



The Core Components of Jiu Jitsu: Building a Strong Foundation

In Jiu Jitsu, every class at the dojo is a building block for deep understanding and technical competence. From a novice practitioner to an advanced Black Belt, the journey in Jiu Jitsu is a structured progression through core techniques and principles, supported by foundational training that ensures each student grows in skill, confidence, and resilience. This article explores some primary elements of Jiu Jitsu—striking, throwing, and control techniques—and how they are woven into a comprehensive training program designed to cultivate proficiency at every level. The elements in this article are explained and supported in the Canadian Jiu Jitsu training manual.

Striking Techniques: Building Awareness and Distance Control

Striking, while not always the focus in every Jiu Jitsu dojo, is essential for self-defense and understanding range. Strikes teach students to maintain awareness of distance, timing, and positioning. Knowing when and how to strike, even minimally, helps a practitioner control engagements and defend effectively.

In foundational training, striking is practiced to develop precision, timing, and understanding of body mechanics. Beginners learn basic hand strikes, elbows, and knee strikes, practicing controlled strikes on pads to build accuracy without compromising safety. Advanced practitioners refine these techniques, working on combinations and speed, and exploring how striking can transition seamlessly into further unbalancing, throws, and control. This element of training teaches both novices and Black Belts the importance of assessing situations and reacting with the appropriate level of force.

Throwing Techniques: Using Leverage and Momentum

Throws are a fundamental aspect of Jiu Jitsu, embodying the principle of using an opponent's force against them. Throwing techniques allow practitioners to off-balance, control, and safely take down opponents, setting up a foundation for further safe distancing, dynamic controls, or submission holds.

In each class, throw training is a must and it all begins with drills that emphasize posture, grip, and leverage. Novices practice basic throws such as hip and shoulder throws, often with close supervision to ensure they understand how to control both their own body and that of their partner. For advanced practitioners, throw training progresses to include variations, counters, and combinations. This continual practice solidifies the essential skill of off-balancing opponents, integrating it naturally into their movement repertoire.

Control Techniques: Positioning and Submission Mastery

Control techniques are the heart of Jiu Jitsu, enabling practitioners to dominate a situation through superior positioning and technique rather than brute force. Control techniques include pins, joint locks, and neck restraints, which allow a practitioner to manage their opponent's movement, exert influence, and maintain situational dominance and control.

Classes are structured to build this control step-by-step. Beginners learn basic positions and simple escapes, gaining a solid foundation of positional awareness. From there, they advance to include learning how to control their opponent's balance, movement, and pace with increasing finesse. Black Belts and experienced students refine these techniques, exploring nuanced entries, transitions, options, dynamics, distance, psychology, and more. This aspect of training is crucial for understanding how to neutralize an opponent and enforce control without unnecessary harm.

The Role of Foundational Practices and Training Programs



To support these core components, dojos implement foundational practices that emphasize discipline, conditioning, and technical drilling. In each class, the following training elements serve as the backbone for development across all skill levels:

- **Drilling and Repetition:** Fundamental to Jiu Jitsu, drills allow students to internalize techniques through repetition. Whether it's basic escapes, striking combinations, or throws, drilling provides the muscle memory needed to respond instinctively during live practice.
- **Live Sparring (Randori):** Sparring sessions offer a controlled environment for students to apply techniques against resisting partners. Beginners focus on light, controlled sparring to develop timing and technique without excess force. Advanced practitioners take on more intensity, testing their skills, exploring new techniques, multiple attackers, disadvantaged positions of defence and attack, and more.
- **Strength and Conditioning:** Physical conditioning is essential for developing the stamina and resilience required in Jiu Jitsu. Classes often incorporate exercises such as bodyweight training, flexibility drills, and core strengthening, building the physical foundation necessary to support technical skills.
- **Mindfulness (Awareness) and Breathing Exercises:** Mindfulness practices, including focused breathing exercises, teach practitioners to remain calm under pressure, enhancing control and endurance. In stressful scenarios, breath control aids in maintaining composure, which is invaluable during high intensity interactions (physical and mental).

- **Technical Analysis and Feedback:** At the end of each class, instructors often provide feedback or analysis, allowing students to refine their understanding of techniques. This process is vital for both beginners, who are learning foundational principles, and Black Belts, who are refining advanced strategies. We all continue to be students no matter what colour our belt happens to be, today.

Some Final Thoughts

The journey in Jiu Jitsu is built on a structured approach to mastering essential techniques—striking, throwing, and control—each of which is integrated into the dojo’s training program. With dedicated practice in every class, students develop not only technical skills but also the discipline, resilience, and awareness that are at the heart of Jiu Jitsu. By fostering these core components within a strong foundation, Jiu Jitsu dojos ensure that every practitioner, from novice to Black Belt, progresses with confidence, safety, and a deep respect for each other and the art. These principles were continually discussed, openly taught, and supported by our founder, Shihan R. W. Forrester.

Canadian Jiu Jitsu Council Directors



Shihan R. W. Forrester (d. 2013)

