

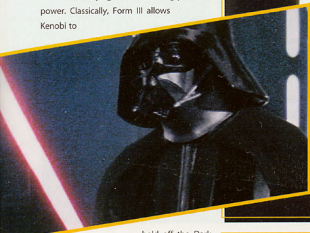


LIGHTSABER COMBAT THROUGH THE STAR WARS SAGA

A New Hope

When Obi-Wan Kenobi duels his former apprentice Darth Vader on the Death Star, both combatants know that they are but shadows of their former selves. Neither has fought another lightsaber-wielder for many years. Kenobi is an older man, and Vader a cyborg crippled by the lingering pain of the injuries that make his life-support suit necessary. Nonetheless, it is a life-and-death battle pitting Kenobi's defensive Form III mastery against Vader's angry Form V power. Classically, Form III allows Kenobi to

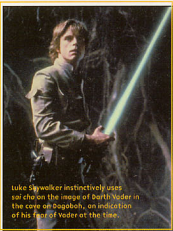
Obi-Wan deploys his blade using a slow materialization setting for maximum stability, since he is about to face a red Sith blade that could potentially cut through his own.



hold off the Dark Lord but cannot bring him victory against the more powerful Form V. Kenobi instead chooses to surrender his body and become one with the Force. Kenobi's successful effort baffles Vader as his old master's body disappears at the moment of death.

The Empire Strikes Back

By the time of the Battle of Hoth, Darth Vader has consolidated his position within the Empire as the favored agent of the Emperor. Within the armed forces Vader now holds absolute power over the higher Imperial officers who scorned him earlier in his career.



Luke Skywalker instinctively uses *soi cho* on the image of Darth Vader in the cave on Dagobah, an indication of his fear of Vader at the time.

This situation reflects Vader's greater mastery over himself and over the Force in the time since the Battle of Yavin, an improvement that is readily apparent in his lightsaber style during the duel with Luke Skywalker on Bespin. Vader has largely freed himself of pain through the Force in the years since the Battle of Yavin and, by practice with living opponents both willing and unwilling, he has advanced his lightsaber technique. Baron Orman Tagge serves as testament to Vader's technique by this era,