

Quick Start Guide to Complete Jiu Jitsu Competition Readiness

Are You Competing in Grappling Without These Seven Competition-Readiness Secrets?



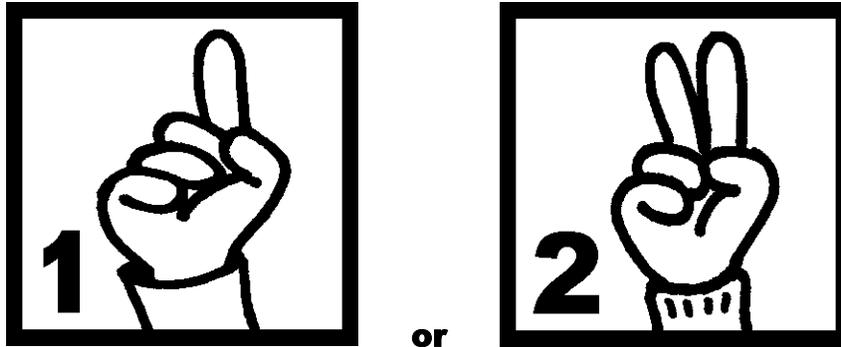
[left: John Connors, BJJ Black Belt, Coach and author of this guide.]

Below, you will find seven secrets to complete jiu jitsu competition readiness. If you implement these secrets, not only will your performance improve, but you'll also have a more enjoyable, anxiety-free experience.

Ignore them at your peril. You'll be more nervous, not perform as well and might not even enjoy your experience. You might even set yourself back a step in your martial arts path if you have a really bad competition experience.

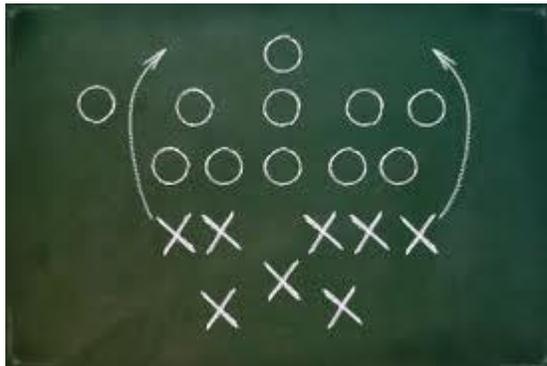
So here they are, understand them and implement them.

The First Secret:



Limit yourself to ONE or TWO techniques from each major position:

- a) one or two techniques from the feet (takedowns)
- b) one or two techniques from your guard
- c) one or two passing techniques
- d) one or two submission techniques;



and use ONE SIMPLE GAME PLAN.

Why limit yourself like this? Several reasons:

Jack of All Trades, Master of None



You do not want to be the proverbial "jack of all techniques and master of none."

You need to **master** the techniques you'll use in competition. It won't help you to "kinda know" a bunch of techniques. You need to hit your techniques effectively and without hesitation. By only using your "bread and butter" moves, you'll avoid making a glaring mistake and giving your opponent an easy opening to counter you.

You might be thinking: "Yeah, but my go-to moves are so basic that they'll never work in competition."

The basics are **always** effective. Also, your training partners are familiar with your game plan and techniques, so they can often make it difficult for you to implement them in training. But at the tournament, your game will be completely new to the competition. You'll be surprised at how effective your most basic techniques are against an opponent who has never competed against you before.

Do not make the mistake of thinking that only tricky or sophisticated techniques work in competition. Especially at the lower levels, the basics tend to win much more often than other fancier stuff.

The second reason you want to limit your competition techniques is:

Make The Most of Your Training Time



You only have a limited time to prepare for your tournament, so you must use your time wisely.

If you intentionally limit your arsenal of techniques, then you can spend more time refining your go-to moves. The more time you put into drilling and perfecting these techniques (instead of learning new ones), the more effective your jiu jitsu game will be.

You can ask your instructor about just these primary techniques, further improving the efficiency of your training time.

And finally, you can take a break from watching a random assortment of jiu jitsu, to focusing in on researching your chosen techniques. Take that random Youtube time and just put it to more grappling and drilling.

