

A smiling man with a shaved head, wearing a blue Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu gi, stands against a teal background. He is holding a black championship belt with a large buckle. The text 'GUIDE TO BRAZILIAN JIU-JITSU' is overlaid on the image. The word 'GUIDE TO' is in yellow, and 'BRAZILIAN JIU-JITSU' is in white. The background features large, faint letters 'U' and 'J'.

GUIDE TO
BRAZILIAN
JIU-JITSU

presented by
Presley BJJ



A NOTE ABOUT THIS GUIDE'S FUNCTIONALITY

This guide is a comprehensive overview of your journey as a developing student in BJJ. As you begin as a newbie in the sport, this guide will save you time by removing the randomness in “what should I study next?” Think of it as your road map from white to black belt! This will be most useful to students in the first five years of their BJJ studies.

FUNCTIONALITY OF THIS GUIDE INCLUDES:

- bookmarks
- hyperlinked table of contents
- external links to created and curated resources
- supporting visuals
- glossary of key terms

This document has been created to deliver effective and accessible information. Suggestions for improvement are welcome and may be emailed to

info@presleybjj.com



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BEFORE YOUR FIRST CLASS

Walking into an academy (also known as dojo or gym) for the first time can be intimidating. Knowing a few key points prior to entering can help make those first few steps a bit easier.



PRE-CLASS

At most gyms you will be greeted by someone at the front desk. This person is likely an instructor at the gym. They will give you the layout of the place and the location of facilities like the washroom and changing area, and share any other important information. It is recommended that you arrive a few minutes early and be ready when the class starts. People will often sit on the mat and stretch out, chat with a friend, maybe even try a technique they saw on the internet before class begins. The instructor will call a start to the class, starting with technique or group warm-ups and tell you what to do.

If you do not have BJJ attire (discussed below) for your first class, this is usually okay! Email or call beforehand and you may take your class in regular gym attire.

WHAT IS THE GOAL OF A MATCH? (HOW DO YOU WIN?)

The goal in BJJ is to use your body to immobilize your opponent's body, ending the match with a submission hold (winning instantly) or by scoring more points than your opponent in the allotted time frame. A tied score will be decided by the referee/judges. A submission can occur from any position. Scores are cumulative and no single score can end the match. When you "tap out" an opponent in the academy, you restart the match.

TAPPING OUT

What is it? Why it's important and how to do it properly.

Tapping out involves gently slapping your hand against your opponent/yourself/the mat. Try to tap on your opponent's body (at least 3 times quickly) so they can hear and feel it to let go faster! It is a signal that you are giving up and your opponent should release their hold immediately. Respect the tap. If you cannot tap physically, say "tap" loudly. We are placing an enormous amount of trust in our partners to protect each other.

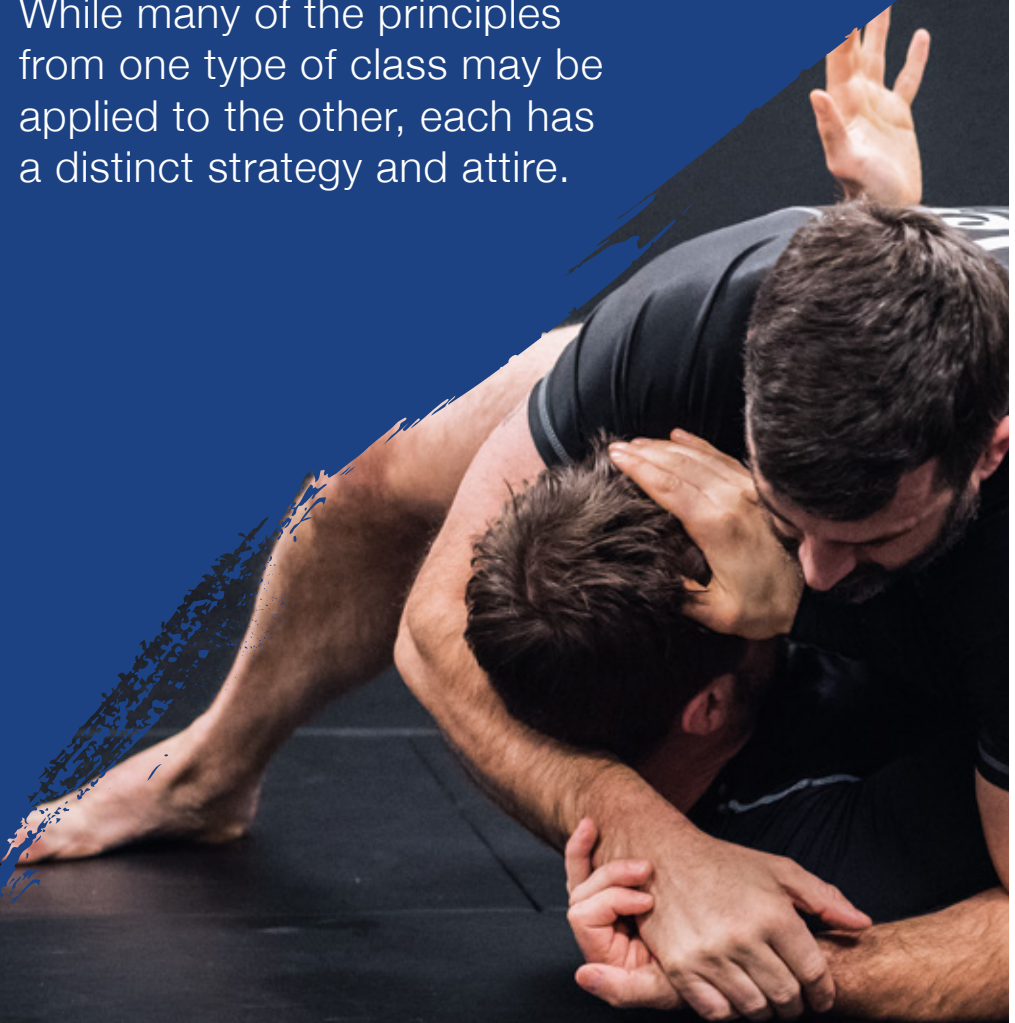
Some may tap from physical pain or mental stress/emotional reasons. Remember we are all there to learn and support each other.

