



15 WAYS TO GET BETTER AT JIU-JITSU FASTER

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15 Ways to Learn Jiu-Jitsu Faster

How to get the most out of your time on the mat.

Contents

- 1. Introduction (the science of learning)**
- 2. Tip 1: Develop Ridiculously Specific Goals**
- 3. Tip 2: Microdrilling**
- 4. Tip 3: Thoughtful Note Taking**
- 5. Tip 4: Mental Training**
- 6. Tip 5: Environmental Shocks**
- 7. Tip 6: Expand Your Competition Horizons**
- 8. Tip 7: Teaching**
- 9. Tip 8: Go Niche**
- 10. Tip 9: Periodic Total Immersion**
- 11. Tip 10: Watch Videos of Yourself Doing Jiu-Jitsu**
- 12. Tip 11: Isolated Sparring**
- 13. Tip 12: Physical Conditioning**
- 14. Tip 13: Quit**
- 15. Tip 14: Quality Rest**
- 16. Tip 15: Enjoy Yourself (like, for real)**
- 17. Conclusion**
- 18. Acknowledgments**

Introduction

Do you remember your first day of Jiu-Jitsu? More importantly, do you remember how *stupid* you felt as you struggled through executing even the most basic movements?

We've all been there.

For me, that day was an April afternoon in Chicago, just weeks before I was supposed to graduate high school.

I was 17, afraid of violence (even just watching the UFC used to make me anxious), and a terribly slow learner. I was a mediocre student, an average high school wrestler, and compared to the adults who I was in class with, I felt like a dummy.

When I was 18, I decided that Jiu-Jitsu was going to be my “my thing”, but I still wasn't exactly “good at learning”. I thought I had to work twice as hard as anyone else to develop half of the skill. The problem was, in a sport like Jiu-Jitsu, where many athletes train for 4–6 hours per day (sometimes more) and literally live in gyms to focus on training, *everyone* is working hard.

You can't just outwork people to become successful. There has to be *something* besides “grit” or “hard work” that separates the top athletes from each other.

I mean, if you're reading this, it's probably because you at least want to believe that getting better at Jiu-Jitsu *faster* is possible.

You might've heard the story of Kit Dale, who went from white belt to black belt in just 4 years and won titles at the lower belts along the way. Kit's a world-class grappler, no doubt, but there's still a giant hole in the game of rapid Jiu-Jitsu learning. No team is producing high-level talent quickly without access to world-class training partners, steroids, and the ability to train “full-time”. There are no average Joe's winning medals at the Pans and Worlds, especially in the adult division.

But still, there *is* a blueprint for getting good at this sport fast, and it's starting to be unraveled. In this ebook I've done my best to help contribute to the rapid ascension of future Jiu-Jitsu athletes and martial artists.

These are the 15 patterns that have contributed toward rapidly increasing my progression in Jiu-Jitsu, without having daily access to famous coaches, training full time, or steroids.

Okay, let's talk about how to get good at Jiu-Jitsu.

The Not-So-Secret Science of Skill Acquisition

Though we call Jiu-Jitsu a martial “art”, it’s really more of a *science*.

To quote John Danaher, arguably the best Jiu-Jitsu coach of all time:

“Remember always that as a student of Jiu-Jitsu you are first and foremost a student of the human body. The deeper your understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, the deeper will be your expression of Jiu-Jitsu.”

While there certainly is a creative, artistic element to Jiu-Jitsu, this variance is seen more prevalently at the highest levels of the sport. At the entry levels, martial arts are as hard a science as there is. Gruesome as it may sound, creating great Jiu-Jitsu techniques requires a great deal of scientific understanding. This is because we learn much of what we do through some form of the scientific method.

Observation -> Research -> Hypothesis -> Test -> Analysis -> Conclusion

As an overarching concept, every habit that we’re going to discuss in this ebook is going to be a result of some sort of “scientific” test. I have hundreds and hundreds of career grappling matches, thousands of hours spent training gi, no-gi, and wrestling, and hundreds of hours of teaching experience.

I’m only 24, but my grappling knowledge is the closest thing I have to my life’s work.

My goal with this ebook is to make your Jiu-Jitsu better using the same process that I’ve used for the last several years of my career that’s led to a rapid increase in my skill development. **I went from being a mediocre blue belt to purple belt world champion to top-ranked brown belt over just 2 years, while I was also a college student, budding entrepreneur, and aspiring professional writer.**



My approach to learning has been chaotic at times, regimented at times, but constant throughout my career. These are the tried and true tips and tricks that have taken my game to the next level.

I hope you get as much out of reading this as I did writing it.

