

NINJAS IN NATURE
GUARDIAN'S GUIDE



NIN BASICS PATHWAY
BY
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& MARK ROEMKE

GUARDIANS GUIDE



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&
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DEDICATION



KENNETH

TO THE ANCESTORS WHO PASSED THESE SKILLS DOWN, THE
CONNECTED TEACHERS WHO WALK THIS EARTH, AND THE
GENERATIONS TO COME WHOM I WILL NEVER MEET.

MARK

TO DR. MASAOKI HATSUMI, THE GRANDMASTER OF THE BUJINKAN,
FOR OPENING THIS ART TO THE WORLD.

TO MY PARENTS WHO SUPPORTED ME TO TRAVEL AND TRAIN WITH
SOME OF THE BEST MENTORS IN THE WORLD.

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NINTRODUCTION



Welcome to the Pathways

Whether training with us at Pathways Dojo, or in the forest with our nature programs, we like to begin each training session the same way, by greeting with gratitude, or as we like to call it, *greetitude*.

Welcome to our NiN Basics Pathway instructor training program. We are unreasonably grateful that you are interested in leading students along this learning journey. It takes time, commitment, creativity, and energy to invest in the learning of another person, and we thank you for taking the initial step in this process by beginning this training.

We recognize that a dedicated teacher is essential for any student to attain success in the study of an art. We recognize you as a *guardian*, one who not only carries the responsibility of instruction, but who is also in charge of the care and safety of others.

We are grateful too for the ultimate teacher- nature. The natural world allows us to live by providing food and shelter, and also provides inspiration, learning, and deep connection to ourselves and the landscape around us.

We are grateful for those who no longer walk this Earth, the mentors who passed down these skills that we teach. We recognize that we are a link in this knowledge chain, and that we have a responsibility to future generations to keep these skills alive by teaching them to others. We are grateful that you are willing to step into this role as teacher and guardian.

Overview

Since 2015, our staff at Pathways Dojo have been leading youth and instructors through this curriculum which combines the ancient arts of the ninja with nature survival and awareness training. We've noticed predictable patterns after leading many students on this journey:

- 1) the fusion of these arts highly engages students, and
- 2) this process requires an adult to lead them.

This is where you come in.

We've observed that when students complete these skills, they develop predictable characteristics. Specifically, students develop:

- ✱ Self confidence
- ✱ Connection to the natural world
- ✱ Increased sensory awareness
- ✱ Aliveness in their bodies
- ✱ Focus
- ✱ Respect

Oh, and they are really *happy!*

This guide is intended to give you all the resources you need to lead students through the four “basic” skills of our Ninjas in Nature or “NiN” Program.

Archetype, Attitude, and Approach

Our curriculum utilizes a unique combination of three elements that we have found to be highly engaging with youth: an archetype, an attitude, and an approach.

The persona of a “ninja” is an archetype. Kids and adults resonate with this persona. While the media has created a mythological creature of a dark clad assassin, and the marketing world sells ninja blenders, we tap into the authentic art of ninjutsu, the art of the ninja. There are many dojos all over the world that teach ninjutsu. Pathways Dojo is one of them. The origins of this art can be traced back over 1000 years.

Pathways Dojo and the Ninjas in Nature program was founded by Sensei Mark Roemke, one of the highest ranked ninjas on the planet. He is a 15th Dan (degree of black belt). He holds the title of Dai Shihan, which is the highest attainable level just below the Grandmaster, Dr. Masaaki Hatsumi, who lives today in Japan. Sensei Roemke is licensed to teach by Grandmaster Hatsumi.

The Japanese word “nin” means “to persevere.” This is the foundational attitude and philosophy behind our program. With each level of training, we give students skills and

challenges. The end goal is to persevere by completing the challenges along each curricular pathway. As instructors we tap into this attitude of perseverance to help students attain their goals.

Our approach is our pathways curriculum. This curriculum includes a step-by-step process of learning then demonstrating skills. We also include acknowledgement of skill completion and proficiency. Students can earn patches for each path, certificates of completion, and order pathway shirts. Patches, shirts, and certificates- these are optional but offer a way to recognize student achievement.

What is NiN?

What is NiN? The nin kanji has two parts. The upper part represents a sword. The lower part represents a physical, energetic, or spiritual heart. There are many meanings behind this. The kanji (character) looks like this:



If someone attacked you with a sword, barely missing your heart, yet you persevered because you were calm, then this would be nin. If someone bullied or attacked you, yet you were calm and not affected, this would be nin. If you helped protect someone you cared for in your heart, this would be

nin. If you were lost in the woods and your bow drill fire kit did not make a coal, yet you continued until you made fire, this too would be nin.

