

Overview of Wrestling Rules

The object of the sport of wrestling is to put your opponent on his back -- to pin your opponent.

A pin (or fall) is when you put your opponent on his/her back with any part of both shoulders or both shoulder blades of your opponent in contact with the mat for two seconds. When you pin your opponent, the match is over and you are the winner.

If nobody gets pinned, the winner is the wrestler who has scored the most points during the match..

There are five ways to score points in a wrestling match:

1) Takedown - (2 points) You score two points for taking your opponent down to the mat and controlling him/her.

2) Escape - (1 point) You score one point for getting away or getting to a neutral position when your opponent has you down on the mat.

3) Reversal - (2 points) You score two points when your opponent has you down on the mat and you come from underneath and gain control of your opponent.

4) Near Fall (Back Points) - (2 or 3 points) You get near fall points when you almost but not quite get your opponent pinned. A near fall (near pin) is when...

both shoulders are held for two seconds within four inches of the mat, or...

one shoulder touches the mat and the other shoulder is at a 45 degree angle coming down to the mat, or...

the wrestler is held in a high bridge or back on both elbows.

If a near fall lasts for two seconds, you get 2 points. If a near fall lasts for 5 seconds, you get 3 points.

5) Penalty Points - (1 or 2 points) Your opponent is awarded points if you commit the following infractions.

- **Illegal Holds** - There are several holds that the referee will penalize you for without warning. (There are other holds called "potentially dangerous holds" which the referee might make you let go of but will not penalize you for).
- **Technical Violations**

Going off the mat or forcing your opponent off the mat to avoid wrestling ("fleeing the mat.")

Grabbing clothing, the mat, or the headgear

Locked or overlapped hands: If you are down on the mat in control of your opponent, you cannot lock or overlap your hands, fingers or arms around your opponent's body or both legs unless you have met criteria for a near pin of your opponent, or your opponent stands up and has all his/her weight on two feet, or you have lifted the opponent off the mat.

Leaving the mat during the match without the referee's permission

Reporting to the mat not properly equipped or not ready to wrestle, or equipment that is detected as being illegal after the match has started

- **Unnecessary roughness**
- **Unsportsmanlike conduct**
- **Flagrant Misconduct** (ejection, the match is over)
- **Stalling** (you get one warning before you are penalized and points are awarded).
- **Incorrect starting position or false start** (You get two cautions before points are awarded).

The first and second time you are penalized, your opponent is awarded one point. The third time you are penalized, your opponent is awarded two points. The fourth time you are penalized, you are disqualified. (Except for illegal starting position or false start - you are cautioned twice, then one point awarded for each infraction, but you will not be disqualified. In the event of Flagrant Misconduct, you are ejected from the match on the first offense, you lose the match, and 3 team points are deducted).

Dual Meet Team Scoring

Fall, Forfeit, Default, Disqualification - 6 team points

Technical Fall (getting ahead of your opponent by 15 points ends the match) - 5 team points

Major Decision (winning the match by 8 - 14 points) - 4 team points

Decision (winning the match by fewer than 8 points) - 3 team points

Thoughts on Match Strategy

- *Don't be afraid to lose. In fact, have an aggressive hunger to win the match at all costs.
- * The best defense is a relentless offensive. Attack, attack, attack!!!
- *If you are in better shape (and you will be!...to be discussed later) force the pace and exhaust your opponent. This is not only necessary if you intend to stay constantly stay on the attack, but it is psychologically devastating for him. If you push the pace, he'll forget about winning the match and will start to worry about just being able to last for the entire match without getting pinned.
- *Keep a cool head and remain poised and confident. Never let a decision by the referee - or anything else for that matter - interrupt your focus. Be Poised and confident!
- *Never, ever stop wrestling until the whistle blows. In tournaments where matches are being run simultaneously on multiple mats, it may be difficult to tell if it is your ref's whistle being blown. Always assume it is not and keep pushing hard until you are sure the whistle blow is directed at you.
- *Never let your opponent know that you are tired. You should be in good enough shape that you can jog back to the middle of the mat if you go out of bounds. Do this and a tired opponent will assume he's toast.
- *Be a 'chain wrestler'. If the first move you attempt is blocked, don't necessarily completely reset yourself. Instead, immediately start working something else. For example, if he blocks the high crotch, switch to the outside single! Again, attack, attack, attack! There are opportunities to score virtually every second of a wrestling match. Make sure it is you, and not your opponent, who is capitalizing on those opportunities.

