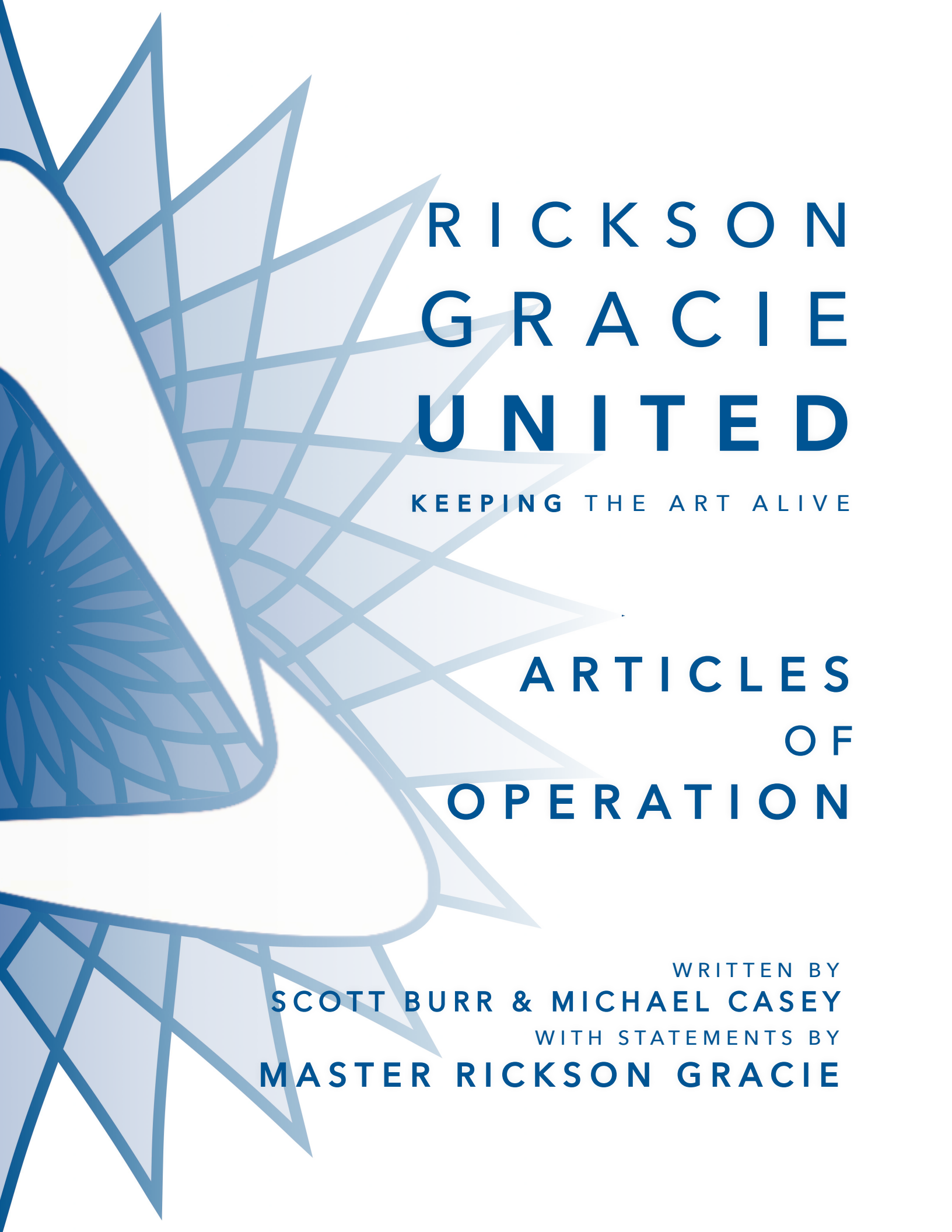




RICKSON GRACIE UNITED

KEEPING THE ART ALIVE

ARTICLES OF OPERATION

WRITTEN BY
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WITH STATEMENTS BY
MASTER RICKSON GRACIE

RICKSON GRACIE UNITED

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1. Statement of Purpose

Rickson Gracie United is an affiliate program for those who wish to be a part of Master Rickson Gracie's mission to preserve and disseminate his unique expression of, and approach to teaching, the art of Jiu-Jitsu.

