

## **Creating an Effective Lesson Plan for a Jiu-Jitsu Class**

### **A Guide for Advanced Students and Black Belt Instructors**

Teaching Jiu-Jitsu is far more than demonstrating techniques. A skilled instructor develops students physically, mentally, and technically while maintaining a safe, structured, and enjoyable learning environment. Effective lesson planning ensures that every class has a clear purpose, progresses logically, accommodates different learning needs, and leaves students feeling challenged, successful, and motivated to return.

This guide outlines the key considerations when planning and delivering a one or two-hour Jiu-Jitsu class.

#### **Begin with the Learning Objectives**

Before selecting techniques, determine exactly what students should be able to do by the end of the class.

Ask yourself:

- What is today's primary technical theme?
- Is the objective technical, tactical, physical, or strategic?
- How does today's lesson build upon previous lessons?
- What will students practise next class that connects with today's material?

Each class should have one major focus. While supporting techniques can be included, too many unrelated topics reduce learning and retention.

Examples include:

- Escapes from a specific hold
- Hip throws
- Transitions
- Defence against wrist grabs
- Basic striking combinations
- Standing self-defence applications

A single well-developed lesson is generally more effective than covering many unrelated techniques.

## **Know Your Students**

The lesson should always be adapted to the students rather than expecting the students to adapt to the lesson.

Consider:

### **Belt Level**

Different grades require different levels of explanation.

- Beginners need repetition and simple instruction.
- Intermediate students benefit from understanding why techniques work.
- Advanced students require refinement, timing, combinations, counters, and tactical decision-making.

Avoid teaching material that is either far too simple or unnecessarily advanced for the class.

### **Learning Styles**

Students learn differently.

Some learn best by:

- Watching demonstrations
- Listening to explanations
- Physically performing movements
- Asking questions
- Experimenting during practice

Use a mixture of demonstration, explanation, guided practice, and partner work to reach as many learners as possible.

### **Learning Restrictions**

Some students require additional support.

Examples include:

- Dyslexia
- ADHD
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Anxiety
- Processing delays

Provide clear instructions, avoid giving too many steps at once, and allow additional practice time where needed.

## **Physical Restrictions**

Always consider:

- Age
- Fitness level
- Previous injuries
- Current injuries
- Limited flexibility
- Mobility restrictions

Offer suitable alternatives where necessary.

An excellent instructor adapts the technique without making the student feel excluded. Remember it is about learning and growth for each student

## **Structuring the Class**

A consistent structure helps students know what to expect and creates an efficient learning environment.

### **Typical One-Hour Class**

| <b>Activity</b>                | <b>Time</b>                            |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Warm-up                        | 10 minutes                             |
| Breakfalls and movement drills | 10 minutes                             |
| Striking practice              | 5–10 minutes (if part of the syllabus) |
| Throws or standing techniques  | 10–15 minutes                          |
| Main lesson focus              | 20 minutes                             |
| Cool-down and review           | 5 minutes                              |

### **Typical Two-Hour Class**

| <b>Activity</b>                          | <b>Time</b>   |
|------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Warm-up                                  | 15 minutes    |
| Breakfalls and movement drills           | 15 minutes    |
| Striking practice                        | 15–20 minutes |
| Throws                                   | 20–25 minutes |
| Main lesson focus                        | 35–40 minutes |
| Controlled randori or application drills | 15–20 minutes |
| Cool-down, stretching and review         | 10 minutes    |

These are guidelines rather than rigid rules. Advanced classes, grading preparation, or self-defence sessions may require different allocations.

## **Effective Warm-Ups**

Warm-ups should prepare students specifically for the skills they will perform later in class.

Rather than generic exercise, include movements such as:

- Rolling and falling
- Technical stand-ups
- Hip mobility drills
- Shoulder mobility
- Footwork
- Core activation

Warm-ups should gradually increase heart rate while reinforcing fundamental movement patterns.

## **Breakfalls**

Ukemi should be practised regularly regardless of student rank.

Include:

- Back breakfalls
- Side breakfalls
- Forward breakfalls
- Rolling breakfalls

Emphasise:

- Protecting the head
- Correct arm position
- Relaxation during impact
- Confidence

Good breakfalls reduce injuries and increase confidence during throwing practice.

## **Teaching Techniques**

Complex techniques should never be taught as one long sequence.

Instead, divide them into manageable sections.

