

AWVMAT Rules and Guidelines



AWVMAT Rules and Guidelines

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I. Basic AWVMAT Rules

I.1. Competitor

Each competitor must present him/herself to the referee suitably attired with proper uniform and equipment and physically prepared to compete. If he/she is not prepared to compete as deemed by the center official, the competitor may be penalized. Refer to **Sparring Penalties – Delay of time** or **Delay of Time - Forms and Weapons Penalties - Delay of Time**.

I.2. Competitor Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the competitor to know the rules and be ready for competition when called to do so. He/she must be suitably attired, and at the appropriate ring when competition begins. Three calls will be made for competition at ringside. If the competitor is not at his/her ring ready to compete when competition begins, he/she will not be able to compete (see delay of time rule). If a competitor leaves the ring after the competition begins and is not present when his/her name is called to compete, his/her name will be called three times at ringside. If he/she is still not present to compete, he/she will be disqualified (see delay of time rule in penalty section of Sparring or Forms and Weapons).

I.3. Legal Age Rule

A competitor's legal competition age is determined by their age on the date of the tournament.

I.4. Proof of Age Rule

All competitors must have a proof of age document. If there is a legitimate reason to question a competitor's age, he/she must present a proof of age (birth certificate, driver's license, or other acceptable documents) to prove his/her age.

I.5. Rank Rule

A competitor must compete at the highest belt rank they have officially earned in martial arts. A competitor may not enter a division for a belt rank they have not legally attained. Once a competitor has legally competed as a black belt, they must continue to compete in black belt divisions for all future events. Competitors are not permitted to compete in a lower belt division than the highest rank they have earned. Exceptions may be considered by the Event Organizer, or Head Official when a division has limited participation below black belt level, provided the situation is explained and approved in advance.

I.6. Late Entries

Once a division has started (the first competitor has started his/her form/weapon routine, or the first divisional sparring match has started) no competitor/s can be added to that division. **BE ON TIME!**

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The only exception to this rule is the "Fairness Rule" at the end of this rules summary.

Late Entry Definition: A competitor arrives at the ring after the final call for the division has been made, competitor placement and bracket order have been finalized, the competition order has been determined, and before the first competitor has started.

I.7. Ring Requirements

The size of the fighting and forms adult black belt rings shall be approximately 20' x 20'.

- a) Starting lines should be marked approximately six feet apart in the middle of the ring.
- b) Additionally, each ring should be posted with a ring number visible to competitors, officials, and medical personnel from across the floor.
- c) All youth and under black belt adult rings can be a minimum of 16' to a maximum of 20'.

I.8. Fairness Rule

If a question arises that is not completely covered by this rule book, the Head Official and/or Event Organizer rules arbitrator may at his/ her discretion, overrule, modify or change a delineated rule if he/she believes that enforcing such a rule would result in an inherent unfair outcome to a competitor. However, the rules arbitrator should overrule, modify, or change a delineated rule only in extreme cases.

I.9. Divisional and Tournament Disqualification

These disqualifications go from least severe to the most severe. The severity of the infraction is the basis of which disqualification is warranted. What is warranted is discussed upon by the Event Organizer and/or Head Official. Play by the rules and show good sportsmanship at all times.

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II. Equipment and Uniforms

II.1. Uniform

All competitors must wear a complete (top and bottom) traditional or professional sport karate (Kung Fu, Tae Kwon Do, etc.) uniform in a good state of repair. The appropriate color belt or sash must be worn in competition.

- a) **Sparring:** All sparring uniforms must have sleeves that reach at least to the middle of the biceps. No T-shirts, sweats, tank tops or unapproved shoes are allowed in the sparring divisions (see sparring foot pads).
- b) **Forms & Weapons:** T-shirts, tank tops and sweatshirts are allowed in forms if they are part of the competitor's official school uniform. Uniforms in the forms and weapons divisions are allowed more liberties because a form routine is not one-on-one competition where the uniform could cause a decisive disadvantage or advantage to a competitor. Removal of the uniform top is allowed if the removal is considered relevant to the artistic expression or safety of the competitor. Shoes may be worn in forms competition if they do not damage or mark the competition floor.

II.2. Required and Recommended Safety Equipment

AWVMAT approved headgear; hand and foot pads, elbow pads, shin guards, mouthpieces, groin cups (for male competitors only) and chest guards (for all competitors 17-year-old and younger) are mandatory for all competitors in sparring divisions.

The competitor's equipment will be checked and if it is deemed unsafe or does not fit properly, he/she will be asked to change the equipment before he/she can compete. Insufficiently padded gloves, foot, chest and head gear will not be allowed. Equipment must be in a good state of repair and must be free of heavy taping, tears or any other repairs that may cause injury.

If a competitor is missing required equipment or the equipment does not meet AWVMAT requirements, as it is deemed unsafe, prior to their division being called for competition, he/she is subject to the Delay of Time Penalty and may be disqualified, it is the responsibility of the competitors to have the proper equipment.

