

8 Week

Beginners Guide

Fast-track your learning with our
beginners handbook

ELEMENT

MARTIAL ARTS BRISBANE

8 Week

Beginners Program

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Guidelines

General overview:

The purpose of this handbook is to keep your learning condensed and easy to follow. We would love to include hundreds of pages of details and specifics on how to do different techniques. However, learning a martial art is very much like learning how to drive a car. Simple but not easy.

It is important to simplify your aims and goals to a unique set of outcomes, like getting to the mount, the back, or any dominant position so that your opponent is vulnerable to your submission attempts, rather than focusing on the infinite number of techniques to achieve that goal. If you are someone who can take in information and retain it with ease, then this handbook will be very simple for you. Speak with one of our coaches, and we will give you higher aims and targets to look for. With this being said, keep in mind the quote below.

Bruce Lee:

“One does not accumulate but eliminate. It is not daily increase but daily decrease. The height of cultivation always runs to simplicity.”

Mount

In the first week, participants will acquire a thorough understanding of the mount position. The mount position is a position beginner and experienced practitioners aim to achieve. Positions such as the mount give smaller practitioners strong and dominant control, allowing them to overpower larger opponents.

Core problem: instability

The mount position can become very unstable, and so it is one of the core problems you will face when using the position in training or competition. Use your arms to stabilize and alternate between an S-Mount, allowing you to move with your opponent's energy vs fighting against it.

Positions: (High Mount + Low Mount + S Mount)

Submissions: (Arm triangle + armbar + americana)

Tips: Focus on your opponent's energy and direction and try to be ready to change your position. More often than not, you will lose the position when you try to hold on too tightly.

Side Control

First let's define side control:

Side control, is a dominant top position in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu where one practitioner pins their opponent to the ground while staying perpendicular to them. Side control is a great position and can often be more stable and controlling than the mount. The key difference being that you are not controlling the bottom person with your legs limiting your ability to get submissions effective on larger and stronger opponents.

- **Standard Side Control:** The classic chest-to-chest position, focusing on heavy pressure and control.
- **Kesa Gatame** (Scarf Hold): A variation where the top practitioner wraps the opponent's head and arm with their arms and keeps their legs wide for balance.
- **Reverse Kesa Gatame:** Opposite to scarf hold, focusing on controlling the hips and isolating the far arm.
- **North-South Transition:** Moving into a head-to-head orientation while maintaining control.
- **Modified Side Control:** Variants with different grips, leg positions, or hand placements tailored to specific transitions or submissions.

Offensive Opportunities from Side Control:

Submissions:

- Armbar
- Americana (Keylock)
- Kimura
- Straight Arm Lock
- Chokes (e.g., baseball choke, north-south choke)

Transitions:

- Mount
- Back control
- Knee on belly

Advancing Position:

- Isolate an arm for attacks
- Maintain pressure to exhaust the opponent

From the bottom, an opponent will often try to:

- Regain guard through hip escapes or frames.
- Bridge and roll to reverse the position.
- Create space to reestablish mobility or counters.

Proper positioning and pressure are essential for maintaining dominance in side control while preparing for offensive attacks. It's a cornerstone of positional hierarchy in BJJ and a fundamental skill for practitioners of all levels.

Knee Ride

Welcome to knee ride week. The knee ride or knee on belly is a position that is favourable in self defence and sports jiu jitsu. Similar to side control only difference being your weight and knee is on your opponents belly.

Key Details for Effective Knee Ride

Balance:

- Stay mobile and adjust to your opponent's movements to avoid being swept.

Weight Distribution:

- Drive your weight through your knee, not your foot, to maximize pressure.

Grips:

- Use grips on the gi (collar, sleeve, or pants) or body to control the opponent and maintain the position.

Head Position:

- Keep your head aligned with your base for better balance and to avoid counters.

Knee Ride

Common Mistakes

Leaning Back:

- This compromises balance and allows the bottom player to sweep or escape.

Too Much Knee Pressure Without Control:

- Applying pressure without stabilizing with grips or posture can lead to escapes.

Not Being Mobile:

- Knee ride requires dynamic movement to adapt to the opponent's attempts to escape.

Key takeaway

The knee ride is a versatile and powerful position in BJJ that combines control, pressure, and offensive opportunities. While it's uncomfortable for the opponent on the bottom, it allows the top player to stay mobile and dictate the pace of the fight.

Back Control

In week 4 we are going to focus on the back mount as the King of all positions in BJJ and MMA. All though you will hear this a lot we believe it is important for you to understand why the back mount is the most important position in jiu jitsu. The reason the back mount is so dominant and sought after is due to the imbalance of effective submission and controls the person on the back has available with relatively high probability of success vs the defending player.

Stay Tight:

- Maintain a strong chest-to-back connection and don't let gaps form, as they make escapes easier.

Control the Hips:

- Use your hooks to follow the opponent's movements and prevent them from sliding out.

