

Gracie Survival Tactics Course Review

“Outstanding!” is the only word that comes to mind regarding the Gracie Survival Tactics (GST) course. I have been an Emergency Medicine specialist for the past 18 years and a Jiu-Jitsu practitioner for nearly 30 years. In my opinion, GST needs to be the foundation for our beloved frontline work force of Law Enforcement Officers, Paramedics, Firefighters, and medical professionals. As front-line professionals, we have an increased chance of confronting combatant, aggressive, belligerent, intoxicated, and dangerous individuals in our line of duty. GST’s life-saving techniques are not only created for self-protection but also with the goal to minimizing injuries and the risk of death of the attacker.

As a certified ringside physician and Head of Medical for ONE Championship, the world’s largest martial arts organization, I have been ringside for thousands of fights including boxing, kickboxing, Muay Thai, submission grappling, and mix martial arts (MMA). Generally, hand to hand combat, whether sport or street, can be divided into two categories: striking and grappling. Striking involves the use of the forehead, open palms, fists, elbows, knees, shins, and feet to deliver blunt force trauma to the opponent. Grappling generally consist of positional control, throws, takedowns, vascular neck restraints, and joint manipulations. The ultimate goal in the striking arts is, simply put, to induce head trauma. This generalized concept can be depicted in a boxing bout, in which the athletes attempt to concuss each other in 12 rounds of battle.

Whether inside of a boxing ring or on the street, delivering acute facial and head trauma is the primary objective and the number one injury suffered by athletes and individuals in street fight.

Acute facial and head trauma suffered from receiving strikes to the face can be as minor as superficial facial lacerations, to more devastating injuries such as fractures of the nose, facial bones, orbits, skull, and finally to the more detrimental fatal injuries from intracranial bleeding. Common torso injuries from these strikes are bruised and fractured ribs, liver lacerations, kidney lacerations, and spleen lacerations. Conversely, fractures of the metacarpals of the hand and metatarsals of the foot from the person delivering the strikes are also very common. I have witnessed all the above injuries and the unfortunate fatalities working ringside for over 10 years. In my opinion and experience, the injuries from strikes unquestionably result in more debilitating and life-threatening injuries when compared to those of grappling.

Common grappling arts include Judo, Jiu-Jitsu, submission grappling, and wrestling. Common injuries generally involve the muscles, ligaments, and joint. Although these injuries can be quite extensive and may be physically debilitating in the future, they are nearly never fatal. Granted, there have been rare incidences of a throw or takedown that results in a disastrous spinal cord injury. However, in my years of Jiu-Jitsu training and competition, having organized multiple international Jiu-Jitsu tournament, and covered thousands of Jiu-Jitsu matches medically, I have never witnessed a life-threatening injury or fatality.


One of the underlying principles of GST techniques is to effectively control the aggressor with the least amount of potential injuries to both parties. In contrast to the very commonly used, striking methods; GST utilizes grappling techniques composed of distance control, leverage, joint manipulations, and positional control to subdue the attacker. The GST techniques provide the cornerstone of self-defense against a stronger and heavier opponent, whether standing or

grounded. The escapes from being pinned on the ground in a front, side, or back mount are essential. The ability to defend from punches with the back on the ground through GST's punch block series is crucial. Techniques on getting out of the very common street attacks such as headlocks, chokes, and guillotines are indispensable. These scenario-based solutions are unlikely taught in most self-defense curriculum. And most importantly, the GST's fundamental concept in managing these scenarios through grappling-based techniques will likely result in less injuries sustained by both parties.

A quick internet video search will unquestionably result in hundreds of viral videos of Law Enforcement Officers utilizing the only tool they know or feel confident in utilizing, namely punching and unstructured grappling, when having to engage in hand-to-hand combat against a non-compliant suspect. Although, in certain situations, these tactics are useful and effective. However, I am committed in the idea that if the officers are given more "tools" through GST, they have the chance to walk away from many situations with less injuries to themselves and the suspects. Moreover, instead of a viral click bait video sensationalizing police violence and brutality, I hope we will watch videos of these honorable men and women working to serve and protect their community.

Lastly, in my years of experience, learning, training, and teaching Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu throughout the world, I am astonished by the Gracie teaching methodology. The Slice Presentation Formula (SPF) provides an amazing and efficient way to not only learn the material but to also be able to teach it. I was fortunate enough to attend a couple of GST courses and observed first-hand how

students were able to learn, obtain, and later teach the material in a 5-day GST Level 1 instructor course. Which was truly a feat that has been nothing short of outstanding!



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