

# Breakfalling

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## BREAKFALLING TECHNIQUES

(Ukemi)

Learning to fall correctly is a key skill in judo as it reduces the risk of injury. In addition, confident judoka will steadily improve their overall skills when they are not afraid of falling, as they will be able to try new techniques without being injured.

This ability to fall correctly and safely is also important from a self-defence point of view, because if you are thrown to the ground unexpectedly, your ability to fall correctly will save you from injury and thus enable you to fight back or even escape. The most important parts of the body to protect when falling are the head, neck and base of the spine.

Ukemi (Breakfalls)

Ukemi, or breakfalls, are not only a way of falling safely, but is also an important way to strengthen the muscles of the body, which in turn helps cushion the body against the shock of the fall. The continuous practice of ukemi achieves this through the striking action of the arms and legs when

you are being thrown, or when you practise falling techniques. This extends to the muscles of the back and, through the correct practice of keeping your

head tucked in when falling, helps to develop and strengthen the neck muscles.

This also has enormous benefits to groundwork as it allows you to keep your head tucked in to protect your neck, thus preventing your opponent's hands and arms from reaching under your chin to apply strangleholds

around your neck. It also helps you to recover quickly when you fall or are thrown to the ground in a self-defence scenario.

Having mastered the ukemi, you will also be more confident to attack in randori because you will have less fear of being thrown.

Ukemi also allows you to help less experienced judoka learn their throwing techniques, as you will be less likely to suffer injury when being thrown.

There are four forms of Ukemi: backward, to either side, front fall, or the forward roll.

The main points to remember when falling.

- Strike the mat hard with one of both arms.
- Curve your back.
- Tuck your chin to your chest so that your head does not hit the mat, keeping your tongue away from your teeth.
- Start from a low position and gradually work up to a standing position.

Never cross your feet. If you are performing a left zempo-kiaten (forward rolling break fall) then your left foot should be forward, if it's a right zempo-kiaten, your right foot should be forward.