Nin is the first part of the word ninja. “Ja” is a Japanese term that means “person”. The term ninja therefore describes a person who has perseverance.

Many of the skills of the ninja involve training in nature. This is what our program is about. NiN is also an abbreviation for **Ninjas in Nature**.

Who is this Guide for?

This manual is intended for nature instructors who wish to add curriculum to their quiver of teaching tools. It is for the martial arts instructor who wants to add the art of the ninja, or ninjutsu, in an outdoor setting to their programs. It is also designed for a parent or youth leader with no previous nature or martial arts skills.

For youth, we recommend ages seven to thirteen, however, you know the youth you are working with the best. We have seen younger and older ages successfully complete our curriculum. Older teens are valuable assistant instructors with our programs. Because we do occasional woodworking (with knife safety training), and fire skills, age seven is a good age to start with. It’s ultimately up to you as the leader to decide if your student is ready for these skills.

It's also important to know that these skills are for you, the instructor. One of our core philosophies at Pathways dojo is that it is important for instructors to teach from experience as opposed to just "leading by reading". Consider this your invitation to connect to the natural world and awaken your own self confidence and senses by doing the skills. In the process, we guarantee you not only will have fun, but you will connect more deeply with your students and the natural world.

How To Use Our Curriculum

Our intent is to give you an easy-to-follow curriculum for leading youth. However, if you already have a set program or training curriculum, you can supplement your program with our NiN Pathways Curriculum in the following ways:

- ✳ Add new creative content to your current curriculum.
- ✳ Design and lead stand alone theme-based programs using our curriculum such as after-school, weekend, summer camps, or festivals. We have been successful with all of these.
- ✳ Become a certified instructor and/or licensed NiN Center with benefits that include exclusive home range, access to trademarked marketing material and copyrighted curriculum, and access to mentoring services.

Student and Instructor Certification

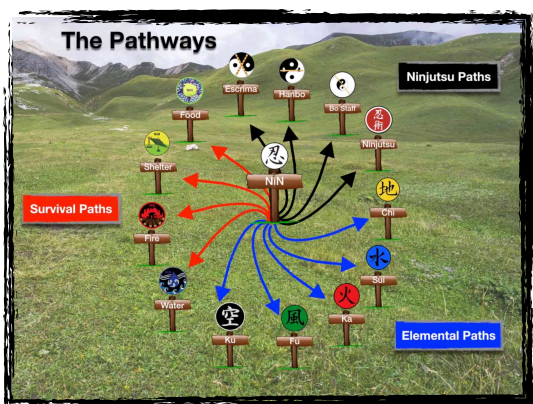
You may certify (provide certificates, patches, shirts) up to three students with this Guardians training. If you are a fee-

for-service program (either for-profit or non-profit) and wish to certify students and/or use our curriculum and logos for programs, you will need to become a certified NiN instructor or licensed NiN Center. Don't worry. It's a very simple process and there are lots of perks that come with certification and licensing. For more details, contact us at nin@pathwaysdojo.com. If you are a fee-for-service program and wish to simply enrich your instructor tool bag, by all means, please do so and continue reading!

The Pathways

Once you lead students through our initial NiN Basics Pathway, you may then choose your next curricular pathway. We have three different directions that you can travel from here: 1)

ninjutsu pathways, 2) survival pathways, or 3) elemental pathways. Each of these directions has separate curricular paths to choose from. For example, with our ninjutsu paths, you can train in escrima, hanbo, or ninjutsu basics in nature. With our elemental training we have skills based on the themes of Earth, Water, Fire, Wind, and Void. You can learn more about each of these pathways at our website www.ninjasinnature.com.



Basics is Not Beginners

In the dojo with our martial arts classes, we constantly emphasize the importance of basics. "Basic" skills refer to a foundation that other skills build upon. This differs from "beginner" skills, which imply that a technique is easy, and once you are proficient, there is no need to return to them, like training wheels. Our NiN Basics are skills that we return to repeatedly throughout our various pathways and thus are very important to learn before proceeding to more challenging skills.