Pre-Match Strategy

- *Do not sit in the stands joking and talking with your teammates. Instead, be serious and focus on your upcoming match(es)! Visualize yourself shooting, scoring, and winning. You should be focused on one thing only, and that is defeating your opponent. There, in that moment, your other concerns and interests are irrelevant. You only have one responsibility: To wrestle as hard as possible and do everything in your power to win.
- *Eat light. Don't make weight and then gorge yourself on food because you are hungry. Eat a plain bagel, a banana, drink water (not too much that you get bloated), and avoid sweets and salty foods. After you have finished wrestling for the day/night, then you can catch up on any calories you missed in the day or days before the match. STAY HUNGRY!
- *Get plenty of sleep the night before your matches. Remember, that TV show, movie, girlfriend or whatever will be there after your match. You only get one chance to get the proper amount of rest before the night of the match. Your body is the conduit through which your mind expresses everything it knows about wrestling and winning. If you are tired, starved, or distracted then it will show in your wrestling. Be focused, well rested, and ready to rock.

Strategy on Your Feet

- *The wrestler who scores the first takedown wins the match approximately 85% of the time. Keep the odds on your side and attack first! Before the first whistle even blows, you should immediately be thinking about either shooting the High Crotch or the Single. When the whistle blows, don't waste time sizing up your opponent. Set up the shot and immediately go for it without hesitation or thought. You've drilled these moves repeatedly so that they should start to become second nature. Don't think, ATTACK! If you take him down early, he's already down 2 pts and will also need to fight back to his feet. Exhaust him early and break his confidence!

*Never shoot for the leg if you are farther out than arms' length. Good position. Hips in and under you. Elbows in. And FINISH!

*Set up all takedowns! Do whatever works well for you to get your opponent out of his stance and then ATTACK! Similarly, do all you can to remain in good position. This is why we spend so much time working stance. It is very hard to takedown a good opponent who is in proper stance. The same is true for you.

*Concentrate on getting the deepest penetration possible when you shoot. Aim a few feet behind your opponent. Remember, you don't take your opponent down with your arms. His legs are stronger than your arms. You take him down with your hips! Hit the shot, and hit it hard!

*Never let your head get below your hips. If this happens, you are overextended. This will exhaust your lower back and result in your opponent scoring a defensive takedown.

*When possible, take your opponent to his back on your follow-through!

*If you happen to be taken down, immediately work to stand up or escape. A takedown is not awarded until the top wrestler is in clean control. Keep working to break his grip. Reverse him, or stand up immediately! Fight for each point and don't give up and give him the two just because he is in on the shot!

*When countering takedowns, hip in hard, sprawl and make your opponent feel your full weight and power. Work to destroy his body position. Spin and cover!

Top Wrestling Strategy

*Be ready to attack the second the whistle blows! Do not react to him. Be the aggressor. Know what you are going to work before the whistle blows and immediately **ATTACK** on the whistle!

*Stay behind your opponent.

*Make your opponent feel your weight and power as much as possible. Fighting from the down position is exhausting. Make sure you take full advantage of this, and ride hard.

*Stay on your toes. This gives you maximum mobility and produces maximum pressure. Stay off your knees as much as possible.

*Keep a wide base and do not fall to the side or drop your head. Keep your hips parallel to the mat as often as possible!

*Concentrate on first breaking him down! The closer he is to the mat, the greater the leverage you will have on him for pinning combinations. The closer he is to the mat, the harder he has to work to fight back to his base to attempt a sit-out, stand-up, or switch.

