skill at all.

It takes an Action to mount or dismount from a horse, during which the character is Reactive (but the Riding Limit is still in effect).

While Riding, use the mount's Stride and Dash in place of your own. Weight carried by the mount hinders its Speed for movement (as per Encumbrance), as usual. You still use your own Encumbrance for your own Dodge.

Mounts with the Gift of Resolve are combat-trained. Farm animals and simple riding horses will not have Resolve; the Game Host can assume that loud noises and threats of violence will spook such animals into running away.

Use *Will & Riding* to Rally a mount, instead of Leadership.

A typical horse has a Stride of 3, a Dash of 15, a Sprint of +d12, and a Run of 60. A *daitokagē* (riding lizard) has a Stride of 2, a Dash of 12, a Sprint of +d12, and a Run of 48.

## GOODS AND SERVICES

### Encumbrance

Characters can only carry so much before their movement suffers. Stronger and larger characters will be able to carry more. The load that a character carries is called their *Encumbrance*.

Total up all the weight the character is carrying, in kilograms, to determine the character's Encumbrance.

Trait or Gift	None	Light (d8)	Medium (d6)	Heavy (d4)
Body d4	6 kg	13 kg	16 kg	32 kg
Body d6	12 kg	16 kg	25 kg	50 kg
Body d8	16 kg	25 kg	32 kg	70 kg
Body d10	25 kg	32 kg	42 kg	85 kg
Body d12	32 kg	42 kg	50 kg	100 kg
Strength	+10 kg	+12 kg	+15 kg	+20 kg
Giant	+10 kg	+12 kg	+15 kg	+20 kg

### Encumbrance Limit

When a character carries too much, they suffer an *Encumbrance Limit*. The character's Speed Die effectively drops to the Encumbrance Limit in size. For a Light load, the limit is d8; for a Medium load, the limit is d6; and for a Heavy load, the limit is d4. Everything dependent on Speed also drops, including movement, initiative, Sprint Dice, Dodge Dice, and rolls to prevent Exhaustion.

**例 Example:** Hayako has a Body of d6, a Speed of d12, 4 Marks in Dodge Skill, and the Gift of Quickness. If she carries 12 kilograms or less, she has no restrictions on her Speed.

Once she picks up 12.1 kg, her Speed drops to d8. Her Dash drops from 8 to 6. Her Sprint Die drops to d8. Her Dodge drops from d12, d10 to 2d8. Her roll to prevent Quickness from Exhausting becomes d8 vs. 5.

Other skills can be affected by the Encumbrance Limit, such as Climbing, Hiking, Jumping, and Swimming. The Game Host should rule what skills are limited in this way.

Armor inflicts a separate *Encumbrance Limit* — see below. Use the limit from either

armor or from carried weight, whichever is worse.

The easiest way to not worry about Encumbrance is to always carry the maximum load that gives no Encumbrance.

## Purchasing Items

There is no list of prices for goods and services in the *Usagi* game. Prices will vary too much from place to place.

Instead, items are rated in how expensive they are to buy. In order to buy the item, the character must first find a marketplace selling the item. Then, the character must roll their *Career Die* against the target number.

Item Cost	Target	Successes Needed
Cheap	2	1
Average	4	2
Expensive	6	3
Extravagant	8 (or more)	4 (or more)

Small towns will probably only have Cheap and Average items. Extravagant items, such as suits of armor or finely-made katanas, may not be available at all.

Normally, a character may roll once per week towards their goal — and this assumes they have regular employment.

With very rare exceptions, characters can only work one job per week.

## Money Bonuses

A character may accumulate *money bonuses* during the game. These will be die-sizes from d4 to d12. These bonuses could be money such as *mon* (copper coins) or *ryo* (gold coins), paper money such as *han*, credit lines of *koku* (rice to be harvested), salable jewelry, or other items.

The character spends the money bonus

when they want to buy something. Once rolled, a money bonus die is spent.

Two money bonuses of the same size can be combined to make one die of the next size up. For example, you can combine two d6s to make a d8. Likewise, money dice can be broken down into smaller sizes. Remember — once rolled, a money bonus die is gone.

## Getting Paid

Normally, a character is assumed to be plying their Career for money for most of the week. Characters denied employment (for example, because they were imprisoned) do not get to roll.

Characters may receive *money bonuses* as rewards for fine service. In general, a money bonus die should be equal to the character's career.

## Gifts

A character with the Gift of *Pennywise* (p. 74) has Favor on all purchase rolls — they may re-roll one 1. A character with the Gift of *Wealth* (p. 82) rolls a bonus d12 on all purchase rolls.

## Armor

Armor is very rare in *Usagi's* Japan. For one thing, it's illegal for most people to own it. For another, it's cumbersome to wear, often requiring attendants to put it on. (Light, flexible chain-mail will not be in common use for another hundred years.) It's also an expensive purchase, not to mention the regular maintenance required which is all but impossible for wandering adventurers.

In game terms, Armor adds more Soak, but it also adds an *Encumbrance Limit*. The



character's Speed Dice, Dodge Dice, and Sprint Dice become limited to the same size as the Encumbrance Limit, marked "Enc." in the table below.

Armor	Wt.	Soak	Enc.	Cost
Tatami-do (scaled armor, worn by peasant infantry)	4 kg	+1	d8	Average
Haramaki-do (breastplate)	6 kg	+2	d8	Expensive
Do-maru (breastplate and shoulder guards)	8 kg	+3	d6	Expensive
Ko-gusoku (partial suit of armor)	12 kg	+4	d6	Extravagant
O-yoroi (full suit of armor)	16 kg	+5	d4	Extravagant

When wearing armor, use the Encumbrance Limit imposed by the armor or by the weight carried by the character (page 139), whichever is lower.

A character's Soak cannot exceed 17; treat any Soak higher than 17 as 17.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Concealment

A character that has 50% or more concealment is *partially concealed*. Partial concealment includes poor lighting (such as a moonlight night), hidden behind a rice-paper wall, or obscured by smoke. When attacking or looking at a partially-concealed combatant, you suffer a penalty of d12 — the target includes a bonus d12 with their defense.

A character that has 100% concealment is *totally concealed*. Total concealment is when the character cannot be seen at all — completely obscured by opaque barriers, or because the attacker cannot see. When attacking a totally-concealed combatant, you suffer a penalty of 2d12 — the target includes an extra 2d12 with their defense.

An attacker that has total concealment against the target rolls a bonus d12. You *cannot* Counter-Attack an attacker that has total concealment — you can only Parry or Dodge.

If neither attacker nor defender can see, then the attacker rolls a bonus d12 to hit, and the defender rolls an extra 2d12 to defend and cannot Counter-Attack.

The Gift of *Night Vision* (p. 74) can negate partial concealment due to poor lighting. The Gift of *Danger Sense* (p. 70) can prevent concealed attackers from claiming a bonus d12 to hit. The Gift of *Blind Fighting* (p. 79) can negate partial and total concealment.

### Cover

A combatant behind a low barrier, thick bushes, or other combatant, where only about 50% of their body is exposed has *partial cover*. Attacks against a target with partial cover suffer a penalty of d12 (that is, the defender gets a bonus d12 on their defense).

A combatant behind a tall barrier, in a narrow window, or has 25% or less of their body exposed has *near-total cover*. Attacks against a target with near-total cover suffer a penalty of 2d12 (that is, the defender gets an extra 2d12 on their defense).

A combatant completely behind a wall or rice-paper window has *total cover*. Attacks against the combatant always strike the cover first. In addition, the target will have total concealment except in very rare cases (such as rice-paper walls).

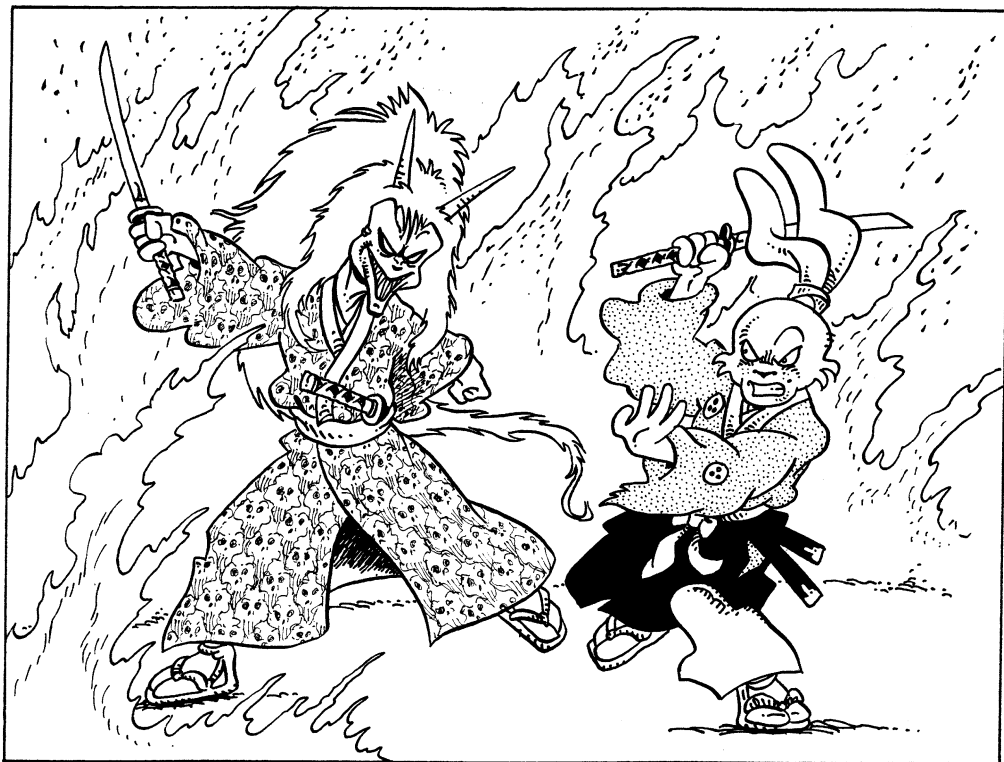
### Retreating Behind Cover

A combatant attacked at range can Retreat if by doing so, they improve their cover against their attacker. On a Tie, Retreating behind cover forces the attack to strike the cover instead.

A target hiding behind a grappled hostage can Retreat behind the hostage, forcing the ranged attack to hit the hostage instead.

### Cover Does Not Aid Counter-Attacks

In the event of a Counter-Attack that also has cover, *keep the Cover Dice separate*. If your Counter-Attack dice were too low, but the Cover Dice was enough to stop the attack, then the attack struck the cover and your Counter-Attack failed. Cover dice never add additional successes to an attack, for Criticals or any other purpose.




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## Fire

At night, lighting comes from candles and house-fires. The possibility of a blaze lurks at every opportunity.

A character that catches on fire suffers 1d20 Damage at the end of every round. (Since this is a Damage Roll, characters without Resolve may become hysterical and Reeling.) A character can attempt to put the fire out by stopping, dropping, and rolling — use *Speed & Will* vs. 6 to put out most clothing fires, and this can be done even while Reeling. Fire will also go out by itself, as well — a fire that fails to cause damage for three turns in a row burns itself out.

Fires have other environmental effects, as well. Rooms will fill up with smoke, which both obscures vision (causing concealment) and displaces oxygen (causing suffocation). Left unchecked, wooden walls and supports will collapse, bringing buildings down.

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## Foraging

Characters will want to eat. Finding food in the wilderness uses the Survival Skill. Note that almost all land in Tokugawa-era Japan is owned by someone; hunting without permission — *poaching* — is a crime that can carry severe penalties.

A character that hunts for eight hours rolls their *Mind* and *Survival* vs. 5. Each Success is one square meal.

---

## Height

Attacking from above has the advantage of gravity. When using Ranged or Thrown Weapons from above, calculate Range using *either* the height *or* the distance, but not both. When using Ranged or Thrown Weapons from below, *add both the height and the distance together*.

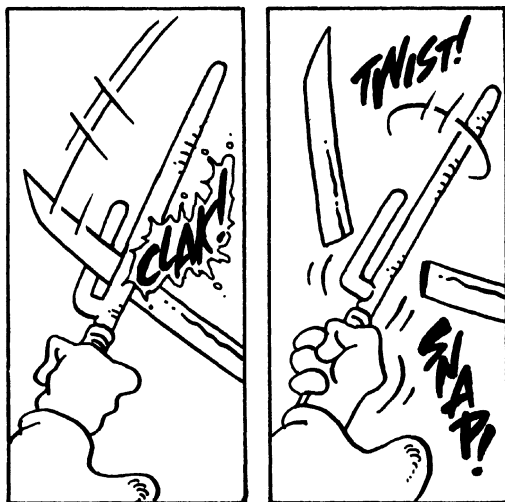
## Falling

Characters can fall from a great height. For every 10 paces or more that a character falls, they suffer 1d20 damage. Round 5 or more paces up to the next 10. For example a character that falls 47 paces takes 5d20 damage. Treat any fall more than 200 paces as 200 paces.

A character will fall 170 paces in one round, and 500 paces in two rounds.

A Reactive character that falls onto a hard surface can test *Speed & Jumping* vs. 7 to reduce falling damage. For each success, reduce fallen distance by 10 paces.

A Reactive character that dives into water can test *Speed & Swimming* vs. 7, 4. On a simple Success, reduce any Injury to Crippled. On an Overwhelming Success, reduce any Injury to Wounded.



## Property Damage

Characters will often strike at inanimate objects, such as trees, walls, furniture, and other objects.

Some inanimate objects will have *Invulnerability* — they ignore 1 or more points of Damage. In game terms, subtract the Invulnerability from the hits scored by the Damage Dice.

Substance	Soak	Invulnerability
Paper	3	0+1 per 10 cm of thickness
Dirt	3	1+1 per 10 cm of thickness
Wood	6	1+1 per 10 cm of thickness
Stone	9	2+1 per 5 cm of thickness
Iron	12	3+1 per 2 cm of thickness
Steel	15	4+1 per 1 cm of thickness

When a character claims cover from a wall or some such, subtract the Invulnerability from the Damage that would be suffered. For example, a character who Retreats behind a 20cm stone wall subtracts 6 from any Damage roll that must penetrate the cover.

Inanimate objects suffer damage the same way as people do. A *Wounded* object is damaged and suffers an extra d20 on future damage rolls. A *Crippled* wagon or tool is useless; a Crippled Weapon can still be used but cannot claim Criticals. An *Incapacitated* object is useless; an Incapacitated door no longer keeps people out, Incapacitated walls collapse in at least a 1-pace wide hole. A *Devastated* item exists only in smithereens, totally beyond repair. The Game Host should make spot rulings for different items.

Some weapons will be better than others against certain substances. For example, an axe is ideal for chipping away at a tree.

An unattended item (such as a door, a tree, or a bottle on a table) is helpless — attack rolls against it claim a d12 bonus. An attended item (such as an item in a character's hand or a moving cart) is not.

## Scatter

When engaging targets at range, most misses can be assumed to just strike the ground or other walls. If it matters where a missile went, you can use these rules.

To determine scatter, you must keep Range Dice, Cover Dice, Concealment Dice, and the target's defense dice separate.

If the attack missed because of Dodge Dice, assume the attack soared through the space where the target was and went onwards, to no more than twice the distance to the original target.

If the attack missed because it was Parried, the missile was flung harmlessly aside or cut in half by the weapon's skillful stroke.

If the attack missed because of Cover Dice, the attack struck the cover. See "Property Damage" to find out if it can penetrate the cover and still strike the target.

If the attack missed because of Concealment or Range Dice, then the attack deviates 10% for each Success those dice score against the original attack dice. To determine deviation, roll a d12, and use the facings of a clock, assuming that 12 is long, 3 is off to the right, 6 is short, and 9 is off to the left.

If the attack missed because of a *Botched* attack roll, the missile could have gone anywhere.

If the Game Host rules that another target is in the line of fire, unaimed attacks roll only a d4 to hit. However, all bonuses (including the d12 for Inactive targets) apply.

## Size

Small objects are harder to hit. An object less than 1 meter in every dimension claims an extra d12 *Range dice* vs. all Thrown and Ranged Attacks. An object less than 50cm in every dimension claims an extra d12 *Range dice* and an extra d12 defense dice against every attack. Smaller objects can have even more defense dice, at the discretion of the Game Host.

Large objects, such as walls or carts, are easier to hit. When missing an object 4 meters or wide in every direction with a

ranged attack, consult the scatter rules. An attack that deviates but still passes through a large object may still hit it.

## Suffocation

Characters that are denied air can hold their breath for two minutes, provided they don't exert themselves, such as attack, defend, or move more than their Stride. A character that is taken by surprise, or that is sent Reeling, will not be holding their breath.

Characters that cannot breathe also cannot speak. They cannot Rally others.

After two minutes (or earlier, if there's exertion), roll the character's Body die at the end of every round. On a 1, the character falls Unconscious. After four more minutes, the character will die from lack of oxygen.

A technique popular with ninja who are *Empty-Hand Masters* will be to come up behind someone, grapple them, then Choke them into unconsciousness.

## Terrain

During the course of the game, characters will fight in all kinds of strange places.

### Even Ground

City streets, *dojo* arenas, level plains, palace interiors, and anything else flat and smooth are *even ground*. Combatants can Stride, Dash, Sprint, Run, Charge, and Retreat freely.

### Uneven Ground

Thick plant growth, soggy mud, ankle-deep water, bumpy rocks, lying corpses, and the like are *uneven ground*. Combatants can only Stride 1 pace. Halve the distance of any Dash, Sprint, Run, or Charge.

A character that Retreats onto uneven ground automatically falls down. (The Gift of *Sure-Footed* negates the falling down.)

If a character moves partly over even ground, and partly over uneven ground, only the uneven ground movement is halved.

### Impassible Ground

Waist-high walls, collapsed buildings, dense trees, cliff fences, castle walls, and other barriers are *impassible ground*. This terrain is no longer "ground" but an obstacle to be scaled or circumvented.

Any surface over 45 degrees requires *Climbing* — see page 138.

## Concealment

For ranged chases and abstract combat, combatants can assume this level of concealment for these distances. Tall trees cast shadows, scrub obscures line of sight, milling crowds get in the way, cities have walls and buildings, etc. Remember that 50% or more is partial concealment (extra d12 defense) and 100% is total concealment (extra 2d12 defense).