Tip 1: Develop Ridiculously Specific Goals

If you downloaded this ebook, you're either my friend, my mom, or someone who genuinely wants to get better at Jiu-Jitsu.

Unfortunately, however, *wanting* to get better at Jiu-Jitsu has very little to do with actually getting better at Jiu-Jitsu.

When you first start training, there's a period of time where you don't know anything about the sport and you're doing nothing but soaking up every bit of knowledge you can. But I'll let you in

on a little secret: **the “true beginner” phase ends faster than you expect.** After just a few weeks of training, you’ve likely already been exposed to almost all of the positions in Jiu-Jitsu.

After a few months, you know most of the moves that are being hit in the best tournaments in the world. What separates beginners from experts isn’t just mat time, it’s also repetition, situational awareness, and the application of their specific goals.

You might develop *initial goals* like:

- “I want to get a better guard”
- “I want to work on wrestling”
- “I want to learn leg locks”
- “I want to compete”
- “I want to be a world champion”

These goals are great, but the problem is, they won’t actually direct very much of your training. I also want to have a better guard, better wrestling, better leg locks, more competition experience, and more world titles, but just wanting that won’t help me get it.

In order to make technical progress (which will lead to the goals above), you’re going to need *highly specific goals* that will help you improve based on your own awareness of your technical abilities.

The more Jiu-Jitsu you learn, the more specific your goals must become.

Your “more specific” goals might look something like this:

- “I want to improve my leg lock entries”
- “I want to improve my initial movements from seated guard”
- “I want to improve my takedown setups”
- “I want to improve my competition anxiety management skills”

And so on.

Tip 2: Micro-drilling

If you know me or have ever trained with me, you know just how much I love micro-drilling.

I'm not ashamed. I'll shout it from the rooftops:

I LOVE MICRO-DRILLING!!!

If you don't know about micro-drilling, "how to microdrill", or how much I love micro-drilling, you really have no idea how excited I am to tell you about this strategy for technical development.

I must preface by saying that I didn't invent micro-drilling, but I do use it for just about every aspect of my Jiu-Jitsu training. I learned about micro-drilling from my coach, Jeff Serafin, who told me about how the Lloyd Irvin team used to do micro-drills in the mid-2000s while watching TV at night or hanging out on the mat after training.

Essentially, micro-drilling is the practice of literally "drilling" a movement into your brain. To use this drilling practice for optimal results, you should follow the steps below:

How to Micro-drill

- 1. Select a technique to master**
- 2. Learn how to do the technique properly (for best results, instruction is recommended)**
- 3. Isolate certain aspects of the move (the "slice" of a knee slice, the "drag" of a leg drag, the initiation of an under hook)**
- 4. Set a timer for 60 seconds (or whatever time you'd like to do)**
- 5. Repeat the movement that you've chosen to isolate as many times as possible within the given time period**
- 6. Repeat this drill at every training session... for the rest of your life**
- 7. Become a master at that specific movement**

They say "drillers make killers", and they're not wrong. But really, it's not enough to just drill. In order to truly perfect the timing, muscle memory, and execution of a given technique, you have to isolate that movement and spend time on it. You have to become one with the move you're trying to do.

If you want to progress faster in Jiu-Jitsu, micro-drilling is a must.

Tip 3: Writing About Jiu-Jitsu

I know a lot of Jiu-Jitsu students and athletes who take notes or claim to take notes, but I know few people who do it in a manner that has much thought behind it at all.

Heck, when I was a blue belt, I wrote one of the most disorganized Jiu-Jitsu notebooks in the history of Jiu-Jitsu.

Of course, most of us learn differently, which means that the way that I take notes for grappling is probably much different from the way that you take notes.

The important thing to take away from this is not that I'm a super-smart Jiu-Jitsuist who knows the best way to take notes. I don't care how you take notes. What I do care about is that you **take notes consistently**, and when you do take notes, **you have a system for those notes** that makes it easy for you to refer to them in a way that's easy to remember.

For me, flow charts took me to the next level. I've always made flowcharts for my guards, and as I've gotten more advanced, I've downloaded flow charts from other sources.

My flow charts started out very primitive, but they've become one of my favorite tools for developing systems of my own to attack from various positions. This has helped me improve both as a competitor, teacher, and general practitioner of Jiu-Jitsu.

Part 2: Hi, I'm a Jiu-Jitsu Blogger

Apart from technical writing about Jiu-Jitsu, I also think that there's a benefit in writing about your experience in Jiu-Jitsu. Whether that looks like becoming a blogger on the internet who writes about Jiu-Jitsu, contributing to Jiu-Jitsu news outlets like Jiu-Jitsu Times, or just keeping a diary about training and competing, the point is that you write down the things that are happening to you as you progress through this martial art.

