

# Active Start



## JUDO FOR CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 8



*This manual was initially produced for the U7 age group and changed to U8 to address age group changes introduced by the International Judo Federation. All information included here is relevant and applicable for the updated age group.*

# Active Start - U8

## JUDO FOR CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 8

### Introduction

**Active Start childhood development is a complex journey and this should be kept in mind when helping children achieve their potential in Judo programs.**

**This requires top-quality programming based on knowledge of sports science and other complementary skills. This manual is designed to help all of us to provide better service to children entrusted to us by their parents. All concepts presented here are consistent with the approved Long Term Development Model (later in this manual referred as the LTDM)**

**The U8 JUDO program is oriented towards beginner judokas four to six years of age. For children this young, judo exercises are used as tools in development of athletic abilities. Learning judo techniques can not be the priority of the program.**

Examples of Judo techniques and the way to employ them for this age group are described in more detail later in this manual. In general, only judo techniques listed for white and yellow belt levels in the Judo Canada kyu syllabus are used in programs for this age group, and some modifications to respect the guiding principles and sport development goals for children this young.

Mastering of judo-specific techniques is not a key priority of this program, but may be a welcome by-product.

## The Guiding Principles of this program based on the Judo Canada LTDM:

- o Childrens' body proportions are very different from adults, so Judo-specific skills must be adopted to accommodate these differences – no child should be expected to execute a technique in a fashion similar to adults.
- o An essential stage needed for maximal athletic development in later stages – however, this development does not have to happen in judo. On the contrary, if children of this age are involved in judo, it is our duty to provide them with the athletic development needed at this stage of their lives.
- o Development of abilities in accordance with personal growth and development: body awareness, motor capacities, lateral skills, social interaction and creativity.
- o Participation in other sports activities besides judo.
- o Understand lateralization and general coordination; differentiation between left and right.
- o Activities must be fun creative and imaginative at all times.
- o Enhances overall feelings of well-being, confidence and self-esteem.
- o Lays the foundation for development of a strong, healthy body, improved fitness and proper weight control.
- o Understanding that a child of this age needs a minimum 30-60 minutes per day of organized physical activity, dependent upon age; and in addition to that for unstructured “play” time involving physical activity - up to 60 minutes per day.



To reiterate, the basic underlying principle for all sporting activities targeting this age group is to deliver a program that is fun and fundamentally respects educational standards and developmental guidelines.

To accomplish this goal we allow for a relaxed framework and employ creativity for the children involved.

Furthermore, the environment of the dojo should prepare children to interact socially and at the same time allow them to learn the etiquette of judo.

## U8 – General objectives as per the Judo Canada's LTDM Athletic Aspects of a Program.

- o Develop fundamental movement skills (running, jumping, throwing, swimming, etc.).
- o Introduce ABC'S of Athleticism (agility, balance, coordination, speed).
- o Develop suppleness (flexibility).
- o Coordination, agility and balance to be accomplished through general exercises and a variety of judo-related games.
- o Short duration speed/agility games to be incorporated.
- o Short duration aerobic efforts - allow for a spontaneous application of effort by the child – no structured time frames for exercises.
- o Flexibility exercises to be incorporated in games that also emphasize coordination and agility.



**When working with this age group we are primarily responsible for enhancing children's capacity to perform fundamental movement skills. We practice these skills in the dojo and we encourage parents to enroll children in programs where they can learn those skills that can not be practiced in the dojo – i.e. swimming or skating.**



## The Basic Fundamentals are



1. Basic locomotor activities like walking, running, jumping, crawling, etc. which we employ in the warm-up routines.

**1.1 To employ Judo Specificity, we add to it judo skills: tsugi ashi, ayumi-ashi, “shrimping on the ground”, cat walk, crab walk, monkey walk, snake sliding-crawling movement, etc.**



2. Basic spatial orientation and temporal orientation motor activities like turning, revolving, pirouettes, positioning which we employ in the warm up routines.

**2.1 To employ Judo Specificity, we add to it judo skills: tai sabaki, zempo kaiten, yoko and koho ukemi, roll over with the partner on the ground, various tsukuri exercises, etc.**



3. Basic gripping/ projecting activities like hitting, catching, throwing, kicking are not often employed in most dojos, but this could and should be done with ball games. Short (5 min) games of soccer, hand-ball, dutch ball, crab ball, etc greatly enhance the attractiveness of judo programs for this age group.