Safety

We named this instructor training program "Guardians" because your role is not only to lead the curriculum, but to ensure the safety of the students under your supervision. There are hazards to be found in nature. Martial arts skills have their own associated risks if you do not train safely. Survival skills, such as fire require that you have a heightened awareness as a leader to ensure safety. Our philosophy is that hazards provide awareness, and thus are a healthy element of human development. ***By agreeing to lead youth through our curriculum, you acknowledge that you are responsible for all aspects of their safety.***

Our Process

Each pathway has a five-step process: 1) learn, 2) train, 3) demonstrate, 4) challenge, and 5) celebrate

1) **Learn.** Our intent is to make the process smooth and uncomplicated for you while allowing for your own creativity to be added to the activities. We give you written explanations and safety guidelines for each skill. We have also created a skills videos for each lesson. For each of the skills, we provide links to these training videos (see Resources below). We encourage you to share these with your students. One of our core philosophies is that a ninja is creative and adapts to each situation. We encourage you to take the skills that we share and adapt them to your students, your own curriculum, the landscape, and your personal teaching style.

2) **Train.** Another philosophy at Pathways Dojo is the importance of training. We believe that you do not “master” a skill by just learning it and doing it one time. After learning a skill, the students then spend time “training” or doing the skill. We often return to skills, weeks, months or even years later. “I’ve already done this skill,” is a comment we sometimes hear. As instructors, this is our prompt to discuss the value of training. Every time we make a fire, the weather is different, the materials are different, and often the landscape is different. This is where the deep learning begins. After learning each skill in our curriculum, spend time practicing the skill. In martial arts it takes time to develop “muscle memory” which is the point where you don’t have to think about a technique. You just “do”. The same is true for the awareness and survival skills we teach.

3) Demonstrate. When a student is ready, they can demonstrate their skills for instructor evaluation and feedback. For independent students not training under a certified NiN instructor who wish to earn a certificate and/or patch and shirt, we ask them to document their skills (usually by photo) which they send to us. For certified NiN instructors (including instructors-in-training), they oversee student proficiency and provide the certificates of pathway completion. Instructors-in-training document student progress the first time they lead students through the curriculum and submit photos to Pathways Dojo as part of their instructor certification process.

4) Challenge. At the end of each curricular pathway, we provide students with a fun challenge that is the culminating event of their training. Much like in the dojo when students demonstrate skills prior to belt promotion, the NiN challenges are intended to be a fun, celebratory, and culminating review of skills. We give you ideas for leading these challenges but also encourage you to use your creativity to modify these activities.

5) Celebrate. After the excitement of the final challenge we provide students with certificates of completion of the pathway, patches, and shirts (optional). In the dojo, when students go through the ceremony of belt promotion, we take time to ceremonially acknowledge the hard work, training, and perseverance each student has shown. This is an event

that can include families and friends as witnesses. In the forest, we likewise take the time to celebrate student completion of our NiN pathways. The certificates, patches, and shirts are optional. We offer these as an add-on because our experience has shown that students value these as a way to look back and remember the effort they put into the skills, their accomplishment in demonstrating proficiency, and most importantly, the fun they had. We encourage our instructors to create their own ceremonies of celebration out in nature.

Note- some instructors prefer to order patches and shirts prior to finishing the course with students so that they will have them available for students after the final challenge. See the Resources link below to order shirts and patches.

Resources

We provide training videos explaining each skill and the games listed in this course. To access training videos, games to lead, teaching resources, certificates, and the Guardians Store to order patches and shirts, visit the link below.

<https://www.ninjasinnature.com/ninbasics>

Preparing to Lead

For leading the four skills of NiN Basics, this is your instructor path: 1) read the lessons that follow, 2) watch the training videos, 3) gather the materials needed, 4) teach your students, 5) lead the final challenge and 6) celebrate.

Ready to begin? Welcome to the pathway!



NIN BASICS SKILLS

Lesson 1: Learning NiN

Time: 10 min

Materials:

- Print or make a photocopy of the nin kanji (see Appendix or resources website link above).
- Notebook or paper and pen/pencil for each student.
- Sample certificate, patch, and shirt (optional).



Activity Overview

- ✱ Mind's eye nin drawing.
- ✱ Show and discuss the meaning of nin.
- ✱ Discuss training pathway overview.

Introduction

- Have students get a piece of paper/notebook and pencil/pen.
- The ancient ninja trained in skills that developed their "muscle memory" so that they could remember things in great detail. You are going to play a mind's eye/muscle memory game to train your brain (discuss what mind's eye means).

The Nin Mind's Eye Challenge

- Show them the nin kanji for 30 seconds then hide it. Have the students draw what they saw.
- Have the students share what they drew.
- Show them the nin kanji and discuss which parts they noticed.
- **Variation**- if outside, have students make the kanji from natural objects (ex. sticks, leaves, stones, etc.). Do a walking tour of everyone's nature kanji art.

