

## Sakura: Sword Duels

### Optional Rules for use in Sakura Campaign



This is a set of House Rules to add a level of complexity and rapid-fire swordplay that we all think of when we think of samurai duels. A duel can imply anything from a ceremonial duel, friendly sparring match, or actual to-the-death duel.

#### Basic rules of a sword duel:

- Each turn, both combatants attack with a rapid series of six strikes while simultaneously moving through six blocks.
- Offense: Pick six strikes from the nine possible strikes (see attack grid) in any combination. Arrange them in sequential order.
- Defense: Pick six blocks from the five possible positions (see defense grid in blue) in any combination. Arrange them in sequential order.
- Roll six attack rolls as normal. These simulate six rapid strikes in a single turn.
- Compare any successful hits (misses don't count) against the blocks picked by your opponent.
  - If your strike crosses a block square (marked in blue in the visual grid) before any blank square, then it is blocked.
  - If your strike crosses a blank square (not colored blue in the visual grid) before any block square (blue square), it is a possible hit. Consult the attack roll and resolve like a normal attack roll.
- Depending on the type of duel, score points or roll for damage on any successful hits.

Below is the defensive grid in blue with letters to represent a blocking posture. The offensive grid is in red and uses numbers for strikes. Notice that sometimes two different strikes can cross the same squares of the grid, but move in different directions.

For example, a '1' strike moves diagonally from upper-left down to lower-right. But the '9' strike moves from the lower-right upwards to the upper-left. So, a '1' strike could be blocked by a block of 'U' because it strikes one of the blue squares in that defensive posture before continuing on. But a '9' strike would not be stopped by a 'U' defense, because it strikes two uncolored squares before crossing the blue square at the upper-left.

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## **Types of Duels**

Three kinds of duel can be held. Which type of duel must be agreed upon by both combatants beforehand and strictly adhered to for the duration of the match. The challenger offers a gesture signaling which type of duel is to ensue. The challenged combatant must return the gesture in kind to accept the challenge. Note that if someone returns a challenge with a gesture for a different form of duel, the process repeats until both combatants agree on the form of duel.

**Honor Duel** – This is a series of blows that do not touch the opponent. Each blow stops just short of contact. Both of the duelists as experts agree "yeah, that was a hit, well done." Simultaneous hits are a tie; points only go to blows that are not returned in the same turn. Matches can be held to 'first blood' or the opponents agree on a point score.

This form of duel is signaled by one combatant placing both hands atop his or her head, then bringing the hands downward with palms up before bowing. Acceptance of the duel is signaled by returning the gesture. The winner of an Honor Duel receives 5 honor points; the loser loses 5 honor points. If one of the combatants refutes any of the points from blows or makes contact with a blow (even accidentally), they lose all honor points.

**Master Duel** – Opponents attack and block but only deal non-lethal subdual damage. Hits deal the same amount of damage, but only to a separate pool of hit points equal to the person's normal hit points. When a combatant's non-lethal hit points are reduced to zero, they are worn out and can no longer fight. They must submit to defeat or lose all honor points.

This form of duel is signaled by one combatant placing their open, left hand over their closed, right fist in a gesture before bowing. Acceptance of the duel is signaled by returning the gesture. The winner of a Master Duel receives 10 honor points; the loser loses 10 honor points. If either of the opponents lands a blow with normal damage, they lose all honor points.

**Death Duels** - Death Duels are conducted with normal damage. All strikes are made in a single turn. All strikes are made simultaneously, neither combatant factor in their initiative modifier for this. All successful hits generate normal damage, all of which is rolled at the end of the turn. Fighting continues to the end of each turn, even if an opponent reaches zero hit points in the middle of a turn. (e.g. An opponent suffers six straight hits, the first one reducing his hit points to zero. The combatant dies at the end of the turn, but his blows were so fast that he only drops dead at the end when his wounds catch up to him).

This form of duel is signaled by one combatant tapping their sword hand on the top of their sword and bowing their head. Acceptance of the duel is signaled by returning the gesture. In some rare cases, friendly duels turn deadly when one of the combatants dishonorably deals lethal blows without warning. That combatant instantly loses ALL honor points, regardless of the outcome of the match.

### **Optional Rule: School of Fighting**

Duelists spend years honing their fighting skills, usually learning from a school or individual master. If a character spends Skill Points in Perform: Duel (weapon) they choose the weapon and where they trained. But each school or master has a different style. Depending on the style, their dueling performance can enhance their proficiency. A duelist can make an Intelligence Check DC 15 before the duel to learn the style of their opponent. They may also ask around about the duelist to see if anyone has information. With a Gather Information check DC 25 they may learn of the duelist's style and find a way to exploit it.

### **Schools or Styles of Dueling and their Modifiers**

**(this section requires further development)**

#### **Random fact:**

Tsujigiri (辻斬り or 辻斬, literally "crossroads killing") is a Japanese term for a practice when a samurai, after receiving a new katana or developing a new fighting style or weapon, tests its effectiveness by attacking a human opponent, usually a random defenseless passer-by, in many cases during nighttime.

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