

TJJF Randori Nationals
Competition Rules and Referee Guidance
(2026 version)

Contents

Section 1: Ne-Waza competition	3
Hold downs	3
Arm locks	4
Strangles	4
Full guard/legs around waist use	5
Overview of banned Ne-Waza techniques	6
Safety	6
Ne-Waza competition scoring	6
Section 2: Tachi-Waza competition	7
Grips	7
Grip breaking	8
Encouraged Tachi-Waza style	8
Discouraged Tachi-Waza style	8
Permitted techniques	9
Banned Tachi-Waza techniques	10
Safety	11
Tachi-Waza competition scoring	11
Explanation of Ippon	11
Section 2b: Elite Competition Rules	12
Overview	12
Leg Grabs – 2026 Trial Rule	12
Scoring	12
Section 3: General competition running and referee guidance	13
Referee commands (simplified)	13
Referee hand signals	13
Referees team	15
Competition length	15
Penalties	15
Scoring and Corner Judging	16
Disqualification guidance	16
Beginning and end of a competition	16
Etiquette	16
Dress	16
Competition entry	17
Change Log	18

Section 1: Ne-Waza competition

Hold downs

- All standard Kodokan hold downs are permitted.
- The hold down must not cover the losing player's face.
- Where a hold down encircles the head, at least one of the losing player's arms must be included, e.g. Kesa Gatame. If the winning player holds around the head with both arms and fails to include their opponent's arm, it is not permitted. This is to ensure neck safety.
- A hold down must begin with both of the losing player's shoulders and back pinned down.
- A hold down is only deemed broken by turn out once the losing player has turned to a position past 90 degrees from the mat, e.g. they are considered to be more so on their front than on their back.
- A hold down is broken by encircling legs around one of the winning player's legs. Hooking a leg over is not sufficient. The losing player must be seen to have gained full control of the leg.
- When escaping a hold down, no contact of the hands with the face or neck is permitted. Furthermore, repeated contact in this way should be penalised following warning.
- **Hold down timings: 10 seconds = Waza-ari/20 seconds = Ippon.**
- **In Ne-Waza competition only: 2 x Waza-ari = Ippon.**



LEGAL: Arm protecting neck, face uncovered.



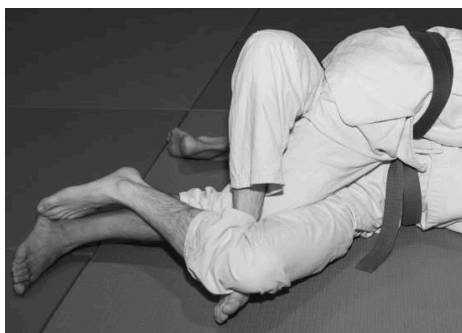
ILLEGAL: No arm protecting neck.



ILLEGAL: Face covered by hold.



ILLEGAL: Hand in face to escape hold.



HOLD BROKEN (Toketa): Leg encircled.



HOLD NOT BROKEN: Leg hooked, unsubstantial.

Arm locks

- Arm locks are permitted for Green belt and above grades only.
- All straight arm locks are permitted.
- Standard Jodan Ude Garami ('Americana') is allowed and must be seen to attack the elbow and not the shoulder joint.
- Gedan Ude Garami ('Kimura') is allowed and must be seen to attack the elbow and not the shoulder joint.



LEGAL: 'Kimura' applied to elbow joint.



ILLEGAL: 'Kimura' attacking shoulder.

Strangles

- Strangles are permitted for **Dark Blue belt** and above grades only.
- Hadaka Jime and Sangaku Jime ('leg triangle') are the only strangles permitted without the use of the gi.
- Sangaku Jime ('leg triangle') must contain an arm and not attack only the neck.
- Strangles utilising the gi are illegal if the gi is pulled across the face.



LEGAL: Sangaku Jime with arm protecting neck.



ILLEGAL: Bad 'triangle' with both legs attacking neck.



LEGAL: Hadaka Jime.



ILLEGAL: Gi pulled across face attempting strangle.

Full guard/legs around waist use

- Loose/open guard is permitted as long as the player using it is making frequent valid attempts to move into a dominant position from it.
- Locked guard (linked/crossed feet) is permitted provided valid attacks are immediate and frequent.
- Locked guard without attacking action should be penalised if repeated after warning.
- Passive guard, e.g. just lying in guard without attempt to gain a dominant position, should be penalised if repeated after warning.



