

# The **7** Basic Skills *of Wrestling*

Wrestling, man's oldest and most challenging sport, can trace its history back 5000 years. Inscriptions on the walls of the tombs at Beni Hasan, Egypt, show maneuvers that are the same as those practiced in any wrestling room today. Although there are an infinite number of moves and countermoves to the sport, each is based on a series of specific skills. This article describes the skills as outlined by the U.S.A.W. Wrestling National Instructional Staff. With these skills as a foundation, a well conditioned and mentally prepared athlete can shoot for and attain championship status. One of the seven basic skills will be published in the next issues of *Wrestling U.S.A Magazine*.

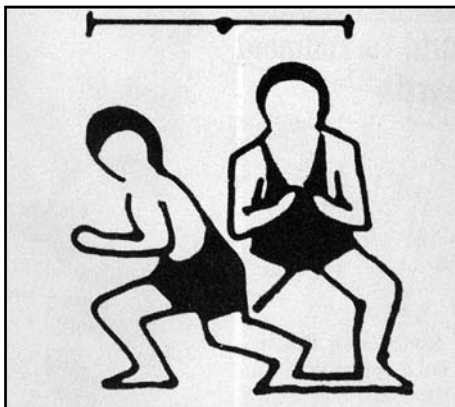
**P**roper body position – the ability of a wrestler to control specific parts of his body in a prescribed position to each other – is the first prerequisite for the successful execution of any primary maneuver. Those key parts of the body, and their relationship to each other, are as follows:

**Head** - always up and on top of the shoulders.

**Back** - keep straight and always over the hips.

**Hip** - keep low, flexed and over the supporting points on the mat.

## POSITION 1



**Feet** - shoulder width apart and kept under your center of gravity.

**Hands** - held in front of your hips, palms down.

**Elbows** - flexed, held in close to the hips.

**Knees** - bent (flexed), but never any farther in front of the body than the chest.

**Chest** - up and out, always over a vertical plane with the knee.

The first skill in the sequence of seven is that of maintaining proper body position.

Bellingham, WA - Cody Mangan (Auburn Mountainview High), about to pin Ben Salgado (Port Angeles), in their 145-lb. match at the Graham Morin Memorial Wrestling Tournament. Photo by Bill France.



Whether on the mat or on your feet, a successful wrestler is one who keeps his body in a position that provides for maximum mobility and power. This position is attained by keeping your head up and rolled back on top of your shoulders. Your arms are bent or flexed with your elbows kept close to your hips. Your back is relatively straight with a slight bend at the waist, your feet should be spread in a comfortable position-usually about shoulder width apart-and your knees should be bent so that your legs are flexed and ready for action.

There are two key points to look for in determining whether a wrestler is in proper position. First, that his chest is in a line directly above his knees, and second, that his hips which in most cases represent the center of gravity of his body - are kept over his point of support, his feet. Regardless of whether the wrestler is in a square stance or one in which he places one foot in front of the other, the same basic principles apply. The head is up, the arms and legs are flexed, the chest is always above the point of the knee, and the hips are centered above the point of support. The same is true for the wrestler down on the mat. From a referee's position, the bottom man

is required to start on his knees with his arms straight out in front of him. His initial goal should be to regain proper body position. Although there is a variety of maneuvers that the bottom man can use that involve moving away from his opponent, most successful wrestlers will explode back into the top man. By doing so, they automatically bring their head up, flex their own arms and drive their hips back over their own feet. When on their feet, it is usually the wrestler who maintains the best position who is able to score the takedown. The wrestler who leads with his head down and his chest extended in front of his knees can be easily snapped down by his opponent. If he over-extends his arms while reaching for his opponent, he becomes vulnerable to an arm drag. In both cases the man being taken to the mat has basically given his opponent the takedown.

When a wrestler initiates a takedown, it's important that he maintain proper position. A fireman's carry is difficult to execute if your head is down, your elbows are out and your chest extended. You must regain optimum position for executing the move by driving into your opponent, bringing your hips back under you, getting your head up, pulling your elbow in, making the

lift and the turn. The same proper position applies for a double leg takedown, one of the most basic of wrestling maneuvers. It's difficult to get the double if you get over-extended.

Lee Kemp on Proper Body Position: A single leg takedown is one of my favorite takedowns and it involves keeping an over-all good body position. First of all, I try to keep my head in the upper portion of my opponent's body. That allows me to keep my lower back straight. It allows me to keep my hips in and I also want to keep my knees bent. That allows me to be lower than my opponent so I have a little better leverage. When I attack the leg, I try not to reach too much, try to keep my elbows in and, as I am going in, I try to suck the guy's body into me. Therefore, I am still lower than he is; I have better body positioning. As we've seen, it doesn't make any difference what maneuver is being executed. Power and mobility come from good body position, the first skill of seven on the road to success.

**Next issue: Motion**

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