I also have a document in my Google drive that has a list of every single strength and conditioning workout I've done for the past 4 years and another document that has a list of every match I've ever competed in since my first tournament as a white belt college freshman living in Oregon. Writing everything down is how I stay organized, focused, and motivated.

I'm a writer, so I'm biased here, but I've found that writing about training has made me a more focused grappler and a more consistent one. By writing, I solidify the importance of my training

in my mind, and this helps me stay focused through life's ups and downs during your Jiu-Jitsu experience.

Tip 4: Mental Training



If you're reading this, you probably train Jiu-Jitsu. If you're reading this and you don't train Jiu-Jitsu... why are you reading this?

Whatever. The point is, we all train. Whatever the skill is you're trying to improve at, you definitely practice that skill. If you're serious about improving, showing up to practice is a crucial part of the day-to-day battle.

Most people train, but most people don't train their minds. If you want to be good at something, mental training needs to be one of your daily habits.

We all experience mental blocks in life - whether it's anxiety, depression, or even just nerves - and though they all are experienced at varying levels of severity, nearly all forms of mental struggle can be eased through mental training.

I'm not a psychologist and I don't pretend to be one on the internet, but [mental strength has been proven to enhance many aspects of life](#).

In this section, we're going to break down 3 types of mental training that I do and that many top Jiu-Jitsu athletes do as well. To improve your body, you must also improve your mind.

Mindfulness

I'll keep this one short since we've all heard about the benefits of mindfulness a zillion times. Even if you don't want to be a Buddhist monk or an enlightened being, mindfulness is a crucial aspect of athletic and technical development in Jiu-Jitsu.

At the very least, my mindfulness practice is simply a break from the onslaught of Jiu-Jitsu that I surround myself with. The day before the Pans or the Worlds, I'm really not trying to reach Nirvana, I'm just trying to get out of my head. Mindfulness is how I do that.

Watching Jiu-Jitsu

Most of what I've learned in Jiu-Jitsu has come from my instructor, but honestly, all of the best aspects of my game have come from things that I've learned on my own through studying instructionals and matches from some of the best competitors in the world today.

Everything that I've added to my game that is "mine" has come through the trial and application of techniques I've learned through study. I watch something, test it, and then try to find my own spin on it using my own awareness of my own body type and attributes.

Visualization

Confession time:

I often have “imaginary grappling matches” in my head where scenarios are played out and I’m able to both find new attacks and refine old ones.

While this might sound a little bit odd to you, it’s been one of the most important practices for my technical development and more importantly, *my retention of knowledge*.

Studies have shown that visualization could be [just as important as physical training](#) when it comes to sports performance.

I highly recommend adopting one or all of these mental training habits to your routine. It doesn’t have to be as strenuous or taxing as your physical training, but the more enthusiasm you put into mental work, the more you will get out of it.

In my opinion, in a sport as complex and intricate as Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, mental training is just as important as physical training.

Tip 5: Environmental Shocks

They say that if you’re the best person in the room, you should leave the room.

They’re partially right. But there’s more to it than that.

It should be something like this:

If you’re the best in the room, you shouldn’t leave the room forever, you should leave the room temporarily. You should shock yourself by immersing yourself in a new and ridiculously strenuous environment.

See, some of us train at world-class gyms, led by world-class instructors, surrounded by high-level competitors and all-around tough people.

Some of us *do not* have that luxury. I’ve been in both situations in my Jiu-Jitsu career. As a lower belt, I’ve been in training rooms where every single person could submit me, but as an upper belt, I’ve been in training rooms where the opposite has occurred.

The solution to this dilemma? **Period environmental shocks.**

Every so often, say every few months, I go seek out a new training environment for a period of time. I've gone and trained with world-class Jiu-Jitsu stars, like Keenan Cornelius and Dante Leon, and their training rooms have been humbling for me. I get my ass kicked. Every single round is a war. I'm *nervous* before training. I'm extra sore the day after. When I train with these monsters, I feel like I'm rolling in slow motion.

But I learn. *A lot.*

The benefit of this periodic shock isn't seen until I get back to my home gym. When I get home from training with some of the best grapplers in the world, I not only move better, I feel like *everyone else* is moving in slow motion. I make rapid improvements in short periods of time through getting beat up by people better than me *and then* applying the lessons I've learned to people who I can already get an edge over.

These tough training rooms test the grappling systems I've created and force me to refine them with new data against top-quality competition in a low-risk environment.

“But I don't live near any world-class training partners, you jerk!”

I know, I get it. There are no world champions in your town and you can't just take a week off work to train at a world-class gym in a city you've never been to before. I'm lucky because Jiu-Jitsu is a large part of my career and the rest of my work is remote. I can travel pretty much whenever I want.

