

BEGINNER'S GUIDE to YOUTH WRESTLING TOURNAMENTS

Wrestling at tournaments begins with attending practices to develop basic skills and a degree of confidence. Fortunately, there are many individual open tournaments that are great opportunities for beginner wrestlers. At younger ages, it's more about getting comfortable being on a mat alone with the ref and the opponent. Tournaments are critical to developing confidence and seeing what fundamentals need more work in practice.

If you're not sure your wrestler is ready for a tournament, talk to a coach to get their opinion. After several weeks, coaches have a decent idea if a wrestler is ready or not for a tournament. If they are ready, use our Youth Weekend Tournament Calendar or the Guillotine's Open Tournament Calendar to decide which tournaments are a good fit. Most individual open tournaments do not require pre-registration.

Most tournaments are held in high school gyms or field houses (multi-gym complexes). Parents and wrestlers sit in the bleachers until their brackets are called and ready to wrestle. Finding a seat can be a challenge so keep this in mind when deciding how much to bring in with you. Bring cash to all tournaments as concessions are often cash only. It can get loud, hectic, exciting, and crowded. **Don't be afraid to ask questions or for directions to tournament volunteers as they're there to help.**

DAY of the TOURNAMENT

Before You Arrive

- Review the flier for the tournament. It has important information, including location, and timing for the schedule.
- **Arrive at the site at least 30 minutes** before your wrestler's weigh-in session is set to close.
- Depending on any healthy weight management needs, consider what intake is appropriate before weigh-ins. Weight management is not necessary for youth wrestlers at individual open tournaments.
- Have your wrestler arrive clean and with fingernails trimmed or filed short.
- Dress in a singlet with underwear (underneath singlet), followed by comfortable overgarments (Mat Club t-shirt, shorts).

Upon Arrival

- For open tournaments, fill out a registration form for your wrestler. Leave the wrestler's weight blank. MNUSA sanctioned tournaments will have online registration.
- Pay your wrestler's registration fee.
- Pay the fee for you and any other spectators you bring along.
- Checks are generally accepted, however as stated prior – cash is common.
- Find the designated weigh-in and skin check area, and have your wrestler present with their singlet and socks.
- After skin check and weigh-in, your wrestler can put their shirt, shorts, and wrestling shoes on.
- Find a comfortable spot in the gym bleachers and have your wrestler join other team members or coaches on the mat. Doing sets of sit-ups, pushups, stretches, short runs are great ways to warm up prior to a coach directing warm-ups.

- **Staging:** Most open tournaments do not use Trackwrestling to electronically share brackets to mobile devices. In these situations, directors will usually call age or grade divisions to “staging”. The staging location will be announced, and wrestlers will be sorted into their brackets with their opponents. At many individual tournaments, a Round Robin format is used where four wrestlers are placed together and wrestle one match against each of the other opponents.

During Wrestling

- Your wrestler will be led with their bracket from staging to the mat upon which they will wrestle.
- Unless told otherwise, a bracket’s matches all occur on the same mat. The wrestler will need to stay matside throughout their bracket.
- We typically will share which tournaments our coaches will attend but may also have parent technicians who attend tournaments with their child(ren) too. Coaches will likely lead coordinated warm-ups if we have a group of wrestlers in attendance. If our coaches or parent technicians are already coaching bouts they may arrive at your mat just as your wrestler begins a match. If a coach is unavailable:
 - Don’t fret. Encourage your wrestler. Find little successes to praise, like rolling over onto their belly after having their back exposed. Remind them to “do what your coaches taught you in the practice room”.
 - Be supportive. It’s an emotional sport. Though we teach that there is no losing, just learning, it can take a long time for young wrestlers (and even parents!) to understand that. Keep positive and calm.
- Parents, coaches, and spectators should ALWAYS TAKE A KNEE when matside to allow visibility for those behind them.
- The wrestlers tend to keep each other occupied during downtime and the socialization is valuable. Parents know best: If your wrestler needs something to keep them occupied or if they need a distraction, bring whatever you feel is appropriate. Keep in mind that gaming devices can be a distraction to the wrestlers.

After Wrestling

- After each match, the coach will give the wrestler pointers on what was done well and what might have been done differently.
- The table workers will finalize the bracket sheet once a bracket has completed wrestling. A tournament volunteer or a parent of a wrestler within your bracket will be asked to walk the bracket and its wrestlers to the awards table.
- Depending upon the tournament, awards may include a medal, trophy, or clothing. For most open tournaments, all wrestlers earn an award. For large tournaments, often only the top six earn an award. Many tournaments have a podium where the wrestlers from a bracket can stand together with their awards for photos.
- KEEP IT POSITIVE! PRAISE DESIRED BEHAVIOR, IGNORE UNDESIRE BEHAVIOR (where appropriate). It is very easy as a parent to criticize your wrestler’s performance. They may quit, cry, lay on the mat, do a move incorrectly, etc. That’s **completely normal** in youth wrestling.
- There is always something(s) you can praise, such as the fact that they even walked onto the mat and started the match. The goal shouldn’t be to fix their behavior with a critique. Instead, your goal as a parent should be to find little encouragements to build confidence that will keep them coming back to the practice room and tournaments. This is the best and proven way of keeping them on the long journey to becoming long-term wrestlers.

