

# All about Your New Judogi

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Hui-O-Judo Beltsville  
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# All about your new Judogi

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## Introduction

You evidently just acquired your first new judogi. 😊 Hopefully, everything you ever want or need to know about your new gi, you will be able to read here. Read closely and you will learn a bit more than that.

The judogi is the traditional and official uniform that we use to practice judo. Other forms of martial arts use the same or similar uniform, some with additional parts, and sometimes have different names for their gi. It is

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sometimes called a dogi (uniform for practicing the way), or keiko-gi (practice uniform). Often, we simply describe it as our “gi”.

The Nihongo word “gi” or “ki” as written in the 3<sup>rd</sup> kanji ideogram above means “suit”, “uniform”, or “clothing”. Other Nihongo words are homonyms (sound the same but have different meanings). One such word “gi” is the first virtue of the bushido, but it means “rectitude” or “the right decision”. Another such ideogram translates to “breath”, or “spirit, or life force” (ki or chi). This is why our dogi is traditionally white, though in our current generation, this concept sadly seems to be fading fast.

The judogi can come in many styles. They can come from a manufacturer, or can actually be hand-made. A hand-made judogi is a rare site these days, but once in a while we still see one. There are very specific regulations for a judogi to be used in competition, and these rules get more complicated constantly in order to promote the fairest competition. A few manufacturers have engineered “tricks” into their judogi to provide their buyers advantage in competition -- some of these tricks are not so fair. ☹️ Unfortunately, these new rules make it impractical to sew one at home for most seamstresses and tailors.

When a judogi is new, the unbleached cotton often has a dull or yellowish tinge to it – this is normal. The gi will seem to lighten up and slowly turn to a brighter white simultaneously to the development of the student’s skill. A new dogi is often stiff or rigid, as is a new student’s judo techniques – the dogi will soften simultaneously with the student’s techniques. Washing helps too, of course. 😊

The only colors allowed for judogi are the traditional white, and blue. Blue is a new color allowed (rather, both are required) as of 1999. No other colors are allowed. In the U.S., the blue judogi is only required for competition at the national & international levels. More details on this later.

Some very specific “decorations” are allowed, and often encouraged. We will discuss these below. Keep in mind that the traditional judogi is plain white with minimal markings. Large commercial ads are frowned upon as “brawling billboards”, though this is popular among some other martial arts – some schools like a huge advertisement on every one of their students, often at the students’ own expense.

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## The Parts of the Judogi



Yes, this will be on the test! 😊

The judogi has 4 parts:

1. Zori – the slippers
2. Uwagi – the jacket
3. Obi – the belt
4. Shitagi – the pants

Here is a picture of Dr. Jigaro Kano, the founder of Judo, in one of his judogi.

We will discuss each part of the judogi in detail.

## Zori – the slippers



We should discuss these first, because they are often forgotten as a part of the judogi.

When you buy a judogi, this part is usually not included. You must get these separately. Most judoka wear the cheapy little rubber flip-flops – inexpensive and easy to get. They work very well at the dojo and the shiaiyo. Some wear leather, or nylon, or “a space-age polymer” & this is almost strictly a personal preference.

Did you notice Dr. Kano above is not wearing his zori? He must be on the tatami (the mat). A very old and very strict rule in every dojo on the planet is NO SHOES ON THE TATAMI. At the same time, NO BARE FEET OFF THE TATAMI. These 2 statements make 1 rule, and this rule is older than

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Dr. Kano. This rule is based on hygiene. The sensei would rather we exercise some self-discipline and follow this rule – doing so will help you avoid discipline from someone else. A traditional remedy for forgetting this rule is the being presented the honor of scrubbing the mats.

Very few nouns in Nihongo have plurals – most are both singular and plural. The word “zori” is both singular and plural. Also, zori is not the plural of zorus. 😊 We say 1 zori, or 2 zori, or 50 zori, no matter how many there are. We don't say “zoris” because there isn't such a word.

Traditionally, when we enter the dojo or shiai-jo, we go to the left corner of the tatami as it faces us. This is the kodeshi's (the lowest ranked) end of the tatami – yes, even the teacher does this. We remove our zori there and put them just off the mat with toes pointed towards the door. Be careful not to disturb anyone else's zori – ours go just to the right of whatever is already there, but as far left as practical. Then, we step onto the tatami & rei (bow). When we leave the tatami at the end of class (or during), we bow off the tatami right near where we bowed on, or as close as possible -- our zori help us remember where that was!

This little protocol is no longer so strictly followed in most judo dojo any more. However, it **is very important** to follow the basic rule about no shoes on the mat. This is particularly important if you visit other dojo. There are a few dojo around with 50 year old tatami that have never been touched by a single shoe, some even older – don't let your shoes be the first. 😊

### Uwagi – the jacket



Please pronounce “oo WAH gee”. 😊

You can see the uwagi worn by Dr. Kano in the previous pages

The uwagi of the judogi is a heavy woven cotton jacket. It is reinforced for lots of pulling and pushing, so that it does not tear. The front has a heavy lapel that opens all the way down, and it is held closed by only the obi, the judoka's self discipline, his sense of self respect, and respect for others around him.

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The uwagi worn in a few other styles of martial arts is usually much lighter. These may be ok for use in the dojo, but they are not suitable for competition. They are cooler to wear in the summer, but often eventually tear. A few of these have tie-downs on the inside to keep the student looking neat. If you have one of these dogi, don't use the tie-downs because they will tear immediately during your first randori match – just let them hang during judo class..

The uwagi of the judogi has a small reinforcing patch hidden just under the arm. You will use this little patch to grab and pull your opponent during some techniques. Most judoka never notice this patch, including some teachers! If you want to know these “secret” techniques, you should attend class. (shhhh!) 😊

The lapels are worn left over right. This is sometimes a problem for western ladies to remember, because blouses are buttoned the other way -- right over left. The uwagi is only worn right over left to prepare someone who had died for burial. An easy way to remember the correct way is: “designer label goes outside”. There is usually a small manufacturer label on the bottom end of the left lapel, & this little maxim seems to be easy for our modern fashion-conscious teens to remember.

You should wear a dojo patch on the front of the uwagi on the upper left side, for dojo practice, tournaments, and clinics. Use a heavy thread to sew it on, because it will occasionally be torn free in practice and tournament. Few other markings are acceptable. Other styles of martial arts wear keikogi with lots of markings – club advertisements, sponsor ads, etc. You will occasionally see keikogi with “Harley Dangerson” and “Joe's Bug Spray” billboards stitched on, but a traditional judo dojo will forbid this – it does not look uniform. Check the IJF rules for details. For higher level kata competitions, don't wear any patches at all on your plain white judogi – the beauty is in the simplicity!

