



Martial Arts Drills For Judo

By

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Introduction

One of the most important things you can do as a martial artist is practice what you've learned. As GM Robert Xavier likes to say – “Perfect practice makes perfect.” Learn how to do something correctly, then do it correctly, repeatedly.

One of the best ways to do that is through “drills.” Drilling is a system of repeating a series of martial techniques correctly multiple times a day, for many days, until the movements become part of your natural movement.

GM John Chung Li liked to talk about moving “naturally.” Drilling is one of the ways we can *naturalize* martial movements.

Age Appropriate Drills

Grace Martial Arts is geared toward teaching families and young people. Each class may have students ranging in age from four to seventy-four years of age. Our T'ai Chi classes have students in their eighties and even nineties.

The way a child of four drills is different than someone who is fourteen, or twenty-four, or fifty-four. It's important that GMA instructors develop drills that are "age appropriate."

Children learn a lot from "play," so martial arts drills for young children often include games that are fun while also educational.

Judo Drills

I started martial arts training at the age of twelve, so I was too old for the younger children's games. However, I found Judo training a lot of fun. That was the first martial art I studied. We did a lot of falling, flipping and rolling over things, jumping off tall objects onto our backs, etc. We lived near a beach, so we practiced some weekends jumping off the lower end of a pier onto soft sand. We progressed by working our way up the pier (which was farther from the ground) and jumping onto harder sand. We also practiced in parks and playgrounds. Going to different locations (other than the *dojo*) to train is another way to increase the fun for children.

Being thrown (being an *uki*) became one of my favorite things to do as a child. I continued to enjoy it until family insisted I stop in my late 60s. I understood their concern for my physical health at an older age, but it was still a lot of fun to do. :)

Judo is a big part of the Yon Ch'uan Martial Arts curriculum, so we teach the correct way to fall at the White Belt level. If you're teaching young children, make sure the students feel safe and enjoy their experience. Always complement them on their effort even if their technique is lacking. Young children want and need encouragement, especially from instructors.

Younger Child Drills

We like to start young students lying on their backs on a 2" Judo mat to learn backward falling (*Ushiro Ukemi*). That's a safe position. We have them raise their arms straight above their chests and then slap the mat with their palms hitting the mat next to their legs. It gets very loud with a lot of children in the class – which is something children love to do – make noise with permission. Instructors can also turn the slapping drill into a game by having one child slap, then the child next to them slap, and so on down the line. If the class is large and there are multiple rows of children, another game is to see which row can slap the loudest. Instructors can also use

something like Simon Says (I call it Sensei Says) to make the slapping into a fun game.

We move next to side falls (*Yoko Ukemi*). The children are still lying on their backs on the soft Judo mats, so they continue to feel safe. We teach them to raise their right arm straight above their chest, then roll to the right side and slap the mat hard with their palm next to their right leg, which is extended. We also teach them to bend their left left about 90 degrees as them roll to the side.

We then teach children to roll to their left side. They raise their left arm above their chest, roll to the left while bending the right leg about 90 degrees (left leg is fully extended). One of the training objectives is to help children slap the mat hard just before they finish their roll to either side.

Once children know how to roll and slap to each side (right and left), instructors can turn it into a game. Here are some examples:

1. Roll and slap to the right five times, then roll and slap to the left five times
2. Roll and slap to the right, then immediately roll and slap to the left
3. Play Sensei Says and call out “right slap” or “left slap”

The idea is to train your young students well while they have fun doing it.

Once children feel comfortable slapping on their back and rolling to the right and left, have them sit up. On your command, they fall backward on the mat and slap just before their back hits the mat. Falling backward, even from a sitting position, is a little scary for some children, so allow those children to continue to lie on their back until they get the courage to sit up and fall back. It usually doesn't take long because they see their friends doing it and having fun.

Falling to the right side and left side from a sitting position is next. Depending on the age of the children, I also add a kick from the bent leg as soon as they slap the mat. That teaches them one of the purposes of bending the leg. It's for protection from someone falling on you after you fall, and for kick someone's leg if they try to step in to hurt you after you fall. Defense is offense. Offense is defense. We can teach children vital martial arts principles through games.

After the children are comfortable falling from a sitting position, we move to a full squatting position, then a half-squatting position, then to bending position, and finally to a standing position. Take it slow and ensure that all of the children feel safe and accepted for whatever they can do.

One of the more difficult falls to teach young children is forward falling (*Mae Ukemi*). That's because they see the ground rushing toward their face and that can be scary to a four-year-old. I begin teaching forward falling by having children lie face down on the Judo mat with their hands (palm down) in front of their face. Their palms and arms (to the elbow) are touching the mat. Next, have the children look right

and hold their head in that position for a few seconds. Then, have the children look left and hold their head in that position for a few seconds. Make a game of it. Have some fun. It's training children that as they fall forward they turn their face to the right or the left – away from the mat. Emphasize to them that their hands will keep their heads from hitting mat (ground) and turning their face to the left or right will protect their nose, teeth, and eyes.

The next step is to have the children practice falling forward from a push-up position. They hold themselves in a push-up position until the instructor tells them to fall. They slowly (at first) let themselves down on their arms to the elbows as they turn their face to one side or the other. After they are comfortable doing that, have them fall from a kneeling position (bent-over kneeling for younger children). That becomes the first time they experience slapping the mat with palms and bent arms as they turn their face to the side. When students are ready, have them fall forward from a squatting position, and eventually a standing position. Don't rush it. You want your students to turn their heads to the side without thinking about it. No broken noses or chipped teeth. Safety first.

GM Xavier often says that the most important person in a Yon Ch'uan class is your partner. Teach your younger students the importance of listening to the Instructor and relying on their partner. That's important to train them early because their partners will eventually throw them and they will throw their partners.

One way to get them used to having a partner throw them is to have children squat down across from each other and gently push each other backward for a back fall. Even timid children develop a sense of acceptance and safety in that kind of partner relationship.