But you can still find ways to shock your environment, and it might be easier than you think.

The easiest way is to just find another gym in town and show up to take a guest class or to go to their open mat. Most gyms nowadays don't make you pay a mat fee, and you'll get your environmental shock for free.

If the gym *does* want you to pay an annoying mat fee, just ask yourself this: is the training I'm going to receive worth the mat fee? Remember that the environmental shock *will* improve your progress. That I can guarantee.

If there's no gym near you worth training at, the environmental shock that I used all the way through my purple belt career was just constant competition.

The best way to test your Jiu-Jitsu is to put it in an unfamiliar, unbiased environment. By testing yourself, you'll rapidly increase your rate of progress. I like to use training environments because they're often lower risk than the competition, but the point isn't where you shock your system, it's *that* you shock your system.

Tip 6: Expand Your Competition Horizon

I absolutely can't stand some of the rulesets in Jiu-Jitsu.

In my early days of grappling, I was a boring, nervous, and even scared points fighter. I was more than okay with winning by an advantage, a penalty point, or eeking out a referee's decision.

At my first IBJJF No-Gi Worlds in 2016, I won *two* referee's decisions in the round of 16 and quarterfinals that helped me get onto the podium despite the fact that *I didn't even know the rules of the tournament*.

At the time, I thought it was because I was just so damn talented, but looking back, I've come to accept my good fortune was sheer dumb luck.

However, eventually, I did learn the rules. I became very proficient in the IBJJF ruleset, and I got pretty good at winning.

But then at a certain point, **I became so obsessed with winning IBJJF medals that my Jiu-Jitsu stopped getting better**. Most of my wins during my first 6 months at purple belt were by advantage or 1-2 points.

The truth is, how you win is just as important as if you win, if you actually care about getting better.

In order to take the next step in my growth and to ultimately *stop winning by advantages*, I had to expose myself to the dreaded 2 words that were going to both scare the heck out of me and send me to the next level:

Sub-Only.

Get out of your comfort zone or risk stagnation.

If you're a points fighter, you should compete in sub-only, if you're a sub-only grappler, you should compete in points tournaments.

That doesn't mean you have to like it, but you should do it.

When you train in the gym, the environment is very safe. Your training partners (most likely) are not trying to hurt you.

In the tournament, it's a different story.

In the tournament, your opponent is doing his best to exploit the rules and defeat you, whatever the rules are.

I once lost to a guy who stalled for 10 minutes only to then beat me in EBI Overtime. I was pissed I lost, but the guy beat me fair and square. He found the hole in my game (I suck at EBI Overtime) and exploited it.

I learned a lot from that experience.

By competing, you grow. Each time you compete, you learn new lessons. But to really take your competition growth to the next level, you need to compete in new environments, different rulesets, different weight classes, gi, or no-gi. The more exposure you have to the different rules of Jiu-Jitsu, the more you learn and the smarter you become as a grappler.

This is one of the most important ways you can get better at Jiu-Jitsu faster.

Tip 7: Teaching



When I started teaching, I had constant imposter syndrome.

I didn't really start teaching until after I'd won my purple belt world title in 2019, but I still felt *completely* unqualified to show anyone anything.

But after a few weeks, I realized something: I had been teaching for *free* since I was a white belt.

Now, when you read that, you're probably thinking one of two things:

1. "Chris, why would you ever teach for free?"

Or...

2. "Chris, why would you teach as a white belt, you didn't know anything!"

The truth is, when I was a white belt, I knew 3 things. I knew how to wrestle, I knew how to D'Arce choke, and I knew how to be tough and not tap from submissions that I was put in. Where I come from, we call that *heart*.

You can't teach heart, so that meant that my teaching options were either wrestling or the D'Arce choke. I stuck with wrestling for a while, but I started teaching friends Jiu-Jitsu after I'd been training for only a few months.

See, even if you don't know a ton of Jiu-Jitsu, it's likely that you do know *something*. Teaching helps you refine your skills, analyze your own behavior, and over time, it helps you grow into a better practitioner.

I'm not saying that if you're a white belt you should try to teach the purple belt who just tapped you 3 times how to do an armbar. Do NOT be that guy, but give yourself a little credit. You might not be ready for an international seminar tour, but teaching the things you do know helps cement them into your brain.

You should figure out what you know and try to show someone else how you do it. It can be your girlfriend, yourself via a diary (or talking to yourself in a mirror, if you're one of those weirdos), or one of your fellow training partners.

There's a stigma in Jiu-Jitsu that white belts can't provide valuable information; *I call bullshit*.