Don't get so caught up in getting a submission hold that you don't notice your opponent tapping out!

An example of a match from the BJJ World Championships: [Roger Gracie vs. Rafael Lovato Jr. \(Gracie wins by choke\)](#)

TYPES OF CLASSES

Brazilian jiu-jitsu classes are either “Gi” or “No Gi” classes. While many of the principles from one type of class may be applied to the other, each has a distinct strategy and attire.



GI CLASSES

In Gi classes students wear the traditional BJJ uniform called the Gi (or sometimes kimono). It includes a Gi jacket, pants, and a coloured rank belt. It is recommended to wear a rash guard (tight-fitting spandex shirt) or t-shirt under your Gi. Some people also choose to wear tighter shorts or yoga pants under their Gi pants.

The Gi is designed to imitate clothing and it is legal to grip your own Gi, AND your opponent's Gi to attack and defend! Gi sparring tends to be a bit slower paced than no Gi, and more grips are available. People will keep grabbing your sleeves and collars. Watch out for collar chokes!

A Gi usually ranges in cost from \$150–250 depending on quality/brand/model and where you source it. Make sure to check the manufacturer's sizing chart before you purchase to get the correct size. Sizes usually range from A1 (small) to A5 (large to extra-large).

NO GI CLASSES

In No Gi you will wear a rash guard top and a pair of board shorts (shorts that don't have pockets or zippers). You will be dressed as if you are going to the beach on a nice summer day!

In No Gi you are NOT allowed to grab your opponent's clothing, but you can grab your own clothing.

No Gi sparring tends to be faster paced, and when opponents gets slippery with sweat techniques can be trickier to execute! Sometimes No Gi gear will be marked with the rank colour.

No Gi rash guards cost \$40–100. No Gi board shorts are \$50–100+.

GI'S

- [Fighter's Market Canada](#)
- [Hyperfly Canada \(Gi and No Gi gear\)](#)
- [Hayabusa Canada](#)

NO GI SHORTS & GEAR

- [Rash guards](#)
- [Scramble Canada](#)
- [Matsuru Canada](#)

HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

Hygiene and best practices will contribute to your ongoing enjoyment when training in BJJ. A few key points to keep in mind:



Trim your nails: You use your hands a lot in BJJ to grab at your opponent. Please keep your nails short to prevent scratching or cutting your partner's body! Nobody wants to go to work with a fingernail scratch across their face!

Skin health: Shower right after class to prevent skin infections like ringworm or MRSA. It's normal for grapplers to get skin infections. Don't be embarrassed, it's part of the sport.

Cauliflower ear: This involves a swelling of the ear and is very painful. It can occur in the first 1–4 years of training. Some students wear head gear to protect their ears.

Washing your Gi/gear: This should be done after every class! Very important. Treat your BJJ gear like your workout clothing.

Mouthguard: Can be used throughout class and should be used for sparring! You can get one made by most dentists (highly recommended) or purchase from a sporting goods store and adjust at home.

Hydration: Drink plenty of water before training and bring water to class. You can sometimes lose 5–10 pounds of water weight in a class! Too bad it comes back the next day.

Diet: A lot of people ask what to eat. BJJ encourages a healthy lifestyle and eating your fruits and veggies! Consult your doctor for any diet plans and/or advice.