For each section:

1. Demonstrate the movement.
2. Explain only the important points.
3. Check for questions.
4. Observe student practice.
5. Make small corrections.
6. Repeat if necessary.
7. Introduce the next section.

Students absorb information far better when techniques are presented progressively.

Avoid overwhelming students with excessive detail.

Correct only the most important errors first.

### **Coaching Strategy**

A useful teaching cycle is:

Explain → Demonstrate → Practise → Observe → Correct → Repeat

During practice:

- Walk continuously around the class.
- Watch every pair.
- Reinforce correct performance.
- Give brief, specific corrections.
- Avoid stopping the whole class for one student's mistake unless it is a common issue.

Positive reinforcement generally produces better long-term learning than constant criticism.

### **Managing Students Who Are Having Difficulty**

Students struggle for many reasons.

Possible causes include:

- Lack of coordination
- Insufficient strength
- Fear
- Information overload
- Poor partner communication
- Fatigue

Rather than repeating the entire explanation, identify precisely where the student is struggling.

Helpful strategies include:

- Simplify the movement.
- Demonstrate again from another angle.
- Slow the technique down.
- Allow the student to practise only one component.
- Pair them with an experienced partner.
- Offer encouragement without lowering standards.

Sometimes success comes from ***reducing complexity rather than increasing explanation.***

### **Partner Rotation**

Students should practise with a variety of training partners.

Encourage training with:

- Larger partners
- Smaller partners
- Stronger partners
- Less experienced students
- Higher-ranked students
- Similar-sized partners

This develops adaptability and prevents techniques from becoming dependent on one body type or your best friend in the dojo.

Students should also practise on both the left and right sides.

Many practitioners naturally favour one side, but balanced development improves technical competence and prepares students for realistic situations.

### **Safety Management**

Safety is always the instructor's highest priority.

Before class:

- Inspect the training area.
- Check mats for hazards.
- Ensure adequate space.
- Remove jewellery.
- Confirm fingernails and toenails are trimmed.

During training:

- Monitor fatigue.
- Control training intensity.
- Stop unsafe behaviour immediately.
- Ensure controlled throwing.
- Reinforce proper tapping procedures.
- Encourage students to communicate discomfort or injury immediately.

Maintain awareness of every pair on the mat.

A safe class is one where students feel comfortable learning while still being challenged.

## **Managing Behaviour**

Good discipline creates a positive learning environment.

Establish expectations early:

- Respect instructors.
- Respect training partners.
- Listen during demonstrations.
- Train safely.
- Maintain good etiquette.

If behavioural issues occur:

- Address the behaviour calmly.
- Correct privately where appropriate.
- Avoid embarrassing students. Public humiliation is not helpful for anyone.
- Explain why the behaviour is unacceptable.
- Be consistent with all students regardless of rank.

Professionalism and consistency earns long-term respect far more effectively than intimidation.

## **Making Learning Enjoyable (Fun-Jitsu)**

Students learn more effectively when they enjoy training.

Fun does not mean a lack of discipline.

Ways to maintain engagement include:

- Progressive partner drills
- Controlled games
- Positional sparring
- Scenario-based training
- Team challenges
- Timed drills
- Technical problem-solving exercises

Use humour appropriately while maintaining professionalism.

Celebrate improvement rather than perfection.

Students who enjoy training are more likely to remain committed over many years.

## **Concluding the Class**

The final few minutes should consolidate learning.

Include:

- Light stretching
- Controlled breathing
- Recovery exercises
- Questions from students
- Review of key learning points

Summarise:

- What was learned
- Why it is important
- Where it fits into the broader syllabus
- What students should practise before the next class

Ending with a clear review significantly improves long-term retention.

## **Final Thoughts**

Excellent Jiu-Jitsu instruction is built on thoughtful preparation rather than improvisation. A well-planned lesson considers the technical objective, the abilities and needs of the students, the progression of instruction, and the creation of a safe, respectful, and enjoyable learning environment.

The most successful instructors are not necessarily those who know the greatest number of techniques. They are those who communicate clearly, adapt to individual learners, maintain high safety standards, encourage continuous improvement, and inspire students to keep training.

A structured lesson plan allows every class to have purpose, direction, and measurable progress. Over time, this consistency develops not only technically proficient practitioners but also confident, disciplined, and capable martial artists.

### **Canadian Jiu Jitsu Council Directors**



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