Description	Ground	Concealment
Bamboo Thicket	Even	50% per 10 paces
Big City	Even	50% per 25 paces
Brush	Uneven	None
Building Interior	Even	50% per 10 paces
Hills	Uneven	50% per 50 paces
Light Forest	Uneven	50% per 25 paces
Marsh	Uneven	50% per 25 paces
Mountains	Impassible	50% per 25 paces
Plains	Even	None
Rooftop	Uneven	None
Swamp	Uneven	50% per 25 paces
Thick Forest	Impassible	50% per 10 paces
Village	Even	50% per 50 paces

## UNUSUAL ATTACKS

### Improvised Weapons

Characters may attack with whatever they have on hand. As a general rule, improvised objects can be Thrown (1d20 damage), or used as Light (1d20), Medium (1d20 in one hand, 2d20 in two), or Heavy (2d20) weapons with the *Truncheon* Skill. Improved weapons can usually take the *Crush* critical.

Some tools, such as the sickle (*kama*), the staff for planting seeds (*bo*), the rice-thresher (*nunchuka*), and the wood-chopping axe (*masaraki*) are weapons in their own right.

### Disarming

Instead of striking at a target, you can strike at a foe's weapon, instead. Declare your attempt to disarm, then roll your usual attack dice — your foe defends as usual (Counter-Attack, Parry, or Dodge).

However, if your attack is successful, *you do not cause damage*. Instead, compare your weapon's weight to your opponent's.

Your Weapon	Target's Weapon	Result Needed to Disarm
Heavy, Combo	Heavy, Combo	Success
Heavy, Combo	Thrown, Light, Medium	Tie
Medium	Heavy, Combo	Overwhelming Success
Medium	Medium	Success
Medium	Thrown, Light	Tie
Light	Medium, Heavy, Combo	Overwhelming Success
Light	Light	Success
Light	Thrown	Tie
Thrown	Medium, Heavy	Impossible
Thrown	Light	Overwhelming Success
Thrown	Thrown	Success

Note that you cannot disarm a Medium or Heavy weapon when you only have a Thrown one in your hand.

Some weapons, such as the *jitte*, have a specific Disarm Critical. Those weapons can either Attack to Disarm or can just use a regular attack and hope for a Critical hit.

## Grappling

Instead of attempting a punch or kick, you can try to *Grapple* a target instead. You must have one hand free to grapple. If you have one hand free, use your *Body & Empty Hand*. If you have two hands free, use your *Body, Speed & Empty Hand*. Your target can defend with any defense that they can muster — and they use *both* Body Dice and Speed Dice with their defense, regardless of whether it's a Counter-Attack, Parry, or Dodge.

If you score one Success, you have *grappled* your target. Your target can no longer Retreat or use Medium or Heavy Weapons.

While grappling, both you and your target are *Inactive*.

For each Success past the first, you may claim one of the following Criticals:

- *Choke* — You can get your hands around the target's mouth and throat,

preventing them from speaking. Characters denied breath will suffocate.

- *Crush* — Use your grip to inflict 1d20 Damage on the target.
- *Disarm* — Remove a weapon from the target's hand. If you have a hand free, you can keep the weapon yourself; otherwise, it falls to the ground.
- *Pin* — Force the target against the wall or to their knees. Once a target is pinned, you have a d12 bonus die on future grapples; your target can no longer use *any* Weapons; and you become Reactive and able to Retreat behind your pinned target.
- *Shove* — Stride in any direction and force the target to move with you.
- *Throw* — Throw the target to the ground, onto a table, or off a cliff, 1 pace in any direction. This breaks a pin.

You can continue to grapple every round.

Note that since you can only inflict damage on "Crush" critical hit, you would do well to pin your target as soon as possible.

Grappling is a *contest of strength* — the Gift of Strong can be used to Maximize body dice involved, by either party.

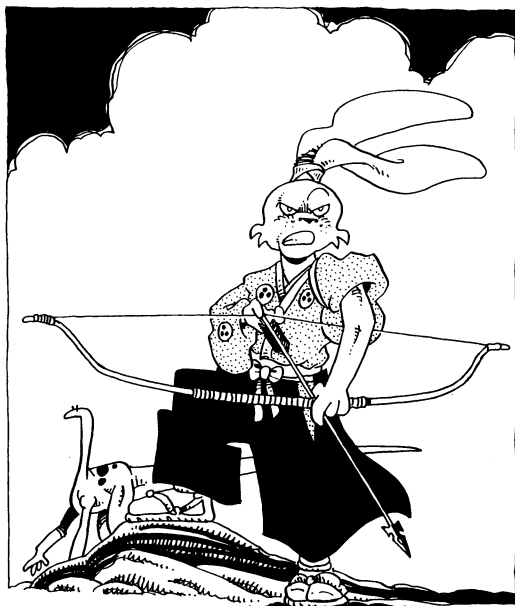
## Breaking Free

As an Action, a grappled target can try to break free, rolling their Body & Empty-Hand Dice vs. yours. On a *Success*, they break free. On an *Overwhelming Success*, they break free, can move their Stride in any direction, and take a simple action like Attack. On a *Tie*, they only break free if you are only using one hand.

As a Reaction, you can end the grapple or pin at any time. You may also end the grapple to defend yourself against someone else's attack.

## RANGE

Most attacks will take place with characters face to face, at *Close* Range. When using miniatures, Close Range is base-to-base contact, 1 pace away. The *Usagi* game defines Ranges into the following bands:



**Close:** 1 pace. The standard reach for most weapons. Figures are in base-to-base contact. When attacked at Close Range, a target with only a Reach Melee Weapon cannot Counter-Attack, but they can Parry or Dodge.

**Reach:** 2 paces. The standard reach for polearms. Figures are separated by one pace. When attacked at Reach Range, a target with only a Close Melee Weapon cannot Counter-Attack, but they can Parry or Dodge.

**Flexible:** 1 or 2 paces. The standard reach for chain weapons. Flexible Weapons can Counter-Attack against attackers 1 or 2 paces away. If appropriate, they can also Parry — but most Flexible Weapons are Flails, which cannot Parry at all.

**Far-Reaching:** up to 4 paces away. With Gifts such as *Fighting-Rope Mastery* (p. 80), some Flails can attack at this Range. When attacked at Far-Reaching Range, a target with only Close Melee or Reach Melee Weapon cannot Counter-Attack, but they can Parry or Dodge.

**Short:** Up to 12 paces away. Targets have a bonus d12 *Ranged Dice* with their defense. This is the maximum range for Thrown Weapons. At Short and greater Ranges, the target can only Dodge. (If the target has the Gift of *Parry Arrows*, p. 81, they can Parry thrown objects and arrows.)

**Medium:** Up to 36 paces away. Targets have a bonus 2d12 *Ranged Dice* on their defense.

**Long:** Up to 100 paces away. Targets have a bonus 3d12 *Ranged Dice* on their defense.

**Extreme:** Up to 300 paces away. Targets have a bonus 4d12 *Ranged Dice* on their defense. This is the maximum range for all Ranged Weapons.

## ABNORMAL STATUS

Sometimes, a combatant will have a lasting effect on them. A change in *status* can hinder or help a combatant's ability.

**Blindness:** A *Blind* combatant cannot see.

Other combatants claim 100% concealment against them. Blind combatants cannot Counter-Attack. While they may Parry or Dodge, Attacks against them claim a bonus d12.

**Confusion:** A *Confused* combatant lacks competence. They cannot gain *Focus* or claim *Favored Use*. They cannot use abilities that require *Favorites*. Confused combatants cannot act normally — they can only take Crippled Actions (p. 117).

**Crippled:** A *Crippled* combatant cannot act normally — they can only take Crippled Actions (p. 117).

**Fear:** An *Afraid* combatant lacks confidence. They cannot gain *Focus* or claim *Favored Use*. They cannot use abilities that require *Favorites*. Afraid combatants cannot Attack, though they may Counter-Attack.

**Lying or Knocked Down:** A combatant that is *lying down* cannot move or Retreat. Any Attacks or Counter-Attacks they make suffer a d12 penalty.

**Rage:** An *Enraged* combatant can take normal Actions, even if Crippled. If an Enraged combatant suffers Unconsciousness, the Unconsciousness *and* the Rage negate one another. The combatant must become Enraged again to fight off a new onset of Unconsciousness.

**Unconscious:** An *Unconscious* combatant can take no actions. They are helpless against attacks; their defense is only 2.

**Wounded:** A *Wounded* combatant suffers an extra 1d20 on all Damage rolls made against them.



# WEAPONS

Even in the peace of the Tokugawa era, the threat of violence is ever present. At character creation, Player-Characters can start with as

many Cheap and Average Weapons as they can carry. (See “Encumbrance”, page 139.) Certain Gifts will give extra possessions.

Name	Cost	Type	Size	Skill	Range	Criticals	Damage
<i>Bo</i>	Cheap	Melee	Combo	Truncheon	Close	Concuss, Crush, Trip	2d20
				Truncheon	Close	Concuss, Crush, Trip	2d20
<i>Bokken</i>	Average	Melee	Medium	Blade	Close	Concuss, Crush	2d20*
<i>Buke-zukuri</i>	Average	Melee	Light	Truncheon	Close	Concuss, Smash	1d20
<i>Daikyu</i>	Average	Ranged	Heavy	Bow	Extreme	Slash	2d20
Empty-Hand Mastery	None	Melee	Light	Empty-Hand	Close	Concuss, Crush, Disarm, Grapple, Trip	1d20
Fist	None	Melee	Light	Empty Hand	Close	Concuss, Crush	1d20
<i>Gunsen</i>	Average	Melee	Thrown	War Fan	Close	Crush, Rebound	1d20
<i>Hachiwari</i>	Expensive	Melee	Light	Blade	Close	Slash	1d20
<i>Hankyu</i>	Average	Ranged	Heavy	Bow	Long	Puncture	2d20
<i>Jo</i>	Average	Melee	Medium	Truncheon	Close	Concuss, Crush	1d20*
<i>Jitte</i>	Average	Melee	Light	Truncheon	Close	Concuss, Crush, Disarm	2d20
<i>Kama</i>	Average	Melee	Light	Axe	Close	Slash	2d20
<i>Katana</i>	Expensive	Melee	Medium	Blade	Close	Slash, Stab	2d20*
<i>Kaginawa</i>	Average	Melee	Heavy	Flail	Flexible†	Crush, Disarm, Puncture, Trip	1d20
<i>Keibo</i>	Average	Melee	Light	Truncheon	Close	Concuss, Crush	1d20
<i>Kiseru</i>	Average	Melee	Medium	Truncheon	Close	Concuss, Smash	1d20*
<i>Kodachi</i>	Average	Melee	Light	Blade	Close	Slash, Stab	2d20
				Truncheon	Close	Concuss, Smash, Trip	2d20
<i>Konsaibo</i>	Average	Melee	Combo	Truncheon	Close	Concuss, Smash, Trip	2d20
				Truncheon	Close	Concuss, Smash, Trip	2d20
<i>Kunai</i>	Average	Melee	Thrown	Blade‡	Close‡	Puncture	1d20
<i>Kusari</i>	Average	Melee	Light	Flail	Flexible†	Crush, Disarm, Entangle	1d20
				Axe	Close	Slash	2d20
<i>Kusarigama</i>	Expensive	Melee	Combo	Flail	Flexible†	Crush, Disarm, Entangle	1d20
				Blade	Close	Slash, Stab	1d20
<i>Kyoketsu Shogi</i>	Expensive	Melee	Combo	Flail	Flexible†	Crush, Disarm, Entangle	1d20
				Flail	Flexible†	Crush, Disarm, Entangle	1d20
<i>Manrikigusari</i>	Expensive	Melee	Medium	Flail	Flexible†	Crush, Disarm, Entangle	1d20*
<i>Masakari</i>	Average	Melee	Medium	Axe	Close	Cleave	1d20*
<i>Naginata</i>	Expensive	Melee	Heavy	Polearm	Reach	Cleave, Rebound, Stab	2d20
<i>Ninja-to</i>	Expensive	Melee	Medium	Blade	Close	Cleave, Stab	1d20*
<i>No-Dachi</i>	Expensive	Melee	Heavy	Blade	Close	Cleave, Crush, Stab	3d20
<i>Nunchaku</i>	Average	Melee	Light	Flail	Close	Concuss, Smash	1d20
<i>Ono</i>	Expensive	Melee	Heavy	Axe	Close	Cleave, Slash	2d20
<i>Shakuhachi</i>	Average	Melee	Medium	Truncheon	Close	Concuss, Smash	1d20*
<i>Shuriken</i>	Average	Ranged	Thrown	Throwing	Short	Puncture	1d20
<i>Tanto</i>	Average	Melee	Light	Blade‡	Close‡	Puncture, Stab	1d20
<i>Tessen</i>	Average	Melee	Light	War Fan	Close	Rebound, Smash	1d20
<i>Tetsubo</i>	Average	Melee	Heavy	Truncheon	Flexible	Concuss, Smash	2d20
<i>Wakizashi</i>	Expensive	Melee	Light	Blade	Close	Stab, Slash	2d20
<i>Yari</i>	Average	Melee	Heavy	Polearm	Reach	Impale, Puncture, Rebound	2d20

\* With any Medium Weapon, you can raise the damage by 1d20 by using *two hands* instead of one.

† With the Gift of *Fighting-Rope Mastery* (page 80), these weapons become *Far-Reaching*.

‡ When thrown, use with *Weapon: Throwing* skill instead, with a range of *Short*.

**Name:** The name of the weapon (in Japanese, where appropriate).

**Type:** Whether the weapon is *Melee* (uses Body & Weapon Skill) or *Ranged* (uses Speed & Weapon Skill).

**Size:** How big the weapon is, from *Thrown* (the smallest, 0.3 kg), *Light* (0.6 kg), *Medium* (1.2 kg), *Combo* (2.4 kg), and *Heavy* (the biggest, at 4.8 kg).

**Skill:** The Weapon Skill used with the weapon. Combo Weapons will have two lines, sometimes with different skills; when using a Combo Weapon, you must choose one part — see page 114.

**Range:** The furthest distance where the weapon can hit a target. For *Melee Weapons*, this is either *Close* (1 pace) or *Reach* (up to 2 paces). *Ranged Weapons* can attack farther — see “Range”, page 145. Different parts of a Combo Weapon might have different ranges.

**Criticals:** What Criticals the weapon can claim. For each Success after the first, you can claim one Critical, in any order. Some Criticals simply add damage dice; others add strange effects. Combo Weapons will have two lines, sometimes

with different Criticals.

**Damage:** The damage of the weapon, in d20s. Different parts of a Combo Weapon might have different Damages.

**Cost:** The price of the weapon, rated from *Cheap* to *Expensive*.

## Descriptions

**Bo:** A wooden staff. Also called a *rokushakubo* (181 cm staff). A popular weapon, easy to find and readily explained away as a “walking stick”.

**Bokken:** Wooden sword, about the size and shape of a katana. While used for training, many are quite worthy for combat — some masters claim they are deadlier than katanas.

**Buke-zukuri:** A katana’s scabbard made of lacquered wood, worthy for fighting. A sheathed katana may be used to subdue those one does not want to grievously harm. The buke-zukuri is tucked into the *obi* (belt-sash) with the blade up.

**Daikyu:** Long bow, about 200 cm long. Notoriously difficult to draw.

**Empty-Hand Mastery:** Improved bare-handed attacks, including grappling and wrestling moves. Also called *jujutsu* or *sumo*. While no weapons are required, you must have the Gift of *Empty-Hand Mastery* to use these — see page 71.

**Fist:** Bare-knuckle punching. Always good in a pinch.

**Gunsen:** The war fan. Originally a signaling device on the battlefield, it could be used as a blocking weapon, or thrown in someone’s face. Popular because it folds up nicely and can be taken anywhere since it’s not technically a weapon.

**Hachiwari:** Literally, “helmet-splitter”; a curved short sword about 50 cm long. A popular off-hand weapon with commoners who are not permitted to carry the katana & wakizashi at the same time.



Bo



Bokken



Buke-zukuri (with sword)



Daikyu



Gunsen



Hachiwari



Hankyu



Jitte



Kaginawa



Jo



Kama



Kusarigama



## THE SOUL OF THE SAMURAI

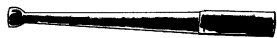
Most weapons are not easy to buy – there are no “weapon shops” in Edo-era Japan. Many of the items on this list are tools improvised as weapons (or even weapons disguised as tools). A samurai’s personal weapon is said to be their soul; a righteous warrior will revere a Favorite katana or naginata and go to great lengths to maintain its fighting edge.



**Katana** (with scabbard)



**Wakizashi** (with scabbard)



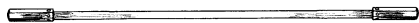
**Keibo**



**Kunai**



**Kiseru**



**Konsaibo**



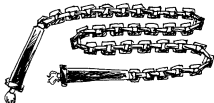
**Kodachi**  
(with scabbard)



**Kusari** (-fundo type)



**Kyoketsu Shogi**



**Manrikigusari**



**Hankyu:** Short bow, no longer than 100 cm.

**Jitte:** Forked iron rod, popular with police. With proper twisting motion, can disarm a target.

**Jo:** Long, one-handed staff.

**Kaginawa:** Rope with grappling hook, used to scale walls. Popular with ninja.

**Kama:** Peasant's sickle, used for cutting weeds and reaping crops.

A popular weapon among the warrior class; a fighting-quality version can be called a *natagama*.

Ninjas prefer the *kama-yari*, where the blade folds into the haft, locked in place with an iron ring.

**Katana:** Curved long sword about 70 cm long. The signature weapon of the samurai warrior.

**Keibo:** Short club, like a baton.

Simple and effective. The typical weapon wielded by an angry mob of peasants.

**Kiseru:** Literally, a pipe for smoking.

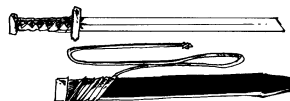
The *kiseru* presented here is about one meter long and fitted with a blade guard. Popular with the lower class, since technically it's not a weapon (and thus not a crime to carry it).



