FREE BEGINNER STARTER GUIDE

BJJ Beginner Starter Guide

A 4-week starter plan for complete beginners: solo drills, core positions, basic escape ideas, hygiene and etiquette, and a simple weekly checklist.

Shrimp · Bridge · Stand-up

Guard · Mount · Side · Back

Hygiene & etiquette

Learn submissions with a coach

What this is not

Medical advice, a gym membership, a class, or a substitute for a qualified coach.

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GETTING STARTED

How to use this guide

This is a written starter plan for people who are new to Brazilian jiu-jitsu. Use it alongside a class if you have one, or as a way to learn the names of movements and positions before you walk onto a mat. It is published by Home Corner Boxing as a free PDF. There is no email signup and nothing here is for sale.

- Read the safety notes before you get on the floor.
- Practice the solo drills slowly, on a mat if you have one, with enough space to lie down and sit up without hitting furniture.
- Learn submissions, sparring, and live "rolling" only under a qualified coach in a class. Do not practice submissions at home with a friend.
- The weekly checklists are optional. Skip a day if you are sore, confused, or tired. There is no prize for finishing in exactly 28 calendar days.
- If something in a class conflicts with a line in this PDF, follow the coach in the room — and use your own judgment about pain and safety.

Who this is for

Complete beginners, and people who have watched BJJ and want a clear, conservative place to start. This guide does not assume you already have a gym, a gi, or a training partner. It also does not invent a school, a coach, a schedule, or a price for you.

READ THIS FIRST

Safety notes

Talk with a doctor before you start

This is not medical advice and not a training plan from a certified coach. Grappling can be vigorous. It includes close contact, work on the ground, and — in class — joint locks and chokes. If you are new to exercise, returning from an injury, or have a health condition, talk with a doctor or other clinician before you begin.

Submissions belong in a class

A submission is a technique meant to make a partner tap, such as a joint lock or a choke. Learn these only under a qualified coach, on a mat, with rules the school actually uses. Do not try them on family, friends, or strangers to "see if they work," and do not treat videos or this PDF as a license to crank a joint.

Tapping

- Tap your partner, or say "tap," when something feels sharp, scary, too tight, or stuck. Tap early. Pride is not worth a joint.
- If your partner taps, release immediately and completely. That is the agreement.
- If you cannot tap with your hands, use your voice. Both people should be listening.

Solo practice at home

- Clear enough space to lie down, sit up, and scoot without hitting a table, a wall, or a lamp.
- A folding mat is helpful; a clean carpet is a cautious stand-in. Hard floors are a poor place to learn these movements.
- Move slowly. These drills are for comfort and coordination, not for speed or for "winning."
- Stop if you feel sharp pain, dizziness, or unusual shortness of breath. Neck, knees, and lower back deserve extra care. Do not force a range of motion you do not have.

What this guide will not claim

It will not tell you how quickly you will earn a belt, how many calories you will burn, or that a drill "always works" against a resisting person. It will not list classes, instructors, testimonials, or prices. When a school's rule differs from a general note here, the school in front of you is the one to ask.

MOVEMENT YOU CAN PRACTICE ALONE

Shrimp, bridge, and technical stand-up

These three movements show up in a lot of beginner warm-ups. Practice them slowly, one at a time. A short session — even five or ten careful repetitions per side — is enough. You do not need a partner for this page.

Shrimp (hip escape)

Lie on your back. Turn slightly toward one side, plant the foot of the top-side leg, and push your hips away from an imaginary partner so you make space and travel on the mat. Your shoulders and hips leave the "flat on your back" position and you get onto your side. Then reset and try the other side. The point is to make room with your hips, not to kick wildly or to crank your neck. If you feel stuck, make the movement smaller.

Bridge

Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet on the floor, roughly under your knees. Press through your feet and lift your hips, then lower with control. In class, a bridge is often used to unbalance someone sitting on you. At home, practice only the lift and the turn of the hips, without throwing your head back hard. Keep it comfortable. If your neck or lower back complains, stop and shrink the range.

Technical stand-up

From a seated position, one hand posts on the mat behind you and the opposite foot plants. You lift your hips, sweep the other leg back, and stand in a balanced stance, keeping your eyes forward rather than folding your head down. Do this slowly. The idea is a controlled way to get up from the ground, not a jump. Practice both sides if you can, and hold a wall if you need help with balance at first.

How much is enough?

There is no required repetition count in this guide. A few clean, unhurried repetitions beat a long set with sloppy form. Rest between sides. If you also go to class, treat these drills as a supplement, not as a second workout you have to "smash" the same day.

NAMES YOU WILL HEAR IN CLASS

Guard, mount, side control, and back

BJJ is organized around positions — who is on top, who is on the bottom, and how the legs and hips are placed. These four are a useful starter set. The descriptions below are orientation, not a complete curriculum. You will learn the details, and the many variations, with a coach.