*After breaking your opponent down so that he is flat on the mat, work for the pin immediately! A man on defense cannot be on offense at the same time.

*When using the half nelson, put your palm on the opponent's head, not his neck for maximum leverage. Grind his head/face hard into the mat, get perpendicular, and drive him over hard. Be on your toes, with your hips lower than your head so that he cannot roll you.

Bottom Wrestling Strategy

*Be ready to hit the stand-up the instant the whistle blows. You shouldn't have to think of what you will do. Watch the ref's lips and be ready to EXPLODE up off the whistle. You want to escape and be back on your feet as soon as possible!

*Make the top man work to counter you. Do not be reactive. The bottom position provides you with a great opportunity to score. Immediately do so!

*Repeat this mantra in your head repeatedly before the whistle blows, "No one can hold me down. This is my match." "No one can hold me down, this is my match." Right when the whistle blows you should be thinking, "**EXPLODE!**"

*If he is working to chop your arms, simply lift them up and get all your weight off of them as quickly as possible.

*If he breaks you off your base, get back to it as quickly as possible. Once back to your base, immediately go on the offense and work to escape. Constantly force him to counter your efforts. He can't work a pinning combination if he is too busy trying to keep up with you!

*Grab his wrists. It is important to maintain hand control at all times. If you have control of his hands/wrists, then he cannot possibly hold you down. Get his wrists and explode up!

*If he gets you flat on your stomach, keep your elbows in tight and your head up! Work to get up to your base by moving up onto one knee at a time.

After the Match Strategy

*Win or lose, shake your opponent's hand, look him in the eye and say, 'Good match.' Then run (NOT WALK!) over to the opposing coaches, shake their hands and say, 'Good match, coach.'

*Spend time analyzing what worked well, what didn't, and what you need to work on during practice to improve upon your performance. This is CRITICAL if you intend to improve as a wrestler.

*If you have a parent in attendance, see if they will videotape your matches for you. It's not only fun to watch yourself whoop up on your opponent when you get home that night, but it will also provide you with an invaluable opportunity to study your stance, your movement. You will see where you are making errors and where you can improve.

Other Tips, Tricks, and Techniques

*Don't continually work a move that fails more than twice. Switch it up if necessary!

*Never let an opponent see that you are tired. Run back to the center when you go out of bounds!

*Don't hold on to a move that is blocked or can't be completed. It wastes both time and energy. If you get sprawled on hard and lose the leg, don't fight to regain it. Toggle immediately to something else or get out of there!

*Give 110% in practice. Go hard! You can't 'lose' in practice. So try things. Work hard. Don't worry about getting tired...afterall....that is what you are there for!!!

*Don't expect sympathy when you get hurt, especially in high level matches. Sympathy makes it hurt more and prevents you from concentrating on getting the job done.

*The head is the steering wheel of the body! Where the head goes, the body follows. Snap, push, pull on the head in neutral to get your opponent out of position to set-up your takedowns.

Using the Mat and Clock to Your Advantage

*If you are near the out of bounds line, shoot! If you are able to keep both feet in bounds, and you take your opponent down, you will score. If you shoot and you both go out of bounds, it is not a wasted effort. It will break your opponent's confidence and will to win. He'll think, 'Good grief! This guy is attacking me even when we are going out of bounds. He's *relentless!*'

*Shoot or otherwise try to score with just seconds left on the clock. It will have the same effect as trying to score when on your way out of bounds. It will set the tone that you are relentless, aggressive, and it might just get you another 2 points!

*Be aware of your location on the mat and also how much time is left on the clock. Glance at the clock when possible, but don't concentrate so much on the clock that you are distracted from your primary objective which is to **ATTACK** and **DOMINATE** your opponent!

Notes on Conditioning

***Conditioning is a personal responsibility.**

*We only have so much time each afternoon for practice. During which time we need to work on our technique. If you want to be a winner and enjoy all the rewards that come with that, you MUST, and I mean MUST find time each day to run, jump rope, bike, or otherwise improve your fitness.

