

# Return-to-Training Plan

*Mat Manual companion guide to "Coming Back: Your First Month After a Long Layoff." Print it. The article teaches the split between what survives a layoff and what does not. This guide turns that split into a four-week ramp, with intensity ceilings, re-entry gates stated as criteria, a load-and-soreness log, and a second-month build.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Dojo/Gym: \_\_\_\_\_ Art: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of first class back: \_\_\_\_\_ Length of layoff: \_\_\_\_\_

**BEFORE ANYTHING:** ☐ Tell your instructor you are returning before your first class back. Use the checklist in Part 3. A return that is a surprise to the room is a safety problem, not a private decision. ☐ If you are returning after an injury or an illness, a professional's return advice outranks every table in this plan. Follow it first, and use this ramp only inside it. ☐ Stop rules outrank doses. Sharp, one-spot, joint, or worsening pain, numbness, tingling, weakness, chest symptoms, or head or neck symptoms end the session. They are never a toughness test and never a ramp step. ☐ Hard sparring, hard rolling, full throws, and falls at height return last, and only through the gates in Parts 15 and 16. The gates are criteria, not dates. Passing a week on the calendar does not open a gate. ☐ Tap early and often in any live work that returns through the gates. Control comes before any submission, throw, or finish, at every stage of this return. ☐ Partners feed at the intensity written for your week, not at your old level. If a partner does not know you are returning, tell them before the drill starts.

## Part 1: How to Use This Plan

This plan covers the first four weeks back, then a second-month build, for a layoff of months or years. Part 2 tells shorter layoffs where to enter.

### The Rules That Govern Every Week

| Rule                        | What it means in practice                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Attendance before intensity | The first job is showing up and recovering. Hard efforts are added only after attendance is steady            |
| One change at a time        | Each week changes one thing: length, completeness, one harder element, or live work through a gate            |
| The morning after decides   | Green next morning: proceed. Heavy or joint-based soreness still building after two days: repeat or step back |

| Rule                      | What it means in practice                                                                                     |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Leave with something left | In weeks 1 and 2, end every session able to do a little more. Stopping early is the plan, not a failure of it |
| The log is the record     | Write each session in Part 17 the same day. Memory flatters a return. The log does not.                       |

## Who Enters Where

| Your layoff                               | Enter the plan at                           | Notes                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| About two to four weeks                   | Week 3, after one Week 1 session as a check | If that check session produces an unusual response, run the full four weeks  |
| About one to three months                 | Week 1                                      | Hold each week as written                                                    |
| Three months to a year                    | Week 1                                      | Hold Week 1 and Week 2 for up to two calendar weeks each if responses say so |
| Over a year, or returning to a new school | Week 1, plus the new-school items in Part 3 | Workload returns as a beginner's workload, whatever your grade says          |

These entry points are a practical starting pattern, presented as variation: schools vary in how they bring students back, and your instructor's placement outranks this table.

## Part 2: The Pre-Return Self-Check

Complete this the week before your first class. It is a readiness check, not a fitness test. Bring the page to the conversation in Part 3.

| Check                                                                                      | Ready                    | Not yet, and what I will do                                           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I can walk briskly and do light daily activity without next-day payback                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> _____                                        |
| My sleep is close to my usual pattern most nights                                          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> _____                                        |
| No joint currently gives sharp, pinching, locking, or giving-way feelings in daily life    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> See a professional before returning          |
| I can get down to the floor and stand up again without help, if my art works on the ground | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Tell my instructor; start with standing work |
| I can raise both arms overhead and turn my head both ways comfortably                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Tell my instructor which movement is limited |

| Check                                                                               | Ready                    | Not yet, and what I will do                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| I know which sessions in my school's week are technical, and which are hard or live | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Ask before choosing my first sessions |
| I have a notebook or the log in Part 17 ready to use from session one               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Set it up before the first class      |
| I have told at least one regular training partner that I am coming back             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Message them this week                |

## The Baseline Page

Write these lines before you return. Week 4 is judged against them, not against your pre-layoff best.