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### Shitagi – the pants



Please pronounce “shee TAH gee”. 😊

The word “shita” in Nihongo means “bottom” or “below” in English. So the word “shitagi” sometimes also translates as underwear. Another Nihongo word often used for pants is “zubon” (pronounce “ZOO-bone”). In the judo context, the word shitagi is most often used.

The shitagi part of the judogi is loose and comfortable. They are held up with a string called a “himo” (HEE-moe) or ojime (OH-jee-may). The string threaded through a seam sewn around the waist that is tied tightly in front with a bow-knot. Most often, this string is a flat length of fabric folded over & sewn shut. If you have this traditional type of string, try to keep it lying as flat as possible & avoid it getting all twisted up where it goes around your body. This looks neater, and it is safer – falling on those twists can sometimes hurt a bit.

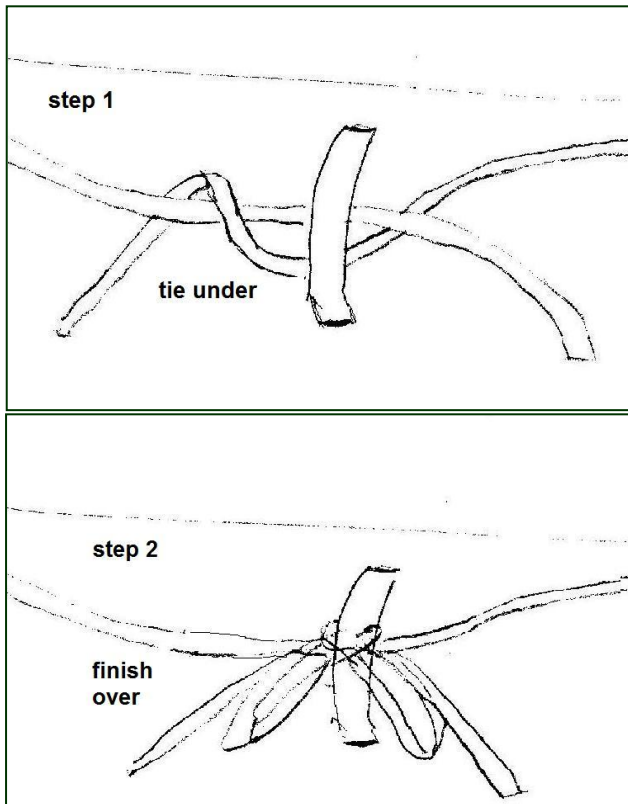
The legs of the shitagi have reinforced knees. The knee patches are worn in front. Some shitagi from keikogi used in other martial arts do not have these patches reinforcing the knee -- These are allowed in competition and practice, but will probably not last long with mat work.

Several styles of shitagi exist.



Some have elastic waist bands. One of these is pictured here. These are great for the younger students who might have trouble keeping the string tied. These come with a string as well, so they can learn and practice their knots. Adults like these too, but the only company that made them in adult sizes has gone out of business many years ago.

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The shitagi often has one or two loops sewn into the front. These are for tying the ojime (string).

- If you have no loops, tie the bow-knot and fold it over to tuck the knot inside the waist band.
- If you have two loops, pass the string from each side through the closest loop and tie it in the middle near your navel.
- If you have one loop, pass the string through it from both sides, tie an overhand-knot underneath under the loop (the first part of the bow-knot), then finish the bow-knot over the loop, so that the loop is trapped in the center of the bow.

This part is not usually considered rocket surgery, and the only problem that can happen is your pants fall down. If this is the case, try again with a tighter knot. You will quickly get the hang of it. Actually, this happens often to students of all ranks, but with the higher ranks it happens less often.

In judo, we usually wear shorts under the shitagi. Sports wear from soccer or basketball do nicely. The only shiai competition rule here is “no hard or metal objects” (a safety rule, easy to understand), so leave your leather belt with the buckle off, no zippers, no snaps, no buttons, etc. At local tournaments, the referees only make glancing inspections during a match when your pants fall down (OOOOPS! 😊). However, at high level tournaments, national and above, this rule is taken more seriously and hard objects are the target of a search -- we’re talking full-body frisk! For practice in the dojo, there is a lot more flexibility, so almost anything reasonable will do, but please wear something under there! Don’t forget to empty your pockets.



### **Hakama – the famous “skirt” question**

While discussing the shitagi as part of the judogi, the question of the hakama is sometimes raised from students of other traditional martial arts, particularly jujutsu and aikido. The hakama is a style of very large loose and pleated pants worn over the shitagi. The legs are very straight and so large that they are often mistaken for a skirt. Their original purpose was for protecting the pants and legs while riding horses, similar to chaps, though today they are largely decorative. Horses are generally not welcome on the tatami – Do you remember the rule of the shoes? 😊

Though the hakama are still worn by students of several other martial arts, they are no longer worn by judoka, primarily because they make easy targets for many judo techniques and can be used against the student wearing the hakama.

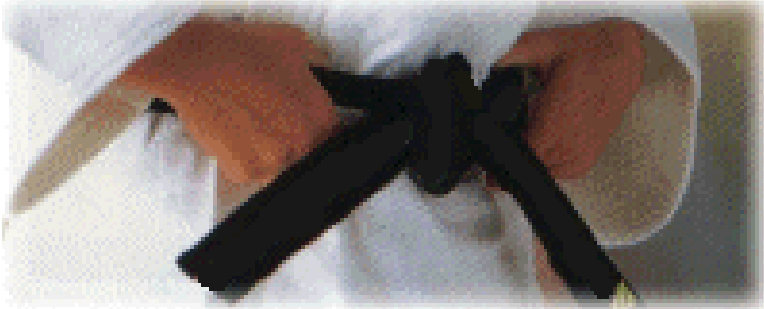
Below is a photo from 1921 of several very important jujitsu teachers wearing their zubon and hakama, some pleated and some not. They seem rather heavily armed, which is unusual. Dr. Kano is front row center, 3<sup>rd</sup> from right.

Trick question: How can you tell if they on or off of their tatami? 😊



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### Obi – the belt



Please pronounce “Oh bee”. 😊

The obi is used to hold the uwagi closed. It is also used for many judo techniques.

In judo, the color of the obi is used to designate rank, based on skill level and mastery of specific techniques. We will discuss more on rank and the colors of the belt later.