**Naginata**



**Masakari**



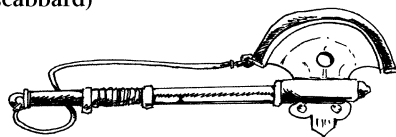
**Ninja-to** (with scabbard)



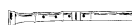
**No-dachi** (inside scabbard)



**Nunchaku**



**Ono**



**Shakuhachi**



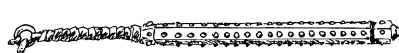
**Shuriken**



**Tessen**



**Tanto**  
(with scabbard)



**Tetsubo**



**Yari**



**Kodachi:** Short sword, just a bit longer than a wakizashi. Popular with rich commoners for personal protection.

**Konsaibo:** A *bo* staff shod with iron on both ends, making it heavier and deadlier.

**Kunai:** The typical throwing knife. Usually flat, edged metal (such as a nail hammered flat), with no hilt but a rope or bag tied to the end.

**Kusari:** A chain of variable length (usually about 100 cm) with weights on either end. Also called a *kusari-fundo* (chain with weighted ends).

**Kusarigama:** A combination weapon of a *kama* (sickle) with a *kusari* (long chain) attached. Popular with both ninja and samurai.

**Kyoketsu Shogi:** A combination weapon of a forked blade with an attached rope, ending in a heavy metal ring. An excellent climbing tool.

**Manrikigusari:** Bigger, heavier chain than a *kusari*.

**Masakari:** A woodchopper's axe.

**Naginata:** Spear with long, sword-like blade. The signature weapon of the female samurai.

**Ninja-to:** a straight-bladed sword with a chisel-point for digging, and a long string for garroting. Popular with ninja.

**No-Dachi:** Very long, very heavy sword, also called *daikatana* (long katana) or

*zambatou* (horse-cutting sword). Popular with many samurai.

**Nunchaku:** Two wooden sticks tied together with rope, used to thresh rice.

**Ono:** Giant axe with blade cover attached by a long rope. Associated with the *sohei* (organized warrior monks).

**Shakuhachi:** Bamboo flute, heavy and worthy for battle.

**Shuriken:** small blade, either star-shaped (*hira*) or slender and pointed (*bo*). Used by samurai as a diversion, and by ninjas for assassination.

**Tanto:** Dagger carried by many samurai. Sometimes called the “head-viewing dagger”, for its use in presenting a severed head as a trophy from battle.

**Tessen:** Folding fan made of iron. Too heavy to throw, but packs quite a punch. Small and concealable.

**Tetsubo:** A staff with one heavy, unbalanced end, studded with iron.

**Wakizashi:** Short sword (about 70 cm), sometimes called the “companion sword.” This weapon and the katana together is called the *daisho* (“the long and the short”) — a pairing permitted only to samurai.

**Yari:** Long spear. The staple of the *ashigaru* (rank-and-file spear carriers) during wartime. The bladed ends vary widely in size and shape, but are still smaller than a *naginata*'s.



## GUNPOWDER

In the true history of Japan, the sword, spear, and bow were no match for the power of the *teppo*, the matchlock gun. These weapons were expensive — the barrels had to be made of high-quality steel or they would burst. However, arquebuses were not nearly as expensive as swords, and they do not require a lifetime of physical training to use — it takes only a few weeks to train a peasant to the skill level where they can fell a mounted samurai in full armor with a well-placed shot. And an army has lots and lots of peasants...

In the *Usagi* stories, guns are extremely rare, having been banned by the Shogunate. It is highly unlikely the Player-Characters will ever see *teppo*, much less own them.

Should arquebuses actually appear, they require the *Weapon: Matchlock* skill for Attacking. (Note that such a Skill is unavailable to Player-Characters at character-creation — they would have to find time to practice shooting to Improve it.) Guns are Ranged Weapons, able to hit up to Long Range, for 2d20 Damage with the Criticals of Impale, Puncture, and Smash. After firing, it takes a full minute (10 whole combat rounds) to re-load.

# HOSTING A GAME

To play *Usagi Yojimbo: Fantasy Role-Play*, one person must serve as *Game Host*. The Game Host plots the outlines of adventures, and then *runs* the players through the course of the story. What the Players do will

determine how the story ultimately ends, but it's the Game Host who takes on the role of making everything happen.

The ultimate goal of *Usagi* is to have fun. After a long week of school or work, it's fun



to sit down and pretend to be samurai, ninja, priests, and rogues who visit strange new places, righting wrongs and saving people.

*Usagi* has no pre-determined conclusion. There are no victory conditions and no points are scored. The Players should have goals what their characters will accomplish, and meeting those goals is a form of winning.



## Being a Game Host

The Game Host is the center of action. It's a daunting task, especially for a novice gamer.

A Game Host is a lot like the programmer of a computer-based role-playing game. The Host decides the rules that will be used, what is allowable behavior and what is not, and what directions the story is allowed to take. However, the platform is the Players' imaginations — there's no strange barred doors that resist all attempts to break down or oblivious bystanders who only respond with rote phrases. When Hosting, think of anything that ever frustrated you when playing a computer game, and now that you're in control, make sure it doesn't happen.

A Game Host is a lot like the director of a movie. The Host decides what scenes will be played, and in what order. Like actors, the Players assume roles in the story. Unlike a movie, there's no script; the Players will improvise all kinds of things. There's also no budget — anything can happen if the Players and Game Host can conceive it. When Hosting, think of your favorite movies and

emulate the best scenes in your game — but never force any story on your Players, as the action should follow from their improvisation.

## Managing the Story

A good story-teller knows when to punch up the action. Don't let an hour go by without some story-points getting resolved. When presented with a lot of options (such as a trip to the big city), Players often want to split up their characters and do all kinds of things — one plan is to go around the table, give each Player ten minutes to describe what they want to do, and then go around again to describe how those actions play out. This method keeps everyone involved, gives you a moment to think, and subtly reminds the Players that they're part of a group.

## Managing the Game Play

In the dangerous world of *Usagi*, fights will be a regular occurrence. Few more things are daunting to a Game Host than having your friends each vying for attention because they must do something *now!* And each of these Players has only one Character — you've got to run the whole *bunch* of bad guys.

The purpose of these game rules is to moderate conflict. When someone wants to do something where the outcome is uncertain or contested, the rules come into play, dice are rolled, abilities are declared, and uncertain things happen. It's this uncertainty that makes for the drama of role-playing games. Combat is a violent and dramatic conflict — the uncertainty of how it will play out combines with the theme of dire peril to make for exciting play. While *Usagi Yojimbo: Fantasy Role-Play* is a game, it's also a story — combat should be fun, but it also should provide conflict that moves the story along.

As Game Host, you're in charge of the universe — you declare what happens and what doesn't. The Players only have their



### CONTROL YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Have a table that everyone can comfortably sit around. Minimize all distractions — turn off all televisions and computers. Music should be instrumentals or other unobtrusive fare; Tokugawa-era music will be ideal.

single Character and some rule-book as their guide on what they can and cannot do. The purpose of the rules is so that everyone has a common understanding of how the world is supposed to work, so all Players and Game Hosts should become intimately familiar with the rules and make sure they all are talking about the same thing.

## Tips for Game Hosts

- **Know the genre.** Of course, we highly recommend reading all the *Usagi* stories you can get your hands on. Stan Sakai is inspired by research, films, and books, and you should be, too — you can start with our bibliography on page 178.
  - **Know all the Basic Rules.** Read this chapter often. There's not a lot there, and it explains the fundamentals like bonuses, penalties, and successes.
  - **Be familiar with the Combat Rules.** The Players certainly will be!
  - **Know when to break rules and when to follow rules.** As Game Host, your job is to make the story fun and exciting — never let the rules get in the way of that. However, the rules are also the common understanding you share with your Players about how things are supposed to work. How much weight can you carry? How fast can you swim? How often do katanas kill people? If you make too many arbitrary changes, your Players won't know how things are supposed to work; they will become frustrated and confused. Always talk to your Players and strike the right balance.
  - **It may be a game, but you're all winners.** In the context of role-playing, your relationship with the Players is that you want to help them have fun. And that fun is to challenge their Characters with dire peril whose outcome is uncertain. Don't abuse your position and punish Players with ridiculous odds, overwhelming opposition, or arbitrary rules-changes. The Players are the stars of the story — make them shine.
  - **Clichés work better in games than in stories.** While we have often compared role-playing to story-telling, one key difference is that the most trite plot-
- lines that would make you groan at a novel, comic, or movie often work amazingly well in a role-playing game. A story is much more compelling when you're actively playing a role in how it's going. At first, keep your stories simple, even cliché, and watch how your Players react.
- **Use a simple sequence of battle.** In most cases, we recommend going around the table and asking each Player in turn what they do, then playing out all the characters you control. Some gamers will prefer “counting off initiative” from 12 down to 1, where you use the Initiative Scores to determine battle ... but this can get very confusing with four or more Players, each of whom gets one action per round and wants it *now*. As with everything, always talk with your Players to find their likes and dislikes.
  - **Be familiar with your Player-Characters' Gifts.** Gifts are like “rule-breakers” — they empower a character to do something that the rules don't, or even something that contradicts the rules. Fortunately, you don't have to know all the Gifts — just the ones the characters in your game actually have.
  - **Don't tell your Players how to do things — ask them.** When a Player tells you they want to do something, such as “I want to bribe the guard into letting me pass,” or “I want to convince the blacksmith to make me a new katana,” and you're not sure how to do it, avoid scanning the rule-book as your rote response. a simple trick is to simply reply with a question. Ask the Player, “What skills and abilities do you have to do that?” Such questions get your Players to thinking about how to better use the more creative aspects of the game, such as Career Traits, in ways the rules can't predict. Most Players love to talk about what their Characters can do and will not hesitate to tell you what Skills and Gifts they want to use. You should always make Game-Hosting look easy — asking questions like this can cover up that you don't know what rules to use, and you just got the Player to look it up for you.
  - **Focus is your friend.** In *Usagi*, there will frequently be fights with mobs of



characters. Trying to think of something for *each* of them to do would take a lot of time. One trick to keep the combat quick is to have some combatants Dash and Attack, while those who can't get there simply Stride and Focus. Read up on the Focus rules (p. 107) — use Interrupts and Focused Attacks. You should find that with only a little tactical planning on your part, your Players have to work harder and use every special ability while you spend only a few minutes to maneuver your combatants.

- **Keep your generic foes generic.** The typical Thug has only d6s in everything he does; the typical Minion has only d8s. Now you only have to remember what they can actually *do* and not how well they can do it.
- **Use leaders.** A gang of bandits is one thing; a gang with a leader is another. Player-Characters will often be too willful or too impulsive to use the Rally rules. As Game Host, you should use them whenever you can. Have a crew of thugs who are all the same, then give one guy the Gift of True Leader (p. 76) and some Leadership dice. Watch your Players become more emotionally involved with any combat encounter when they can focus their frustration on a single character.
- **Balance the fighting.** Did your Players have it too easy in that last fight? In the next one, add more Thugs or bump some up to Minion status. Are the Players having a hard time of it? Reduce the strength of the opposition in the next fight, or have some help show up, like the magistrate or a friendly Major Character.
- **Debrief.** After every game session,

spend at least five minutes asking your Players how they enjoyed the game. Most games will be played once a week, so Players will have time to think about how the game is going. Consider using an Internet mailing list or message board to log events of your game and to discuss what's working.

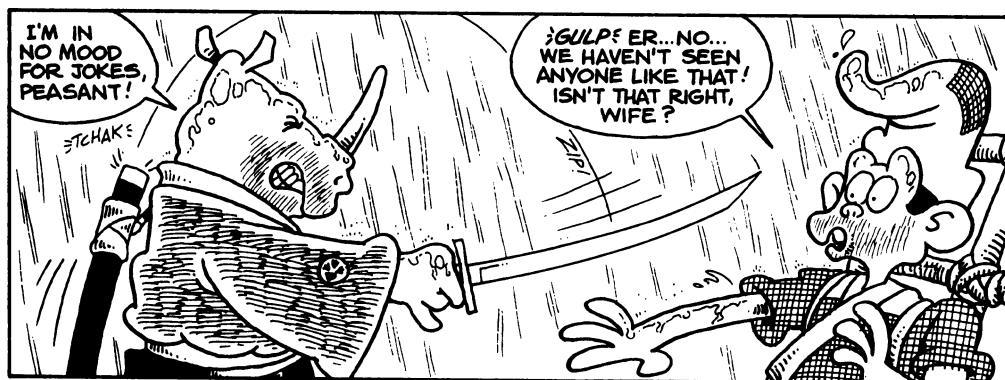
## Diagnosing Problem Players

Do any of your Players match one or more of the following? We've included some tips for dealing with common issues with some Players.

**The Author:** takes the narrative element of the story very seriously. Keep notes, has a long history for their Character, often as a web-log in the persona of the character. Will become despondent if their obsessive level of interest isn't matched. Try to involve one or more of the Author's ideas in the game; don't feel obligated to involve all of them. Remind the Author there are other players.

**The Stickler:** has read every issue of *Usagi Yojimbo*; knows more about it than you. When characters from the comic show up in your game, is most likely to complain that they're not "correct". Excellent resource for character, places, and stories. Will try to police the game by saying what can happen and what can't. Respect the Stickler's opinions but always remember that you're in charge, and the first order is fun, the second is genre, with continuity only coming in third.

**The Professional:** wants their character to be amazingly great at what they do. Will often argue that they deserve more Experience. Lacks humility; always wants to be in the spotlight. Always give them







game time that's appropriate; don't let them spoil the game for others. Since you have the power to make up any character you want, you should *challenge* the Professional by making an adversary that's *similar* to their character but not necessarily *better* in terms of sheer dice.

**The Formalist:** wants everything played by the book. Chimes in to say what can and cannot be done. Use as your ally — deflect rules questions on to them, it makes them feel important. Use your privilege to change the rules sparingly around the Formalist, or they will become confused and frustrated.

**The Rules Lawyer:** the worst kind of Formalist; *only* quotes rules that help their case, conveniently omits rules that work against them. An enemy of good gaming because they make role-playing more adversarial. Be familiar with the rules. Remember that almost every game ability gets Exhausted when used. Remind the Lawyer that you're all friends here, you're all here to have fun.

**The Butcher:** takes *kirisutogomen* too seriously. Designs their character to be the biggest, baddest killing machine possible. Can be bored outside of combat situations. Try to involve the Player in other ways than just combat. Make sure the Player-Character's actions have appropriate consequences — real people won't stand for wanton slaughter and neither should your characters.

**The Monomaniac:** obsessed with how amazingly great your game is and won't stop talking about it. Shows a genuine interest in the game, but be firm and polite, get them to tone it down a notch.

**The Absentee:** doesn't show up to the game regularly. Talk with them, find out why. If it's school or work, then it can't be helped — make sure you give the Absentee game time when they're there, but have their

characters set up to be irregular, recurring characters instead of party main-stays. If they're absent from lack of interest, find out what they like and dislike, get them to be more involved. Avoid crafting major stories around an Absentee's character.

## Tone of the Game

*Usagi* stories vary in mood, from the dreadfully serious and dark of "A Mother's Love", to the romantic adventure of "Momo-Usagi-Taro", to the comic misunderstandings of "A Kite Story". Like the stories of the comic series, the tone of your game will vary, as well.

Role-playing is a collective activity — when the moods of your *Players* change, so



## REALISM vs. ROMANTICISM

In terms of tone, *realism* refers to the real world. In a realistic Tokugawa era, people mostly work tedious jobs; most injuries and disease are beyond hope for medicine; bigotry and sexism are so common, they are accepted as inevitable facts of life; strangers are feared and often exploited; class advancement is all but impossible. The world is a neutral place.

*Romanticism* is larger than life. Heroes are amazingly capable, and unlikely things happen in their favor all the time. Female characters are portrayed as almost equal to their male counterparts. Extraordinary feats are performed with almost casual ease. The world is generous to our heroes, often putting them in the right places at the right times.

Romanticism is not the opposite of tragedy — people still die, sometimes because of circumstances out of control or because of their personalities (such as a commitment to *bushido* that transcends life). But romanticism does mean that things will happen that "realistically" would be highly unlikely or impossible.

*Usagi Yojimbo* is mostly romantic in tone. Most things happen because they're appropriate to the *story*, not because of random chance or tedious realism. As Game Host, you should make the *Players* the stars of the story, and the events of the game should be centered on them.

will the moods of the game. As Game Host, always be sensitive to how your Players feel. Some of them might have had a bad week and have come to the game angry — blowing off steam by slaughtering forty ninjas can be fun for everyone, but being snippy and rude to other Players won't be. It's not easy, but as Game Host it's your role to make sure the game is fun for everyone — taking the problem Player aside for a few minutes and discussing what's wrong and how to improve it will work wonders.

## Writing Adventures

Get to know your Players, and get to know how they like to play the roles of their characters. The game will be more fun for all when the story is personally involving.

Stories are about conflict; as Game Host, always be looking for ways to make the conflict in your stories personally involving to the players.

Here are some typical adventure ideas:

**The Offended Collective:** Someone in a position of authority does something that forces all the Player-Characters to act. For example, in “The Dragon Bellow Conspiracy,” Lord Tamakuro's ambition offends Tomoé Ame (by capturing her), Usagi (by capturing his friend Tomoé), and Shingen (by attacking his ninja clan). In turn, they call in favors from their friends, such as Gennosuké, and strike back. Adventures of this type have a lot of action and usually end in violent conflict, which makes them exciting for a group of Players.

**Mistaken Identity:** One or more of the Player-Characters could be confused for someone else. For example, in “Lone Goat and Kid”, Yagi is misled to believe that Usagi was a conspirator against him.

These adventures usually have violent action with

restraint — Player-Characters will have to rely on Disarms and Guarding as they try to convince their Attackers of misunderstanding. A new Player-Character can be introduced dramatically with a mistaken-identity fight — but before planning this, discuss it with the Player and decide if this is something you think your regular group of Players would like. Role-play should always be fun, not a source for conflict.