Sure, I wouldn't suggest charging \$150 for private lessons as a brand new white belt, but I would recommend trying to help your friends during and after training. Being able to associate words with the movements that you're using will not only help you refine technique, but it will also help you expand your ability to learn more moves, and this will increase the rate at which you're able to digest new information.

Even if you don't want to own an academy or become a professional Jiu-Jitsu instructor, anyone who is serious about Jiu-Jitsu should develop the ability to teach.

I'm bold enough to say it's *never* too early to start teaching, as long as you've started training.

The pressure is on *you* to share good information.

Tip 8: Go Niche



Whenever I teach a lesson on lapel guard or leg locks, I always tell people that becoming highly proficient in these positions is “like having superpowers” on the mat.

There are certain positions that everyone learns in Jiu-Jitsu, like closed guard, de la riva guard, mount, or the back.

But not everyone learns lapel guard.

I have friends who are legitimate, high-level black belts who don’t know anything about lapel guards or leg locks. They have awesome Jiu-Jitsu, but if you fought them and were able to exploit these *huge* holes in their game, you certainly could give them a run for their money.

When the Danaher Death Squad competitors were first coming onto the competition scene several years ago, they were renowned for their ability to attack legs. No one could stop them because no one else had leg lock attacks and defenses that could match theirs.

Essentially, they had superpowers.

The same thing happened when Keenan Cornelius debuted the worm guard in 2014. No one had ever seen any sort of dangerous lapel guard before, and as the lapel guard game has evolved, the defensive game just hasn’t kept up.

If you learn and become highly proficient in lapel guard, you’ll be competing with superpowers. You’ll always have an ace in the hole.

It’s always been baffling to me that Jiu-Jitsu athletes will put in the work to learn the trendiest, fanciest moves, but they won’t put the same effort into learning the non-mainstream guards and submissions.

The truth is “*weird*” wins in *Jiu-Jitsu*. All you have to do is become proficient with the weirdness.

Go Against the Grain

When you go down the route of trying to learn “atypical” attacks in Jiu-Jitsu, people are going to look at you weird.

When I first started trying to learn worm guard as a blue belt in 2017, *no one* wanted to learn with me. I bought a DVD, studied it, and then applied the moves in my drilling. People did not

respect my worm guard attacks until I was on their back, choking them, *while still holding their lapel*.

Within a year, I was hitting lapel guard against some of the best guys in my division, and yes, I felt like I had superpowers. Still, my lapel guard development was *very slow* at first. You could easily learn “secret” attacks faster, especially if you use the learning strategies we’ve talked about so far.

When you see a technique that looks weird, give it a try. Try stuff. Learn. Fail. That’s why you train: to learn, experiment, and gain knowledge.

Too many grapplers are afraid to fail not only in competition but even in the gym. They hold back and only play their “A game”. I know because I’ve done it. This isn’t a sign you’re good, this is a sign of insecurity.

The path to victory in competition involves experimentation, failure, and creativity in the gym.

First, you’ll feel like a mad scientist, then you’ll feel like a wizard.

Tip 9: Periodic Total Immersion

The difference between travel and “total immersion” is that total immersion can be done anywhere. You don’t need to train with world-class opposition every day to become competent at Jiu-Jitsu. You don’t need to write 10,000 words every day to become a great writer.

You do, however, need to practice your skill *a lot*.

When preparing for Jiu-Jitsu events, I often go through these immersion camps unconsciously because I’m so obsessed with the preparation.

Without even realizing it, I’ll spend an entire day training, teaching private lessons, and lifting weights. For whatever reason, it’s easy for me to spend 5 hours on the mat without even noticing the time going by.

This time constantly focused on my skill also rapidly increases my skill development. Maybe this “tip” is cheating, but the point is, if you only approach Jiu-Jitsu as a hobby, you will only develop at the rate of a hobbyist.

Sorry to burst your bubble, but you can’t learn via osmosis. To learn, you need to practice. To

become world-class, you need to practice *a lot*. To get better faster, you need practice more.

I'm not encouraging anyone to work 12–14 hour days on anything, but I am saying that periods of total immersion in your desired skill can only help you develop quicker. For me, these intense periods of long work don't feel like work — at least for a while. When I start to feel burnt out, I try to stop working so hard.

What a concept, huh?

It's easier said than done, but if you're going to immerse yourself in something, you also need to decide when you're going to take a break.

I've done a lot of work to find my physical and mental limitations for work, both athletically and professionally. The occasional testing of limits through immersion camps is a great way to kickstart rapid improvement, especially if you're aware of your limitations.

Tip 10: Watch Videos of Yourself Doing Jiu-Jitsu (not just competing)

Most people know how important it is to study themselves through video, but most people never go past the surface level when it comes to the power of self-study.