HOW CLASSES WORK

Most classes will start with a group warm-up, cover at least one drill technique, and finish with rolling/sparring. Often the class will work on moves from a particular position. These moves are all pieces of a very large puzzle (a match) that you need to see before you can be expected to perform well in a BJJ match. After the technique portion of class, some instructors will do “positional sparring”, which is like a mini game in a certain position. Others will follow technique with rolling/sparring where you roll with different partners for a given time. Most BJJ clubs limit a round to 3–6 minutes. Advanced belts can have 10+ minute matches.

LEARNING THE POSITIONS

Now that you have walked into the academy and are ready to train, it's time to discuss the basic or "fundamental" moves in BJJ.

WHAT ARE THE BASIC POSITIONS?

Each position has an offensive and defensive perspective to learn. Many fundamental classes will show one of the moves described below, then show how to defend against that move, and perhaps a progression from there.



MOUNT

DEFENSIVE MOVES

- Bridge
- Frame
- Elbow knee escape
- Bridging mount escape (upa)

OFFENSIVE MOVES

- Collar choke (Gi only)
- Armbar
- Americana lock
- Arm triangle choke
- Gift wrap
- Cross face

Defensive perspective. Physically, you will be feeling your partner's weight on top of you, specifically on your hips, chest, shoulders, and sometimes face. This may cause you to feel claustrophobic. It's normal. Remember, your partner is your friend! All your movements will require a lot of energy because you are carrying all your partner's weight. Keep your elbows tight to your body. Bridging and shrimping are your main body movements to escape mount. You will feel pressure from your opponent, and your breathing can sometimes be obstructed intentionally or unintentionally. Escaping from this position is very difficult.

Offensive perspective. You are sitting on top of your opponent's waist, making it tough for them to use their legs against you. Worry about keeping a stable base out wide with your hands. Your partner will look to grab one of your arms or trap one of your legs between their legs. Mentally, it can be frustrating trying to attack from mount. If your partner stays tight and you are not able to get a submission, focus on keeping them in mount. BJJ is about control!

BACK CONTROL

DEFENSIVE MOVES

- Hand fighting
- 2on1 arm control escape
- Wrist control
- Over hook escape
- Under hook escape

OFFENSIVE MOVES

- Seatbelt control
- Rear-naked choke (RNC)
- Bow and arrow choke (Gi only)
- Body triangle
- Sleeve choke (Gi only)
- Back triangle

Defensive perspective. Your partner is behind you and you are not able to see what they are doing. They will be trying to gain a choke hold by wrapping an arm around your neck. They may be holding you tight to their body by locking their arms around you. Often your wrists, elbows, forearms will be grabbed by your opponent's hands or sometimes their legs! Use your hands and chin to protect your neck similar to how a boxer protects their face from punches. Their legs will be around your waist. Worry more about their arms than their legs. You are unlikely to make your partner submit when they are on your back. Try to focus on escaping the position and getting back to guard. Mentally it is exhausting being stuck in back control. It feels like you have a backpack on that is trying to choke you! It can be frustrating as even if you block their submission attempts, you can't get out from a good player's back control!

Offensive perspective. Physically your arms are wrapped around your opponent's upper body in some way (see seatbelt grip). Your legs make two hooks over your opponent's thighs. Try to keep your chest stuck to your partner's back like a piece of Velcro. Focus on staying on the back once you get there; it takes a lot of work to get to back control. Mentally you feel like you are winning the battle at this point. It can be frustrating to not get the submission; it's as if you are at the goal line but cannot get into the end zone. Getting strong with submission skills takes time. Be patient!

SIDE CONTROL

DEFENSIVE MOVES

- Frame
- Bridge and shrimp escape
- Elbow push escape
- Tricep post
- Turtle

OFFENSIVE MOVES

- Cross face
- Scarf hold
- Kimura
- Americana
- Armbar

Defensive perspective. People often describe a feeling of drowning when stuck under bottom side control. It's like having a wet blanket on top of you. It is important to breathe and try to relax! It's normal to panic when you start training but breathe and control your emotions; tap out if you are in physical pain! Most won't be comfortable in bottom side control until at least blue belt or higher.

Physically you will feel your partner's weight on top of your body. Their chest often touches your chest. It will be difficult to move yourself or your partner's body. Try to not let your partner control your head! The best chance to escape is to wait until your partner tries to move on top - make your move as they move! A lot of submission attacks are available to the person in top-side control, but there aren't many good submission options for bottom players.

Offensive perspective. Your body is perpendicular to your opponent's body. Usually one arm will be hugging their head and the other arm will hook under for upper body control. Keep your legs free and clear of your partner's legs. Mentally you should feel like you are in control of the battle. But don't get too comfortable as the situation can quickly change!

CLOSED GUARD

DEFENSIVE MOVES

- Framing
- Posture
- Grip breaking
- Breaking open the guard

OFFENSIVE MOVES

- Armbar
- Collar choke
- Triangle choke
- Kimura
- Hip bump sweep

Defensive perspective (top player).

