

# About the Competitions

**Freestyle wrestling** is an amateur sport practiced worldwide and in the [Olympics](#). In freestyle wrestling, two wrestlers attempt to win the match by displaying control and/or mastery of their opponent. In all competitive matches the wrestlers are divided by weight categories and age groups, as determined by FILA rules.

Although [wrestling](#) is a staple high school and college sport the rules employed in high school and college wrestling differ greatly from Olympic style freestyle wrestling. American high school and college wrestling is more accurately termed "American Folkstyle".

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## The Match

A *match* is typically wrestled on specialized foam mats. The mat is marked with a large circle, which serves as the mat's boundary, and a smaller circle within the outer circle that marks the center of the mat and starting point of the match. Within this smaller circle are two sets of parallel lines that form a rectangle. This rectangle has two white lines for the long sides, and two lines of different colors, typically red and green, for the shorter side. In the beginning of a match the referee will assign each wrestler a color (i.e. red or green). The match will start when both wrestlers have placed one foot on their respective color line, have shaken each other's hand, and the referee has blown his whistle. The match consists of three separate periods that last for a specific round of time. Generally the first round is the longest.

The first round is started with both wrestlers on their feet facing each other in the 'neutral' position. In freestyle wrestling the goal of this round is to score a 'takedown' by throwing your opponent onto the mat. Throws are scored on a scale of 1 to 5 and are generally rated on how high an opponent's feet are when they get flipped. Once on the mat the wrestler who scored the takedown will try to win the match by either scoring additional points, this is done by exposing their opponent's back to the mat (called a near fall), or by pinning both of their opponent's shoulders to the mat (called a fall). The wrestler who was taken down tries to avoid being flipped over or pinned by stalling on bottom. If, after a certain time, no action has taken place then the positions will be reset and play resumes with both wrestlers on their feet.

At the end of the first round, a coin is then flipped to determine who chooses the positioning of the second round. The winner of the toss has the option to defer the decision to the other wrestler (this is most common) or choose to either start in the bottom, top, or neutral position. Generally a wrestler will choose the position that he feels he is the strongest at or that he feels he can score the most points from. In freestyle wrestling this is the neutral position. Once a position has been chosen play resumes.

The third round begins much like the second round where the wrestler who deferred their option or lost the toss decides what position to start from. Play will then proceed much like the other rounds. If at the end of regulation time a fall has not occurred then the wrestler with the highest score will win the bout.

If the score is tied after three rounds, the match will go into overtime. In freestyle wrestling the first wrestler to three points will win the overtime period and the match. If at the end of the overtime period three points have not been scored, the wrestler with the most points will win. If the wrestlers are still tied at the end then it will be up to the referee to decide who wins the match.

# Positions

- Neutral position consists of both wrestlers on their feet facing each other. The first round of the match and the overtime round of the match begins in this position. During the second and third round each wrestler will have the option to start in neutral.
- **Referee's** position consists of one wrestler on their hands and knees and one wrestler on top of him with one hand on their opponents stomach and the other hand on their elbow. During the second and third rounds a wrestler may choose to be either on top, on bottom, or in an optional start.
- **Top** - Wrestlers on top attempt to expose a wrestlers back to the mat by tilting their shoulders. If the shoulders break ninety degrees then the wrestler is awarded a point. If the both shoulders are stuck to the mat then the wrestler on top wins the match by way of a 'fall'.
- **Bottom** - Wrestlers on bottom attempt to keep from having their shoulders exposed to the mat. By doing so they may either score a reversal by switching positions to the top, or force the referee to call passivity and have the match reset in the neutral position. Bottom is rarely chosen as a starting position in freestyle wrestling.
- **Optional** - An optional start consists of the wrestler on top starting behind their opponent with both hands on their back that creates a diamond shape between their thumbs and fingers. The goal is to simply let their opponent up into the neutral position. This is rarely seen in freestyle wrestling.

# How to win

There are three main ways in which to win a wrestling match:

- A **fall** is when a wrestler pins both of the opponents' shoulders to the ground with their backs facing the mat. This results in the end of the match.
- A **technical fall** is when a wrestler is ahead of their opponents by ten or more points. Once ahead by this many the referee asks the wrestler if they would like to stop the match or continue for a fall.
- A **decision** is when neither a fall nor technical fall has occurred by the end of regulation. If this is the case then the wrestler with the most points will win.

# Team play

In international wrestling teams are given points based on the performance of their wrestlers at a specific weight class. For example, if a wrestler at the 52.0 kg weight class finishes in first place then their team will receive ten points. If he were to finish in tenth place then they would only receive one. At the end of the tournament each teams scores will be tallied and the team with the most points will win.

# Gear

- A **singlet** is a one-piece wrestling garment made of spandex that should provide a tight and comfortable fit for the wrestler. It is made from nylon or Lycra and prevents an opponent from using anything on the wrestler as leverage.
- **Headgear** is required in all forms of wrestling in order to protect the wrestlers ears at all times during the match. The headgear consists of two straps and two bubbled ear pieces to protect both of the wrestlers' ears.
- A special pair of **shoes** is worn by a wrestler to increase their mobility and flexibility. Wrestling shoes are light and flimsy in order to provide maximum comfort and movement.
- A **blood clot** is required in freestyle wrestling. This is a towel that is placed inside a wrestlers singlet before each match. It is used in case bleeding occurs.
- **Kneepads** may be worn to protect a wrestlers knees.

