

Built to Last: Staying Healthy Through Years of Training

Mat Manual companion guide to "Aches, Warnings, and the Long Run: Training Without Breaking Down." Print it. The article teaches the judgment: warm up with a purpose, change one variable at a time, and tell soreness from a warning. This guide prints the checks, templates, circuits, ramps, and trackers that turn that judgment into a week-by-week practice.

Name: _____ Gym/Dojo: _____ Art: _____

SAFETY, BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE ☐ Stop rules in this guide outrank doses in this guide. If a movement produces a stop signal listed in Part 3 or Part 5, end that movement, whatever the table says. ☐ Sharp pain, a pinch inside a joint, catching, locking, giving way, numbness, tingling, or weakness is never a warm-up problem, a flexibility target, or a toughness test. ☐ Warm up before hard work, every time. Joint preparation begins gently and earns speed across repetitions, never the other way round. ☐ Change one workload variable at a time — frequency, duration, intensity, or type — and write the change in the log in Part 11. ☐ Returning after a layoff, an illness, or an injury is a ramp in Part 7, not a return to your old schedule on day one. ☐ This guide sets training loads and daily checks. It does not clear anyone to train through a medical problem. See the disclaimer directly below.

Disclaimer: Education, Not Medical Advice

Read this section before using any table in this guide.

This guide is educational material about general training habits for healthy martial arts students: warming up, preparing joints, progressing workload gradually, noticing soreness and warning signs, resting, and returning after time away.

This guide is **not medical advice**. It does not diagnose or treat any condition, and nothing in it replaces care from a qualified professional who can examine you in person. It contains no rehabilitation program for any named injury, and no recommendation about medication, supplements, or medical treatment.

Descriptions of soreness, pain, and warning signs here are plain-language decision aids for training only. They help you decide whether to train, train less, change a movement, stop, or seek care. They do not tell you what is wrong, and they are not a medical test.

See a qualified medical or physical therapy professional — promptly where Part 5 says so — for pain that persists or worsens, for any injury, after a fall, blow, twist, or other trauma, for numbness, tingling, or weakness, for chest symptoms, for head or neck symptoms, for a joint that locks, gives way, or swells, and for any medical condition affecting how you should train. Their instructions outrank every table in this guide. Tell your instructor about any limit you train under.

Children and teenagers use this guide only with an instructor and a parent or guardian making load decisions. School sport and other activities count toward the same weekly load.

Part 1: The Pre-Class Readiness Check

Two minutes, before the warm-up starts. Answer honestly. A check that always says "fine" is not a check; it is a habit of not looking.

The Daily Check

Score each line 0, 1, or 2. Add the five scores. The total sets the day's plan in the table below it. Re-check after the warm-up: warming up often improves movement, and never improves the sleep or illness lines.

Check	2 — Ready	1 — Caution	0 — Not ready as planned
Sleep last night	Slept about your usual full amount, woke steady	Short or broken night, one night only	Very short, or the second short night in a row
General energy	Normal for you at this time of day	Flat or heavy, but moves once you start moving	Drained, unwell, or unusually irritable at rest
Muscle soreness	None, or mild and familiar	Moderate, in muscles worked in the last two days	Heavy soreness plus stiffness that changes how you walk or stand
Joint feel	All joints feel normal in easy movement	One joint feels stiff at first, eases with gentle movement	One joint feels sharp, pinched, swollen, loose, or not trustworthy
Mind and focus	Can follow instructions and watch partners normally	Distracted, needs extra care with timing and distance	Cannot concentrate well enough for partner work to be safe

Total	The day's starting plan
9 to 10	Train as planned. This is a normal day; use it well.
7 to 8	Train, with one deliberate reduction: one fewer hard round, lower intensity in the last drill, or an easier role in partner work. Name the reduction before class starts.
5 to 6	Technical day. Light to moderate work only, no hard sparring, no maximal efforts, no new high-load movement. Tell your instructor before class.
0 to 4	Do not train as planned. Rest, walk, or do gentle movement only, and use the warning-sign tables in Part 5 if any score came from pain or a joint. Two days in a row at this level, without an obvious cause such as illness, is a reason to review your load with your instructor and, if symptoms are involved, a qualified professional.

The Spot Checks (60 Seconds)

Run these after the table, standing, in the room where you will train. They are feel checks, not tests to pass.

