

2017 Unified Rules of MMA “FOULS”

1. Butting with the head:

The head may not be used as a striking instrument in any fashion. Any use of the head as a striking instrument whether head to head, head to body or otherwise is illegal.

2. Eye gouging of any kind:

Eye gouging by means of fingers, chin, or elbow is illegal. Legal strikes or punches that contact the fighter's eye socket are not eye gouging and shall be considered legal attacks.

3. Biting or spitting at an opponent:

Biting in any form is illegal. A fighter must recognize that a referee may not be able to physically observe some actions, and must make the referee aware if they are being bit during an exhibition of unarmed combat.

4. Fish Hooking:

Any attempt by a fighter to use their fingers in a manner that attacks their opponent's mouth, nose or ears, stretching the skin to that area will be considered “Fish hooking”. Fish hooking generally is the placing of fingers into the mouth of your opponent and pulling your hands in opposing directions while holding onto the skin of your opponent.

5. Hair pulling:

Pulling of the hair in any fashion is an illegal action. A fighter may not grab a hold of his opponent's hair to control their opponent in any way. If a fighter has long hair, they may not use their hair as a tool for holding or choking in any fashion

6. Spiking the opponent to the canvas onto the head or neck (pile-driving):

A pile driver is considered to be any throw where you control your opponent's body placing his feet towards the sky with his head straight down and then forcibly drive your opponents head into the canvas or flooring material. It should be noted when a fighter is placed into a submission hold by their opponent, if that fighter is capable of elevating their opponent they may bring that opponent down in any fashion they desire because they are not in control of their opponent's body. The fighter who is attempting the submission can either adjust their position, or let go of their hold before being slammed to the canvas.

7. Strikes to the spine or the back of the head. The spine includes the tailbone.

The back of the head is defined as the area starting at the crown of the head and running directly down the centerline of the head with a one inch variance to each side. The entire rear portion of the neck is also illegal to attack starting at the occipital junction and stopping at the top of the trapezius. From the trapezius muscle down the spine is protected to the tailbone

8. Throat strikes of any kind and/or grabbing the trachea:

No directed throat strikes are allowed. A directed attack would include a fighter pulling his opponents head in a way to open the neck area for a striking attack. A fighter may not gouge their fingers or thumb into their opponent's neck or trachea in an attempt to submit their opponent. If during stand up action of a fight a punch is thrown and the punch lands in the throat area of the fighter, this shall be viewed as a clean and legal blow.

9. ** Fingers outstretched toward an opponent's face/eyes:

In the standing position, a fighter that moves their arm(s) toward their opponent with an open hand, fingers pointing at the opponent's face/eyes, will be a foul.

Referees are to prevent this dangerous behavior by communicating clearly to fighters.

Fighters are directed to close their fists or point their fingers straight up in the air when reaching toward their opponent.

10. Downward pointing elbow strike (12 to 6):

The use of a linear "straight up straight down" elbow strike is prohibited. Any variation of this straight up and down linear elbow strike makes the strike legal. Any arc, or any angle change from straight up to straight down makes the strike legal. Any variation of position does not alter the legality of the strike.

11. Groin attacks of any kind:

Any attack to the groin area including, striking, grabbing, pinching or twisting is illegal. It should be clear that groin attacks are the same for men and women.

12. *Kneeing and/or Kicking the head of a grounded opponent:

A grounded fighter is defined as: Any part of the body, other than a single hand and soles of the feet touching the fighting area floor. To be grounded, both hands palm/fist down, and/or any other body part must be touching the fighting area floor. A single knee, arm, makes the fighter grounded without having to have any other body part in touch with the fighting area floor. At this time, kicks or knees to the head will not be allowed

13. *Stomping of a grounded fighter:

Stomping is considered any type of striking action with the feet where the fighter lifts their leg up bending their leg at the knee and initiating a striking action with the bottom of their foot or

heel. (Note) Axe kicks are not stomps. Standing foot stops are NOT a foul. As such, this foul does not include stomping the feet of a standing fighter.