The tournament's official rules arbitrator ultimately determines the approval or denial of the equipment.

- a) **Hand Pads:** A soft padded surface must cover the finger (not required to cover whole finger), wrist and any striking surface of the hand.
- b) **Foot Pads:** A soft padded surface must cover the instep, sides, toes, and ankle. The bottom of the foot does not have to be padded. If sparring shoes are used in all sparring divisions, a soft padded bottom is required. Hard bottoms are **NOT Allowed**.

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c) **Head Gear:** The front, sides, and back of the head must be covered by a soft padded surface. In addition to the head gear, a face shield can be worn but is not required for all competitors 17 yrs. & under.

d) **Chest Guard:** All 17 and younger competitors must wear an approved chest protector in sparring. The chest guard must sufficiently cover the abdomen and upper chest such that the sternum is completely protected. Rib guards that cover only the abdomen area are not approved chest guards. Rib/chest guards are highly recommended for additional safety to all sparring competitors. Color-coded Chest Guards will be provided during the tournament to assist in determining who is blue and red for sparring.

e) **Mouthpiece:** A properly fitted mouthpiece is required.

Jewelry

No jewelry may be worn during the entirety of the tournament.

Fingernails

Fingernails extending beyond the fingertip may require trimming or may result in disqualification.

Medical Devices

Braces, casts, or medical devices must be approved by medical personnel before the tournament and proof of the approval must be turned into the Event Organizer or Center Official.

Honesty Rule

If a competitor falsely claims to be wearing required equipment such as a cup or any other safety equipment, they assume all personal risk.

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III. Officials

III.1. Roles and Responsibilities

Each ring should have a **Center Official**, two to three **Judge Officials**, and **Timekeeper/Scorekeeper**.

a) Judges call points and rule infractions as they observe them. Judges also participate in disqualification votes. The Center Official also calls points and rule infractions but maintains full control of the ring and all ring personnel. Judges are responsible for assisting the Center Official when:

- I. A competitor is requesting a time out
- II. A coach or competitor rep is requesting a Protest / Arbitration
- III. Competitor is injured
- IV. Check competitors for proper equipment (Split gloves, foot gear, mouthpiece, check protector, cup, etc...)

b) The Center Official makes all final decisions on penalty points and warnings (except for disqualifications) but can consult with officials before making their decisions.

c) The majority vote of the judges and referee determines a scoring point and/or a competitor's disqualification.

III.2. Center Referee (Center Official)

The Center Official is selected on his/ her experience and knowledge of the rules and is thoroughly versed in the rules and order of competition. He/she promotes the safety of the competitors, enforces the rules and ensures fair play. To this end, the Center Official:

- a) Starts and stops the match;
- b) Award points;
- c) Makes penalty decisions;
- d) Administrates the voting of the other judges;
- e) Communicates clearly with the scorekeeper and timekeeper; and
- f) Announces the winner of each match.

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III.3. Added Responsibilities to the Center Official

The Center Official also maintains responsibility for the following:

- a) Match starts and ends only with his/her command (not the command of the timekeeper);
- b) Maintains final authority regarding scoring disputes
- c) May issue warnings and penalty points without requiring a majority vote
- d) May overrule a majority call only for the purpose of issuing a warning or penalty point
- e) Automatically disqualifies a competitor who accumulates three penalty points
- f) Has authority to issue timeouts. Competitors may request a timeout, but it is the Center Official's decision whether to grant it

NOTE – Disqualification, when not automatic, requires a majority vote of the judges.

III.4. Calls an Official May Make

When the referee believes there has been a significant exchange of techniques, or when signaled to do so by a corner judge, he/she shall call out the word, “STOP!” in a loud voice. **The referee shall wait until the competitor's return to their starting marks** and addresses the judges by saying “JUDGES CALL!” All judges and the center referee cast their votes simultaneously and assertively in the following manner.

- a) **Judge Sees a Point** – He/she should hold up both colors or hold up one arm, if colors are not being used. At the same time, he/she yells out the word “CALL!” in a loud, clear voice to let the referee know he/she has a call.
- b) **Point Calling** – When signaled by the referee (referee says the competitor who scores the point. If a competitor scores a two-point sweep followed by a successful strike, the officials should hold up or point with two fingers (index and middle fingers). If only one point is being called, the “Judges Call” in a loud clear voice) a judge raises the appropriate color (red or blue usually) if colors are being used or points to judge should point with only one finger (Index finger).
- c) **No Point Scored** – An official crosses his/her wrist at waist level or holds both colors down to indicate that he/she believes that a point was not scored.
- d) **Did Not See If a Point Was Scored** – The officials hold his/her hand over his/her eyes indicating that he/she could not see whether a point was scored or not. Indicates the official was not in the position to see if a point scored. (When using this signal, it has the same effect as saying "no point", but it indicates to the referee, competitors, and fans the reason why you are not calling the point).
- e) **Clash** – Officials make a motion as though they are hitting both fists together, indicating that both competitors scored at the same time.

