

Load-Bearing and Non-Load-Bearing Throws

Understanding Their Relevance in Jiu Jitsu

In Jiu Jitsu, throwing techniques are fundamental tools for controlling and destabilizing opponents, whether in self-defense or sparring. Throws can generally be categorized into **load-bearing** and **non-load-bearing** types, each with unique mechanics, benefits, and applications. Understanding the difference between these throws can enhance both a beginner's foundation and an advanced practitioner's tactical choices.

What Are Load-Bearing Throws?

Load-bearing throws involve lifting or carrying the opponent's weight during the execution of the technique. These throws require the thrower to physically support the opponent's body—typically by positioning themselves under the opponent's center of gravity—before executing the throw. Load-bearing throws demand balance, strength, timing and technique, as they involve shifting the opponent's weight and momentum to create the desired impact.

Examples of Load-Bearing Throws:

Koshi Nage (Hip Throw) is a fundamental throw that uses the hips as a fulcrum to lift and project the opponent. Positioning the hips beneath the opponent's center of gravity, and, by pulling the opponent forward and rotating, lifts them onto the hip before executing a sweeping throw.

Seoi-Nage (Shoulder Throw): In this classic throw, the practitioner positions the opponent over their shoulder, lifting and throwing them forward.

Sukui Nage (Scooping Throw): Often performed as a double-leg lift, the practitioner scoops under the opponent's legs, lifting them up and over in a single motion.

Key Benefits of Load-Bearing Throws

Control Over the Opponent: Because the thrower is carrying or lifting the opponent's weight, load-bearing throws offer, and require, high levels of control, making them particularly useful in self-defense or close-combat scenarios.

Effective for Off-Balancing: Load-bearing throws create a significant shift in the opponent's balance, making it difficult, but not impossible, for them to counter or recover mid-throw.

Strength and Core Development: Practicing load-bearing throws builds physical strength, especially in the core and lower body, which is essential for advanced grappling techniques.

What Are Non-Load-Bearing Throws?

Non-load-bearing throws, in contrast, involve little or no lifting of the opponent's weight. These techniques use leverage, positioning, and redirection of the opponent's momentum to execute the throw, rather than physically bearing the opponent's weight. Non-load-bearing throws rely more on timing, precision, and angles, making them accessible to practitioners regardless of size or strength.

Examples of Non-Load-Bearing Throws:

Osoto-Gari (Outer Reaping Throw): The thrower sweeps or “reaps” the opponent’s leg, forcing them to fall backward without lifting their weight.

Kouchi-Gari (Minor Inner Reap): A foot sweep that targets the opponent’s inside foot or leg, tipping them off-balance without needing to lift or carry them.

Shiho Nage (Four-direction Throw): It’s a classic Jiu Jitsu and Aikido technique that allows the practitioner to control and throw an opponent by manipulating their arm, creating leverage through wrist and shoulder positioning.

Kote Gaeshi (Wrist Twist) This technique is a joint lock and throw commonly used focusing on controlling the opponent through their wrist and applying a twisting motion that forces the wrist outward. This creates intense pressure on the joint, leading to a quick loss of balance.

Key Benefits of Non-Load-Bearing Throws

Minimal Energy Expenditure: These throws require less physical exertion and are ideal for conserving energy during prolonged sparring or competition.

High Speed and Efficiency: Non-load-bearing throws are often quicker to execute, making them excellent options for setting up additional moves or counters.

Leverage Over Strength: Because non-load-bearing throws rely on timing and leverage, they allow practitioners to throw larger or heavier opponents without significant strength.

Practical Applications in Training and Sparring

For **novice practitioners**, learning both load-bearing and non-load-bearing throws builds a well-rounded foundation in Jiu Jitsu. Beginners should start with non-load-bearing throws, as these techniques are less demanding on the body and can be practiced repeatedly to develop balance, timing, and footwork. Over time, integrating load-bearing throws can add power and control to their repertoire, increasing their effectiveness against resisting opponents.

For **advanced Black Belts and instructors**, understanding the strategic differences between these types of throws is essential for adapting techniques to different opponents, styles, and situations. Experienced practitioners often switch between load-bearing and non-load-bearing techniques depending on the flow of the fight. For instance, non-load-bearing throws can be used to keep an opponent off-balance or as a setup for a load-bearing throw to maximize control.

Key Training Tips

Timing and Balance: Both types of throws require precise timing and balance, so practicing in slow motion can be highly beneficial. Drilling movements slowly helps build muscle memory and allows practitioners to feel the mechanics of each throw.

Develop Core Stability and Leg Strength: Both load-bearing and non-load-bearing throws benefit from strong core and leg muscles. For load-bearing throws, core and leg strength are essential for supporting and lifting an opponent’s weight. For non-load-bearing throws, core stability enhances balance and precision.

Focus on Kuzushi (Off-Balancing): All successful throws, load-bearing or non-load-bearing, require the opponent to be off-balance. Practicing kuzushi with a partner or using balance drills helps develop the subtle adjustments needed to create an effective off-balance, ensuring that each throw is executed with control.

Train Transition Techniques: Switching from a non-load-bearing to a load-bearing throw, or vice versa, in response to an opponent's movement can create opportunities for effective takedowns. Practicing these transitions helps advanced students to adapt throws dynamically during sparring or competition.

Mastering both load-bearing and non-load-bearing throws is an essential part of Jiu Jitsu training. Each type of throw offers unique benefits and applications, from the strength-building control of load-bearing throws to the speed and efficiency of non-load-bearing techniques. For novices, understanding and practicing both types builds a strong foundation, while advanced practitioners gain the versatility to adapt to any situation or opponent. By incorporating both types of throws in training, Jiu Jitsu practitioners develop a balanced skill set that combines strength, precision, and adaptability.