

A faint, light gray background illustration of two MMA fighters. One fighter is in a dynamic, forward-leaning pose with fists raised, while the other is on the ground in a defensive or exhausted position. The entire scene is framed by a thick black rectangular border.

ICO UNIFIED AMATEUR MMA RULES



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What Is Mixed Martial Arts (MMA)?

Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) is one of the fastest-growing and most widely followed sports in the world. It is a full-contact combat discipline built upon the foundations of multiple traditional and modern martial arts.

MMA athletes employ a wide range of techniques commonly associated with Muay Thai, Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, Judo, Kickboxing, and Boxing. These skills are combined to create a dynamic and demanding sport that tests striking, grappling, athleticism, and strategy.

Competition permits both striking and grappling exchanges, whether standing or on the ground. Bouts typically take place in either a ring or a fenced enclosure. The fenced area—referred to as the “circle”—may be circular or consist of no fewer than six sides.

MMA represents the evolution of combat sports into a modern discipline that appeals to spectators of all ages, while existing alongside and respecting the traditions of established martial arts.

Match Format

At ICO events, bouts are contested over three rounds of three minutes each, with a one-minute rest period between rounds.

Methods of Victory

A bout may be decided in several ways, including judges' decision, referee stoppage, doctor stoppage, submission, corner stoppage, or knockout.

Knockout (KO)

A knockout is declared when an athlete is rendered unable to continue as a result of legal strikes. The referee will immediately stop the contest to protect the athlete from further harm.

Submission

An athlete may concede defeat by:

- physically tapping the opponent or the mat
- verbally submitting

Technical Submission

The referee will halt the bout if an athlete is trapped in a submission hold and is at imminent risk of injury, even if no tap has occurred.

Technical Knockout (TKO)

The referee may stop the contest if:

- one athlete is dominating to the extent that the opponent cannot intelligently defend themselves
- an athlete appears to be losing consciousness due to strikes
- an athlete has sustained a serious or visible injury

Doctor Stoppage / Cut

If an athlete's ability to continue is in doubt due to injury (such as a severe cut), the referee will pause the bout and request a medical evaluation. The ringside doctor may stop the contest if continuation would be unsafe, awarding victory to the opponent.

If the injury results from an illegal action, the bout may instead be ruled a disqualification or No Contest.

Corner Stoppage

An athlete's corner may stop the fight by throwing in the towel during a round or between rounds. This is typically done to protect the athlete when continuing would be unnecessary or dangerous.

Retirement

An athlete may be unable to continue due to exhaustion or disorientation, most commonly between rounds.

Decision

If the bout reaches its full duration, the result is determined by three judges using organisation-specific judging criteria.

Forfeit

An athlete or their representative may withdraw prior to the start of the bout, resulting in a forfeit loss.

Disqualification

Athletes will receive warnings for fouls, illegal techniques, or failure to follow referee instructions. Accumulation of three warnings results in disqualification. Immediate disqualification may occur if a deliberate illegal action prevents the opponent from continuing.

No Contest

A bout will be ruled a No Contest if:

- both athletes commit serious rule violations
- an athlete cannot continue due to an accidental illegal technique
- a post-bout drug test invalidates the original result

Technical Decision

If a bout is stopped late due to an accidental illegal technique, judges may issue a technical decision based on the scorecards at the time of stoppage.

- In a three-round bout, at least two rounds must be completed
- In a five-round bout, at least three rounds must be completed

Weight Categories

To ensure fair and competitive matchups, athletes are divided into weight categories based on body weight. This system helps reduce the physical advantages of size, strength, and mass.

Men's Weight Divisions

- Up to 52.2 kg
- Up to 56.7 kg
- Up to 61.2 kg
- Up to 65.7 kg
- Up to 70.3 kg
- Up to 77.1 kg
- Up to 83.9 kg
- Up to 93.0 kg
- Up to 120.2 kg
- Over 120.2 kg

Women's Weight Divisions

- Up to 47.6 kg
- Up to 52.2 kg
- Up to 56.7 kg
- Up to 61.2 kg
- Up to 65.8 kg
- Up to 72.6 kg
- Over 72.6 kg