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f) **Penalty** – The official waves the color of the offending competitor in a circular motion. If no colors are used the official waves the hand and arm in a circular motion while pointing at the offending competitor.

g) **Disqualification** – A disqualification vote is taken separately from any other vote. When a disqualification vote is asked for, the center official will say, “JUDGES CALL”. The judges will then hold the color or point to the competitor who is to be disqualified. If the judge does not feel the competitor should be disqualified, he/she crosses his/her wrist or holds both colors down at waist level.

III.5. Head Official

The Head Official serves as the Head Referee of the tournament and maintains authority over all rings, officials, competitors, coaches, and tournament operations. The Head Official ensures consistency in rule enforcement, fairness in competition, and the overall safety and professionalism of the event.

The Head Official is selected based on extensive officiating experience, rule knowledge, leadership ability, and the capability to make unbiased decisions under pressure.

The Head Official is responsible for:

- a) Overseeing all Center Officials, Judge Officials, scorekeepers, and timekeepers throughout the tournament
- b) Ensuring all rules are applied consistently across every competition ring
- c) Conducting a mandatory officials meeting before the tournament begins to review rules, procedures, safety expectations, and tournament operations
- d) Monitoring competition flow and ensuring rings operate efficiently and safely
- e) Interpreting tournament rules when clarification is needed
- f) Resolving disputes, protests, and arbitration requests
- g) Supporting Center Officials when difficult rulings or escalated situations occur
- h) Reviewing unusual situations not specifically covered by the rulebook and applying the Fairness Rule when necessary

The Head Official has authority to:

- a) Stop, pause, delay, or restart a match when necessary for safety or rule clarification
- b) Enter any ring to address unsafe conduct, officiating concerns, or procedural errors
- c) Correct procedural mistakes or misapplication of rules
- d) Overturn a ruling only when a rule has been improperly applied or a clear procedural error occurred
- e) Remove any competitor, coach, official, team member, or spectator from the tournament grounds for unsafe, disruptive, aggressive, abusive, or unsportsmanlike conduct
- f) Suspend or disqualify individuals whose conduct threatens the integrity or safety of the

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tournament

- g) Confer with Center Officials and judges before making a final ruling
- h) Determine when a competitor may not continue due to an obvious skill gap that creates an unreasonable injury risk
- i) Issue tournament-wide instructions or rulings to maintain fairness and organization
- j) Make final decisions regarding arbitration or protest requests

The Head Official should not interfere with normal scoring decisions or routine ring operations unless:

- a) A protest or arbitration request is made
- b) A rule is applied incorrectly
- c) A procedural error occurs
- d) A safety concern exists
- e) Conduct within a ring escalates beyond normal officiating control
- f) Recognize when a scoring technique should have been acknowledged if officials clearly missed the action, and assist in reviewing the situation to ensure a fair ruling

The Head Official's decision is final in all matters involving tournament administration, arbitration, rule interpretation, safety concerns, and removal from the event.

III.6. Official Dress Code

All tournament officials are required to present a professional appearance that reflects the integrity, neutrality, and professionalism of the event. Officials must be easily identifiable, mobile, and free of distractions that could interfere with officiating duties or decision-making.

Officials must wear:

- a) Solid black pants (no jeans, shorts, joggers, or non-approved athletic pants unless specifically approved by the Head Official)
- b) Official tournament-issued shirt, polo or white dress shirt with red tie (must be worn and visible at all times while officiating)
- c) Clean athletic shoes suitable for movement, safety, and extended standing on tournament flooring
- d) or all officials wear martial art gi's
- e) All officials must wear an arm band of the appropriate color for identification

I. Armband color designation for officials:

- Coach ----- Blue
- Head Official -- Red
- Officials ----- Gray
- Score/Time/IT - White

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Officials are NOT permitted to wear:

- a) Jewelry of any kind, including rings, necklaces, bracelets, watches, or any accessory that may interfere with safety, visibility, or officiating performance
- b) Clothing or accessories that are distracting, non-uniform, or that create a perception of bias or unprofessional conduct

Additional standards:

- a) Fingernails must be trimmed and may not extend beyond the fingertip; excessively long nails may result in removal from officiating duties for safety reasons
- b) Officials must maintain a clean, neat, and professional appearance appropriate for a sanctioned martial arts tournament
- c) Any concern regarding safety, appearance, or professionalism may be addressed immediately by the Head Official, including removal from duty if necessary

III.7. Official Signals and Communication Tools

Officials will use standardized signals, tools, and communication procedures to ensure consistent, clear, and safe operation across all competition rings.