**3.1 Similar judo specific skills: gripping the judogi, gripping the belt, blocking the leg with a leg (sasae), barai, gari etc. exercises, etc.**





## the basic fundamentals cont'd

Of the many athletic abilities identified by sport theory, only a few are trainable for children of this age (4 to 6 years old) and can be enhanced with exercise. This principle is particularly important for sports where the individual's peak performance happens over the age of 20 years as is the case in judo. An early emphasis on training the wrong athletic abilities lead to early burn out and retirement from sport.

Thus in judo programs for children under 8 we concentrate our effort on developing agility, balance, coordination and, to a certain extend, speed. Our program can not neglect flexibility, which is trainable at any age. However, at this early development stage, it is very easily enhanced.

It may appear that other athletic abilities (strength, endurance, power, etc.) improve with training as well, but it occurs mostly as a result of improved coordination, thus better quality of movement. Furthermore, a natural development and maturation results in progressive development of all abilities, and our role is to allow it to happen rather than to manipulate it. Thus, in accordance with the LTDM while working with the judoka under 8 years old, training that is targeted to the development of strength, long and short term endurance and power is not appropriate.



Flexibility can be developed at any age. However, it is a very mouldable ability when working with children of this age. Thus, emphasis on flexibility should be employed when playing games, practicing judo skills in ne waza, etc. Also a static stretching training should be employed in the closing segments of the session.

Short duration speed bursts happen in a very natural way when children are playing games. However, to ensure that all children are involved working to their capacity in a somewhat controlled environment, employ relays in your session. With this training form it is relatively easy to control the time of “speed” development (burst no longer than 5 to 8 seconds) and the task itself can target agility, coordination, flexibility, etc.

Working on coordination and agility, flexibility and balance should start as early as possible. When playing games or learning a skill, children should be allowed to move as naturally as possible in order to learn the overall concept of motion. Corrections should be made only in case when movements are unsafe or drastically biomechanically incorrect. Children are great role players and they mimic well so a quality demonstration of a skill is a very essential part of the learning process. Quality demonstrations of skills, that are short and focused on one key point at a time are essential to their learning process.

### **Pedagogical principles of skill acquisition:**

To ensure that what the children practice, will actually train their bodies to move and behave in the most effective (agile, most energy efficient, etc) way, a number of pedagogical principles must be respected.

Firstly, skills must be introduced in order from the simplest through most complex, gradually building on each other.

Secondly, the process can not be rushed. To ensure that the concept of movement commits to muscle memory, a sequence of exercises must be built up to 8 weeks of repetitions (with sessions twice per week).



Thirdly, the process cannot be confusing by introduction of any kind of tactical options (i.e. If your partner reacts this way, you turn right but if the partner reacts this way, you turn left), built into the sequence. Children of this age have limited capacity to make conscious decisions and the introduction of tactical solutions will set the learning process back.

Remember! The body proportions of a child are very different than proportions of an adult body. Thus perfect execution of a movement by a child may look very different than perfect form expected from a mature individual.

## U 8 – Judo Specific Objectives

- o Multidirectional movements in basic position (forwards, backwards, lateral, linear, leapfrogs, etc.).
- o Introduction to judo-related games involving cognitive, motor and physical ability development.
- o Break falls and rolls (basic Ukemi waza).
- o Introduction to the study of basic immobilization techniques and escapes : kesa gatame and yoko shiho gatame (osae-komi-waza).
- o Introduction to basic principles in standing judo – jigotai, shizentai, tai sabaki, ayumi ashi).
- o Knowledge of basic projection techniques: hip and shoulder throws, sweeps, etc. (according to the nage-waza Kyu syllabus of Judo Canada).
- o Learning about values: respect, self-confidence, self-esteem, overall well-being and being part of a group.
- o Introduce modified ne-waza randori.
- o Knowledge on how to grip the judogi (kumi-kata).
- o Learning and developing traditional judo etiquette.
- o Simplified introduction to the Rules.
- o No participation in formal shiai.
- o Having fun must be the main priority, rather than concentrating on performance results.





## Judo Specific Objectives cont'd

Techniques used in this program are in general from the Kyu curriculum for white and yellow belts. The program may be enhanced with some additional skills, i.e rollovers on the ground.

Programs must start with an introduction of proper Judo loco-motor movements on the mat. All directions of movement in both tachi and ne waza need to be employed. An ability to fall safely and roll safely is considered a loco-motor skill and children need to be very comfortable with these exercises prior to attempting throwing techniques. Even if it takes months.