Discussion

- This is a Japanese character used in many martial arts around the world. This character has two parts that represent different things. **Ask**- What do you see when you look at this?
- Point to the sword and the heart characters in the kanji. **Ask**- what do you think these characters mean?
- The upper part represents a sword, and the bottom part represents a heart (physical or spiritual/energetic). **Ask**- now what do you think this kanji means?
- This is the kanji for "nin". It means to endure or persevere. Describe examples of perseverance. **Ask**- What are other ways that people persevere? Do you have any stories in your life when you persevered?
- "Ja" means "person" in Japanese. A ninja is a person who perseveres. This training that we are going to do teaches ancient skills of the ninja. There are people all over the world that train in these skills. This art is called ninjutsu. There is even a Grandmaster of this art who lives in Japan.

Many skills of the ninja are practiced outside in nature. The skills we will learn are part of a training program called **Ninjas in Nature** or the NiN program.

- This first level is called the **NiN Basics Pathway**. There are 4 skills to learn for the first level of this training: a sword skill, a stealth skill, an awareness skill, and a fire skill. After you learn the skills we will play some games. At the end of the training we will do a final fun challenge. Ready to train?
- **Optional**- show them the certificate, patch, and shirt they can earn at the end.

Lesson 2: Skill #1- Sword Evasion

Time: 30 min

Materials:

- **A foam or cardboard sword-**
A pool noodle or pipe insulation (available at most hardware stores) will work. For a low-budget version you can be creative and make a sword from cardboard and tape. Important- make sure there isn't a pointed tip, and that it doesn't hurt to get hit with the sword.
- **Materials for students to make their own swords (optional)-** cardboard, duct or packing tape, pool noodles, or insulation.
- **Boundary markers** for the sword evasion game.



Activity Overview

- ✳ Show students the training video (optional).
- ✳ Show the students a sample training sword.
- ✳ Have students make their own training sword (optional).
- ✳ Teach the three evasion techniques.
- ✳ Play the sword evasion game (optional).

Introduction

- Today I'm going to show you how to avoid getting hit by a sword. In modern times you probably won't run into a real samurai swinging a sword at you.
- **Ask-** What are some modern moving things, in cities or in nature, that you might need to avoid by quickly moving your body? (ex. cars, bikes, falling branches, running into people in a soccer game, things that might trip you up in nature, flinging branches coming from the hiker in front of you toward your face, etc.).

Teach the sword evasion techniques

- There are three sword evasion techniques to learn: 1) *chi tobi* (pronounced *chee toe-bee*) means Earth leap, *fudoza tobi* (pronounced *foo-dough-za toe-bee*) means immovable leap, and *hira* (pronounced *hee-da*), also called "open the door". *Tobi* means "to leap."
- Demonstrate each of the techniques. Have the student first practice doing each technique without a sword, then 2) have them line up in front of you while you individually swing the sword at them. **Note-** the sword wielder does one of three swings with the sword: 1) horizontal head sword swing (for *chi tobi* evasion), 2) vertically down towards their head (for *hira*), and 3) horizontal or diagonal towards the lower legs or feet (for *fudoza tobi*). With each swing the student does the associated evasion technique. **Variation-** you can ask them how fast they would like you to swing at them (slow, medium, "ninja" = fast, or

“ludicrous mode” = super fast). As the sword swinger, make sure to maintain control.

- If you have teaching assistants, form three lines. Each assistant has a practice sword and does one type of swing. Students do the evasion technique based on which line they are in. Students move to the next line/technique after each evasion is done.
- Play the sword evasion game (see Game below and game video in Resources link above).

Safety

Check the landscape where you are training/playing for hazards, including wasps, poisonous plants, things that could trip you or hurt to land on. If needed, clear the area of branches/rocks. Let the students know to be prepared to get hit in the head, body, or legs by a soft sword. Know your student’s limitations. If needed, they can request for slower swings of the sword until they feel confident, then practice with faster swings.

Sword Evasion Game

- Watch the video demonstrating the game.
- Make boundaries (based on the number of people playing the game). For 2 to 4 people, a 20’ diameter is good. Use cones, backpacks etc. to mark the boundary
- **Rules:** 1) one minute rounds 2) if you get hit you are out and have to stand outside the boundary, 3) if they step out of bounds they are out 4) the sword swinger

must ***swing at half speed*** and do one of the three sword swings described above. If they do a bad swing (not one of the three described above) and hit someone, it doesn't count. Kids on sidelines can be referees.

- **Variations-** 1) **Elimination-** play until only one person is left, 2) **Different sword swinger-** make sure the new sword-person has control, 3) **Blindfolded-** sword swinger is blindfolded, 4) **Variable Boundary Size-** shrink or expand the circle by moving the boundaries in between rounds.

