

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF WRESTLING

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Your success in wrestling is a direct result of your expertise in the fundamentals. After you master the following basic aspects of the sport, you can build on them to expand your wrestling repertoire:

- **Stance:** Your body position and posture on the mat; can be parallel or staggered
- **Penetration step:** The first offensive movement that puts you in a position to score
- **Level change:** The act of raising and lowering your hips to set up or execute an attack or to counter the moves of your opponent
- **Neutral position:** The starting position in which you stand face to face and with your shoulders square to your opponent in the wrestling area
- **Referee's position:** The starting position in which one wrestler is in the top position and the other is on the bottom
- **Takedown:** A move during which you take your opponent down to the mat and gain control from the neutral position
- **Reversal:** A move during which you quickly turn the tables and go from being in a position of defense to being in a position of control as the offensive wrestler
- **Escape:** A move you use from the bottom of the referee's position to *escape*, or get away from your opponent
- **Breakdown:** A move you use when you're in the top of the referee's position to try to get your opponent off balance and down to the mat
- **Finish:** The act of pinning your opponent with special techniques that lead to a *fall*, meaning that the back of your opponent's shoulders are on the mat for at least two seconds

HOW A WRESTLING MATCH IS SCORED

The objective in a wrestling match is to beat your opponent. If a pin occurs, the match is over and whoever scored the pin wins. But if neither wrestler scores a pin, the score at the end of three two-minute periods determines the winner. You earn points for the different moves you successfully execute during a match, and your opponent earns points for any infractions you commit:

- **Pin or fall:** Victory; end of match
- **Takedown:** 2 points
- **Escape:** 1 point
- **Reversal:** 2 points
- **Near fall:** 2 points if you hold your opponent for two seconds; 3 points if you hold your opponent for five seconds or more
- **Illegal hold:** 1 point for your opponent
- **Unsportsmanlike conduct:** 1 point for your opponent
- **Unnecessary roughness:** 1 point for your opponent
- **Stalling:** 1 point for your opponent after you receive one warning; disqualification on the fifth stalling violation

Match Basics:

Wrestling matches consist of three periods. Periods can vary in length from one minute in duration for younger age groups, to as long as three minutes for college wrestling. Either wrestler can win the match at any time if they are able to pin their opponent or develop a lead of more than 14 points. Otherwise, the wrestler that can accumulate the most points by the end of the third period (or after overtime in the case of a tie) wins the match. There are only two positions from which referees start, or continue a match. The first is neutral position, with both wrestlers standing and facing each other. The other is the referee's position, where one

wrestler starts on his hands and knees down on the mat, and the other starts on top, behind and in control. The first period always begins in the neutral position.

Each wrestler has their choice in one of the remaining periods, to choose to start from top or bottom referee's position, or in the neutral position. If the action must be stopped before the end of a period, the referee restarts the wrestlers in the starting position that best reflects the position the wrestlers were in when the action was stopped.

Scoring: The scoring system is rather simple. Takedowns (when from a neutral or standing position one wrestler is able to bring the other to the mat and gain control) are worth two points. Escapes (when the bottom wrestler is able to break free from the top wrestler and revert back to a neutral position) are worth one point. Reversals, (when a wrestler on the bottom is able to reverse the control so that the opponent is on the bottom) are worth two points. Back points (also called near fall) are awarded when one wrestler comes close to pinning the other (i.e. exposing the other wrestler's back) and are worth two or three points depending on the length of time that the opponent's back is exposed. In addition, penalty points can be awarded when the opposing wrestler performs illegal moves or is penalized for excessive stalling.

Sportsmanship: Competition is conducted in a manner as to promote and require good sportsmanship. Competitors are expected to show respect to opponents, officials and coaches regardless of the outcome of their match. Both wrestlers are required to shake hands before and after the match. It is also common practice for each wrestler to shake the hand of their opponent's coach after the match. Sportsmanship violations can result in disqualification and a deduction of team points.

Officials: The referee's role is to award points as they are scored, insure safety, and start and stop competition. Officiating is primarily objective in nature, although judgment does come into play in situations where it is difficult to determine if point criteria has been met. High school and college referees and in many cases even youth referees are trained and certified.

Equipment: Basic wrestling equipment includes a headgear, wrestling shoes, and a singlet. Wrestling shoes offer more ankle support than the traditional shoe and are designed lightweight and tight to the foot to promote freedom of movement. Headgear can prevent outer ear injuries and bruises during practice and competition. The standard wrestling uniform, known as a singlet, is designed to fit snug to the body so that it does not restrict the movement of either wrestler. Kneepads are sometimes worn by choice.