My current honest limits: \_\_\_\_\_

Movements I expect to find hardest: \_\_\_\_\_

Success in month one, in one sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

## Part 3: The Instructor-Conversation Checklist

Have this conversation before the first class. Work down the list. Do not save it for the warm-up.

| Item                          | What to say, in plain words                                                                                 | Done                     |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Time away                     | "I have been away for _____ months/years."                                                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Reason, as far as needed      | Work, family, illness, injury, or "life got busy." Detail beyond that is your choice                        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Injury or illness history     | What it was, what stage of recovery you are at, and any professional advice about returning                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Current limits                | Any movement, position, or load you are avoiding, and any limit a professional has set                      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Your month-one holds          | "I plan to hold back hard rounds / throws at height / full class length for the first weeks."<br>Name yours | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Session choice                | Ask which weekly sessions suit a returner, and which to avoid in month one                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Partner placement             | Ask who the instructor would pair you with in week one, and who to avoid until the gates open               | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The watch question            | "What would you watch for in my first weeks back?" Write the answer below                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The gate question             | "Who decides when I spar, roll live, or take full throws again, and what do you want to see first?"         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| New-school items, if relevant | Your grade, who awarded it, what you have covered, and what you have not covered since                      | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Instructor's answers, written the same day: what to watch for: \_\_\_\_\_ Gate decision and who makes it: \_\_\_\_\_ Sessions to attend / avoid: \_\_\_\_\_

## Part 4: Baseline Session: What Survived, Checked Slowly

Run this as your first session back, inside a technical class if possible. Every item is done slowly, at low intensity, with an instructor's eye where you can get one. Mark what you find. This page sorts your month: the "holds" column is your base, the "rebuild" column is your work.

| Area                                             | Check it by                                                                | Holds                                                           | Rebuild                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Form or kata sequence                            | Walk one form or core sequence at walking speed, no power                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Order complete, no guessed moves       | <input type="checkbox"/> Gaps named: _____                           |
| Core stance or base                              | Hold your art's main positions at half depth or low load for a short count | <input type="checkbox"/> Balanced, breathing steady             | <input type="checkbox"/> Shakes, rises, or collapses early           |
| Basic strike, entry, or guard movement           | Ten slow reps of your art's first technique, both sides where relevant     | <input type="checkbox"/> Shape matches your class standard      | <input type="checkbox"/> Shape drifts: _____                         |
| Breakfall or floor movement, if your art uses it | Low, slow, from the lowest height your school teaches                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Clean and quiet                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Holds breath, posts hard, or avoids a side  |
| Footwork                                         | One minute of your art's base step, in and out, no technique added         | <input type="checkbox"/> No crossed feet, stance kept           | <input type="checkbox"/> Steps cross, stance narrows, or breath goes |
| Breath under light effort                        | Two minutes of easy continuous movement                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Can speak in full sentences throughout | <input type="checkbox"/> Gasping or breath-holding at light work     |

**Reading the page.** Two or more "rebuild" marks in one area set that area as your focus for weeks 1 and 2. A pain response is not a "rebuild" mark. It is a stop, under Part 6.

## Part 5: Intensity Ceilings, Defined

Every week in this plan carries a ceiling. A ceiling is a maximum, not a target. Most work sits below it.

| Ceiling label | What it feels like                                      | Talk test                       | What belongs under it                                                                 |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Light         | Easy, controlled, you could repeat the session tomorrow | Full sentences at any point     | Warm-ups, walking forms, slow drilling, low breakfalls, shadow work                   |
| Moderate      | Working, breathing harder, form still fully yours       | Short sentences between efforts | Technical drilling at class pace, controlled partner work, pad work at moderate power |

| Ceiling label | What it feels like                                                                 | Talk test                | What belongs under it                                                         |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hard          | Near your current limit, form at risk in the last reps                             | A few words at a time    | One harder drill or round, only where a week names it, never in weeks 1 and 2 |
| Live          | A partner is genuinely trying to score, pass, throw, or finish within agreed rules | Not a talk-test activity | Returns only through Parts 15 and 16, at agreed light intensity first         |

## Ceiling Rules

Judge intensity ten minutes after the session: adrenaline lies, and the settled feeling goes in the log. Power follows the same ceiling as speed: a slow drill hit at full power is not light. When form breaks twice in a set for tiredness, that set is done. Poor sleep or heavy soreness lowers today's ceiling.