Guard

You are on your back or your hip, and your legs are used to control a partner who is in front of you. Closed guard means your ankles are crossed behind their back. There are many open-guard variations. From here, beginners often work on holding, framing with the arms, and recovering when someone tries to pass the legs.

Mount

The person on top is sitting over the partner's torso, facing them, usually with knees on the mat. It is generally considered a strong top position in class and in sport. If you are on the bottom, the first job is usually to keep your elbows in, avoid panicking, and work toward an escape you have been taught — not to push the person straight up with locked arms.

Side control

The person on top is chest-to-chest at the partner's side, rather than sitting on the hips (mount) or hanging onto the back. Hips and chest stay low. On the bottom, people often work to get onto their side, keep frames (forearms or hands making structure), and recover their guard or their knees.

Back control

The person in control is behind their partner, often with their legs hooked around the hips ("hooks") and their chest close to the back. In class this is a commonly taught scoring or controlling position. If you are the person in front, staying calm, protecting your neck as you have been shown, and turning to face your partner are themes you will hear — again, learn the details with a coach.

You do not need to memorize every variation before a first class. If you can recognize these four names when a coach says them, you already have a useful head start.

PATTERNS TO RECOGNIZE — TIMING BELONGS IN CLASS

Basic escape ideas

Escapes are how you improve a bad position. The notes below describe common beginner ideas in plain language. They are not a promise that a movement will work against someone who is resisting you, and they are not a complete set of steps. Practice the solo movements at home if you want; learn the timing, the grips, and the partner details with a qualified coach.

From mount: make space, get to your side

A frequent beginner lesson is some form of elbow-escape or hip-escape from mount: elbows stay close to your body, you shrimp your hips out to make a little room, and you try to get a knee or your guard back in front of the person on top. Another common lesson is a bridge-and-roll (sometimes taught as trapping an arm and a foot, then bridging). Neither should be done as a wild buck. Ask a coach to show you which version that school wants first, and practice it slowly with a cooperative partner in class.

From side control: frames, then your side

On the bottom in side control, beginners are often taught to keep frames — a structure with the forearms or hands so the person on top cannot sink chest-to-chest for free — and to turn onto their side rather than stay flat. From there, the lesson is usually to recover the guard or to get to the knees. The shrimp from page 4 is the solo movement underneath a lot of this. Do not hold your breath, and do not push with a locked, straight arm into someone's throat.

From the back: protect, then face them

If someone has your back, a typical first theme is to stay calm, keep your chin down and your hands in a position the coach has shown to protect your neck, and work to remove hooks so you can turn and face the person. This is not a solo drill you should invent with a choke from a housemate. Watch, then practice in class at a controlled pace.

A hard limit

If an escape in class involves a submission, or if a partner is putting real pressure on a joint or your neck, you are no longer in "solo homework" territory. Slow down, tap if you need to, and let the coach run the room.

HOW YOU SHOW UP ON THE MAT

Hygiene and etiquette

BJJ is close-contact training. Clean habits protect you and everyone else in the room. Schools may have their own written rules; follow those. The list below is a common, practical baseline — not a medical protocol and not a claim about any one academy.

Hygiene

- Wash your gi, rash guard, and shorts after every class. Do not leave a damp gi in a bag.
- Arrive clean, with clean hair tied back if it is long, and with fingernails and toenails trimmed short and smooth.
- Keep cuts covered as the school directs. If you have a skin infection, rash, or something that might spread (for example ringworm), stay off the mat and get it looked at. Training through that is not a favor to your partners.
- Bare feet on the mat, shoes off. Don't step on the mat with street shoes, and don't walk into the bathroom and back onto the mat barefoot if the school asks you not to.
- Bring a water bottle if that is allowed. Wipe down as the school prefers.

Etiquette

- Be on time if you can. If you are late, wait for a nod from the coach before you step in.
- Listen when the coach is demonstrating. Save questions for the moment they invite them, or for after class.
- Match the pace of a smaller or newer partner. "Going hard" on a first-day student is not a skill.
- Tap early, and release immediately when you are tapped.
- Jewelry, gum, and sharp objects come off before you train.
- Thank your partners. If you bump heads or catch someone with a stray elbow, check on them.
- Follow that school's greeting, bow, or line-up habit if they have one. You do not need to pretend you already know it on day one — watching for ten seconds is enough.

You can say no

If a drill or a roll feels unsafe, too fast, or beyond what you have been taught, you can sit out or ask for a slower partner. A good room will not punish you for that. This guide cannot speak for every school, but you are allowed to protect your body.

WEEKS 1 AND 2

A 4-week starter program

This is a light, optional plan. If you have a class, that class is the main event; the solo work is only practice for movements you can do safely alone. Two or three short home sessions a week are plenty. Rest when you need to. If you do not have a school yet, you can still do the solo drills and the reading, then use a first class as the moment you start learning partner work.

Week 1

Arrive, get comfortable, start the movements

If you can go to a class: Visit once or twice if that works for your body and your schedule. Tell the coach you are new. Watch the shape of the class. You do not have to roll on day one.