LEGAL: An open guard without feet locked. If feet are locked, valid attacks must be immediate and frequent.

Overview of banned Ne-Waza techniques

- Wrist locks, head locks, leg locks and ankle locks are not permitted in any circumstance.
- Hold downs that encircle the head without at least one of the losing player's arms are not permitted.
- Any techniques that cover the face, potentially restricting breathing, are not permitted.

Safety

- At all times the referee must be able to see exactly what is going on.
- In many cases this may necessitate the referee dropping to the mat for a clear view.
- The above is of utmost importance especially when a hold down, strangle or arm lock is being employed.
- A visual communication with the losing player is necessary to be sure they have not:
 - lost (or about to lose) consciousness;
 - lost the ability to tap (arm trapped);
 - become distressed by the situation.
- If one or both players leave the fighting area, the contest is stopped and restarted in the centre.

Warnings and subsequent penalties must be awarded in the following situations:

- During the kneeling grapple a player is pushed back directly over their ankles with force.
- When at any point hands are used to grab or push the opponent's face or neck.
- When attempting to turn out of a hold down a player endangers their own shoulder when the arm is trapped behind them.
- Badly employed strangles where the gi is pulled across the face.
- Viciously applied arm locks and strangles without care for the other player's safety.



SAFETY: Referee maintaining visual (verbal if felt necessary) contact with losing player during strangle.



ILLEGAL: Opponent pushed backwards over ankles.

Ne-Waza competition scoring

- A hold down of 10 seconds = Waza-ari.
- A hold down of 20 seconds = Ippon (contest win/over).
- A submission from arm lock or strangle = Ippon (contest win/over).
- 3 x Shido (penalty point) = Hansoku Make/Disqualification (contest win/over).
- Where both players have scored Waza-ari yet one has accrued more penalties, the penalised player loses.
- Where one player has scored Waza-ari yet also accrued 2 penalties (with the other player having scored nothing and accrued no penalties), the scores cancel out and extra time may be given.

Section 2: Tachi-Waza competition

Grips

- Permitted/encouraged grips include:
 - Sleeve/Lapel
 - Sleeve/Collar
- The following grips are permitted, as long as periods without attack do not exceed 5 seconds:
 - Double sleeve;
 - Cross sleeve/lapel, e.g. both hands on same side of jacket;
 - Deep grips over either shoulder onto back of the gi with other hand holding sleeve;
 - Sleeve/Belt grip.
- The following grips are not permitted:
 - Pistol gripping of sleeve (holding the sleeve in a fist);
 - Pocket gripping of sleeve (fingers inside sleeve);
 - Reverse hand on lapel (gripping lapel with thumb down);
 - Collar grip where the opponent's gi is pulled over their head;
 - Any gripping or seizing of legs;
 - Wrestling grips such as clinching around waste or pickup grips.



ENCOURAGED: Sleeve lapel grip.



ENCOURAGED: Sleeve collar grip.



3-5 SECONDS: Double sleeve grip.



3-5 SECONDS: Cross lapel grip.



3-5 SECONDS: Deep grip on back of gi.



3-5 SECONDS: Belt grip.



ILLEGAL: Pistol grip.



ILLEGAL: Pocket grip.

Grip breaking

- Positively breaking an opponent's grip from your gi is permitted as long as a valid attack follows immediately (within 3-5 seconds).
- Double handed grip breaking is not permitted.
- Repetitive grip breaking without attack should be penalised following warning.
- Grip blocking, e.g. preventing your opponent taking hold of your gi, is not permitted and should be penalised following warning.

Encouraged Tachi-Waza style

- Loose grips allowing free movement of arms at all times.
- Slightly bent arms.
- Upright posture/hips forward.
- Feet no more than a metre apart.
- Frequent genuine throwing attacks.

Discouraged Tachi-Waza style

- Straight arms.
- Stiff arms.
- Defensive posture (Jigotai): hips set far back from opponent and bent over.
- Wide stance preventing free movement.
- Passivity: long periods without valid attack (30 seconds).



ENCOURAGED: Loose/positive upright posture.



DISCOURAGED: Stiff arms.



DISCOURAGED: Jigotai (defensive posture).