Spot check	How	Ready looks like	Not ready looks like
Neck turn	Turn the head gently left and right, then ear toward each shoulder	Easy, near-equal both sides, no symptoms down the arm	Pain, stiffness that blocks the turn, or any feeling into the arm or hand — stop, see Part 5
Shoulder reach	Raise both arms overhead slowly, then reach one hand down the back	Arms reach overhead without shrugging to the ears or arching the back hard	Pinch, sharp pain, or one side clearly blocked
Trunk turn	Feet planted, turn the chest gently left and right	Smooth, near-equal, breathing easy	Sharp back pain, pain running into a leg, or a hard block
Hip and knee	March in place, lifting each knee to a comfortable height; then five easy bodyweight squats to a comfortable depth	Knees lift evenly, squats feel even side to side	Pinch in a hip, sharp knee pain, or one side avoiding load

Spot check	How	Ready looks like	Not ready looks like
Ankle and balance	Rock heel to toe on each foot; stand on one foot for ten seconds each side	Steady, heel and toes both feel solid	Sharp ankle pain, or balance far worse than your normal on one side

Any "not ready" result moves that area out of hard work for the day. Train around it at a reduced level, unless Part 5 says stop entirely.

The Plan Line

Write one line before class. Twenty seconds, and it is the difference between adjusting on purpose and adjusting by accident mid-round.

Today's score: _____ / 10 Plan (full / one reduction / technical / rest): _____ The one thing I am watching today: _____

Part 2: Warm-Up Templates by Training Type and Time

Every warm-up here has the article's three jobs: raise temperature, prepare the joints for the day's ranges, and rehearse the day's movements at rising speed. Templates differ only in what they rehearse and how minutes divide when time is short.

The cutting rule. When time shrinks, shrink every part; never cut a whole part. Five minutes touching all three jobs beats five minutes of only jogging, or only joint circles.

Template A: Striking (Karate, Taekwondo, Muay Thai, Kenpo)

Block	5 minutes	10 minutes	15 minutes
Raise temperature	2 min easy jogging, skipping in place, or footwork shuffles	3 min easy jogging and footwork, nasal breathing, rising pace	4 min footwork patterns, shadow movement, and easy pad-free combinations
Joint preparation	2 min: shoulder circles x8 each way, wrist circles x8, hip circles x8 each way, leg swings front and side x8 per leg, ankle circles x8	4 min: the 5-minute set, plus elbow circles x8, trunk rotations x8, knee lifts x8 per leg, deepening leg swings to x10	6 min: the 10-minute set, plus neck gentle range x5 each direction, spine waves x6, squat-to-stand x6, single-leg balance 20 sec per side

Block	5 minutes	10 minutes	15 minutes
Rehearse the day	1 min: shadow strikes at half speed, rising to three-quarter speed in the last 20 seconds	3 min: shadow combinations and chamber work at rising height and speed; last minute at near-class speed, still controlled	5 min: shadow work, then light partner or pad work at low power, then two short controlled sets at class speed

Template B: Grappling (Judo, Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, Catch Wrestling)

Block	5 minutes	10 minutes	15 minutes
Raise temperature	2 min easy mat movement: walking, jogging the mat, shoulder rolls standing	3 min mat laps, direction changes, and easy breakfall shapes without full falls	4 min mat movement plus light solo entries and level changes at easy pace
Joint preparation	2 min: gentle neck range x5 each direction, shoulder rolls x8, wrist circles x8, trunk rotations x8, hip circles x8, squat rocks x8	4 min: the 5-minute set, plus floor rotations x6, hip escapes x5 per side at easy pace, knee and ankle circles x8	6 min: the 10-minute set, plus spinal flexion and extension waves on all fours x8, deep squat holds 3 x 20 sec, grip opening and closing x20 easy
Rehearse the day	1 min: entries, guard movement, or throw footwork at half speed	3 min: entries and floor flow at rising pace; breakfalls from low height, building only if every rep is clean	5 min: technical drilling with a partner at low resistance, then two short sets at class pace with full control

Grappling note. Breakfalls are rehearsed warm and low before they are ever done at height or speed.

