



Improving Your Learning Skills

*Intended for both students and teachers**

Do you want to learn judo skills faster, easier, correctly on the first try? Silly question. Here are some ideas to assist you in coming closer to achieving these goals.

Teachers are sometimes taught that there are four basic and different types of learners. They are *Visual, Audio, Reading & Writing, and Kinesthetic*. Learners are often predominantly one, with others blended in. Which are you?

Judo instructors are rarely taught to be teachers. They are rarely taught to utilize the skills needed to accommodate these learning styles. Therefore, you must learn to be a more functional student.

First, understand that judo skills in themselves are based upon simple actions. However they are usually of the “Pat your head and rub your stomach. Now, switch!” variety. It is the blending of the parts that are challenging. That said judo skills do not require that you do anything more difficult than wrinkling your nose, then combining that with nodding your head. Get the parts, then get the coordination of them.

Which learner are you? In order to learn better, you must accommodate your learning style. Remember, few teachers accommodate them for you. Because of this, you must become an active learner, not a passive one.

Visual Learning

Move to the best places to see what is going on. All too often, students just stand in one spot when the teaching is happening. Move to better vantage points. Look at the main points being utilized. Every judo technique has a basis in combining the laws of physics with applications to a human body. Know what that is and look for it as applied. If you aren't able to figure it out, ask the teacher to show you where and what. Seek out the best place to observe. Feel free to move about as the situation dictates.

Audio Learning

Some instructors could talk students through an entire learning of a physical skills, while others are more the “I'll show it. You do it” type. Most are someplace in-between.

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* The words “teacher” and “instructor” are used in place of “sensei” because not all teachers are the main dojo sensei. The teacher could be a student, a visitor to a class, somebody showing a specialty. Many options outside of official sensei status.

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If you learn best via audio input, you have a challenge. It is difficult to ask someone to say what it is you don't know you didn't hear. It helps if you to have an idea of the place where your own learning broke down, then ask. "Could you tell me...?" Get the teacher to talk.

Reading & Writing

You can read about technique applications in various places, including many judo specific books. Whether or not what you read is what your instructor wants is another concern, and you can't have a textbook on the mat when you are in class. When applicable, ask your instructor for a book recommendation that best suits the instructor's ideas.

After class, or if possible during breaks, write out both general info and critical points in your own judo notebook, which you are best served to have handy, not awaiting you elsewhere. Some find it more beneficial to hand write it into an actual notebook rather than into the smart phone or pad. Also, if necessary, you can approach the teacher and ask for a specific bit of information you need to write in.

Kinesthetic

Hold on. kinesthetic learning is the whole thing we're trying to learn. Here are some ideas on how to be a better kinesthetic learner.

1. Learn to copy simple things. If your instructor stands with thumbs hooked into the belt, or hands on hips, and so on, you do the same. If the teacher tilts the head, stands with one foot forward, etc. As the instructor is teaching standing things, practice in your mind on an invisible partner, in small moves, what you are seeing.
2. Ask the instructor to do it to you. Whenever possible, volunteer to be the uke, the teacher's partner for demonstration.
3. During the practice session, try to get a better student, the best you can, to be your partner. All too often, judoka with physical learning challenges team up with someone who is also challenged. Don't do that. Get with the best you can. This can sometimes create a difficult scenario. The better student should not suddenly become a mini-sensei. Just be with that other student. Get advice in small bits, if at all.
4. Get the instructor's attention and have the instructor come to you and advise and improve you personally. Many challenged folks do exactly the opposite, as if to hide from criticism. Raise your hand and get the help.
5. Observe others. If you're not sure what to do, look around and find pairs that look like they get it. Then copy.

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Over all

Let your teacher know that you are a specific type of learner. This might encourage the teacher to add more of what you need to general and personal instruction.

When you bow onto the mat area, and again at the beginning of class, make that a point of gathering your focus to your judo. Go forth from the class bow-in to pass through a new mental doorway, and be in your best judoka and learner mode.

If your school / dojo has throwing and grappling kata classes, attend them. Kata teaches you how to be a better learner, and applies to all areas of judo techniques, not just the ones within it.

Lastly, for the teachers among you, you could improve your output by showing different angles of a technique by moving yourself. You could accommodate the range of learner types by showing, telling, and asking if there are any questions re what they've just been taught. When possible for throwing, explain the three parts of the throw. When applicable, also teach it as a moving skill.

If as a learner, your teacher doesn't do the items in the previous paragraph, you can always humbly ask for them. Who knows, you might secretly teach a teacher to help you and others learn better.



Judo Compass is published by Tom Crone. If you wish to be removed from the list, simply respond with Remove Me in the subject. Previous issues can be found on www.cronejudo.com