Permitted techniques

- All standing throwing techniques found in the Kodokan Gokyo or on TJJF syllabus (with the exceptions below).
- Sacrifice throws are permitted, however flops/fake attacks should be discouraged and penalised if persisted.

Banned Tachi-Waza techniques

- All single and double handed leg grabs (including Kata Guruma).
- All wrestling style pickups and take downs.
- Kani Basami (crab scissor throw) or any similar technique which could cause danger to the knees.
- Kubi Nage (neck throw) or any similar technique which could cause danger to the neck.
- Toshi style throws that block/straighten the knee.
- Standing arm, wrist and head locks
- Standing strangles.
- All striking techniques.
- Gripping any part of the body (e.g. the wrist) instead of the gi.



ILLEGAL: Double leg grab.



ILLEGAL: Single leg grab.



ILLEGAL: Kata Guruma.



ILLEGAL: Knee blocked by attacking leg.



ILLEGAL: Kani Basami.

Safety

- Players attempting to avoid being thrown by twisting out onto their front whilst airborne should be warned and penalised if attempts persist.
- If one or both players leave the fighting area, the contest must be stopped and restarted in the centre.
- Attempts at sweeping techniques should be monitored for knee safety.
- Neck safety is paramount at all times. The following situations must be controlled and penalised:
 - Kubi Nage style throws that over pressure the neck;
 - the gi being pulled over the head;
 - gripping the back of the neck not the gi;
 - throws that result in the thrown player landing on their head.
- Knee safety is paramount at all times. The following situations must be controlled and penalised:
 - Kani Basami style throws;
 - any throw that locks the knee out straight.

Tachi-Waza competition scoring

- Waza-ari and Ippon are the only scores awarded in Tachi-Waza (see explanation of Ippon below).
- 2 x Ippons = contest win/contest over.
- Elite competition (historically known as the Open): 1 x Ippon = contest win/contest over.
- Waza-ari scores should be awarded but do not add up to an Ippon.
- A higher Ippon score at full time (1 Ippon vs 0 Ippon) = contest win to the player with the Ippon.
- Waza-ari and Shido scoring only counts to determine the winner when the contest ends at full time with no difference in Ippon scoring.
- Where there are no scores yet one player is penalised = contest win to opponent.
- 1 x Ippon scores higher than 2 x Penalty against; however
- 3 x Penalty = contest win to opponent regardless if player has 1 Ippon score (contest over).
- Waza-ari scores count towards a contest win at full time.
- If no scoring techniques are performed, additional contest time should be avoided, and the winner should be determined by corner judges and head referee awarding the win on the basis of more 'positive play' or genuine attempts at techniques (See additional scoring section for more information).

Explanation of Ippon

Ippon is awarded for a throw ending with an opponent largely on their back, demonstrating full control, speed, and having such amplitude that the feet of the player receiving the action leave the mat.

Considering the definition above it will be easy for many of our larger throws to be awarded Ippon. It is important to note however, that it is not necessary that the throw be airborne. Smaller throws such as O Uchi Gari and Ko Uchi Gari may be awarded Ippon provided that they have the key elements of Ippon - full control and speed. In these cases, as long as the feet have been swept cleanly and the landing is fast and controlled, Ippon should be awarded.

Ippon is not awarded where the throw lacks one or more of the key elements. However, if the referee feels that the throw was of quality and demonstrated some of the attributes described above for Ippon, then a Waza-ari is awarded.

Section 2b: Elite Competition Rules

Overview

- The Elite category operates under the standard Tachi-Waza and Ne-Waza rules set out in Sections 1 and 2, with the following modifications and additions.
 - Contest length is 5 minutes. A single Ippon ends the contest immediately.
 - Content includes transitions from Tachi-Waza to Ne-Waza, scoring can be cumulative between the two.
 - The Elite category is typically open to higher grades, subject to entry numbers, at the discretion of the Head Referee.

Leg Grabs – 2026 Trial Rule

A modified leg grab rule is being trialled in the Elite category at the 2026 Randori Nationals. The following rules apply in place of the standard blanket prohibition on leg attacks.

- **Direct leg attacks remain prohibited.** Initiating an attack that targets the leg(s) as the primary action will be penalised with a Shido.
- **Combination attacks concluding with a single-arm leg attack are permitted.** Where a player initiates a recognised throwing combination and the final phase of that combination results in a leg attack, this is permitted provided the leg is gripped with one hand or arm only.
- **Double leg attacks remain banned in all circumstances.** Using both hands or arms to grip, lift, or attack the legs simultaneously is not permitted regardless of context and will be penalised.
- **Bearhug-style attacks are permitted,** provided the hands are not connected or gripped together. Claspings or interlocking the hands behind the opponent is not permitted and will result in a Shido.

