

Care of Wooden Weapons

With a little preparation and maintenance, you can improve the appearance and feel of a store-bought tanto, bokken, or jo and make it into a fine-looking weapon that will last for years.

Weapons may be varnished when you buy them. It is recommended that you sand off the varnish and apply a low-gloss tung oil, rubbing oil, or gel oil finish instead. Oil feeds the wood, which will help to prevent it from cracking or warping.

To finish an unvarnished white oak weapon, follow the directions below to sand with a very fine sandpaper before applying oil.

Kingfisher laminated weapons have a hard beeswax finish that is designed to need little or no maintenance. If your Kingfisher weapon needs maintenance, contact Kingfisher for instructions.

Sanding

It is easy to change the shape of a weapon by sanding, which can be a good or a bad thing. Be conservative. When sanding a bokken, always wrap the sandpaper around a sanding block to work on the flat planes, and work carefully. This is very important. If you do not block the sandpaper and follow the existing lines, the planes on top of your bokken will round out and it will resemble a banana! You do not need to buy a sanding block. A small rectangle of wood that fits in the palm of your hand is ideal.

Start with coarse sandpaper, working with the grain to remove varnish and marks. Next use a medium grade sandpaper, working across the grain until all the marks from the coarse sanding are removed. Then finish with fine sandpaper, working with the grain to remove all the marks from the medium sanding. A final light sanding with very fine sandpaper will give the wood a silky smooth finish.

To sand curved areas, cup sandpaper in the palm of your hand and apply even pressure to the wood. Rotate the curved area in your hand to ensure that it is evenly sanded.

Oiling

Apply oil with a cloth, and rub it into the wood. You may want to wear rubber gloves or put your hand into a plastic bag to hold the wet cloth, as the oil is difficult to wash off.

Several light coats are better than one heavy one. If you apply too much oil, your weapon may become sticky and you will have to sand it again.

Maintenance

Once a year, sand your weapons lightly. Rub out dents carefully. Finish with very fine sandpaper and re-oil.