



2025

Guide To Starting BJJ

White Lotus Jiu Jitsu



Table of Contents

00



Your First Class	<i>01</i>
Choosing Your First Gi	<i>02</i>
No Gi Grappling	<i>03</i>
Prioritizing Cleanliness	<i>04</i>
Injuries & Safety	<i>05</i>
BJJ FAQs	<i>06-07</i>
Things To Know Before Your Roll	<i>08-09</i>
Rolling for a Reason	<i>10</i>
Must Knows of Sport Jiu Jitsu	<i>11</i>
Offensive & Defensive Principles in Jiu Jitsu	<i>12</i>

White Lotus Jiu Jitsu

Your First Class- Just do it!

You will never really feel ready to try Jiu Jitsu for the first time. You may make internal “excuses” like you need to get in shape first or you’re too old. The fact of the matter is it can be scary to try something new, especially something that is physical like Jiu Jitsu.

Here is what to expect when you try a class at White Lotus. Friendly faces that help you learn where you are at physically and mentally. No pressure. We understand that it is a different experience for everybody. Some will want to hop right in and some will just want to dip their toes. Both ways can be right.

The biggest take away is just try it once. Just do it! Maybe you hate it... great now you know it isn’t for you. Maybe you love it... You just found a great way to protect yourself, stay in shape, and have a great group of new friends. Either way you have more information to make a better decision as to what you want.

We hope to see you on the mats soon.



“Always assume that your opponent is going to be bigger, stronger and faster than you; so that you learn to rely on technique, timing and leverage rather than brute strength.”
– Helio Gracie

Joshua Janis &
Meghan Wagner
Head Coaches

What To Wear

On your first day of class at White Lotus we have no “dress code” We want to make sure you like the sport before you start spending money on it. So what should you wear? A shirt that is more form fitting and shorts or spats that are also form fitting with as little zippers and pockets as possible. Fingers and toes can get caught in baggy clothing and that can be a problem when grappling someone. Safety is always first.

Choosing Your First Gi: A Beginner's Guide

02

Your Training Uniform

When you commit to training you will buy your first gi. The gi is the traditional garment used in many martial arts, but we will talk about it in terms of jiu jitsu. Many more traditional schools require you to wear white gis so It may be smart to have your first gi be white. That said, White Lotus is not a traditional school. Get whatever awesome colors that flavors your awesome personality.

Choosing the Right Gi

Some tips on what to buy when you do get a gi. I suggest a light weight gi. Heavier gis travel poorly and are hotter in summer. There are a few brands like elite that are good starter gis that you can find for under \$100 bucks. If you don't care about spending a bit more money, Origin gis are the only American made gi's and they are awesome.

Under Your Gi

Under your gi you will want to buy a rash guard and shorts. The gi fabric can be rough, and after a few rolls, you might notice some chafing or irritation. A rash guard adds a layer of protection, making training way more comfortable. Another big reason to wear one? It's just better for your training partners—nobody wants to grapple with a super sweaty, bare-chested teammate. Some gyms even require them for hygiene reasons. More on rashguards in the no-gi section.

The Belt

Last but not least the belt. The belt is meant to hold your gi closed, and display what rank you are. If you are new, White Lotus will supply you with your first White Belt when you sign up. There are multiple different ways to tie your belt and youtube does a good job explaining that.



No-Gi Grappling: A Modern Take on Jiu Jitsu

03

No-Gi No Problem

No-gi grappling is not the traditional way to practice Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, but over the last decade, it has grown significantly in popularity. Unlike training in a gi, no-gi grappling requires more dynamic movement and relies on body control rather than grips on fabric. In no-gi, you wear form-fitting shorts and a rash guard—a sweat-wicking, tight-fitting shirt with sleeves that helps protect your skin and enhances mobility. One of the best parts about rash guards is the variety of designs that let you show off your personality. At White Lotus, we have a general rash guard that represents the gym, but we also offer an incredible Avatar: The Last Airbender-inspired series for those who want to blend their love of jiu jitsu with their fandom. Investing in a good rash guard will not only improve comfort but also help maintain hygiene while training.



Ranked Rashguards

Some gyms require ranked rash guards which the sleeves of the rash guard matches your belt rank. Again, White Lotus does not require this, but it is something to be aware of so you don't show up at an open mat where everyone assumes you a brown belt.



Women's No-Gi Gear

Many brands now create rash guards and shorts tailored specifically for women, with cuts that prevent shifting during rolls. At White Lotus, we encourage women to train in whatever makes them feel confident and comfortable, whether that's a standard rash guard and shorts or spats (leggings) for extra coverage.