When we go to Jiu-Jitsu tournaments, we pretty much always have someone there in our corner, and we pretty much always ask them to record our matches.

Besides the few tournaments I went to by myself as a blue belt, I have just about all of my matches somewhere on video. You're probably in the same boat.

But how often do you record yourself during training? Drilling?

Full disclosure, I learned this from a world-class black belt (Michael Liera), but it's become an integral part of my training routine. I've actually also been doing this for years in weight lifting to help perfect my form, and I've come a really long way.

You have to study yourself, along with the world around you. You can't expect to become the next Roger Gracie just by watching Roger, you also have to develop the self-awareness to understand your game and where you're at.

Study Jiu-Jitsu, study *yourself*, and you might just become a freaking monster.

Tip 11: Positional Sparring (a lot of it)



I'll be honest, for a long time, I absolutely *despised* positional sparring.

For me, there was just something incomplete about isolating specific positions in Jiu-Jitsu and repetitively sparring from there. I felt that a victory during positional sparring wasn't a "real" victory, and it wasn't something I should have felt good about.

To quote the *Catcher in the Rye*, I felt like a "*phony*".

But the problem wasn't positional sparring, the problem was that I was completely wrong not about how I approached training (like I said earlier, focusing solely on winning during training is a horrible mindset for growth).

As a grappler with a metric butt-ton of injuries, I'd say that at least 50% of your sparring should be positional sparring. This is extra important as you age.

Think about it. If you only spar with traditional rounds, you're pretty much going to spend every single round doing "positional sparring" from the seated guard or from the feet.

You're going to get really good at probably 4-5 positions, and you'll completely ignore every other aspect of the game.

For me, the most frustrating experience is when I spend 45 minutes drilling a specific technique, only to then never actually get to the position where I can use the technique during sparring.

Right after you drill something, that's the best time to spar from the position that you've been drilling. Both the attacker and defender will be most aware of the options from the position, and you'll both have a very hard time doing anything to each other.

That's the point.

A high level of skill in a specific position in Jiu-Jitsu doesn't just come from drilling and understanding concepts, it comes from spending a fuck-ton of time in that position.

Most people are not willing to spend half the amount of time in a position required to be proficient at it, much less world-class.

Below is an example of how I would go about dividing your positional sparring split if I had complete control of every aspect of your training. Nowadays, I try to do positional sparring at 3 days per week, making adjustments as necessary based on injuries, goals, and upcoming competitions.

You can mix and match the program as you like.

Gi Positional Training Plan:

Positional sparring day 1: Open guard - Lasso, Spider, De La Riva, collar sleeve

Positional sparring day 2: "Attached" Guards - Closed guard, half guard, deep half, Single-Leg X, X guard

Positional sparring day 3: Bad positions (escape focused day) - back, mount, side control, flattened half guard, turtle

No-Gi Positional Training Plan:

Positional sparring day 1: Standing opponent - seaedt guard, shin-on-shin, single leg x

Positional sparring day 2: Grounded opponent - butterfly guard, half guard, Turtle, body lock

Positional sparring day 3: Leg entanglements/bad positions - 50/50, saddle, single leg x, back, mount, side control, flattened half guard, turtle

If you train more than 3 days per week, you can add days to the program, do certain days twice, or come up with your own “specific” training schedule based on your goals.

My favorite way to do this is in groups of 3, doing 90 second rounds.

Tip 12: Conditioning (Physical)

Do you even lift, bro?

I’m going to make a bold claim here: *most Jiu-Jitsu practitioners are operating at 70% of their potential.*

That’s what happens when you don’t do any physical or mental strength and conditioning training. If you ignore one of the most important aspects of being an athlete (you know, your athleticism), you’ll probably never *actually* have the capacity to achieve your goals.

I don’t know about you, but I don’t want to be standing around the water cooler at 46 saying things like “I could have done *blah blah blah*”. I don’t want my body to be the reason I fail.

I’m totally alright with people being better than me. That’s called the evolutionary process. Some of us are going to lose in the competition. I’ve won a lot of tournaments, but in my career, I’ve taken home losses many more times than I’ve taken home gold medals.

Luckily, I’ve never blamed my strength and conditioning for my losses in Jiu-Jitsu.

The thing is, if you want to get better at Jiu-Jitsu *faster*, you need to have a body that’s able to do all of the things that I’ve listed in the mini-chapters above.

You need a ridiculously strong mind, ridiculously flawless technique, and you need to have the conditioning of a racehorse, a marathon runner, and a powerlifter at the same time. This is why martial arts are the most difficult sports on the planet: there's no physical specification. You need *everything* to be the best.

