

Headline: How to Train for BJJ Success at Any Age

Sub: The median age for BJJ practitioners is 30 and even white-haired Anthony Bourdain practices. There's no excuse!

Headline: How to Train for BJJ Health and Longevity

Sub: An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Read inside to learn how older athletes approach BJJ and succeed!

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Anthony Bourdain began his BJJ training at 58 and was recently awarded his blue belt.

“At my age, to learn an entirely new skill is incredibly satisfying,” he [says](#). Bourdain describes his experience as a humbling, yet deeply rewarding in both a physical and mental sense. All this from a man who's never spent any time in the gym.

As BJJ continues to grow worldwide, many would-be practitioners ask, *How old is too old for training?*

Simply put, you're never too old for BJJ. If you're under four years old, you are too young. But BJJ doesn't discriminate by age.

Why?

Because despite the brawny stereotype around martial arts, jiu-jitsu doesn't hinge upon brute force, absolute speed, or sharp movements. Instead, it's about steady growth over time – and engineering a quality practice for yourself.

“They call it physical chess because it's something you think about all day. There's a lot of engineering involved,” says Bourdain. Indeed, becoming a BJJ practitioner is more about proper technique and planning over time than explosive physicality.

Today we look at how to train for BJJ success at any age. Our focus will be how you can engineer a safe, sustainable, and enjoyable jiu-jitsu practice regardless of age.

Read below for three ways that ensure safety and longevity in BJJ training. All ages welcome.

Stretch Before and After



[\(Source\)](#)

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

Stretching before and after training is essential to a sustainable BJJ practice. From lubricating joints and tendons to loosening back muscles, stretching prepares the body for activity.

It's how smart athletes reduce the risk of injury and ensure optimal performance on the mat.

How should you stretch before BJJ training?

Only use dynamic stretches before you roll. Dynamic stretching is active movement that uses motion to prepare your body. For example, perform few twisting lunges, shrimps, and breakfalls before class to get the blood moving. This will activate the elasticity of tendons and muscle fibers, readying them for use.

Never perform static stretches before training.

Why?

Because static stretches – those long hold stretches like touching your toes – elongate muscle tissue and loosen tendons. [Research](#) shows that static stretches decrease muscle strength and endurance prior to activity, and can also lead to tendon injuries.

The exception here is if you have acute or chronic tightness in a specific muscle set. A held stretch between 15-60 seconds will help increase your range of motion.

Warm up with dynamic stretches, or range of motion (ROM) movements. Be sure to save the static stretches for a warm-down. These long holds will help your muscles recover strength and repair more quickly. [Studies](#) also show that a regular post-training stretching routine will help increase the power potential in your muscles.

A great way to develop both strength and flexibility in the body is a yoga practice. Yoga is a fantastic way to improve mobility, balance and generally enhance total body awareness. Whether you opt for a vinyasa flow or a hot Bikram class, yoga marries strength and flexibility.

Stretching the right way promotes faster recovery and minimizes injuries.

Tap Sooner, Not Later



Injuries happen in Brazilian jiu-jitsu. Sometimes injuries happen in competition, other times you might roll an ankle during warmup. Most injuries on the mats are unforeseen.

However, only you control when you tap or don't tap. This means that every injury around tapping is avoidable.

First, remember that tapping is not a sign of defeat, but instead signals another chance to train. When first training, a higher belt told me, "If you tap, you train tomorrow. If you don't, you train six months from now."

His point was: If you're caught in a submission, tap. Learn from the experience, and return to compete another day.

Why so much concern about tapping?

Because if you're submitted and refuse to tap, you're going to try and squirm and muscle away. The vice-like conditions of a submission are the perfect condition for injuring yourself. Often, you won't even realize the damage until after the pain arrives.

Younger athletes heal more quickly, but an older athlete is going to require more time. Tap early to promote longevity and avoid needless injuries that will take you from practice.

Train Intelligently



"The best time to have started training jiu-jitsu was 20 years ago. The 2nd best time is now!" – Common jiu-jitsu wisdom

To enjoy a healthy BJJ practice at any age, train smarter instead of harder. As years progress, physical capabilities and recovery times take a downturn. The good news is, your kinesthetic awareness improves.

Rather than try to keep pace with younger athletes, listen to your body. Proceed at your own pace. Act with patience as you approach BJJ, allowing the body time to adapt to the physical demands of jiu-jitsu. This is especially important if you're accustomed to a sedentary lifestyle.

Here are three smart-training strategies for BJJ:

- **Emphasize drilling rather than sparring.** Sparring is fun but risky. Yet drilling is low-impact and guaranteed to bring about huge increases in your necessary skills. Once you're more skilled, use this know-how to be more effective at sparring, but also minimize the risk of injury.
- **Focus on defense.** Protect yourself at all times, even if that means giving up and favoring other positions to protect the spinal column. "The lumbar region, for example, as strong as it may be, will never be armored against the passage of time. Jiu-Jitsu is for your whole lifetime, and by that line of reasoning you can rest assured that the basic techniques like the closed guard or this open guard I enjoy doing, will never abandon us. At 70 we'll still be capable of performing them with plenty of mobility. That can't be said of the tornado guard or the berimbolo," [says](#) Master Carlos Gracie Jr. Go slow to go fast, and emphasize defending any weak points in the body.
- **Choose an appropriate training partner.** Your training partner will have a huge impact on how much wear and tear your body endures. Find someone who's dedicated to health and longevity foremost, rather than mashing faces and chasing medals. Be sure to communicate with your partner about how you feel. The right training partner will allow you to roll safely, even if you're not at 100%. Remember, if rolling with someone feels unwise, all you need to say is, "No."
[Staying on the mats requires the right partner at the right time.](#)

A Final Word

With Anthony Bourdain as our example, we've seen today that age and prior physicality are no limits to a [successful BJJ practice](#). From ages four to one hundred, Brazilian jiu-jitsu is a lifelong practice available to everyone.

To excel in BJJ at any age, take things slow. This means focusing on fundamentals foremost, guarding the body, and taking the necessary steps to preserve a healthy athletic frame. BJJ requires only your time, dedication and patience.