At home, on a mat or carpet: Rehearse the shrimp and the bridge, slowly, a few repetitions per side. Stop while the movement still feels tidy.

Habits: Read the safety and hygiene pages. Trim your nails. If you already have a rash guard or a gi, wash it after you wear it. If you do not, wait until the school tells you what to buy.

Week 2

Add the technical stand-up and the four positions

Class: Keep going if you have one. Ask the name of a position when you are lost. Thank your partners.

At home: Keep shrimp and bridge. Add the technical stand-up, both sides if you can, using a wall for balance if you need it. After a short drill session, read the position page and see whether you can picture guard, mount, side control, and back control.

Still off limits at home: Submissions, rolling, and “trying it out” on a housemate.

> If week 1 already left you very sore, repeat it instead of adding the stand-up. Soreness that is just tired muscles can ease with rest; sharp or lingering joint pain is a reason to stop and, if it does not settle, to get it looked at.

WEEKS 3 AND 4

Finish the month, keep it light

Week 3

Connect drills to escape ideas — still slowly

Class: When a coach teaches an escape from mount or side control, notice how the shrimp or the bridge shows up. Ask them to watch one repetition if that is welcome in that room.

At home: Continue the three solo drills. You can make them a little smoother, not necessarily faster or more numerous. Mentally review the escape ideas on page 6. Do not add resistance at home, and do not invent a new move because a video looked impressive.

Week 4

Review, write a few notes, keep going to class

Class: A regular week, if your body is happy. You are still a beginner at the end of four weeks. That is expected.

At home: Run through shrimp, bridge, and technical stand-up once more as a review. Use the checklist on the next page to see what you actually did, not what you wish you had done.

Write down two or three questions for a coach: a position you still cannot picture, a drill that felt awkward, or whether you are ready for a specific class type (gi vs no-gi, fundamentals vs mixed). This is the end of the written month, not a promotion and not a test.

After these four weeks

Keep learning in a supervised class if you have found a school that treats you well. You can repeat the solo drills any time as a short warm-up. You do not need a new PDF to “level up,” and this guide will not invent a belt timeline for you. If you also train boxing at home, the free bag-work plan and log are on homecornerboxing.com/free-downloads — keep those as boxing work, and keep BJJ partner work on the mat with a coach.

TICK ONLY WHAT YOU ACTUALLY DID

Week-by-week checklist

This is a record, not a streak you have to protect. Leave a box empty if you skipped that item on purpose or needed rest.

Week	I can tick this if it is true
Week 1	☐ I read the safety notes and the hygiene page.
	☐ I talked with a doctor or clinician if that applies to me.
	☐ I practiced the shrimp, slowly, both sides.
	☐ I practiced the bridge, slowly, and stopped if it felt sharp.
	☐ I visited a class, or I noted that I have not found one yet.
Week 2	☐ I reviewed shrimp and bridge.
	☐ I practiced the technical stand-up (a wall is fine for balance).
	☐ I can name guard, mount, side control, and back control.
	☐ I did not practice submissions or rolling at home.
Week 3	☐ I kept the three solo drills tidy rather than making them harder.
	☐ I read the escape-ideas page.
	☐ In class (if I went), I asked or watched how a shrimp shows up in an escape.
Week 4	☐ I did a short review of all three solo drills.
	☐ I wrote two or three questions for a coach, or for my future first class.
	☐ I remembered that four weeks does not make me “done.”
	☐ I know submissions still belong in a supervised class.

Optional notes (injuries mentioned to a coach, days I rested, a school rule I need to remember):

SHORT DEFINITIONS

Glossary

Back control
Controlling a partner from behind, often with hooks.

Bridge
Lifting the hips off the mat from your back.

Frame
A structure with the arms or hands that makes it harder for a partner to close space.

Gi
The jacket-and-pants uniform used in many classes.

Guard
A bottom position using the legs to control a partner in front of you.

Hooks
Feet or legs used, from the back, to help control a partner's hips.

Mount
A top position sitting over a partner's torso, facing them.

No-gi
Training without the gi, usually in a rash guard and shorts.

Roll / sparring
Live practice with a resisting partner, in a supervised class.

Shrimp (hip escape)
Scooting the hips away to make space and turn onto your side.

Side control
A top position at the partner's side, chest-to-chest.

Submission
A technique meant to make a partner tap. Learn it with a coach.

Tap
The stop signal: a hand tap or a verbal "tap." Release immediately.

Technical stand-up
A controlled way of standing up from the ground with a posted hand and a base.

A closing reminder

Talk with a doctor or other clinician before you start if you are new to exercise, returning from an injury, or have a health condition. Learn submissions only under a qualified coach. Tap early, and release immediately when your partner taps. Stop if you feel sharp pain, dizziness, or unusual shortness of breath. This guide is free educational material from Home Corner Boxing. It is not a gym, not a class, not a ranking, and not medical or coaching advice. © 2026 Home Corner Boxing. All rights reserved.