

BJJ COMPETITION CHECKLIST

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Whether you are a person who leaves things to the last minute and flies by the seat of their pants, or if you are someone who goes through painstaking rituals to prepare for a tournament - the last thing you want is a nasty surprise or something you wish you had have thought of earlier.

By considering the following items, a fighter will ensure that they have left no stone unturned in their preparation for their upcoming fight or tournament.

I have coached BJJ athletes at countless local, international and World Championship events over the years and the following is a basic checklist of necessities you should always bring to a competition from my observation.

- Try to get a good night sleep before competition day. Being well rested and as relaxed as possible is a huge advantage. While running on pure adrenaline can work for some competitors, if you can set aside the nerves and aim for at least 8 hours sleep, you are giving yourself the best possible start to competition day.

- Familiarise yourself fully with the rule set of the organisation you are competing in. With the rise of hybrid organisations and new rule sets, it is very important to know exactly what you are getting yourself into. Don't get caught out or leave yourself open to a technique because you were unaware it was allowed.

- Make sure you have your valid ID card or registration for the competition.

- If you are competing in the Gi divisions, pack an extra Gi and belt. Make sure you are fully aware of the regulations for the Gi in the organisation you are competing in. I have witnessed several inconsistencies between officials disallowing some Gi's or belts, and allowing others with no rhyme or reason. Often times you will be forced to buy a new Gi or belt from the retail stands at the venue, or you may need to borrow one off a friend or teammate. Be prepared.

- If you are competing in the NoGi divisions, pack an extra rashguard, pair of shorts, spats or whatever you choose to wear in competition. You can never be too careful.

- Make sure your bodyweight is on point dressed in Gi where applicable. Again, you need to be familiar with the rule set of the organisation regarding weight divisions and weigh-in requirements.

Make sure you have properly clipped your fingernails and toenails. Bring a set of nail clippers just in case.

Pack a mouthguard. Even though it may not be required by the organisation, it is a good idea to have one with you if you are used to training and competing with a mouthguard.

Make sure you are at the venue at least an hour before you are scheduled to compete. Some organisations are notorious for running ahead of or behind time, and if you are not there ready to go when your name is called, you will be scratched from the competition.

If you have long hair, bring extra hair ties. You may not need them, but your teammates might.

Bring water/electrolytes or whatever you choose to rehydrate yourself between matches. It is also a good idea to bring nourishing food for when you get hungry, which is inevitable when competing in organisations that are prone to running behind schedule.

If you use music to help you focus/relax/pump you up for competition, bring your headphones and the device you use to listen with. Compile a playlist of songs that help prepare your mindset for competition.

 Make sure you have a pair of flip-flops (thongs for Australians) to save messing around with shoes and socks when you get to your allocated mat. It is also a good idea to have warm shoes and socks with you in winter, cold feet while you are waiting around between matches can be annoying.

 While waiting for your match, be sure to warm up in your usual manner. This may include stretching or mobility drills and even light rolling with one of your training partners. If you have a set routine for warming up before class or competition, use it. Have your body prepared in the same way it is used to before stepping onto the mat. If you get caught with no time to warm up, you will step onto the mat cold and go from no-activity to full intensity competition - this is a great way to expose yourself to injury.

 Remember that all BJJ matches start in the stand up position, it is very important for beginners to work hard on their stand up game in the months leading up to competition. A lot of BJJ academies neglect the stand up game in their beginner classes, so if you are just starting out be sure to have a solid stand up gameplan.

 Most of all, treat the competition as a learning experience. Whatever the outcome of your fight(s), be as mindful as possible during each match and learn as much as you can from your opponent. There is a great saying about competition which is incredibly important for anyone hoping to improve their game, “you either win, or you learn”.