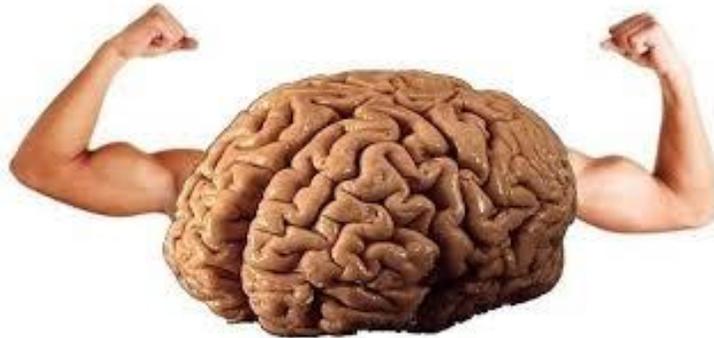
One or two moves per position might not seem like much, but the combinations and potential counter moves add up quickly. There's a lot to learn (and more importantly, master) than you might think.

If you work on improving half the number of techniques, you'll develop mastery of those techniques twice as fast as you would otherwise.

Use your time wisely.

Another reason you want to limit your game plan and techniques is:

You'll Instantly be Mentally Stronger



With a limited selection of techniques, you'll spend much less time and brain power deciding what technique to do in any given moment. ***The decision has already been made!*** BAM ! Just do it!

This will come in very handy if you run into serious fatigue in your matches, because fatigue undercuts your brain's decision-making functions. By "pre-deciding" your techniques, you take that burden off your brain during competition. Now you can focus on just getting after your opponent with your techniques. Many matches are decided by who wins the scrambles. If you don't have to think about it, you'll be that much faster during your match.

Also, your visualization of your matches will now be easier and more effective. Instead of worrying about every single possibility in a match, you can focus on your "perfect match". You can visualize ***exactly*** how you want the match to go.

You might ask: "What if the match doesn't go the way I want it to?"

No problem: because you have a limited game plan, there is a more limited number of ways things could go wrong. Now you can plan and visualize how you will deal with these known setbacks.

You still have a fair amount of work to do, but it is at least manageable and somewhat limited in scope.

Now, this First Secret is great advice, but it won't help you unless ***you act on it.***

So without waiting, you are going to act on it right now. On the next page you will find three homework assignments. Do them now. There is huge power in writing down your plans. You'll get many times more value from this guide if you do the assignments, and do them now.

You might say: "But I'm not sure what my game plan should be."

Don't worry if you're uncertain. You can always change your game plan later, but write something down NOW. Write down the techniques you're most comfortable with and that are most successful for you.

Your Homework

Homework assignment #1:

Write down your core techniques and game plan:

	Technique 1	Technique 2
My Two Techniques From The Feet		
My Two Techniques From My Guard		
My Two Passing Techniques		
My Two Submission Techniques		

My Basic Game Plan is:

Homework assignment #2:

Schedule the training time for your core techniques and game plan

	Technique 1	Technique 2	Training dates and times
My Two Techniques From The Feet			
My Two Techniques From My Guard			
My Two Passing Techniques			
My Two Submission Techniques			

Homework assignment #3:

Visualize your "Perfect Match" using the techniques you selected above. Also, visualize any contingency plans that your game plan provides. For example, my game plan might call for an ankle pick, to guard pass to side control, to paper-cutter choke. My contingency plan might be to pull guard sweep my opponent if I'm unable to execute my takedown.

Make time before the competition (and while waiting at the tournament) to visualize your matches.

The Second Secret:

In almost any endeavor, a GOAL can focus our attention and activities to move us in the right direction. We all want to win and come in first place, right? So our goal should be that and only that, right?

Not necessarily.

Instead, have MULTIPLE GOALS for your tournament experience.



Now, what does it exactly mean to have MULTIPLE GOALS?

Here's ten potential MULTIPLE GOALS for your consideration:

- 1) attempt one of your takedowns
- 2) attempt one of your passes
- 3) attempt one of your sweeps
- 4) attempt one of your submissions
- 5) score one of your takedowns
- 6) score one of your passes
- 7) score one of your sweeps
- 8) score one of your submissions

- 9) win a match
- 10) win your division

Why have multiple goals? Here's a couple of really good reasons.

Your Performance Will Improve



First and foremost, you will improve your performance. Of course, everyone wants to win and come in first, and that is a worthy goal, but we can't completely control the outcome of a tournament. We **can** control our performance.

By focusing ON THE PROCESS, not the outcome, you will improve your focus and lessen unhelpful competition anxiety. Focusing only on winning the tournament can open the door for some destructive and distracting trains of thought:

"What if I don't win? Will my teammates think less of me?"

