

Curriculum

Our curriculum is divided into two categories: Foundations and Advanced. The Foundations class is focused on providing you with a basic knowledge of Jiu Jitsu and the ability to defend yourself against an untrained person who may be bigger and stronger and trying to hit or grab you. This is the type of person you will find yourself facing in the vast majority of self-defense situations. There are certain types of attacks and reactions that untrained people have in common and the defenses and counters to those situations are a core focus during this phase of training.

The curriculum presented in the Foundations class comprises the handful of techniques and tactics with the highest success rates across all environments (meaning gi, no gi, striking, and grappling) and are also simple enough to prepare someone to competently defend him or herself against an unskilled attacker in the shortest amount of time. We should note here that "unskilled" does not mean "not tough" or "not difficult." It just means someone that isn't formally trained in a realistic fighting discipline such as MMA, Jiu Jitsu, Wrestling, Boxing, Muay Thai, Judo, etc., which is approximately 99% of the world's population.

The curriculum for the Foundations phase of training is organized into 25 classes consisting of ~55 techniques/tactics. Each student is required to repeat each of the 25 classes three times. At the halfway point (~35 classes) you will receive the first stripe on your white belt. The first stripe is awarded to acknowledge your ability to persevere in difficult physical training and stick to a goal you have set for yourself. Also, once you achieve the first stripe you are eligible to begin attending the Advanced classes and Open Mats. You must graduate the Foundations class and obtain your second stripe before you are allowed to forgo the Foundations classes altogether though. If you choose to attend an Advanced class as a one-stripe white belt you must also attend the Foundations class that precedes it that day.

Achieving the second stripe will be your first merit-based promotion. Once you have successfully completed each of the 25 classes three times you will have the opportunity to test your knowledge and graduate from the Foundations course.

To graduate you must have a 90% success rate in demonstrating the proper techniques and reactions for the various scenarios you will be placed in (nothing tricky, the test covers exactly what you did in the 25 core classes). If you fail, you will need to reattend

the classes covering the material you didn't do well on and then you can retest. There are also no fees for rank promotions and testing; your advancement is based on merit not money. Upon successful completion of the Foundations test you will be awarded the second stripe on your white belt and a certificate of completion for the Foundations course.

Once you reach the Advanced class the structure and intent will change from primarily focusing on how to defeat an untrained opponent to focusing on how to defeat a trained opponent. The fundamental principles that make Jiu Jitsu work never change though so the themes and concepts you learn in the beginners' class also appear in the Advanced class, just with more nuance. You're learning checkers first and then moving on to chess is another way to think about it.

One important item of note regarding the curriculum. Even though you graduate from the Foundations class and become "advanced," we still encourage you to periodically attend the Foundations classes to keep yourself familiar with the common situations you'll encounter in a self-defense scenario.

If you are an advanced practitioner (one-stripe white belt and above) joining our academy from another school, you will be allowed to join the Advanced class and Open Mats right away. You will at some point need to take the Foundations course test though before you will be eligible for the next colored belt. We can't in good conscience promote someone to a new belt until he has demonstrated he can react with at least minimum competence to the types of encounters most commonly faced on the street.

Also, a word on promotions and class attendance. Once you graduate from the Foundations course you can continue to attend only those classes rather than the Advanced classes if you like. Some people may not want to engage in the harder sparring that takes place at the Advanced level and Open Mats and that's ok.

You just have to understand that you will not be promoted to blue belt without regularly attending the Advanced classes and Open Mats. You will remain as a two-stripe white belt. There's no shame in that or pressure to have you move on if you don't want to.

If you're satisfied with just sticking to the Foundations curriculum for maintenance of basic self-defense skills more power to you, you will be well ahead of the general population. We just want to be clear on the requirements for advancement beyond white belt. The colored belts are a symbol of merit demonstrated at the appropriate level for each color and an indication that you can engage with a resisting, *trained* opponent and perform Jiu Jitsu under pressure. If you don't regularly drill and spar with competent and trained people who are fighting back, you'll never be able to engage with a skilled opponent with any acceptable level of effectiveness.

Foundations Class

Each class will begin with a warmup lasting about ten minutes and consisting of five of the 20 "Universal Movements" (universal in that they are fundamental movement patterns that we utilize to perform the various positions and techniques of Jiu Jitsu). The group of five movements will repeat on a random schedule for variety (each is an independent movement not dependent upon knowing a prerequisite skill).

Universal Movements

1. Shrimp/Reverse Shrimp	11. Granby Roll (Right/Left)
2. Technical Stand Up	12. Power Roll (Stick)
3. Sprawl (Dragon Walk)	13. Thread the Needle
4. Bridge	14. Hip Thrust (Triangle)
5. Standing Base (Partner)	15. Punch Block Defense (Helmet) (Partner)
6. Forward Roll with Breakfall	16. Penetration Step
7. Backward Roll with Breakfall	17. Hip Bump Get Up
8. Shoulder Walk (Forward & Backward)	18. Hip Scoop
9. Jitterbug	19. Pummeling (Partner)
10. Hip Switch	20. Uchikomi (Partner)

After the warmup we will move on to the topic of the day which will consist of a discussion of why the movement or technique we're studying is important and a demonstration of how to do it. You will then work with a partner to understand the steps and movement patterns. This portion will last for 30-35 minutes. The last 15-20 minutes of class will be dedicated to drilling the techniques you learned in a live fashion. This means you will work with a partner that is providing some resistance and struggling against your efforts to utilize the technique. This is a mandatory part of training and is the only way you can develop the timing and understanding of the nuanced positional changes needed to actually pull off a "move" in real life.