You are on your back with your legs wrapped around your opponent's waist and your ankles locked. This gives you a lot of control over your opponent's body. Don't worry about squeezing your legs tight, just keep them inside your guard. You will use your arms to grab the collar, head, elbows of your partner to pull them down and break their posture. Many sweeps and submissions are available in closed guard. It is seen as a neutral position to some, but if the bottom player knows it well, they can have a big advantage!

Offensive perspective (bottom player).

You are on your knees (or standing) and your opponent's legs are wrapped around you. There are very few submission options from here. Against a good closed-guard player attempting a submission, inside their guard is a sure way to end up in a bad position or be submitted. All of your focus should be on breaking their guard and opening the legs! Only after you open the legs can you then pass or submit.

HALF GUARD

DEFENSIVE MOVES (TOP PLAYER)

- Under hook
- Cross face
- Knee cut pass
- Smash pass

OFFENSIVE MOVES (BOTTOM PLAYER)

- Knee shield
- Arm drag
- Under hook
- Sweep

Defensive perspective (top player).

You are on your knees with one of your legs between your partner's legs. Your goal in this position is to get your leg free from their legs and get to a dominant position. You can attack submissions from half guard. The classic method is to fight for upper body control (cross face and under hook) looking to flatten them out and pass. Often you will need your free foot to assist in removing your trapped leg. Strong guard passers will sometimes force their way into half guard. It can be a strong position for top and bottom players. .

Offensive perspective (bottom player).

You are on your side facing your opponent with one of their legs between yours. Your main objective here is to control distance between you and your partner, looking to create opportunities to sweep/submit or go for back control. Do your best to not get flattened out on your back! This will lead to guard passes. In half guard both players are halfway to the back.

OPEN GUARD

DEFENSIVE MOVES

- Guard retention
- Grip fighting/breaking
- Collar sleeve control (Gi only)
- Collar drag
- Butterfly sweep

OFFENSIVE MOVES

- Torreando pass
- Leg drag pass
- Knee cut pass
- Stack pass

Defensive perspective. You are either seated or lying down (supine) with your knees to your chest and feet in the air. There is a greater distance between you and your opponent compared to closed or half guard. The number of different guards you can play is large. You will need to engage your opponent with grips before you can attempt to sweep or submit. In open guard you can be offensive or defensive depending on your opponent's reactions.

Offensive perspective. You are standing or kneeling and your opponent is seated or supine. Often, the one who can "get to their grips" first will be in control of the battle. You will need to close the distance and get clear of your opponent's legs while working toward a dominant position or submission hold.

GUARD PASSING

DEFENSIVE MOVES

- Guard retention
- Shrimp
- Inversion
- Grip break

OFFENSIVE MOVES

- Leg drag pass
- Pressure pass
- Stack pass
- Loose pass
- Submission pass

Defensive perspective. Supine or seated position. When defending your guard, you will need to protect the space between your elbows and knees, particularly your ribcage. Don't let your partner occupy that space with their body. If that happens, they have passed your guard. Don't let them get free of your legs. You will need to defend your guard by pushing your partner away, shrimping, changing angles, and using guard retention techniques to keep your partner in front of you. Your goal is to tie your partner up for control over them, sweep, or submit.

Offensive perspective. You are standing or on your knees. Your job is to get free and clear of your partner's legs while finishing in a dominant position. Good guard players will be tough to pass. Try to become efficient in one or two types of guard passing and work on chaining them together. Pressure passing uses your body weight and leverage against your opponent; loose passing is started on your feet and uses movement as the main weapon against a less mobile guard player. Submission passing involves locking up a submission hold like a kimura and using that to create a guard pass. You can also attack submissions while passing guard.

STANDING POSITIONS, WRESTLING, AND TAKE-DOWNS

DEFENSIVE MOVES

- Grip breaking
- Sprawl
- Stance
- Guard pull

OFFENSIVE MOVES

- Double leg
- Single leg
- Front headlock
- Arm drag
- Judo throw

Defensive perspective. When standing with your opponent the defensive and offensive perspectives can look very similar. You will feel defensive when your partner has grips on you. They will usually look to grab your head, neck, wrists, elbows, and legs in No Gi. Their intention is to break your posture down and set up takedown attacks, putting you down to the mat. With the Gi on, all grips

are fair game except gripping inside the sleeves and pants. The one who gets to their grips first will be the one to control the battle. Whoever controls the grips controls the setups; whoever controls the setups controls the match. Standing defensive reactions will often involve a lot of grip breaking, maintaining balance (sometimes on one foot), and movement of your body. Be careful because standing techniques are often very tiring when first learning to use them in a match. If you don't know any standing techniques (actually very common), get comfortable grabbing hold of your partner and sitting down to play guard. Now instead of wrestling your opponent is forced to engage in guard passing.

