

Now, a second reason why I strongly favor the ankle pick for developing students when they're first starting to work in the standing game is because out of all the various takedowns in jiu-jitsu, the ankle pick is probably one of the best examples of a move which has a very great correlation between the amount of risk taken when you perform the move and the potential rewards. This is a classic example of a move which has great rewards if it's done well and relatively low risk. There are many takedowns in jiu-jitsu where, and grappling in general, where if the move doesn't work, you're in hot water. Say, for example, a double leg. If I get in on Giancarlo's legs and get into a situation where he successfully sprawls on me, you're caught underneath his body weight. You get overextended here, he goes behind you, and now he's scored. Your takedown ends up with you getting scored on. You can see what went wrong there. If I didn't do a good job of managing his body weight when I get into the scoring position, you end up getting scored on. Yes, the double leg is a fine move and done well, it's a great point scorer. But done poorly, there's considerable risk with its use. Another example would be dropped Seian Agi. That's even more risky, okay? If I go into any form of Seian Agi and expose my back to my opponent, this is potentially a very, very bad position indeed, okay? Here, I'm in a situation where if my takedown fails, we're in the first 10 seconds of the match, I went for my takedown, my opponent's on my back, hit a scoring position, he might score four points here. Now, I've got to dig myself out of that grave. I've got nine and a half minutes to work with a guy started on my back who specializes in attacking from that position. That's a terrible start. Now, that's not to say dropped Seian Agi is not a fine move if done well. But let's understand that it's a move with high potential reward, but also very high risk, okay? The great thing about ankle picks is when they're done, they have a tremendous scoring potential. They really are a high percentage way of scoring. And when they're done poorly, there's not really a lot of downside to them. They're pretty safe. The reason for this is simple. When you hit ankle picks, you don't get your body caught underneath his body weight, okay? If I'm on a single leg and it fails and he puts his body weight down underneath me, I'm caught underneath Giancarlo's body weight. Now, don't get me wrong. There's things you can do here, but at the end of the day, you're underneath a talented opponent's body weight. It's never a pleasant experience. Now, contrast this with an ankle pick. In the case of an ankle pick, as we go out with our training partner, if it all goes wrong and Giancarlo steps back and away, my body's not underneath his, okay? So sure, I fail, but it didn't really cost me anything, okay? There's nothing now to stop me coming back up to my feet and just resuming the battle, okay? So one of the beauties of the ankle pick is, first, I never get caught underneath my opponent's body weight, okay? Second, there's never any back exposure. When we go to perform any one of the various ankle picks that we work with, at no point is my back exposed to my opponent. I'm always facing my opponent. So if I lose the leg and he steps out, I'm facing him, okay? As opposed to, say, for example, drop sand on you, or I come in, and from here, oh no, it's all gone to hell, okay? So that's one of the reasons why I strongly favor the idea of the ankle pick as one of your first takedown skills you want to work on. The potential reward is very high. It's a very high percentage successful takedown in competition. And when you screw it up, nothing really bad happens. You don't get caught underneath your opponent's body weight, and you don't expose your back to your opponent. So you can do it with confidence. One of my biggest problems as a coach, when I'm coaching standing position, is that students naturally tend to become gun-shy when it's time to shoot on an opponent and get in to score points whenever they start failing. And let's be honest, in Jiu-Jitsu, when you first start out, most of the time when you try moves, you fail, okay? You're a beginner. It's natural. And when you fail on a single leg, you get punished for it, okay? He gets a good heavy scrawl on me here, and it's like, oh my God, I'm digging myself out of this grave, and he's going behind me and scoring. He's getting to a clock strangle. I'm getting attacked. And, you know, you have three or four failures like that in a row, and pretty soon your confidence goes down, and you're going to stop shooting. It's just human nature. No one likes to shoot when four out

of five shots result in you getting finished, okay? What I find is that students have a lot of confidence working with ankle pegs because when they don't work, nothing bad happens. So they keep trying and trying and shooting, and they don't have that terrible effect of losing confidence the way they often do with single legs or drop sei and agi, where every time they do the move and it doesn't work, they get punished severely, okay? If we get someone who starts off with ankle pegging, and Giancarlo's got fast feet, and when I try, I miss, okay? Nothing bad happens, okay? I come back up to my feet. I try again, and he steps off. Nothing really bad happens, okay? As opposed to double leg, it doesn't work. It's like, oh my God. Now, my attempt at a score ends up with me getting scored on, or even worse, finished. So that's another reason why I strongly favor the ankle peg. It's one of your first foundational takedowns. A lot of potential reward, and very little risk.