## Part 6: Soreness and Warning Decisions During the Ramp

This plan assumes the distinction taught in the companion article's long-run source: normal training soreness is dull, spread across a muscle, eases as you warm up, and fades over a few days. Use this short decision table for ramp choices only. It does not diagnose anything.

| Response the next morning                                                                                                                                           | Ramp decision                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mild muscle soreness, fading, movement normal                                                                                                                       | Proceed to the next planned session                                                                                                                                |
| Moderate soreness, still present at the next session but easing                                                                                                     | Repeat the current step. Do not advance this week                                                                                                                  |
| Heavy soreness, stiffness changing how you walk or stand, or soreness still building after two days                                                                 | Step back one week in the plan. Make the next session light and technical                                                                                          |
| One-spot, sharp, pinching, or joint pain, or pain at the same point in the same movement each time                                                                  | Modify or sit out that movement, tell your instructor, and log the location. If it appears in three sessions in a row, get it assessed by a qualified professional |
| Sharp or sudden pain after a twist, fall, or blow; numbness, tingling, or weakness; chest, head, or neck symptoms; a joint that locks, gives way, or swells quickly | Stop the session. Seek prompt professional help, urgently for chest, head, or neck symptoms. Do not resume the ramp until a professional advises you               |

**The three-session rule.** A movement modified for a third session in a row is no longer a ramp adjustment. Book the assessment.

## Part 7: Week 1: Show Up and Leave Early

**Job of the week:** attendance, information, and a clean baseline.

| Item               | Week 1 standard                                                                                                         |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sessions           | 1 to 2, technical sessions only, chosen with your instructor in Part 3                                                  |
| Session length     | About half to two-thirds of a full class. Leaving before the final section is planned, not apologised for               |
| Intensity ceiling  | Light, rising to moderate only in familiar technical drilling                                                           |
| Content            | Warm-up in full, line work, forms, entries, and controlled partner drilling at low resistance                           |
| Held back all week | Hard rounds, live sparring or rolling, full throws, falls at height, maximal pad work, any test of your old best        |
| Success standard   | You attended, you logged both the session and the next morning, and you could have repeated the week exactly as written |

### Week 1 Session Order

Full warm-up, no shortcuts. Baseline checks from Part 4, inside class work where possible, marked the same day. Technical drilling at light to moderate pace, stopping a drill when form breaks for tiredness. Leave before the hardest final section, as told to the instructor before class. Log within the hour, and again next morning, in Part 17.

## Part 8: Week 1 Session Cards

### Card 1A: First Technical Session

| Block                   | Dose                                | Pass standard                               |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Warm-up                 | Full class warm-up                  | Joints prepared, breathing settled          |
| Stance and footwork     | 5 to 10 minutes, easy pace          | No crossed feet, stance length held         |
| Core technique drilling | 2 to 3 short sets, slow to moderate | Shape holds on the last rep of each set     |
| Form or sequence walk   | 1 to 2 passes at walking speed      | Order complete; gaps noted, not chased      |
| Cool-down and log       | 5 minutes                           | Session and limits written before you leave |

### Card 1B: Second Session, Only If the First Answered Green

| Block                   | Dose                                          | Pass standard                               |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Warm-up                 | Full class warm-up                            | As Card 1A                                  |
| Technical drilling      | One drill more than session one, same ceiling | Form holds; breath recovers between sets    |
| Controlled partner work | Short sets, low resistance, partner briefed   | Either partner can stop the drill instantly |

| Block                             | Dose                                            | Pass standard               |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Floor or fall shapes, if relevant | Lowest height, slow, few reps                   | Clean and quiet, both sides |
| Exit                              | Leave before the final hard section, as planned | Next-morning log completed  |

**Week 1 failure fix.** If session one produced a step-back response under Part 6, there is no Card 1B. Repeat Card 1A the following week and call that Week 1 again. Responses advance a ramp. The calendar does not.