Offensive perspective. Once you grab your partner you can start to be offensive. Your goal is to put your their butt down on the mat. Takedowns can be completed in front of and behind an opponent. There are many different takedown methods. Wrestling is practiced in No Gi while Gi uses many judo takedowns. These are two separate martial arts that must be modified to meet the criteria for BJJ. It is very common for beginner BJJ athletes to spend most of their time on the ground and become interested in learning takedowns later on. Often in competition, the heavier the weight class the less inclined athletes are to pull guard.

DOMINANT POSITIONS

These are the positions you want to achieve and hold in BJJ:

- Mount
- Back control
- Side control

Once you have stabilized a dominant position, it's time to go for a submission by isolating a limb or going for a choke...

HOW TO DEAL WITH UNCOMFORTABLE POSITIONS

Breathe! Tap out! Tap early and often. If you are in physical pain, submit by tapping out. BJJ students are working towards becoming masters of dealing with uncomfortable positions through breath control and emotional control. Even if you don't know the right

technique to use, try to calm yourself and survive the moment. This is a great time to ask your partner questions! They have probably felt the same way at some point. The best way to learn how to deal with tough situations is through knowledge. Knowledge that your rolling partner has!

COMMON SUBMISSION HOLDS

2 types

Joint Locks—Can attack the elbow (armbar), shoulder (kimura, americana), wrist, knee, etc.

Chokes—Blood chokes put pressure against the two carotid arteries and will result in going unconscious if you don't tap! Common chokes include the triangle choke, guillotine choke, arm triangle choke, rear naked choke.

STRUCTURE OF A MATCH

All competition matches start in a standing position. The match will go to the ground by either a takedown or a guard pull. Some of the most common match progressions are...

- 1 Guard pull—sweep—guard pass—submit
- 2 Guard pull—sweep—mount—back control—submit
- 3 Takedown—guard pass—submit
- 4 Takedown—guard pass—back control—submit

Most BJJ clubs start their rolls on the ground. One person on top, one on bottom - instead of shaking hands it's more common to slap hands, bump fists and start the roll!

THE GUARD

BJJ is characterized by its focus on the guard position (bottom position, defined above). From a guard position you can look to off-balance, sweep, or submit your opponent. There are various types of guards with some of the most popular being butterfly guard, half guard, closed guard, de la Riva guard, and X guard.

CONTROLLING DISTANCE

One of the most important concepts in BJJ is to control the distance between you and your opponent. There will be times when you want to increase that distance, and times when you want to decrease it. When two people are standing at a distance, the attacking possibilities are unlimited. As space

decreases or gets taken away, the options for techniques become fewer. Look to become a master of controlling distance as you progress through the BJJ ranks.

HOW HARD SHOULD I TRY TO GO IN SPARRING?

Focus on breathing and relaxing instead of trying too physically hard. Aim for 70–75% as a normal baseline. Try to take it easy in the beginning, on your partners and yourself! The more you train, the less it will feel like a “fight” and the more relaxed you will become.