Partners are also helpful when teaching young children how to do a forward roll. I like to begin by seeing how many of the children know how to do a somersault from a kneeling position. Once they know how to somersault over their head, learning the Judo roll is teaching them how to turn their eyes and head to the corner as they roll forward instead of going straight over their heads.

Older Child Drills

Some older children will grow to love jumping off objects to do their falls, but I recommend instructors first work with on doing standing flips before climbing up on a chair or table. Safety first. We don't want anyone to get injured.

Some children take to falling faster than others. I was one of those kids. I used to take pratfalls as a young child because that amused members of my family (and we had terrazzo floors in the 50s and 60s!). I didn't know the correct way to fall before Judo, but I loved to fall. Learning how to fall correctly was awesome and fun.

Some other fun falling games are:

- Walking side falls (from a standing position – step, fall to the right side, stand up, take a step, fall the left side, stand up, take a step, repeat right and left)
- Rolling side falls (from a kneeling position – roll over right shoulder and side slap, come up to the other knee and

roll over left shoulder and side slap .. some children are better rolling over one shoulder than the other, so let them roll over that shoulder until they are able to roll over both)

- Sitting on back side falls (sit on friends back while they are in a low position – fall off partner’s back to right side, then to left side .. your friend/partner raise his/her body up so the child falls from a slightly greater height)

Older children can do some other fun drills that are a bit harder:

- Kneeling arm side fall (from a hands and knees position – partner reaches under child’s body, grabs gi at wrist level, pulls up so that child flips around in the air and lands on their side while slapping)
- Leaping jump side fall (from standing position – grab partner’s gi at chest level and jump into the air, child falls on side for slap while holding onto partner and while partner holds on to uki’s gi at shoulder and elbow level –

partner holds on with both hands to make sure uki doesn't land too hard)

- Crash mat side fall (from running position – jump up high and flip body over to land on side – if your school doesn't own a crash mat, place two Judo mats on top of each other)
- Handstand fall (stand on your hands with your feet straight up in the air – fall forward and slap before you land on your back or side)

Watch the students practice and point out important points like slapping the mat just before the body hits the mat. That's important for them to learn for more advanced training as well as training on their own at home or with friends away from the *dojo*.

Learning how to fall properly moves naturally into being thrown. One of my Judo instructors used to say that the best way to learn how to throw was to be thrown ten-thousand times. That's probably true, but falling several hundred times

will probably suffice for preparation to become a good *uki* as a young child.

Principles for Falling

Some of the basic principles we want our students to learn as part of *Ukemi* are:

- Relax – don't stiffen before falling, relax the body. A stiff body quickly becomes an injured body.
- Breath – don't hold your breath when you fall, continue to breathe naturally. Holding your breath can lead to losing your breath when you hit the mat. Relax and breathe naturally.
- Flexibility – stretch your entire body before falling – that includes hands, arms, feet, legs, back, and stomach – a flexible body is better able to withstand the impact of falling
- Raise head and feet – training children to raise their head up so they can see their feet raised in the air will help them from bumping their heads during a backward or side fall – it also prepares them to protect themselves

from someone falling on top of them and puts them into a position of kicking at an opponent who might try to grab them, jump on them, or hit them

Judoka (Judo participants, players) need to be flexible and strong. Stretching is important as is developing both upper and lower body strength. Let's start with stretching.

Stretching

There are hundreds of sitting, prone/supine, kneeling, squatting, and standing stretches in Judo. Here are some of my personal favorites to do prior to solo falling (*ukemi*), and partner throwing (*nage-waza*).

Sitting stretches include ..

Rolling ankles in circles to left ten times, then to right ten times .. repeat both sides five to ten times

With legs extended forward, grab toes with both hands .. you should feel stretch in legs, arms and torso .. hold stretch for ten seconds.. repeat five to ten times

With legs extended forward and apart from each other, grab toes with both hands .. you should feel stretch in legs, arms, and torso .. hold stretch for ten seconds.. repeat five to ten times

With legs extended forward and apart from each other, grab toes with both hands until your forehead is on the floor .. you should feel stretch in legs, arms, and torso .. hold stretch for ten seconds.. repeat five to ten times

With legs extended forward and apart from each other, grab toes on left foot with left hand while right hand stretches over your head toward your left foot .. you should feel stretch in legs, arms, and torso .. hold stretch for ten seconds.. repeat five to ten times

With legs extended forward and apart from each other, grab toes on right foot with right hand while left hand stretches over your head toward your right foot .. you should feel stretch in legs, arms, and torso .. hold stretch for ten seconds .. repeat five to ten times

With legs extended and apart from each other, place both hands behind your back and raise your bottom off the floor while arching your back and moving your head backward .. hold stretch for ten seconds .. repeat five to ten times

With legs extended and apart from each other (as far as you can comfortably), place both hands on the floor in front of you, and slowly walk your hands forward as far as you can comfortably .. your goal is to eventually place your forehead or chin on the floor (that will increase the spread of your leg stretch) .. hold stretch for five to ten seconds .. walk your hands back toward your body until you are sitting up straight .. rest for ten seconds .. repeat five to ten times

Extend one leg forward and the other leg backward .. lean forward and place your head on your knee while grabbing the toes of your forward leg .. hold stretch for ten seconds, then raise your body up and place your hands on the floor behind you and stretch backwards while looking up at the ceiling .. hold stretch for ten seconds .. repeat entire forward/backward stretch five to ten times

Sit up straight and extend your left leg .. bring the bottom of your right foot to the inside of your left knee .. stretch forward and touch your forehead or chin to your left knee while grabbing the toes of your left foot with both hands .. hold stretch for ten seconds .. repeat entire forward/backward stretch five to ten times .. you can also change the stretch by looking up toward the sky as you do the same stretch .. another version of the stretch is bend forward over the extended leg, place left hand on the floor while looking to the sky and reaching up with the right hand .. hold the stretch for ten seconds .. repeat five to ten times