Approved Communication Tools:

- a) Red and Blue flags or paddles used for scoring, penalties, and rulings
- b) Double-ended Red/Blue flag sticks may be used by Officials for improved visibility and faster signaling
- c) Standardized hand signals for scoring, no score, penalties, clash, disqualification, and stop commands
- d) Electronic scoring and bracket systems (such as Kihapp when used) for tournament organization and match tracking

Safety and Escalation Signals:

- a) **Yellow Card System** – Used by Center Officials to immediately notify the Head Official of unsafe behavior, serious rule violations, or situations requiring immediate review or intervention
- b) **Arm-Out Stop Signal** – When an official extends one arm outward between both opponents, all action must immediately stop (“NO FIGHTING”) until the Center Official restarts the match.

Coaching Control Tools

- a) **Challenge Card** – Each coach receives one challenge per match. Once used, it is surrendered if the challenger loses the outcome of the challenge and if wins, the coach keeps the Challenge card and may challenge again. Challenge cards may be used to request review of scoring or rulings.

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b) **Timeout Card** – Each coach receives one timeout card per match. It may be used to request a timeout and is returned at the end of the match if used.

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IV. Sparring

IV.1. Order of Competition

Once the final call for the sparring division is made at ringside, the division is closed for check-in and finalized within Kihapp.

All competitors must be present and verified prior to bracket locking.

- a) Competitors are assigned into brackets using Kihapp random placement unless otherwise directed by the Head Official for safety or fairness adjustments.
- b) Once the division is locked in Kihapp, match order is final and will not be manually altered except by the Head Official or Event Organizer.
- c) Reasonable efforts may be made to separate competitors from the same school in the first round; however, this is not guaranteed.
- d) No competitor may select or refuse opponents. All matchups are determined by the bracket system and official placement.

IV.2. Length of Match – Division / Individual

The length of a sparring match shall consist of two (2) rounds of two (2) minutes each unless otherwise modified by the Event Organizer or Head Official for division size, safety, or scheduling purposes.

- a) A competitor who is ahead by seven (7) points at the conclusion of the first round shall be declared the winner of the match under the Seven Point Spread Rule, and the second round will not be required.
- b) If the match remains tied at the conclusion of the second round, a sudden victory overtime period will determine the winner. The first competitor to score a legal point during overtime shall be declared the winner.
- c) The Center Official has the authority to pause or stop the match at any time for safety, penalties, equipment adjustments, injury evaluation, or official consultation.
- d) Match time begins only upon the command of the Center Official and may be stopped only by the Center Official or Head Official.
- e) The timekeeper shall provide verbal time notifications during each round as follows:

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I. At 1 minute and 45 seconds remaining, the timekeeper shall announce: “FIFTEEN SECONDS.”

II. At the end of the round, the timekeeper shall clearly signal “TIME.”

f) Time stopped due to injury, equipment adjustment, arbitration, or official consultation shall not count toward active match time.

g) Between rounds, competitors shall receive a brief rest period as determined by the Event Organizer, Center Official, or Head Official. During this period, coaches may provide instruction while competitors remain in their designated areas.

h) The Head Official may modify match duration or round structure when necessary, due to division size, tournament scheduling, or safety concerns.

IV.3. What is a Sparring Point?

A point is a martial art technique that is scored by a competitor in-bounds and up-right (not considered down) without time being called that strikes a competitor with the allowable amount of **focused touch contact** and **focused control** to a legal target area.

a) **Focused Touch Contact:** the legal amount of contact allowed to certain scoring areas.

b) **Focused Control:** an amount of controlled force that would have incapacitated the opponent, at least momentarily, if the technique had not been controlled.

Therefore, only martial art techniques that would have incapacitated the opponent, at least momentarily, if the technique had not been controlled, are considered points. (Ex. A front hand to the body that does not have “focused control” is not considered a proper martial art scoring technique.)

Any contact that incapacitated the opponent; i.e. Knockout's, causes a concussion, or the opponent cannot continue, will be deemed as Hard Contact and will be a penalty / illegal technique, unless it is a **No-Fault** contact.

IV.4. No-Fault Contact

Unintentional contact may occur during competition that results in injury to a competitor and may be determined to be a no-fault incident. The judges will vote to determine whether a penalty should be assessed or whether the injury resulted from unintentional actions by one or both competitors. A majority vote of the judges may declare the injury a no-fault incident.

IV.5. General Rules

a) All regular AWVMAA Light touch point calling rules will apply.

