



FREESTYLE

— JEET KUNE DO — TM

TOURNAMENT HANDBOOK

PHILOSOPHY · RULES · GUIDELINES · PROTOTYPE 0.9 (2026)

INTERNATIONAL EDITION

PROTOTYPE · FOR REVIEW

VERSION

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Not for official use

About this prototype

Thank you for reviewing the first draft of the **Freestyle Jeet Kune Do™ Tournament Handbook**. It is shared with colleagues in different regions of the world so that the rules can be tested against local experience, law and practice before the first official edition.

Items marked **UNDER REVIEW** are provisional. The status shown applies for now, and your feedback will help decide them. Section 12 lists the main open questions.

Please send comments by section number to the Founder & Director, Ivan Rex Leon.

Contents

1 Purpose and Spirit

2 Charter

3 Adult Rules (18+)

4 Junior Freestyle (16–17)

5 Youth Point Sparring

6 Equipment and Attire

7 Officials and Decisions

8 Conduct

9 Safety and Medical

10 Event Guidelines

11 Governance

12 Questions for Reviewers

Sources

1 Purpose and Spirit

"Under the sky, under the heavens, there is but one family."

BRUCE LEE, INTERVIEW WITH PIERRE BERTON, 1971

Freestyle Jeet Kune Do™ is the application of Jeet Kune Do principles in an amateur freestyle combat sports setting.

Freestyle means every range and every style: striking, clinch and grappling, open to athletes of every martial art and combat sport. The rules are kept to the minimum needed to prevent serious injury, preserving the totality of combat.

Freestyle Jeet Kune Do (Freestyle JKD) uses martial arts to promote a more peaceful world, bringing people together through friendly competition and sportsmanship, for the mutual benefit of the individual and society.

STRIKING • CLINCH • GRAPPLING

- We compete to develop character.
- We respect our opponent, the officials and the spectators.
- We win with humility and lose with dignity.
- We seek victory through efficiency, with the least harm to our opponent.
- We compete for mutual benefit, for ourselves and for society.

The Golden Rule. Treat your opponent as you would want to be treated. Every rule in this handbook follows from this principle, shared by nearly every culture and faith.

The Highest Art. To defeat an opponent without injury is high skill; to make a friend of an opponent is the highest art.

2 Charter

These principles define Freestyle JKD. Rules may be revised each year; the charter does not change.

- 1. Totality.** Jeet Kune Do principles: striking, clinch and grappling, all in one contest.
- 2. Minimal rules.** Only the rules needed for safe competition.

3. **Least harm.** Techniques that can injure before they can be felt are not used in competition.
4. **Open to all.** Athletes of every nation, culture and style are welcome; skill is valued over damage.
5. **Character above all.** Respect, humility and mutual benefit guide every athlete, coach and official.

3 Adult Rules (18+)

Format

- Up to **3 rounds of 10 minutes**, with **1 minute of rest** between rounds.
- A bout ends by submission, by an athlete quitting, by the referee, by the athlete's corner, or by the doctor.
- If there is no finish after three rounds, the judges award the win to the more dominant athlete.

Allowed

Techniques	
Strikes	Punches; kicks, including leg kicks such as jeet tek and dum tek above or below the knee; knees; elbows; headbutts
Takedowns	Throws and takedowns, including single- and double-leg takedowns; slams in which the opponent lands on the back
On the ground	Punches to the head and body; chokes; arm locks; straight leg locks (straight ankle lock, knee bar, toe hold)

Not allowed

We protect our opponents. Techniques that can injure before they can be felt are not used.

Techniques	
Landings	Head spikes (any throw, slam or suplex onto the head or neck); slams that do not land the opponent on the back; suplexes; scissor takedown; leg-entwining throws
Grounded opponent	Elbows, knees, kicks (including soccer kicks), stomps and headbutts to a grounded opponent
Submissions	Heel hooks and twisting leg locks; neck cranks; spinal locks
Fouls	Eye attacks; biting; fish-hooking; groin strikes; kicks or stomps to the knee joint; strikes to the throat, the spine, or the back of the head or neck; small-joint manipulation; hair pulling; grabbing the headgear, gloves or clothing

Techniques under review UNDER REVIEW

These techniques carry a higher risk. The status below applies until the Council decides.