Sit up straight and extend your right leg .. bring the bottom of your left foot to the inside of your right knee .. stretch forward and touch your forehead or chin to your right knee while grabbing the toes of your right foot with both hands .. hold stretch for ten seconds .. repeat entire forward/backward stretch five to ten times .. you can also change the stretch by looking up toward the sky as you do the same stretch .. another version of the stretch is bend forward over the extended leg, place right hand on the floor while looking to the

sky and reaching up with the left hand .. hold the stretch for ten seconds .. repeat five to ten times

Sit up straight and extend right leg backward as you bend left leg so left foot is close to your body .. bend forward over your left knee touching your knee with your forehead with arms extended forward .. hold stretch for ten seconds .. repeat stretch five to ten times

Sit up straight and extend left leg backward as you bend right leg so right foot is close to your body .. bend forward over your right knee touching your knee with your forehead with arms extended forward .. hold stretch for ten seconds .. repeat stretch five to ten times

Sit up straight and extend both legs forward and both arms above your head .. stretch your body to the right and hold for ten seconds .. stretch your body to the left and hold for ten seconds .. repeat right/left stretch five to ten times

Sit up straight and extend your right leg .. bend your left leg and move your left foot to the other side of your right knee .. place your left hand on the ground behind your left hip .. move your right hand over your left knee .. use your right elbow to slightly push on your left knee .. look to your left and hold the stretch for five to ten seconds .. repeat five to ten times

Sit up straight and extend your left leg .. bend your right leg and move your right foot to the other side of your left knee .. place your right hand on the ground behind your right hip .. move your left hand over your right knee .. use your left elbow to slightly push on your right knee .. look to your right and hold the stretch for five to ten seconds .. repeat five to ten times

Sit up straight and bring the bottom of both feet together in front of you (also known as a butterfly stretch) .. place right hand on right knee and left hand on left knee .. gently push downward on your knees until you reach a comfortable stretch .. hold for five to ten seconds .. stop pushing on your knees and relax for ten seconds .. repeat stretch five to ten times .. your goal is to eventually push both knees to the floor and hold them comfortably for five to ten seconds, but don't rush

to reach the goal or you might over extend muscles in the inner thigh

Sit up straight and bring the bottom of both feet together in front of you (also known as a butterfly stretch) .. place right hand on right knee and left hand on left knee .. gently push downward on your knees until you reach a comfortable stretch .. lower your body forward as far as you can comfortably .. hold stretch for five to ten seconds .. return to a sitting position, stop pushing on your knees and relax for ten seconds .. repeat stretch five to ten times .. your goal is to eventually bend forward in the butterfly stretch until you can place your forehead on the ground .. not everyone is that flexible, so just enjoy whatever you can do

Prone/Supine stretches include ..

Lie down on your stomach (prone position), arms extended so hands are next to your legs (palms down) and relax for 30 seconds .. lift hands off floor and extend to each side .. lift hands as high as you can without straining and hold for ten seconds .. slowly lower to floor and repeat five to ten times

In a prone position, with your arms extended so hands are next to your legs (palms down) lift your head and upper body off the floor and hold for ten seconds .. slowly lower your body to floor and rest for ten seconds .. repeat stretch five to ten times

In a prone position, extend above your arms forward in front of your head (palms down) .. lift your head and upper body several inches off the floor with arms extended (like flying) and hold for ten seconds .. slowly lower your body to floor and rest for ten seconds .. repeat stretch five to ten times

In a prone position, place your palms on the floor and push your head and chest upward while looking straight ahead (another variation is to look at the sky) .. keep the top of your feet and legs on the floor as you hold the stretch for ten seconds .. slowly lower your body to floor and rest for ten seconds .. repeat stretch five to ten times

In a prone position, extend above your arms forward in front of your head (palms down) .. lift your head and upper body several inches off the floor with arms extended (like flying), and lift your feet and legs several inches above the ground at the same time .. hold for ten seconds .. slowly lower your body to floor and rest for ten seconds .. repeat stretch five to ten times

Lie down on your back (supine position) and relax for 30 seconds .. lift hands off floor and extend to each side .. lift hands straight above your head until the back of each hand touches the other .. slowly lower to floor and repeat five to ten times

In a supine position, lift hands from sides of legs with palms down and extend hands over head until backs of palms are touching the ground above the head .. slowly bring hands over head and return to palms down next to legs .. repeat stretch five to ten times

In a supine position, bend both legs so that knees are pointing up as feet are flat on the floor .. fully extend right leg upward, then slowly move the extended leg with foot behind head .. hold that stretch for ten seconds, then slowly bring the right leg back to a bent position with foot on floor .. fully extend left leg upward, then slowly move the extended leg with foot behind head .. hold that stretch for ten seconds, then slowly bring the left leg back to a bent position with foot on floor .. repeat right/left leg stretch five to ten times

In a supine position, bend both legs so that knees are pointing up as feet are flat on the floor .. fully extend both legs upward, keeping your arms on the floor with palms down .. slowly move both legs behind your head and, if possible, touch your toes to the floor behind your head .. hold the stretch for five to ten seconds .. return both legs to an extended position above

your waist and repeat the stretch behind your head five to ten times

In a supine position, extend hands to each side even with shoulders (palms down) .. with legs extended, lift right leg above waist and slowly touch toes to the left side of the floor .. hold stretch for five to ten seconds .. return right leg above waist, then slowly return to the floor .. lift left leg above waist and slowly touch toes to the right side of the floor .. hold stretch for five to ten seconds .. return left leg above waist, then slowly return to the floor .. repeat right/left leg stretches five to ten times

In a supine position, extend arms so that your hands are next to your legs (palms down) .. slowly lift your head and chest several inches off the floor and hold for ten seconds .. return your head and chest to the floor and relax for ten seconds .. repeat ten times

Kneeling Stretches

Kneeling stretches can be done on one knee or both knees. They are helpful in engaging your body's core as well as muscles in your legs, arms, chest, back, and neck. You do not need to do all of these stretches before working out with a partner. Select the ones you find most helpful and combine them with other stretches you enjoy from the other stretches we've described in this series.