If this makes you a little nervous, don't fret. This is not all out free sparring with max intensity. This is controlled and supervised resistance in the specific movements we're working in class. Your antagonist is serving more as a coach to help you understand the timing and subtle adjustments involved in performing Jiu Jitsu in a live situation against a noncompliant opponent.

The techniques selected for the Foundations course are all based on scenarios that assume strikes could be involved and in which managing distance is crucial. These are of course not the only techniques that could be used, there are many other excellent choices, and you will learn those later in the Advanced course. Those we have included are simple enough for beginners to understand in a short time as well as effective and comprehensive enough to cover a multitude of environments you could find yourself in from self-defense on the street to grappling only matches.

The classes listed below are numbered sequentially but they don't need to be attended that way. They were designed to be independent of each other so you can jump in whenever your schedule allows. Classes will also be scheduled in a such a way that prevents them from always being on the same day each month to accommodate your availability to train. If a certain class is always on say a Tuesday and you can only attend on Monday's and Thursday's, you'll never get to do that one. We will move them around month to month so that doesn't happen.

"There are no black belt techniques. There are only basic techniques done at a black belt level." –*Roger Gracie*

Foundations Class Schedule

Class 1:

Mount Defense/Escape 1

- Trap & Roll (3 variations)

Class 2:

Mount Defense/Escape 2

- Elbow Escape
- Hip Escape

Class 3:

Mount Retention 1

- Establish Position (Low Mount)
- Weight Distribution
- Swim Move
- Pummeling/Stripping Grips

Class 4:

Mount Retention 2

- Log Roll Drill
- Leg/Hip Control (Hip Switch/Sprawl)
- Control Elbow to Gift Wrap to Back Control

Class 5:

Mount Submissions

- Isolate Arm
- Americana (Key Lock)
- Arm Triangle (Kata Gatame)

Class 6:

Side Control Defense/Escape 1

- Frame, Bridge, & Recover Guard (Elbow/Knee)
- Punch Defense to Guard Recovery

Class 7:

Side Control Defense/Escape 2

- Underhook Escape
- Block Crossface/Punch to Escape (Stone Squirrel to Elbow Push)

Class 8:

Side Control Retention

- Establish & Change Position (3 Orientations)
- Weight Distribution (Push/Pull)
- Hip Switch/Sprawl to Break Frames

Class 9:

Side Control Submissions

- North South Choke
- Americana/Straight Armlock/Kimura

Class 10:

Back Defense/Escape

- Overhook Side
- Underhook Side

Class 11:

Back Control

- Maintain Connection (Roll)
- Overhook Side/Underhook Side Control & Recovery

Class 12:

Back Submissions

- Triple Threat (Strangle/Armbar/Triangle)

Class 13:

Guard 1

- Guard Retention

Class 14:

Guard 2

- Punch Block Series
- Triangle

Class 15:

Guard Pass 1

- Posture/Break Guard – Standup
- Torreando (Bull Fighter) Pass

Class 16:

Guard Pass 2

- Posture/Break Guard – Kneeling
- Half Guard Pass

Class 17:

Guard Sweeps 1

- Scissor
- Elevator

Class 18:

Guard Sweeps 2

- Tripod
- Double Ankle

Class 19:

Takedowns

- Helmet to Clinch
- Clinch to Back – Trips
- Body Fold/Leg Hook

Class 20:

Striking

- Jab/Cross/Hook/Uppercut
- Front Kick/Teep
- Helmet to Clinch
- Clinch and Knee & Elbow Strikes

Class 21:

Grabs 1

- Wrist Grabs
- Bear Hug (Over Arms/Under Arms)
- Standing Rear Naked Choke

Class 22:

Grabs 2

- Headlock Defense – Standing
- Headlock Defense – Takedown

Class 23:

Grabs 3

- Headlock Defense – Ground

Class 24:

Guillotine Defense

- Standing
- Ground

Class 25

Guillotine

- Standing
- Ground

Advanced Class Format & Teaching Methodology

Once you make it to the Advanced class your focus now changes to fighting a skilled opponent and playing the "game" of Jiu Jitsu against people that know what you know. It doesn't abandon the self-defense aspects you learned in the Foundations course, on the contrary, it builds upon them and goes deeper into the intricacies of the fundamentals and how to solve the problems you'll encounter as you fight people with advanced knowledge and skills.

To ensure we cover the most important topics regularly we organize our training around the five macro scenarios/positions you'll find yourself in while grappling. You will be in most if not all five of these circumstances in every grappling encounter whether it is training in the gym, a competition, or a street fight.