Technique	Status for now	Concern
Slams (landing on the back)	Allowed for adults	A slam that goes wrong can land on the head
Slamming out of a submission	Allowed only if the opponent lands on the back	The held athlete cannot protect the head
Knees to the top of the head	Not allowed	Neck injury to an athlete shooting in
Suplexes	Not allowed	Landing on the head or neck
Leg kicks near the knee	Allowed above or below the knee	Knee hyperextension if the kick slips
Headbutts	Allowed for adults	Cuts and concussion
Standing elbows	Allowed for adults	Cuts
Ground punches to the head	Allowed for adults	Repeated head impact
Spinning and jumping strikes	Allowed	High force, less control
Knee bars and toe holds	Allowed	Ligament injury if the tap is late
Wrist locks	Not yet decided	Small-joint rule unclear

4 Junior Freestyle (16-17)

Athletes aged 16 and 17 may compete with the written consent of a parent or legal guardian. The adult rules apply, with these changes:

	Adults (18+)	Junior Freestyle (16-17)
Rounds	Up to 3 × 10 minutes	1 × 10 minutes
Headbutts	Allowed	Not allowed
Elbows	Allowed standing	Not allowed
Slams	Allowed (landing on the back)	Not allowed
Ground punches	Head and body	Body only

If there is no finish, the judges award the win to the more dominant athlete.

Head strikes under 18 UNDER REVIEW Some international amateur bodies do not allow any strikes to the head before age 18. Junior Freestyle may change to body-only striking.

5 Youth Point Sparring

Youth competition is point sparring, inspired by sport fencing: a clean, controlled strike scores a point and the athletes reset. A clean takedown wins the bout.

Age groups **UNDER REVIEW** The groups below are provisional. Two-year groups (6–7, 8–9, 10–11, 12–13, 14–15, 16–17), as used by many international bodies, are being considered.

	Kids (6–11)	Cadets (12–14)	Juniors (15–17)
Strikes	Punches and kicks	Punches and kicks	Punches and kicks
Targets	Body	Head and body (light contact)	Head, body and legs (light contact)
Bout length	2 minutes	3 minutes	3 minutes
Takedowns	Sweeps, trips and simple hip throws	Throws and takedowns, no slams	Throws and takedowns, no slams

Scoring

- **1 point** for each clean, controlled strike to a valid target.
- **First to 5 points wins**, or the athlete leading when time runs out. If tied, the next point wins.
- **A clean takedown wins immediately**: the opponent lands on the back or side while the thrower stays in control.

Youth safety

- Controlled contact only. Excessive force brings a warning, then disqualification.
- No knees, elbows, headbutts or slams.
- Leg kicks (Juniors) land above or below the knee, never on it.
- No ground fighting. After a takedown that is not clean, the athletes restart standing.
- Clinching is limited to **5 seconds**.
- Every athlete must be able to fall safely before competing.

6 Equipment and Attire

The same equipment is required for every age group.

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|--|--|
| ☐ Full-face cage headgear for combat sports | ☐ Knee pads |
| ☐ Open-finger MMA gloves suitable for amateur competition | ☐ Elbow pads |
| ☐ Shin guards | ☐ Mouthguard |
| | ☐ Groin protector |

Attire: fitted shorts and a rash guard. No gi, shoes, jewellery or hard objects. Nails are trimmed.

7 Officials and Decisions

The referee's only role is the safety of the athletes. The referee never scores. The referee's decisions are final.

	Officials	When there is no finish
Minimum	1 referee + 1 judge	The judge decides
Recommended	1 referee + 3 judges	Majority of the judges

Judges award the win to the more dominant athlete.

8 Conduct

The JKD salute. In honour of Bruce Lee, founder of Jeet Kune Do, every athlete performs the JKD salute toward the opponent and the officials before and after each bout. Events open and close with the same salute.

Respect. Disrespect toward the opponent, the officials or the spectators results in disqualification: trash talk, insults, taunting, or mocking a defeated opponent. The same applies to coaches and teams. Disrespectful spectators may be asked to leave.

Fouls. First foul: warning. Second foul: final warning, considered by the judges. Third foul: disqualification. A deliberate, dangerous foul: immediate disqualification.