Place both knees on the floor and stretch both hands above your head .. slowly bend your body back as far as you can comfortably and hold for five seconds .. slowly move from that position to bend your body forward as far as you can comfortably and hold for five seconds .. bring your body back to an upright position, lower your hands to your sides, and relax for ten seconds .. repeat the backward/forward stretch ten times

Place both knees on the floor and stretch both hands above your head .. slowly bend your body to the left as far as you can comfortably and hold for five seconds .. slowly move from that position to bend your body to the right as far as you can comfortably and hold for five seconds .. bring your body back to an upright position, lower your hands to your sides, and relax for ten seconds .. repeat the left/right stretch ten times

Place your left knee on the floor with your hands on your hips .. stretch your right leg straight back and hold the stretch for ten seconds .. then stretch your right leg to your right side and hold the stretch for ten seconds .. next, stretch your right leg forward and hold the stretch for ten seconds .. return your right knee next to your left knee .. repeat the stretching combination with your right leg five times

Place your right knee on the floor with your hands on your hips .. stretch your left leg straight back and hold the stretch for ten seconds .. then stretch your left leg to your left side and hold the stretch for ten seconds .. next, stretch your left leg forward and hold the stretch for ten seconds .. return your

left knee next to your right knee .. repeat the stretching combination with your left leg five times

Place your right knee on the floor and stretch your left leg straight in front of you so that your right heel is touching the floor .. bend forward at your waist and place your right hand on the floor and your left hand on the toes of your left foot .. stretch forward as far as is comfortable and hold for five to ten seconds .. repeat the stretch ten times

Place your left knee on the floor and stretch your right leg straight in front of you so that your left heel is touching the floor .. bend forward at your waist and place your left hand on the floor and your right hand on the toes of your right foot .. stretch forward as far as is comfortable and hold for five to ten seconds .. repeat the stretch ten times

Place your right knee on the floor with your right hand on the floor .. raise left hand above your head while you raise your left leg straight out parallel with the floor .. hold stretch for ten seconds .. lower left hand and leg and relax for ten seconds .. repeat stretch ten times

Place your left knee on the floor with your left hand on the floor .. raise right hand above your head while you raise your right leg straight out parallel with the floor .. hold stretch for ten seconds .. lower right hand and leg and relax for ten seconds .. repeat stretch ten times

Place left knee on the floor with your right leg stretched behind you touching the floor .. make a fist and raise your hands in front of your chest .. slowly walk across the ground/floor/mat on your knees (alternate knees) with your hands in front of you .. take ten knee steps forward .. reverse direction and take ten knee steps backward .. relax for 30 seconds .. repeat knee-walking stretch five to ten times

Place both knees on floor and sit back on your heels with hands on your legs .. slowly move knees as far away from each other as is comfortable .. hold stretch for 30 seconds .. bring knees back together and rest for 30 seconds .. repeat stretch five times

Place both knees on floor and sit back on your heels with hands on your legs .. slowly move knees as far away from each other as is comfortable .. bend at the waist as you reach forward until the palms of your hands are on the floor .. bend forward as far as is comfortable (the goal is to eventually touch your forehead to the floor) .. hold stretch for 15 seconds .. return body to upright position and bring knees back together and rest for 30 seconds .. repeat stretch five times

Place both knees and both hands on the floor (palms down) about shoulder width apart (knees and hands) .. arms are straight, but elbows are not locked .. move your feet on the floor so your toes are pointing outward at a 90 degree angle (right toes pointing right, left toes pointing left) while keeping your heels touching the floor .. stretch your hips back slightly as if attempting to sit (slightly, don't overstretch) while breathing in, then stretch forward slightly while breathing out .. stretch back and forward ten times .. relax for 30 seconds .. if you feel okay, do another set .. if not, that's fine

Squatting Stretches

[Squatting places a lot of pressure on your knees .. if you have knee problems or weak knees, you may want to modify or even skip these stretches so that you don't strain your knees]

Stand with your feet shoulder width apart .. squat down until your knees are straight out, also reach forward with both hands .. return to a standing position .. repeat the squatting exercise ten times .. relax for 30 seconds .. repeat the stretch five to ten times .. you can increase the stretch by placing more weight on the front of your foot (toes and ball of foot), but I recommend you wait to do that until regular squatting with feet flat on the floor is easy to do

Stand with your feet shoulder width apart .. step forward with your left foot into a squatting position .. rise and step forward with your right foot into a squatting position .. continue across the floor ten times, then reverse direction and move backward ten times .. relax for 30 seconds .. repeat stretch five times

Move into a squatting position with toes on both feet pointing outward about 20-30 degrees .. place your hands on your legs or outstretched in front of you .. walk forward across the floor in a squatting position .. reverse direction and walk backward across the floor in a squatting position .. stand up and relax for one minute .. if you feel up to it, repeat the squat walk .. the goal is to eventually repeat the squat walk (forward and backward) five times

Move into a squatting position and stretch left leg to the left and hold for ten seconds (your weight will be on your right leg) .. bring your left leg back into a squatting position and stretch right leg to the right and hold for ten seconds (your weight will be on your left leg) .. repeat ten times .. stand up and relax for one minute .. if you feel up to it, repeat the squat stretch .. the goal is to eventually repeat the full side-to-side squat stretch five times

Move into a squatting position with your hands on the floor in front of you .. move more weight to the front of your foot (toes and ball of foot) .. move forward in a frog-like posture by changing weight from hands to feet as you move .. move

forward ten times, turn around and move forward ten times .. stand up and relax for one minute .. repeat moving stretch five times