Wrap up: regroup. **Ask-** what strategy did you use? What did/didn't work? What did you learn?

Lesson 3: Skill #2- Shinobi Aruki

Time: 30-60 min



Materials:

- **Paper, plastic, or metal cups** (or any non-glass/non-breakable cup or object to be balanced on a head).
- **Blindfold and clothespins** (Optional-for the stalking game).
- **Location-** a forest, yard, or grassy area that will make some sound when moving across (vs. a parking lot or indoor space which doesn't make much noise).

Activity Overview

- ✳ Show students the fox walking video (optional).
- ✳ Demonstrate and practice fox walking.
- ✳ Do the one minute fox walk step.
- ✳ Play the stalking game.

Introduction

- In Japan, ninjas long ago learned a way to move silently. This is called shinobi aruki (pronounced- *shin-oh-bee ah-roo-key*) or "silent ninja walking." If you are lucky to watch a fox moving, they have a similar silent way of walking. Today we will practice shinobi aruki, also known as fox walking. **Ask-** What other animals depend on stealth and silent movement for survival?

Teach fox walking

- There are four parts to fox walking: 1) lift front leg and balance on your back leg. Use the front leg like a walking cane to carefully feel the ground where you will put it down, 2) put the front foot quietly and gently down on the outside of the foot, 3) roll the foot flat, 4) shift your weight to the front foot (then repeat the sequence with the other foot).
- Demonstrate a "1 minute fox walk". This is done by starting a stopwatch the minute you start to move your back foot. Try to finish step number 4 above (finishing shifting your weight) as close to this time as you can. This is the speed you need to move if you wish to sneak close to wild animals (or humans!) in nature.
- Have students practice this technique. Ask them to move as quietly as possible.
- Start a stopwatch and have all the students try a one minute fox walk step. Have them raise their hand when they finish the one minute step. Watch to see who gets close to this time. For playing the stalking game below, you can move faster than this speed.
- Practice fox walking while balancing objects on their head (paper cups, sticks, small stones, etc.).

Part 2: The stalking game

- Pick someone who feels like they are good with their “spidey senses”. They will be in the center of a group blindfolded.
- Everyone needs an object such as a stick, rock, pine cone etc. One person is chosen to be in the center. Everyone else puts their object within arms reach of the person in the center. These people are the “stalkers”. The stalkers then face outward from the person in the middle and walk 8 to 10 steps outward from the center.
- The person in the center puts on a blindfold. You (the instructor) are the referee. Select people to begin stalking in (as many at a time as you like, but if you have a large group, it can be chaotic to choose too many at once).
- Stalkers fox walk in toward the center and try to get their object and return to their starting point, fox walking slowly the whole time.
- If the person in the middle thinks they detect (hear) someone, they say “Freeze!”. Stalkers must freeze. The person in the middle points a finger at the person they think they hear. Referee checks to see if they correctly “hit” their target by pointing at them. The stalker must go back to the starting point if they are hit.

- The person in the middle gets a limited number of misses. After all misses are used up, a new person is selected for the middle, or after all stalkers have been eliminated or completed their stalk the round ends and a new person is chosen for the middle.
- Stalkers can have multiple attempts if they get hit (referee's choice).
- **Variations-** 1) play "skunk" by having the person in the center use a squirt bottle or water squirter to spray toward the stalkers, 2) stalkers use clothespins to try to pin the clothes of the person in the center, 3) move to a different location to try on a different type of ground (grass versus leaves etc.), or 4) if a stalker makes it back, they can try to stalk back to the center and return their object.
- **Bonus challenge game-** stalk with cup of water on their head. Make an obstacle course to go over, under, and around. Avoid thin plastic cups (they break when they fall and don't hold water).

Safety

Like the sword challenge, pick a place in nature that is safe to practice fox walking. Do a simple scan of the area for hazards such as poisonous/itchy plants, wasp nests, and hazards you might step on. Remember, some obstacles are helpful in teaching you to fox walk.

Lesson 4: Skill #3- Owl Eyes

Time: 30 min



Materials:

- **Notebook and pen/pencil.**
- **Quiet place in nature to observe.**
- **Nature objects such as pinecones** (optional for the game).
- **Training sword or stick** (optional for the game).

Activity Overview

- ✳ Show the owl eyes video (optional).
- ✳ Teach owl eyes.
- ✳ Send students to location on the landscape to record owl eyes observations.
- ✳ Play the owl eyes games.