FOLKSTYLE WRESTLING BASICS

FOLKSTYLE WRESTLING - A combative sport where one wrestler tries to **physically control** the opponent against their will without injuring them.

PHYSICAL CONTROL - To get behind the opponent's back and arms, take them down to the mat, turn them over onto their back, and pin them. To take the opponent directly from their feet to their back and pin them. To counter the opponent's moves to stay in the control position.

MATCH OR BOUT - When two wrestlers wrestle each other. Both wrestlers must weigh within one weight class of each other.

A **MATCH** in high school consists of three two-minute periods. The first period begins in neutral position with both wrestlers on their feet and facing each other. The second period begins with one wrestler choosing top, bottom, neutral, or deferring choice until the third period. The third period begins with the other wrestler choosing top, bottom, or neutral position. A college match is the same except the first period is three minutes long.

POSITIONS - Most sports have two scoring positions - offense and defense.

- *** Wrestling has three scoring positions - offense, defense, and neutral.
- *** You can only be in one of these positions at a time.
- *** Scoring match points is just going from one position to another.
- *** You can only score in certain ways from each position.
- *** If one wrestler is in neutral position, the opponent must also be in neutral position.
- *** If one wrestler is in the offensive position, the opponent must be in the defensive position.

MATCH STOPPED - If the wrestlers have their match stopped by the referee's whistle, the referee will return them to the center of the mat and start them wrestling again in the same neutral, top, or bottom position that they were in when the match was stopped. For example: out of bounds, potentially dangerous situations, penalties, injuries, and coach's conference.

NEUTRAL (FEET) POSITION - **No Control** - When neither wrestler has control over the other and they are both on their feet or knees and facing each other. Besides penalty points, the only way you can score from the neutral position is a 2 point takedown.

OFFENSIVE (TOP) POSITION - **In Control** - The wrestler who is on top of or behind the opponent and is physically controlling them. Also the wrestler on top in referee's position. The offensive wrestler will try to physically break down the opponent and turn the opponent's back toward the mat (45 degree angle or less) to score near fall points or to gain a fall. Besides penalty points, the only ways you can score from the offensive position are 2, 3, or 4 point near fall.

DEFENSIVE (BOTTOM) POSITION - **Being Controlled** - The wrestler who is underneath and is being physically controlled. Also the wrestler on the bottom in referee's position. The defensive wrestler will try to get out of the top wrestler's control by escaping from or reversing the offensive wrestler. Besides penalty points, the only ways you can score from the defensive position are a 1 point escape or a 2 point reversal.

MATCH POINTS – Points scored during a match. There are eight basic ways to score match points in high school and nine basic ways in college (riding time).

- **TAKEDOWN** - T2 - 2 points - One of the neutral wrestlers gets behind the opponent and takes them down to the mat to their stomach or side or knees or weight on all fours OR takes them directly to their back or buttocks without getting behind them and becomes the offensive wrestler. If you go from neutral to defense, you were taken down and are now on the bottom. Neutral to Offense is a two point takedown.
- **ESCAPE** - E1 - 1 point - The defensive wrestler gets out from underneath the opponent's control and gets into the neutral position AND is facing the opponent. Defense to Neutral is a one point escape.
- **REVERSAL** - R2 - 2 points - The defensive wrestler gets out from underneath the opponent's control and gets on top of and/or behind the opponent in one move and becomes the offensive wrestler. To earn a reversal, you do not have to return your opponent to the mat as you would on a takedown. Defense to Offense is a two point reversal.
- **NEAR FALL 2** - N2 - 2 points – **Awarded** after the offensive wrestler turns the defensive wrestler over onto their back and holds them at a 45 degree angle or less for between 2-4 seconds (2-4 counts by the referee). **Also awarded** when the match is stopped due to the defensive wrestler being injured and/or screaming out to stop the match (unethical unless they are really injured) while being turned toward their back (imminent near fall) before the near fall count starts or

before 2 counts by the referee. Only one set of near fall points can be awarded for each pinning hold, and they cannot be awarded until after the pinning situation has ended. Defense on Back.