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- b) Out of Bounds, falling down or excessive running (as determined by the head official) around the ring will be considered an attempt to avoid competition and the other competitor will be awarded a point.
- c) A competitor is considered out of bound when they have both feet off the sparring area (mat). If the competitor is out of bounds without being kicked out or physically pushed out of bounds, their opponent will receive 1 point.
- d) If a competitor goes out of bounds while the other competitor is kicking or punching, near the competitor WITHOUT actually touching the competitor, the competitor will be considered leaving the sparring area to avoid competition and the other competitor will receive a point. A fighter must stay engaged in the match if he/she goes out of bounds not to be penalized.
- e) If the out-of-bound competitor is scored on, with a legal technique, before the center official calls STOP, then the in-bounds competitor can receive a score for the technique and the penalty point from the other competitor going out of bounds to avoid fighting.
- f) A competitor is considered down if any part of their body above the ankle touches the ground or mat surface. Touching the ground with the hand, knee, hip, elbow, torso, or any body part above the ankle will result in the competitor being considered down.
- g) A point cannot be scored on a down competitor and a downed competitor cannot score a point. If an upright competitor strikes a down competitor or they can be penalized.
- h) A competitor who leaves their feet while in-bounds, must land with at least one foot in-bounds to score a point.
- i) Immediate Action Halts: The moment a competitive strike or kick lands, the center referee or a corner judge will call 'Stop' or 'Break.' The entire match action is instantly paused.
- j) Mandatory Judges' Vote: Upon pausing the match, the center referee and corner judges will immediately cast an official vote to determine if a point was scored. No running or continuous exchanges are permitted during this phase.
- k) Neutral Controlled Restart: Once a point is awarded (or dismissed), the competitors are ordered back to their marks in a neutral stance. The referee will issue a clear command to resume the match.

IV.6. Consecutive Matches

Any competitor who must engage in consecutive (back-to-back) matches has the option to receive a 5-minute rest between each match.

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IV.7. Downed Competitor

A competitor is considered down when any part of their body above the ankle touches the sparring surface or ground area.

If an upright competitor strikes a downed competitor, the upright competitor may be penalized.

A downed competitor may not score and may be penalized if they strike an upright competitor.

A competitor who touches the ground to maintain balance, stabilize a kick, or recover position is still considered down regardless of intent.

IV.8. Point Values

- a) A legal hand technique that scores shall be awarded one (1) point.
- b) A legal kick technique that scores shall be awarded one (1) point.
- c) A legal spinning kick to the body that scores with proper control shall be awarded two (2) points.
- d) A legal spinning kick to the head that scores with proper control shall be awarded three (3) points.
- e) A legal sweep followed immediately by a controlled hand technique to a legal target area shall be awarded two (2) points.
- f) If a legal sweep is successfully performed and followed by an immediate strike attempt, but the grounded competitor successfully blocks or prevents the scoring technique, the attacking competitor shall be awarded one (1) point for the sweep only.
- g) Penalty points awarded against a competitor shall result in one (1) point or more being awarded to the opposing competitor depending on the severity of the infraction.
- h) All scoring techniques must be confirmed by a majority vote of the officials unless otherwise determined by rule or Head Official review.

IV.9. Winner Determination

A competitor shall be declared the winner of a sparring match by one of the following methods:

- a) The competitor with the highest total score at the conclusion of the final round shall be declared the winner.
- b) A competitor who achieves a seven (7) point lead at the conclusion of the first round shall be declared the winner under the Seven Point Spread Rule.
- c) If the match is tied at the end of the second round, a sudden victory overtime period shall be used. The first competitor to score a legal point during overtime shall be declared the winner.
- d) A competitor may win by disqualification of the opponent due to penalties, illegal techniques, unsportsmanlike conduct, or rule violations.

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- e) A competitor may win by medical stoppage if the opposing competitor is unable to continue and the injury was not caused by a disqualifying penalty.
- f) If a competitor is unable to continue due to an illegal technique committed by the opponent, the offending competitor may be disqualified by majority vote of the officials.
- g) The Center Official may stop a match for safety concerns. The Head Official may review and finalize the outcome when necessary.
- h) If a match is stopped due to an obvious and dangerous skill gap creating a safety risk, the Center Official or Head Official may declare a winner in the interest of competitor safety.
- i) All winner determinations are final once announced by the Center Official and verified by the scorekeeper unless reviewed by the Head Official for procedural error, arbitration, or safety concerns.

IV.10. Majority of Votes

Points are awarded by a majority vote of all judges. The majority of judges do not have to agree on the same technique being scored, only that a point was scored. A majority of the judges calling the point must call a three (3)-point Kick to head before three points can be awarded. Otherwise, only one point is awarded.

IV.11. Legal, Illegal, and Non-target Areas

- a) **Legal Target Areas:** Entire head that has protection, ribs, chest, abdomen, and collarbone.
- b) **Illegal Target Areas:** Spine, face, back of neck, throat, sides of the neck, groin, legs, knees, and back.
- c) **Non-Target Areas:** Hips, shoulders, buttocks, arms, and feet.

IV.12. Legal & Illegal Techniques

- a) **LEGAL TECHNIQUES:** are all controlled martial art techniques, except those listed as illegal.
- b) **ILLEGAL TECHNIQUES:** Head butts, hair pulls, bites, scratches, elbows, knees, eye attacks of any kind, take downs on a hard surface floor, ground fighting, any stomps or kicks to the head of a downed competitor, slapping, grabbing for more than two seconds, uncontrolled blind techniques, any uncontrolled throws, takedowns or sweeps and any other uncontrolled dangerous techniques that are deemed unsafe in martial arts.