Template C: Forms / Kata / Poomsae

Block	5 minutes	10 minutes	15 minutes
Raise temperature	2 min easy walking of the form's floor pattern, or general easy movement	3 min floor-pattern walking plus stance changes at easy pace	4 min pattern walking, stance changes, and turns, breathing settling into form rhythm

Block	5 minutes	10 minutes	15 minutes
Joint preparation	2 min: ankle circles x8, knee circles x8 gentle, hip circles x8, shoulder circles x8, trunk rotations x8	4 min: the 5-minute set, plus stance changes at half depth x6 each stance, spine waves x6, wrist circles x8	6 min: the 10-minute set, plus full-depth stance holds 3 x 15 sec per main stance, shoulder reach checks, single-leg balance on stance changes
Rehearse the day	1 min: first section of the form at half speed	3 min: form sections at rising speed; one full run at about three-quarter speed	5 min: section work, then one full form at class speed, then one slow form with attention to the transitions

Template D: Sparring Day (Any Art)

Use the template for your art, then add this four-minute block at the end. Sparring adds reaction, distance, and contact to a warm body; it should never be the way the body gets warm.

Minute	Work	Standard
1	Footwork only, no strikes or entries	Distance changes smoothly, breathing stays controlled
2	One technique each, alternating with a partner, at low speed	Either partner can stop the drill instantly; no scoring
3	Limited combination or entry set at moderate speed	Power stays low; speed comes from timing, not effort
4	One short controlled round at class speed, light contact as your school allows	End the block able to speak in full sentences; if not, the block was too hard for a warm-up

The Arrival-Late Rule

Missed the warm-up is a workload fact, not a shame event. Do the five-minute template at the edge of the mat, join at technical work, and skip the hardest drill of the first half. Tell the instructor. Instructors: this rule only works if using it costs the student nothing socially. Protect it.

Part 3: Joint Preparation Circuits

Joint preparation is gentle, repeated movement through the ranges training is about to use. It is not stretching to your limit, not strength training, and never done against pain. Move slowly at first, let range grow across the set, and finish each area warmer and easier than you started, not tired.

Universal stop rules. Stop an area's circuit and apply Part 5 if you feel: sharp or pinching pain in or around the joint; catching, locking, or giving way; numbness, tingling, or weakness; pain that travels down a limb; or a range on one side that is suddenly and clearly much less than the other side and does not ease with gentle movement. Stiffness that eases as you move is common. Pain that grows as you move is a stop.

The Joint-by-Joint Table

Area	Movements (in order)	Dose	Notes and form standard	Stop rule for this area
Neck	Gentle turns left and right; ear toward each shoulder; small chin nods	5 slow reps each direction, 1 set	Unloaded, seated or standing tall; range is whatever is easy today, never forced; no circles at speed, no partner pressure, ever	Pain, dizziness, or any feeling into the shoulder, arm, or hand
Shoulders	Shoulder rolls forward and back; arm circles small to medium; reach overhead slowly; reach behind the back gently	8 rolls each way; 8 circles; 5 overhead reaches; 3 back reaches per side	Ribs stay down on overhead reaches; range grows across reps, shrug-free by the last reps	Pinch at the top of the reach, sharp pain, or one side blocked with pain
Elbows	Bend and straighten fully at easy pace; rotate the forearm palm up and palm down	10 bends; 8 rotations each way	Keep the upper arm still; the motion is at the elbow and forearm, not the shoulder	Pain at end range, locking, or a feeling of instability
Wrists and hands	Wrist circles; bend the wrist gently forward and back; open and close the fists; spread the fingers wide	8 circles each way; 8 bends; 15 open-close reps; 5 finger spreads	Especially important before gripping, posting on the mat, and weapons work; keep pressure light —	Sharp wrist pain, numbness or tingling in the fingers, or pain after a recent fall on the hand (Part 5, then

