

Safety, Principles and Values at the University of Toronto Judo Club

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Risk of injury is intrinsic to all sport:

No sport excludes the possibility of injury. In fact, injuries do occur in all sports, from the apparently gentle Badminton or Table Tennis to the intensely physically demanding Weightlifting or Rugby. Clearly, every participant in every sport exposes themselves to the risk of injury from over-exertion, or by interaction with other participants. Judo is not only a contact sport, but it is also a “collision” sport, and collision may from time to time produce injury.

Accordingly, one of the fundamental objectives for the sport of Judo is to minimize this risk by participating in the sport in a manner which is as safe as possible. We want to prevent injuries and to minimize their impact when they happen.

Origins of Judo:

Judo is an Olympic sport, the second most practiced sport in the world. It is derived from the self-defence, hand-to-hand fighting art - **Jiu-Jitsu** - which was practiced by the Samurai warriors of feudal Japan. The purpose of Jiu-Jitsu is to defend oneself from a physical attack by another person by avoiding the attack, utilizing the momentum of the attacker and then using a throwing, choking, joint-lock or immobilization technique to ensure that the assailant is no longer a threat.

In contrast, Judo is not a self-defence fighting art, although its techniques are useful for self-defense purposes if a Judo player is attacked in the street. The object of Judo is not to harm the opponent, but to defeat him or her according to the rules and ethics of the sport. The win may be accomplished by throwing the opponent safely on to his/her back or by using a hold down technique, an elbow lock or a choking technique.

Judo principles and ethics:

There are two underlying principles which govern everything that we do on the mat. They are Maximum Efficiency with Minimum Effort (**Seiryoku-Zenyo** in Japanese) and Mutual Welfare and Benefit (**Jita-Kyoei**). This latter principle has two components – how to take care of the safety of our partner or opponent in a training session or competition, and how we protect ourselves from the risk of injury or harm of any kind while practicing Judo.

Following the principle of Jita-Kyoei, there is an ethical obligation on every Judo player to take care of the welfare of the person with whom they practice. This obligation has special meaning with reference to the practitioner who is weaker, smaller, younger, less capable, older or disadvantaged in some way.

Part of the obligation of caring for the welfare of one's opponent or partner is exercised through throwing him or her safely. This entails using good quality throwing techniques, with reference to:

- the timing of the attack,
- taking the opponent/partner off balance (**Kuzushi**),
- appropriate use of power, speed and body positioning (**Tsukuri**), and
- helping the partner or opponent to land safely on the mat (**Kake**).

Attention to these elements demonstrates respect for the partner/opponent and the discipline of Judo and minimizes the risk of injury or discomfort.

Dangerous techniques:

Throwing and grappling techniques that over the years have been found to be dangerous to a Judo player have been removed from acceptability within the sport. These include all joint locks except ones applied against the elbow. Therefore leglocks, anklelocks, heelhooks and spectacular “television wrestling” techniques are all prohibited, as are pressure point attacks, pinching, hair pulling, gouging, numerous throws that place unacceptable pressure on any part of the body, or any other technique that is likely to be dangerous to the partner or opponent.

Chokes applied by the legs to an opponent/partner’s neck are considered dangerous unless one of the partner’s arms is alongside the neck and between the attacker’s legs. When **tori** (the person executing the technique) is applying an elbow lock or choking technique and **uke** (the person experiencing the technique) submits, tori **MUST** cease applying the technique immediately. Tori’s intention must be to cause uke to submit, not to harm him or her.

In competition, when uke decides to submit, he/she is advised to tap twice with the hand (or foot if necessary), preferably onto tori’s body and preferably loudly so that the referee can see the submission. In randori, the same applies except for the referee observation.

Use of prohibited techniques Judo in competition is cause for warning or disqualification. At the UofTJC the Instructors maintain watchfulness and correct the player who utilizes dangerous or prohibited techniques. In exceptional circumstances it might be necessary for the Instructor to require the offending Member to leave the mat or to not come back.

Breakfalls and stretching:

One of the first elements of instruction for the beginner to Judo is learning to fall safely. This is the “breakfall” (**Ukemi**), the skill of falling safely to the front, to either side or to the back when thrown with a Judo throwing technique. All around the world, Judo clubs ensure that their members practice breakfalls at the beginning of every class and before every competition match. Until beginners to Judo have learned their breakfalls, it is inadvisable to allow other players to throw them or to practice counter attacks on them. This means that free practice (**Randori**) should be delayed until the player is capable of being thrown safely on the mat from any direction. Additionally, the Judo player who is capable of falling safely will probably learn their attacking, defensive, combination and counter throwing techniques more rapidly and at a deeper level of quality than the player who is worried about their breakfalls.