- **NEAR FALL 3** - N3 - 3 points – **Awarded** after the offensive wrestler holds the defensive wrestler within near fall criteria for five or more seconds in a row, instead of the two point near fall. **Also awarded** when the match is stopped due to the defensive wrestler being injured and/or screaming out to stop the match (unethical unless they are really injured) after being held within two point near fall criteria (2-4 count by the referee), instead of the 2 point near fall. Defense on Back Longer.

- **NEAR FALL 4** - N4 - 4 points – **Awarded** when the match is stopped due to the defensive wrestler being injured and/or screaming out to stop the match (unethical unless they are really injured) after being held within near fall criteria for five or more seconds in a row, instead of the 3 point near fall. Defense on their Back Longer and Are Injured.

- **PENALTY POINTS** - P1 or P2 - 1 or 2 points - A wrestler in any of the three scoring positions can earn one or two penalty points when their opponent breaks the rules of wrestling. These rules include no stalling (one stall warning “S” is given before penalizing for stalling), no swearing, kicking, scratching, biting, hitting, body slamming an opponent to the mat, bending any body part beyond its normal range of motion (the referee will try to stop these situations as “potentially dangerous” before someone is injured), or using holds from the illegal holds’ list. On the penalty chart, any first penalty is 1 point. Any second penalty is 1 point. Any third penalty is 2 points. Any fourth penalty is disqualification. Unsportsmanlike conduct and flagrant misconduct can lead to immediate disqualification.

- **LOCKED HANDS PENALTY** - A wrestler in the neutral position or defensive position can lock hands around the torso or both legs of the opponent. But it is a penalty for the offensive wrestler to lock hands (except cradles) around the torso or both legs of the defensive wrestler unless the opponent is standing on their feet or within a near fall count. Overlapping fingers is considered locked hands by the referee.

- **LOCKED HANDS AROUND THE HEAD PENALTY** - It is a penalty from any of the three scoring positions to lock hands around the opponent’s head without an arm or leg included. You must also allow your opponent to breath in a headlock or the referee can stop it as potentially dangerous.

- **CAUTION** and **CAUTION POINT** - C and C1 - 0 and 1 point - A wrestler in any of the three scoring positions can earn one caution point from the opponent’s third caution on for each time the opponent is cautioned by the referee for starting too quick before the whistle OR by lining up incorrectly when starting from referee’s position or from on the feet. A wrestler is allowed two cautions before the C1 penalty points begin. Also caution points are separate from penalty points and do not count on the penalty chart towards disqualification. Scored C, C, C1, C1, C1, etc.

TEAM POINTS - DUAL MEETS - Team points scored depend on the margin of victory of each match and are scored after each match is completed.

- **FALL** (noun) or **PIN** (verb or noun) - 6 team points - Awarded to the team whose wrestler holds both of the opponent's scapulas to the mat for two consecutive seconds in high school and one second in college. The match is over as soon as the fall occurs, and the one who is pinned loses automatically even though they may have been way ahead in match points at the time. The referee slaps the mat when a fall occurs. You can pin or be pinned in any of the three scoring positions.
- **TECHNICAL FALL** - 5 team points - Awarded to the team whose wrestler has scored 15 match points more than the opponent has scored. The match is stopped as soon as the 15 point margin is achieved, except in a pinning situation where the referee will allow the offensive wrestler to try to score the fall. In college only, the winning wrestler has to have scored near fall points during the match to receive the technical fall team points. If no near fall points were scored, this 15-point-margin-win would be a major decision.
- **MAJOR DECISION** - 4 team points - Awarded to the team whose wrestler wins by a margin of 8-14 match points more than the opponent has scored. Also in college, a 15-point-margin-win with no near fall points.
- **REGULAR DECISION** - 3 team points - Awarded to the team whose wrestler wins by a margin of 1-7 match points more than the opponent has scored.
- **DRAW OR TIE** - There are no more ties in wrestling as the match will be decided by sudden victory overtime from the feet and/or by tie breakers from referee's position.
- **DISQUALIFICATION** - 6 team points - A wrestler wins a match by disqualification when the opponent is disqualified from the match because of too many penalties **OR** when a wrestler is illegally injured by an opponent's illegal hold and cannot continue wrestling. If you were injured by an opponent's illegal hold (not a technical violation like locking hands or grabbing the uniform), you will win the match by DQ. It will not do a wrestler any good to intentionally try to injure an opponent because they will lose.
- **INJURY DEFAULT** - 6 team points - A wrestler wins a match by injury default when the opponent is injured accidentally during the match and cannot continue wrestling.
- **FORFEIT** - 6 team points - A wrestler wins a match by forfeit when the other team does not have a wrestler to compete against them in a dual meet.