Introduction

- Today we are going to teach you to expand your awareness by training our eyes to see like owls. This technique is called peripheral vision or "owl eyes." Owls have amazing eyesight that they use to see at night. **Ask-** What other animals depend on their eyesight for survival? Why would peripheral vision, or owl eyes be valuable to us humans? Ninjas use a stance that you learned earlier in sword

evasion called hira to practice peripheral vision and expanded awareness.

Teach Owl Eyes

- Demonstrate hira stance. While in this posture, wiggle your extended fingers to show how you can notice the edge of your peripheral vision from this stance.
- Have the students practice this stance and wiggle their fingers. Try to notice wiggling fingers while looking straight ahead. Have them imagine the feeling of expanded awareness while doing this stance.
- Have students then stand or sit normally while wiggling their fingers out to the side to find the limits of their peripheral vision. Then, have them move their fingers around above and below them to find the limits to vision in these areas.
- Have students drop their hands to their sides and see if they can maintain owl eyes without using their hands.
- Have students pay attention to the tiny, subtle movements that they see while in owl eyes. **Ask** for examples (such as leaves wiggling, bugs, birds, or planes flying by, people moving in the distance).
- Have students take their notebooks and go find a place to sit and practice owl eyes. Ask them to notice the subtle/tiny movements that they normally would miss seeing. Record these things in their notebook, then shift back to

owl eyes. Repeat. Have them sit in nature doing this for 5-10 minutes.

- Return after a designated time. Share observations.

Safety

Define the boundaries for your sit spot owl eyes. Discuss natural hazards before sending them out (ex. wasps or poison oak/ivy). Use a call out vocalization announcing the return time (ex. wolf howl) that everyone repeats loudly when they hear it. Make sure students don't go further than they can hear the call-out to return.

Owl Eyes Game

Game #1: Point the prey

- Watch the owl eyes game video (optional).
- Students get a partner.
- Student #1 stands a few feet behind the second person and throws natural objects one at a time high over the head of their partner and into the distance. Pine cones work great for this activity. Smaller, more challenging objects can be used. Student #2 practices owl eyes and tries to point to each object before they hit the ground. Man-made objects like tennis balls can also work.
- Partners switch roles. **Variation-** do activity while walking down a trail.

Game #2: The Samurai Owl

- Student #1 again stands a few feet behind their partner. Student #2 has a stick or a training sword. Student #1 gently tosses objects over their partner's shoulders with the goal of the objects landing 3-6 feet in front of them. Student #2 attempts to swing their "sword" and connect with the object before it hits the ground. **Variation-** do the challenge while walking down a trail.

Game safety- make sure the objects that are being tossed will not injure their partner (ex. don't use rocks). Make sure students can focus and be safe with this activity before you do this game. If working with multiple pairs of students, make sure there is adequate distance between pairs.

Lesson 5: Skill #4- Match Training

Time: 30-60 min

Materials:

- **A book of matches**
(preferably “strike anywhere” matches).
- Small bowl of water.



Activity Overview

- ✳ Show the training with matches video (optional).
- ✳ Discuss ancient and modern ways that we depend on fire.
- ✳ Demonstrate correct and incorrect (match breaking) ways to light a match.
- ✳ Show how “fire burns up” by angling a lit match in different ways (up, level, down) to regulate the flame.
- ✳ Discuss wind direction.
- ✳ Show how to use the bowl of water.
- ✳ Let students practice.
- ✳ Time the students to see how long they can burn a match.

Introduction

- **Ask-** Why do we need fire to survive? How do we depend on fire today in the modern world to survive?
- Fire can save your life in an emergency. However, just like training in self defense in a dojo, to connect with the element of fire requires respect, focus, and safety. To begin

our training with the element of fire, we start with matches.

- **Ask-** what will matches teach us about fire? (Fuel, humidity, fire burns up, wind)

Teach match striking and burning techniques

- Discuss safety (location, bowl of water, wind, clothing, hair pulled back etc.).
- Demonstrate how to light a match, burn it, and drop it into the bowl of water.
- First have students hold their match over the bowl of water. Light their match from your match. Have them drop their match in the water when they feel they can no longer burn it.
- Let students practice lighting their own matches, burning them, and dropping them into the water.
- Have the students count to themselves (ex. "one Mississippi..") to see how long they can burn a match.
- When they feel they are ready, you can time them with an "official" stopwatch (optional). The goal is for them to show improvement from their first attempts.
- **Variation-** use "strike anywhere" matches and have the students light them on rocks, bricks, etc.

Safety

Adult supervision is required for this skill. Make sure you have a safe place to burn matches with no dry leaves or debris nearby. Have a container, preferably with water available for dropping matches into. Make sure all loose clothing and hair is pulled back. If you feel like the flame is getting too close to your fingers, then simply drop the match

into the water. If you feel like you received a slight burn, immediately dunk your finger into the container of water.