Scoring

- A single Ippon ends the contest. Waza-ari scores are recorded and can accumulate to Ippon.
- If no Ippon is scored at full time, the winner is determined by the higher Waza-ari count, or failing that by Shido differential, or failing that by majority decision of corner judges and head referee on the basis of positive play.
- Three Shido accumulations result in Hansoku-make and disqualification from the contest. The nature of the infringement determines whether the competitor may continue in the competition (see Disqualification guidance, Section 3).

Section 3: General competition running and referee guidance

Referee commands (simplified)

- Rei = Bow.
- Hajime = Begin fighting.
- Matte = Stop fighting.
- Shido = Light penalty point.
- Hansoku Make = Disqualification.
- Ippon = Full point/Contest win.
- Waza-ari = Half point.
- Waza-ari Awasete Ippon = Two Waza-ari adding up to Ippon (*used in Ne-Waza only*).
- Osae Komi = Hold down on.
- Toketa = Hold down broken.

Referee hand signals

The referee's hand signals are just as important as the commands and must be used. They assist the referee's team, and also the spectators of the contest in understanding what is happening. Some key hand signals are included below.



Hajime (Start fighting): 2 hands down.



Matte (Stop fighting): Raised hand.



Osae Komi: Hand held over players.



Shido: Referee points to offending player when issuing penalty.



Gi adjustment: Referee signals to untidy player.



Ippon: Hand held above head.



Waza-ari: Hand held out to side.



Score cancelled: Signalled by the hand waving in and out above the head to cancel score.



Toketa (hold down broken): Signalled by the hand waving inwards and outwards next to body.



Passivity warning: The rolling of the hands to signify the penalty cause.

Referees team

- Made up of a minimum of a referee, a time keeper and a corner judge.
- Additional corner judges may also be placed in the team.
- The time keeper sits opposite the referee's starting position.
- Corner judges sit outside the contest area in the corners of the area.
- When only two corner judges are present, they should sit diagonally opposite each other.
- No spectators are allowed within the mat area at any time.

Competition length

- The length of both Ne-Waza and Tachi-Waza competitions will be 3 minutes.
- The length of the Elite competition will be 5 minutes.
- The time keeper may stop the watch during periods of non action as called by the referee.

Penalties

- The referee reserves the right to issue penalties for any foul play they identify.
- The process for penalising a player is a first, second, then third 'Penalty'.
- Once three penalties are awarded against a player, Hansoku Make (disqualification) is issued and the contest is over.
- The referee reserves the right to move directly to Hansoku Make at any time if they feel it is deserved.

Scoring and Corner Judging

- The preference is to use secondary scores (Waza-ari / Shido) to award the win where possible. Extra time should be avoided to prevent competition over-running.
- If there is no scoring difference, corner judges should be consulted to award the win via majority decision. This should be signalled using Red/White flags if available, raised after the contestants have bowed their heads. If flags are not available, the relevant arm should be raised to indicate the winning contestant.
- Corner judges have the ability to indicate disagreement with a score by showing a hand signal for the alternative score. The mat referee may temporarily pause the contest, cancel the original score, and award a new score at their discretion.
- Corner judges should also flag to the mat referee if they see something that the referee may have missed.

Disqualification guidance

- Shido: two (2) Shido can be awarded; a third results in Hansoku-make. The athlete is disqualified from that contest but may continue in the competition (e.g. in consolation brackets), if applicable. This generally applies where the competitor has not been reckless, unsafe, or aggressive.
- Hansoku-make (outright): the athlete is disqualified and cannot continue in the competition. This is reserved for behaviours unbecoming of TJJF members, including aggression, unsafe practices without control, or disrespectful behaviour.

Beginning and end of a competition

- Prior to the contest the players will wait at the edge of the contest area (centre mat edge) until the referee invites them to enter the contest area.
- Once invited the players will first Rei into the contest area then approach the centre of the mat standing to the left and right of the referee on the marker mat or tape lines.
- On instruction both players will Rei to the referee and then each other.
- The referee signals Hajime and the contest begins.
- At the end of the contest the players take their initial positions then the procedure is to Rei to each other, then to the referee, then to walk to the edge of the mat area and Rei out.
- Belts should not be removed until well out of the contest area.

