



BREAKFALLS INSTRUCTION GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

This document is an adaptation of the original document entitled "Les Chutes," written by Francis Drouin in 2000.

Humans have a natural fear of falls. They have an almost conditioned reflex to protect themselves by placing their hands in front of or behind them to cushion the contact with the ground. This natural reaction can cause serious injuries to various joints along the arms, fingers, and shoulders.

Breakfalls summarize all the educational value of judo. The ability to fall safely is therefore an important element of injury prevention. When falling, the judoka releases a burst of energy proportional to the kinetic energy developed during the action of the throw. It becomes important to teach the art of controlling the fall to avoid accidents.

The falls must be practised every session for the movement to become completely natural and automatic. Special attention should be paid to backward falls, which are crucial for the development of muscle groups that allow for better head support. It is important that the falls are well- controlled by the students. Special attention should be paid to the head, which should never contact the ground, to the hand strike, which should be done with the palm, and to the legs, which should never be crossed.

Quality falls often make better judokas, as they promote a more flexible and offensive oriented judo. A person who does not master falls tends to adopt a defensive and unconstructive attitude in learning judo.

Neglecting the importance of falls is dangerous. Judokas must have a minimum command of falls before being introduced to throws and sparring. Traditional instructors are very strict about falls and place great importance on them.

IMPORTANCE OF BREAKFALLS

Facilitates the learning of judo

A well-executed fall makes judokas more confident and better able to learn new techniques safely. Judokas will develop self-confidence; will no longer fear being countered and will be able to practise judo that is enjoyable for themselves and their partners.

Objectives of breakfalls

The purpose of the fall is to reduce the forces that can cause injury. A violent, uncontrolled fall can cause serious injury. To reduce this risk, the execution of the fall must allow for deceleration of the body and distribution of the shock wave.

- It is necessary to eliminate the brutal shock of the landing. The contact must therefore be made with a body rounded as much as possible at the level of the scapula for the most part, protecting the head and any bony protrusions. The position of the various segments of the body at the finish is therefore fundamental.
- It is also necessary to treat the shock wave which, according to the principle of action reaction, will be sent back by the tatami at the time of the contact and which, when absorbed by the body, can cause various injuries.

Components of an effective fall:

Muscle Tone	A strong body allows for good control of the movement of the limbs on impact with the ground. The head can stay in place without hitting the ground and the legs and arms can participate effectively in the distribution of the shock and shock waves.
Striking the Ground	<p>A vigorous arm and hand strike, or arms and hands, helps to distribute the shock wave and thus reduce its impact on the bone structure. The angle of the arms should be natural, which represents an angle between 35° and 55° with maximum effectiveness at 45° to the body.</p> <p>Strike with the palm of the hand, fingers together the extension of the arm. The arm has to strike and not decelerate the velocity of the falling body. This is a way to send the shock wave back.</p> <p>Ideally, the main joints should act as shock absorbers by participating in this striking movement. It is therefore essential to keep them completely relaxed so that they can play this role.</p>
Position of the Body	The body should be in a position where only the fleshy parts are present and there are no bony protrusions. Providing a large body surface area on the ground helps to distribute the shock and vibration. This means that the upper and lower body should hit the ground simultaneously.

Good breakfall technique reduces some risk factors:

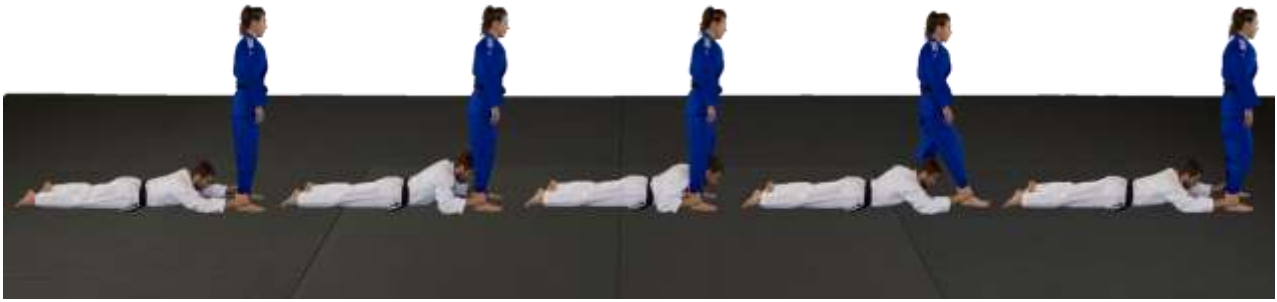
Shock to the head	Head impacts are always an important risk in judo. This risk must be controlled because its consequences are serious. Adequate strength training and fall control can contribute significantly to the reduction of head impacts.
Whiplash	<p>If a person performing a judo breakfall is subjected to a sudden and forceful motion, such as a powerful throw, their head and neck may experience a whiplash-like movement. The rapid acceleration and deceleration of the head can cause the brain to move within the skull, leading to a concussion.</p> <p>During a whiplash motion, the head is initially thrown backward due to the force applied, and then it quickly snaps forward. This rapid movement can result in the brain colliding against the inside of the skull, causing a concussion.</p>
Dislocation of the Wrist, Elbow, or shoulder	Poor fall technique increases the possibility of injury to the joints that make up the arm. Properly controlled falls keep these segments aligned and reduce the risk of such dislocations.

