



# Read me before you compete

This is a short guide meant to help you navigating the competition setting.

## ▼ A month before the competition

1. It's time to train hard. Forget bells and whistles, this is the time to bring up your A-game, not to try that thing you saw on Instagram.
  - a. Build a strategy and that means to train goal-oriented: Which submission does work best for you? Work your way backward. Which pin do you need to get there? Which sweep or takedown? Which hand-fighting or footwork sequence brings you the closest the fastest to a score/submission? If you don't have a strategy come a talk to me and we'll work on it together.
  - b. Count points. Points pave the way to submissions. Hail Mary submissions are rare and unreliable.
  - c. Don't accept inferior positions. Remember: POINTS ARE NEVER TAKEN, THEY ARE ALWAYS GIVEN. Only when you give up and stop moving your opponent scores a sweep/takedown/pass etc.
2. Don't worry too much about your weight. Sign up in a division you feel comfortable and that will allow you to compete without starving yourself. That being said, try to be on the heavier end of your division.

## ▼ A week before the competition

1. Stop sparring with people heavier than you about a week before the event.
2. Stop sparring hard at all about 3-4 days before the event. Some light drilling, cardio or weights are generally fine.
3. No JJ the day before the event.

## ▼ Before you arrive to the venue

1. It's like taking a flight: it should be straightforward but you never know. Get there about 1.30-2 hours before your division opens and go to the weigh-in area immediately.
2. Some people like to fast, some can't survive without breakfast. I don't know which is the right solution *for you*, but it's something you'll need to think about. A good rule of thumb is not to break your routine: if you train in a fasted state, then compete in one, and vice versa.
3. Bring water, food and toilet paper.

## ▼ At the venue

1. As a general rule, when you compete, I'm there. BUT, I might be already busy with someone else, I might be called to ref, I might not see you, etc.
  - a. If you don't see me, call me 1000 times.
  - b. If I'm busy, look for a more experienced teammate to be with you.
2. DON'T GO ANYWHERE ALONE. While at the venue, always stay with a teammate or with me. If the ref calls your name through the speaker and you miss it, you're out. If there's a sudden change in schedule your teammates can warn you, they're generally less stressed than you and not "in the zone" (headphones, etc.). If you're in the bathroom and your name has been called, they can go and warn the ref that you'll be there in a sec. And so on...
3. ALWAYS RECORD YOUR FIGHTS. At local competitions the organization is often very chaotic:
  - a. Inexperienced refs. I will often take care of this. If I'm unavailable, you or a more experienced teammate will have to deal with it. The ref is the highest authority on the mat, but you do have options against a bad ref call:
    - i. In some tournaments fights are recorded on the spot and you have the right to ask to stop the fight and have the ref watch the replay. Remember: a decision can be overturned and points can be awarded even after the end of the match, before the ref raises the winner's hand!

- ii. You can talk to the organizers. They often have the power to overturn a ref decision. Example: you got submitted with an illegal move that the ref didn't know it wasn't allowed. Talk to the organizer, show them the video, and they might overturn the ref decision.
- b. Clueless scorekeepers. They often don't even know which sport this is. What can go wrong and how to fix it:
  - i. The ref awards points to player A and the scorekeeper marks them down to player B, or the ref raises player's A hands while in fact player B won. Have your teammates pay attention to the scoreboard as much as anything else. REMEMBER: IF THE SCOREKEEPERS MAKES A MISTAKE THEY CAN ALWAYS FIX IT AFTER THE FACT, EVEN AFTER THE END OF THE MATCH, NO MATTER WHAT THEY SAY. Insist to fix the mistake before the next match starts.
- c. Bad softwares and wrong schedules. Don't trust the online schedule, always check in person when and where you're fighting. It's your responsibility to be at the right mat at the right time, refs will call you, but not for long. A good idea is to find out who your next opponent is and keep an eye on them.

## ▼ During the fight

1. Tap for f\*ck's sake. It's really not worth it.
2. If you're reading this, probably you don't have money nor career at stake when you fight. It's just a beautiful game, try to enjoy it...
3. ...BUT REMEMBER: for you it might be just a game, but for your opponent it might not be, and not everybody is out to play. Take the risk seriously. Research shows that (unsurprisingly) the worst injuries happen in competition.
4. If you're 0-0, sometimes you'll have to let the decision in the hands of the ref. This is what the ref needs to see to give you the match:
  - a. Initiative. Leading the fight, dominating the grip exchanges and initiating actions will help the ref make up their mind. REMEMBER: No

need to go crazy, you just need to initiate more than your opponent.

- b. A plan. Show the ref you have a plan: engage in a gripping, level changes, footwork, clear movement patterns, anything that shows the ref that you're trying to PROACTIVELY execute a plan, but that you're opponent is PASSIVELY preventing it.
- c. Ref decisions shouldn't be based on a flashy action at the end of the fight, but they are rather made taking into account the match as a whole. YES, BUT, nothing nudges a ref into giving you the fight like a few last seconds of raw power. It shows that you "want" it more than your opponent, and that factors into the decision.

### ▼ After the fight

1. Wash everything, yourself included, with the most hardcore sh\*t you've got. Competitions mats are comically dirty, people walk barefoot everywhere and then they step on the mat.
2. Take a couple of days off sparring and let your body recover.
3. Your coach really likes pizza and pastries. Just an idea.