



Submission Philosophy & Policy

Part I: Philosophy

At 150 Grappling, the standard is to comply with the rules that the International Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Federation (IBJJF) has set in place for safety and practicality. It is critical to keep our practice partners healthy and safe. Further, using disqualifying techniques in practice will reinforce negative habits and lead 150 members to using illegal moves in competition, resulting in disqualification. There are basic roles in a submission situation, the role of the aggressor and the role of the defender. The responsibility of each at 150 Grappling can be summarized by two simple concepts: “Protect yourself at all times;” and “You are responsible for your partner.”

Protect yourself at all times: Perhaps the most important concept in combat sports is knowing when to yield. Typically, a submission will occur when the aggressor has the defender in either a chokehold or a joint lock. Submissions occur when an appendage has become isolated (including the neck) and the grappler applying the submission is able to use leverage and force to achieve the particular submissions end state. A choke is a grappling hold that critically reduces or prevents either air or blood from passing through the neck of an opponent. A joint-lock is a grappling technique involving manipulation of an opponent's joints in such a way that the joints reach their maximum degree of motion and reach hyperextension. The end state of a choke results in the defender going unconscious and the end state of a joint lock results in a defender experiencing a joint separation or a break (fracture of a bone or tear of a ligament). In training, it is not (and never should be) the intention of the aggressor to reach the end state of the submission and inflict unconsciousness or injury upon the defender. Rather, the attack should end in the defender yielding by “tapping out.” It is the responsibility of every Brazilian jiu-jitsu practitioner to protect themselves. It is a common (and potentially damaging) mistake for individuals to think that the time to tap is when they feel pain. This is incorrect,



and in fact some submissions such as heel hooks may not produce pain until a ligament has already torn. The time to tap is *before* it hurts; to tap once the defender feels a substantial stretch or pressure. Egos getting in the way of safety can cause significant issues.

Beyond simply protecting yourself at all times, you must seek to *intelligently* protect yourself. This means anticipating submissions and understanding when you need to concede to stay safe and healthy enough to train tomorrow and the day after; to “fight another day.” Anticipating submissions will save the defender, especially when fighting an aggressor who is either more aggressive, heavier, or unpredictable/spastic. Using a chess analogy, think of this as being “in check.” The aggressor has the defender in a control hold and is one or two transitions from reaching a finishing position. Being in check does not mean the game is over for certain but it very much could be. Ultimately success comes from not allowing yourself to be placed in compromising positions. For instance, imagine that an aggressor is in mount with an armbar. The defender is protecting themselves by locking their hands together. In an attempt to break the grip, the aggressor is leaning with all of their weight and pulling with all their strength. The fight is not over, but it may be wise for the defender to anticipate the very real possibility of the submission. Once the defender’s grip breaks, there may not be any time to enact another intelligent defense. There may not even be time for the defender to “tap” before the aggressor reaches the breaking point of the submission. This could result in avoidable injury.

Fight another day: In competition or fights, there might be a time where a defender is “dead to rights” in a submission. The defender’s only option might be to continue the fight, use grit, and try to wait for the aggressor to mess up and produce a window of opportunity. While this is sometimes a successful tactic, it is not efficient in the battle of attrition. The reward is fairly low for such a high-risk tactic, and over a long enough period of time the defender will inevitably be injured using this tactic. Remember that it is critical to lay your ego down and



intelligently defend yourself. What's more important: Winning a round? Winning 100 rounds? Or being healthy enough to fight tomorrow?

You are responsible for your partner: Grappling is a competitive sport and encourages competitors to train and fight at a high level of intensity. If practitioners do not take a reasonable amount of responsibility for their training partners they will lose them. Submissions, flying techniques, jumping guard pulls and lifting your opponent off of the mat are some of the major situations in which the aggressor must take some responsibility for their actions and seriously consider impact to their training partner. Flying submissions often create issues because the nature of the move makes it extremely difficult to control the attacker's momentum and force once they go airborne. This is a gateway to injury.