## Part 9: Week 2: Make Attendance Ordinary

**Job of the week:** the same load, done as routine, with recovery between sessions as the thing being trained.

| Item               | Week 2 standard                                                                                                                |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sessions           | Your normal number, technical sessions; if week 1 had one session, week 2 may have two                                         |
| Session length     | About two-thirds to three-quarters of a full class                                                                             |
| Intensity ceiling  | Moderate. One drill may touch the top of moderate. Nothing hard                                                                |
| Content            | Full technical class except the hardest rounds; controlled partner work at moderate resistance where your instructor places it |
| Held back all week | Live work, full throws and falls at height, hardest conditioning finishers                                                     |
| Success standard   | You recovered normally between sessions, and the second session looked like the first, not worse                               |

### Week 2 Watch List

Second session clearly worse than the first: recovery is the limit, so hold week 2 for another week. Soreness smaller than week 1 after the same work: adaptation is on schedule, proceed. A favourite technique feels close to old form: enjoy it at the ceiling, do not test it at full power. Motivation dips: the normal week-two dip. Run the week as written and judge it from the log.

## Part 10: Week 2 Session Cards

### Card 2A: Technical Class, Near Full

| Block                 | Dose                                     | Pass standard                             |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Warm-up               | Full                                     | As week 1                                 |
| Main technical blocks | All except the hardest round or finisher | Form holds in the last block you complete |
| Partner drilling      | Moderate resistance, briefed partners    | Stops and resets are instant              |

| Block                   | Dose                                      | Pass standard                          |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Form or position review | One full run or one longer positional set | Breakdown point noted for week 3 focus |

### Card 2B: Weak-Area Session

Choose the area with the most "rebuild" marks in Part 4. This session is deliberately narrow.

| Block                             | Dose                                                                            | Pass standard                          |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Warm-up plus targeted preparation | Full warm-up, plus gentle preparation for the weak area                         | Area moves freely at light load        |
| Weak-area drilling                | 3 to 4 short sets, moderate ceiling, rests generous                             | Last set matches the first set's shape |
| Supporting work                   | Your art's base movement under the weak area: footwork, base, or floor movement | No compensation you have to hide       |
| Log                               | Note the drill that will become week 3's harder element, if this area earns it  | One drill named                        |

**Week 2 failure fix.** Two step-back responses in one week ends week 2. Take the next week at week 1 load, tell your instructor, and use Part 22 before advancing again.

### Part 11: Week 3: Add One Harder Element

**Job of the week:** prove one harder element can be added, recovered from, and repeated.

| Item                         | Week 3 standard                                                                                                         |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sessions                     | Your normal number                                                                                                      |
| Session length               | Full technical class, except live sections still gated                                                                  |
| Intensity ceiling            | Moderate, with one hard element in one session only                                                                     |
| The hard element, choose one | One harder drill, one longer block, one conditioning finisher at moderate-hard, or one round of faster partner drilling |
| Held back all week           | A second hard element, live work that has not passed its gate, any make-up volume for missed sessions                   |
| Success standard             | The hard element was recovered from normally, and the session after it was a normal session, not a survival exercise    |

## Choosing the Hard Element

Good first choices: one fast pad round at controlled power (striking); one set of entries at full class speed against a cooperative partner (throwing); one positional, defence-focused round at agreed intensity (grappling); one full form at full intent after section work (forms). Poor first choices, in every art: free live work, full throws at height repeated, and anything done to exhaustion.

## Part 12: Week 3 Session Cards

### Card 3A: The Hard-Element Session

| Order | Block                                                | Standard                                                                    |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1     | Full warm-up                                         | No shortcuts on the day the load rises                                      |
| 2     | Technical work at moderate ceiling                   | Arrive at the hard element fresh, not already tired                         |
| 3     | The one hard element, from Part 11                   | Stop it at form breakdown, not at the planned end, if breakdown comes first |
| 4     | Easy technical work to finish                        | Leave able to speak in full sentences                                       |
| 5     | Log the element and the next morning with extra care | This week's log rows decide week 4                                          |

### Card 3B: The Answer Session

Run this as the next session after Card 3A. Its job is to read the answer.

| Check                      | Green answer                             | Yellow answer and action                                            |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Next-morning soreness      | Mild, muscle-based, fading               | Heavy or joint-based: week 3 repeats, hard element halved           |
| Warm-up feel               | Joints and movement near your new normal | Stiff in a new place: stay at moderate ceiling all session          |
| Form in first drilling set | Matches last week's standard             | Clearly worse: this session becomes a Week 2 session                |
| Willingness                | Ready to train                           | Dreading contact or impact: name it to your instructor before class |