*Test: Get a jump rope. Can you jump continuously for 10 minutes? If not, you aren't in shape to constantly be on the attack in a 6 minute wrestling match.

A quick conditioning anecdote...My senior year of high school, I went into the first big tournament of the year 14-1. Sure, my record was great, but I knew if I wanted to win the State Title then I'd absolutely need to get in better shape. On the Monday before the tournament, a 30 year old ex-college wrestler showed up to work with our team. He saw that I showed some promise and insisted we meet the next morning to run before school. We did, and each morning (Tues-Friday) we ran 5 miles at a pretty fast clip. When I got to the tournament on Saturday I felt hungrier and more focused than I ever had at any other point during my career. I pinned my first two opponents of the day in the first period. My ability to attack like crazy was simply overwhelming. I could be confident that I could come out extremely aggressive without getting tired because I had put in the 'road work' that week. In my semi-final match, I pinned the guy ranked 3rd in the state in the second period. It was a huge upset and pretty darn exciting. I did not allow that to ruin my focus though. Instead, I went to the back room, put a towel over my face and visualized for the next two hours exactly how I would wrestle in my finals match. I tried to picture every single situation possible. I was so focused I could virtually smell the Resilite mat, hear the fans in the stands, smell the concession stand. Each takedown, escape, and riding scenario played through my mind with me confidently controlling and executing successfully each move. I was summoned to the Finals mat, put on my head gear, and ran out to the center. I don't remember a single thing after that but my arm getting raised at the end of the match. I was completely in 'The Zone.' Watching the match that night when I got home, I saw how I wrestled almost exactly how I had visualized the match. I had beaten the number 5 ranked guy in the state 15-3 (major decision) and had dominated the entire match. I attribute every bit of that success that day to the extra cardio work I had put in that week. It didn't just increase my endurance, it greatly enhanced my focus, and my confidence. Knowing you are in better shape than every single guy in your division gives you an ENORMOUS advantage! I knew I could be on offense constantly without worrying about getting tired. After finishing watching the match that night, I put on my running shoes and went out into the frigid Baltimore night and ran three miles. Sure, I was inspired from my performance that day, but I also knew that everyone else (probably in every weight class that day) had gone home and was probably laying around watching TV, gorging on pizza, and licking their wounds. If I was out running, then I was gaining an edge on my competition.

At the University of Iowa (the single greatest dynasty in all of college sports) famed coach and wrestler, Dan Gable, is often referenced as having always sought to create the '**Gable Edge.**' Which is, 'the edge I create for myself.' You can't always be stronger, faster, or have better balance than every guy you wrestle. What you can do though, is out work them. You can out work anyone. You just have to make the decision to do so, and follow-through. As the above anecdote shows, the old adage holds true...

"The Harder I Work, The Luckier I Get."

Why Wrestling Is Special (And the Value of Hard Work)

Unlike other sports, wrestling matches aren't won by the tallest, fastest, or strongest competitor. They are won by the wrestler who has put in the most work and who has the most desire. In basketball it's all about height. In track, it's speed that wins. Most sports favor those with the natural born talent to succeed. Wrestling couldn't be more different.

I was never the most gifted athlete on my wrestling teams. In college, I wrestled with some of the best athletes in the country. Guys who were benching 450 lbs, had 35 inch vertical leaps, and who could run the 40 yard dash in 4.5 seconds. Beating them in a wrestling match should have been impossible for me. But it wasn't. Now let me tell you why...

Wrestling is a sport with so many different facets that even if you aren't the 'best' at any given one, you can still win by improving at each area...by becoming the best, most well-rounded wrestler you can be. The more work you put in, the more you will get out of the sport.

Wrestling requires balance, strength, speed, power, technique, heart, focus, insane levels of cardiovascular fitness, poise, confidence, etc. By working on all of these things you can and WILL get better!

