

PUNCH. KICK. FIGHT. WIN.—

AN INTRODUCTION TO MIXED MARTIAL ARTS

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Mixed Martial Arts packs agility and power into exhilarating feats of strength. Also called MMA, the sport combines Boxing, Jiu Jitsu, Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, Judo, Karate, Kickboxing, and Wrestling into a single unified form.

MMA's oldest relative, the Pankration, introduced in 650 BCE, was a staple of the Olympiad. Athletes used punching, kicking, and wrestling, with very little restrictions, to overtake their opponent. Including choking and holding, a Pankration event wouldn't look very different from the MMA matches you see today. Shuai Jiao, another relative of modern MMA, is a military combat style developed during the Han Dynasty that involves

grappling to bring the opponent down to the floor. Winning could be the difference between life and death.

These fighting styles travelled around the globe throughout centuries. The early 20th century saw a revolution in combat sports. Mitsuyo Maeda, the Japanese judoka, introduced Judo to the Brazilian martial arts legends, the Gracie family. They traded knowledge, and one of the most intense hand-to-hand combat styles, Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, was born.

While mixed-style fights garnered attention throughout the second half of the 20th century, the first regulated MMA competition in the United States took place on March 20th, 1980 outside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The Tough Guy competition advertised super-fighters who could kick, punch, and wrestle. The competition developed into the first Mixed Martial Arts league. A few years later, the Pennsylvania legislature attempted to outlaw these competitions through the Tough Guy law. The growing popularity of the sport halted the attempt to ban the events.

A national interest in MMA developed, and more fighting organizations, called promotions developed. Promotions handle logistics related to organizing and promoting matches, gaining sponsorships, and managing fighters. The highest and most-prominent promotion, the Ultimate Fighting Championship, also called the UFC, first formed in 1993. Other promotions include the Professional Fighters League and the global Bellator MMA.

Now, all professional MMA fights are governed under a set of universal rules. Like boxing, fighters are broken up into weight classes. Regular fights last for three, five-minute rounds, while title fights are five rounds. Three judges score rounds on a 10-point system and award a winner for each round based on effective striking, grappling, aggression, and the fighter's control of their opponent within the ring-- unless the round ends in a knockout technical knockout: when a referee deems it unsafe for the fight to continue due to one fighter's injuries.