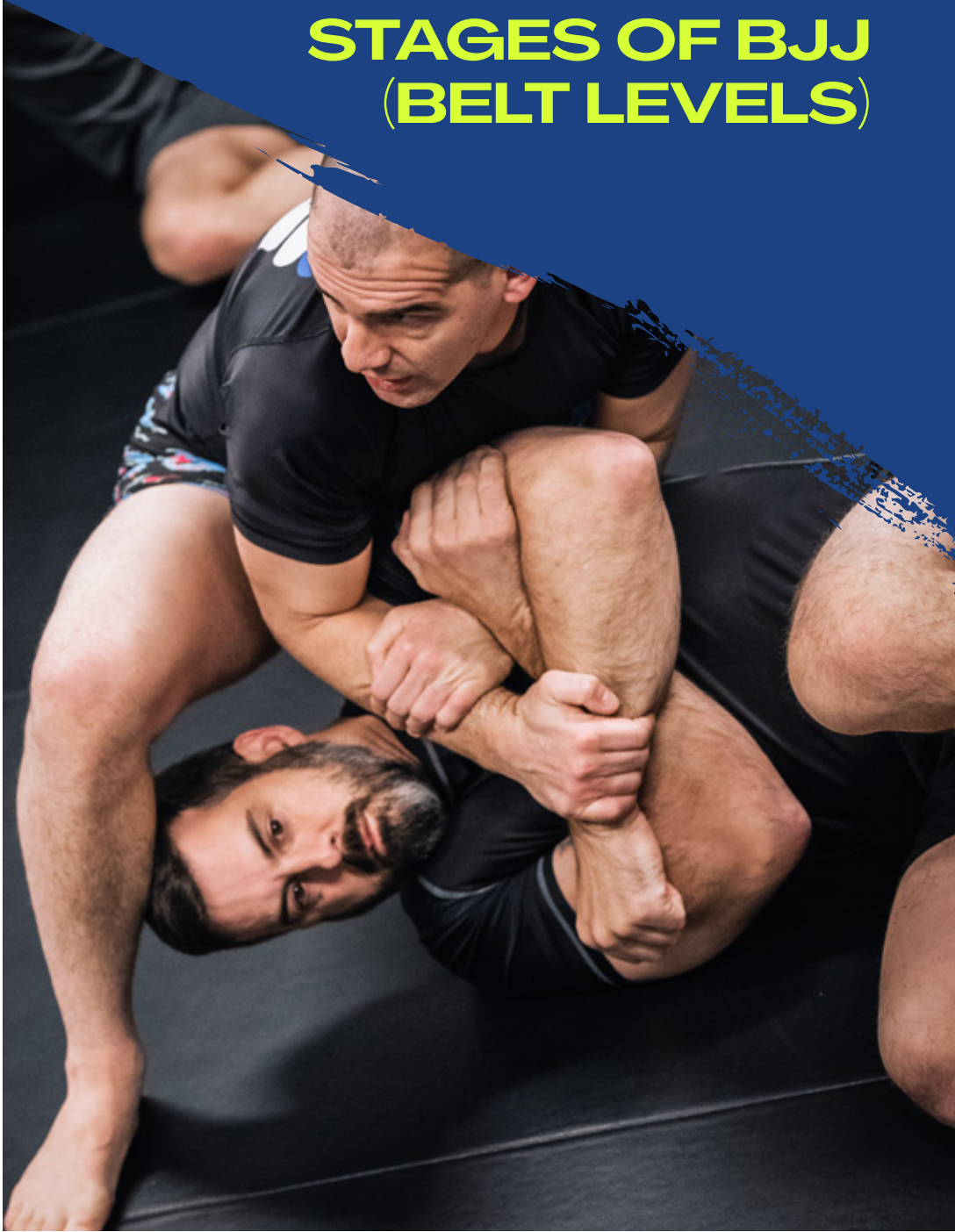
MATCHES TO WATCH

[Tommy Langaker vs. Sebastian Brosche](#)

[Roger Gracie vs. Claudio Calasans](#)

[Garry Tonon vs. Rousimar Palhares](#)

DEVELOPMENT STAGES OF BJJ (BELT LEVELS)



LEVEL 1 (WHITE BELT–BLUE BELT) AVERAGE TIME 1–2 YEARS

WHAT SKILLS WILL I BUILD?

- Identification. Able to identify takedowns, sweeps, passes, and submissions.
- Learning proper movement patterns for BJJ and gaining fundamental knowledge.
- Learning how to survive unfavorable positions. Learning when to quit/tap.
- Emphasis on learning gripping, grip fighting, hand position, head position, and being able to move another person's body.
- Can perform a couple of attacks from bottom position.

Most important skill in all of BJJ:

Identification

The quicker you can identify what your opponent is trying to do, the better for you. If you don't know the technique your opponent is using, it is impossible to defend against it. BJJ is a game of trying to force your partner into predictable reactions and taking advantage of those reactions. If you know what your partner is going to do next, you are a step ahead.

LEVEL 2 (BLUE BELT–PURPLE BELT) AVERAGE TIME 4–5 YEARS

- To accomplish the above and start hitting one takedown, pass, and sweep consistently on peers and lower belts.
- Becoming more efficient in fundamental movements
- Building confidence in your technique and skill level
- Learning the most common reactions and basic attacks
- Refining your technique
- Mentoring less experienced students
- Developing a good defense and a few escapes from dominant positions
- Learning what a guard pass is and how to achieve it against a partner of similar skill level.
- Learning how to roll with partners of different sizes.

LEVEL 3 (PURPLE BELT-BROWN BELT) AVERAGE TIME 7-8 YEARS

- Accomplish all of the above as well as establish dominant position post-takedown, pass and sweep.
- Ability to chain attacks together, attacks are becoming smooth
- Clean up the “rough edges” of your skillset
- “Specialize” in one or two guards
- You are a challenging round for higher belts
- Can manipulate your opponent’s momentum and weight against them
- Ready to begin teaching what you know to beginners.

LEVEL 4 (BROWN BELT-BLACK BELT) AVERAGE TIME 10-12 YEARS

- Attain a dominant position and finish from there
- Full control over your body and ego
- Highly technical
- Attack and defend reflexively, without thought
- Fluid and efficient in your complex attacks
- Strong defensive skills and escapes
- Reducing wasted movements
- Forcing people into predictable reactions and taking advantage of those reactions
- Being efficient with your energy while rolling

THE MENTAL ATTITUDE FOR EACH BELT

Level 1: You are a complete beginner.

Relax! Go at your own pace. There is a lot you don't know. You will need to be coached and told what to do. You're learning what to do, how to do it, and why you are doing it. The most difficult level. You will spend a lot of time on the bottom, and tapping out to higher belts. You will feel frustrated, confused, and unsure of what you are doing. You will also have the greatest leap in development. Take your time, breathe, and ask your partners and instructors lots of questions.