IV.13. Grabbing

A competitor may grab the uniform top of his/her opponent in an attempt to score with a martial art technique for only two seconds (immediately), after which time he/she must release the uniform. Likewise, the uniform pants may be grabbed for one to two seconds to an upright opponent in an attempt to score. Extended grabbing or control beyond allowed time is a penalty.

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IV.14. Sweeps, Takedowns, and Ground Fighting

Sweeps are not meant to take down an opponent, but only to obstruct the balance so as to follow up with a sport karate technique and can only be executed to the back of the **front leg at mid-calf or below**.

- a) A sweep must be deemed a proper sweep and not a kick, to be legal.
- b) Controlled Takedowns and sweeps that are meant to take down an opponent are not allowed.
- c) A point is awarded only when the legal sweep or takedown is followed up effectively legally and **immediately** with an appropriate martial art technique.
- d) **What it means:** Just like in class, the person executing the sweep shares responsibility for the other person's safety.
 - **The Visual:** If a competitor executes a beautiful foot-sweep, they should ideally retain a light grip on their opponent's sleeve or uniform to help break or control their descent, rather than walking away while the person crashes unchecked

IV.15. Light Touch Contact

Light Touch Contact means there is no penetration or visible movement of the competitor because of the contact. A light touch is required to all legal target areas in all black belt sparring divisions. The face shield of a headgear along with the headgear is a legal target area.

IV.16. Moderate Touch Contact

Moderate Touch Contact is defined as slight penetration or slight target movement. Moderate touch contact may be made to all legal target areas except the headgear, face shield, and face.

IV.17. Out-of-Bounds

A competitor is considered out-of-bounds when any part of their body touches the floor or surface outside the designated competition mat area. The outer edge of the mat layout defines the limits of the ring.

- a) A competitor must remain entirely on the competition mat area to be considered in-bounds.
- b) If any part of a competitor's body touches the floor outside the mat area, the competitor is considered out-of-bounds.
- c) An out-of-bounds competitor may not score a point while out-of-bounds.
- d) An in-bounds competitor may score on an out-of-bounds competitor if the scoring technique occurs before the Center Official calls "STOP" and the action is considered continuous.

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- e) Leaving the mat area to avoid engagement, scoring, or legal contact may result in a penalty point.
- f) If a competitor is forced out-of-bounds through legal movement or momentum, the Center Official will determine whether a penalty or score applies.
- g) The Center Official and Head Official maintain final authority in determining out-of-bounds rulings and whether a score or penalty applies.

IV.18. Sparring Warnings and Penalties

- a) NO WARNINGS are issued in AWVMAT Black Belt Sparring. Penalty points are issued immediately for breaking the rules.
- b) In Under Black Belts one (1) warning may be issued (verify with promoter if Black Belts have the same rules.)
- c) A competitor cannot be penalized and still receive a point on the same call. A competitor can receive a point for a proper technique and another point from a penalty call against his/her competitor.
- d) If, in the opinion of the medical personnel, a competitor cannot continue because of an injury caused by an illegal penalized attack, executed by the opponent, the offending competitor shall be automatically disqualified.
- e) The injured competitor cannot continue to compete.
- f) A penalty point(s) will be issued if a competitor, as determined by the center official:
 - I. Missing or improper equipment
 - II. Goes out of bounds to avoid competition;
 - III. Falling down to avoid competition;
 - IV. Runs around the ring to avoid competition;
 - V. Stalling and/or not attempting to engage the other competitor;
 - VI. Excessive contact, as deemed by the center official;
 - VII. Pushing a competitor out of bound, as deemed by the center official;
 - VIII. Attacking illegal and non-target areas;
 - IX. Using illegal techniques;
 - X. Blind, negligent or reckless attacks;
 - XI. Uncontrolled techniques;
 - XII. Unsportsmanlike behavior by the competitor, his/her coaches, friends, etc.;
 - XIII. If a coach(s) and/or team member(s) enters the ring, during a match;
 - XIV. A competitor arrives at the ring without the proper equipment;
 - XV. A sparring match is ready to start, and the competitor is delaying his / her entry into the ring;

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- XVI. Competitor refuses to leave the immediate sparring area an additional penalty point may be issued;
- XVII. Late strikes after call to stop;
- XVIII. Retaliation strike from a competitor;
- XIX. Competitor's equipment is incorrectly fitted or improperly secured and continues to fall off or requires adjustment. This penalty will start on the 2nd occurrence of the equipment failure;
- XX. At the discretion of the center official, a penalty point may be issued immediately, if the center official believes the competitor is delaying without a valid reason;
- XXI. A penalty point will be issued for each minute the competitor is not properly ready to compete.
- XXII. Delay of Time - Sparring
- XXIII. A competitor purposely removes their equipment.
- XXIV. A competitor, coach, or team member uses profanity;
- XXV. More than 1 coach or maximum team members are represented at start of a match;
- XXVI. Punching a downed competitor in the head or face;
- XXVII. Kicking a downed competitor, to the body, will result in a 2-point penalty or a disqualification for kicking the downed competitor in the head or face. Disqualification requires a majority vote;
- XXVIII. A downed competitor kicks an upright competitor to the body;
- XXIX. A downed competitor kicks an upright competitor will result in a 2-point penalty or a disqualification for kicking the upright competitor in the head or face. Disqualification requires a majority vote;
- XXX. No competitor, team member or coach may make physical contact with officials.