Head Position:

- Keep your head close to the opponent's to avoid strikes (in self-defense scenarios) and maintain control.

Attack with Purpose:

- Always threaten submissions or transitions to keep your opponent defensive. This is often overlooked but really important for effective control.

Escapes from Back Mount

For the person on the bottom, escaping the back mount is challenging but possible with the right techniques:

Hand Fighting:

- Focus on removing the opponent's grips, especially the choking hand.

Protect the Neck:

- Prevent your opponent from getting their arm underneath your chin and around your neck.

Hip Escape:

- Use your hips to slide out of the hooks and turn into the opponent to recover guard or escape.

Bridge and Roll:

- Create momentum by bridging to one side and rolling to disrupt their balance.

Common Mistakes in Back Mount

1. Crossing Feet:

- Never cross your feet while in back mount—it opens you up to an ankle lock.

2. Loosening Control:

- Allowing gaps in chest-to-back connection makes it easier for the opponent to escape.

3. Neglecting Hand Fighting:

- Focusing only on submissions without controlling their hands can lead to losing the position.

Closed Guard

In week five, participants will delve into the closed guard position, a cornerstone of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu that epitomizes the David versus Goliath narrative in martial arts history. This position proves to be highly effective for both defensive maneuvers and offensive techniques. The closed guard serves as a valuable self-defense tool, and it is important to understand its strengths and weaknesses. Don't miss your next opportunity to learn the fundamentals and self-defense applications of this position.

What is the closed guard?

The closed guard is a fundamental position in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu where the practitioner on the bottom wraps their legs around their opponent's waist, locking their ankles together behind the opponent's back. This position provides control, defensive options, and offensive opportunities for the person on the bottom.

Advantages of the Closed Guard

Control:

- The locked legs and grips make it hard for the opponent to pass the guard.

Submission Potential:

- The closed guard offers access to high-percentage submissions like chokes and joint locks.

Transition Opportunities:

- From closed guard, you can transition to open guard, half guard, or even offensive positions like mount.

Defensive Strength:

- The position makes it difficult for the top player to launch effective attacks.

Attacks from Closed Guard

Submissions:

- Armbar: Trap and isolate the opponent's arm for an arm lock.
- Triangle Choke: Use your legs to trap the opponent's neck and arm.
- Guillotine Choke: A head-and-arm choke applied when the opponent lowers their head.
- Kimura: A shoulder lock applied by isolating and twisting the arm.

Sweeps:

- Scissor Sweep: Use your legs to off-balance and flip the opponent.
- Hip Bump Sweep: Bridge and twist to roll the opponent onto their back.
- Flower Sweep: Combine grips and leg movement to destabilise the opponent.

Tip:

Both top and bottom player will have to fight for control over posture. Posture plays a critical role in being able to effective control or escape.

Open Guard

Week six is focused on the open guard. This position allows for greater mobility and a variety of attack options for both top and bottom position. Learn how to simplify the complexity of the position and narrow your focus to a few effect strategies and positions to give you confidence amongst uncertainty. Eliminate your opponent's ability to generate power and speed from both top and bottom position so you can keep yourself safe.

The open guard is the most dynamic of all positions in Jiu Jitsu. To simplify the open guard we suggest focusing on these key concepts when you first start;

Bottom player wants to use their legs to control, sweep or submit the top player. The top player wants to achieve the opposite. Their goal is to avoid the bottom player being able to effective use their legs, effective removing their legs all together.

There are a number of open guard positions but we will focus on the main concepts;

Distance: This may seem odd at first and will often be overlooked but your ability to maintain distance is crucial for both top and bottom player.

Plus guard: Plus guard just refers to any type of guard position where the person on bottom is sitting on their hips with their shoulders off the floor.

Minus guard: Any guard or position where the bottom player is lying back and has their back or shoulders on the floor.

Some open guard positions you will see often:

- De La Riva Guard
- Butterfly guard
- X guard

Bottom player:

As the bottom player you will want to focus on keeping your legs in front of your opponent. This is often referred to as guard retention.

Top player:

Stay balanced and stable. The quickest way to lose when you are on top in open guard is losing your balance and allowing your opponent to knock you over.

Half Guard

In week seven, you will explore techniques related to the half guard position. Mastery of this position is essential for successfully transitioning to more dominant positions. The half-guard is a position that can be dominant from either top or bottom position. The top player is generally able to exert a lot more force and pressure especially in a self-defence situation, so having effect strategies from this position is crucial for your confidence.

The half guard is often where you will spend a lot of your time in jiu jitsu. It is the metaphorical front line that give either player access to dominant controls.

What is the half-guard and what should you know.

As with many positions in jiu jitsu the half guard is extremely complex but can be easily understood with some guidance.

General goals and aims: Submission is always the goal and can be achieved from the half guard position but for the sake of keeping things simple we have removed the focus on submission and rather focus on progressing positionally.

