



NINJA WEAPONRY

The artistic, immaculately crafted weapons of the ninja deliver as much awe as they do death. Fashioned out of carefully folded, ultra-strong steel, finely woven fibers and the rarest of Eastern plant life, these implements of destruction are among the world's most exquisite.

Ninjato (Sword)

When most people think of the ninja sword, they imagine the artful, cherished blades used by the samurai. While the *ninjato*, with its gently curved shape and unbreakable steel construction, bears strong similarities, it's not as long nor as revered as the samurai sword. From its plain black hilt and grip to the unmarked steel shaft and ordinary scabbard, the ninja sword has always been considered a tool for lethal combat, nothing more. Razor sharp and capable of devastating slash

and jab strikes, the *ninjato* is guaranteed to kill you. The carefully crafted blade is so strong that it can cut through steel, concrete and hope. Your best bet to defend against a razor-sharp *ninjato* would be a full-body shield made of diamond-strengthened steel.

***Shuriken* (Throwing Blades)**

Known to Westerners as "ninja stars," *shuriken* are the most overtly intimidating weapons employed by the ninja. Although the blades, rarely over two inches long, generally do not deliver lethal stab wounds, a quick strike from a medium distance is demoralizing at best and often physically paralyzing. If confronted by a ninja, expect a hail of *shuriken* throughout the battle, not just the beginning. Even when holding a drawn sword in the throwing hand, a ninja can throw a star with the other hand, thanks to years of ambidexterity training. Effective present-day defenses against *shuriken* almost always involve Kevlar, a lightweight, durable synthetic that dramatically reduces the damage of thrown blades, although they can be ineffective at close range.

***Bo, Jo and Hambo* (Wooden Staffs)**

Most people can "carry a big stick," but few know how to wield it properly. Ninjas do. The ninja staff comes in a variety of lengths—the three-foot *hambo*, the four-foot *jo* and the six-foot *bo*—and all are highly effective fighting weapons. The strike to be most wary of is the full-force blow from the end of a staff. Ninjas rely heavily on such thrust blows to incapacitate their victims, concentrating enormous power into a small, deadly tip. Wallops to the head, back or vital organs, along with the thrusts, make the staff a versatile whacking weapon. Ninjas are also trained to use household objects as fighting staffs. Always keep your broom and mop handles in a locked, secure area. It may make sweeping and cleaning a little less convenient, but it could spell the difference between life and death—or at least a few broken ribs.

***Yumi* (Ninja Bow and Arrow)**

When it comes to sniping, the highly covert ninja bow (*yumi*) is only slightly less effective than the M40A3 sniper rifle employed by the U.S. Marines. Both the twang of the bowstring and distinctive

midflight arrow whistle have been damped with reeds to sink below the range of human hearing, making the ninja sniper a completely silent assassin. The compact bow can be slacked and slipped into a thin piece of hollow bamboo or blueprint tube, unnoticeable in a crowd of architects. According to eyewitness accounts, from a "tiger-crouch" firing position, ninja bowmen have hit targets up to 1,000 meters away.

Because of the relatively slow speed of an arrow compared to a bullet, if you spot a sniper you may have enough time to cover your face, heart and neck, robbing the assassin of a sure-kill shot. Ninja arrows can pierce double-paned, vacuum-sealed glass, as well as car windows. When you're at home, keep your shades drawn at all times, especially on the second floor, where a ninja is most likely to strike. Fashion "car curtains" that you can draw closed whenever you're stopped at a light or caught in dense traffic.

Concealed Blades and Weapons

Notorious tricksters, ninjas almost always carry concealed weapons. One of the most common is the *shinobi-zue*. A once-commonplace gentleman's accessory in Western society, this common cane/walking stick can be hollowed out and the handle fitted with a blade up to three feet long. The straight blade can be wielded just as effectively as a sword. So be extremely wary of any "old man" sporting a walking stick or cane.

Another form of weaponry oft concealed in *shinobi-zue* are weighted chains used for swinging strikes or ensnaring limbs. A cane can also be used to shoot poison darts, removing both end caps to reveal a blowgun. A single, well-placed dart that hits an artery can mean permanent lights-out.

Never turn your back on a person with a cane, no matter what the distance. If you encounter someone carrying one, pay special attention to the cane's make and shape. Cylindrical metal canes are light and durable, perfect for dart guns. Larger wooden canes may contain hidden blades. Canes with a platform base and some "walkers" can conceal weighted chains or narrow *shuriken*.

EXPLOSIVES, SMOKE BOMBS AND POWDERS

Originally designed to dazzle, confuse and demoralize their opponents, ninja explosives and powders have evolved into a deadly art all their own. Powders to blind or intoxicate victims are often inserted into the delicate eggs of the *tancho*, or Japanese crane, which the ninja hurl at unsuspecting opponents, incapacitating them. Blinding solutions can be as simple as dirt and fine thorns mixed with crushed *sansho* pepper. More advanced, mind-altering powders often combine blinding solution with finely ground hallucinogenic mushrooms. Fighting back after being affected by either is nearly impossible. And death is just a bit more terrifying.

Smoke bombs conceal a ninja's position and can also be packed with high-grade *assa* (cannabis). Refrain from inhaling when passing through *any* cloud of smoke. Ninjas who have meticulously rid their bodies of THC receptors, will not be affected, though they may appear more relaxed.

UNARMED COMBAT

It's often said that an animal is most dangerous when it's trapped. Without room to run, strike or fight, the beast's fear-heightened adrenaline level makes it ferocious. While "fear" is unknown to the ninja, a ninja caught without weapons is just as dangerous as one armed to the teeth.

Hand-to-hand ninja training is the most rigorous in the world. Like Indochina's top Muay Thai fighters, ninjas spend years physically hardening their bodies through repeated abuse—head-butting suspended boulders, sharpening their claw attacks on granite faces, splitting dense hardwood trunks with thunderous punches.

Phalanges Strikes

The most debilitating strikes are those delivered with the fingers, thumbs, knuckles or toes, which concentrate the full force of the rocketing limb into the smallest possible area. A toe strike to the ribs can puncture a lung. A *shikan-ken* (extended finger-knuckle strike) to the neck can shatter the trachea. The aquiline-nosed ninja may even use his beaked face to strike at the opponent's eyes or groin.