Once a competitor receives 3 penalty points they are disqualified.

If a penalty is called on one or both competitors, the penalty point(s) must be issued to the competitor(s). This ensures the penalties are counted to determine an automatic disqualification. For example; both competitors continue to spar after STOP is called. The Center Official calls a penalty on both competitors, a one-point penalty should be issued to both competitors.

IV.19. Other Causes of Penalization

Any grabbing or pushing an official may cause the competitor to be disqualified. Striking an official may cause the competitor, coaches(s) or team member(s) to be disqualified and suspended from future AWVMAA events.

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IV.20. Disqualification

Requires a majority vote by all officials, unless it is an automatic disqualification.

- a) **Non-Competing Penalty:** If in the majority opinion of the officials, it is considered that one or both competitors are not making an obvious attempt to compete in the sparring match in the true spirit of competition, one or both competitors will be penalized and if it continues, will be disqualified.
- b) **Wrong Division:** If any competitor competes in a division he/she does not qualify to compete in due to age, weight, rank, gender, style, etc., he/she will be disqualified.

IV.21. Skill Gap Safety Rule

If the Head Official or Center Official determines there is a significant skill imbalance that creates a safety risk:

- a) The match may be paused or stopped
- b) The Center Official, or Head Official may declare a winner for safety reasons
- c) The priority is competitor safety over competition continuation

IV.22. Coaching

The opportunity to have a coach is a privilege that may not be available to all competitors. To maintain fairness and prevent an unfair advantage, coaching is permitted only under the following guidelines:

- a) A coach is defined as any individual assisting a competitor in any capacity. This may include, but is not limited to, a parent, teammate, instructor, friend, or designated team coach. Competitors may have multiple available coaches; however, only one designated coach may represent the competitor during a match.
- b) Only the designated coach may communicate with officials regarding protests, arbitration, or rule clarification on behalf of the competitor.
- c) Coaches may be changed between matches. Any coaching change must be communicated to the Center Official prior to the start of the match to become official.
- d) Each designated coach will be assigned a coaching chair within a designated coaching square at ringside. This coaching square is the official boundary for all coaching activity during the match.
- e) The designated coach may remain seated or stand at any time during the match, provided they remain within the designated coaching square.
- f) Coaches must remain within the designated coaching square while the match is in progress. Movement, standing, and coaching activity within this area are permitted.
- g) Any coach leaving the designated coaching square during an active match is subject to penalties as outlined in the Officials and Penalty Rules.
- h) Coaching activity must not interfere with competitors, officials, or the operation of the ring.
- i) Coaches may receive penalties or disqualification for unsportsmanlike conduct, abusive behavior, interference, or failure to follow official instructions. If a coach is disqualified, another eligible coach may be assigned.

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- j) A coach may never enter the competition ring or mat area without permission from the Center Official or Head Official.
- k) Abusive, violent, disruptive, unsportsmanlike, or excessive coaching behavior is prohibited.
- l) Coaches may not interfere with ring operations, official decisions, or the progression of a match. The Center Official may issue penalties if a coach disrupts fair competition or interferes with officiating duties.
- m) If a coaching chair is provided, the coach must remain within the designated coaching area during competition. Violations may result in penalties determined by the Center Official or Head Official based on severity and repeated conduct.
- n) Coaches are required to wear the official armband or identification indicator assigned by color for their competitor or team. This armband serves as official identification of the designated coach.
- o) Failure to properly wear the assigned armband, loss of the armband, or removal of the armband by an official results in the individual no longer being recognized as the designated coach for that competitor during the match.
- p) Once a coach is no longer recognized due to loss of identification, they may not perform coaching duties for that competitor for the remainder of the match unless reinstated by the Center Official or Head Official.

IV.23. Injured Competitor

- a) The Center Official, Head Official, or Medic have the final determination if a competitor may NOT continue, with NO exceptions.
- b) Everyone except the medic, competitor, the center official, head official, event organizer and 1 coach will be removed from the immediate area to allow the medic to determine the extent of the injury;
- c) No one may discuss the injury with the medic, except the competitor. It is the responsibility of the center official to control the other/outside conversation and may issue a penalty if:
 - I. Team member(s) or coach(s) will not leave the immediate area;
 - II. Attempts to discuss the competitors' injury or ability to continue, with the medic, unless the input is requested by the medic.
- d) If a medic determines a competition cannot continue; either immediately or in a post-injury review, the following steps are mandatory:
 - I. Competitor and Coach is informed the competitor cannot continue;
 - II. Tournament Promoter and staff are notified competitor cannot continue and why; and
 - III. If an online system capability is available, competitor entry into other events, at the tournament is pulled or flagged / indicator in the system set. Once the indicator is set, the competitor cannot continue at the event or register for future events until the competitor has submitted documentation that has been cleared by a medical individual.