"What if I don't win a single match? What will people think?"

"What if I get submitted?"

"What if I totally freeze up and choke?"

When you don't focus on the process, your mental approach can become too personal. Self consciousness kills performance.

Another mistake can come when you try to "size up" the competition:

"Wow. That guy looks strong!"

This kind of thinking cannot help your confidence or performance. If you don't believe you can win, it's unlikely that you will win. Your opponent's apparent strength is not really important any way. You want to focus on your performance.

And it can go the other way too:

"Oh, that guy doesn't look too tough."

This line of thinking might give you an initial boost of confidence, but it can backfire on you. What if, when you get into the match, this "not so tough" guy turns out to be pretty tough! This could throw you for a loop and knock you off your game. You might have to work much harder than you planned when you sized up your "weak" opponent.

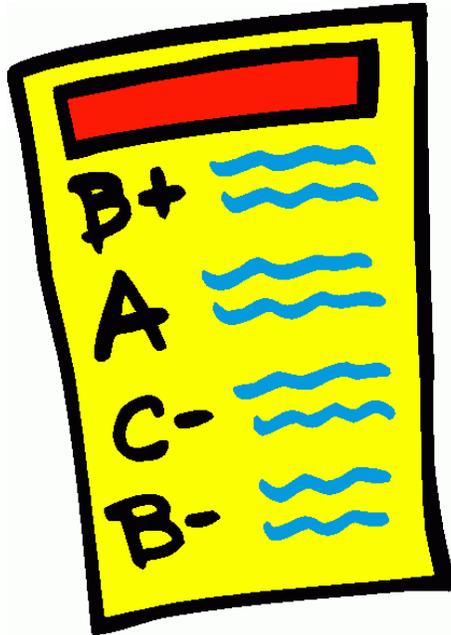
It's much better if you can forget about your competitors, forget about what others think, forget about the consequences of winning and losing, and put your focus where it needs to be: ON YOUR OWN JIU JITSU GAME - your techniques and how you will execute them.

Get lost in the game plan, so to speak. Don't let it matter who your competition is. You can't control who they are, what they look like, where they're from, or what they'll do. It can't help you to focus on those things, but it might hurt you.

So, by having PROCESS GOALS, not just results goals, you can better focus where you need to, on YOUR PERFORMANCE. This ultimately leads to more wins in the long run, any way.

There's another very good reason to have multiple goals:

More Goals = More Chances for Success



With multiple goals, you are simply more likely to achieve at least one of them. Why is this important? You can then consider your tournament experience as at least somewhat successful. You are more likely to learn from your experience and come back to compete again. If winning the tournament is your only goal and you come in second, you might have had a great performance but still not feel good about it.

Also, with multiple goals, if you go out and hit your first takedown, then you've already hit one of your goals! Now you can build on that momentum and feel even more confident.

Of course, as you gain tournament experience, you might want to drop the softer goals of "attempting" techniques. But at the start of your competition career they can serve as useful "training wheels" to get you on the right path.

Homework assignment #4:

Write down all your goals NOW.

Include PROCESS GOALS.

The Third Secret:

Incorporate "Match" sparring into your training. Use a referee; score the bout, have fans cheering. Simulate a real match as much as possible.



Why "Match" sparring?

You have probably done most of your sparring starting on the mats at a somewhat friendly pace. You need to acclimate yourself to a different experience. You'll have a referee scoring the match, coaches and fans yelling during the match, and other matches going on simultaneously. You'll want to simulate as much of these new sensory inputs into your training and preparation as possible.

Even starting on your feet might be new to you. You might feel like your conditioning is pretty good, but conditioning is somewhat activity-specific. You might find that working on your feet tires you much faster than you anticipated. Get your experience in training to prepare yourself as much as possible.



The military and law enforcement use simulation training to improve performance in high-stress situations, for good reason. Now it's your turn.

The Fourth Secret:

Also incorporate "Scramble" sparring into your training.



What's scramble sparring? Well, it has nothing to do with eggs.

Start the sparring round with both athletes lying on their backs head to head, and /or on their backs side by side, head to foot. When the coach says go, the match starts from this awkward scramble position.

So many matches at the beginner levels are decided because one athlete won the scramble - one athlete got to the top position before the other.



Win the scrambles. Do Scramble Sparring.