PREPARATORY EXERCISES

Here are some muscle-strengthening exercises that will help in the execution and learning of breakfalls:

Scapular belt

- Pull-ups
- Pull-up with a partner (grabbing ankles, towing...)
- Pull-up on the ground on the stomach



Abdominals and back

- Sit-ups
- Back extension
- Half sit-up ("*crunch*")

Other

- Rolls
- Games (touching the head, passing behind...)

TRAINING

All students should practise falls, even the most advanced. Practice should follow the warm-up and be done under the supervision of a competent and qualified instructor/coach.

Few training methods simulate a real fall as happens in judo. Nevertheless, an adequate progression will help to increase the comfort of the participants when facing a fall and will help to develop a natural and automatic response and thus make it safer.

Demonstration

When possible, demonstrate the fall using an appropriate throw and at normal speed. Then, perform the fall without a partner and initiate the progression.

Important Points for the Execution of a Good Breakfall

- Strike the tatami, not only with the hand, but with the whole length of the arm, in unity. Strike vigorously.
- The ideal angle of the arm with the body is 45°, but it can vary between 35° and 55°. With a smaller angle, you risk rolling over the arm and injuring it, a larger angle will cause your entire back to be crushed.
- The synchronization between the arrival on the ground, the action of the hand and the stretched position of the legs must be perfect. The hand land on the tatami the moment the shoulder hits the ground, and it is already bouncing when the rest of the body follows.

- The body should be firm and stiff only at the fraction of a second of the impact of the hand on the tatami.
- Keep your head up with your chin towards your chest to avoid any accidents.
- Don't cross your legs but swing them straight and wide (to avoid ankle or heel strike). Stay in this position on the ground before getting up during the training.

USHIRO-UKEMI OR BACKWARD BREAKFALL

General instructions

- Keep your chin close to your chest.
- Look at the belt to keep your head up.
- Place the buttocks near the heels.
- Roll with your knees above your stomach to maintain the rounded shape of your back.
- Avoid the head touching the ground.
- Maintain adequate muscle contraction.

Progression and learning stages

1) Lying down

- Become familiar with the landing position.
- Strike with both hands, palms facing the ground, back to the ground.
- Without moving the rest of the body, spread the arms and strike with force simultaneously with the hands flat on either side of the body, the arms making an angle between 35° and 55° with the trunk (with a maximum effectiveness at 45°).
- The hands should immediately bounce like balls, in opposite directions, to the crossed position on the chest.

2) Sitting



- Roll, cradled, backwards with arms crossed over the chest.
- Contact is made at the level of the hips.
- Then stretch your legs forward and upward; strike the mat with both hands at the angles defined earlier as you roll onto your shoulders.

3) Crouched

- Roll backwards and strike the ground with both hands (same as sitting).

4) Standing



Crouch then roll backwards and strike with both hands (same as crouched position).

5) On the move

- Move backwards, crouch and roll into a back fall.
- Move forwards, turn around and roll into a back fall.

6) With instruments

- Ball: sitting on the ball, roll backwards and strike the ground with both hands.
- Stick: two partners hold the stick at knee height behind a third partner who steps back and rolls backwards.