Prioritizing Cleanliness



Personal and Gym Hygiene

Cleanliness of yourself and the gym is of highest priority. Jiu Jitsu is inherently a disgusting sport. We are almost as close as we can be with another human as they sweat profusely. There is no way to get around that but what we can do is make sure we don't smell and are as clean as we can be.

As far as gym cleanliness, at White Lotus we got you covered. The rest of this section will be what you can do to make sure you aren't the smelly kid in class.



You Need To Shower

You must shower after every class that you roll. Period. Unfortunately we do not have showers currently at the gym which means that when you get home, shower. The scariest part of the sport isn't arm bars and strangles, it is staph infections. A staph infection many times looks like an angry pimple that starts to grow under the skin. IF you see something like that, go to a doctor immediately. There are other skin infections like ringworm but they typically are just more annoying than dangerous.



Wash Your Training Gear

Along the same token whatever clothes you wore to grapple in are one time use. You will never grapple in a gi and then wear it the next day without washing it at White Lotus. Follow the wash instructions of the clothing.



Nail Care

Keep your nails trimmed short to avoid any accidental scratches - once you've been caught by a toenail or a long nail, you'll understand why!



Bathroom Etiquette

In every Dojo/academy/school whatever they want to call it (White Lotus will answer to any of them) they will ask you to take your shoes off somewhere when you walk in the door. NEVER walk on the mats with your shoes.

When you use the restroom at White Lotus, (and most schools) you will NOT go in bare foot. Use the sandals that are provided right by the door of the bathroom before you go do your business. The last thing you want is a barefoot person stepping in pee then stepping on the mats.

Of course, if you use the restroom wash your hands!

How To Handle Injuries & Be Safe

05



A Culture of Safety

At White Lotus, we place a strong emphasis on fostering a training environment that promotes both skill development and safety. Our approach to Jiu Jitsu is rooted in the principles of Painless, Precise, and Playful training. Ignoring with these core values, we ensure that students can train safely while still achieving their goals and advancing their skills in Jiu Jitsu. Our environment encourages self-awareness and respect for others, helping everyone train at their best with the confidence that safety is always a priority.



Minor Injuries on the Mats

As with any physical activity, minor injuries such as cuts, scrapes, and bruises can still occur. For small injuries, we have fully stocked first aid kits available to address minor wounds. If you happen to bleed on the mat, stop rolling, clean yourself up and let the coach know where you bled so we can wipe it up with some bleach wipes.



Listen to Your Body

If you strain or sprain something or you hear something pop that is abnormal stop rolling and talk to the coach. Don't be a tough person at practice as you can injure something more. The coaches are not doctors but can help you off the mat and can anecdotally express what they have seen over the years.



Serious Injuries While Training

If you happen to break a little toe or a finger and its still basically in line that sucks. Tape is your new best friend. Very rarely does something more serious happens but if you break something bigger or anything else that can happen in life know that you are amongst your teammates and we will make sure to get you the care that you need.



Strangling Unconscious

If you accidentally strangle someone unconscious (while very rare it can happen) put the person on their side and call over the coach immediately. They will be fine coming back from dreamland most likely but depriving your partners brain of oxygen for long periods of time can be dangerous.

How to explain what Jiu Jitsu is to your family

If you are American here is how I explain Brazilian Jiu Jitsu (which I often shorten to just Jiu Jitsu). Jiu Jitsu is like wrestling except instead of trying to pin the person on their back, you try to submit them which is like getting them to say uncle. The father Martial art of Brazilian jiu jitsu is Judo. The Cousin is Wrestling.



Winning & Losing on the Mats:

When grappling it is easy to think that you are winning a round or losing a round. Maybe you got someone to tap or you tapped. This is an easy trap to fall into, but don't do it. We are all on the same team. Teammates don't try and beat each other, they try and make each other better. Don't try to win unless it is a competition class. Try to work on a skill and develop it. Let the other person try things on you as well so you can learn to defend them.



Expectations of Your Coach & teammates:

Your Jiu Jitsu coaches at White Lotus are there to make sure that you are safe, that you have a good environment to enjoy class, and that you learn some Jiu Jitsu. Your teammates are there to donate their bodies to the science of Jiu Jitsu. You need each other to get better at the sport. Always be grateful for your teammates.



Belt Promotion Expectations

Belts in Jiu Jitsu can be confusing. I will just speak for belts here at White lotus. Belts are based on time on the mats and growth in relation to your individual skill. Everybody comes in with different athleticism and abilities. I watch all my students and reward them with stripes or belts when they have shown improvement over time.