At the same time children are introduced to values promoted by judo programs. Learning to respect the partner and that without cooperation there is no progress are essential to a successful socialization of the group

Children must also learn to deal with rivalry and opposition through games and modified demonstration competitions (demonstrations of skills, ground work, etc), inter-dojo relationships, etc. When skill competition is employed, all children must be awarded for their achievement so there is no disappointment and no “losers”.

Ne waza is emphasized over tachi waza. Na waza exercises allow the child to better understand (feel) the mechanics of working with partners, rolling safely, holding the head in a safe place, etc, without the risk of an injury. That way in a safe environment children learn to work with each other, while the coordination of movement, agility and muscular strength improve making it safer for a transition to tachi waza. Thus over 60% of judo specific training of children that young, must take place in ne-waza.



## Program Components & Framework

- o The training group preferably consists of children of the same age (U8). The preferred ratio of eight to twelve children per one instructor.
- o Participation 1-2 times/week; 40-60 minutes in duration.
- o In cases where programs for children of various ages are mixed, an instructor must be designated to work with this particular age group, within a larger training session setting.
- o The instructor should have knowledge of the customer and their development needs: psychogenesis, anatomy, physiology and firstaid, but at the minimum, must be competent in communicating with children.
- o Competency is ensured with the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP). Instructors must be a minimum NCCP Dojo Assistant trained or NCCP 1 certified.
- o Programs must be delivered in areas that are safe to practice judo and a firstaid kit and an Emergency Action Plan must be readily available if needed.
- o Participants must be members in accordance with their respective provincial/territorial and Judo Canada jurisdictions.
- o Instructors must frequently communicate with parents.
- o Instructors must remain playful and energetic while being strong and flexible group leaders. Always have back-up plans, etc.
- o Emphasis on ukemi and ne-waza; time allocation 60-70% ne-waza, 30-40% tachiwaza.



## Program components and framework cont'd

- o Modified randori; ne-waza only; in-club only.
- o Motor skills 35%, judo 55%, other (cognitive, mental) 10%; try to pair motor skill exercises with judo exercises when possible.
- o Focus on basic movement skills and patterns, locomotion (walking, running, jumping, swimming), climbing, throwing, catching, kicking.
- o Include both hand-eye and foot-eye coordination activities.
- o Progress from simple to more complex movements.
- o No lifting nage-waza techniques.
- o Access to developmentally appropriate equipment as needed (i.e. balls).
- o Activities should be designed to ensure success and develop self-esteem and a desire to participate.
- o Activities should be non-competitive or not obviously competitive and foster participation.
- o Maximum grade of yellow-orange.
- o Ensure that the children stay hydrated.



It is recommended to practice one to two times per week at forty-five to sixty minute intervals. It is important to remember that longer training time will not improve the quality of the program for children. The attention span is simply not there yet and a great experience from 45 minute session may turn into a boring experience when the time is expanded beyond 60 minutes. Experience shows that the last thing instructor want to see are looks of “bored” faces in their sessions.

## Program components and framework cont'd - tips.

Flexible course-planning must be implemented according to the theme (s) contained within the class. It is essential to proceed in this manner in order to prioritize a gradual learning process and to maximize each individual's potential for development. It is important to emphasize having fun during class. Periods of rest must also be allowed so that the child can recuperate and get a bathroom break if needed. The group must be at a ratio of one teacher for no more than eight to twelve students (if an assistant is available, a group of sixteen to twenty students is acceptable).



The technical approach in judo must be planned in a way in which the child's personality is taken into consideration in respect to his/her ability to concentrate, capacity to retain information and ability to correctly perform techniques. This part of the lesson must be concise and clearly outlined. The child will easily become bored of repetition and will want to do other things if a game is not associated with the exercise in question. About twenty minutes must be assigned to this activity and it should be consistent with what was done during the warm-up.

A "reward" activity, entirely recreational, should always be given during each class. This game or activity should be done at the end of the class and it should last about five minutes.



The latter part of the class should include a brief calm-down period by way of stretching (yoga) in order to counter the stress caused by the active periods within class. This is also a time to introduce children to a relaxation (mental) training. By simply asking them to mimic a behaviour of an ... choose an animal that is famous for its "lazy" nature, children start to learn both relaxation and mental rehearsal techniques.



