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Transition Tactics and the Flow

Mastering throw combinations | Natural flow patterns | Never Give Up

The best defenders don't just try one technique and hope it works. They chain techniques together, flowing from one attempt to the next without resetting their grip or stance. Lets break down how transitions work, a few combination options, and what makes certain flows more effective than others.

Kuzushi Continuity

The secret to seamless transitions is that the first throw's kuzushi (balance-breaking) should set up the second. When Tori directs Uke's centre of gravity in a specific direction, that displacement doesn't disappear if the first throw fails. Smart Tori exploit the same shifted balance for the next technique.

Compatible Kuzushi Directions

Not all throws flow into each other. Successful combos require compatible balance-breaking vectors. When the kuzushi directions match, Tori avoids having to re-establish balance-breaking—saving critical time and energy.

The Kinetic Chain

Effective transitions preserve the kinetic energy generated in the first throw. Hip rotation, leg drive, and arm leverage create momentum that can be redirected into the next technique without "resetting." The body stays in motion, and that motion becomes fuel for the follow-up.

Tsukuri Positioning

Tsukuri (entry/body fit) from the first throw often leaves Tori already positioned—or close to positioned—for the second. Good transitions minimize the distance Tori needs to move between techniques, maintaining grip and reducing recovery time for Uke.

Commitment vs. Flexibility

Going all-in on the first throw can trap you if it fails. But half-hearted attempts give Uke too much time to counter. The sweet spot is committing enough to generate real kuzushi, but staying light on your feet so you can pivot quickly.

Grip Control Is Non-Negotiable

Changing grips mid-combo kills momentum. Maintain your grip and adapt your throws to match, not the other way around. Change your grip after you have moved to a new chain flow of techniques.

Read the Resistance

Uke's defensive reactions tell you what comes next. If they stiffen forward, look for a sacrifice throw. If they lean back, sweep the legs. If they circle left, switch to a right-sided technique. Watch for tells. The Uke's movements tell you where they are comfortable and where they are not. Move them into discomfort knowing they will regain their comfort on the next move, then take advantage of that move.

Don't Chase Forever

Transitions work best in pairs or triples—not endless chains. When we train we attempt to do endless chains to practice the options. In reality, two or three attempts is the typical window before your motion is used against you. Dragging a combo too long opens you to counters.

Drill the Flow, Not Just the Throws

Most dojo drilling isolates individual techniques. But transitions require practicing the link between throws. Partner drills that force you to follow up on failed attempts build the neural pathways needed for success.

Canadian Jiu Jitsu Council Directors



Shihan R. W. Forrester (d. 2013)