Standing Stretches

Stand with your feet close together and your knees bent slightly .. stretch your hands above your head (eyes follow hands), then slowly lower your hands toward the floor (reach downward as far as you can comfortably, some people can place their fingers on their knees while other can place their fingers on their shins or toes, the key is to make the stretch comfortable, you will find that your ability to stretch farther will increase over time) .. hold stretch for five seconds .. slowly raise your body and your hands above your head, then slowly lower your hands to the floor .. hold stretch for five seconds .. repeat ten times .. stand and relax for 30 seconds .. repeat stretch five to ten times

Stand with your feet apart (two shoulders width) .. raise your hands above your head, then reach backward so that your back is bowed .. hold stretch for five seconds .. reach forward so that your back is rounded .. hold stretch for five seconds .. repeat stretch ten times .. relax for 30 seconds .. repeat stretch five to ten times

Stand with your feet shoulder width apart .. slowly raise your right foot behind you and grab the top of your foot with your right hand (the goal is to eventually place the heel of your right foot on your bottom, but don't push the stretch, make it comfortable) .. hold for five to ten seconds (place your left hand on a wall in front of you if balance is difficult during the stretch) .. repeat stretch five to ten times

Stand with your feet shoulder width apart .. slowly raise your left foot behind you and grab the top of your foot with your left hand (the goal is to eventually place the heel of your left foot on your bottom, but don't push the stretch, make it comfortable) .. hold for five to ten seconds (place your right hand on a wall in front of you if balance is difficult during the stretch) .. repeat stretch five to ten times

Stand with your feet together .. bend your knees slightly .. place hands on both knees and slowly rotate knees in a circle to the right .. repeat ten times .. reverse direction and slowly rotate knees in a circle to the left .. repeat ten times .. relax for 30 seconds .. repeat stretch five times

Stand facing a wall .. place your hands on the wall (palms forward) .. move into a strong forward stance with your front foot fully on the floor and your back foot with toes on the floor and heel up .. gently push forward with your back foot toward the wall while resisting the push with your front leg and hands .. hold stretch for ten seconds .. change feet and hold similar stretch for ten seconds .. continue changing feet ten times .. relax .. repeat stretch five times

Resources

Stretches for Judo will also work well for other martial arts (e.g. BJJ, Aikido, Karate, Kung Fu), though each of those arts have some stretches unique to their system. Judoka stretch at the beginning and ending of each class. Other martial arts may do less stretching and more warmups as part of their system.

While the best resource you have is your instructor, here are a few good online resources to supplement. Keep in mind that you want flexibility, speed, and strength for Judo and other martial arts.

[GMA Black Belt Study Guide](#) (pages 9 – 10)

[Stretching and Flexibility for Judo](#)

[Stretching Routine for Judo](#) (Video)

[Warm Up Stretches for Judo](#) (Video)

We have focused on stretching drills so far in our series. We now move to strength drills.

Strength Training

Judoka should focus on strengthening every part of their body. That includes arms, legs, hands, fingers, feet, toes, core muscles, back muscles (especially lower back), shoulder muscles, and neck muscles. You will engage all of those physical areas in the art of Judo. The same is true for Judo Self Defense, which is primary to training in Yon Ch'uan Martial Arts.

You will need to increase your ability to grip and pull strongly. You will need strength to endure a lengthy physical struggle along to explode into a successful throw. You will find how important core muscle strength is when you explode into a throw.

I studied Judo in the early 1960s when teachers were still using strength training methods they had learned when they served in the military in Japan and other Asian countries. I'll be sharing those older methods with you in this article since that's what I've used for the last 60 years. If you want to build strength with modern training equipment, I recommend you join a good gym or fitness center and learn from people with those skills.

Solo Strength Training

Grip strength is very important in Judo and Judo Self Defense. We grip both the *gi* (uniform) and *obi* (belt) with a partner, so you can also use the *gi* and *obi* in your solo strength training.

Take your belt and fold it in half .. hold your belt in front of you at arms length .. twist the belt in your fingers in opposite directions (e.g. left hand twists belt backward while right hand twists belt forward, then reverse) .. continue twisting your belt back and forth 20 times .. relax for 30 seconds .. repeat exercise five times

Take your belt and fold it in half, then half again .. hold your belt in front of you at arms length .. twist the belt in your fingers in opposite directions (e.g. left hand twists belt backward while right hand twists belt forward, then reverse) .. continue twisting your belt back and forth 20 times .. relax for 30 seconds .. repeat exercise five times

Hold your belt in front of you at arms length (without folding) .. hands should be even with shoulders .. pull the belt in opposite directions as hard as you can for 30 seconds .. rest for 30 seconds .. repeat exercise ten times

Hold your belt in front of you at arms length (without folding) .. left hand holds the belt above your head while the right hand holds the belt next to your right hip .. pull the belt in opposite directions as hard as you can for 30 seconds .. rest for 30 seconds .. repeat exercise ten times

Hold your belt in front of you at arms length (without folding) .. right hand holds the belt above your head while the left hand holds the belt next to your left hip .. pull the belt in opposite directions as hard as you can for 30 seconds .. rest for 30 seconds .. repeat exercise ten times

Hold your belt behind your head (without folding) .. hands should be slightly wider than your shoulders .. pull the belt in opposite directions as hard as you can for 30 seconds .. rest for 30 seconds .. repeat exercise ten times

Hold your belt behind your lower back at arms length (without folding) .. hands should be slightly wider than your shoulders .. pull the belt in opposite directions as hard as you can for 30 seconds .. rest for 30 seconds .. repeat exercise ten times

Put on your *gi* top (*uwagi*) with or without wearing your belt .. grab the upper part of the *uwagi* (thickest material) and pull up and down strongly for 30 seconds .. relax for 20 seconds .. grabbing the same part of the *uwagi*, pull outward and inward strongly for 30 seconds .. relax for 20 seconds .. repeat full exercise (pulling up, down, out, and in) five times