Don't wash your obi unless it's in really really bad shape. The reason for this lays in legend (actually, myth). Before the belts were colored to designate rank, they were just plain cotton. As the average student of martial arts wore his gi for practice, no matter how diligently he cared for it, it would become soiled. He would wash all parts but the obi. As his skills slowly grew better and better over time, his obi slowly grew darker and darker at the same time, from sweat, dirt, blood, tears, etc. Eventually, as his skills approached perfection, his obi turned (you guessed it!) black. 😊

You may put your name on your belt. This is allowed by the contest regulations. It's also a good idea because at tournaments we change our obi frequently throughout the day, and it is easily misplaced or misidentified somebody else's.

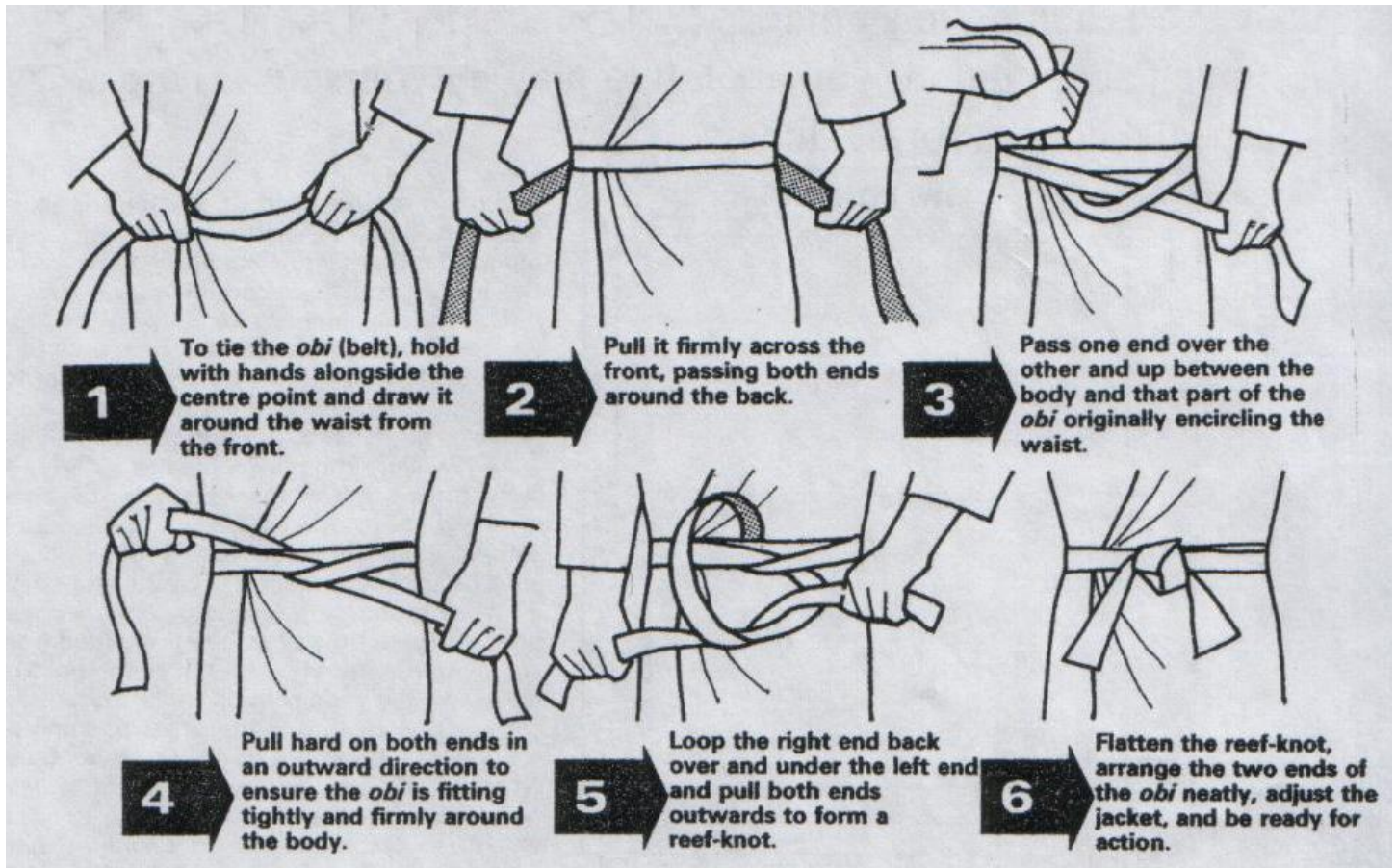
### How to tie the obi

The first few times you tie your obi will be very confusing. Don't worry – after a while it will become second nature, and you will be able to tie it quickly, even if blind-folded.

Believe it or not, there are many ways to tie your obi. The method you use will probably be the way your sensei teaches you, but keep in mind that variations do exist. As you progress in skill (and rank), you will learn small variations of ways to do the same thing, and why these variations are important.

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Always tie your obi securely to hold your uwagi closed. Some teachers advise their students to tie it loosely for randori (sparring) and tightly for kata (forms). We believe you should tie it the same way for both, because if you are doing your kata correctly, your technique will be the same in randori. If you intentionally tie your obi loosely just for randori, you are probably trying to give yourself an advantage that you shouldn't really have anyway, so you don't want that. Good sportsmanship tells us that this is not a good way to practice.



With luck and practice, both ends are hanging the same length about 7 to 12 inches from the knot.

While at a tournament, tie your obi tightly before each match so your uwagi stays closed as long as possible. You won't get an opportunity to adjust it unless the referee instructs you to -- doing so may result in a penalty for disrobing yourself. If your uwagi becomes loose during the match, it should be because your opponent loosened it. When the obi comes off of either player, the referee must stop the match so that both players can adjust their gi back to an equally fair and normal state. As a result, some sneaky

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players attempt to use this as a stalling tactic to stop the match clock for some recovery time and catch their breath – not fair! Thus, the disrobing penalty was brought into the game.

### The Joshi stripe



Please pronounce “JOE-shee”. 😊

The word “joshi” in Nihongo translates to “lady” or “Madame” in English.

The joshi stripe is the white stripe down the length of the obi as worn by female judoka. Only female judoka are permitted to wear this obi. The obi may be of any color. The younger ladies consider the joshi striped belt as old fashioned, so it will likely go the way of the hakama.