Accidental fouls.

- The injured athlete may take up to **5 minutes** to recover.
 - If the athlete cannot continue: in round 1, no contest; after round 1, the judges decide.
 - In a tournament, the athlete able to continue advances.
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9 Safety and Medical

Local law first. Organizers follow all local laws and sports regulations for combat sports events, including medical cover, medical clearance, insurance and emergency procedures. Where local rules are stricter than this handbook, local rules apply.

Minimum. Where local rules set no requirement, a qualified medical professional or certified first aider is present throughout, with a plan for emergency transport.

After a knockout or stoppage by strikes.

- The athlete does not continue in the tournament if stopped by strikes to the head.

- The athlete rests at least **30 days** from competition and hard sparring, and returns only with medical clearance.

Situations not covered. The referee decides. Safety decisions are final.

10 Event Guidelines

Competition area UNDER REVIEW

- Recommended: an 8 × 8 m contest area with a 3 m safety border, on judo tatami.
- Minimum: a 7 × 7 m contest area with a 1.5 m safety border, on judo, sambo or wrestling mats at least 5 cm thick.
- Firm, joined mats, cleaned before each session. The contest edge is marked in a contrasting colour. No raised platform, ring or cage for now.

Out of bounds. The referee stops the action and restarts the athletes in the centre, in the same position as closely as possible.

Waivers (required). Every athlete signs a liability waiver and medical declaration valid under local law. Athletes under 18 also need a parent's or guardian's signature.

Weigh-in. On the day of the event, for safety: athletes compete close to their natural weight, without extreme weight cutting.

Adult weight classes UNDER REVIEW

Class	Kilograms	Pounds (approx.)
1	Up to 60	Up to 132
2	60–70	132–154
3	70–80	154–176
4	80–90	176–198
5	90–100	198–220
6	Over 100	Over 220
Open	Any weight	Any weight

Lighter classes (for example up to 52 and 56 kg) may be added for regions with lighter athletes. Small classes may be combined. Open-division athletes accept the weight difference in writing. Youth athletes are matched within their age group and within 10% of body weight.

Divisions. Open divisions are available to all athletes. Organizers may also offer women's divisions; eligibility follows local law and the national sports governing body.

Recognition. Achievement is recognised in various forms, such as medals, trophies or certificates.

11 Governance

Founder & Director. The Founder & Director appoints the Council and approves rule changes. Only events that follow these rules may use the Freestyle Jeet Kune Do™ name.

The Council. Council members are selected by the Founder & Director on the basis of their martial arts experience, their moral character, and their commitment to the mutual welfare of the individual and the global community. Because Freestyle JKD is based on principles that cover every range of combat, martial artists who are well versed in any range (for example kicking, punching, clinch or grappling) are welcomed for their knowledge, and membership is not limited to those with an exclusively Jeet Kune Do background.

Annual review. Each year the Council reviews the rules, based on what happened at events: injuries, stoppages, fouls and rules that caused confusion. Changes must agree with the charter.

"Absorb what is useful, reject what is useless and add what is essentially your own."

BRUCE LEE, TAO OF JEET KUNE DO

12 Questions for Reviewers

This handbook is a prototype. Your experience is welcome on any rule, and especially on these open questions:

1. **Youth age groups:** keep the current three groups, or move to two-year groups?
2. **Head strikes under 18:** allow them in Junior Freestyle, or body only?
3. **Techniques under review:** which should be allowed, restricted or removed? (Section 3)
4. **Weight classes:** do the 10 kg classes suit athletes in your region? Are lighter classes needed?
5. **Competition area:** is the recommended size and mat practical where you are?
6. **Round length:** are three 10-minute rounds right for amateur adults?
7. **Experience levels:** should there be separate novice and open levels?
8. **Local law:** are there rules in your country that this handbook should reflect?

Sources

- Bruce Lee, interview with Pierre Berton, recorded 9 December 1971 (*Bruce Lee: The Lost Interview*).
- Bruce Lee, *Tao of Jeet Kune Do*.

Freestyle Jeet Kune Do™ is a trademark of Ivan Rex Leon. This handbook is not legal advice; organizers should have waivers and event arrangements reviewed by a local legal professional.