

Safety on the mats

How to be safe and minimize training injuries!

Excerpt from Assessment of Injuries During Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Competition

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The injury rate of 9.2 per 1000 exposures observed in our study of 8 BJJ tournaments suggests an almost 9 times lower risk of injuries in BJJ competitions compared with taekwondo competitions. ... The BJJ injury rates in our study were also substantially lower than the injury rates reported for wrestling.

Etiquette on the Mat

Be a good teammate on and off the mat. We should be trying to support and help each other as a Martial Arts community.

Being a good participant of the art means to help your fellow teammates out during rolling when times are right.

Remember that Jiu-Jitsu's focus is about technique over strength.

We are also training to improve our skills safely. Practice what you are not good at and experimentation with techniques that you are taught is encouraged.

Respect Seniority. In most BJJ Academies, lower belts do not initiate choosing partners to roll with. Usually the Instructor or higher belt will initiate choosing of rolling partners.

Ladies First. Also along the lines of seniority, the ladies have the status of a black belt. Normally if there are two pairs of ladies that are nearby, the higher belt seniority principle applies. However, if there's just one girl among two pairs, the pair where she rolls has seniority, even if the other pair is a brown and black belt, and she is a lower belt. BJJ ladies will always be in danger when a couple of ultra-heavyweight competitors are rolling extra hard nearby.

Use of profanity should be avoided on or off the mat.

Tips to avoid injuries prior to training.

1) If you have an injury, Stay off the mat!

Jiu-Jitsu is a lot of fun and once you are a practitioner you are hungry to get on the mats and train. Don't train through discomfort. If you choose to train, you may be doing more damage to yourself than benefiting by continuing to train.

2) Remember, you are not obligated to train with any one person.

If you are uncomfortable training with a specific person, you are not obligated to train with that person. Inform your instructor about your preference and the reasons why you are not comfortable training with that person. This will allow the instructor to remedy the situation.

2) Warm up adequately

Usually during training sessions, participants are already warmed up prior to training. However if you arrive at the session late, or if the session is an Open Mat session, spend a few minutes to warm up prior to jumping into a free sparring session.

3) Assess your surroundings

- Inspect your surroundings and note any dangerous items that may be on or surrounding the mat area.
- Inform your Instructor if there is something that needs to be removed or cleaned from the mat.
- When you are rolling you must be aware of your space. Notice your placement if you are getting close to the edge of the mat and just reset.
- Other rolling pairs and walls, benches and pillars are environmental hazards that you must avoid.

4) Personal Safety Equipment / Preparation

Make sure to wear a rashguard and proper undergarments.

Wear a mouthguard during all free sparring roll trainings.

Cover all open cuts and abrasions; Taped and Bandaged

Ensure all finger / toe nails are trimmed.

Ensure proper hygiene; personal cleanliness; equipment cleanliness.

Remove all jewelry, piercings, hair pins, and other sharp or hard items worn on your body.

Headgear is sometimes worn to protect your ears, if necessary. If you choose to wear headgear, do not purchase / wear a hard shell headgear since it may injure your teammate.

Do not wear a hard shell groin protector since it may injure your teammate.

Tips to avoid injuries while training.

1) Mat awareness. Be aware while training.

Speak up to your teammates if you see something about to happen.

Protect not only yourself, but your training partner and the other students training.

Respect higher belts and take initiative to move if you see they are about to enter your space.

Currently we are limited to practice takedown techniques from standing because of the mat environment. Keep all sparring sessions on your knees and on the ground.

NOTE: If you intentionally try to injure your partner, you will be asked to leave the studio. Here are some tips to avoid injuries prior to training.

2) Tap early to submissions

When you are caught in a submission and you do not know the proper technique for escape, do not attempt to invent your own escape. Just Tap!

When you are caught in a submission and you are unable escape, do not wait until it is painful. Just Tap!

When you are caught in a submission and you feel the sensation of pressure, do not wait for pain to occur. Just Tap!

Tap multiple times with your hands, feet, or use words when you are unable to escape a submission. If you hear a loud scream from your teammate, the vocalization during a submission is also considered a tap.

Do not wait until it hurts.

3) Practice Jiu-Jitsu pressure for control.

Apply pressure on your teammate for control only. Stack your teammate carefully to avoid injuries.

NOTE: Do not apply pressure to intentionally hurt your teammate. You will be immediately asked to leave the studio.

4) Practice submissions safely.

When applying a submission, apply the submission slowly and deliberately. Release the submission immediately when your partner taps; or when you believe you might inflict injury to your partner.

5) Keep control of your techniques and body movements

Avoid explosive moves. Remember that the principles of Jiu-Jitsu is about technique over physicality.

Avoid body slams, strikes, and other illegal techniques; Your instructor will go over legal and illegal positions.

No Small joint manipulations; Fingers, Toes, Eye pokes, Scratches, or Pinches

Avoid excessive pressure. Apply pressure for control. Do not apply pressure to injure your teammate.

Control your body (weight) to avoid accidentally falling on top of your partner's joints.

Properly fall and base during rolls to prevent injury.

6) Protect yourself in all positions

Inverting is a great technique for those more flexible among us to defend the guard and even catch triangles and other submissions.

These positions, however, can place one's neck and spine in a precarious position. If the opponent suddenly reacts in an unexpected way, the pressure and weight can come down in a dangerous way on the bottom player.

If you are getting stacked while attacking a triangle and your neck is in a bad position, be safe by giving up the triangle and protect your spine.

Positional Hierarchy. The general rule here is that the more complicated the position, the higher it is on the hierarchy. In this case, the practitioners engaged in the lower complexity position will defer to the practitioners engaged in the higher complexity position. For example, the closed guard pair will reset and move further away from the other practitioners engaged in an open guard exchange.

7) Avoid explosive techniques and the overuse of strength. The goal of Jiu-Jitsu is to learn to use technique over power and strength.

In summary, mat awareness is a key in your BJJ skill set to stay safe. Look out for you and your training partners while you roll. Simply look around prior to the start of your roll and respect the ground rules while you are engaged in a roll. This way we can keep our Jiu-Jitsu training fun and safe for everyone,