Take an extra belt (not the one you wear in class) and wrap it around a tree or pole .. facing the tree or pole, grab the belt with both hands and pull strongly down toward your hips, then (keeping tension on the belt) raise the belt up to head height and pull strongly .. continue to pull toward your hips, then head, for one minute .. rest for one minute .. repeat exercise ten times

Take an extra belt (not the one you wear in class) and wrap it around a tree or pole .. facing away from the tree or pole, grab the belt with both hands and pull strongly down toward your hips, then (keeping tension on the belt) raise the belt up to head height and pull strongly .. continue to pull toward your hips, then head, for one minute .. rest for one minute .. repeat exercise ten times

Lie down on the floor in a supine position (back on floor) .. place your belt over the bottom of your right foot and pull the belt toward you with both hands as you push the belt away from you with your foot .. hold for 30 seconds .. relax for 20 seconds .. repeat five times

Stay on the floor in a supine position and place your belt over the bottom of your left foot and pull the belt toward you with both hands as you push the belt away from you with your foot .. hold for 30 seconds .. relax for 20 seconds .. repeat five times

Move into a prone position (facing floor) and extend arms with palms on floor .. feet up on toes .. keep your face forward and back straight as you perform 20 push ups .. rest for 20 seconds (return knees to floor while resting) .. repeat five times (some students may need to begin doing pushups with knees on the floor, but the goal is to have knees off the floor during the exercise)

You can increase the strengthening aspect of pushups by doing more pushups (work up to 50 or more pushups between resting), and by having someone place weighted objects on your back as you do your pushups .. one way to do that is for a fellow student to sit on your back as you do the pushups, but that fits better with partner strength training

You can also increase the impact of push-ups by doing them with your finger tips instead of your palms on the floor

[Another option for push-ups is plyometric push-ups .. they add an extra aspect for strength training .. you can find some good examples on the Internet]

Sit on the floor with your legs outstretched and both hands on your chest .. fall backward, slap the floor (mat), and immediately return to the seated position with hands on chest .. repeat the Judo sit-up ten times .. rest for 30 seconds in seated position .. repeat exercise five times

Hold medicine ball (or other heavy object .. large rock, piece of wood, etc) in both hands with legs in a wide stance (double shoulder width) .. raise medicine ball or other object above your head, then lower quickly between legs, and quickly raise above your head again .. repeat ten times .. rest for 30 seconds .. repeat exercise five times

Jump up and grab a strong tree branch with both hands (palms facing away from you) .. hand on the tree branch for 20 seconds .. pull up with your arms until you can place your chin above the branch .. return to a hanging position .. continue to perform pull-ups 20 times .. rest for 30 seconds .. repeat exercise five times .. change the exercise by holding on to the branch with your palms facing toward you (if you don't have a tree branch that will work, you can build a pull-up/chin-up bar in your backyard, or use one at a gym)

You can also increase your grip strength by hanging from the tree branch or bar for several minutes .. that is a good body-weight exercise .. rest on the ground for a minute or two before hanging from branch or bar again for several minutes .. repeat exercise five times

Place a thick rope over a large branch and tie it so the rope can hold your weight (a thick branch 15-20 feet off the ground works well) .. climb up the rope, hold your position at the top for five seconds, climb down the rope .. rest for 30 seconds .. repeat the exercise five times

Hold an object in each hand that weighs about five pounds .. fully extend your arms in front of you and hold the objects for 30 seconds .. lower the objects and rest for ten seconds .. repeat the exercise ten times

Hold an object in each hand that weighs about ten pounds .. raise the objects to your chest, then lower to your side .. repeat ten times, then rest for 20 seconds .. repeat the exercise ten times

Hold an object in each hand that weighs about ten pounds .. leave your arms extended by your legs while you raise the objects using only your wrists .. repeat ten times, then rest for 20 seconds .. repeat the exercise ten times

Run in place for five minutes lifting your feet about 18-inches off the ground .. rest for one minute .. repeat the drill five times

Run in place for five minutes lifting your feet about three feet off the ground .. rest for one minute .. repeat the drill five times

Run forward as fast you can for one minute .. rest for one minute .. run backward as fast as you can for one minute .. rest for one minute .. repeat the drill five times

Stand straight with your feet shoulder-width apart, toes pointing straight .. place hands on hips .. bend knees slightly and jump laterally to the right (to the side) .. land with your knees bent slightly .. jump laterally to the left .. repeat lateral jump ten times left and right .. relax for one minute .. repeat exercise five times

Place about ten pounds of weight into a small bag that has a handle (you can also use a kettle bell or any weight with a handle) .. hold bag with your right hand near your face while extending your left arm straight forward with palm down .. squat down and back up ten times .. switch bag to left hand, hold right arm straight forward with palm down and squat down and back up ten times .. rest for one minute .. repeat exercise five times

Place a heavy bag on the ground (20 pounds at first .. work your way up to 50 pounds) .. stand 20 feet away from the bag .. run as fast as you can toward the bag, grab it, and run with the bag back to where you were standing .. drop the bag (your first movement in running toward the bag should be explosive) .. walk 30 feet away from the bag .. rest for 30 seconds .. run as fast as you can toward the bag, grab it, and run with the bag back to where you were standing .. drop the bag .. walk 40 feet away from the bag .. rest for 30 seconds .. run as fast as you can toward the bag, grab it, and run with the bag back to where you were standing .. drop the bag .. walk 50 feet away from the bag .. rest for 30 seconds .. run as fast as you can toward the bag, grab it, and run with the bag

back to where you were standing .. drop the bag .. walk 60 feet away from the bag .. rest for 30 seconds .. run as fast as you can toward the bag, grab it, and run with the bag back to where you were standing .. drop the bag .. walk 70 feet away from the bag .. rest for 30 seconds .. run as fast as you can toward the bag, grab it, and run with the bag back to where you were standing .. drop the bag .. walk 80 feet away from the bag .. rest for 30 seconds .. run as fast as you can toward the bag, grab it, and run with the bag back to where you were standing .. drop the bag .. walk 90 feet away from the bag .. rest for 30 seconds .. run as fast as you can toward the bag, grab it, and run with the bag back to where you were standing .. drop the bag .. walk 100 feet away from the bag .. rest for 30 seconds .. run as fast as you can toward the bag, grab it, and run with the bag back to where you were standing .. drop the bag .. repeat the exercise if you want, but it's not necessary .. it's a tough workout, especially as you use heavier bags