7) With partner(s)

- Sitting sideways on the back of a partner lying on their stomach, roll backwards to perform a back fall.
- Sitting on the back of a partner lying on their stomach. The partner log rolls them to make the other student slide backwards so that they make a fall.
- Sitting on the back of a partner who is on all fours, let yourself slide backwards until you must make a fall.
- Throws
 - O-soto-gari form for the more advanced
 - O-uchi-gari form for beginners

8) Games

- Two participants crouched, facing each other, pushing each other with their hands, held at shoulder height, to make their partner roll backwards, allowing them to fall.
- Two partners crouched and back-to-back, one partner moves sideways to create a gap that will let the other fall backwards.

YOKO-UKEMI OR SIDEWAYS BREAKFALL

General instructions

- Keep your chin close to your chest.
- Look in front of you to keep your head up.
- Create an imbalance by swinging one leg to the opposite side of where you will fall.
- Place the buttocks near the heel of the supporting leg.
- Roll with your knees above your stomach to maintain the rounded shape of your back.
- Do not allow the head to touch the ground.
- Maintain adequate muscle contraction.
- Keep your legs straight and upright when you fall.
- Fold the legs on the mat without crossing them as soon as you fall.
- Stay in this position for a while before getting up.

Progression and learning stages

1) Lying down



- Become familiar with the landing position.
- One-handed strike from the side on the ground alternating right/left.
- Lie on your back, feet apart and legs slightly bent.
- Straighten your head.
- Turn the body to one side and the other, to pass over the shoulder blade and the flank, and strike alternately with the corresponding arm.
- To strike to the right, raise the right arm to the left shoulder ("gripped" position) and then bring it down in a direct line before letting it return in the same direction, as if moved by a spring.
- The opposite hand remains inert and preferably around the belt.

2) Sitting



- One-handed strike from the side on the ground, alternating right/left.
- Sitting with legs stretched and spread and chest upright.
- Turn the legs to one side, to align them with the torso and pass over the shoulder blade and flank.
- Strike the corresponding arm.
- To strike to the right, raise the right arm to the left shoulder in a bent position and then bring it down in a direct line before letting it return to the gripped position, as if moved by a spring.
- The opposite hand remains inert and preferably around the belt. Do this exercise on one side and then on the other.

3) Crouched

- One-handed strike from the side on the ground alternating right/left.
- Cossack Squat, roll back and strike the ground with one hand.
- Sitting on your heels, drop to one side while striking the corresponding arm.
- Make sure you fall on your side and not on your back.
- Sitting on your heels, create an imbalance by swinging one leg on the opposite side to the one where you will fall.

4) Standing



- Cossack squat and roll backwards to strike with one hand.
- From the standing position, swing one leg forward, "gripping" the corresponding hand, then crouch slightly on the other front and roll as before.

5) In forward and lateral movement

- Falling directly from a standing position by throwing oneself to the side, during a sidestep.
- The momentum should be increased by throwing your legs up and away from your body as you fall.

6) With instruments

- Ball: Sitting on the ball, let yourself roll to one side or the other in order to make a fall on the right or left side.

7) With partner(s)

- A partner pulls our sleeve, from the opposite side, when we are on all fours or lying on our stomachs.
- While grabbing the belt of a partner, slide opposite foot and strike with opposite hand for a side fall.
- Throws
 - O-soto-otoshi blocking
 - Okuri-ashi-harai
 - De-ashi-barai

ZEMPO-KAITEN-UKEMI OR FORWARD ROLL

General instructions

- Keep your chin close to your chest.
- Look back through the space between the body and the arms.
- Keep the back leg extended when landing.
- The surface of contact with the ground should be a strip from the shoulder on one side to the buttocks on the other side.
- A perfect arc should be formed as much as possible to reduce jarring one's bone.
- Maintain adequate muscle contraction.
- Work static first. This is a shoulder roll, forward and very slightly angled.
- Move the left leg forward and bend the body forward. Place the right hand, fingers slightly turned inward, then the left hand forward and in the middle of the line of the right foot and the right hand.
- The fingers of the left hand are directed towards the right rear foot and the left elbow, slightly bent, points forward.
- Then stretch your legs and throw yourself forward, accentuating the imbalance by raising your right leg.
- Roll on your left arm, which you should keep well arched, then your left shoulder, then your back, across.
- You come to rest on your right side, after a full turn, while you strike the tatami with your right hand.
- Make sure from the start that you pull your head in, chin in and look towards your right shoulder, which should be protected by your left shoulder.
- On landing, the legs are parallel and straight, heels off the mat.
- It is also beneficial for beginners to start this roll from a kneeling position (by extending the right leg for a left roll).
- Reverse for a right-hand roll with left-hand strike.
- Gradually, start from a higher and higher position, then while walking, and finally while taking more and more momentum.
- The body must describe a wheel and unroll smoothly when it touches the ground.
- You will end up falling without even putting your right hand down and with minimal support from your left hand.
- You can also practise overcoming an obstacle, propelling yourself higher and higher or further and further (over one or more crouching, kneeling, or semi-standing partners).

