



Lesson: Hicho Kaiten, The Ninja Flying Dive Roll

Category: Ninjutsu

Overview

Once you have learned to do the Ninja Somersault, the forward diagonal roll (zenpo kaiten naname), and the backwards roll (koho kaiten), you are ready to progress to the dive roll (see Ninja Rolls Lesson Plan link below if you haven't learned these skills yet). In ninjutsu, the dive roll is known as hicho kaiten (pronounced **Hee**-cho **KI**-ten). This roll requires a level of body awareness to protect the head and neck from injury. In this lesson, we will start out low and slow, then progress towards length and height.

Materials

A soft surface to practice on such as a yoga mat, sleeping pad, thick blankets, athletic mat, mattress, soft grass or leaves (if in nature). We recommend for the dive roll, starting with a thick mattress then gradually moving to thinner padded material. Once this roll is mastered, it can be done on harder surfaces.

Setting

Make sure you have adequate room to do this roll (4-6m depending on body length and leap distance).

Safety

Only progress to the dive roll when students can demonstrate that they can do zenpo kaiten naname without their head touching the ground and without doing a barrel roll. If training indoors, make sure there are no objects to roll into (lamps, chairs, walls etc.). If training



outdoors, scan the rolling area for sharp rocks, sticks, wasp nests, poisonous plants etc. The intent of this technique is to learn to protect the head and neck when rolling.

Lesson:

1. **Say-** Now that you have learned to do the basic forward diagonal roll, we are going to learn a more advanced roll, the dive roll, also known as hicho kaiten. This is a roll designed to protect your head and neck from a high fall.
2. Show students the training videos (links below). Demonstrate the roll if you are capable.
3. Have students form lines in front of the rolling area. Each student goes one at a time then lines up again.
4. Begin with a low crouch roll, progressing to a high crouch, and finally (if comfortable) a roll from a standing position.
5. Have a student place a marker on the ground in front of them indicating the distance that they can clear for a low distance roll. They can then self-regulate and try moving this object incrementally farther away.
6. **Important things to practice:**
 - Use the hand as supportive but flexible shock absorbers
 - Make sure to breathe out as you roll
 - Pay attention to rolling diagonally across the back while tucking the head to the side so as not to let the head touch the ground
 - Practice this roll first on well-padded surfaces (ex. A thick tumbling mat, or mattress)
 - Once the basic crouching roll is perfected, try dive rolling low to the ground for distance
 - Once a low-distance dive roll is achieved, try gradually dive rolling for height, starting with low object to clear then gradually dive rolling over higher objects
 - To roll from over high objects, first practice leaning over the object, get a touch of the ground with the hands, then fall forward into the roll
 - Make sure to practice rolling over both right and left shoulders.
7. Play the roll tag game below once students are comfortable with the technique.



Variations

- **Being pushed**- have students turn their back to you, then give them a gentle touch or push. When touched or pushed, the student should dive roll by dropping to a crouch and diving forward or rolling from a standing fall.
- **Silence**- see how quietly they can roll.
- **Stand up** at end of roll- see if they can roll into a crouching or standing position.
- **Holding an object**- roll while holding an object in one hand.
- **Picking up an object**- toss an object on the floor in front of you (ex. A wooden training sword). Dive roll over the object while picking it up with one hand.
- **Catch and roll**- a partner stands behind the person doing the roll. The partner tosses an object (ex. A ball) over the head and within arms reach. The roller catches the object and immediately falls into a dive roll.
- **Catch and roll #2**- partners stand facing each other at a distance of 3-5 m apart. One person throws a ball to their partner who catches it and immediately falls into a dive roll. Upon standing back up, they then toss the ball to their partner who does a roll, stands, and tosses the ball back. This continues.

Debrief

Ask- Who was able to improve on their height or distance when practicing this roll? What was the hardest variation that you did? How could this roll protect you from injury or possibly save your life? What did you learn doing this roll?

Mind of the Mentor

This roll actually saved the life of Sensei Roemke, which was detailed in our [ninja blog](#). We have had many parents and friends relate stories of how this roll saved their son or daughter from serious injuries including tumbling over bike handlebars, soccer leg trips, and more. This is an extremely empowering roll for kids to learn. For the new kids who are still building their muscle memory technique with this skill, we recommend using a thick (10" or more) mattress until they are safely demonstrating rolling without their head touching the ground. Starting with the crouch version of this roll is also a good way to build confidence and then move to bigger distances. We emphasize that this is not a competition between students for distance



or height but rather an opportunity for personal improvement. In this respect, it is important to let students decide the length and distance they are comfortable with. It is important to be aware of overconfident students who immediately want to go for the highest and farthest roll. This can lead to injury. Make sure they demonstrate gradual competence in developing distance and height. Once the technique is learned, youth absolutely love doing the roll. It builds a lot of confidence.

Video Links:

[How to do a dive roll](#)

[Advanced Dive Roll Techniques](#)

[Dive Roll Tag](#)

Join our private [NiN Mentors Facebook Group](#) to ask questions and share experiences from our curriculum.

Related Lesson Plans

[Throwing Stick Techniques](#)

[Ninja Rolls](#)