## Part 13: Week 4: A Whole Technical Class

**Job of the week:** complete a normal technical class, whole, and review the month from the log.

| Item              | Week 4 standard                                                                                   |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sessions          | Your normal number                                                                                |
| Session length    | Full class, technical sections complete                                                           |
| Intensity ceiling | Moderate, with the week 3 hard element repeated once, if week 3 answered green                    |
| Content           | Everything except live work that has not passed Parts 15 and 16                                   |
| Held back         | New hard elements, test efforts, any attempt to demonstrate your old best for the room            |
| Success standard  | A whole class, recovered from normally, with form in the final section close to form in the first |

### The Month-End Review Questions

Answer from the log, in writing, at the end of week 4.

| Question                                                                   | Your answer                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| How many planned sessions did I attend, and how many did I miss or shorten | _____ / _____                 |
| Which week had to repeat, if any, and what did the repeat teach            | _____                         |
| What is my current honest hard element, the one I can recover from         | _____                         |
| Which area from Part 4 is still in the rebuild column                      | _____                         |
| Am I ready to be assessed against the gates in Parts 15 and 16             | Yes / Not yet, because: _____ |

### Part 14: Week 4 Session Cards

#### Card 4A: The Whole-Class Check

| Block                                     | Dose                     | Pass standard                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Warm-up                                   | Full                     | As every week                                                  |
| Every technical section of a normal class | Full class length        | Final section form within one clear step of first section form |
| Hard element                              | The week 3 element, once | Recovered normally the next morning                            |
| Cool-down                                 | Full, unhurried          | Breathing and heart rate settled before leaving                |

## Card 4B: The Rebuild-Focus Session

| Block                                         | Dose                                                                       | Pass standard                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Warm-up plus preparation for the rebuild area | Full                                                                       | Area ready at light load                                                 |
| Rebuild-area drilling                         | Moderate ceiling, 3 to 4 sets                                              | A named standard from class is met, or a named gap remains for month two |
| Best-material run                             | Your strongest form, sequence, or position, once, at full technical intent | Clean, controlled, and logged as the month's marker                      |

**End-of-month ruling.** Passing Card 4A moves you to the gates and to month two. Failing it is information: repeat week 4 with the rebuild area as focus, and review Part 22 before trying the gates.

## Part 15: The Sparring and Live-Work Re-Entry Gate

This gate is stated as criteria on purpose. No date opens it. Your instructor confirms each item, in class, before your first live round back.

| Criterion               | How it is checked                                                                                   | Met                      |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Attendance base         | Several technical sessions in a row completed, with normal next-morning recovery in the log         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Form under fatigue      | Guard, base, or posture holds through a full technical round, including its last thirty seconds     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Stop discipline         | You stop, reset, tap, and answer a coach's call instantly while tired, checked in drilling          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Defence first           | Your art's basic defence, escape, or cover works at moderate resistance, checked by your instructor | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Breath control          | You can speak a short sentence between efforts in hard drilling                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Named first partner     | A specific partner, briefed, who has agreed to light intensity and to end the round on any signal   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Agreed limits written   | Intensity, round length, and target or position limits for the first rounds are written below       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Exit that costs nothing | You and your partner both know the early-exit signal, and using it ends the round without comment   | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Agreed limits for my first live rounds: Intensity: \_\_\_\_\_ Length: \_\_\_\_\_ Limits:

\_\_\_\_\_

## The First Live Rounds Format

| Round  | Format                                                                     | Standard to advance                                        |
|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 to 2 | Light, short, one named partner, defence and movement scored, not finishes | You stayed within the agreed intensity and stopped cleanly |
| 3 to 4 | Light to moderate, same partner or one more named partner                  | Form held in the last round as well as the first           |
| After  | Normal class live work, introduced one session at a time                   | Instructor confirms; log records each step                 |

A gate item that fails in live work sends you back to technical work for at least one week, then to the gate again.