A Black belt in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu under White Lotus will take 8-10 years of consistent training 2-3 times a week. It is a massive achievement and the reason why there are not many black belts in the world. On the way to Black belt there are 4 other color belts. White, Blue, Purple, and Brown. At White Lotus, and most schools we do stripes on the belts as well to show progress. Each belt will receive 4 stripes before they move onto the next color.

Belts



How & When To Tap

Tapping out when rolling is an indication that you give up. It is what allows us to train all the time. If it wasn't for tapping, you would get strangled to sleep and your limbs broken constantly because your training partner would not know when to stop.

Jiu Jitsu is a legit dangerous sport. To train all the time do not try and be a hero to yourself on a random Tuesday. If something hurts, you can't breath, the lights are going out, or it feels like a lot of pressure is building while someone is twisting something of yours just tap! It is wonderfully freeing.

You tap by lightly open hand slapping your opponent at least twice. If you can't slap your opponent



Common Challenges

Finding Time, Soreness, Feeling Like You're Struggling
Here's the thing: don't stress about any of this until you step onto the mat and try a class. Give Jiu Jitsu a shot first—see if it's something you enjoy. Once you've felt it out, then you can start thinking about managing your time and how your body's adjusting. The rest will come as you grow!

There is risk in Jiu Jitsu as in life. Let's compare it to driving. If you drive with no seat belt, at high speeds, with no experience your risk of an accident is high. It is the same with Jiu Jitsu. If you come into class redlining every roll, without having any idea of what you are doing the risk of accident is high.

Think about your arms and legs as rubber bands. A rubber band is much more likely to break at tension. The ligaments, tendons, and muscles are all more likely to break at tension. Learn to roll with as little tension as possible. If you are here at White Lotus, I will explain in depth to keep you safe in the beginning. Listening to this advice is like putting on your safety belt before you drive.



Gym Culture & Finding One That Fits You

I am a big believer of finding the gym culture that fits you. Just like any social group, you will stick around if the people are your type of people. Some common cultures are Gym bros, competition focused, MMA focused, Hobbyist focused (like white lotus), Gi or no-gi focus, pothead, traditional, culty etc. etc. There is no right identity, there is just right for you at that time. Remember, you are never obligated to train at a gym for a lifetime. If you were a pothead and liked training with potheads in your early 20's that doesn't mean you have to stay training there in your 30's. Train where it makes sense for you. A good gym will just want you to start and train, no matter where it is.



Breath Work & Recovery

Breathwork is the most important action you can take in any given day. When you start a new sport, you are not efficiently moving, which means you are not efficiently breathing. Jiu Jitsu is hard and if you can't breathe it becomes almost impossible. Learn to breathe diaphragmatically while moving. Try not to hold your breath. If you can learn to breathe efficiently, quickly, you will progress like a star!

Recovery is important as your body can take a beating. Drink plenty of water, diaphragmatically breathe always, stretch, and eat enough protein and you should be fine. Listen to your body, if you need a day off, take a day off.

Things To Know Before Your Roll

08



How To Start A Training Round

When you start to practice live with someone (we call it to “roll”) you make eye contact with that person, slap hands and bump fists gently and commence. This is throughout all gyms and it is the one thing that everybody in the community seems to be ok with.

If you are brand new, or nursing an injury, or any other safety concerns you have, make sure to tell your training partner before you start the roll. It is both parties responsibility to keep both people safe.



Athleticism and Jiu jitsu

Skill can overcome size, but the skill gap will need to be proportionate to the size/athleticism gap. If two people are the same skill level but one is 20lbs heavier the heavier person will win most of the time. If two people are the same skill level but one is 50 and the other 25, the 25 yr old will win most of the time.

That said, if you have a 25 yr old novice that has 20lbs on a 50 yr old black belt, the black belt will win most of the time. I hope this clears it up.



Your First Month

Your first month of Jiu Jitsu will be a roller coaster. Commonly you may think if you only knew what to do from (name your position) that you would be way better. You may get your first submission, you may feel like you are learning, or you may constantly feel like a nail. Either way, at White Lotus you will feel included and welcome.



What BJJ Is & Isn't

Brazilian Jiu Jitsu is not fighting. It is not what your 7 year old niece has a black belt in. It is not to beat people up. At White Lotus, it is a tool to give people confidence in themselves and a tool to bring people together.



Rolling and Classes In Jiu Jitsu

09



What Is Rolling & Who To Roll With

Rolling is the way we practice Jiu Jitsu. When you are at White Lotus, you can roll with anyone. We are all on the same team trying to get better. You can be sure that none of us are trying to hurt each other. We need our team to get better so we as an individual can get better. You can roll with anyone, but don't feel forced to roll with anyone. If there is a person who you just don't like training with feel free to say no to that person. There are no hard feelings. Not all dance partners are made for each other and that is ok!



