

Rules for Combat Sport Daoshu (Saber) Competition

The goal of promoting Daoshu (Chinese saber) is to provide a competitive environment that allows Daoshu practitioners to progress and validate their skills. The rules of combat sport Daoshu are therefore designed with an emphasis on skill cultivation rather than historic dual reenactment. The rules reflect a high level of realism, allowing Traditional Chinese Daoshu techniques to function as they were originally designed.

1. Setup and Personnel

1.1 Facility

The match will be conducted in a 25' x 25' square ring. The on-guard position of each contestant is located such that the front foot of each contestant is 5 feet from the center of the court with contestants facing each other.

1.2 Referee

The referee is located inside the ring. The referee conducts the match and resolves any disputes during the match. The referee will score "point deductions" only for violations described in sections 4.5.8 and 4.6.

1.3 Side Judges

Two side judges are assigned per match. To maintain high scoring precision during heavy chopping and slashing exchanges and to eliminate missed counts, **each side judge tracks only ONE contestant per round using a single mechanical counter.** Side judges are located on opposing sides of the ring and move along the sidelines following the action.

1.4 Time/Scorekeeper

One time/scorekeeper controls official time and tabulates scores from the referee and side judges at the end of each round.

1.5 Ancillary Devices

- **1.5.1** Four handheld mechanical counters per ring (two assigned to side judges per round; two reserved for the referee for point deductions).
- **1.5.2** Red and blue wristbands for side judges.
- **1.5.3** One stopwatch and one calculator for each ring.

2. Valid Techniques and Target Areas

2.1 Valid Techniques

Daoshu emphasizes powerful chopping, slicing, pressuring, and close-quarters blade engagements (*Dao Fa*). Valid scoring techniques include:

- **Circular Slashing / Chopping (*Pi / Gua*):** Cutting or hacking with the primary cutting edge (first 15 inches of the blade or full belly) in a sweeping or downward motion with sufficient force.
- **Linear Sawing / Draw-Cutting (*Kan / Draw-Cut*):** Pulling or pushing cuts across valid target areas using the cutting edge under pressure.
- **Thrusting (*Ci*):** Direct thrusts with the tip of the blade.
- **Close-Range Pressing / Wrapping (*Chan Tou / Guo Nao*):** Following up clean parries with rapid counter-slashes or thrusts delivered with clear edge orientation.

Single-Edge Alignment Rule: All valid cuts must land with the designated cutting edge of the saber. Strikes landed with the spine (back edge) or flat of the blade are non-scoring. However, **defensive blocks or parries made using the spine of the blade are fully encouraged as proper Daoshu technique.**

Execution Criteria: All valid scoring techniques must be delivered with offensive intent, clean execution, clear single-edge alignment, and realistic structural force.

2.2 Target Areas

2.2.1 Valid Target Areas

- **Head (front and sides)**
- **Neck (front and sides)**
- **Torso**
- **Hand, Wrist, and Forearm**
- **Legs (thigh and calf)**

2.2.2 Off-Target Areas

Strikes to areas other than those in section 2.2.1 are considered “off target” and do not qualify for scoring.

2.2.3 Illegal Target Areas

- **Back of head**
- **Back of torso (spine)**
- **Inner thigh**
- **Groin area**

3. Contestant Equipment

3.1 Combat Sport Saber

- **3.1.1** Saber must be made from approved plastic material.
- **3.1.2** Maximum blade length: 30 inches.
- **3.1.3** Maximum weight of saber: 1.5 lbs. (Standard combat saber will be provided for contestants).
- **3.1.4** The spine (back edge) of the saber shall be marked with colored tape to clearly distinguish the non-scoring spine from the true single cutting edge.

(Standard combat spear will be provided for contestants if necessary).

3.2 Protective Gear

- **3.2.1** High-impact fencing mask.
- **3.2.2** Hockey-style neck protection (optional).
- **3.2.3** Dual-color (blue and red) chest protection with collarbone protection pads.
- **3.2.4** Reinforced gloves that protect the hand, fingers, and wrist.
- **3.2.5** Long- or short-sleeved shirts made of durable material.
- **3.2.6** Long pants made of durable material.
- **3.2.7** Groin protection.
- **3.2.8** Elbow pads and knee/shin pads.