Etiquette

- All fighting will be performed in a friendly and competitive manner. If the referee feels aggression is being shown, they are within their right to penalise or disqualify either or both competitors.
- The referee's decision is final in all matters.
- Questioning the referee's decision will result in immediate disqualification.
- Swearing at the referee or opponent will result in immediate disqualification.
- Gi adjustments will be made on one knee.
- All other etiquette expected of TJJF members applies to our Randori Nationals competitions.

Dress

- Each player will wear a clean white or blue gi (a combination of both is not permitted).
- All players are permitted to wear a t-shirt/rashguard or similar under-gi garment if preferred (this has to be plain and not brightly coloured).
- Each player will wear either a red or white belt.
- Hair must be clean and tied back if long.
- No jewellery is to be worn.

Competition entry

- Players will be entered into an appropriate category based on sex/gender, weight, and TJJF grade (Clarification of entry categories for competition has been shared with all instructors).
- If the referee feels the player has been misplaced, e.g. clearly having a weight advantage or disadvantage, the player can be re-entered provided it is feasible to do so at that time.
- It is the responsibility of club instructors to provide genuine weight entries (kg) for their students.
- Players who hold relevant non TJJF grades will be placed in higher categories at the discretion of the Head Referee.
- Those competitors who hold relevant non-TJJF grades will be placed in higher categories at the discretion of the Head Referee. All relevant non-TJJF grades need to be declared using the [Declaration of relevant non-TJJF grades and experience form](#) prior to the closing date for registration. If this has not been declared, then entry will not be allowed. Speak to your instructor if this applies to you as the form needs to be completed by them.
- Players who hold relevant non TJJF grades must be graded within TJJF in order to compete. In the loop-hole situation of a genuine 'new to TJJF' case novice with another grade, the competitor's instructor must verify how long they have been training within TJJF in order to genuinely establish that they are not a 'ringer'. This process must take place prior to the closing date for registration.

Change Log

Section	Change	Version
S1 – Ne-Waza	Strangles grade threshold raised from Light Blue to Dark Blue belt and above.	2026
	Locked guard rule: removed the “every 3–5 seconds” frequency qualifier; attacks must simply be immediate and frequent.	
	Ne-Waza scoring: penalty bullet reworded to “3 x Shido (penalty point)” for clarity.	
	Ne-Waza scoring: removed both Golden Score bullets (first hold down ending the contest, and penalties not ending golden score time).	
S2 – Tachi-Waza	Banned techniques: “Standing arm locks”, “Standing wristlocks”, and “Standing headlocks” consolidated into a single line: “Standing arm, wrist and head locks”.	
	Scoring: two new bullets added – (1) a higher Ippon score at full time wins the contest; (2) Waza-ari and Shido scoring only applies when Ippon scores are level at full time.	
	Scoring: Golden Score bullets replaced with guidance that if no scoring techniques are performed, the winner should be determined by corner judges and head referee on the basis of positive play.	
	Referee commands: removed Hiki Waki (Draw), Hantei (Decision), and Sona Mama (Freeze) from the simplified commands list.	
S3 – General	New section added: Scoring and Corner Judging – covers preference for secondary scores, flag/arm signal decision procedure, and corner judges’ ability to flag disagreements.	
	New section added: Disqualification guidance – distinguishes between Hansoku-make where a player may continue (accumulated Shido) versus cannot continue (aggression, unsafe or disrespectful behaviour).	
	Competition length: removed the bullet permitting one additional minute of extra time for a draw; simplified Elite competition description (removed “previously known as the Open” parenthetical).	
	Clarified submission process for non-TJJF grades — Club Instructors should now submit prior experience directly to the National Organising Team, with contact to Gareth Horgan retained as an alternative. The note about the website only supporting Judo grades has been removed.	
	Minor corrections: “Addition corner judges” corrected to “Additional”; “competition” corrected to “competitions” in competition length.	
S2b – Elite	New section added: Section 2b Elite Competition Rules – covers scoring differences, and a 2026 trial of modified leg grab rules in the Elite category (combination single-arm leg attacks and bearhug-style attacks permitted; direct and double leg attacks remain banned).	