# Terminology

Some common wrestling vernacular follows:

- **Shooting** – this is a reference to a physical attack on the legs of your opponent from a standing position. A successful "shot" places the wrestler very close to his opponents legs with his arms in control of one or both of the opponents legs. Variations of the shot include:
  1. **The "double"**, where both of the attacking wrestlers arms grab at both of the opponents legs #The "hi-c" or "high-crotch" where one hand is used to pull the opponent closer while the other hand reaches for the opposite leg of the opponent
  2. A **"single"** where the attacker swings an arm in an attempt to hook the closest leg
  3. An **"ankle-pick"** where the attacking wrestler attempts to hold his opponents ankle in place while at the same time displacing the weight of his opponent as so to make him fall to the ground
- **Turning** – Turning is where a wrestler is on top of and in control of his opponent and attempts to "turn" his opponent over so that his back is at a 45-or-less-degree angle to the mat, scoring points for the wrestler in control. Up to three points at a time may be scored in this manner. Once an opponent has been "turned" for a full three points, the controlling wrestler must change to a different move or break whatever locks he has with his hands in order to turn his opponent again for more points.
- **Escaping** – An escape is any move which releases the bottom wrestler from the control of the top wrestler, scoring the escapee one point. Some common escapes include simply standing up and breaking away from the opponent, sitting on one's rear and scooting and flipping until you are facing your opponent, and slowly turning your body to face your opponent.
- **Switch** – A switch is used to describe the plethora of moves used to change control to the bottom wrestlers favor. Unlike an escape, where the bottom wrestler tries to break the top wrestlers control, a switch is where the bottom wrestler attempts to get on top of his opponent and switch positions with him/her. This is often accomplished by shuffling quickly on one's knees in order to get behind your opponent and then slowly freeing your upper body from your opponents grasp. A switch is worth two points.
- **Tech** – A Tech is a win by 15 or more points, which if obtained at any point during the match immediately ends the match in favor of the wrestler on the advantageous side of the point gap.
- **Major or minor** – a Major or minor victory describes the number of points a wrestler has over his opponent at the end of a match. From one to seven points is a minor victory, and from eight to fourteen points is a major victory.
- **Sprawl** – Sprawling is when one wrestler throws his legs backwards at an angle in other to protect them from attack. He will usually land on his opponents back with his stomach.  
**Tying up** – Tying up is process of two wrestlers interlocking hands in order to try and gain an angle or opening to attack from the neutral position.

## Illegal moves

Within a freestyle wrestling match the following are the illegal moves, positions, and styles. Violations may result in points may be awarded to either wrestler.

- **Illegal headlocks** – A headlock is illegal if the wrestler is not locked around both the arm and the head. A one point reward will usually be awarded to the wrestler receiving the illegal headlock.
- **Potentially dangerous** – If one wrestler or the combined results of both wrestler's moves create a situation where either wrestler is in danger of receiving a serious injury, the referee will blow the whistle and the match will resume from the previous position.
- **Stalling** – Stalling is when one wrestler avoids any wrestling. If in the neutral position, the wrestler trying to stall will usually grapple with his opponent and run out of bounds. If the staller is on top, he will usually break down the other wrestler, but make no attempt to turn the wrestler. If the stalling wrestler is on bottom, he will keep his arms and legs very tight and not allow anything to be done on him without attempting to escape or switch. The staller is usually warned once or twice. On a second or third offence, the other wrestler may be awarded points. Still, some wrestler's strategy consists of gaining a minor lead and then stalling until the end of the match. This is especially popular when the skill difference is very minor and in heavy weight matches.

- **Out of bound** – Not technically an illegal move. Whenever one wrestler moves out of the limits of the circle, the referee will blow the whistle. The match will pause and wrestling will resume when both wrestler's go back to the middle of the circle. Going out of bounds is a strategy for escaping a move that could potentially harm you.

## Weight classes

American high school weight classes are defined by being below a certain weight, with cut offs at 103, 112, 119, 125, 130, 135, 140, 145, 152, 160, 171, 189, 215, and 275. However, these weight classes apply only to high school American Folkstyle wrestling. They do not apply to freestyle.

*Weigh-ins* occur directly before a [dual meet](#) or tournament. Some dual meets use the "honor system" where a wrestler weighs in the morning and his or her weight is recorded by the school's nurse. The wrestler is allowed to gain up to three pounds before the official weigh in.

Starting in January, some divisions will add two pounds to all weight classes, allowing wrestlers to change their weight class. Some tournaments also offer allowances. An allowance is weight added on to each weight class. Allowances are usually one pound, seldom two. Weight divisions vary from competition to competition. In the 2004 Olympic Games there were only three divisions for the women's tournament, which is substantially less than in other competitions.

## Women's wrestling

Freestyle is the only style used for international competition in women's wrestling, possibly because of there being more strength usage in Greco-Roman. Some small U.S. College clubs wrestle freestyle against Canadian universities mostly because of the limited number of wrestling programs in the United States, and none of the U.S. organizations such as the NCAA sponsor women's wrestling, while the Canadian Interuniversity Sports Association does.