

BRITISH
JUDO



Coaches & Referees Briefing

Technical Restrictions for Inexperienced
Judoka - 2026 Revision

28 June 2026

Technical Restrictions for Inexperienced Judoka - 2026 Revision

Webinar for Coaches and Referees

These revisions to the **BJA Technical Restrictions for Less Experienced Judoka** have been developed by the National Coaching Commission (NCC) in response to multiple requests from the coaching community to update the current BJA Technical Restrictions.

These revisions incorporate over 12 months of development and pilot event feedback from coaches and referees; they have now been approved by the NCC and the National Refereeing Commission (NRC) and will come into effect on **6 July 2026**.

These webinars will target coaches and referees, detailing the logic and application behind the revisions, to better prepare them for the changes.

Key Objectives of the Revisions

- Age & Stage Appropriateness: Promoting fundamental, development-focused techniques.
- Long-Term Development: Encouraging active, positive attacking judo over passive tactics.
- Safety Enhancement: Reducing instances where young or novice judoka are placed in dangerous positions.
- Ambiguity Removal: Providing clear-cut guidelines standardising the application of rules.
- Positive First Experiences: Ensuring competitive environments build confidence for entry-level fighters.

Webinar Focus Points

- Gripping Rules: Expectations around establishing standard sleeve-and-lapel grips and how non-standard or preparatory grips will be handled.
- Drop-knee and Sutemi-waza Rules: Restrictions surrounding drop-knee and sacrifice throws, aimed at preventing judoka from dragging opponents down or sacrificing stance prematurely.
- Ne-waza Rules: Specific technical parameters for younger age bands.
- Penalties : An emphasis on shifting away from winning matches purely on opponent penalties.
- Contest Decisions: Clearer criteria for determining the winner when no scores are made, looking at positive attacking.
- Coaches Appeals: The code of conduct for coaches when querying a refereeing decision during a match.

Technical Restrictions for Inexperienced Judoka - 2026 Revision

1.1 Applicable Categories

Technical restrictions must apply to:

- School year 7, for any grade.
- All under 12 years' categories, for any grade.
- All under 16 year's categories limited to yellow belt and under.

Additionally, the golden score provisions only apply to:

- All under 16 years' categories limited to orange belt and under.

Technical restrictions will not apply to any other categories than those described above.

1.1 Applicable Categories

Technical restrictions must apply to:

- School years 4, 5, 6 & 7, for any grade. Scotland P5, P6, P7 & S1.
- All under 12 years' categories, for any grade.
- All under 16 year's categories limited to yellow belt and under.

End of contest (no golden score) provisions also apply to:

- All under 16 years' categories limited to orange belt and under.

Technical restrictions do not apply outside these categories.

No changes, to applicable age and grade categories.

Previous
Issue

2026
Update

Technical Restrictions for Inexperienced Judoka - 2026 Revision

1.2 No forward throwing techniques with the hand of tori around uke's neck

It is prohibited to apply any form of forward throwing action with the hand of tori around the back of uke's neck at shoulder level. The rule prohibits the whole hand of tori going past uke's back of neck centre line at shoulder level or higher, if the hand around the back goes past the neck centre line below shoulder level, this is valid.

1.2 No Grips over the Shoulder

Tori may not take a grip where one or both hands pass over uke's shoulder or onto the back of the collar (see Figure 1). Throwing techniques from such grips are prohibited. Grips on the top of the shoulder, more or less in the shoulder stripes area, are permitted (see Figure 2).

Note: Waist grips, where the hand of tori goes under, or outside, uke's arm and around the waist, are permitted for koshi-waza (see Figure 2).

Exception: Where an athlete takes a waist grip, their opponent may then take a grip past the shoulder and down or across the back. At no point can a grip around the neck or back of the collar be taken.



Figure 1 – Examples of Prohibited Over the Shoulder Grips

Previous
Issue

2026
Update

Technical Restrictions for Inexperienced Judoka - 2026 Revision

1.2 No Grips over the Shoulder – Continued...



Figure 2 – Examples of Permitted Grips

2026
Update

Justification

Safety: Inexperienced judoka lack the control and rotational skills to execute these throws safely, resulting in spiked landings, neck hyper-flexion and concussions.

Clarity: Under the current restrictions tori often grips high on the collar behind the neck of uke then during application of the throw tori's hand will slip to encircle the neck, resulting in the occurrence of injury to uke's head and neck. Additionally, the rule did not prevent throws to the side or the rear with a grip encircling the neck of uke.