MATSIDE EXPECTATIONS

- Sportsmanship is taught, and our program emphasizes it.
 - The wrestler should shake their opponents hand prior to wrestling
 - Win or lose, the wrestler should shake their opponent's hand, the opponent coach's hand, and then their own coach's hand. Please practice this with your wrestler. It will help them when things don't go well for them.
 - We encourage assertive use of techniques taught in practice, but never try to hurt an opponent.
- If a coach is able to be matside, please let them do the coaching. Multiple voices can confuse a wrestler.
- Positive cheering is encouraged; screaming is not.
- A match goes fast. Each "match" consists of three periods of (typically) 1 minute each. There is only about 10 seconds of downtime between each period. Wrestlers stay on the mat, they do not visit with their "corner" between periods.
- Although the wrestlers are encouraged to cheer on their teammates matside, please keep an eye on them. You need to know where they are at all times, and that they are behaving well.
- If you think there's a mismatch — weight, size, age — or other problem, address it privately with our coach. Don't speak with the other wrestler or the other team's coaches — that's our coaches' job, when necessary.
- For referees, if there's something that needs to be addressed with them, talk it over with the coach and let them do it.

SCORING in YOUTH WRESTLING

Referees wear a different color wrist band on each wrist. These colors coincide with the band worn around a wrestler's ankle. The referee indicates points as they are scored using their fingers on the hand of the corresponding color.

The wrestler with the most points at the end of the match wins that round. There are no ties within a match. The wrestler who wins the most matches wins the bracket. There are criteria for a tie-breaker within a bracket.

Scoring Points

Take Down: 2 points (from the neutral or standing position, when a wrestler gets behind or on top of the opponent and gains control)

Escape: 1 point (Getting out from underneath the opponent to a standing or neutral position and facing the opponent)

Reversal: 2 points (Getting out from underneath, and getting behind or on top of an opponent in one maneuver)

Near Fall: 2 points (Holding the opponent's shoulders to the mat for less than one second, or holding his/her shoulders within four inches of the mat for one second or longer, or holding one shoulder to the mat and the other at a 45 degree angle.)

Near fall: 3 points (Holding a 2 point near fall for 5 consecutive seconds.)

Pin: A pin is when a wrestler's shoulders are held on the mat for a two count. A pin ends the match, and the pinning wrestler earns the win.

Illegal holds, Roughness, Technical Fouls — 1 point awarded to offended wrestler

Abusive and/or Unsportsmanlike Conduct — Deduct 1 Team point

Flagrant Misconduct — Disqualify and deduct 1 Team point.

MNUSA Tournaments operate brackets and staging differently. Often, a website called TrackWrestling is used. Please let coaches know if you have any questions.

TYPES of TOURNAMENTS

There are two main types of tournaments: Team and Individual.

Team

Team tournaments consist of a team of our wrestlers, each wrestling within a specified weight range, against other teams of wrestlers. Match points are scored within each match, and the result of the match determines how many team points the victor's team earns. The team with the most team points at the end of the dual is the winning team.

Youth team tournaments typically consist of Kindergarteners through 3rd graders, or Kindergarteners through 6th graders (K-3 or K-6).

We believe team tournaments are fun, build camaraderie, and help to keep young wrestlers enjoying the sport. As such, our philosophy emphasizes getting kids exposed to team tournaments. We aim to have options for our wrestlers to participate in either MNUSA or Open individual tournaments and attend a team tournament. Your wrestler may not attend some team tournaments as there are two tournaments where we bring our most competitive team: Prior Lake, The Brawl, and the MNUSA Team Tournament. Coach selection will be conducted for these two tournaments.

Individual

In individual tournaments, a wrestler is placed into brackets with other wrestlers of similar age and weight. Tournament Directors try to place wrestlers from the same team in different brackets but this may not always be feasible.

There are two types of individual tournaments: Open and Member.

Open

Open individual tournaments are open to anyone who meets the age requirements. Registration is done the day of when you show-up at the site.

Member

Member individual tournaments only allow members of a specific wrestling organization to participate. The most common organization is the Minnesota chapter of USA Wrestling, or "MNUSA" which our club is sanctioned with.