



WRESTLING 101

The purpose of this guide is to generate new interest and awareness among parents whose children want to participate in the exciting and rewarding sport of wrestling.

The Difference Between Real Wrestling and “Professional Wrestling”

If you have been exposed to wrestling at the youth, middle school, high school or college level, you may already realize that “Professional Wrestling” (i.e. WWE) as depicted on television is entirely different from the actual sport of wrestling. So different, in fact there is little, if anything in common. Consider this comparison:

Real Wrestling	“Professional Wrestling”
Based on self-discipline, hard work, skill and determination.	Based on theatrics, entertainment value and shock factor.
Conducted on a mat with regulation shoes, singlet, kneepads and headgear.	Conducted in a ring with boots and outrageous costumes.
Physically demanding, but relatively safe and non-violent. Does not involve or even tolerate actions intended to cause injury.	Violent in nature with contestants depicting punching, kicking, body slams, etc.
World-class wrestlers utilize skills, strength and endurance developed over a lifetime of practice and hard work.	Showcase events typically involve participants with no real wrestling experience.

What Should Parents and Kids Know About Wrestling?

Wrestling is perhaps the purest form of athletic competition to exist in the realm of organized sports. There are no bats or balls, pucks or sticks. No pads or helmets or jerseys. There’s no time to rethink strategy, regroup or even to catch your breath. There’s only you and your opponent of equal weight and size. Experience, preparation and the will to succeed will determine the victor. Wrestling involves a unique balance of practically every aspect of physical and psychological conditioning. Strength is as important as stamina. Speed as technique, strategy as intensity and power as is coordination. However, it’s not always the natural athlete that ultimately succeeds in the sport – it’s the natural competitor.

Kids that are strong for their weight, well coordinated and naturally aggressive are usually more successful early on in this sport. However, it’s the kids that *really* enjoy the sport who eventually achieve the highest levels of success. Some kids that thrive on competition often surprise parents and coaches by eventually surpassing more naturally gifted kids through hard work and preparation.

Although it is wise for parents and coaches to de-emphasize winning, victories can be extremely gratifying because of the strong sense of personal achievement. The effort put forth in practice and preparation is apparent in competition, and not lost in team effort. This aspect of wrestling can be a great motivator and teacher, and can develop a person’s work ethic, self-confidence and ability to achieve in all areas of life.

How Does Wrestling Compare With Team Sports Such as Soccer, Baseball or Football?

Wrestling is considered an individual sport, but includes many of the benefits of team sports. Wrestling differs from most team sports in that during competition, athletes must rely entirely on their own individual abilities for success. Those that dedicate the time and effort will eventually achieve at a level directly proportionate to the investment they have made. The individual nature of the sport provides an

outstanding opportunity for young athletes to develop a sense of responsibility and self esteem while learning the relationship between effort and achievement.

Similarities exist in that teammates still depend on each other in team competitions. Team victories in meets and tournaments are determined by the number of individual victories, and the extent to which each match was won or lost. Wrestlers also develop an appreciation and respect for teammates that have been through the same challenges, and a strong sense of belonging and camaraderie with teammates and other wrestlers.

Does Wrestling Teach or Promote Aggressive or Violent Behavior?

Aggressiveness, Yes. Violence, NO. Wrestling is unique in the fact that it can be very aggressive without being violent. One of the factors that make wrestling so different from most other sports is that wrestling involves head-to-head competition. Success in wrestling requires the ability to attack, as well as the ability to stop your opponent's attack. Wrestling does not permit opponents to strike one another, and imposes strict penalties or disqualification for violent behavior. The objective is to out-manuever your opponent and gain control, not destroy or harm them.

Is Wrestling Dangerous?

"Wrestling is a contact sport and injuries will occur. As would be expected, wrestling has more injuries than tennis and swimming, but most wrestling injuries are minor, consisting of sprains and strains. Wrestling has fewer serious injuries than football, basketball or ice hockey. There is a lesser chance of getting seriously hurt while wrestling than when riding in a car, skateboarding or riding a dirt bike" – USA Wrestling Club Organizing Guide

Wrestling injuries can and do occur, but are more of a factor at the collegiate and international levels where match intensity is much higher. The chance of injury in wrestling is lessened by the lack of high-impact collisions and absence of highly repetitive motion. There is also no chance of injury from hard objects such as bats, sticks, balls or pucks.

Can Wrestling Have an Effect on Character Development?

Wrestling provides real-life experiences that build and strengthen the following character traits: self reliance, mental toughness, work ethic, competitive spirit, responsibility, self discipline, goal orientation and confidence.

Will My Child be Required or Expected to Lose Weight?

NO! There's no weight cutting in youth wrestling programs. This can be a good opportunity to explain how healthy eating can have an impact on performance, or to discuss the difference between healthy food and "junk foods". But parents and coaches should be aware of health and safety factors and should not engage in unhealthy or risky forms of weight loss.

What Equipment Will My Wrestler Need?