Long-Term Development: Encouragement of sleeve-lapel judo to promote the development of the kumi-kata skills required to manage distance and feel momentum. Relying on high-collar or deep over-the-shoulder grips early can create a lack of versatility and an over dependence on overpowering rather than out-maneuvring an opponent.

Technical Restrictions for Inexperienced Judoka - 2026 Revision

1.3 No Throwing Techniques with Double Sleeve or Reverse Grips

To avoid situations where uke is unable to breakfall safely, tori may not throw using double sleeve grips or reverse grips. This prohibits variations of throws such as sode-tsurikomi-goshi or *reverse variations* of throws such as o-goshi, seoi-nage, kata-guruma (see Figure 3).

Taking and progressing from a double sleeve grip without using it to throw is permitted.

Taking and throwing with same-side grips is permitted, allowing cross-grip variations of techniques such as seoi-nage and tai-otoshi (see Figure 4).

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Figure 3 – Examples of Prohibited Throws with Double-Sleeve or Reverse Grips

Technical Restrictions for Inexperienced Judoka - 2026 Revision

1.3 No Throwing Techniques with Double Sleeve or Reverse Grips – Continued...



Figure 4 – Examples of Allowed Throws with Same-Side Grips

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2026

Justification

Safety: Judoka of this young age and stage lack the control and rotational skills to execute techniques such as sode-tsurikomi-goshi and reverse variations of throws, resulting spiked landings, neck hyperflexion and concussions. Additionally, they lack the ukemi skills to fall safely and can be tempted to extend their arm during the throw, risking injury to shoulder, collar-bone, elbow and wrist.

Long-Term Development: Promotion of double-sleeve grip too early in a judoka's development can result in an overly bent-over posture, a stalling of ashi-waza progression and a restriction of full body rotation, leading to a narrow range of throws usually limited to sode-tsurikomi-goshi or sacrifice throws.

Technical Restrictions for Inexperienced Judoka - 2026 Revision

1.3 No drop-knee techniques

It is prohibited to apply any forward throwing technique by tori dropping directly, with one or both knees, to the ground during the initial stage of the action.

Guidance: if tori takes the weight of uke on their back in a standing position and then performs any recognisable throwing action, although they fall to the ground, this will be a valid action.

1.4 No Drop-knee Techniques

Tori may not perform a throwing technique by dropping directly to one or both knees during the initial stage of the action.

Guidance: if tori first takes uke's weight in a standing position and then performs any recognisable throw, although they fall to the ground, this will be a valid action. This is not intended to prevent a normal Kodokan technique, like seoi-nage, o-goshi, o-uchi-gari or ko-uchi-gake, performed without an initial drop action.

Justification

Safety: Under-rotated or poorly executed dropping techniques can cause the uke to be pulled directly down onto the top of their head causing lumbar and cervical spinal compression. Growth plates in the knee take heavy repetitive impact on the mat accelerating conditions like Osgood-Schlatter disease and patellar tendonitis.

Clarity: The restriction did not prevent drop-knee throws to the side or to the rear, resulting in similar long-term injuries to tori and unsafe landings for uke.

Long-Term Development: Drop-knee techniques are often used to bypass the difficult to learn off-balancing skills, resulting in an early success development trap and an over dependence. The young judoka can then struggle to develop the gripping, movement and timing skills required for upright judo and foundational forward throws. This also limits the opportunity to practice multi-directional attack chains leading to easy-to-read one-dimensional judo.

Previous
Issue

2026
Update

Technical Restrictions for Inexperienced Judoka - 2026 Revision

1.4 No Tomoe-nage or Sumi-gaeshi or similar techniques

It is prohibited to apply tomoe-nage or sumi-gaeshi or similar techniques, this means techniques where the body of tori impacts with the tatami before that of uke and uke is being thrown with techniques such as or very similar to tomoe-nage or sumi-gaeshi.

1.5 No Sutemi-waza

Tori may not apply sutemi-waza. This includes techniques such as tomoe-nage, sumi-gaeshi, uki-waza, yoko-otoshi, tani-otoshi, ura-nage, or maki-komi.

Note: Rear lifting throws where tori remains standing are permitted, allowing techniques such as ushrio-goshi.