You must give your opponent the opportunity to tap. This simple concept can be applied in numerous situations. For example, the aggressor has the defender in mount then the defender posts with straight arms and lifts the aggressor's chest off of their chest. The aggressor was ready for this and is prepared to execute an armbar with speed and precision. In a competition it is often acceptable for the aggressor to take the submission to the breaking point and further as fast as they can. In the training room, however, the aggressor should always award the defender an opportunity to tap. This means the aggressor will need to show control. The aggressor can execute the submission with speed but should slow the movement before they reach the breaking portion of the technique. From there the aggressor should slowly and progressively add pressure to the submission until the defender yields. In the Brazilian jiu-jitsu community, this action is commonly simplified in the phrase: "Quick to position, slow to submission." In training it will often take a significant amount of pressure or force to get a fighting opponent to yield, and this is an accepted practice, but you *must* provide an opportunity for the defender to tap.



Lifting your opponent off the mat: There are significant differences in how an aggressor may lift their opponent off the mat, what is practically accepted, and what is illegal in competition.

Starting with both practitioners in the neutral position, from the standing position there is a difference between a takedown and a slam. There are varying levels of takedowns and the corresponding speed with which the defender will reach the mat. A clean takedown executed with force is not a slam. A slam either involves intentionally trying to cause harm to the opponent outside of the techniques intended use or adding additional/unnecessary movements to a technique which can lead to injury.

Two examples of techniques that can lead to injury include intentionally causing harm using a suplex, and adding unnecessary movement. The suplex takedown is when the attacking athlete lifts their opponent at the waist in order to take him/her down and throws them backwards or sideways to the ground. The use of this technique is still permitted provided that the movement does not force the opponent's head or neck into the ground. Forcing the opponent's head or neck into the ground would be considered intentionally trying to cause harm and could cause grievous injury. With regard to an unnecessary movement example, a double leg takedown is commonly finished by the aggressor lifting their opponent so that their feet are no longer in contact with the ground which presents the aggressor with the opportunity to put the defender's hips on the ground and secure a takedown. An unnecessary movement that would constitute a slam is if the aggressor were to jump into the air once the defender's feet had broken contact with the mat. Since this movement is not necessary for the technique to be successful, it would be seen as an attempt to cause unnecessary harm to the defender. Both of these slams are illegal in competitions and in the training room.

Slams can also occur when one or both of the practitioners are already grounded. In a closed guard, there is a top and bottom position. If the top player lifts the bottom player off of the ground and returns them forcefully for any reason, this is considered a slam. Based on the IBJJF rules, if the top player at any point lifts the



bottom player off the mat, they are responsible for their safe return, and a slam will result in disqualification. It is wise, however, for you to take your safety into your own hands and so if you are the bottom player and the top player is beginning to lift you in closed guard it is wise to either anchor yourself to a leg so that you cannot be elevated or drop your guard and stand up. This goes back to the concept of protecting yourself at all times. Do not cede your safety to your opponent by letting them take you off of the mat if you can avoid it.

What if they aren't tapping?: If the aggressor has a submission attempt that is not working—either because it is not technically strong or because it is being effectively combated by the defender—the responsible course of action is to transition to another position or submission.

The situation changes if the aggressor has a strong submission attempt. Say that the aggressor has the defender in an armbar with the defender's arm fully extended and the defender is no longer intelligently defending themselves. In competition, it is the goal of the aggressor to attack submissions until their breaking point as intensely as possible with the preferred goal of getting the defender to yield. In a training environment, it is acceptable to continue the submission attempt in a progressive manner, meaning that the aggressor can progressively add controlled force until the defender yields. There is a level of partner preservation that must be applied. If the aggressor is experienced enough to know that any further force applied to the submission will inevitably lead to an injury and the defender is not defending themselves intelligently and is being negligent with their safety, an experienced practitioner will put their ego aside and transition to another position. It takes years of experience to reach this level of awareness and self-control. If a practitioner believes their training partner is creating training situations that are compromising their own safety and putting the attacker in a difficult position, then that practitioner should inform a coach immediately so that the defender can be corrected by someone with an adequate level of experience.



The Brazilian jiu-jitsu cliché, “tap early, tap often” bears repeating because it is true and is a critical sentiment to remember.

