

How a Wrestling Match Works

Wrestling matches consist of three periods. These periods vary in length from one minute for younger age groups to 1.5 minutes for our older athletes. Either wrestler in a match can win at any time if they are able to pin their opponent or develop a lead of more than 14 points. Otherwise, the wrestler who can accumulate the most points by the end of the third period wins the match. If the match is tied after three periods, it will go into overtime until one of the wrestlers wins.

There are only two positions from which referees start, or continue a match. The first is the neutral position, with both wrestlers standing and facing each other. The other is the referee's position, where one wrestler starts on his hands and knees down on the mat, and the other starts on top, behind, and in control.

The first period always begins in the neutral position. Each wrestler has their choice in one of the remaining periods, to choose to start from the top or bottom referee's position, or in the neutral position.

If the action must be stopped before the end of a period, the referee restarts the wrestlers in the starting position that best reflects the position the wrestlers were in when the action was stopped.

Wrestlers earn points through takedowns, escapes, reversals, back points, and penalty points. Takedowns are worth two points. This is when a wrestler goes from a neutral (standing) position and is able to bring the other to the mat and gain control. The double-leg drop, single-leg sweep, fireman's carry, arm drag, and pancake are a few examples of takedowns.

Escapes are worth one point. This is when the bottom wrestler is able to break free from the top wrestler and revert back to a neutral position. The stand-up, forward or granby roll, sit-out turn-out, and sit-out turn-in are examples of escape maneuvers.

Reversals are worth two points. This is when a wrestler on the bottom is able to reverse the control so that the opponent is on the bottom. The switch, side-roll, and Peterson roll are examples of reversals.

Back points (Near Fall) are worth two or three points depending on the length of time that the opponent's back is exposed. Back points are scored when the top position wrestler can make the bottom wrestler: 1) spring into a high bridge; 2) lean back on their elbows; 3) expose their shoulders four inches or less to the mat; or 4) have one shoulder on the mat and the other 45 degrees or less above the mat. The half-nelson, cradle, three-quarter Nelson, and armbar series are near-fall maneuvers that can ultimately lead to a "fall".

In a Pin (fall), both shoulders are forced to the mat for a period of two seconds. When a wrestler completes a fall, he scores 6 points for his team during the tournament. A fall immediately finishes a match, and no additional points need to be scored.

Penalty points can be awarded when the opposing wrestler performs illegal moves or is penalized for excessive stalling. An illegal hold is one example in which a wrestler would receive penalty points. The best definition of an illegal hold would be "any maneuver that could cause bodily harm intentionally or not." Illegal holds are penalized in the following manner: first and second offense - one match point for the opponent; third offense - two match points for the opponent; and fourth offense - disqualification from the match. Examples of illegal holds are: full nelsons, overscissors, back bows, headlocks (without arm encircled), forceful trips, pulling thumb or less than four fingers, holds that restrict breathing, and any holds that are used for punishment alone.

Any intentional act that is hazardous to an opponent's physical well-being is considered unnecessary roughness. Such perpetrations such as striking, kicking, butting with the head, elbowing, and forceful tripping are examples of this. Typically the violator is punished as follows: first offense - one point, second offense - two points, third offense - two points, fourth offense - disqualification. If a referee deems an action "flagrant misconduct" at any time during the match, the offender is immediately disqualified along with ALL team points earned for the match.

There are six types of technical violations in freestyle wrestling. Offenders are penalized one point for their first offense, one point for their second, two points for their third and they are disqualified after their fourth infraction. These technical violations include:

1. "Leaving the Mat Proper" - No wrestler may completely step off the wrestling mat without the permission of the referee.
2. "Intentionally Going Out-Of-Bounds" - When either wrestler goes out-of-bounds to avoid wrestling their opponent for any reason (except when a near-fall is scored).
3. "Grasping of Clothing" - A wrestler may not grab anything except his opponent while wrestling.
4. "Interlocking or Overlapping Hands" - The top wrestler may only lock or touch hands around the opponent's body or both legs when they are scoring near-fall points or if the other wrestler is standing up.
5. "Figure-4 Head Scissors" - This is a technical violation in the neutral position.
6. "Improperly Equipped" - This occurs when a wrestler reports to the scorer's table on the mat they are going to wrestle without being prepared to wrestle.

Wrestling matches do not end in a draw or tie. If at the end of three regular periods, the match is tied up, then the match goes into overtime to break the tie. During the overtime period, the wrestler who scores the first point(s) will be declared the winner. There is no rest between the regular match and the overtime period. The overtime period will begin immediately following the three regular periods with both wrestlers starting in neutral position. If no winner is determined by the end of the one-minute overtime period, a second overtime period for 30 seconds will take place.

The 30-second period begins with the wrestler who scored first in the match choosing either the top or bottom position. If there is no score, the referee will toss a disk to determine which wrestler can choose their position to be top or bottom. The wrestler who scores the first point(s) in this 30-second period will be declared the winner. If no score occurs during this final period, then the wrestler in the top position will be declared the winner.

Competition is conducted in a manner as to promote and require good sportsmanship. Competitors are expected to show respect to opponents, officials, and coaches regardless of the outcome of their match. Both wrestlers are required to shake hands before and after the match. It is also common practice for each wrestler to shake the hand of their opponent's coach after the match.