**Long-Standing Quest:** One or more of the Player-Characters are on a quest that naturally brings adventure with it. For example, in “Vendetta”, Koyama is hunting the four men who slew his father. Since some of them are bandits, violent confrontation is inevitable. Adventures like these personally involve the Players — after all, it *is* their quest — but care must be taken to involve everyone, not just the “star Player”.

**Defenders of the Helpless:** Nothing says “hero” like fighting greedy brigands or evil monsters. As wanderers across early Edo-era Japan, the Player-Characters should run into all kinds of malfeasance. For example, in “Silk Fair”, Usagi helps to defend a village against violent thieves. In “Village of Fear”, Usagi vanquishes a mysterious monster who has been murdering helpless villagers. Only the most heartless or self-centered of Player-Characters can resist using their superior abilities to help those who cannot help themselves.

**The Contest:** Sumo matches for temple's charity, the meet of rival *dojo* schools, or even duels in the street are all sources for contests where one character attempts to rise above all. In “Samurai!”, a long and bitter rivalry with the Dogoro school gets resolution when Usagi attends a *kenjutsu* contest hosted by Lord Mifune. Any contest can be made interesting to a group of Player-Characters simply by raising the stakes — for example, a



rivalry to become the official poet for an eccentric, indulgent lord instantly becomes adventurous if the rivals hire gangs of thugs to rough one another up.

**Infiltration and Rescue:** A common story in adventure fiction — and one of the more challenging stories for a gaming group — is the plot of invading a castle to steal something, to rescue someone, or (in this era of political intrigue) to assassinate a victim. Stories like these work better with stealthier Player-Characters, like ninja and thieves. Infiltration adventures require lots of research and detailed maps, so know your Players and make sure a story this involved is something they'd want to play.

As always, look to your Players for cues on what kinds of adventures they would enjoy. After each gaming session, spend a few minutes to ask how the game went, and use the feedback to determine what adventures were more enjoyable.

## Minor Character Profiles

To speed play, we here present some typical *profiles* for Minor Characters — a convenient setup. Minor Characters are built using different rules than Player-Characters, and are on the whole inferior.

### The Thug

Your players will spend a lot of time engaging *Thugs*, the lowest level of opponent who can still be a viable combatant. A Thug has 6s in Body, Speed, Mind, Will, and Career. They have no skills — they lean completely on their Career Trait. They only

have Gifts granted by their Careers, and no extra Skill Marks.

Thugs, with their little 2d6 Attack dice, are easily dealt with by combat-worthy Player-Characters. To be a real threat, they must attack in great force — three or four for every Player-Character.

### Sample Thug Bandit

- Body d6, Speed d6, Mind d6, Will d6
- Race: Any (no Racial Gifts)
- Career: Bandit d6
- Skills (including Career):
  - Empty-Hand d4
  - Leadership d4
  - Persuasion d4
  - Presence d6, d4
  - Stealth d6
  - Tactics d6, d4
  - Weapon: Blade, Bow, or Polearm d6
- Gifts:
  - Belligerent
  - Resolve (X: d6 vs. 5)
  - Rustic
- Group Initiative: d6, d4 & leader's Leadership Dice
- Stride 1, Dash 5, Sprint 5+d6, Run 18
- Attack: Choose one of the following
  - *Hankyu* (Ranged [Long], Attack 2d6; Damage 2d20 [Criticals: Puncture])
  - *Kodachi* (Melee [Close], Attack 2d6; Damage 2d20 [Criticals: Slash, Stab])
  - *Yari* (Melee [Reach], Attack 2d6; Damage 2d20 [Criticals: Impale, Puncture, Rebound])
- Soak 6



**Sample Thug Bravo (Samurai)**

- Body d6, Speed d6, Mind d6, Will d6
- Race: Any (no Racial Gifts)
- Career: Bravo d6
- Skills (including Career):
  - Empty Hand d4
  - Leadership d4
  - Inquiry d6
  - Leadership d4
  - Persuasion d4
  - Presence d6, d4
  - Tactics d6, d4
  - Weapon: Blade d6
- Gifts:
  - Belligerent
  - Resolve (X: d6 vs. 5)
  - Samurai
- Group Initiative: d6, d4 & leader's Leadership Dice
- Stride 1, Dash 5, Sprint 5+d6, Run 18
- Attack:
  - *Katana*, two-handed (Melee [Close], Attack 2d6; Damage 3d20 [Criticals: Slash, Stab])
- Soak 6

**Sample Thug Ninja**

- Body d6, Speed d6, Mind d6, Will d6
- Race: Any (no Racial Gifts)
- Career: *Genin* d6
- Skills (including Career):
  - Deceit d6
  - Stealth d6
  - Throwing d6

- Weapon: Axe d6
- Gifts
  - Empty-Hand Mastery
  - *Ninjutsu* (Stride and attack with extra 1d6; target includes Inquiry & Observation with defense)
  - Resolve (X: d6 vs. 5)
- Group Initiative: d6, d4 & leader's Leadership Dice
- Stride 1, Dash 5, Sprint 5+d6, Run 18
- Attacks
  - *Kama* (Melee [Close], Attack 2d6; Damage 2d20 [Criticals: Slash])
  - *Shuriken* (Thrown [Short], Attack 2d6; Damage 1d20 [Criticals: Puncture])
  - Empty-Hand Mastery (Melee [Close], Attack d6; Damage 1d20 [Criticals: Concuss, Crush, Disarm, Grapple, Trip])
- Soak 6

**The Minion**

The next step up from Thug, the *Minion* is a viable threat to Player-Characters, although warriors should make short work of them. When Thugs aren't cutting it, upgrade them to *Minions*.

Minions have Body d8, Speed d8, Mind d6, Will d6, and Career d8. Like Thugs, they have only Career Gifts and no Skill Marks (other from Career Gifts.)

In any band of Thugs, consider having a Minion as their Leader, and raise their Leadership Skill Dice to d8.

**Sample Minion Bandit**

- Body d8, Speed d8, Mind d6, Will d6
- Race: Any (no Racial Gifts)
- Career: Bandit d8

**WHERE ARE THE MONSTERS?**

Rarely, Usagi or his friends have encountered some supernatural threat, such as a demon, ghost, or other monster. Such monsters are rare and should have powers that you, as Game Host, deem appropriate. Use *Causing Confusion* and *Causing Fright* (p. 132) as your guide – for every die used in a monstrous power, there should be one or two used to resist it ... provided the target even has those Skills in the first place.

As for killer *tokagé* ... the cute little lizards that infest Usagi's world only attack if threatened or desperate. Such critters have Body d4, Speed d10, no Mind, Will d4, and a Career: *Tokagé* d8 that applies to Climbing, Observation, Stealth, and Survival.

- Skills (including Career):
  - Empty-Hand d4
  - Leadership d4
  - Persuasion d4
  - Presence d8, d4
  - Stealth d8
  - Tactics d8, d4
  - Weapon: Blade, Bow, or Polearm d8
- Gifts:
  - Belligerent
  - Resolve
  - Rustic
- Stride 1, Dash 6, Sprint 6+d8, Run 24
- Attack: Choose one of the following
  - *Hankyu* (Ranged [Long], Attack 2d8; Damage 2d20 [Criticals: Puncture])
  - *Kodachi* (Melee [Close], Attack 2d8; Damage 2d20 [Criticals: Slash, Stab])
  - *Yari* (Melee [Reach], Attack 2d8; Damage 2d20 [Criticals: Impale, Puncture, Rebound])
- Soak: 8
- Throwing d8
- Weapon: Axe d8
- Gifts
  - Empty-Hand Mastery
  - *Ninjutsu* (Stride and attack with extra 1d8; target includes Inquiry & Observation with defense)
  - Resolve (X: d6 vs. 5)
- Group Initiative: d8, d4 & leader's Leadership Dice
- Stride 1, Dash 6, Sprint 6+d8, Run 24
- Attacks
  - *Kama* (Melee [Close], Attack 2d8; Damage 2d20 [Criticals: Slash])
  - *Shuriken* (Thrown [Short], Attack 2d8; Damage 1d20 [Criticals: Puncture])
  - Empty-Hand Mastery (Melee [Close], Attack d6; Damage 1d20 [Criticals: Concuss, Crush, Disarm, Grapple, Trip])
- Soak 8

## The Elite

Even nastier than the Minion, an *Elite* is worthy adversary for any Player-Character. Elites have d8s in the Basic Traits, and a formidable d12 in their Career Trait. To keep things simple, they only have their Career Gifts. An Elite is about as formidable as a generic rank-and-file combatant should be – as Game Host, only use a gang of Elites as a dramatic encounter.

Consider having an Elite with the Gift of True Leader and Leadership d12 to preside over a band of Minions.

### Sample Elite Bandit

### Sample Minion Bravo (Samurai)

- Body d8, Speed d8, Mind d6, Will d6
- Race: Any (no Racial Gifts)
- Career: Bravo d6
- Skills (including Career):
  - Empty Hand d4
  - Leadership d4
  - Inquiry d8
  - Leadership d4
  - Persuasion d4
  - Presence d8, d4
  - Tactics d8, d4
  - Weapon: Blade d8
- Gifts:
  - Belligerent
  - Resolve
  - Samurai
- Group Initiative: d8, d4 & leader's Leadership Dice
- Stride 1, Dash 6, Sprint 6+d8, Run 24
- Attack:
  - *Katana*, two-handed (Melee [Close], Attack 2d8; Damage 3d20 [Criticals: Slash, Stab])

### Sample Minion Ninja

- Body d8, Speed d8, Mind d6, Will d6
- Race: Any (no Racial Gifts)
- Career: *Genin* d8
- Skills (including Career):
  - Deceit d8
  - Stealth d8

- Body d8, Speed d8, Mind d8, Will d8
- Race: Any (no Racial Gifts)
- Career: Bandit d12
- Skills (including Career):
  - Empty-Hand d4
  - Leadership d4
  - Persuasion d4
  - Presence d12, d4
  - Stealth d12
  - Tactics d12, d4
  - Weapon: Blade, Bow, or Polearm d12
- Gifts:
  - Belligerent
  - Resolve
  - Rustic
- Stride 1, Dash 6, Sprint 6+d8, Run 24

- Attack: Choose one of the following
  - *Hankyu* (Ranged [Long], Attack d12, d8; Damage 2d20 [Criticals: Puncture])
  - *Kodachi* (Melee [Close], Attack d12, d8; Damage 2d20 [Criticals: Slash, Stab])
  - *Yari* (Melee [Reach], Attack d12, d8; Damage 2d20 [Criticals: Impale, Puncture, Rebound])
- Soak: 8
- Attacks
  - *Kama* (Melee [Close], Attack d12, d8; Damage 2d20 [Criticals: Slash])
  - *Shuriken* (Thrown [Short], Attack d12, d8; Damage 1d20 [Criticals: Puncture])
  - Empty-Hand Mastery (Melee [Close], Attack d6; Damage 1d20 [Criticals: Concuss, Crush, Disarm, Grapple, Trip])
- Soak: 8

### Sample Elite Bravo (Samurai)

- Body d8, Speed d8, Mind d8, Will d8
- Race: Any (no Racial Gifts)
- Career: Bravo d12
- Skills (including Career):
  - Empty Hand d4
  - Leadership d4
  - Inquiry d12
  - Leadership d4
  - Persuasion d4
  - Presence d12, d4
  - Tactics d12, d4
  - Weapon: Blade d12
- Gifts:
  - Belligerent
  - Resolve
  - Samurai
- Group Initiative: d12, d4 & leader's Leadership Dice
- Stride 1, Dash 6, Sprint 6+d8, Run 24
- Attack:
  - *Katana*, two-handed (Melee [Close], Attack d12, d8; Damage 3d20 [Criticals: Slash, Stab])
- Soak: 8

### Sample Elite Ninja

- Body d8, Speed d8, Mind d8, Will d8
- Race: Any (no Racial Gifts)
- Career: *Genin* d12
- Skills (including Career):
  - Deceit d12
  - Stealth d12
  - Throwing d12
  - Weapon: Axe d12
- Gifts
  - Empty-Hand Mastery
  - *Ninjutsu* (Stride and attack with extra 1d12; target includes Inquiry & Observation with defense)
  - Resolve (X: d8 vs. 5)
- Group Initiative: d8, d4 & leader's Leadership Dice
- Stride 1, Dash 6, Sprint 6+d8, Run 24



## Major Characters

Major Characters should be just like Player Characters. As Game Host, you should get a character sheet and write them up, complete with Skills and Gifts. For example, any of the sample characters provided can be used as a Major Character – simply change the description and the Disposition to be a villain, or perhaps a misunderstood tragic hero.

You can even give Major Characters their own Experience, making them even more formidable. Be careful – your goal is to *challenge* the Player-Characters, not slaughter them.

When building powerful villains, remember to give them Gifts to keep them from being taken down in one hit, such as Brushing Aside, Speed Save, Combat Sense, Fighting Spirit, and Luck.

# BEGINNING ADVENTURE

## For the Game Host Only! Players Read No Further

Players should not read this Chapter. The text contains surprises which will be ruined by advance reading.

## Involving the Players

As this is a beginning adventure, your Player-Characters might not know one another yet, even though the Players do. This adventure opens with a *narrative device* – the Player-Characters are all assumed to be walking down the same road together, to the same destination.

The default setting for this adventure is the road to Nara in the Kawachi province (p. 25) on Honshu island. Ask your Players what reasons their Characters would have to visit Nara. (Samurai might be looking for work; Priests might be on a pilgrimage; Thieves might be on the run from somewhere else, etc.). Ask the Players to describe their characters to one another: what they look like, what they carry, and the like. Allow for a few minutes for the Players to become familiar with each others' Characters, as this is the prelude to greater adventures together.

## The Unfortunate Merchant

Tell the Players that their characters have been walking together for a day or two, stopping at road-side inns and generally making small talk – nothing of interest. It's not until they are a half-day's walk from Nara that they happen across a dreadful scene.

As the Player-Characters crest a small hill, they will see ahead of them (at Medium Range, 36 paces away) a male middle-aged dog being beaten by a motley crew of rough customers of various species – two for each Player-Character present. The poor man is down on his knees and begging for his life, while the toughs laugh and continue berating him.

The Player-Characters will most likely ask what is going on, or one of the toughs will order them to be on their way. If all of the Players decide their characters don't want to become involved (how callous of them!), then move on to "The Aftermath", page 163.

Odds are, one or more of the Player-Characters will ask why these ruffians are attacking this poor man. The toughs will offer no answers, and they will stubbornly order the Player-Characters to be on their way. They will say things like, "Begone, or you'll know the bite of our blades!" and other grand-standing challenges – feel free to ad-lib your favorite clichés from movies and the comics.

If players answer the challenge, then a fight begins. You can place miniatures on the tabletop, if you have them – use one upright figure for each tough and one lying face down for the poor merchant.

The toughs are Thug Bravos – you can find their game statistics on page 158. They roll 2d6 for all Attacks and cause 3d20 Damage with their katanas held in two hands. The toughs are in plain clothes – they have no livery with *mon* (crests) to identify what house they serve. The toughs will fight to the death, but any on the edge who can flee (at the 18 paces per round afforded by Running) will do so. Any survivors will refuse to talk, letting it be assumed they are just typical *ronin*.

The Player-Characters should handily win this fight with no more than a few minor scrapes. Take notes on how the Players fight. Do they work well together? Do they concentrate on brute strength? Who are the powerhouse characters, and who are the ones who rely on tactics? Knowing how your Players fight will help you craft greater challenges later.

If the Players are successful, the man will thank them profusely. He will introduce himself as *Yuufuku* of Nara, where he is a wealthy rice merchant. As thanks for saving his life, he insists that the Player-Characters enjoy his hospitality.

Yuufuku will not volunteer why he was on this road, nor why such a wealthy man would travel alone. If asked, he will say that he was on a pilgrimage to Houkasu Shrine.



Suspicious Players may not believe him – in that case, they can roll their Mind and Inquiry Dice against Yuufuku’s Will and Deceit (2d8) to know that he is hiding something. Those who can make *Lore: Geography* or *Lore: Religion* rolls will know that the Houkasu Shrine burned down years ago during Nobunaga’s Ambition (p. 8); if challenged, Yuufuku will be evasive, talking about how happy his wife and children will be to receive them. Observant characters (Mind & Observation vs. 2d10, or 2d8 if they have Keen Eyes), will notice that Yuufuku carries the sheath for a *tanto* knife but does not have one.

## What the Players Don’t Know, and What Yuufuku Isn’t Telling

Yuufuku is indeed returning from Houkasu Shrine – or more specifically, from the ruins, where he has secretly met with *Sosei-no-Chuushin*, a mercenary who has agreed to help Yuufuku with his current problem with Lord Akimaru.

Like many rice merchants, Yuufuku stores the *koku* (bushels of rice) reaped as the tribute for samurai – he charges a fee to store it, but he allows samurai to borrow against future harvests, much like a modern-day bank.

Unfortunately, Lord Akimaru – one of Yuufuku’s many clients – has been demanding more and more money as loans, despite that he is already several years in debt. Yuufuku has refused, but that hasn’t stopped Akimaru’s men from bullying the poor merchant. As a commoner with no laws to protect him from a samurai’s brutality, Yuufuku fears for his life and the lives of his family.

In desperation, Yuufuku has followed the advice of some of his merchant allies, and he has paid a large sum of money to *Sosei-no-*

*Chuushin*, who he hopes will protect his family.

Whew! That’s a lot of background, and it’s all a secret. How can your Players find any of this out? You can let some bits dribble out in the next encounter, “The Hospitality of the Rice Merchant”, below. Or you can have Player-Characters make rolls of their Career Dice, Mind Dice, Lore Skill Dice, etc. against difficulties that you set. Or you can just keep this to yourself and see how the next few scenes play out.

## The Hospitality of the Rice Merchant

Yuufuku will make a big show of introducing the Player-Characters who saved his life to everyone he meets while passing through town to his home, boasting about their fighting prowess. (Secretly, Yuufuku wants everyone to know that he has powerful allies to protect him against further attacks.)

Yuufuku is indeed wealthy—he lives in one of the richer town-houses with his wife, *Saiaiko*, his two sons *Ichiro* (aged 11) and *Jiro* (aged 9), and his daughter *Keiko* (aged 6). The family will make a very hospitable welcome, and they will be eager to be good hosts.