Part II: Policy

What submissions am I allowed to use, and who can I use them on? The International Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Federation (IBJJF) has set standards for legal submissions by age divisions and belt colors. These rules and standards can be found at: <https://ibjjf.com/books-videos>.

150 Grappling follows the submission rules established by the IBJJF. There are some exceptions so that practitioners can gain experience with submissions (attempts and defenses) prior to reaching the division at which those submissions are legal.

Why do they have limitations on submissions? Some novice grapplers think there are submission limitations to keep them in the dark about moves that higher-level belts may access. In reality, though, Brazilian jiu-jitsu is so complex and involves such a tidal wave of information that it is recognized that it is not reasonable to expect a new grappler to become proficient in all submissions in a few months or even years of training.

Understanding dangerous positions is a significant factor. It cannot be assumed that everyone will react appropriately when put in compromising positions. In many situations, simply turning left instead of right can result in the submission reaching the breaking point and inflicting injury. Less seasoned defenders have poor instinct due to lack of submission and positioning knowledge and the same can be said for the novice aggressor. Poor instinct, lack of mechanical knowledge, and fragile self-control can lead to dangerous attempts to finish submissions and unnecessary risk. Limiting the range of legal submissions and removing more dangerous submissions makes competition safer and more manageable for less experienced grapplers.



The term “dangerous submissions” may seem redundant because the point of a submission is to get an opponent to concede by driving toward a breaking point. Some submissions, though, are considered particularly dangerous because they require a much smaller range of motion from initiation to the breaking point and they also might not provide warning—in the form of pain—that real damage is about to occur. While in an armbar the discomfort from (hyper)extension of the elbow makes it clear to the defender that they are in a bad spot, submissions like the heel hook, which attacks the ligaments in the knee, are dangerous because there often isn’t any pressure or discomfort until after the breaking point when the ligaments are already torn. Even visually, it is difficult for a less experienced grappler to see the submission mechanics. The hyper extension of an armbar looks dramatic and painful while heel hooks can be barely discernable, leaving less experienced grapplers to wonder why the defender tapped in a dangerous submission situation. The same lack of understanding regarding submission mechanics will make inexperienced aggressors apply more force than necessary, and so waiting until a grappler has a higher level of experience before exposing them to all submissions is vital to keeping practitioners safe.

Practicing submissions outside of a competitor’s division is acceptable for color belts, with the understanding that they are using them to get technical experience, not to finish submissions. For example, a purple belt is not permitted to use toe holds by IBJJF standards; however, during a live rolling situation, they may attempt a toe hold. Instead of using maximum force to finish the submission, the purple belt is to focus on controlling the submission, and limit movement and defense opportunities from their opponent. Once the aggressor, the purple belt, has reached a high level of control they should release the toe hold submission attempt and continue transitioning to other dominant positions. This training approach is commonly referred to as “catch and release.”

Whenever a submission is being used – particularly when it is being used by a practitioner outside of his/her corresponding division— the burden of safety falls heavily on the aggressor, and issues stem from lack of awareness and lack of



control. If a brown belt, who can legally use toe holds, attempts a toe hold on a blue belt, the brown belt must accept an additional level of caution because it is entirely possible that the blue belt may not know how to defend the submission. Indeed, the blue belt may not even know they are in trouble and lack an understanding of the nearly invisible danger of a toe hold submission and so may endanger themselves in their reaction. If the scenario involved a blue belt aggressor and a blue belt defender, there would need to be an additional emphasis on control from the aggressor because in all likelihood a blue belt would not be proficient in finishing a toe hold correctly.

What submissions are not allowed at 150 Grappling? There is a benefit to progressively learning submissions. At 150 Grappling, there are some amendments and hard lines imposed when it comes to submission options, including the following:

- There are no heel hooks in the GI, due to the fact that the friction of the gi and additional grips make defending heel hooks very difficult and very dangerous.
- There is no jumping closed guard or flying submissions while both practitioners are in the neutral position because the risk of movement failure and injury are too high to be used regularly in a training environment.

Remember-- “tap early, tap often,” and “live to fight another day.” The only time you truly lose in Brazilian jiu-jitsu is when you can no longer train tomorrow, next week, and beyond. Safety and your physical health must trump everything else.