Previous
Issue

2026
Update

Justification

- **Safety:** Mistimed or poorly executed tomoe-nage and sumi-gaeshi attacks often have uncontrolled fall trajectories; resulting in hyper-extension of the spine or awkward landing injuries. Tani-otoshi is often incorrectly performed and is statically one of the most dangerous throws in youth judo; causing severe knee and ankle injuries such as ACL tears, meniscus damage, and growth plate fractures. Young children have a high head to body mass ratio, undeveloped neck musculature and fragile growth plates, making them physically less able to absorb the forces of ura-nage and maki-komi; resulting in a high risk of spine compression, concussion, fractured ribs and broken clavicles.
- **Clarity:** This did not prevent uki-waza and yoko-otoshi, at this age and stage these are often used to pull uke into ne-waza rather than as a genuine attempt to score.
- **Long-Term Development:** Sacrifice techniques are often used to bypass the difficult to learn off-balancing skills, resulting in an early success development trap and an over dependence. The young judoka can then struggle to develop the gripping, movement and timing skills required for upright judo and foundational forward throws. This also limits the opportunity to practice multi-directional attack chains leading to easy-to-read one-dimensional judo.

Technical Restrictions for Inexperienced Judoka - 2026 Revision

1.5 No Throwing from Behind while Rising from Ne-waza

It is prohibited for tori to throw their opponent from behind while rising from ne-waza to tachi-waza. The referee shall attempt to call mate before one athlete attempts to grip and/or throw while rising from ne-waza in this position. There is no penalty provided a throwing action has not been started.

1.6 No Throwing from Behind while Rising from Ne-waza

Tori may not throw their opponent from behind while rising from ne-waza to tachi-waza. The referee should call mate before a grip is taken or a throw is performed from this position. No penalty is given unless a throwing action was started.

No change, just a minor update to the wording.

Previous
Issue

2026
Update

Technical Restrictions for Inexperienced Judoka - 2026 Revision

1.6 Dangerous Turnovers

In cases where uke is lying flat on their front and tori has a grip on the collar of uke behind their neck, pinning uke's head to the mat, then proceeding to lever the leg or foot of uke and attempt to turn uke over by bringing the body directly over the head, this will be penalised. The referee is to stop the contest immediately this action becomes clear to prevent injury. For this penalty to be awarded, the legs of uke must be moving in a direction which is likely to cause uke's neck to be unnaturally bent backwards. The following will apply:

- If this action is completed, the penalty given will be hansoku-make.
- If the action is started and the referee can successfully intervene before completion of the full movement, shido will be awarded.

Note: Athletes infringing any of the technical restrictions above will be penalised at the appropriate level immediately every time, meaning no 'free chances' will be given. The referee should briefly explain to the athlete the reason for the penalty on every occasion a penalty is awarded due to a technical restriction.

Previous
Issue

Technical Restrictions for Inexperienced Judoka - 2026 Revision

1.7 Ne-waza with Higher Risk to the Neck or Spine

Tori may not perform osaekomi-waza using the legs to apply sangaku-gatame, or have the legs in a similar position encircling the neck (with or without an arm). Note: The initial stages of the sangaku turnover are allowed provided the legs are not interlocked, as is subsequently applying osaekomi-waza having first uncrossed the leg (see also 2.1 for shime-waza and kansetsu-waza).

Tori may not perform actions that 'crank the neck' of uke; for example, applying a turnover or hold using kata-sangaku (see also 2.3).

Tori may not perform actions that arch the spine of uke; for example applying a turnover, where uke is lying flat, control the collar, pin uke's head to the mat, and lift the leg or foot bringing uke's body directly over their head.

The referee should call mate immediately when any of these actions become apparent.

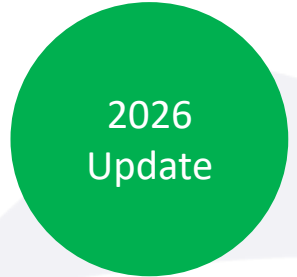


Figure 5 – Examples of Prohibited Osaekomi-Waza / Newaza

Justification

Safety: Turn-overs and hold-downs where uke's neck or spine is crushed, cranked or arched are high-risk injury actions and are not suitable for this age and stage of development.

Technical Restrictions for Inexperienced Judoka - 2026 Revision

1.8 Penalties for Restricted Techniques and Gripping

No penalty is given for the first occurrence of a restricted act. The referee should briefly explain the infringement to the athlete.

Any subsequent restricted act, whether the same or different, is penalised with shido. The referee should again explain the infringement.