GETTING YOUR BODY FIT FOR WRESTLING

Getting and keeping your body in the best condition possible can help you reach your full potential as a wrestler. If you're in shape and physically fit, you can better handle moves your opponent may try on you during a match. Here are some fundamental aspects of fitness and wellness that can help you stay fit during your wrestling season:

- **Rest:** Getting plenty of good-quality rest is critical to your success on the mat. Take at least one day off a week during the season, and get 8 hours of sleep every night. Practices and training shouldn't last more than 150 minutes during the season.
- **Disease prevention:** Closely check your skin every day for discoloration, swelling, areas of tenderness, and changes in texture. Scrub your body with antibacterial soap and wash your practice gear daily. Never share shirts, shorts, towels, or headgear with teammates. Impetigo, herpes, and ringworm are just a few of the skin diseases common to wrestlers that you can prevent by following these simple steps.
- **Endurance:** All wrestlers need to build their endurance if they want to be successful; in other words, you need to build your heart's capacity for maintaining intense levels of exercise over time. To be ready for competition, you need to be able to run or ride an exercise bike continuously at moderate intensity for 40 minutes.
- **Strength training:** You and your coach need to develop training programs that increase the maximum amount of force your muscles can exert against resistance. Your muscles get stronger when you experience *momentary muscular failure* (the point at which you can't accomplish any more repetitions of an exercise). The point of momentary muscular failure should occur on the 11th or 12th repetition of an exercise in the 2nd and 3rd set of a 3-set/12-repetition strength building plan. Some great fundamental strength training

exercises include the bench press, shoulder press, triceps extensions, upright rows, pull-ups, leg extensions, leg curls, and arm curls.

- **Flexibility:** To become an agile wrestler with quick feet, you need to increase the ability of your muscles and joints to move through their full range of motion. You can develop your flexibility by doing light dynamic loosening exercises followed by stretching exercises before and after each practice. Dynamic loosening exercises include lunges, walking toe touches, high-knee jogging, lateral jogging, carioca jogging, and arm circles. As for stretching, focus on stretching the main muscle groups (hamstrings, quadriceps, hip flexors, lower back, shoulders, gluteal muscles, and neck); hold each stretch for 15 to 30 seconds.
- **Nutrition:** You need to understand how carbohydrates, proteins, and fats affect your wrestling ability and training during exercise, after exercise, and before exercise. While the dietary needs of each athlete depend on a variety of factors, including age and gender, a good rule of thumb is to try to eat a diet consisting of 40 percent carbohydrates, 40 percent protein, and 20 percent fats.
- **Hydration:** Approximately 75 percent of your body is water. Because of the weight classifications in wrestling, you need to make sure you get the right amount of fluids before, during, and after exercise. Drink 2 to 3 cups of water four hours prior to exercise, 2 cups two hours before exercise, 2 cups 30 minutes before exercise and 1/2 cup of water every 15 minutes during exercise. After exercise, drink 2 cups of water for each pound lost during exercise.
- **Concussion:** A head injury is a brain injury. So make sure to have a medical professional check you out right away after you suffer any type of head injury. Your doctor must also clear you before you can take to the mat again.

KEEPING YOUR HEAD IN THE MATCH: THE MENTAL PART OF WRESTLING

Because of the one-on-one nature of wrestling and the relatively brief length of a match, the mental approach to competition and the commitment you need to succeed are unique. The following list provides some keys to winning the mental game as a wrestler:

- **Inspiration:** External motivation and rewards can take you only so far; to be a great wrestler, you need to be truly inspired.
- **Positive attitude:** Successful wrestlers must be in the right positive mindset to win a match on any given day.
- **Strength in the fundamentals:** Great wrestlers understand the importance of the fundamental moves and work to improve them every day.
- **Style:** You need to develop a style that fits your skills, strengths, and abilities. Each wrestler's style is different, so you need to develop yours with confidence and then pay attention to the styles of your opponents so you can beat them.
- **Competition:** Develop a desire for competition by competing all the time, even at practice. Maintain consistent intensity in everything you do both on and off the mat and stay focused on the task at hand.
- **Mental toughness:** Understand that concentration, confidence, self-control, and goal-setting are all mental drills that wrestlers have to master to gain a mental edge.