Basic equipment includes headgear, wrestling shoes and a singlet. Wrestling shoes offer more ankle support than the traditional shoe and are designed to be lightweight and tight to the foot to promote freedom of movement. Headgear can prevent outer ear injuries and bruises during practice and competition. The standard wrestling uniform, known as a singlet, is designed to fit snug to the body so that it does not restrict the movement of either wrestler. Elk River Wrestling will provide a singlet for use during the season. Kneepads are sometimes worn by choice.

What Wrestling Organization is Elk River Wrestling Involved in?

New for the 2014-2015 season, Elk River Wrestling is a registered club with USA Wrestling for all levels (youth through high school). USA Wrestling is known as the National Governing Body of the Sport of Wrestling in the United States and, as such, is its representative to the United States Olympic Committee. It is the central organization that coordinates amateur wrestling programs in the nation and works to create interest and participation in these programs. Our local chapter, Minnesota USA (MN/USA) is dedicated to Freestyle, Greco-Roman and Folkstyle wrestling in all levels. Membership in MN/USA is included in your Elk River Wrestling registration fee. You can learn more at www.mnusawrestling.org

In previous years, Elk River Youth Wrestling has been a member of the Northland Youth Wrestling Association (NYWA). This organization sanctions Folkstyle tournaments.

What are the Different Types of Wrestling?

FOLKSTYLE: n

The primary goal in Folkstyle wrestling is to gain control of your opponent and to ultimately pin your opponent by holding their back (both shoulder blades simultaneously) on the mat for a period of at least two seconds.

Matches consist of three periods. Periods can vary in length from one minute for younger age groups, to as long as three minutes for college wrestling. Either wrestler can win the match at any time if they are able to pin their opponent or develop a lead of more than 14 points. Otherwise the wrestler that can accumulate the most points by the end of the third period (or after overtime in the case of a tie) wins the match.

Positions from which referees start, or continue a match are 1) Neutral Position; with both wrestlers standing and facing each other and 2) Referee's Position; where one wrestler starts on his hands and knees down on the mat, and the other start on top, behind and in control. The first period always begins in the neutral position. Each wrestler has their choice of which position to start in during one of the remaining periods. If the action must be stopped before the end of the period, the referee restarts the wrestlers in the starting position that best reflects the position the wrestlers were in when the action was stopped.

Scoring is rather simple. **Takedowns** (when from a neutral position one wrestler is able to bring the other to the mat and gain control) are worth two points. **Escapes** (when the bottom wrestler is able to break free from the top wrestler and revert back to a neutral position) are worth one point. **Reversals** (when a wrestler on the bottom is able to reverse the control so that the opponent is on the bottom) are worth two points. **Back points** (also called near fall) are awarded when one wrestler comes close to pinning the other (i.e. exposing the wrestler's back) and are worth two or three points depending on the length of time that the opponent's back is exposed. In addition, **penalty points** can be awarded when the opposing wrestler performs illegal moves or is penalized for excessive stalling.

Sportsmanship requires that each wrestler shake hands with their opponent and with the referee before and after the bout. It is also common for wrestlers to shake the hand of the opponent's mat-side coach after the match.

FREESTYLE & GRECO-ROMAN:

The primary objective in Freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling is much the same as with Folkstyle, except that other factors are taken into account such as the skill with which moves are executed and the type of holds that are used.

Matches are condensed into one or two periods, depending on the age group. Younger groups typically wrestle two ninety-second periods. Older groups wrestle one continuous five-minute period

Position from which periods always begin is the neutral position.

Scoring is similar to Folkstyle in that the match can be stopped short of the time limit if either wrestler scores a pin or achieves a technical superiority – which in Freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling is a lead of ten or more points. After a takedown situation in which both wrestlers continue to wrestle down on the mat, known as the “par-tarre” position, the bottom wrestler is not obligated to work for an escape or reverse as with Folkstyle. Instead, it is the responsibility of the top wrestler to work diligently to execute a hold that will expose their opponent’s back. If the top wrestler is not immediately (officials allow about fifteen seconds) successful in doing this, the official will stop the match and re-start the wrestlers in a neutral position. Control of one’s opponent is less of a concern in Freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling. Back points are awarded more freely in that it is only necessary to turn your opponent’s back within 90 degrees of the mat. Takedowns, escapes and reversals are awarded one point, unless there is exposure of the back, in which additional points are awarded. Unlike Folkstyle, it is not necessary to have control in order to score back points. A wrestler in a defensive situation can be awarded back points if their opponent’s back makes contact with the mat in executing an offensive move. Other variations from Folkstyle scoring include the additional points that can be awarded for takedowns that result in back exposure. “Grand Amplitude” holds, in which an opponent is lifted from the mat and brought from a standing position directly to his or her back, are good for five points. **Sportsmanship** requires that each wrestler shake hands with their opponent and with the referee before and after the bout. It is also common for wrestlers to shake the hand of the opponent’s mat-side coach after the match.