Area	Movements (in order)	Dose	Notes and form standard	Stop rule for this area
			preparation, not a stretch contest	professional advice before loading it)
Spine and trunk	Standing trunk rotations; side bends; gentle flexion and extension waves standing or on all fours	8 rotations per side; 6 side bends per side; 8 waves	Move segment by segment at easy pace; breathe out as you turn; range stays comfortable throughout	Sharp back pain, pain running into a leg, or numbness or weakness in a leg
Hips	Hip circles standing; leg swings front to back and side to side; knee lifts; deep squat rocks holding support as needed	8 circles each way; 10 swings each plane per leg; 8 knee lifts per leg; 8 squat rocks	Hold a wall or partner's shoulder for swings if balance limits range; the standing leg works as much as the moving leg	Pinch at the front of the hip, sharp groin pain, or clicking that comes with pain
Knees	Gentle small knee circles standing with feet planted; slow bodyweight squats to comfortable depth; step-ups to a low step	6 circles each way; 8 squats; 6 step-ups per leg	Knee travels in line with the toes; depth is the depth you own today without pain	Sharp pain, swelling, locking, or a feeling that the knee will give way
Ankles	Ankle circles; heel raises slow; knee-to-wall rocks over the toes; heel-to-toe rocks	8 circles each way; 10 heel raises; 8 rocks per side; 10 rocks	Heel stays down in the knee-to-wall rock until it naturally wants to lift — note that point, do not force past it	Sharp pain, a recent twist that still swells, or instability on the balance check
Feet and toes	Toe spreads and scrunches; short-foot holds (draw the arch up without curling the toes hard); walk barefoot on the mat for a minute where your school allows	10 scrunches per foot; 5 holds of 5 sec per foot; 1 min walking	Feet are the base of every stance and step; cold feet on a cold floor get the walking minute first	Sharp pain under the heel or in the ball of the foot that changes how you walk

Circuit Format A: The Full Circuit (About 12 Minutes)

Run the table top to bottom, one set each area, before a long or hard session, or after more than two days off. Order follows the body downward so nothing is missed.

Circuit Format B: The Upper-Body Circuit (About 6 Minutes)

Neck, shoulders, elbows, wrists, and spine rows only, at the listed doses. For striking sessions built on punching, gripping sessions, weapons sessions, and ground grappling where the arms post and frame. Add the hip row if throws or takedowns are planned.

Circuit Format C: The Lower-Body Circuit (About 6 Minutes)

Spine, hips, knees, ankles, and feet rows only, at the listed doses. For kicking sessions, forms sessions, and any session built on stance work or footwork. Add the shoulder row if falls or throws are planned, because landing is upper-body work.

Circuit Format D: The Floor Circuit (About 7 Minutes, Grappling)

Done on the mat, in order: spine waves on all fours x8; floor trunk rotations x6 per side; hip escapes x5 per side, easy; shoulder rolls on the mat x4 each side; wrist bends and fist open-close from the table; knee circles lying, feet in the air, x6 each way; ankle circles lying, x8 each way. Finish standing with hip circles x8 and five easy squats.

Dose honesty. One set done slowly, at the listed reps, with attention, is the dose. Rushing forty circles in twenty seconds is no dose with extra numbers. If an area still feels stiff, repeat its set once, gently. Twice is the warm-up limit. Stiffness that survives two gentle sets is information for the day's plan.

Part 4: Workload Progression and the Cautious Ramp

Workload is everything training asks of you: how often, how long, how hard, and what kind. This part turns the one-variable rule into tables you can plan a month on.

The Four Variables, Defined for the Log

Variable	Measured as	What counts toward it that students forget
Frequency	Sessions per week	Open-mat sessions, private lessons, seminars, and testing days are sessions
Duration	Minutes of actual training per session	Staying after class to drill counts; so does a long warm-up before a tournament

Variable	Measured as	What counts toward it that students forget
Intensity	Easy / moderate / hard, by session, judged 10 minutes after it ends	Hard sparring, hard throwing, maximal pad rounds, and grading efforts are hard, whatever the clock said
Type	The activities in the session	A new type — first sparring, first weapons, first lifting, first falls at height — is a load even at low minutes

The Progression Table

Change one row per step. Hold each step at least one full week, two if the last step produced heavy soreness or a poor readiness score.