Pick up a 10-pound bag (or suitcase) and place it above your head .. walk across the floor in a squatting position, turn around and walk back in a squatting position .. you can increase the weight of the bag and the distance to build more strength

Fill a bag or suitcase with 50 pounds of weight .. pick up the bag or suitcase with your right hand and walk as quickly as you can for 50-100 feet .. put the bag or suitcase down and grab the handle with your left hand .. turn around and walk back to where you started .. repeat the exercise ten times .. you can build strength by adding weight and distance

Push a heavy object forward in the dirt at least 30 feet .. pull the heavy object backward in the dirt at least 30 feet .. repeat the exercise five times .. you can build strength by adding weight and distance

If you have access to a bicycle, ride it as often as you can .. ride uphill as well as downhill to build leg strength, core strength, and endurance.

If you have access to a pool, lake, or the ocean, swim in an old Judo *gi* (top and trousers) while wearing an old pair of tennis shoes .. swim as far as you can safely (especially if you're alone). It builds strength and endurance.

Isometric exercises are also helpful in building strength. The key to building strength is body resistance in a static position. Here are a few examples:

1. Stand with your back to a wall .. bend your knees and slowly slide down the wall half way .. push from the bottom of your feet, through your legs and hips, to your back .. hold the push for 30 seconds .. rest for 10 seconds .. push again and hold the push for 30 seconds .. repeat the wall-sit exercise for five minutes
2. Stand with your right side to a wall .. place your right hand on the wall and try to push your body away from the wall as your body resists the push .. hold the push for 30 seconds .. rest for 10 seconds .. switch sides and do the same exercise with your left hand .. repeat right/left wall-push exercise for five minutes

3. Sit in a chair and move it forward until you are sitting under a table or desk that won't move .. place your palms on the bottom of the table or desk and lift upward as hard as you can and hold the lift for 30 seconds .. rest for 10 seconds .. lift again and hold the lift for 30 seconds .. repeat the exercise for five minutes

The plank, bridge, low-squat hold, pull-up hold, flexed-arm hang, and static lunge are other examples. Lots more isometric exercises to try, so check them out in an exercise book or on the Internet.

We move now from solo strength training to training with a partner and fellow students in a class.

Partner Strength Training

Grab your partner's *uwagi* (uniform top) in *randori* style .. your partner grabs your *uwagi* in the same way .. each of you pulls and pushes as hard as you can, but without throwing .. the purpose of this drill is to strengthen your body by practicing the art of *kuzushi* (unbalancing, off-balancing opponent) .. continue for five minutes .. rest for one minute .. repeat drill five times .. *kuzushi* has eight primary directions for off-balancing, so try to move your partner in all directions as you strengthen your body

Grab your partner's *uwagi* (uniform top) in *randori* style .. your partner grabs your *uwagi* in the same way .. each of you pulls and pushes as hard as you can .. when you think your partner is off-balance (*kuzushi*), enter () and try to execute () the throw without finishing the throw .. allow your partner to stay on his or her feet .. the purpose of this drill is to strengthen

your body .. continue for five minutes .. rest for one minute ..
repeat drill five times

Grab your partner's *uwagi* (uniform top) in *randori* style .. your partner grabs your *uwagi* in the same way .. each of you pulls and pushes as hard as you can .. when you think your partner is off-balance (*kuzushi*), enter (*tsukuri*) and try to execute (*kake*) the throw but without finishing the throw .. allow your partner to stay on his or her feet .. the purpose of this drill is to strengthen your body .. continue for five minutes .. rest for one minute .. repeat drill five times

Grab your partner's *uwagi* (uniform top) in *randori* style .. your partner grabs your *uwagi* in the same way .. each of you pulls and pushes as hard as you can .. when you think your partner is off-balance (*kuzushi*), enter (*tsukuri*) and try to execute (*kake*) the throw but without finishing the throw .. allow your partner to stay on his or her feet .. the purpose of this drill is to strengthen your body .. continue for five minutes, then throw your opponent .. rest for one minute .. repeat drill five times .. you and your partner can alternate throwing at the end of each five-minute drill period

Run as fast as you can with your partner to the end of the mat .. turn around and run back .. continue running back and forth for five minutes .. rest for one minute .. repeat drill five times

Run as fast as you can with your partner to the end of the mat .. turn around and forward rollup back .. continue running and forward rolling for five minutes .. rest for one minute .. repeat drill five times

Do forward rolls as fast as you can with your partner to the end of the mat .. turn around and forward rollup back .. continue doing forward rollups for five minutes .. rest for one minute .. repeat drill five times

Grab your partner's *uwagi* (uniform top) in *randori* style .. your partner grabs your *uwagi* in the same way .. throw your partner and try to hold them on the ground (*gatame*) for at least two minutes .. rest for one minute .. return to *randori* position and let your partner throw you and hold you on the ground for at least two minutes .. use as much strength as possible to get away from your partner's hold .. repeat the drill five times (each partner throws five times)

Carry your partner on your back across the mat and back .. rest for one minute .. repeat the exercise five times .. allow your partner to carry you on his or her back across the mat and back .. rest for one minute .. your partner repeats the exercise five times