You can see the joshi stripe on Sensei Karen Wilden’s obi as she is practicing kata with Sensei Diane Jackson. That obi seems to work very well in this photo! 😊

This stripe is a symbol of honor, presented by Dr. Jigaro Kano to the ladies of the Joshibu, in 1933 – the same year that the new Kodokan building was opened. The Joshibu was the first group of ladies who studied under Dr. Kano at the Kodokan. He held his female students in the highest respect, as they faced additional adversities and still exceeded in their studies of Judo.

A recent ruling by IJF prohibits the wearing of this obi during competition (😞?!). Many of us hope that this rule will still be rescinded. You may still wear it for kata competition, practice, clinics, and anything EXCEPT competition.

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This is a picture from the web of Inahosa Yawara, the star of the popular anime cartoon “Yawara!”, named after her. She is known as “The Fashionable Judo Girl”, and a high school heart breaker. The obi that binds her neatly folded judogi is sporting a joshi stripe. Look closely and you will see two folded judogi.



Ummmmm, where are her zori? 😊

### Rank Colors



In judo, rank is awarded to acknowledge improvement in skill. It is not earned, as in other martial arts. There are no guaranteed promotions. Rank can neither be bought nor sold.

Promotions are not for us to worry about – that’s for our teachers to worry about. If we work hard at what we are supposed to be doing, we will be promoted as long as our teachers are working hard at what they are

supposed to be doing. The same is true for the teacher’s teacher, and the teacher’s teacher’s teacher, and so on.

Rank is carefully controlled for several important reasons.

- Safety -- Higher ranked players face higher ranked players at tournaments. This can be dangerous for someone without the higher skill.
- Respect – How can we respect the rank of a person who was promoted for a gift or for money? Would that be fair to those who were

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promoted before them correctly that have worked hard acquiring and improving their judo skills?

- Honor – Once you are promoted in rank, your friends, family, teacher, classmates, and yourself should be proud of your accomplishments. 😊  
But, be careful of arrogance.

At the better dojo, the teachers will never promote their own students. This prevents trouble in the dojo, and avoids a problem often dubbed “the little league syndrome”. Teachers will recommend their students for promotion to teachers at other dojo in the area, who will examine them (test their skill level). Actually, there are regional organizations for this, called yudanshakai (association of black belts), which has procedures for examining skill and promoting local students to very high ranks, and getting their rank acknowledged globally.

The examinations are as thorough as possible, testing the students’ knowledge of judo history, a demonstration of specific techniques, randori (sparring), kata (forms), a written test, and a review of records. The records review includes class attendance, time in rank, event experience (tournaments, clinics, etc), service contributions to dojo and yudanshakai communities, sportsmanship, attitude, etc. Such an examination is usually an all-day event, called a promotional tournament.

Examinations are pass or fail, and ALWAYS very strict. It is very rare event to see everyone pass. In fact, almost everyone fails one every once in a while, so don’t be too disappointed when it happens to you. Though failure can be humbling and disappointing, there is no shame in this, so just go back to your dojo and work hard without complaint. Feedback from examinations is rare, regardless of result – again, just work hard.

Judo rank is awarded for life. Once rank is awarded, it is rarely taken back. When it is withdrawn, it’s probably due to a clerical error on someone else’s part, or a very grave misdeed on your part. Rank is also transferable between any dojo on the planet, with very few exceptions. However, you must keep your records to prove it. For the ranks of shodan and above, the Kodokan Institute will award diplomas with your degrees, and maintain your records.

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You may purchase a belt of any color you choose, but not the ranks that go with them. Belts are for sale, but ranks that go with them are not. We are authorized to wear the obi color for our rank, or any rank below, but not above. So, someone who has been awarded the brown belt may wear white or green, for example. Additionally, a student who has only been awarded a yellow belt may not wear a black belt. This is common sense. There is a single exception to this rule for local competitors, who must wear a blue belt during tournament matches.

There are two colors that are universally acknowledged between most martial arts – black, and white, for yudansha and mudansha respectively. The beginners wear white belts and the experts wear black. If the belt is not black, it's white in one form or another.

The judo rank system was put together at the Kodokan long ago and approved by the founder, Dr. Jigaro Kano. Today, The Kodokan Institute in Tokyo is the global rank authority. The rank system was designed for 12 degrees of black, though only 10 degrees have ever been awarded. Only 8 people have been awarded the 10<sup>th</sup> degree, and they were all direct students of Dr. Kano. One additional rank above black was created -- the most special double-width white belt rank, and it has only been awarded to Dr. Kano. This particular white reminds us of the shoshinsha concept, which basically means keeping a newness of life in your heart. No matter how much we learn, we can always learn more – always a beginner.



At some point in time, the Kodokan adopted the practice of honoring their 6<sup>th</sup> degree black belts (half way through the system) and higher with kohaku obi -- red and white striped obi for 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> degrees, and solid red for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> degrees.
















For beginner levels, a reciprocally balanced system of 12 degrees was at one time set up, though only 6 degrees are used today.

A beginner starts as a rokyu (6<sup>th</sup> degree) and gets promoted to gokyu (5<sup>th</sup>). After reaching the rank of ikyu (1<sup>st</sup> degree beginner), the next promotion is to shodan (1<sup>st</sup> degree black), then to nidan (2<sup>nd</sup> degree black), etc.

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At some point in time, Dr. Kano brought in the different colors to designate and acknowledge varying levels of skill for the beginners. Some students believe that he borrowed the idea from the suieijutsukai (the Japanese martial art of swimming quickly in armor) who used colored sashes on their students to designate a few levels of skill. As Judo popularity spread through the world, the colored belts designating rank also spread to other martial arts.

The junior system undergoes changes every so often, and it varies between countries, and sometimes regions within countries. The 6 degrees are pretty universally accepted, though many variations exist, some quite goofy. There are no yudansha (black belt) ranks for juniors, because the word “dan” in Nihongo means “man” in English. A junior becomes a senior on his 17<sup>th</sup> birthday, and generally drops back 3 ranks.

Rank and degree	Senior color Minimum age is 17	Junior color And minimum age
Judan - 10	Black 	
	or Red 	
Kudan – 9	Black 	
	or Red 	
Hachidan – 8	Black 	
	or Red and White 	
Shichidan - 7	Black 	
	or Red and White 	
Rokudan – 6	Black 	
	or Red and White 	
Godan – 5	Black 	
Yodan – 4	Black 	
Sandan – 3	Black 	
Nidan -2	Black 	
Shodan -1	Black 	None



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Ikyu – 1	Brown 	Purple  Or Brown in some counties  14
Nikyu – 2	Brown 	Blue  12
Sankyu – 3	Brown 	Green  10
Yonkyu – 4	Blue 	Orange  8
Gokyu – 5	Green 	Yellow  6
Rokyu – 6	White 	White  0

This table is a simplified representation of the current judo rank system. Beginners start at the bottom and work up.