The five cycles we will rotate through to accomplish this are the following:

Cycle 1: Takedowns/Clinch

Cycle 2: Defend & Escape (Pins & Submissions)

Cycle 3: Guard Top (Passing)

Cycle 4: Control & Submit (Pins & Submissions)

Cycle 5: Guard Bottom (Retention, Wrestling Up, Sweeping, & Submissions)

(Each cycle lasts one training week, Mon-Sat)

The topics covered will rotate cycle to cycle, but the overall themes will stay in this same general format. For example, if the topic of Cycle Two this month is learning how to defend and escape from the Mount Bottom position, when we get to Cycle Two again the next month we will still do Defend & Escape, but the topic could be Side Control. The next time around for Cycle Two will find us working defense and escapes again but maybe now it's from Back Control etc. It will then be this same type of rotation of topics for each of the major themes cycle to cycle to ensure you are exposed to all the various aspects and possibilities that a fight or match consists of.

We will also randomly pick a day each week to work the scheduled topic with strikes involved (we'll wear MMA gloves). This is a vital step in ensuring that you are prepared to deal with a striking situation and understand how the distance management requirements change when someone is trying to punch or kick you. If the sole focus of your training is to compete within a grappling only tournament ruleset and you never practice striking, there's a better than average chance you'll get beat up if you ever engage in a real fight with a person that is a proficient striker and also somewhat competent at grappling.

Ok, so that was more of a macro view of the class topics scheduling cycle, let's now look at the micro view or how each class itself will be structured.

Each class is organized into a three-phase format. There is first a warmup of approximately 10 minutes to get your body prepared for harder training as well as provide an opportunity for further skill development. Our warmups emphasize standup skills primarily for several reasons, a big one being that most Jiu Jitsu practitioners are sorely lacking competency in basic striking and clinch skills and don't know what to do when on their feet. Working standup every class even as just a warmup for other training will greatly improve your skills on your feet over time. Also, every fight starts standing so it makes sense to get comfortable in that range by starting every training session standing.

Below are the five warmups we'll generally rotate through:

- 1: Basic Boxing Skills (Jab, Cross, Hook, Uppercut)
- 2: No Gi – Clinch & Foot sweeps
- 3: Punch Defense to Clinch
- 4: Gi – Grip Fighting, Uchikomi (repeated practice of takedown entries) & Foot Sweeps
- 5: Basic Thai boxing (Elbows, Knees, Straight & Round Kicks)

For example, if today's training schedule calls for "Warmup 1," you will get with a partner and decide who is holding pads first since it's a striking situation. The timer will be set for 5 minutes and the person striking will spend that time working the four basic boxing punches for speed, power, and combinations. After 5 minutes is up you will switch sides and the other person will get his chance to work the same strikes. On the "no gi clinch" and "grip fighting (gi)" days you will usually play a task-based game against each other with specific objectives.

Next, we begin a period of instruction about the topic of the week. In this phase of the class, you are being taught a technique or tactic and the context in which to use it. You will practice the "move(s)" with a partner in a cooperative way (meaning no resistance) so you can understand the technical structure and steps of the technique(s). The instruction phase will last anywhere from 15-30 minutes.

The rest of the class will be dedicated to drilling so you can develop skill in the movements taught in the instruction phase. In this phase we combine the theoretical discussion with practical application to develop the timing and nuanced adjustments needed to apply what you have learned against a resisting opponent (phases 2 & 3 will often be intermingled).

The concept of drilling should be clarified and expanded upon here. In some schools "drilling" means you practice a move over and over for a certain number of reps or for time against an opponent who is essentially acting as a training dummy and providing no or only slight resistance. This is called static drilling and will provide some benefit at first to help a student understand the steps involved and get faster at executing those steps. The problem though is you don't get much beyond a basic introduction by executing the steps against a cooperative opponent because that's not the way an actual fight happens.

To prepare you for a real fight or match you also have to spar against opponents that are resisting because again, that is what happens in reality. But to get the amount of practice you need to truly develop great skill you must spend time doing the same thing over and over (which is why some incorrectly believe that doing a move for a high number of repetitions is key).

What is required for true skill acquisition is to combine the two concepts of sparring against resisting opponents and executing a move or technique over and over. We do that through positional sparring and task specific/constraint-based games (this is what we mean when we say "drilling"). This essentially means isolating a particular part of Jiu Jitsu and engaging in a game with specific objectives so you can discover on your own the nuanced adjustments, positional changes, and timing that make it work. A simple analogy for the methodology overall is a jigsaw puzzle. The class discussion and technique practice provide the pieces that make a basic outline or frame of reference and help you put them together, the task specific sparring provides all the pieces in-between that you discover and connect yourself to get the complete detailed picture.

Remember to have patience and keep in mind that your goal is the acquisition of knowledge, and the turning of that knowledge into physical skill through a competent training program based largely around conceptual understanding and practical application through constraint based and task specific sparring (drilling). It's not enough to simply know the theory, you must apply it. And likewise, it's not enough to mindlessly apply technique, you must understand.

And finally keep in mind that like any skill, the volume of knowledgeable training you undertake is a key component to improvement—you must have consistency. People frequently overestimate how much they can do in a week but underestimate how much they can do in a year.