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IV. If a manual system is being used, all rings, where the competitor can compete, must be notified the competitor is ineligible to compete.

e) A competitor is injured, not due to a penalty, they are allowed 4 minutes to determine if they can continue, the time starts immediately. The time may be extended two additional minutes, once the medic reaches the competitor. It is the center official's responsibility to communicate with the medic and determine if additional time will be allowed. The center official must then inform the scorekeeper who is keeping up with the time of the delay. A medic can always request an extension time to properly determine if the competitor can continue.

The maximum time that can be allocated to determine if a competitor can continue is 8 minutes. If the medic requests an extended length of time, due to an injury and is officially allowed, it is recommended, if possible, to move to the next match while the injured competitor is recuperating.

The timekeeper must record the score and time remaining to properly restart the match.

f) If it is determined the injured competitor cannot continue, due to a penalty, as determined by center referee and judges, the following applies

- a. The uninjured competitor is disqualified;
- b. The injured competitor cannot continue to compete; and
- c. If the match was for the 1st and 2nd place the uninjured will be declared the winner.

g) If a competitor cannot continue because of an injury, where there is no penalty call, the uninjured competitor will be declared the winner.

If something happens in any AWVMAA sparring competition that cannot be answered by the rules stated, the "Fairness Rule" will come into play. As an example – the failure of a tournament medic to arrive prior, to the expiration of the 4-minute rule.

IV.24. Excessive Injuries

- a) If a competitor sustains a severe injury during competition, medical personnel, the Center Official, or the Head Official may immediately stop the match for safety purposes.
- b) If the injury is determined to create a significant risk to the competitor's health or ability to continue safely, the competitor shall not be permitted to continue competing.
- c) Officials shall review the circumstances surrounding the injury to determine whether it resulted from:
 - I. A legal technique;
 - II. An illegal technique;
 - III. Excessive contact;
 - IV. A no-fault incident.
- d) If the injury resulted from an illegal technique, penalties or disqualification may be issued according to the severity of the infraction.

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- e) A competitor removed from competition due to excessive injury may not re-enter any additional divisions during the same tournament unless cleared by medical personnel and approved by the Head Official.
- f) Competitor safety shall take precedence over match outcome, placement, or tournament advancement.

IV.25. Time-Out's

- a) Each competitor and designated coach shall be issued one (1) Time-Out Card per match. A timeout may only be requested through the use of the official Time-Out Card.
- b) A timeout request may be made only by:
 - I. The competitor currently participating in the match; or
 - II. The designated coach assigned to that competitor.
- c) To request a timeout, the competitor or coach must stand, clearly hold up the Time-Out Card, and verbally call "Referee" to gain the Center Official's attention during a stoppage in action or safe moment recognized by the Center Official. The Time-Out Card must then be respectfully presented to the Center Official and may not be thrown into the ring or toward an official.
- d) The Center Official has sole discretion to grant or deny a timeout request based on match flow, competitor safety, timing, or improper use of the request.
- e) Each competitor is permitted one (1) approved timeout per match unless additional time is required for medical or safety reasons.
- f) Once a Time-Out Card has been used and granted, it is considered exhausted for that match and will not be reissued until the next match.
- g) Timeouts may be used for:
 - I. Equipment adjustment;
 - II. Strategy discussion with coach;
 - III. Minor injury assessment;
 - IV. Mental reset or clarification;
 - V. Official clarification when permitted.
- h) A timeout may not be used to intentionally delay competition, avoid engagement, or disrupt match momentum. Abuse of the timeout system may result in a warning or penalty.
- i) The Center Official may stop time independently without a Time-Out Card for:
 - I. Injury evaluation;
 - II. Equipment malfunction;
 - III. Safety concern;
 - IV. Official consultation;
 - V. Head Official review.
- j) If the Center Official determines that a judge's call was made too late to be considered, arbitration or challenge may not be requested for that specific exchange.
- k) All timeout decisions made by the Center Official may be reviewed by the Head Official only in cases involving procedural error, safety concern, or abuse of authority.
- l) A competitor or designated coach may verbally announce "TIME" to request use of their Time-Out Card. The request must be clearly directed toward the Center Official and may only be recognized during a safe moment or natural pause in competition. The Center Official maintains sole discretion to grant or deny the timeout request.

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m) Verbal timeout requests do not automatically stop the match. Competition continues until the Center Official officially stops time and acknowledges the timeout request.