If you are concerned about your strength, set a goal to improve upon that. Hit the weights. Determine to do 100 pushups every morning before school and stick to that schedule rain or shine.

If you are worried you aren't fast enough, keep drilling your 'go-to' moves. You'll find that as your technique improves you won't have to think before you shoot. You will no longer hesitate. You will be a one-man attacking machine that will stop at nothing to get that leg and you will find speed and quickness you never knew you had. If you need to work on your technique, then shadow drill in front of a mirror. Listen to your coaches. Ask questions of your teammates who might be executing a certain move better than you are. Watch instructional videos on line. Get a book about wrestling technique from the local library. Watch game film from your matches. Find areas that you need to improve your technique and come into practice with a goal to improve that technique and get help from your coaches and peers. After practice think about or write down what you learned that day. Are there still questions or ways to improve upon that technique? If so, set a new goal for that and come into practice the next day to work that move.

I've seen guys who lost almost every match their freshmen year become league champions by their senior year. Don't forget, you are young and your body will get stronger and faster as you get older. Your wealth of experience will grow and you will become a better wrestler. There is no better feeling than winning a tournament and looking back on all the hard work it took to get you there. In fact, the less natural talent you have and the more work you put in, the more deeply gratifying it is to win. The journey and the work become not just the necessary steps to winning, but in essence become the fun of the sport itself. And remember, in wrestling, when you win there is no question that it was you who won. You are out there alone. If you worked hard all season, it will show. If you goofed off at practice, failed to set meaningful goals, didn't put in the extra time to get to the level of fitness necessary to win, then that also will show through. Remember what you get out of this sport is what you put in.

I'll finish this section with another quote from the all-time great **Dan Gable**:

"The 1st period is won by the best technician. The 2nd period is won by the kid in the best shape. The 3rd period is won by the kid with the biggest heart."

Attitude and Mindset: Practice and Matches

It's very important to always embody the spirit of good sportsmanship. This is not a street fight, its not UFC, it's not boxing. This is wrestling. It is the world's oldest sport and that is what it is – a sport. That being said, you need to go into every practice and match with an almost aching hunger to win. Be rough, be mean, ATTACK your opponent. Remember, he is there to beat you. It is up to you – not him(!) – whether or not that will become a reality. You've got to take it to the other guy. Use all of your strength, all of your power, your guts, determination, and skill to win. That's what you've trained so hard for. If you put in the requisite amount of work to win, then you DESERVE to win! Don't lose sight of that fact. Remember though, when it's over to look him in the eye and shake his hand regardless of the outcome. You've both trained hard, put in the hours, got through the aches and pains, stepped on the scale, and had the guts to step out there in front of the crowd. That deserves respect.

Quotes about Wrestling and Resources for Inspiration

“Gold medals aren't really made of gold. They're made of sweat, determination, and a hard-to-find alloy called guts.” – Dan Gable

“Right out of high school I never had the fear of getting beat, which is how most people lose.” – Dan Gable

“I shoot, I score. He shoots, I score.” – Dan Gable

“Once you've wrestled, everything else in life is easy.” Dan Gable

“More enduringly than any other sport, wrestling teaches self-control and pride. Some have wrestled without great skill – none have wrestled without pride.” – Dan Gable

"It is not the critic who counts: not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcoming, but who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself for a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who knew neither victory nor defeat." -Theodore Roosevelt

“I sweat it upon Zeus an outstanding runner cannot be the equal of an average wrestler.” – Socrates

“This is a sport (wrestling) that has turned many boys into men and many men into leaders. And it is a sport in which you can be a giant regardless of how big you are.” – Carl Albert

“There are no losers in wrestling, just winners and learners.” – Unknown

“Take a strong wrestler, get them tired, and they aren't as strong.” – Unknown

“Take a quick wrestler, get them tired, and they aren't as quick.