Level 2: You are starting to know what to do, but it's tough to actually do it!

You're focused on the outcome and tapping someone out and not tapping out yourself. You have a few "go to" moves that work well. You have a deeper understanding of BJJ. You still make mistakes, but are now aware of them. Your performance is inconsistent. You will start to become more independent with your skill development. Keep practicing what you are good at to improve your timing. Now is not the time to let ego creep in! Stay humble, work with less experienced partners to practice control and work on your weaknesses with similarly skilled belts to have competitive and challenging rolls.

Level 3: You are getting pretty good at this! You know what to do, and why you are doing it.

Stronger, more athletic, younger students will still give you plenty of problems. But you are now developing systems to use to control your opponent and are capable of connecting moves together in a coherent way. Development is slower now and plateaus are common. Stay focused! Complacency, emotional fragility, lack of concentration, lack of focus are common problems.

Level 4: You're an expert! You know what to do and when to do it.

You're winning lots of rolls now. You love the learning process. Not focused on the outcome, enjoying the process of the activity. Performance is consistent but gains are smaller. Development is slow. Lots of self-coaching. Find the weaknesses in your game and strengthen them. Be kind to your training partners. You still have a lifetime of learning ahead of you.

HOW DO I GET GRADED TO THE NEXT BELT?

Your instructor will decide when it is time. This is usually based on factors like skill level, knowledge of technique, success against peers, time on the mat, dedication to the sport and academy.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT CAN I DO TO GET BETTER AT BJJ OFF THE MAT?

Watch competition videos on YouTube of black belt matches. Watch instructional videos. Stretch, do yoga, do bodyweight exercises, focus on mobility.

CAN I ASK ANYONE TO ROLL?

Yes. Most academy cultures (and Presley BJJ) encourage asking anyone to roll—higher belts, even the instructor. In other academies, the higher belts (purple+) pick their partners first and lower belts are not expected to ask higher belts to roll. If this is the case, it's usually made clear before class begins.

CAN I SAY “NO” TO ROLLING WITH A PARTNER?

Yes you can, and don't feel bad about it! BJJ is a very close contact sport. Roll with who you feel comfortable with. Sometimes you may feel at a higher risk of injury or don't feel you are ready for an opponent's size/strength...literally any reason is good enough to not roll with someone. If someone says “no” when you ask them to roll, don't take it personally! Everyone is dealing with something.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN SOMEONE SAYS THAT PERSON IS “SPAZZY”?

It means someone is trying to use a lot of strength and quick movements without much technique behind it. Some feel like they are fighting a bodybuilder when rolling with a spazzy person. The key is communication; help them relax and learn to use their energy in a more effective, technical way.

DO I “HAVE” TO BE ABLE TO DO A MOVE ON BOTH SIDES (LEFT AND RIGHT)?

No, you don't. Most students will develop a strong side and weak side for practicing techniques. It's not necessary to perform moves on both sides, but it does make you a more well-rounded grappler!

FUTURE COURSES/WORKBOOKS ON COMPETING, DEVELOPING A PERSONAL GAMEPLAN, CONDITIONING, TRAINING WHILE TRAVELLING, ETC.

Pre-work for students to complete before class

Post work for students to study after.

Including mini tests

GLOSSARY

ROLLING/SPARRING

Ankle lock: A foot lock where the toes are extended down, applying pressure to the Achilles tendon, aka Achilles lock.

Americana: A shoulder lock where the arm is bent with the wrist above the elbow. Pressure is applied on the wrist to get the submission.

Arm drag: Pulling your opponent's tricep so you can move them past your body and get behind them.

Arm triangle: A blood choke using your arms to lock around your partner's neck and shoulder to cut off blood flow to the brain.

Back take: Any move that results in you ending up in back control.

Base: Being stable and difficult to push over. Base on top position is very important.

Belt: Traditional BJJ is done in the Gi and your belt demonstrates your rank.

Breakfall: A technique designed to spread out the impact of your body when falling or thrown. Prevents injury. Learn how to breakfall!

Bridge: Fundamental movement done on your back lifting your hips in the air. Used to escape and create space.

Butterfly guard: An open version of guard where you are seated with your legs bent and heels in toward your butt.

Cauliflower ear: A painful swelling of the ear caused by a blow or trauma sustained by the ear. Can be protected against with headgear.

Clinch: When you and your opponent both have hold of each other.

Collar choke: Any Gi choke where you grab your opponent's collar and use it to gain a submission.

Crank: When force is applied to the neck and spine, not carotid arteries. Not encouraged and sometimes seen as a bully move.

Control: Being able to influence or dictate your opponent's body movements.

Crossface: A form of upper body control where you grab your partner's lat muscle and put your shoulder into their jaw.