Use this opportunity to let the Players show off their characters conversational skills. Some will try to get more details out of Yuufuku and his family – as Game Host, you will have to assume the roles of the merchant and his family, and you will have to improvise.

Yuufuku will be reluctant to talk about his business. An experienced merchant, he will encourage the Player-Characters to talk about themselves and where they’re from. (As Game Host, when you assume the role of Yuufuku, put the players on their defense.) Players with *Gossip* skill will try to pry more information out of him – if they can win against his 2d8, either he or his wife will let it slip that the “difficult Lord Akimaru” has disrupted his business. (Since Yuufuku is a commoner and Lord Akimaru is a samurai, he will be very careful about what he says to strangers.)

Yuufuku will insist that the Player-Characters sleep in some of his many spare rooms, as “gratitude.” In reality, Yuufuku fears a second attack.



After dinner and some light conversation (as well as having walked all day and having been in a fight), the Player-Characters will most likely want a Proper Rest. As Game Host, you may be called upon to improvise – some Player-Characters, especially ninja, will want to prowl around the house at night. Perhaps their searching will find Yuufuku’s dreadful balance statement with Lord Akimaru, or a letter written to Yuufuku suggesting that he meet “a mysterious stranger” outside of Nara.

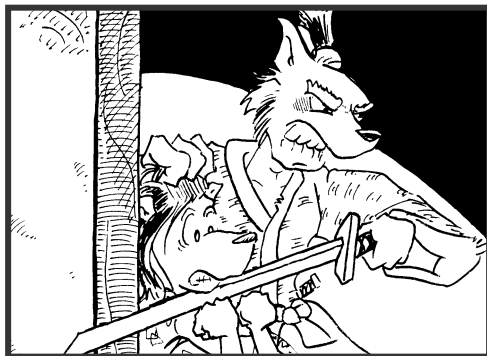
## The Evening’s Unwelcome Guests

All will not be peaceful in Yuufuku’s household. Lord Akimaru’s surviving men will not take the insult lying down. That evening, they will sneak into Yuufuku’s household like thieves and attempt to murder him.

Unfortunately, their entry (without any real Stealth skills), will probably wake up at least one of the Player-Characters. If not, then Saiaiko’s scream for help certainly will.

This combat should be a lot more dramatic than the previous one. For one thing, there’s lots of narrow spaces and closed rooms. The rice paper walls can easily be broken or shredded (see “Property Damage”, page 143) to allow faster progress.

How well did your Players do in the last fight? If they had trouble, then there



shouldn’t be more people this time – three Thug Bravos for every two Player-Characters should do it. If it was too easy, upgrade to three or four Bravos per Player. If any of your Players complained there was no real challenge, put an Elite Bravo with an extra Gift of Toughness (p. 74) in the hallway blocking our heroes from Yuufuku’s room.

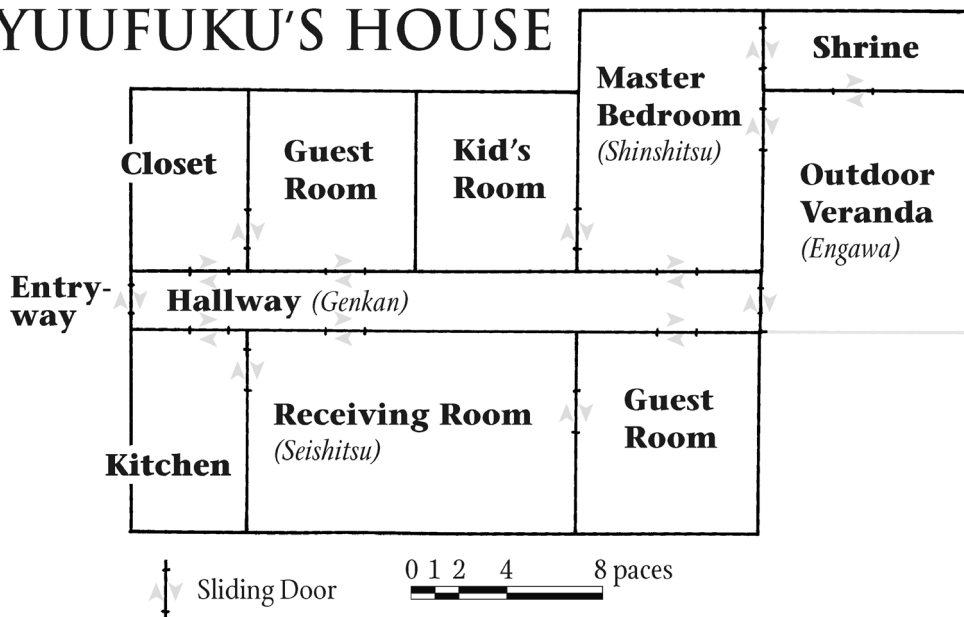
Yuufuku will defend his wife as best he can, even to the death. The cowardly, villainous Bravos are not above using Yuufuku’s children as hostages to get past the Player-Characters.

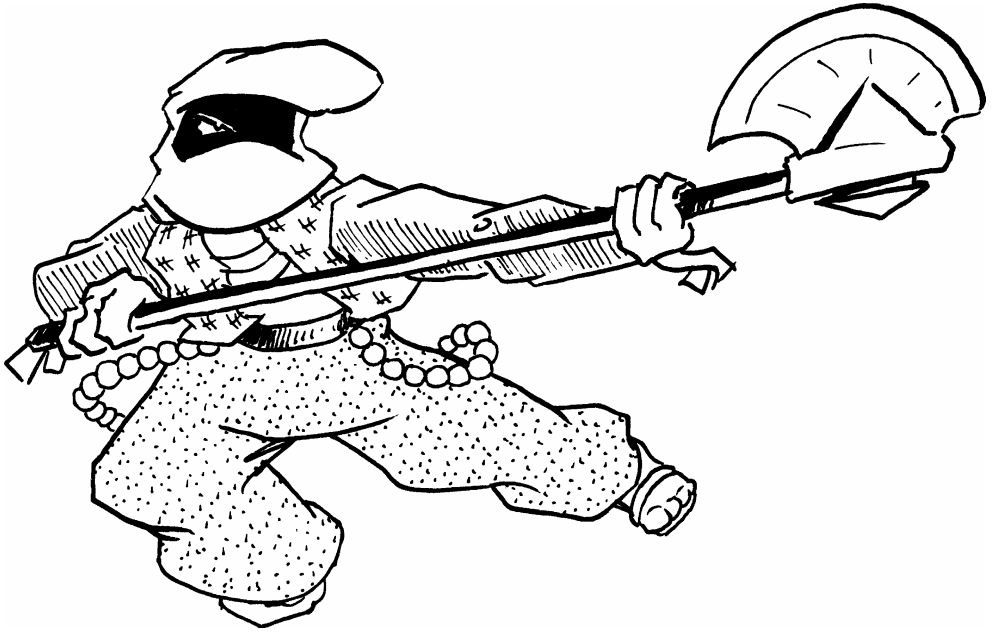
## The Aftermath

If Yuufuku suffers a Devastating wound, he will live on for five more minutes – long enough to deliver his deathbed confession.

Yuufuku will finally tell the Player-Characters the whole truth – that these samurai in disguise work for Lord Akimaru and are trying to scare him into erasing current debt or into giving more money. He

## YUUFUKU’S HOUSE





will be angry with Sosei-no-Chuusin, who took his money but did nothing to prevent any of this.

## The Dreadful Crime

Unbeknownst to anyone – even Yuufuku! – Sosei-no-Chuushin and his allies took advantage of the lack of security around Lord Akimaru’s household. They infiltrated the house and slew the lord in his sleep with Yuufuku’s own *tanto* -- Sosei used his Deceit skill to lift this weapon from Yuufuku, earlier.

Sosei is hoping that by framing Yuufuku for this crime, the merchant will be forced to join his cause, his *ikko-ikki* (league of fighters against the Shogunte). If Yuufuku perishes, then Sosei doesn’t care – he already got his money, his cause is the most important thing to him.

Unfortunately for the Player-Characters, they will have been seen all around town with Yuufuku, who is known to be the target of Lord Akimaru’s ire. This will make them prime suspects in his murder! While the police will probably round our heroes up and question them, they should be able to easily convince the authorities they had nothing to do with the murder. (Bounty-Hunter Player-Characters may ask about the reward for the assassins’ capture, which is quite substantial – about 4d12 money bonuses. See page 140 for rules about money.)

If Yuufuku still lives, he will plead to have his knife recovered and Sosei brought to justice so he can confess. He is willing to pay

his last *ryo* to clear his name. If Yuufuku perished in the raid, then his widow Saiaiko may make the pleas instead.

## Aftermath

Sosei-no-Chuusin and his allies have returned to their hideout – the ruins of Houkasu shrine. It was there that the (fictional) Houkasu monks made their last stand against Nobunaga’s troops. This monastery should be at least a day’s trek outside of Nara, along the same route where our heroes first found Yuufuku.

Or our heroes might decide they’re not interested in Sosei and will wash their hands of the whole affair. That’s fine, too – you should never force your Players to pursue plot-lines they won’t enjoy. You can try to motivate the Players with money, with honor, or with anything else at your disposal, and it’s hard to believe after witnessing Yuufuku’s plight first-hand that our heroes would be so callous.

## Game Statistics

### Yuufuku

(Male Dog Merchant)

A middle-aged man with pretenses to humility despite how he and his family dress in the latest silk fashions, Yuufuku has Body d4, Speed d4, Mind d10, Will d8, Career: Merchant d8. His Skills (including Career) are Deceit d8; Diplomacy 2d8; Gossip d8; Inquiry d8; Literacy d8; Lore: Geography

d8; Persuasion d8; and Trade: Merchant d8. He has the Gifts of Pennywise, Talkative, and Wealth. He has no Resolve and will avoid any fights.

## Yuufuku's Family

Yuufuku's wife Saiako, his two sons Ichiro (aged 11) and Jiro (aged 9), and his daughter Keiko (aged 6) are non-combatants. Assume they have d6s in any relevant Skills or Traits, and improvise as need.

## Disguised Bravos

The nameless *ronin* use the same game rules as Bravos. They start off as *Thug Bravos* (p. 158), but you should upgrade them to *Minion Bravos* (p. 159) as needed. Consider adding one Elite Bravo (p. 160) as a leader worthy of a Player-Character warrior.

## Sosei-no-Chuusin

(*Male Unknown Mountain-Warrior*)

Sosei's true name and history are shrouded in mystery. He wears a stylistic hood that obscures his features. For some reason, he has dedicated his life to the re-founding of a *Sohei*, the warrior-monk order abolished a few years ago by the the Shogunate. Perhaps he is a relative or former comrade of one of the Player-Characters?

Sosei is an excellent commander. He will use his Gift of True Leader (p. 76) to urge his followers on. He fights with the *ono*, a giant axe associated with warrior-monks. He is one rough customer -- easily on par with a healthy Player-Character. He should be approached with caution.

- Body d8, Speed d8, Mind d6, Will d10
- Race: Unknown (but the Game Host should change this to match plot purposes)
- Career: *Yamabushi* d12
- Skills (including Career):
  - Empty-Hand d12
  - Leadership d10
  - Literacy d12
  - Lore: Religion d12
  - Tactics d12
  - Weapon: Truncheon d12
- Gifts:
  - Empty-Hand Mastery
  - Grit
  - Hospitality
  - Resolve (X: d10 vs. 5)
  - Toughness (X: auto; see page 74)

- Group Initiative: d6 & Sosei's Leadership Dice of 2d10
- Stride 1, Dash 6, Charge 6+d8, Run 24
- Attack: Choose one of the following
  - *Ono* (Melee [Close], Attack 2d6; Damage 2d20 [Criticals: Cleave, Slash])
  - Empty-Hand Mastery (Melee [Close], Attack d12 & d8; Damage 1d20 [Criticals: Concuss, Crush, Disarm, Grapple, Trip])
- Soak 8

## Sosei-no-Chuusin's Followers

Should the Player-Characters pursue Sosei, his hideout is guarded by *Thug Yamabushi* with extra Tactics Dice. There should be at least two for every Player-Character, possibly more. Some will attempt to strike our heroes with their *konsaibo* while others will try to strike with Empty-Hand, seeking to grapple (p. 145) with a Critical Hit.

- Body d6, Speed d6, Mind d6, Will d6
- Race: Any (no Racial Gifts)
- Career: *Yamabushi* d6
- Skills (including Career):
  - Empty-Hand d6
  - Literacy d6
  - Lore: Religion d6
  - Tactics d6
  - Weapon: Truncheon d6
- Gifts:
  - Empty-Hand Mastery
  - Hospitality
  - Resolve (X: d6 vs. 5)
- Group Initiative: d6 & Sosei's Leadership Dice of 2d10
- Stride 1, Dash 5, Charge 5+d6, Run 18
- Attack: Choose one of the following:
  - *Konsaibo* (Melee [Close], Attack 2d6; Damage 2d20 [Criticals: Concuss, Smash, Trip])
  - Empty-Hand Mastery (Melee [Close], Attack 2d6; Damage 1d20 [Criticals: Concuss, Crush, Disarm, Grapple, Trip])
- Soak 6

# APPENDIX 1: FURTHER ADVENTURES

The following adventure outlines are designed to be fit into any larger campaign. They can be played through in one or two nights, or they can serve as launching points onto much longer quests.

These are outlines only. Some preparation will be needed to fill in details, such as names and appropriate locations. As Game Host, you should tailor your adventures to your Players and their Characters.

## The Treasure of the Burning Shrine

While traveling through a wilderness area the players notice a column of black smoke rising from amongst the trees, halfway up the side of a nearby hill. If they investigate, they will find the blackened ruins of a small Shinto shrine. The wooden arch (*tori*) that leads to the shrine has been broken into pieces with an axe. Lying on the steps of the shrine is a badly burned panda in tattered robes. He groans softly as the players approach. (If, for whatever reason, the players are leery about leaving the road, have them find this poor wretch on the roadside.)

The panda's name is Gyou. He was one of the two priests who tended to this remote shrine. They honored the *kami* said to inhabit a large stone, shaped something like a reclining fox, around which the shrine was built. The other priest, an elderly dog, died in the fire. Gyou can barely speak at first, but he manages to tell his tale if the players give him water and assistance. It seems the shrine has been haunted in recent weeks by a *karasu*, a terrible goblin with twisted features and crow's beak. For three nights, he capered horribly at the archway of the shrine, calling out insults, and shrieking madly. On the fourth night, the priests made petition to the *kami* of the stone, asking for aid. Alas, as they were in the midst of their ritual, the horrible beast broke down the arch and quickly set a fire burning on the steps of the shrine. Gyou leapt through the flames, but was struck senseless by the goblin. He woke only as the players approached.

Gyou insists that the players have been led here by the *kami*, and that they must punish the wicked goblin and help avenge the death of

the old priest. He asks them to remain at the shrine for the night, and help him catch and slay the goblin. He can offer no reward, aside from the good will of the *kami*. Assuming the players agree, the *karasu* does indeed appear, creeping into the clearing around the shrine in the darkest part of the night. Accompanying him are other, smaller, goblins, with ugly faces, huge noses, and matted fur. They carry clubs and axes. The priest identifies the smaller goblins as *tengu*. There is one *tengu* for each player. Unless challenged, they enter the ruins of the temple, pull up the floor mats, and begin digging into the clay floor near the enshrined stone.

If the players slay or catch the *karasu* or his friends, they quickly learn the truth. The goblins are simply bandits, wearing masks of wood and leather. Years ago, they served in the army of a local lord, and found a cache of treasure while looting a castle. They buried this treasure under an odd stone until it was safe to collect. In the intervening years, the shrine was built around the stone. They despaired of ever collecting their hoard, until the leader of their little band concocted a scheme to frighten away the priests. They did not intend to kill the old man. When this tale is discovered, Gyou bursts into bitter laughter. The treasure the bandits speak of was found long ago — and used to fund the construction of the shrine.

## The Whistling Ghost of Kamikuchi Village

When stopping in a small village, the players hear word of a tragedy which has befallen the family of the headman. His young daughter, just eight years old, has disappeared while collecting mushrooms in the hills. The little mouse girl has not been seen in three days. Worse, there is news from travelers that a nearby mountain pass is haunted by the spirit of a flute-playing ghost woman. The villagers say this ghost, who appears as a rabbit woman, is the spirit of a young *kuge* noble whose throat was cut by her husband. In death, she cannot speak, yet blows unearthly tunes on a reed flute.

The headman makes it known that he will grant a *koku* of rice (180 kg — enough for one person for a full year) to any group that finds his daughter, as well as a pony to bear it. Another *koku* will be given to anyone who can chase away the irksome spirit. If the players investigate this matter, they will find no sign of the girl. However, if they approach the mountain pass at night, they WILL see the spirit. She is indeed a terrible sight, and her ghostly music chills the bones. When the spirit sees the players, she will approach. It is probable that the players will attempt to perform rituals of purification, or otherwise challenge the spirit. If they do so, she disappears, only to return on the following night.

Assuming the players manage to approach the spirit with obvious peaceful intent, she approaches them, and then drifts silently past, heading towards a ravine a few hundred paces from the pass. If the players follow, they hear a small voice calling out to them from a narrow crevice. The headman's daughter is below, in a small cave. She tumbled into the cave while collection mushrooms, and has been here ever since. She has been dining on the mushrooms she collected, and drinking from a pool of rainwater. Aside from being cold and frightened, she is unharmed. Once the girl is found, the spirit disappears, never to be seen again. Some of the elders in the village recall that the dead woman was said to have had a young daughter of her own...

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## Mercenaries, Spies and Samurai

Lord Itomi Mashiro is a very worried pig. His *han* is rather small, and he has had trouble paying his annual tribute to the Shogun. He fears that he'll lose his lands, or be sent to administer some wind-swept island in the north. At first, Lord Mashiro believed his problem was simply a matter of poor crops, but he has come to believe that his peasants are plotting to overthrow him. Last month, one of his samurai discovered a bundle of spears in a clearing near an abandoned farm. He believes the farmers are deliberately withholding rice, and stockpiling weapons. To find out more, he has asked his magistrates and samurai to hire a team of *okapikki*, or freelance spies. The players probably fit this bill nicely.