Of course, we all have certain attributes. I'm more explosive naturally and cardio does not come naturally to me. Other people have more isometric strength, and others are natural cardio machines (but seriously, fuck those people).

In order to be the best version of yourself on the mat, you have to identify your strengths and capitalize on them while simultaneously working your weaknesses up to a manageable level.

Below are two lifting programs that I've used in my career. One is more intense, and one is less so:

Sample weekly strength and conditioning plan A: "The Spartan Grappler"

- **Day 1: Back Squats 8x5, Front Squats 4x10, Calf Raises 4x10, Barbell Lunges 4x10 each leg, (Optional: Abs to finish)**
- **Day 2: Bench press 8x5, Dumbbell Bench 4x10, Bicep Curls 4x10 each arm, Tricep Extensions 4x10**
- **Day 3: Deadlifts 8x5 (progressive overload), Pull-ups (I shoot for 100 each session), RDLs 4x10, Dips 3x10**
- **Circuit (*optional*): 4 rounds, 8 exercises, 45 seconds of work followed by 15-second rest, primarily bodyweight exercises (or a kettlebell if you have access to one)**

**I dedicate 45 minutes to one hour to each strength and conditioning workout.*

If I do this program, I will also mix in low volume, high-intensity weeks along with high volume, low-intensity weeks, along with complete de-load weeks every 4 weeks. I *never* lift weights the week of a competition.

If you want to follow a less intense program that has still helped me get results, try this one:

Sample weekly strength and conditioning plan B: "The Cupcake Grappler"

- **Day 1: Back Squats 8x5, Front Squats 4x10, Leg Press 4x10, Bench Press 5x5 (Optional: Abs to finish)**
- **Day 2: Deadlifts 8x5, Pull-ups (I shoot for 100 per session), Dips 5x10, 100 Bodyweight Squats (or some other leg finisher)**

These are just 2 ways that you can structure strength and conditioning training, and there are countless more ways to go about doing it. You should always consult a professional trainer before beginning any intense workout regiment, especially if these exercises are new to you.

The point is, you need to do something *off* the mat to give yourself the body to thrive *on* the mat.

Tip 13: Quit.

Okay, *don't quit Jiu-Jitsu*, but quit doing the dumb stuff that doesn't help you get better at Jiu-Jitsu.

Once you're good at shrimping, stop freakin' shrimping up and down the mat. You're a person, not a crustacean. It's not that you can do too many shrimps (you probably can't), but *your time is limited*.

Unless you live in the gym, you probably don't have time to do pointless drills that won't help you get better and closer to your highly specific goals you set after Tip #1.

All I'm saying is that you don't see a lot of black belt world champions doing shrimping drills. They're drilling techniques that they actually use every day in training and competition.

Maybe I'll get some heat for saying this, but doing shrimp drills every day is stupid. You don't need those in your life.

Similarly, you don't need other things in your life that are holding you back from becoming the grappler that you could be.

For example, if you want to take the next step in developing your Jiu-Jitsu, you probably don't need another cookie, another beer, or to skip training and go out happy hour *again* after work. You need to focus on the things that matter and forget the things that don't. Learning this has been incredibly valuable for both my grappling and personal development.

Tip 14: Quality Rest

There's no sport that *demonizes* days off and resting like grappling sports.

Some of the best competitors in the world are known for living on the mats, training for 6 hours a day - sometimes more.

I mean, the best team in the world (the now dismantled Danaher Death Squad) prided themselves on their “no days off” training philosophy. Most of us took this as a sign that we too had to train every single day to become the best in the world.

I call bullshit. This is why:

For most of my grappling career, I’ve been overtrained, exhausted, and burned out. In fact, the only times that I ever really feel like I’m genuinely enjoying training is when I get to take a few days off before a competition.

Being rested feels *so good*. There has to be some sort of scientific benefit that says that resting is good for athletic performance, right?

Oh, that’s right. Literally, *every single sport on planet earth besides Jiu-Jitsu* encourages athletes to rest, take care of their bodies, and do the work to not only improve but find optimal performance.

Imagine what could happen if professional Jiu-Jitsu athletes started training like professional athletes instead of meathead Neandertals. Imagine if there was drug testing in Jiu-Jitsu, and athletes were forced to train like human beings instead of superheroes.

What would the top athletes do then? What would you do then?

We would all learn so much about how to actually train. However, that’s a conversation for another day.

There is something to be said for avoiding burnout, maintaining optimal physical health, and training like a professional athlete instead of a deranged lunatic.

Resting is hard. Jiu-Jitsu is fun, addicting, and you’re motivated to be the best. Overtraining in this sport is *natural*. It is not encouraged to take care of yourself.