The question is often asked, “How long does it take to become a black belt?”, and there is only one answer, “A loooooong time” – intentionally non-specific. Less often, the next question is “What if I work twice as hard?”, and the answer is inevitably, “Then it will take you twice as long.” 😊 There is actually some truth to this old expression -- Time to acquire skill varies between people, and rushing is often counterproductive.

There is a custom in Judo, and several other martial arts (aikido is one), that a student is thrown by everyone in his class to congratulate him on his promotion. Please don't forget rei (bow) before and after. 😊

Again, keep in mind that regional variations exist with the colors. In Wales, for example, a red stripe down the length of the belt similar to the joshi stripe was adopted to remind students of their country's flag. Some organizations use split-color belts to designate advancement between the ranks, doubling the number of ranks. Some use the checkered brown/black belts to honor their 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> degree black-belts. Still other dojo on or near military or naval bases have their military rank insignias embroidered onto their belts. These are just a few variations you will see, there are plenty more.

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### Mon -- Stripes on the Obi



Please pronounce “m-OH-n”. ☺

The word “mon” in Nihongo in this context means “gate” in English.

A recent change to the junior rank systems in many regions was the addition of interim-step grades between the ranks designated by small red stripes on the end of the obi. These steps are referred to as “mon”.

In most mon systems, a junior may be awarded up to 3 mon stripes per rank. Other systems limit to 5, and still others have no limit. The 3-mon system expands the available number of junior ranks from 6 to 24. When a full rank promotion is awarded to

someone with stripes, the stripes are dropped and a new color obi is worn with no stripes.

The examination for a mon level is generally the same examination as the next rank. For example, a yellow belt with 2 stripes or less will take the orange belt test. A passing grade will result in a promotion to a grade with one more mon stripe. Beware that this is not always the case, as some regions have very specific testing requirements for each specific level

We have found when traveling to far away events (tournaments and clinics out of the area), that the mon stripes are not fully accepted yet, particularly by some of the most highly ranked & respected teachers. For this reason, some clubs use this system in their dojo for augmenting the lower end of the rank system where some kids sometimes seem to need encouragement or acknowledgement, and for students who are not likely to travel to such tournaments. In the future, we anticipate acceptance of this system to improve, but it will take many years.

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### **Fuji notes -- for the ladies (mostly)**



Ladies should wear a t-shirt under their uwagi. The Official IJF Tournament Contest Rules require ladies to wear plain white t-shirts or white leotards only. The same rule set forbids men from any t-shirts and leotards – sorry guys! ☹

At a tournament site, we may wear anything we want **BETWEEN** matches, but must follow the above rules **DURING** matches. Failure to comply constitutes a withdrawal – fusengachi (you loose before the match gets started), so when your name is called for a match, be ready to shed any stuff not on the official list of judogi parts.

For practice at the dojo, or clinics, life is a little more flexible -- anyone can wear a t-shirt under their uwagi. Almost any t-shirt is acceptable, but try to keep colors and patterns simple. Most suitable are judo t-shirts from your dojo or a recent judo event. Avoid shirts with collars or buttons. Short sleeves are best, though some dojo are cold in the winter and light sweat shirts or long sleeved t-shirts are appropriate.

This information used to be for the ladies only, but in the past few years it seems to apply to the gentlemen as well. By now you are no doubt aware of the safety rule of no hard objects allowed on the tatami. They should be removed for your own safety as well as your practice partners. This includes jewelry such as watches, necklaces, bracelets, and rings. Yes, wedding rings are included on this list. Your significant-other will understand, and they will prefer you stay safe as you improve yourself for them in the dojo. Don't forget the piercings – ear-rings, navel studs, lip, nose, and other parts that may be pierced, should be removed and stored safely until after the class. (GUYS!! This means you too!) The single exception to this rule, oddly, is the tongue-stud -- it is considered internal to the body, as are orthodontic braces.

If you wear your hair long, it should be secured neatly with ribbons, elastics that have no metal clips, or something similar, no beads or barrettes. This is yet another obvious safety rule, which applies to both males and females. You don't want to loose a handful of hair when your practice partner takes their grip – OUCH! For the hair-ties, once again, simple colors are best, and

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creative humble styles are admired. A popular color theme is to match the color of your hair-ties with the color of your obi. 😊

### Dogi bag



This is NOT a bag to bring the left-overs from the restaurant home to the household pup. 😊

This is simply a bag to carry all your judo stuff. This includes all of your judogi (don't forget the zori!) and judo documents. (hint: where will you keep this document?) Since the judogi has no pockets, it is often convenient to carry all your extra stuff in there. After you dress out in your judogi, you can put your street clothes into the dogi bag so it doesn't get kicked around or abused in other ways.

You might consider this your first judo “accessory”. It is not required by anyone, but just makes good sense. The dogi bag can be a knapsack, backpack, sports bag, a really huge purse, or just a large cloth bag.

It is handy for getting your judo stuff to and from the dojo, but particularly useful for shiai, clinics, and all other away events. Any event where travel is involved, the utility of the dogi bag is obvious.

For tournaments of regional and national category, it's almost a requirement. For national and international tournaments, senior contestants must carry four judogi with them (2 white, 2 blue), so if you are competing at those levels, think in terms of luggage.

Many beginners dress out in their judogi at home and wear it all the way to and from the dojo. This is not practical in cold or wet weather, for obvious reasons. Unfortunately, it is not wise to be seen dressed in judogi in some neighborhoods, and this can invite a fight that you don't want. Around the high schools, this problem has been dubbed “the fastest gun syndrome”, when someone challenges you just for the opportunity to prove themselves. Though this problem has been decreasing in recent years with the gain in popularity of martial arts in general, the problem still exists. The best practice is to keep your judogi folded neatly in your dogi bag and out of sight from eyes that carry such problems behind them.

# All about your new Judogi

## The Dojo



Please pronounce “DOE-joe”. ☺

Literally, this is not a word, it’s an expression, which means “place for learning the way”. More loosely it means “practice hall”. You will likely see this expression on a written test at some point.

Historically, the dojo predates all martial arts, and has its origin in religion. Sadly, many martial artists forget this, and unintentionally lose respect.