Membership is available to all instructors of blue belt rank or higher, of any club, school, or academy, regardless of its association with other affiliations or federations.

2. RGU's Mission by Master Rickson Gracie

Gracie Jiu-Jitsu was developed by my father to give the weak a chance against the strong, and to give the timid and shy the confidence to meet challenges. Nowadays, however, with the rise in popularity of the sportive aspect of Jiu-Jitsu, many of the essential concepts and techniques that serve this objective are being lost. These days a practitioner may advance through the belt ranks by training only in the sportive aspect of the art and winning competitions, and become a black belt and an instructor with tremendous knowledge of the sport and little to no knowledge of the core art. In such cases, these black belt instructors are limited in their ability to serve those who are not interested in competitions, but who would like to learn to defend themselves and feel more confident when engaging in unfamiliar situations. These individuals represent a substantial population: accordingly, this gap in knowledge represents a missed opportunity for these instructors and their businesses, the individuals they might serve, and society at large.

Over the course of my life, I have continued to develop the Jiu-Jitsu I learned from my father by focusing on aspects that I now refer to as "Invisible." These include the elements of Strategy, Base, Weight Distribution, Connection, Leverage, Timing, and Distance. These elements are hard to see with the naked eye, but obvious when properly applied. In my view, these are the elements which play a deterministic role in the art's effectiveness when it is employed by a smaller, weaker person. In other words: It is my view that these elements are essential to the art's original expression and mission.

Having now worked with many students and instructors of every belt rank for many years, I have come to believe that this "Invisible Jiu-Jitsu" is poorly understood within the broader Jiu-Jitsu community, even at the senior belt levels, and within a few generations may be lost entirely. With Rickson Gracie United, it is my intention to present this knowledge and a framework for its dissemination to students of every level, so that it may continue to benefit practitioners and their students for generations to come.

3. A Note Regarding the JJGF by Master Rickson Gracie

When I created the JJGF, it was with a dual purpose. First, my objective was to preserve the core art of Jiu-Jitsu, at a moment when I felt that core was being lost to the sportive aspect of the art. My second objective was to create a place of unification for the Jiu-Jitsu community—a place where practitioners from every style, affiliation, and lineage could gather under one banner—at a moment when that community seemed to be in danger of fragmenting into factions.

In pursuit of the former objective, my intention was to offer a series of educational programs and certifications. While my vision was to offer these programs and certifications as a resource for the community, I see now that this strategy created an unintended conflict: that a Federation designed as a place for unification for Jiu-Jitsu practitioners cannot also present an official, preferred expression of the art.

While I still believe strongly in the JJGF's mission of unification, I now feel that this other, more personal mission—the preservation and dissemination of the art—requires my full energy and focus. Accordingly, it is now my intention to direct my efforts toward building an affiliate program to help me pursue this more personal goal.

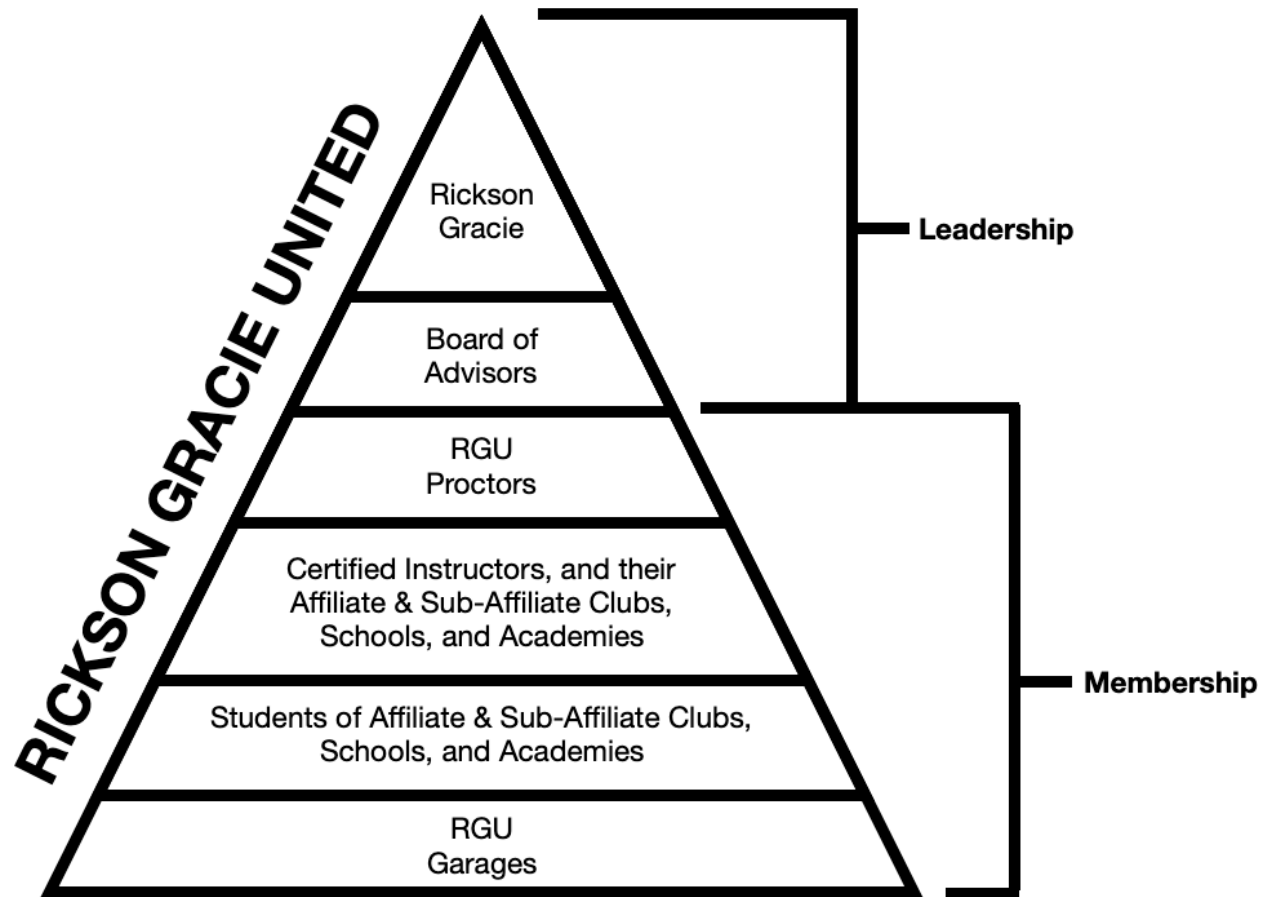
Rickson Gracie United will be an affiliate program made up of instructors certified in my unique system and teaching methodology, and their respective clubs, schools, and academies. Through these instructors, it is my hope to preserve the art to which I have dedicated my life for generations to come.

Though my efforts going forward will be focused within this new organization, it is still my hope to provide a service to the broader Jiu-Jitsu community. This will come in the form of educational resources, Zoom addresses, "Ask Me Anything" sessions, and other programming which I intend to make available through the expanded online platform at www.Rickson.Academy. These resources will be available to all members of Rickson.Academy, regardless of their affiliation or association with Rickson Gracie United.

I am very excited about this next phase of service, and hope that you will join me on this mission. Together, we will keep the art alive.

4. Organizational Structure

The structure and function of each tier of the included graphic is described in greater detail in the following pages.



5. Leadership Structure and Roles

Rickson Gracie United (RGU) will be overseen by Rickson Gracie and the Rickson Gracie United Board of Advisors, to be composed of an odd number of members of not less than three and not more than nine persons appointed by Rickson Gracie or, in his absence or by his appointment, a two-thirds or greater, depending on the composition of the Board, majority (2/3, 3/5, 5/7, 6/9).

All decisions concerning the management of Rickson Gracie United will be made by either Rickson Gracie or, in his absence or by his appointment, the Rickson Gracie United Board of Advisors, with all decisions made by the Board requiring a two-thirds or greater, depending on the composition of the Board, majority (2/3, 3/5, 5/7, 6/9).

Notwithstanding the above, and during the course of his lifetime, Rickson Gracie shall retain final decision-making authority on all matters concerning Rickson Gracie United.

6. Membership Structure and Member Roles

The membership tier of Rickson Gracie United will be composed of 1) RGU Proctors, 2) Certified Instructors, and their Affiliate and Sub-Affiliate Clubs, Schools, and Academies (run by or employing Certified Instructors; see below), 3) the Students of Affiliates and Sub-Affiliates, and 4) RGU Garages.

- ***RGU Proctors***

Rickson Gracie United Proctors have been enlisted and appointed to conduct, assess, and recommend to Rickson Gracie certifications in the various Rickson Gracie United Instructor Certifications. Note that all certifications will be issued and signed by Rickson Gracie or, in his absence or by his appointment, a quorum of not less than three RGU Proctors (see **8. Rickson Gracie United Certifications, Certification Timing, and Re-certification**).

- ***Certified Instructors, and Their Affiliate & Sub-Affiliate Clubs, Schools, and Academies***

A Rickson Gracie United Certified Instructor is an instructor who has successfully completed the RGU Level I Instructor Certification (minimum), and whose certification is current.

A Rickson Gracie United Affiliate is a Club, School, or Academy that is committed to following and helping to spread Rickson Gracie's unique approach to expressing and teaching Jiu-Jitsu, and where an RGU Certified Level I Instructor teaches regular classes covering the RGU material. See **7. Rickson Gracie United Affiliate Requirements, Costs, Considerations, and Benefits**.

A Rickson Gracie United Sub-Affiliate is an RGU Affiliate that is also sub-affiliated with an RGU-Affiliated club, school, or academy. RGU Sub-Affiliates are entitled to special sub-affiliate pricing. See **11. Cost and Benefit Structure for Sub-Affiliates of Rickson Gracie United Clubs, Schools, and Academies**.

- ***Students of Affiliates and Sub-Affiliates***

Any dues-paying student of any rank of a RGU Affiliate or RGU Sub-Affiliate Club, School, or Academy.

- ***RGU Garages***

RGU Garages are run by independent students of the instructional material available through www.Rickson.Academy and/or Rickson.Gallerr.com. See **12. *RGU Garages*** for more information.

7. Rickson Gracie United Affiliate Requirements, Costs, Considerations, and Benefits

An RGU Affiliate may be:

- 1) Owned and/or run by a black belt who is also a Rickson Gracie United Certified Level I Instructor (minimum), and who teaches regular classes covering the RGU material;
- 2) Owned and/or run by a black belt who is not a Rickson Gracie United Certified Level I Instructor, but where a Rickson Gracie United Certified Level I Instructor (minimum, any belt rank) teaches regular classes covering the RGU material;
- 3) Owned and/or run by a non-black belt who is a Rickson Gracie United Certified Level I Instructor (minimum), and teaches regular classes covering the RGU material, or;
- 4) Owned and/or run by a non-black belt who is not a Rickson Gracie United Certified Level I Instructor, but where a Rickson Gracie United Certified Level I Instructor (minimum, any belt rank) teaches regular classes covering the RGU material.

Rickson Gracie United Affiliates are of 3 types, based on the affiliate's student body size. These 3 types are:

- Club-Level Affiliate (20 or fewer enrolled students)
- School-Level Affiliate (21-50 enrolled students)
- Academy-Level Affiliate (51+ enrolled students)

If an affiliate's student body size changes such that its tier level is affected, and this change remains for a period of 3 months, the affiliate must contact Rickson Gracie United to change their affiliation tier.

Affiliates of all levels will be considered full affiliates of Rickson Gracie United.

Affiliate fees for each tier are the following:

- Club-Level Affiliate - \$115/month
- School-Level Affiliate - \$230/month
- Academy-Level Affiliate - \$345/month

Affiliate dues must be paid via automated payment via the subscription portal at www.RicksonGracieUnited.com. If a payment has been declined, a \$35 fee will be applied. Repeated declined payments may be grounds for membership termination (see **14. Termination or Expulsion from Rickson Gracie United**).

In the event that two or more Rickson Gracie United Level I Certified Instructors are teaching at the same club, school, or academy, the club, school, or academy's affiliation dues will be considered to cover all of the instructors. If, however, in these same circumstances, one of these certified instructors leaves the affiliate club, school, or academy to go teach at another school, that instructor must begin paying affiliate dues, or their new school begin paying affiliate dues, for that instructor's affiliation to be recognized, and their certification eligible for renewal.

All Rickson Gracie United Affiliates are required to have adequate facilities to ensure student safety, to include minimum 1.5" industry standard mats and padding on all surfaces within and in immediate proximity to the training area. Facilities are expected to be clean, well-lit, inviting, and professional, to the standard determined by Rickson Gracie or his representatives. This includes holding and enforcing appropriate student dress and hygiene codes of conduct, in the manner of but not limited to the following:

Personal Hygiene

- Arrive clean for every class.
- Hands and feet must be clean before stepping on the mat.
- Fingernails and toenails must be trimmed.
- Do not train with open cuts, skin infections, or contagious conditions (including ringworm, staph, or impetigo).

Uniform & Gear

- White gi required for all gi classes.

- Gi, belt, rash guards, and training gear must be clean and washed after every use.
- No dirty, damp, or foul-smelling gear on the mat.
- Rash guards are recommended under the gi.

Jewelry & Piercings

- No jewelry or earrings on the mat. This includes rings, necklaces, bracelets, watches, earrings, and body piercings.

Hair & Grooming

- Long hair must be securely tied back.
- Beards should be neatly maintained.
- Students should avoid using excessive hair products.

Feet & Footwear

- No shoes on the mat.
- Wear shoes or sandals off the mat, especially in restrooms.
- Clean or sanitize feet before returning to the mat if you leave the training area.

Illness

- Do not train if you are sick or contagious.
- If in doubt, sit out—protect your training partners.

Enforcement

- Instructors may deny mat access to anyone not meeting these standards.
- These rules exist for safety, health, and mutual respect.

All Rickson Gracie United Affiliates are required to have a minimum insurance liability policy. **Rickson Gracie and Samurai Enterprises LLC must be named as covered parties on that policy.** Proof of current coverage must be submitted to RGU (see below).

To apply to become a Rickson Gracie United Affiliate, an applicant must:

- Complete the Rickson Gracie United Affiliate application. Note that application will be reviewed by Rickson Gracie or, in his absence or by his appointment, the Rickson Gracie United Board of Advisors.

- Pay the \$125 application fee.
- Complete and submit a background check through an accredited service in the applicant's country of residence (applicant's own expense). Background check should cover/include at a minimum sexual offender registries as well as local, state, and federal criminal databases (convictions and pending cases), and should be sent directly from the service to Rickson Gracie United (RicksonGracieUnited@gmail.com).

Upon application approval, the applicant must:

- Enroll in the Level I Instructor Certification course, and pay the balance of the \$3,500 certification fee (less application fee).
- Complete the Level I Instructor Certification course, and pass the in-person assessment.
- Agree to abide by the Rickson Gracie United Code of Conduct (signature required).
- Agree to abide by the Rickson Gracie United Zero Tolerance Policy (signature required).
- Sign the Rickson Gracie United Indemnification (signature required).
- Enroll in automatic billing at the appropriate tier (club, school, or academy) level.
- Complete and submit proof of concussion awareness training (<https://www.cdc.gov/heads-up/training/athletic-trainers.html>)
- Complete and submit proof of anti-abuse training (<https://uscenterforsafesport.myabsorb.com/#/curricula/e13f5965-7e12-4d40-9466-2b7fccae360e>)
- Complete and submit proof of CPR training (<https://www.redcross.org/take-a-class/classes/adult-and-pediatric-child-and-baby-first-aid/cpr/aed-online/a6RVx000000XaW9.html>)
- Provide proof of liability insurance, with Rickson Gracie Samurai Enterprises LLC named as covered parties.
- Note: It is recommended that those in the process of becoming certified avail themselves of either private or seminar training with RGU Certified Instructors and/or Proctors during the course of their certification.
- Additional requirements may apply.

Note that, during the period in which the affiliate is completing these requirements, they will be included in the RGU Affiliate database with a "pending" notation. A "pending" affiliate may not have access to all of the benefits of a full affiliate. No affiliate may remain "pending" for more than one calendar year.

All non-pending Rickson Gracie United Affiliates and their students will receive the following:

Affiliate Benefits:

- Naming rights: Affiliates may use the verbiage "A Partner in Rickson Gracie's Global Mission" or "A Member of Rickson Gracie United" in the following manner: CLUB/SCHOOL/ACADEMY NAME: A Partner in Rickson Gracie's Global Mission" or "CLUB/SCHOOL/ACADEMY NAME: A Member of Rickson Gracie United." Note that they may not use the name "Rickson Gracie United" as the name of the club, school, or academy itself. Note also that affiliates may not use the "Rickson Gracie United" name as the name of their competition team, or the banner under which they compete. See **12. A Note on Rank, Promotions, and Competition** for more information.
- Advertising rights: Affiliates may use the verbiage "A Partner in Rickson Gracie's Global Mission" or "A Member of Rickson Gracie United" and the Rickson Gracie United logo logo variants within their signage and advertising. Note that this does not include the use of Rickson Gracie's personal likeness, logo, or name except as part of the "Rickson Gracie United" descriptor. Other acceptable language may be determined on a case-by-case basis. Note that all signage and advertising designs must be submitted for and are subject to approval by Rickson Gracie and/or the RGU Board of Advisors.
- Merchandise rights: Affiliates may use the verbiage "A Partner in Rickson Gracie's Global Mission" or "A Member of Rickson Gracie United" and the Rickson Gracie United logo logo variants as part of the affiliate's own merchandise and branding. Note that

this does NOT include the right to produce "Rickson Gracie United" merchandise. All designs must be submitted for and are subject to approval by Rickson Gracie and or the RGU Board of Advisors.

- Access to Rickson.Academy and Rickson.Gallerr.com (the SDU).
- 20% discount on Rickson Gracie United merchandise.
- Preferred rate and scheduling when hosting seminars with RGU Certified Instructors and Proctors (details TBD).
- Access to and inclusion in the Rickson Gracie United online network database at www.RicksonGracieUnited.com, which will list information about the affiliate, including but not limited to instructor name, club/school/academy name, location, and contact information.
- Affiliate upcoming events and seminars included in the Rickson Gracie United EVENTS page of www.RicksonGracieUnited.com.
- Exclusive access to Zoom addresses, classes, and instructor meetings with Rickson Gracie or other senior Rickson Gracie United members (details TBD).
- Certified Instructors and Proctors receive 10% off private lessons with Rickson Gracie (max. 3 per year). Please note that private lessons with Rickson are subject to Rickson's availability, and are not guaranteed.
- Certified Instructors and Proctors receive 10% off private lessons with other Rickson Gracie United Proctors and Certified Instructors.
- Annual Rickson Gracie United Retreat (details TBD).
- Membership in the Rickson Gracie United Affiliate private Facebook group (details TBD)

Affiliate and Sub-Affiliate Student Benefits:

- 10% discounted membership to www.Rickson.Academy and Rickson.Gallerr.com.
- 10% discount on Rickson Gracie United merchandise.

8. Rickson Gracie United Certifications, Certification Timing, and Re-certification (General)

It is the express purpose of Rickson Gracie United to preserve and disseminate Rickson Gracie's unique expression of Jiu-Jitsu. A series of certifications covering various aspects of this expression—from technical instruction to teaching methodologies to supplementary exercises—will serve as the foundation of this mission.

- Certifications will be available to instructors of any rank from blue belt up.
- Certifications will be available to instructors of any affiliation, provided that they or the school where they teach will also become Rickson Gracie United Affiliates.
- Content, cost, requirements, and duration of these certifications will vary.
- Certifications will be valid for a term of not more than 2 years. Requirements for recertification will vary based on the certification.
- Certification will be conducted either by Rickson Gracie or by the Rickson Gracie United Proctors, with Rickson Gracie retaining final discretion over any and all certifications/recertifications.
- In Rickson Gracie's absence or by his appointment, a quorum of not less than 3 RGU Proctors may issue a certification.
- RGU Proctors will be appointed by Rickson Gracie or, in his absence or by his appointment, the Rickson Gracie United Board of Advisors.

An RGU Affiliate is considered to be in good standing so long as a representative of that affiliate has completed or is in the process of completing or re-certifying in the Level I Instructor Certification course (minimum).

Once an instructor is certified, they must keep their certification current in order to maintain their club, school, or academy's affiliation.

In the event that a Rickson Grace United Certified Instructor stops teaching at an affiliate club, school, or academy for any reason, and

another representative of that affiliate is not certified or does not begin the certification process, that affiliate will lose its affiliate status.

Rickson Gracie United Certified Instructors will re-certify either with Rickson Gracie or, in his absence or by his appointment, a Rickson Gracie United Proctor. The recertification will involve an in-person assessment. Note that instructors may be grouped to facilitate efficient recertification. The cost for re-certification will vary. For more information concerning Level I Instructor certification and re-certification, see **9. *The Rickson Gracie United Level I Instructor Certification: Cost, Timing, and Re-certification.***

9. The Rickson Gracie United Level I Instructor Certification: Cost, Timing, and Re-certification

The RGU Level I Instructor Certification is designed to accredit instructors in 1) a working knowledge of the terms, concepts, and practice of Invisible Jiu-Jitsu, and 2) a curriculum for disseminating that knowledge to those instructors' students.

Certification will depend on:

- 1) The careful study of all coursework,
- 2) The completion of 100 hours (minimum) teaching the course material,
- 3) 3 (minimum) video instruction assessments and Zoom consultations with either Master Rickson Gracie or a Rickson Gracie United Proctor, and
- 4) A final in-person assessment, either with Master Rickson Gracie or with a Rickson Gracie United Proctor.

This certification is available to any individual who intends to become a Rickson Gracie United Affiliate, blue belt and above, regardless of their association with another federation of affiliate program.

Certification costs:

- Application fee - \$125
- Background check - approx. \$30-\$50
- Level I Instructor Certification Fee - \$3,500 (less application fee)

Every 25 teaching hours, for the duration of the certification process, the applicant will submit a video of themselves demonstrating and teaching techniques from the certification material. These videos will be assessed by either Rickson Gracie or a Rickson Gracie United Proctor, with whom the applicant will then have a Zoom session for assessment and feedback of the provided video.

Once the instructor has completed their course of study, 100 hours (minimum) of independent instruction, and 3 (minimum) video

assessments, and dependent on the content and quality of the assessment videos, they will be eligible for their final, in-person assessment.

The in-person assessment will take place in person with either Master Rickson Gracie or with one of the Rickson Gracie United Proctors. An instructor who passes this in-person assessment will be a Rickson Gracie United Level I Certified Instructor, and their club, school, or academy or the club, school, or academy where they teach will become a fully affiliated member of Rickson Gracie United.

If, based on the content and quality of their first 3 assessment videos, as instructor fails to qualify for the in-person assessment, they will be eligible for up to 3 further video assessments, at 100-, 125-, and 150-teaching-hour intervals respectively, each of which may qualify them for an in-person assessment.

If, based on the content and quality of this 6th assessment video, an instructor fails to qualify for an in-person assessment, they will be considered to have failed the certification, and their club, school, or academy will lose its pending affiliate status.

An instructor who qualifies for but fails to pass the in-person assessment will be eligible to return for another in-person assessment after completing another 25 teaching hours. An instructor who fails this second in-person assessment will be considered to have failed the certification, and their club, school, or academy will lose its pending affiliate status.

The Rickson Gracie United Level I Instructor Certification is valid for a period of 2 years (24 months). This will be followed by a 6-month grace period during which the instructor and affiliate will be considered in good standing so long as the instructor is actively pursuing a recertification opportunity, i.e. they have scheduled and are awaiting the in-person re-certification assessment.