Alternate Lesson: Calligraphy

Time: 30 min

Note- If for logistical reasons, you are unable to do one of the above four skills, you can substitute this calligraphy lesson for one of the skills.



Materials:

- **Paper-** plain paper, watercolor paper, or calligraphy rice paper (your choice).
- **Drawing/painting tool-** pencil, pen, brush (your choice).
- **Kanji brush stroke order print-outs-** see Appendix or Resource link to download printouts. Have multiple copies so students can pick and choose.

Activity

Overview

- ✱ Discuss what a kanji is.
- ✱ Show examples.
- ✱ Demonstrate how to draw a kanji.
- ✱ Practice.
- ✱ Art show.

Introduction

- Kanji are a type of writing that uses characters. For thousands of years, martial artists, especially those who

train in the art of using a sword, have practiced drawing kanji characters, called calligraphy, as one way to train.

Ask-How do you think calligraphy helps train as a martial artist? Think of moving a brush or pen like the practice of training with a sword. Calligraphy teaches focus, eye hand coordination, and mindfulness. When kanji are drawn, each character has a brush order, meaning each part of the character is drawn or painted in a specific order. Today we will practice doing some kanji.

Teach calligraphy

- Pick a sample kanji from the examples we share to start with (see the Resource link for several kanji to draw). We recommend starting with a kanji that has very few strokes, such as the kanji for tree.
- A good practice is to sit up straight at a table when practicing. Have the students get their paper and drawing tool (brush, pen, pencil etc.). Practice the first kanji (ex. tree) together.
- Let the students pick from the various choices of kanji to practice. Encourage them to practice the same kanji many times until they no longer need to look at the example to do it.
- When they are ready, have them pick their favorite one to do on a blank piece of paper (optional).

- **Art show**- After the students do their favorite kanji, put all the kanji on display and go around and share/compliment/critique their work (optional).



CHALLENGE
&
CELEBRATE

The NiN Basics Challenge

Time: 60 min

Ok ninjas, it's time for some fun! Once you have done all 4 skills, it's time for your NiN Basics Challenge! Here is what you will need.



Materials

- paper or plastic cups and some water.
- a training sword (cardboard, foam, etc.).
- Pine cones, acorns, or hand-held balls.
- a book of matches and a bowl of water.
- a timer (watch, phone, etc.).
- A piece of paper and pen/pencil.
- a camera (if certifying students).
- Printed certificates, patch, and shirt (optional).

Activity Overview

- ✳ Students demonstrate sword techniques. Play the sword evasion game.
- ✳ Students demonstrate shinobi aruki/fox walking. Play the stalking game and/or the fox walk water challenge (see video).
- ✳ Students demonstrate owl eyes. Play the owl eyes games.
- ✳ Give them a match to light and burn.
- ✳ Draw the nin kanji
- ✳ Celebrate- certificates/patches/shirts (optional)

Note- if you are leading this training to become a certified NiN Instructor, take pictures of students doing each of these challenge skills. You will need to submit these photos to Pathways Dojo as part of your final instructor certification.

Introduction

- It's now time to see what you have learned by doing the final NiN Basics Pathways challenges. We will review the skills you did and play some fun games.

Lead the Challenges

- **Sword evasion:** Have the students demonstrate the three evasion moves (chi tobi, fudoza tobi, and hira/open the door). Swing the sword at them while having them demonstrate the three moves. Play the sword evasion game.
- **Shinobi aruki/fox walk:** Have the students demonstrate fox walking. Do the fox walk water challenge (see the video in the Resource section above). Play the stalking game.
- **Owl eyes:** Have the students demonstrate hira stance while doing owl eyes. Have them name things that they notices doing owl eyes. Play the owl eyes games.
- **Match Lighting:** Gather around a bowl of water. Give each student a match. Have them light and burn the match then drop it in water. Time them to see how long they burned a match (optional).

- **Drawing the nin kanji:** Have the students draw the nin kanji doing the mind's eye activity from lesson 1. **Option-** show the kanji again and let them draw/paint it again by looking at it without hiding it.
- **Variation-** if you have assistant instructors and a lot of students, break your group into subgroups and set up stations to rotate through, with each assistant leading a challenge.

Celebrate

Now that the skills have been learned, reviewed, and challenged with some fun activities, it's time to acknowledge perseverance.