For acts in 1.7, if an action is completed by bending the neck or back unnaturally or applying a shime-waza, the penalty will be hansoku-make.

New for
2026

Justification

Safety: Actions with high-risk of injury should be taken seriously.

Long-Term Development: Allowances made for inexperienced judoka adjusting to the revised technical restrictions. Prohibited actions that would be a penalty at any level of event should be awarded shido or hansoku-make as applicable.

Technical Restrictions for Inexperienced Judoka - 2026 Revision

1.9 Injury as a Result of a Restricted Technique

If the application of a restricted technique is the cause of uke's withdrawal from the contest through injury:

- **In the pools system**, the contest shall be a draw. Both athletes may continue in the pool.
- **In the knockout system**, the injured athlete shall be declared the winner. The other athlete may continue into the repechage, if applicable.

New for
2026

Justification

Clarity: Section added to detail what happens as a result of an injury a result of a restricted technique.

Long-Term Development: No desire to disqualify an inexperienced judoka completely from the event, where the application of a restricted techniques caused injury but was accidental and without intent to injure (also see section 4.2).

Technical Restrictions for Inexperienced Judoka - 2026 Revision

1.7 Golden Score for Technical Restrictions Categories

In cases where there is no technical score difference in Technical Restrictions contests, the process will be as follows:

- At the end of normal time (always 3 minutes), if there is no technical score difference but there is a penalty difference of any sort, this will be the result and the decision given.
- If scores and penalties are equal at the end of the first 3 minutes, golden score will proceed immediately for a maximum period of a further 3 minutes. In this time, the first score or penalty will end the contest immediately.
- If scores and penalties are equal at the end of the golden score period, the referee and judges (if there are judges, otherwise just the referee) will decide which athlete came the 'closest to achieving a technical score' and declare them the winner.

The decision on which athlete came 'closest to a technical score' will be by majority opinion applying the following criteria, based on the golden score period only:

- Where there has been one or more osaekomi of less than 10 seconds, the winner will be declared based on the longest osaekomi. Where tied, the second longest will prevail and so on.
- Where osaekomi does not decide the contest, the decision will be based on tachi-waza in the following order of precedence (the single best example in a higher level prevailing over any number of lower level examples):
 - Level 1 - The athlete who came closest to scoring with a throwing technique, usually but not exclusively based on the landing position.
 - Level 2 – Where there have been no throwing actions with landings, the contest will be based on the athlete who disturbed the other athlete's balance most.
 - Level 3 – Where criteria one and two is too close to judge, the decision will be based on the athlete who made the best kumi-kata application resulting in the most effective control of their opponent.

Previous
Issue

Technical Restrictions for Inexperienced Judoka - 2026 Revision

1.10 End of Contest Decision

Where there is no score difference at the end of normal time:

- **In the pools system**, hikiwake (draw) will be given:
- **In the knockout system:**
 - All penalties shall be entirely disregarded.
 - The winner is decided by majority decision (referee alone if no judges) based on which athlete came 'closest to a technical score'. This result is without appeal.
- This will be determined by:
 - Where there has been one or more osaekomi of less than 5 seconds, the winner will be declared based on the longest osaekomi.
 - Thereafter, the decision will be based on the athlete who came closest to scoring with a throwing technique, thereafter the most positive attacking behaviour and thereafter who demonstrated the most effective control of their opponent.

New for
2026

Note: In the pools system, Re-fights are only required if wins and points are equal, and a tie-breaker is needed to determine a medal placement (e.g., 1st/2nd or 2nd/3rd). They are not needed to decide 3rd/4th place.

Justification

Safety: Removal of Golden Score this will reduce injuries due to fatigue and technique overuse for judoka of this young age and stage. Additionally, they do not have the emotional maturity to cope with the stress of this format.

Clarity: The previous rule was over-complicated.

Long-Term Development: Contest decisions rewards positive attacking judo throughout normal time, rather than allowing contest to be won on tactical shido.

Technical Restrictions for Inexperienced Judoka - 2026 Revision

1.11 Coaching, Appeals and Referee in Charge Calls

Coach appeals are not permitted in technical restriction categories. This does not prevent the refereeing team themselves referring a decision to the referee in charge.

Coaches are reminded that especially in these categories coaching must be kept positive. It is not acceptable to critique the opponent or call for penalties against them.

New for
2026

Justification

Long-Term Development: The removal of coach appeals aids the development of resilience, emotional regulation, autonomy and sportsmanship.