The Wrestling Season

The wrestling season for Folkstyle wrestling can begin as early as November and run into March. The Freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling season begins in March and runs through July. Youth practices are held one or two nights per week depending on the age/level of the wrestler. Youth tournaments are held on weekends. The Coaching Staff can assist you in determining if your wrestler is ready for a competitive tournament, and give recommendations as to which tournaments are appropriate.

Practice

As was mentioned earlier, the effort put forth in practice and preparation is apparent in competition. But we also strive to make practices enjoyable by changing the routine and by introducing other skills, such as tumbling. Wrestlers should wear t-shirts and comfortable athletic shorts, preferable without pockets. It is recommended that wrestlers wear wrestling shoes, however clean socks may be worn during practice. To keep the mats as clean as possible, no street shoes are allowed. Practices begin with warm-up and conditioning exercises such as stretching, push-ups and crunches. Coaches will demonstrate different wrestling techniques, which wrestlers will then practice with a partner. Parent volunteer Pod Coaches will also be on the mat to give additional attention to the wrestlers as they practice each technique. Each wrestler will be paired with another wrestler based on the Coach’s discretion. Some practices will include live wrestling or games. Wrestlers are expected to listen and behave during practice, so as not to distract the coaches and other wrestlers. Push-ups or time-outs may be given to kids who are disruptive during practice.

Tournaments

Wrestling tournaments can last for 4 to 6 hours and can involve hundreds of participants. The first step in a tournament is the mandatory weigh-in. A wrestler’s weight, age and sometimes experience level is recorded on a slip of paper that is used for to form brackets. The wrestler’s skin will also be checked during this process.

Tournament competition is organized by age and weight. A completed bracket sheet will show specific pairings for each match. After each round, bracket sheets are updated to show pairings for the following

round. Winners continue to advance, while those that lose are typically eligible for “wrestle backs” in competition for third or fifth places.

4-man brackets are common with 8 and under age groups and 8-man brackets more common for older age groups. There is usually a 30 to 60 minute period before the tournament begins, when wrestlers can warm up and locate their bracket sheet if the tournament sponsors post them before rounds. For younger wrestlers, age groups are called to a staging area or “bull pen” where wrestlers are announced in their brackets, then escorted as a bracket to their mat as mat space becomes available. Staging and bracketing usually starts with Pre-K and advances through the remaining grades.

Positions at each mat are filled by volunteer parents and high school wrestlers to run the clock, manage the score cards and keep score notes on the bracket sheets. At some tournaments the referees are also volunteers, sometimes high school and college wrestlers.

Wrestlers typically wrestle two to four matches in any one tournament; however it is possible in some situations to wrestle more. Tournaments are organized in rounds, allowing wrestlers sufficient time to rest between matches.

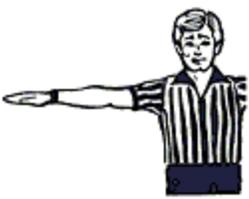
Tournament regulations usually limit the number of coaches allowed to coach from the edge of the mat. The referee starts and stops the match, awarding points when appropriate. When the match is over, wrestlers shake hands and return to their coaches. In some cases, winner must sign the score card at the scoring table. Trophies or metals are awarded for 1st – 4th places, and sometimes 5th and 6th, after all of the matches in their bracket have been completed. Awards are sometimes presented at the scoring table immediately after the match, or the bracket will be escorted to an awards area with space for pictures. Wrestlers are free to leave after awards are presented, unless there are team activities for which they need to be present.

The Coach’s Role

It is the intent of ERYW that our coaches are people our wrestlers can trust, look up to, learn from and rely on for support. It is the responsibility of our coaching staff to follow all of the responsibilities as called out in our Coach’s Code of Conduct.

The Parent’s Role

Wrestling can be relatively demanding, not only for the wrestler, but for the parents and family members. Beyond the tasks of planning around, driving to and preparing for practices and tournaments, parents also need to encourage and support their wrestler with positive reinforcement and recognition of their personal accomplishments. Please see the Elk River Wrestler Parent’s Code of Conduct for more details.

1  Starting the Match	2  Stopping the Match	3  Time Out	4  Start Injury Clock	5  Start Blood Clock	6  Start Recovery Clock
7  Stop Blood/Injury /Recovery Clock	8  Neutral Position	9  Indicates No Control	10  Out-of-Bounds	11  Indicates Wrestler in Control Left/Right Hand	
12  Defer Choice	13  Potentially Dangerous Left/Right Hand	14  Stalemate	15  Caution – False Start or Incorrect Starting Procedure	16  Stalling Left/Right Hand	
17  Interlocking Hands or Grasping Clothing	18  Reversal	19  Technical Violation	20  Illegal Hold or Unnecessary Roughness	21  Near-Fall	
22  Awarding Points Left/Right Hand	23  Unsportsmanlike Conduct Left/Right Hand	24  Flagrant Misconduct Left/Right Hand	25  Coach Misconduct Left/Right Hand		

**some portions of this guide were taken from "Parent's Guide for Youth Wrestling" by Bill Campbell