



# Randori



Randori is a term used in Japanese martial arts to describe free-style practice. The term literally means “chaos taking” or “grasping freedom,” implying a freedom from structured practice such as prearranged drills or kata. At Satori Dojo, we use the term randori to describe “combat-training.” As opposed to kumite, where both partners act as active and equal combatants, randori is not competitive. One partner plays the part of the defender, while the other plays the role of the attacker. Randori is the logical culminating activity for each of the progressions, encouraging us to put our skills to the test so we can know more precisely our capabilities and, perhaps more importantly, our limitations.

At the basic level, randori refers to one-on-one practice where one partner attempts to resist and counter the other's techniques. You can concentrate on practicing a single technique or combination, repeating it many times in order to polish it, or employ a variety of techniques in your practice. Resistance should start out light and gradually increase to progressively greater levels of non-compliance as the skill of the practitioners increase. The partner at the center of the randori is not expected to be successful at defending 100% of the time. Quite the contrary, he or she should experience a failure rate between 20-25%, or 1 in 4-5 moves. If you are failing more than that, your partner should reduce the amount of resistance he is providing. If you are succeeding more than that, your partner should progressively increase his resistance until the target success rate of 75-80% is reached.

Students build their skills by starting with one-on-one practice. The exercise should begin slowly and with a limited number of techniques. After achieving basic competence they would progress to defending against multiple attackers in quick succession without knowing how they will attack or in what order. Training should maintain a high level of difficulty by gradually allowing for greater levels of non-compliance and offensive strategy from your opponents. Still, resistance should be lowered again so that a new skill or strategy can be built up.

## **Types of Randori**

While the concept of randori began with judo and aikido, the concept can also be applied to the practice of our other foundation arts as well. These arts already have their own versions of practice and pressure testing, such as sparring in boxing, kumite in karate, chi sao in wing chun, etc., with randori in each art obviously resembling these well-established exercises. One of the most important distinctions between the two is that randori is not a competitive match, it is a cooperative exercise. With that in mind, in the initial stages of training, attackers should offer mild resistance, providing progressively greater levels of non-compliance as the skill of the defender increases.

### **Judo**

Judo randori involves throwing and grappling with your opponent. It is the equivalent of free sparring in karate. Agree on the goals parameters of each match ahead of time. Are both partners fighting equally, or is one working a technique while the other is providing progressive resistance. In basic judo randori, both players primarily use the judo stance and judo techniques. At more advanced levels, the attacker(s) may vary their attack strategies and tactics, adding striking techniques such as punches and kicks.

### **Aikido**

Aikido depends on your opponent giving you their energy in order to be successful. Therefore, in aikido randori your attackers should come at you with grabs, punches, and kicks. Use good footwork to evade or harmonize with your opponent's energy before applying a throw or locking technique to neutralize the opponent. As with all randori, practice should start slow with a single attacker. When you are comfortable with a single attacker coming at you at or near full speed, it is time to increase the difficulty by introducing a second attacker, then a third, etc.

Tanto randori is an exercise wherein an attacker armed with a knife attempts to stab you while you attempt to counter him using aikido techniques. Be careful, limiting attacks to the lower abdomen unless headgear is being worn. Attackers should exercise progressive resistance, until it becomes something of a sparring match, with the knife wielding attacker getting a point each time he stabs the aikidoka, with the aikidoka scoring each time he or she successfully applies an aikido technique.

### **Karate**

Like boxing randori, karate randori is very similar to sparring, but one person plays the role of defender, and the other the attacker. Karate randori includes training

with multiple opponents. This forces the defender to apply his or her skills under increasingly complex circumstances.

### **Traditional Wing Chun/Tai Chi Chuan**

Traditional wing chun randori and tai chi chuan randori are so similar that they are included here together as a single exercise unlike the other randori sets. Since the primary skill is sensitivity, the randori is a free-style chi sao. The goal is to gain and maintain cohesion with your opponent throughout the exercise. Disengaging in order to score a strike is usually frowned upon, as, for that moment, the attacker would theoretically be vulnerable to attack. This is not to say that strikes without cohesion do not occur. If you are able to trap both of your opponent's hands with one of yours, you would have a free hand with which to attack without violating the guideline of maintaining cohesion while attacking. In initial levels of training, attacks should be restricted to the hands, gradually adding chi gerk leg techniques. In the initial stages of training, the attacker should begin in very close quarters, so that cohesion is easily established. As the skills of the defender increase, begin engaging your opponent from longer distances and against a greater range of techniques as the skills of the practitioners improve.

### **Progressive Wing Chun**

In progressive randori, your opponent(s) should employ a variety of strategies and tactics in attacking you, while you concentrate on employing wing chun techniques and fighting strategy. Defensively, you should adopt a closed stance with your hands in man sao and wu sao, employing the pak sao, tan sao, and bong sao against incoming attacks. Employ linear techniques when attacking, using the Principle of Continuation of Attack that says you should strike repeatedly with each extension of your arm, rather than striking once and then rechambering the attacking limb. Your offense should consist primarily of straight punches, sharp chops, low kicks, and footsweeps. Apply the three rules of Centerline Principle: guarding your center, turning your opponent's center away from you, and attacking the opponent's center. Accomplish this through small, off-line movements and tight footwork rather than meeting attacks head on.

### **Boxing**

Like Judo randori, boxing randori is pretty much just sparring, but one person is playing the role of defender, and the other the attacker. Defenders can work particular strategies and tactics to develop different skill sets. At higher levels of training, the levels of restrictions are reduced.

One unique element of boxing randori is the inclusion of multiple opponents. This forces the defender to apply his or her skills under more complex circumstances. The defender should use strategy and footwork to engage only one opponent at a time

## **Vovinam**

Vovinam is the Vietnamese equivalent of Chinese kung fu. In Vovinam randori, the defender uses techniques from the different animal styles: tiger, crane, snake, and monkey. The defender can use a single style, such as monkey, or mix complementary styles, such as tiger and crane. Attackers should use a variety of styles, strategies, and tactics.

## **Weapons Randori**

Randori with weapons can be a very challenging, but very rewarding version of the exercise. The weapons increase the range and power of your opponents, but increases your range and power as well. Weapons randori can be performed with matched weapons (bo vs. bo, tambo vs. tambo, knife vs. knife) or mixed weapons (bo vs. tambo, bo vs. knife, tambo vs. knife). The most advanced weapons randori would be empty hand randori against armed attackers.

## **Mixed Randori**

Once primary skill sets are well established, the next step is to start combining different types of randori practice, such as boxing and judo, or traditional wing chun and aikido. This allows you to begin developing connections and transitions between styles.

## **Satori Randori**

The ultimate randori practice, in Satori Randori attackers may use any strategies and tactics they wish. The same goes for the defender, who can call upon any and all techniques in their arsenal to defend and counter. The goal is to demonstrate the knowledge and flexibility to flow seamlessly between techniques that derive from radically different styles.

## **Multiple Opponents**

One of the goals of the randori exercise is learning to deal with multiple opponents. Students should spend For testing: Shodan: 1 attacker; Nidan- 2 attackers; Sandan: 3 attackers, Yondan 4 attackers.