In any dojo, we must help to prepare for class by setting up the tatami, tables, chairs, and other equipment used during the class. Everyone helps – this is an old dojo rule that is older than judo itself. This activity should not be left to the instructors and parents. Everyone means EVERYONE. In fact, you will occasionally observe even the handicapped observers attempting to help (☺ before someone politely offers to take over their noble endeavors for them). The reverse is true after class – we must all help put things away and clean up.

Traditionally, we wear our street clothes to the dojo carrying our folded judogi in a dogi bag. We change into our judogi in the dressing room, and store our street clothes in the bag. Don’t forget your zori. It used to be considered impolite to change at mat-side, but in recent years for judo this has custom has changed due to the introduction of the blue judogi – you will see why in the section on shiajo.

Some dojo do not have a dressing room. If this is the case for your dojo, wear your shorts underneath your street clothes so that you can change into your judogi at the side of the mat (not on the mat).

Before class, it is best to get your drink of water & take care of your restroom needs, so that you won't have a need to leave the mat during the class.

Once you are dressed in your judogi, go straight to the tatami. Bow at the door and place your zori at the left-most edge of the tatami with the toes

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pointing toward the door, step on and salute the center of the tatami with ritsurei (standing bow). More traditional dojo use zarei (sitting bow). Warm up and practice a little bit before class begins. If class has already begun when we arrive, we should remain patiently at the tatami's edge until the sensei signals us an invitation to join the group -- a tradition of safety.

While quietly waiting for class to begin, warm up or loosen up a little, and review the waza (techniques) you have been studying during last class. This is a good time to get help from your classmates who are more familiar with these waza – don't be shy about asking! 😊 Also at this time, it's good to help newer classmates who are reviewing waza that we are more familiar with – don't be shy about offering! 😊

In the most traditional dojo, the sensei is saluted when he enters the room. Someone will call "KIOTU SUKE!" (Attention!), and all stop what they are doing for this. The odeshi (highest ranked) in the room will call "REI!" and we all politely bow with ritsurei, and resume what we were doing. In some dojo, this is done again when the sensei bows himself onto the mat. These particular protocol traditions, along with many others, are very formal and are now only kept in the oldest and most traditional dojo. If you are visiting a dojo other than your own and something happens that you don't understand, just smile quietly and try to participate as best as you can, and be prepared to be accept a "polite correction" or instructions on how to participate in the protocol. If none are offered, ask about it later, and not during, so as not to disrupt the activity – we always want to remain as respectful as possible.

At some point, a formation is called to open and close the class. This line you are probably familiar with from your very first class. A command is called or signaled by the sensei, but sometimes by the odeshi or someone who the sensei has delegated. Usually, they will call "ATSUMARE!" (GET IN LINE!), or they will signal by some other prearranged method. Stop what you are doing, and get in line instantly (don't forget to bow to your partner! 😊) Not a lot of discussion should happen at this time, in fact, this should be done silently. Anyone watching from the side should notice a stunning shift in our discipline. Most classes line up with yudansha (black belts) on one side of the room and mudansha (non black belts) on the other, but other formations exist. This line is usually ordered by rank, with highest

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rank on the right-most end of the mat facing the teachers. Be sure your judogi is ready and neat, with obi tied smartly.

The formations in judo have an interesting history too. Judo has its origins in martial arts. The word “Martial” means military. The importance of military formations is obvious. This formation and its various salutes are one of the last remaining vestiges of the military traditions of the judo dojo. The importance of a clean, sharp-looking uniform should also be obvious, particularly in a formation – what is so “uniform” about them? 😊

When you get home from the dojo or shiai, it is a good idea to hang it for a little while just to let it dry. Once dry, check it for odors and stains. Anything peculiar indicates you should wash it. Washing after every practice is not recommended, because it will wear out more quickly – that would be an expensive, though very cleanly habit.

### The Shiaijo



Please pronounce “shee-AYE-joe”. 😊

The word “shiajo” in Nihongo means “place for tournament” in English. In the U.S., this word has casually been extended also to describe the place where clinics (judo seminars) are held.

Wear your street cloths to and from the shiai. It’s a good idea to wear judo t-shirts, sweat shirts, jackets, and such with logos from your dojo, to show your club spirit. Bring your judogi neatly folded in a dogi bag. It is a good idea to “under-dress”, that is, wears your shorts under your street clothes -- in case there is a problem with dressing areas, you can dress at the edge of the mat.

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Go immediately to the registration table, and make sure your papers are in order. If you are a player, you will weigh in at this time. If you will be working at the tournament, (table worker, referee, refreshments, etc), make sure your name gets on the right lists. Be prepared for long lines, and have patience. After you have registered, dress in your white judogi, and find your sensei and your dojokai (students from your club), and warm up together.

At the opening and closing of the shiai, a formation is called. Be prepared for this announcement. Move quickly and quietly to your position! This is an interesting point of the tournament, and the competitive spirit between the various clubs has already begun -- We

don't want our club to be the last ones in place! To be in line quickly to watch the other clubs fumble around, is better than the other way around. 😊

The shiai formation is different than the formation held in the dojo, but has the same purpose. This formation has tournament officials, referees, and honored guests in the front of the gym or auditorium in one long line. Facing this line, in lines perpendicular to the officials are multiple lines of competitors, one line per dojokai, kodeshi in front. You should be in the line with the rest of the students from your dojo. It is not necessary to be a competitor to be in this formation, but it is necessary to be in your judogi. There is a photo below of the opening formation at the Liberty Bell Classic, an annual shiai hosted in Philadelphia each spring.

Before the shiai begins, an opening formation is held to bow everyone in, as well as for instructions and announcements. After the shiai is over, the formation is held to announce winners, present trophies, and bow everyone out. Everyone in the dojokai should be in BOTH formations, in their judogi. Contrary to popular belief, the closing formation is not restricted to winners-



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only or competitors-only. This formation is for everyone, just as the opening formation. Tradition dictates that if you bowed in during the opening formation, you should bow out during the closing formation. This gives us all the opportunity to show our respect for respect all participants, not just the competitors.

After the opening formation, do as the announcer instructs -- either clear the mat, or continue warming up until instructed to clear the mat later. After clearing the mat, stay with your dojokai as much as possible. Listen for your name being called, and the names of classmates from your club, & report quickly to whichever mat table as instructed.