Top player: Get past your opponents legs and try and keep the bottom player flat on their back. By doing this regardless of the techniques you use you will negate a lot of the opportunities that your opponent will have available.

Bottom player: Stay on your side and prevent the top player from flattening you out, controlling your head or passing your legs. Try to sweep them over, get to the better position where you are able to have more control over your opponent like the closed guard.

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Guard Passing

In week 8 we focus on guard passing techniques and basic guard retention. Mastering this skill is essential for advancing your overall game and most important of all keeping yourself safe in a real situation where you have ended up on the ground. Understand what our primary goals are when we are trying to pass the guard will help the bottom player also understand what to prevent and how to come out on top. Come join us for a class on guard passing and learn the basics.

Guard passing can be simplified by focusing on some concepts. Rather than trying to remember every technique which becomes overwhelming very quickly instead pay attention to the following 2 types of guard passing:
Pressure passing vs movement based passing

Pressure passing: Where the top or bottom player uses pressure and tension to slowly and meticulously pass the opponents guard.

Movement passing: Out maneuvering or directing your opponent one way and going the other.

Next you can categorise guard passed into 3 types of passing:

- Underneath or over the legs
- Around the legs
- Between the legs

Important tips:

Try to dominate the controls / grips between you and your opponent. Grips alone can often dictate the fight so by having good controls yourself or avoiding your opponent establishing good grips on you will be a large part of your early battles in jiu jitsu.

Some common guard passes you will see;

- Knee Slide Pass
- Double-Under Pass
- Toreando Pass
- Leg Drag Pass
- X-Pass
- Backstep Pass
- Smash Pass
- Over/Under Pass

Start by paying attention to your opponents posture and distance. Be ready at all times.

Key takeaways:

- opening the closed guard
- controlling the legs
- controlling the hips
- controlling the upper body
- finishing your pass

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Rules

General Etiquette

- **Respect Everyone:** Treat instructors, teammates, and visitors with respect, regardless of rank or experience.
- **Bow When Entering/Exiting the Mat:** This shows respect for the space and tradition of BJJ.
- **Listen to Instructors:** Follow all instructions promptly to ensure safety and efficient learning.
- **No Disruptive Behavior:** Avoid loud or distracting conversations while classes are in session.

Hygiene and Attire

- **Clean Gi and Gear:** Ensure your gi, no-gi attire, and belt are clean and free of odors before every class.
- **Personal Hygiene:** Keep nails trimmed, shower before class if needed, and use deodorant.
- **No Jewelry:** Remove all jewelry, watches, and accessories to prevent injuries.
- **Footwear:** Always wear sandals or shoes when off the mats. Do not walk on the mats with shoes.

Safety Rules

- Tap Early, Tap Often: To avoid injuries, always tap when caught in a submission. Your safety is paramount.
- No Slamming: Slamming is prohibited during training or sparring.
- Controlled Sparring: Train at a level that matches your partner's experience and comfort.
- Injuries: If you feel pain or suspect an injury, inform the instructor immediately and stop training.

Mat Rules

- Stay on the Mats During Class: Do not leave the mat without informing the instructor.
- No Food or Drinks: Keep food and drinks off the mats. Only water bottles are allowed in designated areas.
- No Phones on the Mats: Leave phones and other distractions off the mats.
- Leave Ego at the Door: This is a learning environment. Winning isn't the goal—improvement is.

Community Guidelines

- Help Beginners: Higher belts are encouraged to guide and support new students.
- Report Issues: If you notice something unsafe or concerning, notify the instructor or staff.
- Be On Time: Arrive on time for class. If late, wait for the instructor's permission to join.
- Encourage Team Spirit: Celebrate your teammates' successes and support one another.

Hygiene & Illness Policies

- Stay Home if Sick: If you feel unwell or have any signs of illness, please stay home to protect others.
- Skin Conditions: Notify the instructor of any skin conditions before training. Do not train if you have contagious skin issues.

Academy-Specific Guidelines

- Respect the Space: Keep the facility clean and organized. Dispose of trash properly and store personal belongings in designated areas.
- Observe Quiet Hours: Be mindful of noise levels during other classes or private lessons.
- Promotions: Belt promotions are at the discretion of the instructor based on skill, effort, and attitude.

Consequences

Failure to follow these rules may result in warnings, suspension, or termination of membership, depending on the severity of the violation. Our goal is to ensure a positive experience for everyone.

Thank you for being a part of a safe and inclusive community. Let's train hard, stay safe, and have fun.

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Thank you

Martial arts is evolving each and everyday with new technique, principles and concepts being discovered all the time. We want to share this learning journey with our students and invite you to come and join us.

Martial arts has changed many of our lives here at Element martial arts and in community at large. We want to share that passion and positive impact with as many people as possible.

Send us a message or email tell us what interests you in learning martial arts or if you have an interesting story to share with us.

If you have any questions too please reach out. We genuinely want to help.

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