4. Match Regulations

4.1 Start of Match

- Each match starts with contestants standing, saluting the judges and each other, then taking the on-guard position at the locations specified in Section 1.1.
- Contestants will resume the on-guard position following any referee-called stoppages.

4.2 Duration of the Match

- Each match consists of up to three rounds.
- Each round is 1-1/2 minutes with a 1-minute break between rounds.
- Action within each round is continuous, with stoppages called by the referee only for warnings, fouls, out-of-bounds, or disqualifications.
- The contestant who wins two rounds will be declared the winner of the match.
- In the event of a tie after three rounds, a sudden-death round will take place where the contestant who scores the first valid point wins.

4.3 Stop the Match ("Halt")

The referee can stop the match by calling "Halt" for:

- Contestants out of bounds.
- Fouls or disqualifications.
- Unsportsmanlike conduct (e.g., wild out-of-control swings, striking unprotected areas).
- Protective gear adjustments.

4.4 Calling "Out-of-Bounds"

"Out-of-bounds" is called by the referee when a contestant's foot steps outside the ring boundary. If a contestant performs a technique while out of bounds, it cannot be scored.

4.5 Scoring and Single-Counter Judge Rotation Protocol

4.5.1 Contestant Identification

Contestants wear opposing color chest protection (Red or Blue) for scoring identification.

4.5.2 Single-Counter Judge Rotation Protocol

To maximize tracking accuracy during intense saber exchanges and eliminate single-judge bias, side judges operate a single counter per round assigned to a specific competitor:

Round	Side Judge 1 (SJ1)	Side Judge 2 (SJ2)	Neutral Balancing Protocol
Round 1	Tracks RED (Wears Red Wristband)	Tracks BLUE (Wears Blue Wristband)	Dedicated single-competitor focus.
Round 2	Tracks BLUE (Wears Blue Wristband)	Tracks RED (Wears Red Wristband)	Judges swap assigned competitors.
Round 3	Tracks RED (Wears Red Wristband)	Tracks BLUE (Wears Blue Wristband)	Validation Audit: Round 3 score sheets are verified against the Referee's observation log prior to final tabulations. <i>(Alternatively, a 3rd standby judge replaces SJ1).</i>

4.5.3 Referee Penalty Counters

The center referee carries dedicated deduction counters (or a penalty record sheet) to record point deductions described in Sections 4.5.8 and 4.6.

4.5.4 Scoring Criteria

A point is awarded when a valid technique (Section 2.1) lands cleanly on a valid target area (Section 2.2.1) with proper edge orientation, sufficient force, and clear offensive intent.

4.5.5 Non-Scoring Techniques

No points are awarded for:

- Cuts that land with the blunt spine or flat of the blade.
- Light tapping or glancing blows that lack delivery force.
- Pushing, slapping, or striking with the pommel or guard.

4.5.6 First-Land Principle

If a contestant performs a valid technique on a valid target area before their opponent, that contestant is awarded one point.

4.5.7 Simultaneous Strikes (Double Hits)

If both contestants simultaneously deliver valid techniques within the same tempo, **no point is awarded** to either contestant.

4.5.8 Dropped Weapon Penalty

The referee deducts one point from a contestant's round total each time that contestant loses control of or drops their saber.

4.5.9 Round Score Tabulation

At the end of each round, Side Judge 1 and Side Judge 2 hand their single-counter totals to the Scorekeeper. The Scorekeeper subtracts any referee deductions to determine the round winner. The referee announces the winner at the conclusion of the match.

4.6 Warnings, Fouls, and Disqualifications

4.6.1 Warnings

A contestant will receive a warning from the center referee for:

- Unsportsmanlike behavior (e.g., wild, uncontrolled swinging without defensive awareness, over-aggressiveness, continuous passive retreating).
- Performing invalid or illegal techniques without intent to cause injury.

4.6.2 Fouls

A contestant receives an official foul from the referee for:

- Accumulating more than one warning in a match.
- Performing illegal techniques that cause injury to the opponent (with or without intention).
- **Penalty:** 1-point deduction per foul (applied via referee deduction sheet).

4.6.3 Disqualification

A contestant is disqualified and automatically forfeits the match for:

- Accumulating **three fouls** in a match.
- Refusing to cooperate with the referee or side judges.