Escape: A technique used to get out of a bad position.

Framing: A hand, elbow, knee, etc. used to control the distance from your opponent.

Gable grip: A palm to palm grip (no thumbs) created by American wrestler Dan Gable. One of the strongest grips in BJJ.

Gassing out/gassed: When you are too tired to continue rolling.

Gracie family: The original family of BJJ who brought the art to North America and were responsible for a lot of its popularity in the early days of BJJ.

Heel hook: A leg lock twisting the foot and ankle, with major damage possible for the knee. Tap early to heel hooks because you may not feel the pain right away!

Hooks: When your feet are on the inside of your opponent's thighs. Powerful for lifting and moving your opponent.

Guillotine: A choke involving wrapping your arms around your partner's neck with your armpit over the back of their head.

Judo: A standing martial art that involves powerful throwing techniques.

Kneebar: A submission hold involving hyperextending the leg.

Kimura: A shoulder lock where you grab your opponent's wrist and your own wrist.

Lockdown: A version of half guard that locks both the bottom player's legs around one of the top player's legs in a bear-trap type situation.

MRSA: A dangerous skin infection that is resistant to antibiotics. See a doctor.

No Gi: A form of training in shorts and a t-shirt as opposed to the traditional Gi/kimono.

Omaplata: A shoulder lock done to an opponent using your legs and hips.

Over hook: A clinch hold using your arm to reach over your partner's arm, with the ability to trap it against your own body. Also known as a whizzer.

Ringworm: A common skin infection for grapplers that presents itself as an itchy round circle. Shower right after class to prevent ringworm.

Sandbagging: When your skill level is seen as higher than the belt division you are competing in.

Seatbelt grip: Locking your hands together around your partner's upper body with one arm underneath their armpit and the other arm over the opposite shoulder.

Shark tank: An endurance form of sparring where one person stays in and keeps rolling with fresh opponents regardless of the outcome of the match.

Shrimp/hip escape: Done while lying on your back. Drive your feet into the ground and push your hips out to the side.

Slap and bump: A common sign of respect in BJJ. Most rolls start and end with a slap of hands and bump of fists.

Submission: A hold that results in your partner tapping out and the end of the match.

Sweep: When you go from bottom guard position to top position, holding top for 3 seconds.

Triangle: A classic BJJ technique involving wrapping your legs around your partner's neck and shoulder and using your legs and their trapped shoulder to execute a choke hold.

Pass the guard: When you get around/free from your partner's legs and are able to pin them down for 3 seconds of control.

Turtle: A defensive shell position where you are on your elbows and knees.

Plateau: When you are training for a suitable time but don't feel you are progressing your skills. This is very common as BJJ is a long road. There will be peaks and valleys; the main thing is to stay in the race!

Posture: Refers to your spine being straight and in alignment.

Pummel: Fighting for inside control using your legs or arms.

Pulling guard: When you go from a standing position to a guard position. Most commonly done with one or two grips on your partner before sitting down. This is done to engage the ground fighting quicker.

Rolling: Commonly used term for the sparring that takes place during class.

Uke: The partner involved in demonstrating a technique with the instructor.

Under hook: When your arm goes under your partner's arm, grabbing their back. This gives you the ability to lift your partner's arm and move their body.

Wrist lock: A submission hold involving grabbing the hand and twisting the wrist.

X Guard: A version of guard defined by controlling one of your opponent's legs with both of your legs, while your body is positioned directly underneath their centre of gravity.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



JOSH PESLEY

Josh Pesley is a Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (BJJ) black belt and one of the most accomplished jiu-jitsu practitioners on the east coast of Canada.

Of course, Presley was not born a black belt. He began practicing BJJ as a teenager, looking for a way to improve his health and get in shape. While Presley had no prior experience in martial arts, through hard work and focus he became a dedicated athlete, and now an exceptional teacher.

Presley is one of the top lightweight Canadian competitors of the 2010's, with medals from the IBJJF World Championships, Pan American Championships, and Abu Dhabi World Pro Trials. Presley has trained with legendary black belts, including Ryan Hall, Cobrinha, Jon Thomas, and faced tough international competition in his BJJ career.

After the COVID pandemic, Presley made a triumphant return to competition in 2023. Motivated by his students he won one of the hardest championships in Canada - the No time limit Rogue Grand Prix.

Presley now places focus on passing his knowledge and passion for the sport of BJJ onto the next generation of BJJ athletes. Presley's instruction and content provide students the tools to progress faster than Presley did himself.

SAMANTHA TAYLOR

[Samantha Taylor, PME is a Senior Instructor at Dalhousie University.](#) She hosts the [Sam Taylor Podcast](#) which supports learners in making and chasing after big goals. Sam is a white belt training at Presley BJJ who aspires to retain guard against Jocko Willink and triangle choke Lex Fridman.

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