The adventurers are approached while passing through any settled area. How they are drawn into the employ of Lord Mashiro is up to you. If they are well-known heroes, they may be summoned by an official messenger. If they are famous scofflaws, they might simply be arrested by a band of samurai — and offered their freedom if they perform this “simple and easy task.” No matter how this happens, they are employed to travel to the village at the edge of Mashiro's fief in the guise of mercenaries and find out if anyone is looking for a little extra muscle.

The villagers are likely terrified of the strangers, and certainly unwilling to admit to any kind of revolutionary plan. However, if the players are persistent, one old monkey woodcutter tells them of a band of warriors hiding in the woods, a day's journey away. Perhaps these ne'er-do-wells wish to hire some sell-swords? If the players investigate, they indeed find a band of a dozen tough and ruthless mercenaries, led by a grizzled cat ronin. If they ask for work, he accepts any reasonable cover story, though remains suspicious. If they attack and defeat his party, they uncover documents detailing the plan described below.

The first thing the players are asked to do is collect 5 *koku* of rice from a local farmer. The farmer refuses to pay, saying he has barely enough left to feed his family. If the players have any reasonable code of honor, they will accept his excuse. In speaking to the farmer, they learn that he has already paid his tribute twice this year.

The mercenaries are in the employ of an ambitious neighboring lord, who wishes to annex Mashiro's land. If he can make Mashiro look incompetent in the eyes of the Shogun, he can achieve this without risking battle. The mercenaries are planting evidence of a peasant's revolution, and are also posing as Mashiro's own samurai and collecting tribute. Of course, then the real tax agents arrive... to find angry farmers swearing they have already paid. How the players defuse this situation is up to them. If they can bring evidence of the meddling to Lord Mashiro, he can inform the Shogun. Doing this can win them some powerful allies... as well as enemies!

# APPENDIX 2: VARIANT RULES

Basic Rules are assumed to be in play all the time. Spot Rules deal with things that come up every so often. A *Variant Rule* changes or replaces the regular rules of play.

Not everyone wants to play *Usagi* the same way. Some will want faster combat; others will want meticulous mechanics for every last detail. Some prefer rigid organization; others prefer fast-and-loose, breezy games. The Basic Rules presented in this book work best for most campaigns — but if you're looking for something different, read on.

Game Hosts and Players are encouraged to come up with their own Variant Rules. Remember that the purpose of game rules is to be fair and consistent — everyone should know what to expect. Always talk with your fellow Players to ask how the game is going and how your changes are affecting play.

## Variant Character Creation: Customized Traits

The schemes for Traits in Character Creation can feel restrictive to some Players, especially veterans who've played role-playing games before.

Game Hosts who want to give their Players more control over their character's make-up can try the following setup:

- Assign d8, d6, d6, d6, d4 to the five Traits of Body, Speed, Mind, Will, and Career.
- Choose a Race & Career. Write down Gifts, as appropriate.
- Choose any *five* Gifts.

This scheme has the advantage of being a lot simpler to describe and to implement. However, Game Hosts should be wary — it's also a lot easier to optimize in ways not possible with the standard rules, resulting in characters vastly more powerful in some things while unrealistically deficient in others. Use with caution.

## Variant Character Creation: Alternate Power Levels

Not all campaigns are the same. The *Usagi* basic rules assume that players are seasoned

veterans of the world, but are not peerless masters of combat — they still have room to grow. Veteran role-players might want to start with more complex characters. Or a Game Host may want to start the Players very early in their careers.

This variant rule can be even more generous than “Customized Traits”, above. Characters effectively start with a different amount of Experience.

Power Level	Starting Traits	Skill Marks	Gifts*	Effective Experience
Low	d6, d6, d6, d6, d4	8 (max 3)	3	-40
Average	d8, d6, d6, d6, d4	13 (max 5)	5	0
High	d8, d8, d6, d6, d4	18 (max 8)	7	+70
Extreme	d10, d8, d6, d6, d4	23 (max 12)	9	+140
<i>Chambara</i>	d10, d8, d8, d6, d4	33 (max 19)	13	+280
<i>Kensei</i>	d12, d10, d8, d6, d6	43 (max 29)	21	+480

\*In addition to the two Racial Gifts and three Career Gifts.

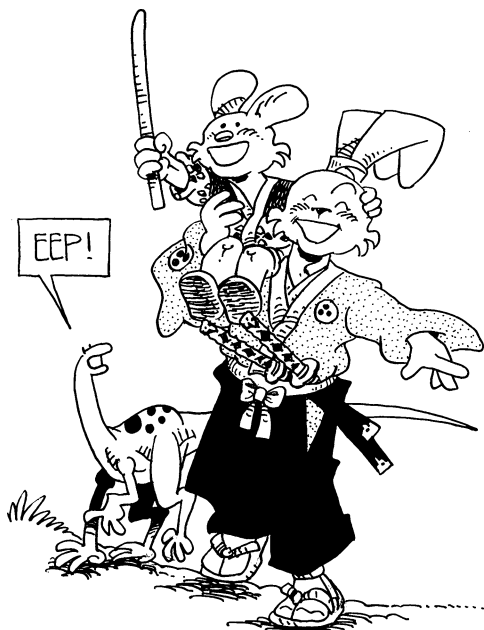
Game Hosts should be careful when starting at a higher power level. There's a big difference between how a Player adds 480 Experience to a character over forty-eight play sessions, and how a Player adds all those points at character creation.

## Variant Character Creation: No Design, No Conception

For those who find the character design rules too limiting, there is the option of giving the Players *complete* freedom in building their characters.

In this variation, characters start with d4s in all five starting Traits (Body, Speed, Mind, Will, and Career). Then, the Players add 240 Experience to their characters, buying any and all improvements that they see fit.

This option gives the players complete freedom in what they want to build. However, for most campaigns, this will be *too much* freedom. For example, characters can be built with 7d12 in Weapon: Blade! The Game Host may want to impose limits (such as no more than 90 spent on Gifts, or at least 50 points spent on Skills).




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### *Variant Campaign:* **Loyal Retainers**

The default assumption in the *Usagi* game is that the Player-Characters are itinerant adventurers — they wander from place to place, encountering strange things and uncovering danger and intrigue.

However, a satisfying campaign can be made by setting up all Player-Characters as loyal retainers to an estate. Possible adventures include:

- A gang of toughs move in, bullying the locals and stealing what they need — the Player-Characters must deal with them, peaceably or with force.
- A prominent delegation arrives, such as agents of the shogun or a visiting lord. There will be ceremonies and parades to plan, plus the possibility of embarrassment or even assassination.
- Someone threatens the lord of the estate. It could be ninja spies under the cover of night, a supernatural force such as a demon or angry ghost, or something even wilder.
- The Player-Characters must escort their lord as he travels to another palace or shrine. They must defend him against bandits and the plots of rival lords designed to disgrace or even kill him.
- The Player-Characters are sent on an errand, such as to carry a message or gift to some remote place. The route can be dangerous, both in the form of

enemies who attack, and of difficult terrain that must be climbed, crossed, or navigated.

It's possible that wandering adventurers might finally settle down, thus transforming a wandering campaign into one of loyal retainers.

Some Players don't like following orders — the idea of being vassal to a Game Host's non-player character lord will not sit well with them. As always, talk with your Players to find the campaign that best suits their collective interest.

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### *Variant Combat:* **Open-Ended Damage**

In the standard rules, damage is pretty predictable. You can't score more hits than damage dice that you roll, so it takes at least 4d20 Damage to kill a target instantly.

With this variant rule, after rolling damage, for each die that shows "20", roll another d20. If this new die comes up "20", roll yet another d20.

This variant rule means that now any attack can kill someone outright, given enough luck. It greatly rewards bigger weapons and Criticals that include more dice. Remember that this variant rule would apply to *all* combatants, so the Player-Characters are at greater risk of getting "one-shotted" (killed by a single, lucky attack).

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### *Variant Combat:* **One Retreat**

In the standard game rules, there is no limit to the number of times a combatant can Retreat. As long as they keep failing defense rolls, they can keep moving. This can lead to undesirable results, such as a combatant who is attacked by a line of warriors, and as each one attacks, the combatant retreats one more pace down the line. Such events are rare (given the unusual circumstances where Retreats are allowed), but possible.

With this variant rule, each combatant may Retreat *once and once only* until their next turn in the sequence. This rule keeps combatants from moving too far, but it requires extra record-keeping, and it makes Gifts like *Speed Save* less powerful.

## Variant Combat: Hit Location

To add a stronger visualization to your game, you can include randomized hit locations.

With an attacker's hit dice, include a bonus d20 with the attack roll. Consult the table below to see where the target was hit.

d20	Description	Attitude
1	Far Foot	Lower
2	Near Foot	Lower
3	Far Leg	Lower
4	Far Leg	Far
5	Far Arm	Far
6	Far Arm	Far
7	Stomach	Middle
8	Stomach	Middle
9	Far Hand	Far
10	Near Leg	Lower
11	Near Leg	Near
12	Chest	Middle
13	Chest	Middle
14	Shoulders	Upper
15	Near Arm	Near
16	Near Arm	Near
17	Near Hand	Near
18	Neck	Upper
19	Head	Upper
20	Head	Upper

### Called Shots

Sometimes, an attacker wants to put a hit exactly in the right place. With this Variant, every attack has a new Critical: the *Called Shot*. Claiming this Critical lets the attacker choose exactly where the attack lands.

Note that the “Called Shot” rule is very deadly when combined with “Attitudes and Approaches”, below.

### Vital Spots

Normally, damage is abstract — the more damage inflicted by the roll, the more effectively the attack hit vulnerable spots. With hit location, hits to the head or stomach are thought to be more likely to cause injury.

With this variant rule, add 1d20 Damage to any hit that strikes the head or stomach.

This rule increases damage on a random basis, so it will make the game deadlier — and since it's random, it gives an edge to minor characters who are usually out-skilled by the Player Characters. Use with caution.

## Using Hit Location to Simulate Cover

Instead of granting the target extra Cover Dice on their defense, you can instead use hit location. The Game Host should declare what parts of the target's body are behind the cover, and any result that would strike the target in a covered location strikes the cover, instead.

## Hit Location and Crippling Injuries

Normally, a Crippling Injury just reduces a combatant's combat options. With this Variant, you can simulate different kinds of injuries by ruling that only body parts become Crippled.

A Crippled leg or foot reduces the combatant's movement to only Strides. A Crippled arm or hand becomes useless; the combatant cannot use it to hold weapons or perform actions. A Crippled head, chest, shoulders, or stomach uses the regular Crippling rules.

For added gruesomeness, the Game Host can rule that a Devastating injury to a body part destroys it or cuts it right off. The graphic descriptions of such injuries are left as an exercise for the players.

## Attitudes and Approaches

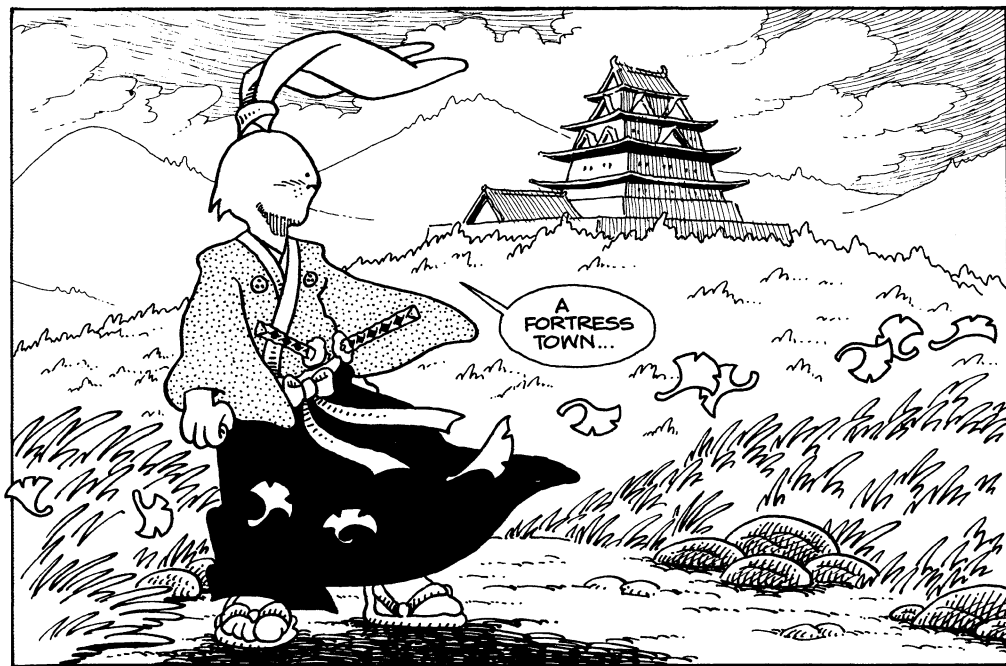
Some fighting styles advocate that there are five *attitudes*, or avenues of attack against a target — *upper*, *middle*, *lower*, *near* (the target's left side for right-handers, the right side for left-handers), and *far* (opposite of near). For each attitude, there is a preferred *approach* to hit the target. To add this dimension to play, you can use the following rules.

In Melee Combat, before striking at a foe, either combatant may declare one of the five *approaches* for their Attack or Counter-Attack: upper, middle, lower, near, or far. If only *one* combatant declares, there is no effect — *both* must declare an approach.

Each combatant rolls their Attack and Counter Attack dice, as well as their hit location die. If the hit location matches the approach, play proceeds as follows:

- No Retreat is possible on the target's part.
- The target suffers an extra 1d20 damage, above and beyond all other effects.





Using this rule will greatly slow down play. It works best for one-on-one confrontations. It also makes combat more randomly dangerous.

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### *Variant Character Recovery:* **Complex Recovery**

The basic rules assume that all Gifts can be recovered after simple resting. But what about pure mental prowess like *Cleverness*, improved socializing like *Streetwise*, strength of character like *Honor*, or strange things like *Luck*? Why would simple resting bring these back?

With this variant rule, Gifts recover based on what Exhausts them in the first place, and by judgment of the Game Host, as follows:

- Gifts that have *Body* or *Speed Dice* in their tests to avoid Exhaustion recover normally, as per the rules.
- Gifts that have *Mind* or *Will Dice* in their tests to avoid Exhaustion recover only when the character has had eight hours of stress-free activity. In game terms, the character can claim a *Long Rest* instead of *Proper Rest* as long as they have not suffer any mental stress. Unskilled labor and time with loved ones is restful; skilled labor, extended sleeplessness, or torture is not.
- Gifts that are purely social in nature, such as *Streetwise*, are based on a character's social equity. These recover after 24 hours of laying low and not

bullying for more favors. These Gifts can recover sooner if the Game Host rules that the character has been extra generous or helpful.

- Gifts that are based on sheer chance, (such as *Luck*) or that weigh the law of averages in your favor (such as *Keen Ears*, which lets you maximize a roll so you successfully observe more often than others) recover after 24 hours, regardless of what the character does.
- After performing a task that you have sworn to do on your *Honor* (p. 71), *instantly* recover all exhausted *Honor* Gifts.

This variant rule makes recovery a lot more complex. As with all variants, the Players should discuss if they want to use this rule.

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### *Variant Character Design:* **Flaws**

The basic rules describe how good your character is, but there's no mechanics for describing the bad. Some Players like the idea that they should be rewarded for sacrificing some of their character's autonomy. In game terms, you can use this variant rule of *Flaws*.

To have a *Flaw*, the Player must describe to the Game Host how the *Flaw* hinders the character. It could be a physical infirmity, such as crippling, blindness, or ill health. It could be a mental problem, such as a bad temper or reckless overconfidence. It could be

a social constraint, such as a vow of poverty or the inconvenience of an enemy.

As Game Host, take note during the session if the Flaw hindered the Player-Character in any way. Was the character unable to perform some physical task that otherwise healthy people take for granted? Was the character prevented from doing something the “best” way because of their mental disposition? Did an enemy act against the character, either directly or through intrigue? If the answer is “yes”, then the character was hindered by the Flaw.

*When granting experience, if the Flaw came up once or more, grant the character 1 extra Experience to be spent on any improvement.*

Unlike other rewards, this 1 extra *can* stack on top of others. This extra 1 point is called “a learning experience” — what happens in life when you don’t get what you want.

Flaws are self-limiting. For one thing, the maximum reward is only 1 per Flaw — no more, no matter how bad it was or how often it came up. Secondly, some Players will try to “play around” their Flaws (like a Pacifist character who happens to hang out with the greatest combat masters of the land, never having to lift a finger). To truly be a Flaw, and thus worthy of the extra Experience, the Flaw must have somehow hindered the character’s best interests or limited their choices. A Flaw that doesn’t hinder isn’t a Flaw.

## Sample Flaws

**Duty:** The character has a social obligation, such as serving a local lord or fulfilling the tasks granted by Legal Authority. Any time the Duty keeps the character from doing what they “need” to do, that’s worth a Reward.

**Enemy:** Someone plots against the character. It could be a mortal enemy, or just someone who wants to crush their hopes and dreams. Some enemies have a narrow geographical area of control, entering the game rarely; others will be far-reaching. Either way, whenever the Enemy successfully works against the character’s interests, that’s worth a Reward.

**Failing Health:** The character is old or sickly. Increase all Damage rolls against the character by 1d20. Remember that only one Reward is possible per session, no matter how many Damage rolls the poor character suffers.

**Greedy:** The character is motivated by money. When the character “sells out” or does something contrary to best interests for material gain, that’s a Reward.

**Honorable:** The character is driven by a personal code of honor. Whenever the character chooses a path more difficult, as dictated by their honor, that’s a Reward. This Flaw stacks nicely with the Gift of Honor, page 71.

**Pacifist:** The character has taken a vow to avoid violence. When the character chooses difficult alternatives to counter-attacking, that’s worth a Reward.

**Romance:** The character is in love with another. When the love interest is threatened (possibly to motivate the character to do something they normally wouldn’t do), that’s a Reward.