Because cold and stiff muscles, tendons and ligaments tear more easily than those that have been stretched and exercised, our practice is to have a stretching and flexibility warm-up at the beginning of each practice session, and a warm-down session at the end, to stabilize and relax the muscles. Many beginners to Judo are not physically fit, thus it is advisable for the Beginners Class Instructor to utilize light exercises and stretching techniques. After several months when the beginner has been promoted to Yellow Belt, he or she will be fitter and stronger. At that point most will be able to safely manage the more

challenging warm-ups, stretching and flexibility exercises in the Intermediate/Advanced Class.

Focus on health:

The risk of injury goes up for any sport participant who does not pursue a healthy lifestyle. Therefore every Member of the UofTJC is encouraged to acquire and follow proper habits of nutrition, rest and hygiene as well as developing a healthy mind, attitude and body in preparation for the practice of Judo. It is good advice for all Members to have a regular medical examination.

The club requests for every Member to wash their uniform regularly. Keep finger and toenails trimmed and use some form of footwear or sandals other than the one you have been wearing all day for coming to and from the practice area. Water bottles are encouraged in order to reduce the risk of dehydration.

Supervision of every Judo class:

Each UofTJC Judo Class is under the direct supervision of a Black Belt. Each training session is clearly defined. It starts with the "bow in" and ends with the "bow out". Following the end of the training session, the practice of Judo may continue only so long as a Black Belt Instructor is present and approves of continuing activity. If no Black Belt is there to supervise, the practice of Judo is not permitted.

Gender issues:

If at all possible men will work out with men and women with women, unless mutually consented otherwise. Hands are not to be placed where they do not belong and techniques that lend themselves to such awkward positions should be avoided. In the event that any Member feels uncomfortable about a gender-related issue, they should talk privately to the Instructor, preferably immediately. The Instructor will ensure that the concern is taken seriously and dealt with in an appropriate manner.

Accident prevention measures:

- The Instructor will see to it that practicing pairs are formed with individuals of similar height and weight.
- In a Randori session, all Members not participating should stand (never sit) alongside the north wall so as to protect the Randori participants from hitting the wall,
- When practicing Randori, the advice is to relax. This will consume less total energy and will free up the power and speed to be used at the point of attack or defence
- When practicing Randori, be aware of your surroundings and ensure that you throw your partner in a vacant area, not onto another Member,
- When thrown, do your Ukemi and do not attempt to spin out of the throw,
- When throwing a Member, help them to land safely,
- Whenever possible the higher ranks should practice Randori with lower ranks in order to promote good habits and to advance the learning process.

Gaining access to the club:

A further safety control is governed by controlled permission of an individual to be on the Judo mat as a player during a training session. There are only two ways that this can happen:

- The Member has a valid Membership in Hart House, and has paid the registration fee to Membership Services Office for the applicable academic term (September to December, January to April, May/June and July/August).
- The second is for a high-ranking judoka (Sho-Dan or higher) to have been introduced to, and approved by, Hart House by a UofTJC instructor as a *Guest Instructor*.

Values:

Personal and club values are regularly reinforced in Judo instruction. These have to do with respect for the sport and for the opponent or training partner. These include:

- Learning how to lose a Judo match or Randori practice gracefully. This includes submitting when there is risk of injury through an elbow lock, choke or strangle. It also includes the expectation that when a Member is being thrown, he or she recognizes the quality of the technique and does Ukemi, rather than utilizing an excessive avoidance technique, which can place one or both of the Members at risk of injury
- Ensuring that at no time there is intent to do harm to another Member,
- Learning how to be a helpful influence under circumstances where we can be useful to our training partner, and
- Showing respect for all Members of the sport, particularly the Instructor (**Sensei**), a Referee, Judge or other official at a competition.

Emergency Action Plan:

Staff at the Hart House Athletics facility is familiar with the elements of an Emergency Action Plan in the case of injury, including first aid materials and telephone numbers and directions to local hospitals. The Instructor in charge will coordinate further action and communication . Hart House assumes responsibility for the safety and cleanliness of the mats in the practice area.

Informed Consent:

Starting in January 2002, each Member has been asked to complete an Information and Waiver form and sign it in recognition that injuries can occur in Judo. These forms:

1. ask for information about relevant health/allergic/medical matters and the name and telephone number of a person to be contacted in case of emergency,
2. require the signature of the Member that they understand and accept the potential risk inherent in any physical exercise, such as Judo, and refrain from taking legal action against any Members, Black Belts, Hart House, the University of Toronto or Judo Ontario.

The forms are kept under lock and key in the Membership Services Office. The information is accessible only by Hart House officials and Judo Club Instructors who may consult the forms in the event that there is an incident.