Step order	Change	Example from a base of 2 classes/week, 60 min, moderate
1	Duration first, if classes are being cut short by fatigue	60 to 70 minutes in the sessions you already attend
2	Frequency, if duration is comfortable	Add a third session, and make the added session easy to moderate for its first two weeks
3	Intensity, in one session only	One of the weekly sessions gains one hard drill or round; the others stay as they were
4	Type, one new activity at a time	Add 20 minutes of the new activity once a week, inside or alongside an existing session
5	Repeat the cycle from the new base	Reassess with the readiness check scores and the log before choosing the next row to move

The 10-Percent-Style Heuristic, Explained Carefully

A common coaching rule of thumb says: increase total weekly work by no more than about ten percent per week. Total work can be estimated as sessions $\times$ minutes $\times$ an intensity value (easy = 1, moderate = 2, hard = 3). Two moderate 60-minute classes score $2 \times 60 \times 2 = 240$. A ten-percent-style step is about 24 points — roughly one easy 25-minute session, or about 12 added moderate minutes, not both.

This number is a heuristic, not a law. It comes from coaching practice, not a medical rule, and no percentage knows your sleep, job, or age. Bodies do not adapt on a spreadsheet. Use it as a brake, not a target:

Using it well	Using it badly
As a ceiling: "no more than about this much more, this week"	As an entitlement: "I am owed ten percent, however I feel"
Skipping the increase in a hard life week and calling that the plan	Adding ten percent every week without a hold or easy week, for months
Checking the readiness scores and soreness before applying any increase	Applying it to a week that already contains a tournament, test, or camp
Stepping back below last week's load when Part 5 says yellow twice in a week	Averaging away a warning sign because the weekly total still fits

A steadier pattern: build for two or three weeks, then take an easier week at about two-thirds of the recent load. Skill often shows up in the easy week, when the body finishes adapting.

Worked Example: Eight Weeks for a Twice-a-Week Student

Week	Sessions	Session plan	What changed
1	2	Base week, logged honestly	Nothing — the base must be measured before it is moved
2	2	Base, plus 10 minutes of technical drilling in one session	Duration, one session
3	3	Two base sessions, one new easy 30-minute session	Frequency, at easy intensity
4	3	Same as week 3	Hold — watch readiness scores
5	3	One session gains one hard round	Intensity, one session
6	2	Easy week: two easy to moderate sessions, no hard rounds	Deliberate step back
7	3	Week 5 plan, plus 20 minutes of a new activity once	Type, small dose
8	3	Same as week 7	Hold and review the log before any new step

If any week in the table produces two yellow days or one red day under Part 5, repeat the previous week's load instead of advancing. The plan serves the response. The response never serves the plan.

Part 5: Soreness, Pain, and Warning Signs

This part sorts what you feel into three decisions: green, train as planned; yellow, change the plan; red, stop and seek help. It is **non-diagnostic**: it names no conditions, rules nothing out, and a green day is not a medical clearance. When a feeling does not fit the table, use the more careful color. When in doubt, ask a qualified professional, not a training partner.

The Decision Table

Color	What it commonly feels like	Where and how	Training decision
Green — normal training soreness	Dull, stiff, tender ache in muscles that were worked	Spread across a muscle or muscle group; often strongest 24 to 48 hours after a harder or newer session; eases as you warm up; fades over 2 to 4 days	Train as planned. Note it in the log. Expect it to be smaller after the same work next time.
Green — normal effort feelings	Breathing hard, muscles burning during a hard drill, general tiredness right after class	Whole-body, matches the work being done, settles within minutes to hours after stopping	Train as planned. These are the feelings training is supposed to include.
Yellow — modify today	A specific sore spot that you can point to with one finger, in or near a joint	Shows up at the same point in the same movement; changes how you move; makes you favor one side; still there at the next session	Change the movement, reduce load and range, or sit that drill out. Tell your instructor. Log it with its location. If it appears in three sessions in a row, book a professional assessment instead of a fourth modified session.
Yellow — accumulating tiredness	Soreness not clearing between sessions, sleep worsening, readiness score falling across a week	Whole-body or several areas at once; performance dropping on work you normally handle	Take an easy week at about two-thirds load. No new progression step. If a full easy week does not restore you, reduce further and