The Fifth Secret:

Start your match out fast.



Many competitors look to start slowly and get a feel for their competitor. They get grips, move around a bit, try to feel how strong their competitor is. Maybe they go out of bounds and come back in. **Because you know exactly what techniques you want to use on your feet, you don't need to wait. Get right after your opponent and into your game before your opponent is ready.**



If you can hit a takedown right out of the gate and be up 2-0, you dramatically increase your chance of winning.

The Sixth Secret:

Keep your hips low.



Athletes bridge differently in training than they do in competition. You might find yourself on top in side control or half guard and feel pretty comfortable. But in competition you are more likely for your opponent to use his "berserk" energy and hit you with a powerful bridge unlike anything that you have ever felt in training.

What a waste, spending energy to get to a dominant position and then getting reversed just because you let your center of gravity get too high.

The Seventh Secret:

Never concede the pass (or other position).



A common mistake by beginners is to give up or concede the pass when the opponent has 99 % completed the pass. Don't quit now! Your opponent has to settle in and stabilize the position for three seconds. Use this time to recover your guard, even if only partially.

The same goes for any position. **If your opponent mounts you, escape immediately. If they don't stabilize the position for three seconds, they do not get the points. Also, it's usually easier to escape a position immediately, when your opponent hasn't yet settled in and gotten their balance.**

Be stingy with giving up points. It could make all the difference in the match.

Concede nothing.

Additional Tips:

8. Have a Competition Gear Checklist of equipment and clothing, food and drink, and directions to the competition. Bring extras of most equipment.

9. Don't lose vigilance near the edges of the mat. The action stops when the referee says it does. If you let up because you are near the

out of bounds and your opponent keeps going, you might give up an easy takedown because you were being polite. Compete hard until the referee says stop.

10. Do not overly concern yourself with cutting weight. Compete at a weight that you can comfortably make and focus your attention on your performance.

11. Understand the rules of the tournament. Know what techniques are not allowed in your division. You do not want to lose by unnecessary disqualification.

12. Exhale. You don't want to hold your breath when competing. And sometimes we can unconsciously mirror our opponent's breath, so if your opponent is holding their breath, you might be doing the same. A deliberate "cleansing" exhale will get you back on track to breathing appropriately.

13. If you must compete with a mouthpiece, then wear one in training. You want to be used to competing with one.

14. Some coaches advocate watching your opponents to pick up on their game plans. This could be helpful, but make sure this doesn't cause you too much anxiety. After all, you want to focus on your own game plan, remember?

15. Where is your coach? Can you hear their instructions when you're on the mat?

16. Bring something to pass the time. Sometimes tournaments involve a long day of waiting before you compete.

17. If you find yourself down on points, push the pace. If you're in your guard, then actively force your opponent to make mistakes.

18. Take warm up seriously - wear layers if necessary. Get your heart rate over 100 BPM before the match. Consider using a heart monitor.

19. Keep it business as usual on competition day. Don't eat or drink unusual stuff.

20. Hold your position. Remember you need to stabilize your position for three seconds to get your points.

21. Learn to break the closed guard efficiently. Don't exhaust yourself doing so. You still need to pass.

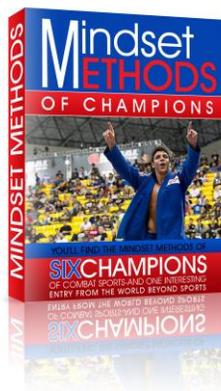
22. Stay positive and keep fighting. Often you're just a tiny effort away from accomplishing your goal, whether breaking the closed guard or completing a pass.

There you have it! Not just seven secrets, but 22 important tips to ensure that you get the most out of your tournament experience.

But there's still one BIG area that you must have nailed down to not only compete at your best, but also to reach your full potential as a grappler and/or martial artist. Of course, I'm talking about [THE MENTAL GAME](#).

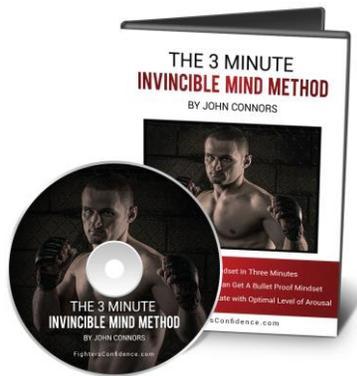
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All the best on the mat and in life!



Coach Connors