Take a technical wrestler, get them tired, and they aren't as technical.
No matter what kind of wrestler, everyone is afraid of getting tired.
It's those who learn to perform when they're tired that find success." – J. Robinson

"No activity I know of is more of a confidence builder and at the same time more 'humility training' than wrestling." – Congressman James Leach

"But it's the wrestler who can put the fatigue out of his mind and break through the 'wall' like a marathon runner after 18 or 20 miles, who will survive. The key to that survival is in hard workouts that develop mental confidence to the point where you won't submit to fatigue and pain descending upon you. "- Lou Banach

"Grappling with fate is like meeting an expert wrestler: to escape, you have to accept the fall when you are thrown. The only thing that counts is whether you get back up."

"Pain is weakness leaving the body."

"Being mentally tough is doing EXACTLY what you don't want to do, EXACTLY when you don't want to do it. "

"Remember, when you are not training, someone somewhere is training; and when you meet him, he will win."

"Victory happens when ten thousand hours of training meets one moment of opportunity."

"You miss 100% of the shots you don't take."

"Being defeated is only a temporary condition; Giving up is what makes it permanent."

Watch:

Terry Brands vs. Jeff Prescott (on YouTube.) Notice everything about this match. Notice how Brands runs back to the middle. Notice how he never stops attacking. Absolutely relentless! See the effect this has on Prescott.

Rocky movies.

You Tube the Dan Gable Documentary. Its in multiple parts. Watch the whole thing!

Videos online showing different techniques. Questions on anything you saw? Come into practice and ask your coaches!

Other Advice on Improving as a Wrestler

*Keep a notebook or journal this season. I always did this and found it an invaluable learning tool. On top of that, it is so much fun for me to read and reflect on all of that more than a decade later. Trust me you'll thank yourself. Use it to take notes on things you've learned. Think about and right down your strengths and weaknesses. Include goals. Things you need to work on. Questions you might have. When

you get home after a match write a brief description of the match. What worked, what didn't, what was the final score? Were you tired? If so, what was your diet like in the hours or days before the match? What was your cardio routine like? Write down what you plan to do differently next time. And reflect on it!

*Push yourself each and every practice. Not only that. Push each other! Is your partner dogging it? If so, he's not just hurting himself. He's hurting you! You are only as good as the guy you mostly train with. Tell him to pick it up!

*Do calisthenics at night or in the morning before school. Its not too hard to do 50 pushups and 100 situps. Right? How much time does it take? 5 minutes. Tops. It's not that big of a commitment, but just think in one 7 day week, that's an extra 350 pushups and 700 situps per week. Over the span of a 16 week season that's 5,600 pushups and 11,200 situps that your opponent did not do! What an amazing edge without much additional effort/commitment on your part!

*Always look to improve and get stronger and faster. Each thing you do to get better - no matter how small - is one additional advantage point over your opponent. Keep score with yourself. Did you do 30 extra things this week to get better? 50? 100? I guarantee you that the guys who are going to States this year are doing more and working harder than you think necessary or even reasonable. But, the satisfaction they will get from doing these things almost always proves more valuable than the time spent not doing them. Get on it!

Special Side Note:

The Holiday's are here. It's Thanksgiving Week. Most of your opponents will be sitting around gorging themselves on turkey feeling all fat and happy. WHAT A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU!!!

Why not get out there and run, jump rope, ride your bike, do pushups and situps, shadow drill, watch wrestling matches online, read up on new skills. His laziness is your gain. Not only do you get to continuously work to improve this break, but your opponent is doing just the opposite! He's backsliding and wasting some of his conditioning and focus, while you are making gains. You'll come out for the Faultline Duals on December 1st Lean and Mean! Think about that!

Enjoy the break and time with your families.

P.P.S. Now that you've read through the packet, now might be a good time to start a journal and make note of things you learned by reading this. Anything that struck you as particularly important or inspiring, write it down! Put your favorite quote up on your home bulletin board or white board. Once you've done so, read this again. And again. And again. And again. And again!

Happy Holidays and Great Work Guys!!!

-Coach Al