At the end of the class participants can be asked to use their imagination or visual creativity to think about which game or activity he/she enjoyed the most during the class. Instructors should remember what the participant likes most and ensure to use this knowledge to the advantage of the program.





## Competition - Demonstration Format



Competition for this age group is actually based on the presentation and the execution of techniques which are sometimes quite complex.

Technical demonstrations must include a basic judo-specific loco-motor skills, including breakfalls, grappling techniques and escapes, and throwing techniques. Throwing techniques should be performed to the left and to the right. Observing these young children applying themselves and executing techniques is a joy for both instructors and parents alike. The following regulations should be respected during these demonstration events:

Demonstrations must:

- o Include breakfalls in all directions and to the left and right sides.
- o Include Ne waza techniques and escapes in at least two directions.
- o Show proper placement of teh grip, i.e. the grip is allowed only at the front of the judogi, except when a hip throwing technique is demonstrated.

Demonstrations may include:

- o Randori

The following techniques or groups of techniques are forbidden for children in the U8 age group:

- o Head locking with a grip over or around the neck.
- o Leg grabbing techniques.
- o All drop down techniques, which start on one or both knees.
- o Tani otoshi.
- o makikomi waza.
- o sutemi waza.

**No Shiai competition format is allowed.**

All competitors must be awarded a recognition prize for participation



## Typical Sessions with Samples of Exercises

This part of the manual is intended as a training catalogue, i.e. examples of sessions with a number of optional exercises to choose from. In each section of the lesson plan, some exercises are identified and objectives for them are listed.

There is room to add more exercises, providing that you can identify the objectives for each of them.

Children of this age generally have a very short attention span. Thus instructors' interventions come very frequently; every 1 - 5 minutes. In a 45-minute session, the number of interventions made by the instructor is equal or greater to the amount of interventions made in a 2-hour session for adults! In other words, working with children is harder than coach working with adult judoka.

The instructor's task is to choose the appropriate exercises to accomplish the objective for the class, i.e. If one of the objectives is increase in flexibility, then the length of the cool-down of the training may be extended at the expense of another part of a session.

Objective(s):

General: Identify in terms of impact on the athletic capacities – i.e – improvement of agility and coordination of rolling break falls

Specific: Identify in terms of development of Judo Skills – i.e. migi and hidari zempo kaiten (rolling forward ukemi);



NOTE! Exercises listed below do not necessary complement the sample objective listed above.

Total Duration: 60 (min) the symbol > is used for “up to”

## typical sessions with samples of exercises cont'd

| Activities (Goals : Athletic abilities, type of effort; length; intensity, movements, etc.)  | Key Points (Objectives, Guidelines, safety)  |
|--|--|
| Introduction - >3 minutes<br>BOW-IN AND INRODUCTION  | Take the attendance record;<br><br>Always tell the group what are the planned activities for the session;                          |
| <h3>General &amp; Specific warm-up (15 - 20 minutes)</h3> <h4>Increase the size of the inventory (Add your own exercises).</h4> <p><b>TIPS and KEY POINTS</b></p> <p>Warm-ups of 15 to 20 minutes; must be done progressively (from easy to more difficult) and prepare participants for the body movements they will be expected to perform later. It has to also cover the basic fundamental skills development. The warm up for this age group can take up to a half of a time of the session.</p> <p>Start each exercise with a clear explanation or – a better option – clear demonstration. I.e; sitting, lying down; either on their backs or stomachs, etc. Themes: coordination, agility, static and dynamic balance.</p> <p>Participants are instructed to execute the given instructions as quickly as possible. This requires concentration, vigilance and speed on the part of participants.</p> <p>Any exercises in the standing position (jumping, running, steps, balancing, sweeping) etc must be performed with flexed knees.</p> <p>Learn how to fall backwards without touching the mat with the head. Head trauma in young children is very difficult to detect, but it happens!</p> <p>Speed movements in variety of exercises and directions (left right, forward, backward, sideways, etc) are at this age more a function of coordination than of strength;</p> <p>Relay games impact mobility, speed, coordination, cooperation, etc. Divide the group into teams in order to do a relay race along the sides of the tatami (mats); the relay must include all members of each respective team. The goal is to finish before the opposing teams; however, ensure that there are no teams that will win all the time and all the races.</p> |  |
| - jogging around mat; side shuffling; cross step running; running in circles (> 4 minutes)   | Objective - to improve cardiovascular readiness of the body. Start at low intensity and increase the intensity to medium and high. |