Go against the grain and take care of your body. Take days off every now and then.

Tip 15: Enjoy Yourself (like, for real)



I get it, you want to be good at Jiu-Jitsu, and you want to be good *now*. You want everyone to look at you and be like “damn, how’d they get so good, so fast?”

You want to be impressive. You want to be memorable. You want to leave your mark.

I’ve got 4 words for you.

Hold Your Horses, Cowboy

The thing that no one talks about, thinks about, or even acknowledges in Jiu-Jitsu is the fact that one day, this whole journey is going to end.

Before you start calling me a downer, think about it. I'm right. One day when you step on the mat, whether you know it or not, is going to be the last day of your martial arts journey.

Don't run from this idea, accept it. Understand that you don't "have" to train Jiu-Jitsu, you *get* to train Jiu-Jitsu. Even if this is your job, you can always quit Jiu-Jitsu and become *literally* anything else. The world always needs more burger flippers. One day, this whole thing is going to be over.

"I cannot escape death, but at least I can escape the fear of it."— Epictetus

When you're an athlete, a martial artist, or do anything else that consumes your being like the pursuit of your Jiu-Jitsu black belt does, you're going to die twice. The point of acknowledging the end is that it allows us to fully experience the present, and that's what Jiu-Jitsu should really be about.

For me, Jiu-Jitsu has been the ultimate outlet for my anxiety, depression, and life stress. Without it, I wouldn't have become the person that I am today. I'm grateful for every single moment and every single day on the mat because I know that one day, I won't be back.

Plus, if you can acknowledge your limits and still manage to enjoy yourself, you'll be able to decrease frustration, lower neuroticism, and increase your rate of progression. By acknowledging and accepting that there will be an end, we're able to fully experience the present.

If you want to leave no stone unturned during your Jiu-Jitsu career, you have to acknowledge that one day, your Jiu-Jitsu career will be over.

Your main priority during training shouldn't be lifting weights, micro-drilling, or doing as much positional sparring as possible. Your main priority during Jiu-Jitsu training should be enjoying the limited time with the amazing people you meet on the mat, and creating memories that you'll be able to look back on and enjoy.

At the end of life, all we have is our memories. Don't sacrifice your enjoyment for the sake of progress, you'll only burn yourself out.

I know that from experience.

Conclusion

In the pages and sections above, I've listed and explained every possible way someone could get better at Jiu-Jitsu that I can possibly imagine. I'm sure I left something out, but I gave you everything I could.

Now, there's only one person standing between you and better Jiu-Jitsu, and that's *you*.

See, it's one thing to download this ebook, learn the methods, and say you studied an ebook on getting good at Jiu-Jitsu from a guy with bleach blonde hair, but it's another to actually put in the work required to get good at this insanely complicated martial art.

If I'm being honest, extended commitment to the process is *more important than anything else I've written in this book*.

Most people are afraid. They're afraid of not being good enough, they're afraid of losing, and most of all, they're afraid of what they could be if they actually gave it all they could. What stops people from pursuing skills to their fullest usually isn't a lack of talent, dedication, or hard work.

Usually, what stops us from being everything we can be is *fear*.

But that is a topic for another day and another ebook.

I hope you got something out of this and enjoyed reading the ebook at least half as much as I did writing it. If you apply the principles above, I *promise* you'll get better.

Did I leave something out? Am I a genius? Am I an idiot? Let me know. Shoot me an email, a DM on Instagram, or contact me via smoke signal to give me your thoughts on this ebook.

Last of all, if you enjoyed reading this, please share it with your friends. Word of mouth is still the best way to spread information.

Best,

- Chris

Acknowledgments

This book is dedicated to anyone who's just starting out on their Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu journey and doesn't know where to start. I was just like you once. I was a white belt who was full of ambition but completely lost when it came to finding tangible advice that I could apply to my daily life to get better faster at this sport.

This ebook is the result of 12 years of hard training, experimentation, focus, and hard work. You'll notice "work hard" *isn't* listed as one of the tips in the text, and that's because I know that if you've read this far, you are a hard worker. You don't need anyone to tell you to work hard, you need someone to give you tips and tricks on how to apply the things you learn in class and how to drill them into your brain *faster and more efficiently*.

This ebook is the resource that I wish I had when I was first starting out in grappling.

I'd like to thank my coach, [Jeff Serafin](#), for the endless life lessons provided throughout the last 6 and a half years, and my primary drill partner, [Ramses Bugarin](#), my co-mad scientist on this journey. Most of these tips are the result of our conversations and drill sessions. Finally, a special thank you to my friend Hunter, for making me believe that I had something to offer.

I'm excited to see where this wild ride takes me next.