Color	What it commonly feels like	Where and how	Training decision
			review sleep, food, and life load honestly.
Red — stop now	Sharp, sudden, or severe pain, especially after a twist, fall, blow, pop, or snap	One clear moment of onset; pain that makes you stop mid-movement	Stop the session. Do not test the area with more training. Protect it, tell your instructor, and seek prompt professional care.
Red — nerve and circulation signs	Numbness, tingling, a limb feeling dead or weak, or a limb that will not do what you ask	In an arm, hand, leg, or foot, during or after training	Stop. Seek prompt professional help the same day. Do not train again until a professional has advised you.
Red — chest and general signs	Chest pain or pressure, unusual breathlessness out of proportion to effort, feeling faint, palpitations that do not settle	During or after exertion	Stop at once and seek urgent help. Do not drive yourself.
Red — head and neck signs	After a blow or fall: confusion, worsening headache, vision change, vomiting, unusual drowsiness, or neck pain	During class or developing in the hours after	Stop at once and seek urgent help. Do not return to training that day, and follow professional advice about returning at all.
Red — joint failure signs	A joint that gives way, locks so it will not move, or swells quickly and visibly	Knee, shoulder, ankle, elbow, or a finger or toe after a jam or twist	Stop training on it and seek prompt professional care.

The Three Questions (When the Table Is Not Enough)

Ask, in order. The first "yes" decides.

1. **Did it start with one specific moment** — a twist, fall, blow, pop, or snap? Yes: red rules. Stop and seek prompt care.
2. **Is there numbness, weakness, chest, head, or neck involvement, or a joint that locks, gives way, or swelled fast?** Yes: red rules. Stop and seek prompt or urgent help as the table states.

3. **Is it one specific spot that changes how you move, returns in the same movement, or is still there next session?** Yes: yellow. Modify, log, and set the three-session limit for booking an assessment. If all three answers are no, and the feeling matches the green rows, train as planned and log it like any other day.

Soreness Patterns Worth Noticing in the Log

Pattern across two to four weeks	What it commonly means for training	The adjustment
Same muscle soreness after the same drill, smaller each week	Normal adaptation to a new load	Keep the load steady until it barely registers, then progress
Soreness lasting longer each week after the same work	Load is rising faster than recovery, or recovery inputs have dropped	Hold the load, take an easy week, check sleep and food in Part 6
Soreness in a new place after a technique change	The new movement is loading new tissue, or technique is borrowing from the wrong place	Reduce the new work's volume, get technique checked by your instructor
One side always sorer than the other after even work	A side difference in strength, range, or habit worth knowing about	Add the preparation work for that side first; mention a persistent, painful difference to a professional
Morning stiffness everywhere, most days, for weeks	Total load — training plus life — is probably ahead of recovery	Easy week, readiness checks daily, and a professional review if it persists with other symptoms

Part 6: The Recovery Menu

Recovery is a short menu of plain inputs, not a product. Work it in order: sleep first, then food and water, then easy movement, then life load. Fixing the fourth item while ignoring the first is the most common recovery mistake in this guide.

Sleep

Habit	The working standard for most adults	If training ends late
Total sleep	A regular window long enough to wake without an alarm battle most days; many adults need seven to nine hours	Protect the morning end of the window where your schedule allows, rather than cutting both ends
Regular times	Getting-up time steady within about an hour, most days of the week	Keep the getting-up time even after a late class; shorten the wind-down, not the sleep
Wind-down	Screens dimmed or off and hard talk done in the last 30 to 60 minutes where life allows	Shower, easy breathing, and a written note of tomorrow's first task to park a busy mind
Room	Dark, cool, and quiet as far as your housing allows	Eye shade and earplugs are ordinary tools, not a statement about toughness
Naps	Short, early-afternoon naps can help after a genuinely short night	Avoid long late naps that steal the next night; log a nap like a session, because it affects one

Food and Hydration Basics

General habits for healthy adults, not a diet plan or medical nutrition advice. Students with a medical condition, or who are pregnant, training a child, or managing competition weight, should follow their own professional's guidance instead.

Timing	The basic habit
Across the day	Regular meals, enough total food to match your training load, a source of protein at each meal, and ordinary variety — fruit, vegetables, grains, and the foods your household actually eats
Two to three hours before class	A normal meal or substantial snack you know sits well. Training hard on nothing since morning is a recovery error, not discipline.
During class	Water available and actually drunk, in small amounts across the session; more in heat, in heavy uniforms, and in long sessions
After class	Water first, then a normal meal within the next few hours. A very hard or long session earns a snack sooner rather than a larger lecture about food.
Warning habit	A steady drop in appetite, body weight you did not intend, or meals skipped on every training day: count it as a load problem and raise it — with a professional if it continues

Easy Movement on Off Days

Twenty to forty minutes, at a pace where you can speak in full sentences the whole time. Choose from the menu; rotate freely.