This is where the blue judogi is used, so have it with you. Contestants' names for matches are called in pairs, and the 1<sup>st</sup> name called must play the blue side and the 2<sup>nd</sup> name called plays the white side – you do not have a choice in color. The blue-side player has the option of wearing a blue gi with obi color indicating his rank, or wear his white judogi with a blue obi. If the blue-side player wears a white gi, both players must remove their obi & wear either a blue one or white one, which ever is appropriate. If this is a senior national event, you must wear your blue judogi. If you have a blue judogi, now is the time to use it – change quickly at the edge of the mat.

Obviously, with all the changing of judogi and obi, it is easy to loose an obi or part of a judogi. For this reason, it is a good idea to label everything with your name. Help your classmates with their judogi as they play their matches, and they will help you too.

Between your matches at the shiai, you should sit quietly near the edge of the tatami with your dojokai. If you need to leave the tatami, don't forget to bow and don't forget your zori! 😊 If you brought anyone with you to watch, it's a good idea to go visit them every so often – they will have many questions for you. If possible, try to move them to where the visitors from the rest of the club are sitting.

After your last match, keep your judogi on and intact. Stay prepared for the closing formation, whether you won anything or not – it is considered impolite to miss the closing formation, but sometimes things happen so it's understandable. After the closing formation, check with your sensei before

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changing back to your street clothes. When its time to change, do so quickly. Fold your judogi neatly, and make sure you leave nothing behind. Then, be prepared to help pick up mats and clean up -- If not asked, offer! ☺ Hosting a shiai is lots of work and your help is always welcome.

When the closing formation is called, line up with your dojokai as before -- quickly and quietly. Likely you will be called to attention for ritsurei, then asked to sit (use “anza” for this – sit cross-legged or Indian style). You should applaud everyone receiving an award, and cheer for anyone from your club! ☺ If your name is called to receive an award, here is the protocol: Stand up and go to the head table, bow to the presenter, shake his hand, accept the award, and bow again – ritsurei twice, then return quietly to your original place unless otherwise instructed. Some humility is important here – not polite to cheer for yourself, so just leave that to us! ☺



After the closing formation, check with your sensei before you leave. All attending family and significant-others should attend this briefing – this includes the very young and very old. ☺ There may be some club announcements, travel or hotel info, a group photo, or a victory/spirit dinner being arranged.

When its finally time to go, DON'T forget your judogi! ☺

### Laundering your judogi

Find a sunny location on your stream with a slight current flowing by a large smooth rock. A little fine-grain sand nearby will help to remove the heavier sweat and/or blood stains, but don't mistake mud-silt for sand.

Just kidding! ☺

Machine wash cold and hang dry for maximum life and minimum shrinkage. Use detergent, as you do with your other cotton clothing. Heavy stains can

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be pre-soaked or sprayed with “shout” or something similar. Be very wary of bleach. You can use the dryer on low or no heat if you are pressed for time.

Once the gi is dry, fold it as usual. Mom or Dad can help with the laundry, but folding is not their job.

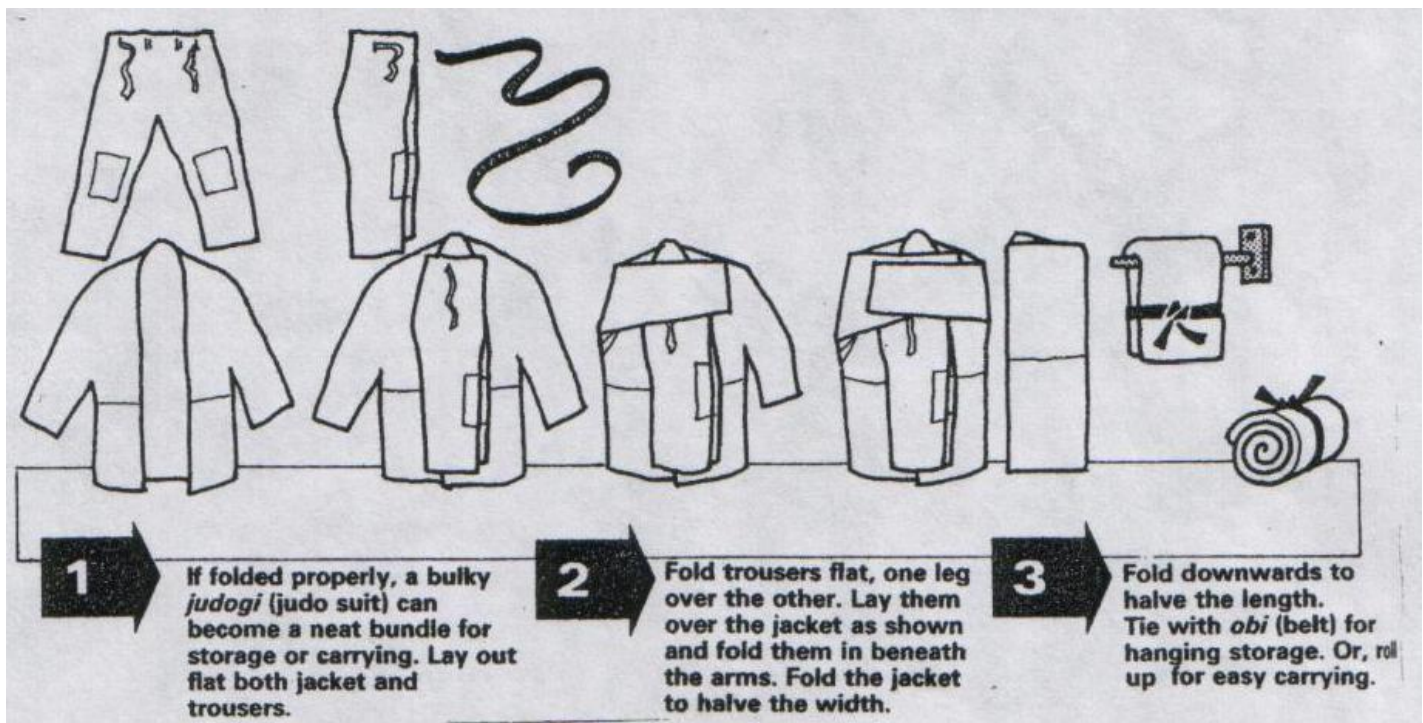
Every time you wash your gi, it will shrink a little bit. Most of the shrinkage will occur during the first few washes. Each wash will also make it a little lighter in color.

If you have a blue judogi, never wash it with your white one. If you do, you will probably be buying another white gi soon. For reversible judogi (blue on one side and white on the other), follow the manufacturer’s instructions.