Use *Ippon Seoinage* (one arm shoulder throw) to lift your partner onto your back .. carry them across the mat and back .. rest for one minute .. repeat the exercise five times .. allow your partner to use *Ippon Seoinage* to carry you on his or her back across the mat and back .. rest for one minute .. your partner repeats the exercise five times

Use *O-Goshi* (major hip throw) to lift your partner onto your hip .. carry your partner across the mat and back .. rest for one minute .. repeat the exercise five times .. allow your partner to do the same exercise with you .. repeat five times

Grab your partner's belt with both hands near their sides .. try to lift your partner and move them several feet forward, then several feet backward, then several feet to each side .. rest for two minutes .. repeat exercise five times .. your partner

then does the same exercise by grabbing your belt and lifting you

Facing your partner .. your partner removes his or her belt or uses an extra belt to place around their back .. grab the ends of the belt facing you and pull as hard as you can .. your partner resists your pull for two minutes .. rest for one minute .. repeat the drill five times .. then it's your partner's turn to try to pull you with a belt around your back

One student lies on their back, while the other sits on their partner's stomach and pins their arms to the floor/mat .. the student on the bottom attempts to get out of the hold while the student on top attempts them from escaping .. after one minute, students switch positions .. the student on the bottom attempts to get out of the hold while the student on top attempts them from escaping .. after one minute, students switch positions .. repeat exercise so each student is on the bottom five times

Class Strength Training

Circle strength training involves student groups of at least three people, preferably four, five or six .. one student stands in the middle as the other students surround him or her .. students in the circle (one at a time) approach student in the center and grab uwagi, attempting to push and pull them around the inside of the circle without throwing them .. student in the middle grabs uwagi of approaching student and resists being pushed and pulled without throwing them .. each encounter lasts two minutes .. as soon as two minutes is up, the next student in the circle grabs student in the middle and attempts to pull/push .. student in the middle resists strongly .. this process continues until all of the students on the outside of the circle have attempted to push/pull student in the middle .. student in the middle joins the other students in the circle and another student from the circle steps into the middle .. the process of push/pull continues until all of the students have the opportunity to resist push/pull .. depending on the size of each group, this may take up a good portion of the

class time .. however, it is a lot of fun and helps students develop strength in most muscle groups

Another way of doing this is to have one student stand alone in the middle of the mat/floor .. all other students line up several feet away .. one student at a time approaches student in middle and tries to push and pull them around, without throwing .. student in middle resists for one minute .. next student approaches student in the middle and tries to push and pull them around, without throwing .. student in middle resists for one minute .. this continues until all of the students have finished trying to push/pull student in the middle .. student in the middle then joins the outside group and the next student in line goes to the middle .. repeat the exercise until all students have the opportunity to be in the middle .. depending on the number of students in the class, this may take up a good portion of the class time .. however, it is a lot of fun and helps students develop strength in most muscle groups [if you have a large space and enough mats, you can split the class into two groups to make the exercise go faster .. you can also split the class into size or age groups if you want]

[Once students are used to these kinds of strengthening drills, you can let them complete a throw at the end of each encounter]

Break the class into teams for a tag-team event .. each team lines up at the end of the mat .. the first student in each group gets on their hands and knees .. they race across the mat and return to tag their waiting teammate .. the teammate then gets on their hands and knees and races across the mat .. the event continues until the last student finishes

Break the class into teams for a tag-team event .. each team lines up at the end of the mat .. the first student in each group lies face down on the mat with their arms and legs outstretched .. they race across the mat using their hands to pull them and their feet to push them .. they return to tag their waiting teammate .. the teammate lies face down and uses their hands and feet to race across the mat and return to tag their waiting teammate .. the event continues until the last student finishes

Break the class into two or three groups (depending on size of dojo) for a tag-team event .. students face each other .. one student wraps a long belt around their waist (from the back to front) and the other student grabs the ends of the belt with each hand and pulls their partner backward while the belted partner resists .. when they reach the end of the mat, the team members switch belts so the other student pulls their teammate back to where they started .. students tag teammates and the next two do the same thing .. the event continues until the last student finishes

Break class into multiple groups for a tag-team event .. two students in same group face each other .. they grab each others' *uwagi* at shoulders .. one student pushes the other student as fast forward as they can while partner gives some resistance while running backward .. when partners reach the end of the mat, they change who pushes/resists and do the same thing in the other direction .. when they reach the starting place, they tag out with the next two students who do the same thing .. the event continues until the last student finishes

Place several old/extra belts on the mat to make a big circle .. two students step inside the circle of belts and try to push/pull each other out of the circle, but without stepping out of the circle themselves .. the winner stays inside the circle and faces the next student .. they try to push/pull each other out of the circle, but without stepping out of the circle themselves the winner stays inside the circle and faces the next student .. once a person wins twice in a row, they must step out and let two new people inside the circle .. the strength game continues until all the students have had a chance to participate

Two students get into the middle of the circle of belts (see above) .. they both get into a right front stance with their right feet almost touching .. they grab each other's right hands with a vertical grip (thumbs up) .. when the instructor says *hajime* they use their right hand to pull each other off balance (that happens when partner moves left foot to catch balance) .. partners continue until one of them wins two out of three .. next two students step into the middle of the circle of belts and do the same thing .. when all of the students have had a chance to participate, switch students to left forward

stance holding left hand in vertical position .. partners continue until one of them wins two out of three (off-balance happens when partner moves right foot to catch balance) .. next two students step into the middle of the circle of belts and do the same thing .. instructor can change up the partners so students experience using strength and balance against partners of different sizes .. this drill teaches the importance of when to use your strength and when to use your partner's strength against them

Resources

[GMA Black Belt Study Guide \(pages 9 – 10\)](#)

[Judo Strength Training](#)

[What Your Judo Strength and Conditioning Training Should Look Like](#)

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