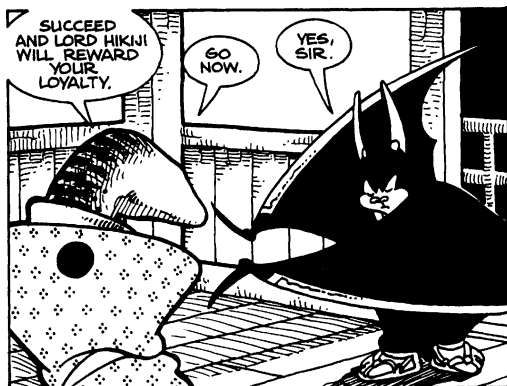
Another take is the *Unrequited Romance*, where the love interest does not love the character back. Perhaps the love interest is oblivious; going out of one’s way to get noticed is worth a Reward. Or perhaps the love interest spurns the character’s advances because of differences in social status; working to change one’s status for the sake of the romance is worth a Reward.

**Secret:** The character has an embarrassing secret of some kind. A common example is the former bandit who becomes a priest to atone for past crimes, taking on a new name ... but constantly vigilant for those who seek revenge for past crimes. Any time the character must do something to cover up their Secret, that’s a Reward.

Players are encouraged to come up with more ideas for Flaws. Beware of “enablers” — Flaws that are just excuses for wanton behavior, such as “Impulsive” or “Overconfident”. A Flaw must *hinder* the character to be worth a learning experience.

Like Gifts, characters can remove Flaws during the Character Growth sessions. Removing a Flaw costs no Experience, but it doesn’t earn any, either. The hindrance is gone, but so are the hard-earned lessons it brings. The Player should have some good reason for removing the Flaw. For some Flaws, this will be easy — for example, an Enemy can simply be killed. For others, such as a Secret, the consequences will be greater, possibly trading one Flaw for another.

# APPENDIX 3: VARIANT RACES



These Races are not normally options for Players. They rarely appear in the *Usagi* stories, and when they do, they are dramatic and strange..

The Game Host and Players can make up new Races – simply decide two Gifts that would be appropriate.

## Bat

Bats are uniquely gifted among the intelligent races in that they have the ability to fly through the air. These abilities are counteracted by their general frailty. As a result of their special talents, these nocturnal creatures may often be found filling the ranks of ninja clans, or acting as spies.

- Gift: Quickness
- Gift: Wings

## Mole

Moles are a curious people. They have large, clawed paws that allow them to dig quickly through soft earth, and small, weak eyes that are best suited to darkness. Moles often find employment as miners, or in other professions that keep them from the bright light of the sun.

- Gift: Digging Claws
- Gift: Keen Nose

## Serpent

Serpents are rarely seen, but long remembered. They are perhaps the most curious people of Japan, possessing no limbs, and having scales instead of fur. Their lack of arms and curiously cold-blooded perspective

on the world means that they often exploit the labor of others. They are found here and there amongst the noble classes. Some serpents can grow to a colossal size, and become frightening combatants.

- Gift: Might
- Gift: Ophidian

## Variant Racial Gifts

### Digging Claws

Requires: Race of Mole

Always — you have giant claws you can use as a 2d20 hand weapon, using Blade Skill.

Always — as an Action, you can move through soft earth and dirt at your Dash. You are Inactive while moving under the ground, but you can claim 100% cover and concealment while moving.

### Ophidian

Requires: Race of Snake

Always — You have no hands. You can use your tail as a one-handed grabber, to close doors and hold things.

Always — as an Action, you can slam people with your long body. Move up to your Dash, then strike a target with *Body*, *Speed & Empty-Hand Dice* vs. the target's defenses. Your attack has the Criticals Crush and Trip, and causes 2d20 Damage.

Always — as an Action, you can constrict people with your mighty coils. This is the same as grappling (page 145), except your crushing damage is 3d20.

### Wings

Requires: Race of Bat

Always — You can mount Light Blades on your wings for 2d20 Damage. You cannot use two-handed weapons while flying.

Always — You have wings. You can fly at Speeds up to your Dash. While in the air, you *must* move at least 6 paces every round or you will fall to the ground.

Always — you take less damage from a fall, as your wings slow your descent. All falling damage for you is *Enervated*.

# APPENDIX 4: VARIANT CAREERS

The Careers presented here are not always appropriate for Player-Characters, but many of the supporting cast will have them.

At need, the Game Host and Players should make up new Careers. Choose three Career Gifts and four appropriate Skills for the Career Trait.

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## WARRIORS (*SHI*)

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### Bravo

Times are tough, and some samurai will have turned to less savory activities to support their habits. A Bravo might have actually crossed the line and be guilty of crimes, or they may be more like racketeers, shaking down commoners for money.

- Include with:
  - Inquiry
  - Presence
  - Tactics
  - Weapon: [of Choice, usually Blade]
- Gift: Belligent
- Gift: Resolve
- Gift: Samurai

---

### Pirate

In previous generations, the Pirates of Japan were notorious in Okinawa, Ezo, China, and elsewhere. These days, there isn't much call for them.

- Include with:
  - Swimming
  - Tactics
  - Trade: Boating
  - Weapon: [of Choice, usually Blade]
- Gift: Athletic
- Gift: Resolve
- Gift: Samurai

---

### Retainer

Many samurai will be fortunate enough to serve lords. Retainers represent the well-to-do samurai.

- Include with:
  - Literacy
  - Lore: Nobility
  - Tactics
  - Weapon: Blade

- Gift: *Bushido* Training
- Gift: Resolve
- Gift: Samurai

---

## Student (*Shugyosha*)

When not repeating the endless drills of drawing and sheathing their swords a thousand times a day, or shouting a *kiai* while stepping and swinging down, Students are often looking to prove their abilities and the superiority of their fighting style. Many a young, hot-headed *shugyosha* has met an untimely end at the edge of a sword wielded by a foe they thought they could beat.

- Include with:
  - Literacy
  - Lore: *Kenjutsu*
  - Presence
  - Weapon: Blade
- Gift: *Bushido* Training
- Gift: Indoor Techniques
- Gift: Samurai

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## BUSINESSMEN (*SHO*)

While technically beneath even commoners in the Tokugawa-era caste system, businessmen enjoy increasing standing in society as money and trade become more important.

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### Merchant

In this stabilizing era of peace, Merchants are very important as *koku* (bushels of rice) are reaped from fields, stored in the many warehouses, and sold for the money that samurai expect to use to support their lifestyle.

- Include with:
  - Diplomacy
  - Literacy
  - Lore: Geography
  - Trade: Merchant
- Gift: Pennywise
- Gift: Talkative
- Gift: Wealth

## Trader

Most trading in Japan is done by sea. Boats holding 50 *koku* (rice bushels) or more regularly trade up and down the coast. Player-Characters may hitch a ride.

- Include with:
  - Diplomacy
  - Inquiry
  - Trade: Merchant
  - Trade: Sailor
- Gift: Pennywise
- Gift: Wealth
- Gift: Well-Traveled

## FARMERS (*NO*)

While the Tokugawa caste system puts farmers just below warriors, many of them work long hours for little reward.

### Hetman

The most educated person in a typical village, the *Hetman* will be the one everyone runs to for guidance of what to do in a crisis. The stereotype is a middle-aged man or woman with a brow creased from worry and a voice that speaks common-sense wisdom.

- Include with:
  - Diplomacy
  - Leadership
  - Trade: Mayor
  - Choose one Skill [Craft or Trade of choice]
- Gift: Educated
- Gift: Sympathetic
- Gift: True Leader

### Tiller

Your typical farmer, the *Tiller* usually spends all day in a damp rice field reaping for the merchants who will collect it and store it for the samurai to spend later.

- Include with:
  - Craft: Carpentry
  - Hiking
  - Trade: Animal Handling
  - Trade: Farmer
- Gift: Might
- Gift: Rustic
- Gift: Toughness

## CRIMINALS (*HININ*)

### Bandit (*Touzoku*)

This is your typical villain in many stories: the thug who preys on helpless villagers.

- Include with:
  - Presence
  - Stealth
  - Tactics
  - Weapon: [Choose one, usually Blade, Polearm, or Truncheon]
- Gift: Belligerent
- Gift: Resolve
- Gift: Rustic

## NINJA (*SHINOBI*)

### Agent (*Genin*)

The lowest ranking ninja, *genin* make up the bulk of ninja forces. Each group is led by a *chunin*, who will have the same abilities, plus True Leader and Leadership d8.

- Include with:
  - Deceit
  - Stealth
  - Throwing
  - Weapon: [Choose one, usually Axe or Blade]
- Gift: *Ninjutsu*
- Gift: Resolve
- Gift: Choose one [Empty-Hand Mastery; Fast-Draw; Sneaky]

## NOBLES (*KUGE*)

During the Shogunate, most nobles have few duties except as functionaries, collecting a stipend from the Emperor. Many work as teachers for the richer samurai or commoners.

- Include with:
  - Literacy
  - Lore: Nobility
  - Presence
  - Trade: Choose one [Functionary or Teacher]
- Gift: Educated
- Gift: Talkative
- Gift: Choose one [*Bushido* Training; Charismatic; Cleverness; Doctor; Honor; Pennywise; Perceptive; Sneaky; Sympathetic]

# APPENDIX 5: THE REGULATIONS OF IMAGAWA RYOSHUN

Without knowledge of learning, one will ultimately have no military victories.

Cormorant fishing and falconry are pleasures that uselessly destroy life. They are forbidden.

It is forbidden to pass the death sentence on a man who has committed a major crime without full investigation.

It is forbidden to use favoritism and excuse a man who has committed a major crime.

It is forbidden to bring about one's own excessive prosperity by means of exploiting the people and causing the destruction of shrines.

It is forbidden to tear down one's ancestors' family temples and pagodas, thereby embellishing one's own domicile.

It is forbidden to forget the great debt of kindness one owes to his master and ancestors and thereby make light of the virtues of loyalty and filial piety.

It is forbidden that one should, acting without respect to the Way of Heaven, attach little importance to his duties to his master and be overly attentive to his own business.

It is forbidden to be indiscriminate of one's retainers good or evil actions and to distribute unjust rewards and punishments.

Be mindful of the fact that, as you know the works of your own retainers, the master knows yours in the same way.

It is forbidden to disrupt the relationships of other people, and to make others anguish your own pleasure.

It is forbidden to put others profit at a loss and, recklessly embracing one's own ambition, increase one's own power.

It is forbidden to be disregarding of one's own financial status and to live too far above it or below it.

It is forbidden to have contempt for wise retainers and prefer flatterers, and to have one's actions be influenced by those conditions.

One should not be envious of someone who has prospered by unjust deeds. Nor should he disdain someone who has fallen while adhering to the path of righteousness.

It is forbidden to be given up to drinking and carousing and, in gambling and the like, to forget one's family duties.

It is forbidden to be prideful of one's own cleverness, and to ridicule others about everything.

When a person comes to one's home, it is forbidden to feign illness and thus avoid meeting him.

It is forbidden to enjoy one's own tranquility, and to retire a man without adding to him some stipend.

It is forbidden to be excessive in one's own clothing and armor, while one's retainers go about shabbily.

One should be highly reverential of Buddhist priests and treat them with correct manners.

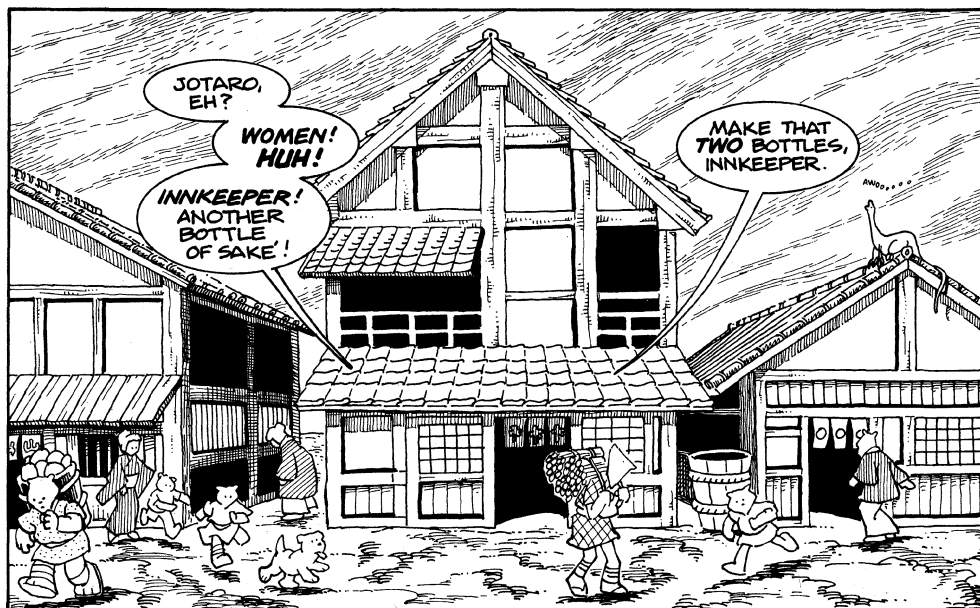
Regardless of a person's high or low position, it is forbidden to disregard the law of karma, and to simply live in ease.

It is forbidden to erect barriers in one's own domain and thus cause distress to travelers both coming and going.

## Postscript

It is natural that training in the martial arts is the Way of the warrior, but it is important to put them into actual practice. First, it is written in the Four Books and Five Classics, as well as in the military writings, that in protecting the country, if one is ignorant in the study of literature, he will be unable to govern.

From the time one is young, he should associate with companions who are upright and not even temporarily be taken in by friends of low character. Just as water will conform to the shape of the vessel that contains it, so will a man follow the good and evil of his companions. This is so true. Therefore it is said that the master who governs his domain well loves wise retainers, while the man who exploits the people loves flatterers. This means that if one would know the heart of the master, he should look to the companions who the master loves. One should truly take this to heart. To prefer friends who are superior to him, and to avoid those who are his inferiors, is the wisdom of the good man. However, considering this to be true, it will not do to be overly fastidious in one's choice of people. This is simply saying that one should not love those who are evil. This is not limited to the man who governs the



country, for without the love and respect of the masses, all matters are difficult to achieve.

First of all, a samurai who dislikes battle and has not put his heart in the right place, even though he has been born in the house of the warrior, should not be reckoned among one's retainers. Many famous generals have made this admonition. Next, if one would wonder about the good and evil of his own heart, he may think of himself as good if many people of both high and low positions gather at his door. And, even if one invites many people, and still they neglect him and he has no comrades, he should think of his own conduct as being incorrect.

Yet, I suppose there are two ways of having the gate crowded with callers. There are also occasions when the people are fearful of the masters' iniquity, are exploited by the high handedness of his retainers and opposed by the plots of his companions, and will gather at the gates of the authorities complaining of their afflictions with explanations of their distress. One should be able to discern such situations well and to correct the arbitrariness of his retainers. He should entrust himself to the wise sayings of the ancients and follow the conditions of the law.

A man who is said to be a master should, in the same way the sun and the moon shine on the grass and trees all over the land, ponder day and night with a heart of compassion into matters of rewards and punishments, for his vassals both near and far, and even to those officials separated from him by mountains and sea; and he should use those men according to their talents. It is possible that there are many examples of men becoming leaders of samurai,

and yet being negligent and lacking wisdom and ability, and thus incurring the criticism of men both high and low. Just as Buddha preached the various laws in order to save all living beings, one must rack one's brains and never depart from the Ways of both Warrior and Scholar.

In governing the country, it is dangerous to lack even one of the virtues of humanity, righteousness, etiquette and wisdom. In adhering to correct government, there will be no rancor from the people when crimes are punished. But when the government makes its stand in unrighteousness and the death penalty is passed, there will be deep lamenting, and in such a case there will be no escaping the retribution of karma.

There is a primary need to distinguish loyalty from disloyalty and to establish rewards and punishments. It is meaningless to divide up the administration of the domain if one's vassals commit useless acts in their own interests, have no ability in the martial arts, and do not sustain their underlings. And though one can say that the treatment of his vassals in the division of the fiefs has not differed since the time of his ancestors, differences in conduct and authority are dependant of the same frame of mind of the present master.

Being born into a family that has from the beginning earnestly known the Way of Battle, it is truly regrettable to wastefully tamper with the domain, support no soldiers, and receive the scorn of all.

Thus the above is written  
in the 19th year of Oei (A.D. 1412)  
Imagawa Ryoshun

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comics. Variable in quality and extremes of violence. Released in various English editions.

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- Sengoku* (role-playing game) — full of detail on the Warring-States Era, just before the Shogun’s Peace.
- Samurai Swords* (a.k.a. *Shogun*, board game) — Simple strategy game of unifying feudal Japan; amaze your fellow players with how much you know about the provinces on the map.