Custom tells us not to wash our obi unless it is in really bad shape. See the section above about obi for an explanation.

### **Folding**

Always fold your judogi after class. If you don’t know how, any classmate will be happy to teach you. Every judoka folds his/her own judogi – this is not a job to be left for Mom.



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If you have a dogi bag, resist the temptation to stuff your judogi in there without folding it after class. Always fold your judogi after class whether you have a dogi bag or not. Experienced students can tell who does and who doesn't fold their judogi when we line up in formation at the start of class to bow in – the wrinkles tell all. This can be embarrassing to the entire club if the dojo has any honored guests watching or participating. It is also disrespectful to your classmates, though they are likely to be understanding.

### **Storing**

The judogi should always be clean for long term storage, so launder it first. Always store it in a clean dry place, so it will be immediately ready for use.

Storing the judogi for short term is easy. Leave it folded and in your dogi bag if you have one.

To store it for a longer term, hang it on a clothes hanger in a closet.

To store it indefinitely, you may want to consider placing a plastic bag over the hanger & seal it at the bottom. Then put it in a trunk or a box along with a moth ball -- remember that it's made of cotton, and insects eat cotton. The moth-ball will protect the contents of the trunk, and the sealed plastic bag will protect the judogi from the odor of the moth-ball.

### **Where to get a judogi**

Ask the sensei first. He may or may not have some in your size. He may send you somewhere specific, since he knows your needs and your resources (transportation and money), so he may have someplace that really fits the bill for you. Also, as parts of your judogi get old and worn out, you can replace parts individually, if you prefer.

Alternatively, he may give you an 800#, or send you to a specific website. If possible, get a print out and show it to him before ordering – just in case.

At the higher level shiai, regionals, nationals, and larger, there are usually a good selection of high quality judogi for sale (expensive!), available just outside the mat area. They will usually offer t-shirts, books, and other judo and martial arts stuff – way cool! 😊

## **The Official Rules (IJF)**



The IJF is the International Judo Federation. They establish and maintain the internationally accepted rules of competition for the sport of Judo. The Olympic Event of Judo uses the IJF rules.

The following section is taken from the International Judo Federation website in English, in August of 2004. Though this document changes often for interpretations and clarifications, it will not change during an Olympic year.

Article 3 of the rule book is dedicated to the judogi. If you would like to have the entire document, you can always get the most current revision from <http://www.ijf.org> in several languages.

### **o3. Judo uniform (judogi)**

The contestants shall wear a Judogi complying with the following conditions:

a) Strongly made of cotton or similar material, in good condition (without rent or tear). The material must not be so thick or hard or slippery as to prevent the opponent from taking a grip.

b) Blue for the first contestant and white or off-white for the second contestant. (See Appendix).

c) Acceptable markings:

- 1) National Olympic abbreviation (on back of jacket). Size of the letters 11 cm.
- 2) National Emblem (on left breast of jacket). Maximum size 100cm<sup>2</sup>.
- 3) Manufacturer's trade mark (on bottom-front of jacket, on bottom front of left leg of the trousers and on one end of the belt). Maximum size 20 cm<sup>2</sup>.  
It is permitted to place the manufacturer's trade mark

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on one of the sleeves but inside the 25cm x 5cm area instead of at the bottom front of the jacket. The IJF Official suppliers are allowed to place the IJF Logo above their trade mark (in direct contact).

- 4) Shoulder markings (from collar - across shoulder down the arm - both sides of jacket). Maximum length 25cm and maximum width 5cm. (The same advertising or national colours on both sides)
- 5) Advertising on the sleeves, 10 cm x 10 cm on each sleeve (different advertising allowed). These 100 cm<sup>2</sup> have to be fixed just below and in contact with the stripes of 25 cm x 5 cm.
- 6) Indication of the placing (1st, 2nd, 3rd) at the Olympic Games or World Championships, in an area of 6cm x 10cm at the bottom front left side of the jacket.
- 7) The contestant's name may be worn on the belt, lower front of the jacket and upper front of the trousers up to a maximum of 3 cm x 10 cm. Also the contestant's name or abbreviation may be placed (printed or embroidered), on the back of the jacket above the National Olympic abbreviation, but in no case in a position to prevent an opponent from grasping the back of the jacket. The letters can be up to a maximum of 7cm high and the length of the name can be up to a maximum of 30cm long. This 7cm x 30cm rectangular area must be located 3cm below the collar of the jacket and the back identification must be fixed at 4cm below this area.

Note: For IJF Events and the Olympic Games, the names are indicated on the 30 cm x 40 cm Bibs.

- d) The jacket shall be long enough to cover the thighs and shall at a minimum reach to the fists when the arms are fully extended downwards at the sides of the body. The body of the jacket shall be worn with the left side crossed over the right and shall be wide enough to have a minimum overlap of 20cm at the level of the bottom of the rib-cage. The sleeves of the jacket must reach to the wrist

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joint at the maximum and 5cm above the wrist joint at the minimum. A space of 10 to 15cm shall exist between the sleeve and the arm (bandages included), along the entire length of the sleeve.

The lapel and collar must be a maximum of 1cm in thickness and 5cm in width.

- e) The trousers, free of any markings except for c3 and c7, shall be long enough to cover the legs and shall at the maximum reach the ankle joint and at the minimum 5cm above the ankle joint. A space of 10 to 15cm shall exist between the trouser leg and the leg (bandages included) along the entire length of the trouser leg.
- f) A strong belt, 4 to 5cm wide, whose colour corresponds to the grade, shall be worn over the jacket going twice around it at waist, and tied with a square knot with the first loops inside the knot, tight enough to prevent the jacket from being too loose and long enough to leave 20 to 30cm protruding from each side of the knot when tied.
- g) Female contestants shall wear under the jacket either:
  - i) a plain white or off-white T-shirt, with short sleeves, rather strong, long enough to be worn inside the trousers, or:
  - ii) a plain white or off-white leotard with short sleeves.

If the Judogi of a contestant does not comply with this article, the Referee must order the contestant to change in the shortest possible time, into a Judogi which does comply with the article.

The contestant's spare Judogi should be brought by the coach to his chair at the edge of the competition area.

To ensure that the sleeves of the contestant's jacket are the required length, the Referee shall direct the contestant to raise both arms, fully extended forward at shoulder level, when making the control.

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b) The official colour standards for **Judogi blue** are between pantone numbers n°18-4051 and n°18-4039 on the TP pantone scale and between n°285 or n° 286 on the print pantone scale.

### Judogi size:

