

## How does junior Judo differ from senior judo?

For me, there are two ways of looking at this question, firstly from the judoka's perspective and secondly from the instructor's perspective.

**As a judoka**, starting to train as Novice, there may not appear to be a great deal of difference. The starting point is the same for everyone, Ukemi followed by an introduction to the core tachi-waza and ne-waza. To learn and appreciate the principles of judo, from a physical point being Kuzushi and from a mind development point being the Judo Code, it is as important to juniors as it is seniors.

The grading syllabus provides a guide as to the progression of a judoka on a physical level, stating the order that techniques should be learned. The techniques are no different for a junior grading compared to a senior grading (apart from Shime-waza and Kansetsu-waza appearing in the lower senior gradings and NOT the lower junior gradings up to Green belt 3<sup>rd</sup> Kyu).

So, as a judoka, the techniques are very much the same. In competition, certain techniques may not be allowed within certain age groups, typically those that are more advanced and outside of the grading syllabus for the age group competing. This is for their safety as well as an encouragement to demonstrate good technique. The competition time may also be shorter.

**As an instructor**, clearly the teaching methods may be very different when planning a training session aimed at juniors as compared to teaching the same techniques to seniors. The concentration span would be expected to be considerably shorter for a 7 year old as opposed to a 30 year old, and the instructors aim for the planned session would be far less for the youngest age group than perhaps it would be for those of a senior age group (theoretically). The pace and intensity of a session may also be very different not only from a senior to a junior session, but also within that group. However, one of the key considerations that the instructor must make is not to plan a session for a set age group, but to consider the development age and physical condition of the group under instruction - which may well be very different to the chronological age of the group.

For example, when planning a senior session the instructor may include Shime-waza. However, just because the judoka are of a certain age or grade (Shime-waza commences for junior green to blue belt), the instructor must consider the safety aspect of teaching Shime-waza to someone who may have a lower development age than chronological age. As an instructor I would use the judoka's grade (belt colour) as an indicator of their development, but not rely on this.

So, as well as there being techniques that are clearly designated as being for the more advanced and not for a lower junior level, such as Shime-waza and Kansetsu-waza, as an instructor I would not rely on the chronological age or even the judoka's grade, but consider the development age of my group first and foremost.

Clearly, from a safety aspect, the instructor owes the same duty of care to all ages of judoka, from 6 to 106, and whilst a senior may be more likely to submit during ne-waza, or tell the instructor if they are injured or feel unwell, than a junior may do, the instructor must always be aware, look for all of the visual signs of distress, incorporate safety measures (such as teaching the Ukemi before the tachi-waza), be aware of inappropriate pairs/partners and constantly remind all judoka to respect and look out for themselves and their Uke.