## typical sessions with samples of exercises cont'd

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>General Loosening exercises</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- side to side twisting; bending forward and backward - bending side to side; neck movement; seated three way stretching/loosening; lateral adductor stretch; etc (total 5 minutes)</li> </ul>                                      | <p>Objective – to increase mobility of all the joints in the body; 15 to 20 repetitions of movement within that joint should be performed to reach the readiness of a muscle group or joints.</p>   |
| <p>A variety of callisthenic exercises</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- push up; judo push up; sit up; leg rises; crunches in squats; etc – in a variety of forms. (total of 5 minutes)</li> </ul>  | <p>Objective – to improve the coordination of movements. These exercises should not be done with a goal to improve strength or endurance. If a child is not able to perform a form that is for them easy to do, modify the exercise for that individual child so they can succeed. Do not set a number of repetitions but rather a time limit and ask all participants to do their best.</p>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Game of a frozen tag (total up to 3 min)</li> </ul>  | <p>Objective – to relax the children; to improve their agility and coordination; chose a various tasks they have to perform to free a frozen participant; ensure that they are aware of the multidirectional movement all around them; etc.</p>   |
| <p>Relay races; variety of different positions; Short sprints – various steps; races in crab positions, forward and backwards; races in rolling sideways, forward, backwards; races in shrimping; etc (&gt;10 minutes)</p>  | <p>To improve agility, and all other athletic capacities.</p> <p>To provide an environment for a short bursts of max. speed movement</p> <p>To teach discipline and cooperation by adhering to rules of the game and not allowing the benefit of winning by not following the set rules.</p> <p>Easily adjustable athletic outcome by increasing or decreasing the number of children in each relay team. When working on speed, ensure that the work to rest ration is at least 1 to 6. (5 seconds of speed exercise followed by 30 seconds of relaxed rest time).</p> |
| <p>Rolling exercises – i.e. gymnastic role forward, backward, breakfalls forward, backwards, sideways; pending the level of skill of the child; (&gt;10 minutes)</p>   | <p>To improve the coordination; agility; confidence in rolling movement in various directions; breakfall technique; to increase readiness for judo specific exercise.</p> <p>Always emphasize the safety of the head! When rolling in whichever direction, the goal should be that the head does not touch the ground!</p>  |



## typical sessions with samples of exercises cont'd

### Main part > 20/25 minutes

#### TIPS and Key Points

In early stages of the program repeat frequently the safety rules: no headlocks or hands to the face, etc.

Continue previous lessons - build up on previously learned skills in a systemic fashion.

Demonstration must be short (30 seconds - 1 minute) and precise – emphasize one key point.

Allow the child to experiment with their own way of doing things – for as long as it is safe and no biomechanical principles are violated.

When teaching hold downs, teach escapes as well. Demonstrate how these exercises relate to movement skills practiced in the warm up part of the session i.e. shrimping to escape from the Yoko Shiho Gatame.

When detecting symptoms of boredom (the body language of children), intercept your judo specific activities with games that will re-energize the group.

Standing exercises: fundamental athletic abilities (agility balance, coordination, etc.) in conjunction with fundamental judo skills (break falls, tsugi ashi, tai sabaki, tsukuri) put to use.


Once comfortable with the breakfall, introduce throwing techniques in motion and practice as much as possible in motion. Emphasize the use of natural forces generated by movement of both partners.

If the child is hesitant (fear of falling) - revert to teaching the technique in a static format with uke on one or both knees

I.e. uki-goshi; uke is on their knees and tori is standing in order to complete the move Tori facing uke, foot placed towards the middle of uke and body turned away from uke. A brief explanation of the gripping (kumi-kata).

In case the child is hesitant to roll even from this position, introduce the double sleeve grip and perform this roll over in a very controlled fashion. Instructor helps by volunteering for both uke and tori roles until the child is comfortable with falling (rolling).


Do not allow throws that require lifting. No problem if lifting happens in a natural way when children are in motion. Static lifting should not be allowed – i.e. – Seoi Nage in a static format. Children do not have the strength of the upper body to execute kuzushi. They can do it only if kuzushi is a continuation of a movement.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>Review of previously learned skill – I.e. roll over to YSG; uchi komi in ne waza both partners. &gt; up to 4 minutes.</p> <p>Introduction of a new ne waza skill or element of a skill. –escape from YSG. Demonstration &gt; 2 minutes; Practice both partners &gt; 10 minutes.</p>   | <p>To improve readiness of the body to perform complex movement patterns in a relatively relaxed form; to review what was learned earlier; Options: Allow students to go at their own pace.</p>  |
| <p>Ne waza modified randori – cat fight. Task – tori in a supine position and uke tries to get around toris legs and arms resistance to apply a holddown. &gt; up to 10 round of 1 minute.</p>   | <p>To understand the principles and the objective of a judo fight on the ground. To learn to concentrate on the task to perform. To develop further basic athletic and judo skills.</p>  |
| <p>INTERCEPTOR – if needed; Game &gt; up to 5 minutes</p>  | <p>See the games catalogue</p>   |
| <p>Partner up and in free movement Sute Geiko training – throw for throw, review of already known techniques; starting with what was learned most recently; instructor calls the name – one pair demonstrates if necessary; other follow; etc &gt; 5 minutes.</p>  | <p>To review and improve skills already acquired; to maintain the skills learned; to improve coordination of movement when performing known skills.</p>  |
| <p>INTERCEPTOR – if needed; Game &gt; up to 5 minutes</p>  | <p>See the games catalogue</p>   |
| <p>Introduction of a new tachi waza skill. O soto gake. We start with “Gake” not “Gari” to ensure safety. In O Soto Gake we emphasize that tori moves behind uke, just like in O Soto Gari, but then tori places the sweeping foot on the ground to resume a stable posture while uke is off balance.</p> <p>Explanation of what (If) is similar to other techniques already learned by students. Emphasize safety; Demonstration &gt; 2 minutes.</p> <p>Practice with partner in defined (back and forth) motion. Movement allows a natural exploitation of external forces to perform the kuzushi.</p>  | <p>To initiate learning a new skill; to develop coordination; to develop cooperation.</p> <p>Start teaching in motion – uke backwards and tori forward to allow for a natural use of forces associated with movement. Pay attention to the “big picture only” No details are important at this time for as long as safety of participants calls for them. Tsukuri must be defined as easily as possible. Kake should be defined as a natural outcome of the previous steps. Other interpretations of the throwing techniques must be corrected.</p> <p>If learning in motion does not work for some judoka, ask them to do a technique that is based on similar principles and they already know it (i.e. uki goshi).</p> <p>Stay away from a static teaching of technique at this stage of development. Static requires a use of strength which we are trying to avoid and should be used only if a child is afraid to fall. If needed the knee form (one knee or both knees) should be used to help overcome the fear.</p> |
| <p>tachi waza randori; emphasize the principles of randori – it is not a shiai; no leg grabs and head hugs. Traditional kumi kata only; &gt; 10 minutes – with individual rounds no longer than 2 minutes.</p>   | <p>Try the technical skill in a resistance environment; Improve coordination, agility, balance and end experience the kinesthetic learning of judo in motion and with resistance.</p>  |

## typical sessions with samples of exercises cont'd

### Cool down (duration = 5/10 min)

Relaxation exercise: think about applying a yoga exercise which can be adapted to children: stretching while lying down, letting go, breathing and slight movements to stretch lower/upper limbs. Ask the students to visualize what they liked most about the class when they are calm or in a relaxed state.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Static stretching in seating position, with an emphasis on increased range of motion.<br>>3 minutes   | Increased suppleness; Choose one joint per training session, on which the stretching is being applied – 3 to 4 stretches of 20/30 seconds each. Other joints are just loosened up.  |
| relaxation – all children on the mat in relaxed prone position with eyes closed and limbs outstretched. A typical short version of relaxation exercise combined with breathing exercise. >2 minutes | Learn a basic relaxation technique ; focus on the necessary<br><div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">  </div>                        |
| Conclusion<br><br>Mokuso, rei and praise the students for a job well done > 1 minute  | Always choose student's who's attitude earned them a special mention at the end of the session. Be aware that some who are not shining among the others may need such a mention as well. Find a reason to give them what they need. |
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|   |   |

# Judo Games

Games can add a little spice to the workout and are especially popular with younger and recreational judoka, as well as adults. Most develop some component of judo, such as fitness, strength, agility, coordination, decision-making, strategy, or skills.

Use them at different points in a practice for a change of pace or at the end as a reward.

## GAMES CATALOGUE

(samples only; add your own and share it with the rest of the Judo Community if the game is a lot of fun)

### Games Appropriate for the US

#### TIPS and Key Points

Repeat safety rules every time you play a game; i.e. running only in one direction.

Games are identified as group, team or individual!

Be alert when playing a group game. The instructor must pay particular attention when there is a lot of movement on the mat; the group must be controlled in order to avoid collisions or too much chaos.

Do not put any emphasis on winning or losing.

Direct the student so that they concentrate on the task at hand.

The Beetle Game - *A group game*; develops agility, concentration, decision-making, coordination, mobility, etc. The Beetle Game is played on the ground (leg tag) while moving in a controlled environment. Two partners move around while on their hands and knees and they must try to touch one of the other kids (who are standing and trying to avoid being touched) with one of their legs. Each person who gets tagged must then get on their hands and knees with the original two "beetles", which increases their number until there is only one or two survivors/winners.

The Cat and Mouse Game; *A group game that* involves learning how to catch or outsmart the other by making the opponent, the "cat", chase ( standing up) after the end of a belt (the mouse's tail ) which is attached to the belt of the "mouse": this involves speed, decision-making skills, coordination, agility, balance, etc. The student, the "cat", who is standing must try to step on the end of the belt in order to catch the "mouse". Each person takes turns in being the cat or the mouse and each person has about thirty seconds to catch the "mouse".

Frozen Tag - *A group game* with one or two "its" trying to catch as many as possible who are "frozen" once tagged and who can be freed if another child is able to slide between their legs.

Chain Tag - *A group/team game* ; A basic game of tag, but once the person who is "it" tags another player, they must stay paired up to tag the other players. The game ends when there is no one left to tag.



Crab soccer -A *team game*; A basic game of soccer, but the players must be on all fours either frontward or backward.

Pushing sumo game - *Individual* or two on two, etc; with both partners confined to one tatami and trying to push each other out.

Around the world – An *individual* is standing or on the ground one partner serving as a support either standing or in high quadruped prone position and the other partner sitting on the back of the “Support” and trying to get around the support’s body without touching the ground. Children of this age can not serve as the support partner, only as the climbers. This game is a great developer of coordination and agility.

Sensei’s coming - Have the students pretend they are on a boat. Name the four sides of the mat: bow, stern, port, and starboard.

When sensei calls out the direction, the students run to that side. Last one there is overboard and has to “tread water” (sit-ups or some other exercise) until the game is over.

Change directions in mid-run and add the following commands:

Sensei’s coming- everyone stops where they are and does a judo bow to sensei

Sensei’s kid- everyone drops to one knee and holds their hand out, like they are proposing marriage

Submarine- lie on the back and hold one leg in the air (periscope)

Airplane- face down on the tatami, arms out to the side

Machine guns- seiza position with hands in front making noise like a machine gun

Man overboard- exactly three judoka sit in a circle (anza position), holding hands and pretending they are rowing (the odd one(s) out can try to break in- (leads to some fun ne-waza)

Last person left is the champion

Sensei says - An *individual game* ; Just like “Simon Says”. Call out and mimic the action – “Sensei says touch your head” and everyone has to touch their head, (last one to do it is eliminated); if you just say touch your head (without saying “sensei says”) the people who do the action are eliminated. Add to the fun by saying one action and mimicking another.

Ball and chain -An *individual game*; Participants must create a ball and chain from their judogi belts for this game. Participants create a circle with one player in the middle holding the ball and chain.

This person must turn in a circle and try to hit the participants ankles with the belt. The participants must not touch the ball and chain by jumping or skipping over it. If they fail to do so they are eliminated.



Belt tug of war -A *team or individual game*; This game is played with the use of a judogi belt and can be played with a team or with two individuals. Each partner grabs an end of the belt and must pull as hard as they can to get it out of the other teams hands.

King of the mat – A *group game*; All judoka are on the mat on hands and knees. Object is to eliminate others by putting them on their back or having some part of their body touch outside the mat area. The last on the mat is the king.

Chess - *A team game*; Divide the group into two equal teams. Let them choose a king for each team. As in chess the object is to capture the king (put on osae-komi). Teams will need a strategy (who protects our king, who attacks other king?). Lots of good ne-waza action. If someone other than the king is pinned in osae-komi, (s)he does 10 push-ups and gets back in the game.  
Safety tip : No pulling on the limbs or belts

Knights - Pair up students. (If different sizes put the smallest judoka with the largest, second smallest with second largest, etc.). The bigger judoka is the horse, the smaller is the knight. Horse is on hands and knees. Knight is on horse's back, legs hooked around torso. The object is to knock the other knights off the horse. Only the knights can "fight". If any part of knight touches ground, (including feet), the team is eliminated.  
This can also be done standing (piggy back) with older judoka (minimum U13).