*** A grounded fighter is defined as: Any part of the body, other than a single hand and soles of the feet touching the fighting area floor. To be grounded, both hands palm/fist down, and/or any other body part must be touching the fighting area floor. It needs to be clear to all fighters that once an opponent has become grounded, Stomps of any kind are not permitted, even to the feet.*

14. Holding opponent's gloves or shorts:

A fighter may not control their opponent's movement by holding onto their opponent's shorts or gloves. A fighter may hold onto or grab their opponent's hand as long as they are not controlling the hand only by using the material of the glove, but by actually gripping the hand of the opponent. It is legal to hold onto your own gloves or shorts

15. Holding or grabbing the fence or ropes with fingers or toes:

A fighter may put their hands or feet on the fence and push off of it at anytime. A fighter may place their hands or feet onto the cage and have their fingers or toes go through the fencing material at any time. When a fighter's fingers or toes go through the cage and grab hold of the fence and start to control either their body position or their opponent's body position it now becomes an ILLEGAL action. A fighter may not grab the ropes or wrap their arms over or under the ring ropes at any time. The fighter may not purposely step through the ropes. If a fighter is caught holding the fence, cage or ring rope material the referee shall issue a one-point deduction from the offending fighters scorecard if the foul caused a substantial effect in the fight. If a fighter grabs hold of the cage and because of the infraction, the fouling fighter ends up in a superior position due to the foul, the fighters should be re-started by the referee, standing in a neutral position after determining if a point deduction is appropriate

16. Small joint manipulation:

Fighters must grab the majority of fingers or toes for use as defense or manipulation. Fingers and toes are small joints. Wrists, ankles, knees, shoulders and elbows are all large joints.

17. Throwing an opponent out of the ring or caged area:

A fighter shall not throw their opponent out of the ring or cage.

18. Intentionally placing a finger into any orifice, or into any cut or laceration of your opponent:

A fighter may not place their fingers into an open laceration in an attempt to enlarge the cut. A fighter may not place their fingers into an opponent's, nose, ears, mouth, or any body cavity

19. Clawing, pinching, twisting the flesh:

Any attack that targets the fighter's skin by clawing at the skin or attempting to pull or twist the skin to apply pain is illegal.

20. Timidity (avoiding contact, or consistently dropping the mouthpiece, or faking an injury:

Timidity is defined as any fighter who purposely avoids contact with his opponent, or runs away from the action of the fight. Timidity can also be called by the referee for any attempt by a fighter to receive time by falsely claiming a foul, injury, or purposely dropping or spitting out their mouthpiece or other action designed to stall or delay the action of the fight

21. Use of abusive language in the fighting area.

The use of abusive language is not allowed during MMA competition. It is the sole responsibility of the referee to determine when language crosses over the line to abusive. It should be clear that fighters can talk during a match. The mere use of auditory language is not a violation of this rule. Examples of abusive language would be (Racially motivated or Derogatory language)

22. Flagrant disregard of the referee's instructions:

A fighter MUST follow the instructions of the referee at all times. Any deviation or non-compliance may result in points being deducted from the fighter's scorecard, or the fighter being disqualified from the match.

23. Unsportsmanlike conduct that causes an injury to opponent.

Every athlete competing in the sport of MMA is expected to represent the sport in a positive light emphasizing sportsmanship and humility. Any athlete that disrespects the rules of the sport or attempts to inflict unnecessary harm on a competitor who has been either taken out of the competition by the referee or has tapped out of the competition shall be viewed as being unsportsmanlike.

24. Attacking an opponent after the bell has sounded the end of the period of unarmed combat.

The end of a round is signified by the sound of the bell and the call of time by the referee. Once the referee has made the call of time, any offensive actions initiated by the fighter shall be considered after the bell and illegal

25. Attacking an opponent on or during the break:

A fighter shall not engage their opponent in any fashion during a time-out or break of action in competition

26. Attacking an opponent who is under the care of the referee.

Once the referee has called for a stop of the action to protect a fighter who has been incapacitated or is unable to continue to compete in the fight, fighters shall cease all offensive actions against their opponent.

27. Interference from a mixed martial artist's corner or seconds:

Interference is defined as any action or activity aimed at disrupting the fight or causing an unfair advantage to be given to one combatant. Corners are not allowed to distract the referee or influence the actions of the referee in any fashion.