Materials

- A space to circle the group
- Objects for creating a ceremonial space (optional)
- Certificates, shirts, patches (optional)

Activity Overview

- ✱ Prepare the gathering space
- ✱ Honor individual achievement. Give certificates, shirts, and patches (optional)

Preparing the Space

Find a place to gather with your group. If you wish, you can create a ceremonial space by cleaning/clearing an area of the forest, creating individual seating locations, or setting a “stump of honor” where individuals will come sit to be recognized. If they did the calligraphy exercise, they can pin their art to the surroundings. If you have the ability, making a central fire is always a good way to center the attention of a group.

Honoring Individuals

When you are ready, gather the group. We recommend having everyone seated to help settle and focus the energy. Call each

student up to be recognized for their accomplishments. Instructors and/or students can voice compliments, acknowledgements, and appreciations for students. We often create the “stump of honor” in the circle for individual students to sit upon while we acknowledge them. If you have certificates, shirts, and/or patches, you can hand them out at this time. This is also an opportunity to invite family and friends to come witness and celebrate.

The Next Path

If they enjoyed this training, let them know that by completing the NiN Basics Pathway, they are now eligible to choose their next training pathway in one of the following areas: **1) Elements** (Earth, water, fire, wind, void) **2) Ninjutsu** (making and learning how to use ancient wooden ninja training tools), or **3) Survival skills** (shelter, water, fire, food).



BOWING OUT

We hope you have enjoyed this training adventure. We thank you again for taking the time to be a Guardian of young ninjas.

We look forward to seeing you down the next pathway.

Domo arigato gozaimashita!

(Thank you very much!)

In gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Roemke'.

Mark Roemke
Dai Shihan, 15th Dan
Founder, Pathways Dojo

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kenneth Clarkson'.

Kenneth Clarkson
Director Ninjas in Nature
Shodan

For more Pathways or to train live with us visit

www.ninjasinnature.com



APPENDIX

The NiN Kanji



Nin certificate meaning

Nin
Earth
Water
Fire
Wind
Void

忍地水火風空

Pathways Dojo Ninjas in Nature
Sensei Mark Roemke
Licensed to Teach by Dr. Masaaki Hatsumi
34th Grandmaster of Togakure Ryu
Does hereby award the Pathway of
NiN
To

詞韻波羅密大光明

**Shiken
Haramitsu
Daikomyo**
“Through every encounter may we reach the highest light”

Date _____

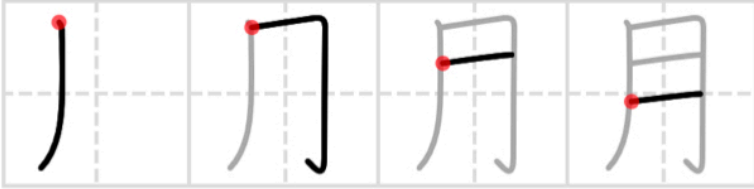
Sensei Mark Roemke, 15th Dan

Ken Clarkson
NiN Program Director

Ninjutsu kanji

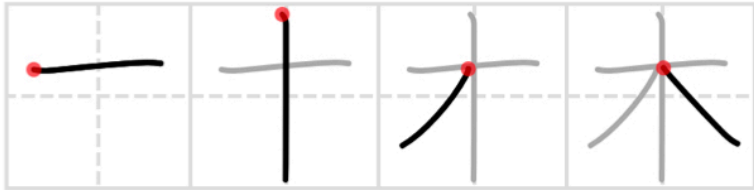
Alternate activity: Calligraphy

Stroke order



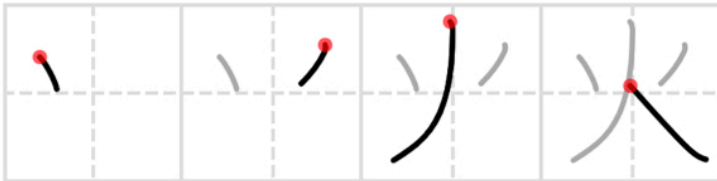
Moon

Stroke order



Tree

Stroke order



Fire

Alternate activity: Calligraphy

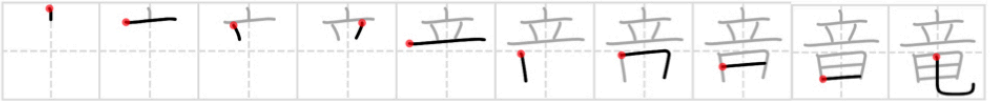
Sword 刀

Stroke order



Dragon 龍

Stroke order



Tiger 寅

Stroke order



Tutorial Videos, Games, and PDF's

To access training videos, games to lead, teaching resources, certificates, and the online Guardian's Store to order patches and shirts, visit the link below.

<https://www.ninjasinnature.com/ninbasics>