Tag team ne-waza - As in professional wrestling, pairs of judoka compete against each other. When one judoka is in danger of being pinned, he can tag off with his partner who replaces him in the battle.

Sumo - Make a circle with belts. Competitors must force one another out of the circle or to touch the ground with something other than their feet.

Cops and Robbers - Divide into two teams. Partner with someone from the other team. Both teams lie on stomachs, facing each other, one tatami width apart. One team is Cops, the other Robbers. When sensei says "Cops" all the Robbers must get back to their edge of the mat before they are tagged by their partner (a Cop). When sensei says "Robbers", the Cops must get away (back to their edge of the mat).

Animal Ball- Two teams on opposite sides of the mat. Number them from Ichi, ni, etc on each team. Put a ball in the middle (a semi-deflated volleyball works well). Call a number (or several numbers). Those called move towards the ball. Object is to get the ball and carry it to the opposite side. Everyone must stay on the ground. Ball cannot be thrown or rolled. Great ne-waza action.

Rugby Judo - *A team game*; Similar to the above but all players participate at once. Variation: ball can be thrown from one player to another.

3-person ne-waza - Groups of three, labeled A, B, and C. A wrestles B until sensei calls switch, at which time C goes against B, without stopping. The next time sensei says switch, A goes against C, and so on.

Planets - *A team game*; Participants are separated into 4-5 groups. Each group is assigned a planet name. The instructor must call the name of two planets to "attack" each other. The length of the "attacks" are at the instructor's discretion and typically range between 30-45 seconds. When planets attack each other they must steal the "satellites" from the opposing team. "Satellites" are kids sitting down holding on to each other. If a team successfully steals a satellite, the stolen members are now part of the opposing team.  
One rule : No pulling on belts

Rolling Tag - *A group game* ; All players are on the tatami. One (or two) are "It" and must tag the others. Players (including It) can move only using somersaults, log rolls, or forward or backward shoulder rolls.

Chicken fights - Each student holds one leg up with his hand. Bounce/balance on the other leg and attempt to knock opponent over, or force him to put other leg down.

Turn the Turtle - One person lies on their stomach or the low knee/elbow "turtle" position; their partner tries to turn them on to their back.



Arm link game - *An individual/partner game*; One person links their arms together. The other links his arms through his partner's arms. They try to separate without letting go of their hands. Can they do it?

Kuzushi game - *An individual/partner game*; Two partners stand on a line, feet apart, facing opposite directions. They join their inside hands. They try to force each other off the line by pushing or pulling (use only the hand that's joined. If either foot leaves the line or one person touches the ground with other than a foot, they lose.

Kuzushi Game II - *An individual/partner game*; Two partners face each other about 1.5- 2.0 meters apart. Snake a belt around their left sides and back and hold with the right hand. Using hip action and pulling on the belt try to force the other to move his feet.

Footsweep game - *A group game*; Make a circle with several people. Grip the sleeve of the people on both sides of you. Using only kuzushi and ashi-waza, try to knock down the other people. Last one standing is champion.



British Bulldog - *A group or team game*; All judoka line up on one side of the mat except for one who is in the middle. When he calls "hajime" all the judoka must make their way (on hands and knees) to other side. The one in the middle must stop the others by putting an osae-komi on them. Those who are captured join in trying to capture the others.

Tape Game - *An individual/partner game*; Everyone puts a piece of masking tape on the thigh of the gi pants. It can be flat on or fold it over and leave some hanging to make it easier to grab. (This is a good way to handicap the better judokas). The object is to grab the opponent's tape while protecting your own while in ne-waza.

Variation: Put the tape on the back of the belt and play the same game while standing. Works great for grip fighting.

Belt game - *An individual/partner game*; While in ne-waza, the object is to remove the opponent's belt and use it to tie up the legs or arms or both of the partner!

Stop the enemy - *An individual or group game*; Divide into two teams. Number the players from "ichi to ....". Line the teams up along two sides of the mat at right angles to each other. When a number is called, one person must make his way on all fours to the opposite side. His opposite number, has to prevent him from making it to the opposite side for 15 seconds. After everyone has had a turn, reverse the roles so that the other team has to stop their opponents.