## GLOSSARY

**Amidist Buddhism:** “Pure Land” Buddhism sect, associated with peasant rebellions  
**arquebus:** European gun  
**ashigaru:** spear-carrying warrior  
**atemi waza:** bare-handed striking techniques  
**bakufu:** literally “tent government”; government with strong Shogun and weak Emperor  
**bakuhan taisei:** full name for bakufu  
**bakuto:** gambler  
**bo:** staff  
**bojutsu:** staff fighting  
**bokken:** wooden sword, about the size and shape of a katana.  
**bouzou:** bonze; Buddhist priest  
**buke:** warrior house  
**buke-zukuri:** wooden scabbard for katana  
**bunraku:** puppetry  
**bushido:** samurai warrior’s code  
**chambara:** historical-period samurai films  
**chugi:** loyalty (*bushido* discipline)  
**Confucianism:** Chinese philosophy; foundation of *bushido* and caste system  
**daikatana:** long katana  
**daikyu:** long bow  
**daimyo:** literally “great name”; landed lord one step below Shogun  
**daisho:** literally “long and short”; katana and *wakizashi* together  
**daitokagé:** giant riding lizard  
**dojo:** (1) school of martial arts; (2) highest-ranking noble caste  
**do-maru:** breastplate and shoulder guards  
**doshin:** thief-taking samurai  
**Edo:** capital of Japan under Shogunate rule  
**Edo era:** another name for the Shogunate  
**fudai:** samurai clans that supported Tokugawa  
**Fuke:** Buddhist sect, famous for flute-playing  
**gaijin:** foreigner (considered derogatory)  
**gi:** correct judgment (Buddhist discipline)  
**Go Rin No Sho:** “The Book of Five Rings” by Miyamoto Musashi  
**goyikki:** part-time watchmen  
**Grasscutter:** sword, one of three great treasures  
**gunsen:** war fan  
**hachiwari:** literally, “helmet-splitter”; a curved short sword  
**han:** (1) fiefdom; (2) paper money  
**hankyu:** short bow  
**haramaki-do:** breastplate  
**hatamoto:** Shogun’s guards  
**Heian period:** last great rule of the noble class  
**heimin:** commoner

**-hime:** “princess” (name suffix)  
**hinin:** literally “non-person”; criminal  
**-ichi:** “first son” (name suffix)  
**ikko-ikki:** literally “single-minded league”; alliance of monks and peasants  
**-ji:** “second son” (name suffix)  
**jidaigeki:** period-drama samurai films and television  
**jige:** minor nobility  
**jin:** benevolence (*bushido* discipline)  
**jitte:** forked iron rod  
**jo:** Long, one-handed staff.  
**Jodo Shin:** Buddhist sect, notorious for uprisings  
**Jodo:** Amidst Buddhist sect  
**jujutsu:** literally “gentle or yielding art”; bare-handed fighting, focusing on throws  
**kabuki:** musical theater  
**kaginawa:** Rope with grappling hook  
**kama:** Peasant’s sickle,  
**kama-yari:** folding sickle  
**kami:** divine Shinto spirits  
**kampuku:** Imperial Regent  
**karma:** destiny as determined by personal actions  
**karukuchi:** joke-telling as entertainment  
**katame waza:** grappling and controlling techniques  
**katana:** Curved long sword  
**-kazu:** “first son” (name suffix)  
**keibo:** short club  
**kenjutsu:** sword fighting  
**kensei:** literally “sword saint”; devotee to ultimate fighting techniques  
**kikotsu:** militia code of honor  
**Kirisuto Iesu:** Japanese translation of Jesus Christ  
**kirisutogomen:** literally “killing and walking away”; the right of a samurai to kill anyone of lower status  
**kiseru:** pipe for smoking.  
**-ko:** “child” (female name suffix)  
**koan:** Zen riddle  
**kodachi:** short sword  
**ko-gusoku:** partial suit of samurai armor  
**kohei:** war veteran  
**koku:** literally, “barrel of rice”; the income generated by a rice field  
**koma asobi:** top-spinning as entertainment  
**komono:** irregular police  
**komuso:** flute-playing monk  
**konsaibo:** iron-shod double-ended staff  
**kuge:** noble house (*not* samurai)

**kunai:** throwing knife  
**kusari:** chain  
**kusari-fundo:** weighted chain  
**kusarigama:** combination chain and sickle  
**kusarijutsu:** fighting with weighted chains  
**kyoketsu shogi:** forked blade with weighted rope  
**kyukaku:** militia warrior  
**machi-bugyo:** magistrate  
**makoto:** honesty (*bushido* discipline)  
**manrikigusari:** big heavy chain  
**masakari:** woodchopper's axe.  
**Meifumado:** Buddhist Hell  
**meiyo:** honor (*bushido* discipline)  
**melee:** hand-to-hand fighting  
**metsuke:** commoners authorized to detain samurai  
**-mi:** "beauty" (female name suffix)  
**mon:** literally "gate"; noble family's crest  
**nage-waza:** bare-handed throwing techniques  
**naginata:** spear with long, sword-like blade  
**natagama:** weapon-quality sickle  
**ninja:** secret warrior  
**ninpo:** ninja's code of honor  
**no-dachi:** very long, very heavy sword  
**nukenin:** rogue ninja  
**nunchaku:** rice-thresher; wooden sticks tied with rope  
**obi:** belt  
**okapikki:** informant; spy  
**okugi:** secret teachings of martial arts  
**oniwabanshu:** ninja working undercover  
**ono:** giant axe  
**otokodate:** vigilante; commoner who fights injustice  
**o-yoroi:** full suit of samurai armor  
**pace:** one meter  
**rei:** respect (*bushido* discipline)  
**ri:** 3.927 kilometers  
**Round:** (game term) about 6 seconds  
**ronin:** literally "wave man"; masterless samurai  
**roshi:** wandering samurai, possibly a deserter  
**ryo:** gold coin  
**samurai:** literally "one who serves"; warrior caste  
**sankin kotai:** policy of holding heirs hostage to control vassals  
**Satori:** Zen Buddhist enlightenment  
**Scene:** (game term) about 5 minutes  
**Seii Taishogun:** full title for Shogun  
**sensei:** teacher  
**shakuhachi:** bamboo flute  
**shi:** warrior  
**shinobi:** another name for ninja  
**shinpan:** clans related to Tokugawa

**Shintoism:** early Japanese religion  
**Shogun:** military dictator  
**Shogunate:** rulership of the Shogun  
**shoukin-kasegi:** Bounty hunter  
**shuriken:** throwing star  
**shurikenjutsu:** fighting with the throwing star  
**sohei:** Warrior priest  
**sui zen:** flute-playing as Zen meditation  
**sumotori:** professional sumo wrestler  
**taidou-geijin:** street entertainer  
**takuhatsuzou:** mendicant  
**tanto:** Dagger  
**tatami-do:** scaled armor, worn by peasant infantry  
**tengai:** basket helmet covering the face  
**teppo:** matchlock rifle  
**tessen:** iron war fan  
**tetsubo:** studded iron club  
**Tokugawa:** noble family who first united Japan and established the Shogunate  
**Tokugawa era:** another name for the Shogunate  
**tozama:** samurai clans who submitted to Tokugawa only after losing  
**ukiyo:** literally "floating world"; establishments of entertainment and earthly delights  
**wakizashi:** Short sword  
**yamabushi:** "mountain warrior"; warrior monk  
**yari:** Long spear  
**yojimbo:** Bodyguard  
**yu:** courage (*bushido* discipline)  
**zambatou:** horse-cutting sword  
**zanzin zamba:** literally, "cut the man, cut the horse"; an attack maneuver of leaping high in the air and coming down blade first  
**Zen:** Buddhist school of meditation, introspection and intuition  
**-zo:** "third son" (name suffix)



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# SAMPLE CHARACTERS

The following pages contain sample characters for playing in the *Usagi* game. The interpretations of Usagi, Gen, and Tomoé would represent them at the beginning of their adventuring careers – certainly not the seasoned veterans they are in the present storyline.



























# USAGI YOJIMBO™

Fantasy Role-Playing Game

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## Skills

Skills	Marks	Dice	Career
Climbing			
Craft:			
Deceit			
Diplomacy			
Dodge			
Empty Hand			
Gossip			
Hiking			
Inquiry			
Jumping			
Leadership			
Literacy	1	d4	d6
Lore: <u>NOBILITY</u>			d6
Lore: <u>BUSHIDO</u>	1	d4	
Medicine	1	d4	
Navigation	1	d4	
Observation			
Persuasion			
Presence			
Riding	1	d4	
Searching	III	d8	
Stealth	III	d8	
Survival			
Swimming			
Tactics			
Trade:			
Weapon: <u>BLADE*</u>	III 1	d12 d4	d6
Weapon: <u>BOW</u>	1	d4	

## Gifts

Name	Page	X
<u>BUSHIDO TRAINING</u>	70	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>IMPROVED PARRY</u>	72	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>IMPROVED TRAIT: WILL</u>	72	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>NIGHT VISION</u>	74	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>QUICKNESS</u>	74	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>QUICKNESS</u>	74	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>PARRY ARROWS</u>	81	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>RESOLVE</u>	76	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>SAMURAI</u>	82	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>SPEED SAVE</u>	78	<input type="checkbox"/>

\* FAVORED USE: W/ FAVORITE  
KATANA

Name: TOMOE AME



Race: CAT Gender: F  
 Career: RETAINER (Die Size d6)  
 Eyes: GREEN Pelt: LIGHT Hair: BLACK  
 Distinguishing Characteristics: LARGE EYES  
 Disposition: ENERGETIC

## Motivation for Adventuring:

DUTY TO LORD NORIYUKI

Initiative: d8, d6 (Speed & Mind Dice)

Stride: 1 (1) Sprint: d8 (Speed Die)

Dash: d6 (Speed d4=4, d6=5, d8=6, d10=7, d12=8)

Run: 24 (3 × Maximized Speed Die)

Primary Weapon: KATANA

Attack Roll: d12, 2d6, d4

(With Melee: Body & Weapon Dice; With Ranged: Speed & Weapon Dice)

Damage Dice: 2d20 (3d20 in two hands)

Criticals: SLASH, STAB

Backup Weapon: HANKYU

Attack Roll: d8, d4

(With Melee: Body & Weapon Dice; With Ranged: Speed & Weapon Dice)

Damage Dice: 2d20

Criticals: PUNCTURE

Dodge Roll: d8 (Speed Dice & Dodge Skill Dice)

Soak: 6 (Maximized Body Die + Armor)

## Status:

Wounded

Crippled

Incapacitated

Devastated

Afraid

Confused

Enraged

Unconscious

## Healing:

\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_  
Quota / Goal

Experience Earned: \_\_\_\_\_

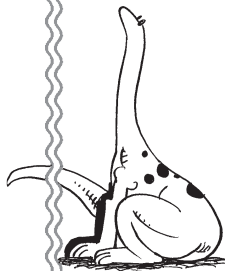
Improvement Goals:

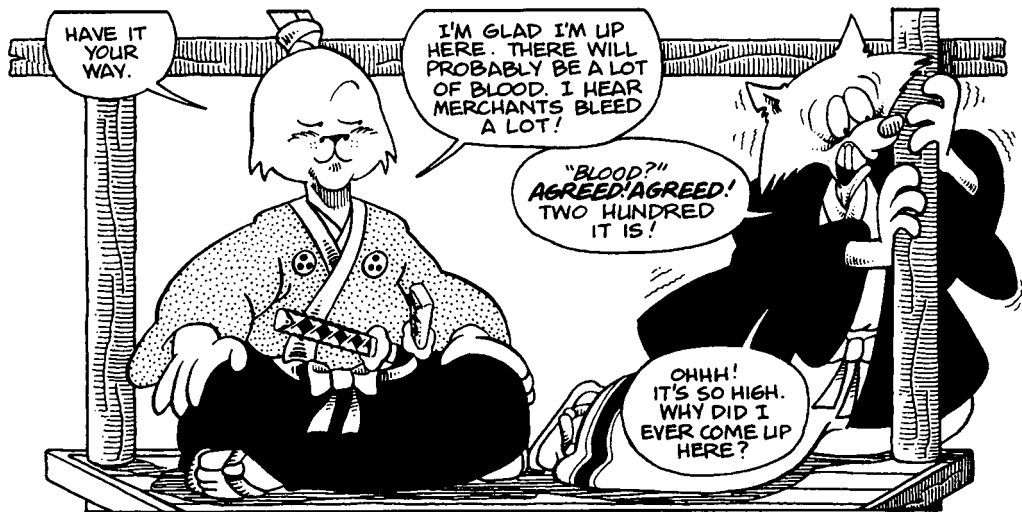
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# TABLE REFERENCE

Item Cost	Target	Successes Needed
Cheap	2	1
Average	4	2
Expensive	6	3
Extravagant	8 (or more)	4 (or more)

Trait or Gift	None	Light Ⓐ	Medium Ⓑ	Heavy Ⓒ
Body d4	6 kg	13 kg	16 kg	32 kg
Body d6	12 kg	16 kg	25 kg	50 kg
Body d8	16 kg	25 kg	32 kg	70 kg
Body d10	25 kg	32 kg	42 kg	85 kg
Body d12	32 kg	42 kg	50 kg	100 kg
Strength	+10 kg	+12 kg	+15 kg	+20 kg
Giant	+10 kg	+12 kg	+15 kg	+20 kg

Initiative: Start of fight	Initiative Difficulty
Ambushed!	8, 4
Neutral stand-off	4
Doing the ambush yourself	2

Individual Initiative Result	Outcome
Botch, Overwhelming Failure	Reeling
Failure	Reactive
Tie, Success, Overwhelming Success	Focus

Group Initiative Result	Outcome
Botch	1 in 2 are Reeling
Overwhelming Failure	1 in 4 are Reeling
Failure	1 in 4 have Focus
Tie	1 in 3 have Focus
Success	1 in 2 have Focus
Overwhelming Success	3 in 4 have Focus

Bdy Trait	Soak
d4	4
d6	6
d8	8
d10	10
d12 or more	12

Speed Trait	Stride	Dash	Sprint	Run
d4	1	4	+d4	12
d6	1	5	+d6	18
d8	1	6	+d8	24
d10	1	7	+d10	30
d12	1	8	+d12	36

Change to Character	Experience Required	Total Earned
Add a Favored Use or Weapon	none — see page 85	none
Change a Favored Use or Weapon	Costs 1	+1
Add one Mark to a Skill	Costs 5	+5
Buy a new Gift	Costs 15	+15
Remove one Mark of a Skill	+1 to any two Improvements	-3
Remove one Gift	+4 to any two Improvements	-7
Add a Career	Costs 15 (see “Extra Career”, page 80)	+15
Studying a School of Martial Arts (see below)	Improvement stacks with another on list	none

Attack vs. Counter-Attack Result	Outcome
Attack Overwhelmingly Succeeds	Defender is hit and suffers a Critical result. The Defender suffers one Critical for each success after the first. Roll Damage and resolve other effects.
Attack Succeeds	Defender is hit. Roll Damage.
Attack and Counter-Attack Tie	Outcome uncertain! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First, the Defender may declare a <i>Retreat</i> (p. 111). If so, neither takes damage.</li> <li>• Second, the Attacker may declare a <i>Retreat</i>. If so, neither takes damage.</li> <li>• Otherwise, both Attacker and Defender hit each other. Roll Damage against each other.</li> </ul>
Counter-Attack Succeeds	Attacker is hit. Roll Damage.
Counter-Attack Overwhelmingly Succeeds	Attacker is hit and suffers a Critical result. The Attacker suffers one Critical for each success after the first. Roll Damage and resolve other effects.

Attack vs. Dodge Result	Outcome
Attack Overwhelmingly Succeeds	Defender is hit and suffers a Critical result. Roll damage and resolve other effects. The Defender suffers one Critical for each success after the first.
Attack Succeeds	Defender is hit. Roll Damage.
Attack and Dodger Tie	Defender is hit, unless they declare a <i>Retreat</i> — see page 111.
Dodge Succeeds	Defender is missed.
Dodge Overwhelmingly Succeeds	Defender is missed.

Attack vs. Parry Result	Outcome
Attack Overwhelmingly Succeeds	Defender is hit and suffers a Critical result. The Defender suffers one Critical for each success after the first. Roll Damage and resolve other effects.
Attack Succeeds	Defender is hit. Roll Damage.
Attack and Parry Tie	Defender is hit, unless they declare a <i>Retreat</i> — see page 111.
Parry Succeeds	Defender turns the attack aside.
Parry Overwhelmingly Succeeds	Defender turns the attack aside without breaking a sweat.

Circumstance	Modifier
Target is <i>Wounded</i> or worse	Extra 1d20
Target is helpless	Extra 1d20
Attack has a <i>Critical</i>	Apply Critical effects
Damage was <i>Slaying</i>	Re-roll all d20s that rolled <i>less than or equal to Soak</i> once more
Damage was <i>Energated</i>	Re-roll all d20s that rolled more than <i>Soak</i> once more

Damage vs. Soak Result	Outcome
Damage scores no successes	Scratched
Damage Succeeds (by 1)	Wounded
Damage Overwhelms (by 2)	Crippled
Damage Overwhelms (by 3)	Incapacitated
Damage Overwhelms (by 4)	Devastated

Recovery Status	Beather	Short Rest	Proper Rest	Long Rest
No injury	Only 1	1 in 2	All	All
Wounded	Only 1	1 in 3	1 in 2	All
Crippled	None	1 in 5	1 in 3	1 in 2
Incapacitated	None	Only 1	1 in 5	1 in 3
Devastated	None	None	None	None

Length of Rest	Healing Roll
Breather, Short Rest	none
Proper Rest	roll Body, Speed, Mind, Will
Long Rest	maximize Body, Speed, Mind, Will

Healing	Difficulty	Qota
Devastated to Incapacitated	9, 6	1200
Incapacitated to Crippled	7, 5	200
Crippled to Wounded	5, 4	50
Wounded to no injury	3, 2	10

Description	Ground	Concealment
Bamboo Thicket	Even	50% per 10 paces
Big City	Even	50% per 25 paces
Brush	Uneven	None
Building Interior	Even	50% per 10 paces
Hills	Uneven	50% per 50 paces
Light Forest	Uneven	50% per 25 paces
Marsh	Uneven	50% per 25 paces
Mountains	Impassible	50% per 25 paces
Plains	Even	None
Rooftop	Uneven	None
Swamp	Uneven	50% per 25 paces
Thick Forest	Impassible	50% per 10 paces
Village	Even	50% per 50 paces

# USAGI YOJIMBO



*Books by Stan Sakai*

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*darkhorse.com*

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BOOK 9: DAISHO  
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More than just a source-book for the *Usagi* characters and stories, this game stands apart as a combination of story-telling and role-playing. Start simple, then add more skills, powers, and abilities — even trade in old ones for new as your character changes and grows to become the hero that *you* create. Take on the role of a brave samurai warrior, a sly ninja, a wise priest, or even a simple farmer bound for glory. Battle the forces of corruption, despair, and evil. Clash swords with dozens of foes, or duel a single worthy opponent — simple rules combine with your character's special abilities to make all encounters quick, decisive, and fun. Fight along side Usagi, Tomoé, and Gennosuké as they thwart Lord Hikiji and his minions ... or create all new characters and stories from your own imagination! This game brings all the excitement of Stan Sakai's fantastic blend of Japanese history and legend to you.

*To play this game, you will need pencil & paper, polyhedral dice (four-sided, six-sided, eight-sided, ten-sided, twelve-sided, and twenty-sided), and this book.*

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