## Part 16: Throws, Falls, and Contact Gates by Art

Use the row for your art, alongside Part 15 where live work is involved. Your instructor confirms the checks.

| Art family              | Gate checks, in order                                                                                                                    | First full version allowed when                                                          |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Throwing arts           | Breakfalls clean low and slow, both sides; entries clean against a cooperative partner; landing area and partner agreed                  | Instructor has seen the falls and the entry at class speed with control                  |
| Grappling, ground       | Positional defence checked; tap fluency checked in drilling, release instant every time; positional rounds completed at agreed intensity | Live rolling returns short, positional first, open rolling last                          |
| Striking, partner work  | Guard and cover hold in drilling; pad work at strong controlled power is accurate; partner drills at rising speed stay controlled        | Free sparring returns light, short, with named partners, per Part 15                     |
| Forms and weapons based | Full forms at training intent are clean; weapon handling at slow and class speed is controlled with space checked                        | Demonstration or test efforts are scheduled, not improvised at the end of a tiring class |
| Mixed programmes        | Each strand above that your programme uses is gated separately                                                                           | Passing one strand's gate does not open another strand's live work                       |

**Ukemi rule for every throwing return.** If a fall cannot be taken cleanly at low height today, no throw that needs that fall is drilled at height today. No exceptions for enthusiasm, visitors, or grading dates.

## Part 17: The Load-and-Soreness Log

One row per session. Two minutes after class, and a second short entry the next morning. Intensity uses the labels from Part 5: L (light), M (moderate), H (hard element included), Live (only after a gate).

| Date  | Week of plan | Session type and length | Ceiling used (L/M/H/Live) | What I held back | Next morning: soreness where, and green/yellow/red under Part 6 | One note |
|-------|--------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| _____ | _____        | _____                   | _____                     | _____            | _____                                                           | _____    |
| _____ | _____        | _____                   | _____                     | _____            | _____                                                           | _____    |
| _____ | _____        | _____                   | _____                     | _____            | _____                                                           | _____    |
| _____ | _____        | _____                   | _____                     | _____            | _____                                                           | _____    |
| _____ | _____        | _____                   | _____                     | _____            | _____                                                           | _____    |
| _____ | _____        | _____                   | _____                     | _____            | _____                                                           | _____    |
| _____ | _____        | _____                   | _____                     | _____            | _____                                                           | _____    |
| _____ | _____        | _____                   | _____                     | _____            | _____                                                           | _____    |
| _____ | _____        | _____                   | _____                     | _____            | _____                                                           | _____    |
| _____ | _____        | _____                   | _____                     | _____            | _____                                                           | _____    |
| _____ | _____        | _____                   | _____                     | _____            | _____                                                           | _____    |
| _____ | _____        | _____                   | _____                     | _____            | _____                                                           | _____    |

### Reading Four Weeks of Log

Soreness after the same work gets smaller each week: the ramp fits, advance. Soreness lasts longer each week: load is outrunning recovery, hold the week and use Part 22. The same joint is the note every week: use the Part 6 three-session rule and get it assessed.

### Part 18: The Weekly Review Sheet

Complete one per week, on the same day, from the log, not from memory. Rows for each of weeks 1 to 4: sessions planned / attended; highest ceiling used; yellow or red mornings; hard element, if any; gate progress; one thing that improved; next week's one change.

Week 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Week 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Week 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Week 4: \_\_\_\_\_

**Review rule.** If you cannot fill a line from the log, fixing the log is next week's first change.

## Part 19: Solo and Home Work During the Ramp

Solo work supports the ramp. It never adds a hidden second programme on top of it.

| Allowed in month one           | Dose                           | Standard                                  |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Walking a form or sequence     | 1 to 2 passes, easy pace       | Order and stance only; no power, no speed |
| Easy shadow movement           | 5 to 10 minutes, light ceiling | Breathing conversational throughout       |
| Mobility and joint preparation | Short, gentle sets             | Nothing forced, nothing against pain      |

Not in month one: hard home conditioning finishers, full-power striking at home, learning return material from videos, and make-up sessions for missed classes. A missed session is missed. Doubling the next one breaks the one-change rule.

## Part 20: Conditioning Support That Does Not Compete

Conditioning returns as support, from week 3 at the earliest, and only if class recovery is green. Walking for 20 to 40 minutes at conversational pace on rest days. Easy cycling or swimming, if you already do them, for 20 to 30 minutes on rest days only. Light strength work through comfortable ranges, if already familiar, one or two short sessions a week well below old loads, never the day before a hard-element session. Extra sleep and regular meals, daily, are the highest-value support in a return month.

**Competition test.** If a support activity leaves you sorer the next morning, it was training. Log it and count it against the week's one change.

## Part 21: Training Around Life Load in a Return Month

A return month competes with the life that filled the layoff. Plan for it in advance. A physically demanding job: start at the lower session count, because work lifting counts toward tissue load. Poor sleep you cannot fix this month: hold weeks longer and drop ceilings one label on short-sleep days. A stressful month: keep attendance, drop hard elements; a technical-only month is a completed month. Travel: a hold week, Part 19 solo work only, resume at the week you left. Uncertain session length from caring duties: choose the shorter format and log it as the plan, not a shortfall.

Tell the people at home which evenings are class and that week two may be tired and grumpy. Returners who brief their household keep their ramp.

## Part 22: When the Ramp Stalls: Step-Back Rules

Stalls are normal. Handle them by rule, not by mood.

| Stall                                                                    | Rule                                                                                         | Return point                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| One red response under Part 6                                            | Stop, professional route first                                                               | Resume only inside professional advice, at the week the response occurred or earlier |
| Two yellow mornings in one week                                          | Next week repeats the previous week's load                                                   | Advance only after a green week                                                      |
| A week missed for illness, without chest symptoms and with full recovery | Repeat the last completed week                                                               | Then advance as written                                                              |
| A week missed for any other reason                                       | Repeat the last completed week if the gap was over ten days; otherwise hold the current week | Log the gap and the reason                                                           |
| Form still collapsing in final sections at week 4                        | Repeat week 4 with Card 4B as the focus                                                      | Gates wait until Card 4A passes                                                      |
| Motivation gone, body fine                                               | Shrink session length for one week, keep attendance                                          | If a second week feels the same, talk to your instructor                             |
| A new pain in a new place                                                | Treat as Part 6, not as a stall                                                              | Assessment rule applies from its first appearance                                    |

**Never rules.** Never test a stall by going harder, and never hide a stall from your instructor.

## Part 23: The Second-Month Build: Weeks 5 to 8

For returners whose ramp went well: Card 4A passed, mornings green, and at least one gate in Parts 15 and 16 assessed. If your ramp included repeats, month two starts whenever month one genuinely finishes.

| Week | Sessions and length           | Ceiling and hard work                                           | Live work                                                  | Focus                                                                                                       |
|------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5    | Normal schedule, full classes | Moderate, hard element once, as week 3                          | If gated: first live rounds per Part 15 format             | Settle the full class as the new base                                                                       |
| 6    | Normal schedule               | Moderate, hard element in two sessions if week 5 answered green | One live session, named partners                           | Rebuild area from Part 4 becomes the technical focus                                                        |
| 7    | Normal schedule               | One genuinely hard session, the rest moderate                   | Live work in one session, limits widened only by agreement | Add the second activity you held back: conditioning support, a second art session, or a seminar-style class |

| Week | Sessions and length | Ceiling and hard work                                              | Live work                                           | Focus                                                                              |
|------|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8    | Normal schedule     | Hard work as your school programme sets it, for one session a week | Normal class live work, if your instructor confirms | Review month two from the log; choose the next training block with your instructor |

## Second-Month Ceilings

Total load rises by one change a week at most. Hard sessions: one a week in weeks 5 and 6, two from week 7 only if recovery stays green. One new activity type across the whole month, not several at once. Tests, gradings, and competitions only with your instructor's agreement, and not in week 5: a return is not proved by an event.

## Part 24: Month Two Progression and the New Base

Month two ends with a new base: the load you can hold, recover from, and build on. Write it down. It replaces both your pre-layoff numbers and your month-one numbers as the reference for future planning.

| Measure                                                     | My new base, end of month two |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Sessions per week I can hold                                | _____                         |
| Hard sessions per week I can recover from                   | _____                         |
| Live work I am cleared for, and its limits                  | _____                         |
| My rebuild area: closed, or carried forward as              | _____                         |
| My usual next-morning response to a hard session            | _____                         |
| The warning sign I now know to act on first, in my own body | _____                         |

## From Here, the Long-Run Rules

From month three, normal load planning takes over: one variable at a time, easy weeks planned, warnings answered early. Keep the Part 17 log running for at least one more month. It turns this return into knowledge you can reuse after the next layoff.

## Part 25: Terms Used in This Plan

| Term   | What it means here                                                                                                     |
|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Layoff | A break from regular training long enough that fitness, timing, and tissue tolerance have dropped, whatever the reason |
| Ramp   | A planned return in which load rises in steps small enough to read your response to each one                           |

| Term                          | What it means here                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ceiling                       | The hardest a session in a given week is allowed to be. A maximum, not a target                               |
| Hard element                  | The single hardest drill, round, or block in a session, named in advance                                      |
| Gate                          | A set of checkable criteria that must be met before a kind of work returns. Gates open on evidence, not dates |
| Technical session             | A class or part of a class built on drilling, forms, and controlled partner work, without free live rounds    |
| Live work                     | Sparring, rolling, or randori (free practice) with a partner genuinely trying to succeed within agreed rules  |
| Ukemi                         | Breakfalling: the taught way of falling and landing safely in arts that throw                                 |
| Green / yellow / red response | The next-morning decision labels from Part 6: proceed, repeat or modify, or stop and seek help                |
| New base                      | The load at the end of month two that you can hold and recover from, recorded in Part 24                      |

## Part 26: Instructor's Class Plan for a Returning Student

Instructors: a returner in a regular class needs placement, not a separate class. This plan gives you the levers.

| Lever             | Week 1                                                                           | Week 2                                   | Week 3                                                 | Week 4 and month two                               |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Session choice    | Technical only                                                                   | Technical                                | Technical plus one hard element                        | Full programme, live work gated                    |
| Partner placement | Experienced, controlled, briefed                                                 | Briefed regulars                         | Regular class placement                                | Normal, with gate limits observed                  |
| Role in drills    | Receiver and mover at low resistance first                                       | Full drilling roles, moderate resistance | One harder feeding role                                | Normal roles                                       |
| Check-in point    | Before class and at the leaving point                                            | Before class                             | After the hard-element session, read the log with them | Gate assessment, in class, against Parts 15 and 16 |
| What to watch     | Breath, stance collapse, a technique done from memory at old speed on a new body | Recovery between sessions                | Response to the first hard effort                      | Form in final sections; honesty of the log         |

**Protect the early exit.** Teasing a returner, however warmly, for leaving on plan teaches every future returner to hide their ramp. Make leaving on plan respected, and returners will tell you the truth about their load.

## Part 27: Partner Agreements for the Return

Read and sign with a regular training partner, or with the partner named for your first live rounds. These agreements hold for the whole return.

| Agreement                                                                                            | Returner                                   | Partner                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| I will state my ceiling for this session before we start, and name anything I am holding back        | <input type="checkbox"/> Initial:<br>_____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Initial:<br>_____ |
| I will feed at the returner's ceiling, not at their old level and not at mine                        |                                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Initial:<br>_____ |
| Either of us can stop, reset, or end a round on any signal, with no explanation needed in the moment | <input type="checkbox"/> Initial:<br>_____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Initial:<br>_____ |
| Live work happens only at the intensity and within the limits written in Part 15                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Initial:<br>_____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Initial:<br>_____ |
| A tap, in any form, ends the technique in the same motion it is felt. Every time                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Initial:<br>_____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Initial:<br>_____ |
| If the returner reports a warning sign, we stop and tell the instructor together                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Initial:<br>_____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Initial:<br>_____ |

Partner name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Part 28: Return Review and Sign-Off

Complete at the end of month one, and again at the end of month two. Keep the signed page with the log.

| Review line                         | Month one     | Month two     |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Sessions attended / planned         | _____ / _____ | _____ / _____ |
| Weeks repeated, and why             | _____         | _____         |
| Gates passed (Parts 15 and 16)      | _____         | _____         |
| Hard element I can now recover from | _____         | _____         |
| Rebuild area: status                | _____         | _____         |
| One lesson this return taught me    | _____         | _____         |

| Review line                          | Month one | Month two |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Next block agreed with my instructor | _____     | _____     |

Student signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Final line.** You have started a shorter, smarter story, and the log in this plan is its record. Train from the base recorded in Part 24, not from the one you remember.