Progression and learning stages

1) Lying down



- Become familiar with the landing position.
- One-handed strike to the side of the floor and alternate right/left.
- Lie down on your back, feet apart and legs slightly bent.
- Straighten the head. Turn the body to one side and the other, to pass over the shoulder blade and the flank, and strike alternately with the corresponding arm.
- To strike to the right, raise the right arm to the left shoulder (gripped position) and then bring it down in a direct line before letting it return in the same direction, as if moved by a spring.
- The opposite hand remains inert and preferably around the belt.

2) Kneeling



- Roll on your right arm, bringing it toward your left knee, which will lift up to roll on your right shoulder.
- Alternate right/left.

3) Standing



- **RIGHT FALL:** Right foot forward, forward roll along the right arm, strike the ground with the free hand (left)
- **LEFT FALL:** Left foot forward, forward roll along the left arm, strike the ground with the free hand (right)

4) On the move

- Fall directly from the standing position by rolling over the shoulder on the same side as the leg being advanced, during a forward walk. Stay on the ground at first.
- The momentum must be increasingly important and get up with legs stretched in the continuation of the movement of fall.

5) With instruments

- **Ball:** Place a ball under the arm on the side of the fall, the arm you would normally roll on.



- **Stick:** One partner holds the stick firmly at one end. The other partner grabs the stick with the close hand palm up and the far hand palm down. The first partner brings the stick down to the ground so that the other partner can do a rolling breakfall.

6) With partner(s)

- Our partner is on all fours, we approach and slide our arm along their belt which they will seize in Makikomi to facilitate the roll fall.
- With a partner on all fours, repeat the same exercise as above, but without the help of the partner seizing the arm and Makikomi. Rolling over one or more partners on all fours

- Throws
 - One partner on their knees performs a Seoi-nage while controlling the head of the other.
 - Partner on the back performs a form of Tomoe-nage to allow the other to roll over them on one shoulder.

MAE-UKEMI OR FORWARD BREAKFALL

General instructions

- Keep the back leg extended when landing.
- Maintain adequate muscle contraction.
- Keep fingers turned inward.
- Keep your arms bent to act as a shock absorber.

Progression and learning stages

- Kneeling, let yourself fall forward, hands and forearms cushioning the fall like a spring.



- Stand up and drop forward as in the previous exercise.



- Same exercise as the previous one, but we add an upward impulse.

GAMES

Introduction

The games are designed by educators with the objective of assimilating the principles of the techniques taught. Participants are presented with a sequence of falls that they must reproduce according to specific rules. At the end of the training, the learners should be able to perform a sequence of falls with flexibility and without apprehension. For example, in a standing position, they will perform a roll breakfall, follow it up with a back breakfall after getting up, and complete it with a side breakfall from which they will get up by performing a rolling breakfall.

Game Bank

The round

In a circle, participants grab each other end of sleeves and try to knock each other down. They must use sweeps, hooks, and reaps while avoiding kicks.

Fall Tag

We designate one, two or even three chasers who must touch all other participants moving within a limited territory. The players who are touched must adopt a distinctive position (hands above their head) and remain motionless until a playing partner comes to free them.

A player can be released if one of their partners comes to throw them. A player is safe if they keep their Kumi-kata (for a maximum of 15 seconds). As soon as the throw is executed, or the 15 seconds are up, both players become vulnerable and must run away from the chasers. The game ends when all pursued players have been touched or after a predetermined period.

Variation: For beginners, the same rules can be followed, but the liberator positions himself on the knees and elbows behind the participant to be released and the latter must perform a back breakfall.

Touching the head

One player is on their back or sitting down. One player, standing in front of the first player's feet, tries to touch the first player's head. The defending player prevents this by controlling them with their feet.

Go behind

A player is sitting down, their partner tries to pass behind them while they move to prevent it.

The trailer

A third belt is attached to the belts of two opponents. They must attempt to tow their opponent to their line placed two (2) metres from their starting point.

Variations: The movements can be done in different ways to solicit different muscle groups:

- On the back
- Crawl on your stomach
- Walking on all fours

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