Finding White Lotus Jiu Jitsu

White Lotus is located just outside downtown Milwaukee. We are on 1st and Florida in the comedy sports building. Enter in the parking lot off of Florida. Look for a blue awning. Go in that door and up the stairs. Visitors are always welcome.



Class Structures

At White Lotus we have multiple different class styles. We are constantly learning about ways to coach and run classes. White Lotus offers an ecological type of class, a creativity in jiu jitsu, advanced group share, to bring your own shit, and finally long form flow rolling class. There are many different tools to help you learn, we want to make sure we have the right one for you.



Rolling for a Reason



Common Reasons Your Teammates Train Jiu Jitsu

There are many reasons people train Jiu Jitsu, some of them have nothing to do with actually getting better at Jiu Jitsu. Here are some common reasons people do Jiu Jitsu...

Camaraderie, exercise, weight loss, fun, self defense, they like trying new things, they want to compete, they want to fight. When rolling with someone, perhaps it would be good to be curious as to why they roll and take that into consideration. If they want to learn to fight, and you are there for fun, sometimes a quick discussion pre-roll is in order. Communication is key everywhere.



The Different Types of BJJ- Sport, Self Defense, MMA

There are different ways to play the game of Jiu Jitsu. At the heart of it, they all can help keep you alive in a self defense scenario. That said, there are difference in how the sport is coached and communicated. Here are the three ways as I view it. There is sport Jiu Jitsu which focuses on getting better on the mats under BJJ rulesets. There is self defense, which focuses on what to do out on the streets if an altercation happens. Then there is Jiu Jitsu for MMA.

The core of these three is essentially the same, but as you progress, they can take you down wildly different paths. Sport Jiu Jitsu practitioners will smoke MMA guys in the sport of BJJ but in MMA they would get their ass kicked. Self defense Jiu Jitsu may focus more on control rather than counters that you would see in sport jiu jitsu. Find the style that works best for you.

Must Knows of Sport Jiu Jitsu



The Art of Submission

Jiu Jitsu, as it is known in America, is a grappling art whose parent is Judo, whose and whose brother is wrestling.

The ultimate goal is to get your opponent to “tap” out. The tap is an acknowledgment that a particular area on the body has been isolated and if the offensive person were to continue physical damage would occur to the defense person.

To apply submissions safely and efficiently you need to pin your opponent (pin meaning stop rotational movement) and isolate a limb or neck. Almost always this means attachment with your legs, attachment with your arms, and finishing force with your hips.

Strangles (chokes)- Strangles are trying to “kink the hose” of the arteries that run up your neck. To do this you need a connection with the neck, control of their rotation, and the ability to compress their jaw to their chest. When done correctly, if the person does not tap, blood stops flowing to the brain and the person passes out. Obviously, in training we tap before this

Joint locks- Anywhere there is a joint, it can be isolated and torqued a way it isn’t supposed to go. Joint locks require rotational control and

Offensive & Defensive Principles in Jiu Jitsu

12



Offense

Move yourself so your opponents weapons (In most cases 2 arms and 2 legs) can not come into play. This can be done with movement (angles, distance management) or Pins (weight distribution, or getting tied into a pretzel). Try to get to somebody's back (your chest connected to their back) or add weight through them pinning them to the ground

Create angles to allow your weapons to be useful. Angles refer to where your center mass is pointing in relation to where your opponent's mass is pointing. Remember that we are 3 dimensional and angles can have height as well.

- Your hips should face your opponent and ideally be higher than your opponents.
- Apply weight to inspire movement or to control movement
- Try to off balance your opponent. Push, pull, or rotate

Defense

When it comes to defending in Jiu Jitsu, there are several key principles that can help you maintain control, protect yourself, and set yourself up for effective escapes or reversals. Here are the core concepts to keep in mind:

- Elbows home. Meaning at your side as if you were carrying heavy groceries
- Feet always on the ground or on your opponent to move your hips.
- Always have space to move into. Note that if you are not flat on the ground, you will always have space behind you.
- Fight to get your Hips higher than your opponent
- When in trouble, move your hips and get your elbows home. (said it twice for importance)

By practicing these defensive positions and principles, you'll create a solid foundation for your Jiu Jitsu defense, making it much harder for your opponent to advance their position or submit you.



Contact Us

→ *Phone:* (414) 253-6103

→ *E-Mail:* whitelotusbjj@gmail.com

→ *Website:* www.gentleartlifestyle.com/whitelotusbjj

→ *Address:* 420 S Lake Drive Milwaukee WI