Option	Dose	Best for
Walking	20 to 40 min, ordinary pace	General stiffness, heavy legs, the day after a hard session
The Morning Mobility Ten	Part 3 doses at half reps, about 10 min	Stiff starts, travel days, students over 40 as a daily habit
Easy technical shadow work	10 to 15 min at half speed or slower	Skill that needs touches without load; returning students in Part 7
Easy cycling or swimming, if you already do them	20 to 30 min, conversational pace	Students whose arts load the joints hard and who want an off-day option with different demands
Floor mobility set (Part 3, Circuit D)	One pass, about 7 min	Grapplers, and anyone whose stiffness is mostly hips, spine, and shoulders

What recovery is not. It is not a second hard workout renamed. If an off-day activity leaves you sorer next morning, it was training, and it belongs in Part 4 at its real intensity.

Life Load: The Honest Row

Once a week, in Part 9, rate life load 1 (light), 2 (normal), or 3 (heavy: illness in the house, a work crunch, poor sleep, a hard job week, travel). A 3-week cancels progression steps automatically.

Part 7: Returning After a Layoff

Layoffs come from holidays, work, illness, family life, and injury. The ramps below are for time away *without* an injury that needs care. After an injury, or an illness with chest symptoms or a professional's advice to stop, that professional's return guidance comes first, and these ramps are used only inside it.

Shared rules for every ramp. Tell your instructor you are returning. First session back is always easier than you think you need. Hard sparring, full-power throwing, falls at height, and maximal efforts return last. Next-morning response sets the next step: green means proceed; yellow means repeat the step; red ends the ramp and starts the professional route.

Ramp A: About One Week Away

Session	Plan
1st back	Normal class at about 80 percent effort; full warm-up, no shortcuts; skip only the single hardest drill if the class has one
2nd back	Normal class as planned, if session one produced only green soreness
Watch for	Soreness heavier than expected after session one — treat the week as Ramp B, week 1

Ramp B: About One Month Away

Week	Sessions and intensity	Held back until
1	Your normal number of sessions, at about 50 to 60 percent of old volume and intensity: shorter drilling, light partner work, no hard rounds	End of week 1, if all responses are green
2	About 70 percent: full technical class, one moderate hard drill, still no hardest rounds	End of week 2
3	About 85 percent: hard work returns in one session only	End of week 3
4	Normal schedule. Review the log before resuming any progression step from Part 4.	—

Ramp C: Six Months or More Away

Return as a beginner in workload, whatever your rank says. Knowledge returns in days. Fitness, strength, and tolerance for contact return in weeks to months.

Weeks	Sessions per week	Intensity and content	Milestone to move on
1 to 2	1 to 2, shorter than a full class if your school allows	Easy to moderate technical work only; full joint circuits; leave before the hard final section	Two sessions in a row with green next mornings
3 to 4	2	Moderate technical work; conditioning at easy to moderate; no hard sparring or full throws	Readiness scores back at your old normal most days

Weeks	Sessions per week	Intensity and content	Milestone to move on
5 to 6	2 to 3	One harder drill per session; contact work light and controlled	Soreness pattern matches your pre-layoff pattern
7 to 8	Your target schedule	Hard work returns in one session per week; falls and throws at full height only now, and only if every earlier step was green	—
9 onward	Normal	Resume Part 4 progression from the new, measured base — not from your pre-layoff numbers	Full review at week 12 in Part 10

The returning student's two traps. First, the good first day: adrenaline makes session one feel easy, so session two gets loaded — the bill arrives on day three. The ramps are written by calendar on purpose. Second, comparing yourself to the partner who never left. The honest comparison is you against last week's log.

Part 8: Training at 40, 50, and 60 and Beyond

These rows adjust doses and spacing, never honesty about response. A warning sign at 25 is a warning sign at 55. Never file pain, numbness, weakness, chest, or head and neck symptoms under "age." Get them assessed as Part 5 directs.

Group	Warm-up and preparation	Hard days	Progression and load notes
40-plus	Full 10- or 15-minute template; full joint circuit on hard days	Two hard days per week suit most; add an easy technical day rather than a third hard day	Hold each Part 4 step two weeks; morning mobility most days pays a clear dividend
50-plus	15-minute template as the default; joint circuit daily on training days	Space hard days with at least one easy or rest day between them	Progress one variable per two-week step; strength work through comfortable ranges twice a week supports the joints your art loads most
60-plus	15-minute template, plus the spot checks in Part 1	One to two hard days per week, with technical days between;	Smaller steps, longer holds; balance work in every warm-up; any new

Group	Warm-up and preparation	Hard days	Progression and load notes
	done slowly and in full	falls and throws only at heights and speeds your instructor sets for you	joint pain is assessed, not trained through

At every age: Part 6 recovery inputs carry more of the result than any extra session. Judge yourself against your own log, never against the youngest person in the room.

Part 9: The Weekly Tracker

One row per week. Copy the page or keep the same lines in a notebook.

Week of	Sessions planned / done	Hard sessions	Best readiness score / worst	Yellow or red days (Part 5)	Life load (1-3)	One observation
_____	____ / ____	____	____ / ____	_____	____	_____
_____	____ / ____	____	____ / ____	_____	____	_____
_____	____ / ____	____	____ / ____	_____	____	_____
_____	____ / ____	____	____ / ____	_____	____	_____

Reading it. Readiness falling while life load is a 3 is a scheduling problem; a yellow day repeating in the same joint is a Part 5 problem; steady scores with sessions done is permission for one Part 4 step.

Part 10: The Twelve-Week Tracker

The long view. Review at weeks 4, 8, and 12 with your instructor if possible.

Measure	Start	Week 4	Week 8	Week 12
Sessions per week (usual)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Hard sessions per week	_____	_____	_____	_____
Average readiness score	_____	_____	_____	_____
Yellow days in the period	_____	_____	_____	_____

Measure	Start	Week 4	Week 8	Week 12
Red days (and action taken)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Sleep: usual hours	_____	_____	_____	_____
Main training goal for next period	_____	_____	_____	_____

Reading it. The twelve-week win is a period with no avoidable absence: hard training was done, warnings were answered early, and the load at week 12 is higher than at week 1 without a break in between.

Part 11: The Training Log

One row per session. Two minutes after class, while the memory is true.

Date	Art / session type	Minutes	Intensity (E/M/H)	Readiness before (/10)	Soreness or pain next morning (where, color)	One note
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Questions Students Ask

I am sore after every class. Is that normal? Mild, dull soreness that fades in two to four days and shrinks as a session becomes familiar is the green pattern in Part 5. Sharp, one-spotted, joint, or still-building soreness is not that pattern.

Can I train when I slept badly? One short night usually means a one-reduction day under Part 1, not a cancelled day. Two short nights in a row, or a short night plus a yellow joint, means a technical day or rest.

The ten percent idea — do I have to hit it? No. It is a ceiling and a brake, not a target. Holding steady is a complete plan for a hard life week, and an easy week is a planned part of the system, not a failed week.

I took two months off. Can I use Ramp B? Ramp B covers about one month away. Two months sits between B and C: start with Ramp B, week 1, but hold each week twice before advancing, and take the Ramp C rule about hard contact returning last.

At 58, should my goals change? The schedule should: longer warm-ups, spaced hard days, smaller steps. The warning-sign standard does not change, and neither does the right to train hard on days your readiness check earns.

Does this guide replace asking a professional? No. It tells you exactly when to ask one. That referral is part of the program.

Instructor Notes

Run the readiness check as a class habit for the first month — two minutes at the start, scores called as numbers, no explanations required. Students report honestly when a low score costs them nothing. Protect the arrival-late rule and the technical-day option the same way: the first student punished socially for using either ends honest reporting for the whole room.

Watch for the pattern, not the complaint. One student modifying one drill is a yellow day. The same student modifying the same drill for three weeks is an assessment conversation, held privately. Keep a class-level eye on Part 4: when you add a new drill or a testing block, that is the class's one-variable step for the week — do not also extend the class and raise sparring intensity, then read the soreness as a fitness problem.

For mixed-age classes, set the warm-up by the oldest standard in the room and let younger students add speed inside it. Your 50-plus students are often the attendance backbone of the school. Their long run is the school's long run.

Finally, model the log. An instructor who writes down their own training and returns gives every student permission to treat this work as part of the art, which it is.