Rickson Gracie United Certified Instructors will re-certify either with Rickson Gracie or, in his absence or by his appointment, a Rickson

Gracie United Proctor. The recertification will involve an in-person assessment. Note that instructors may be grouped to facilitate efficient recertification.

The cost for a Level I Instructor Recertification is \$500.

More information, see the Rickson Gracie United Level I Instructor Certification Workbook.

10. New Rickson Gracie United Affiliate Locations and Mechanics

Adequate space between affiliates is crucial for the success of each affiliate location. The goal is not to have competing Rickson Gracie United Affiliates, but to spread Rickson Gracie Jiu-Jitsu around the world. Accordingly, new or changing affiliate location(s) must be reviewed by the surrounding (within 20 miles) affiliates, the Board of Advisors, and/or Rickson Gracie to ensure the location does not encroach on an existing affiliate's footprint. New potential affiliate locations must be submitted for review prior to negotiating or signing any lease agreements.

11. Cost and Benefit Structure for Sub-Affiliates of Rickson Gracie United Clubs, Schools, and Academies

Rickson Gracie United Affiliates may have their own sub-affiliates.

Sub-Affiliates must meet the same requirements as independent affiliates (outlined in **7. Rickson Gracie United Affiliate Requirements, Costs, Considerations, and Benefits**), but will receive special sub-affiliate pricing and rates. These include the following:

- The cost for the Level I Certification for sub-affiliate instructors is \$2,500 (less application fee). Should the sub-affiliate leave the sub-affiliation and become an independent Rickson Gracie United Affiliate, they must pay the \$1,000 balance in order for their affiliation with Rickson Gracie United to continue to be recognized.
- The membership cost for each sub-affiliate is one half the appropriate tier-level monthly dues for the sub-affiliate's student body size (club, school, or academy), billed to the Sub-Affiliate.

Sub-affiliate fees for each tier are the following:

Club-Level Sub-Affiliate - \$57.50/month

School-Level Sub-Affiliate - \$115.00/month

Academy-Level Sub-Affiliate - \$172.50/month

Should the sub-affiliate leave the sub-affiliation and become an independent Rickson Gracie United Affiliate, they must begin paying full affiliate tier-appropriate monthly dues in order for their affiliation with Rickson Gracie United to continue to be recognized.

12. Rickson Gracie United (RGU) Garages

The RGU Garage program is designed as a space within RGU for independent students of the educational materials available at www.Rickson.Academy and Rickson.Gallerr.com.

Cost:

- Membership to www.Rickson.Academy and/or Rickson.Gallerr.com.
- \$15 application fee.
- \$35 annual fee.

Benefits:

- Being part of the Rickson Gracie United community.
- Inclusion in the Rickson Gracie United online database.
- Curriculum and other RGU materials (details TBD).

To become an RGU Garage, you must:

- Enroll or maintain enrollment in Rickson.Academy and/or Rickson.Gallerr.com.
- Commit to studying, practicing, and sharing the art of Jiu-Jitsu as presented in the materials available at www.Rickson.Academy and/or Rickson.Gallerr.com.
- Fill out the RGU Garage application. Note that to complete the application, you will need to record and upload a five-minute (approx.) video tour of your facility. You will also need to submit a background check from an accredited service in your country of residence. Background check should cover/include at a minimum sexual offender registries as well as local, state, and federal criminal databases (convictions and pending cases). Applicants in the U.S. may submit a "complete"-level check from BackgroundChecks.com. Background check should be attached to the application, but should also be send directly from the background check provider to RicksonGracieUnited@gmail.com.
- Sign the RGU Code of Conduct, Zero Tolerance, and Indemnification forms.

Please note that RGU Garage locations cannot charge their members for membership or training, and RGU Garages cannot be commercial clubs, schools, or academies. Please note also that RGU Garages must be outside a 15-mile radius of any existing Affiliate Club, School, or Academy, or must have written permission from the Affiliate Club, School, or Academy owner.

Additional recommendations:

- Concussion awareness training
(<https://www.cdc.gov/heads-up/training/youth-sports.html>)
- Anti-abuse training
(<https://uscenterforsafesport.myabsorb.com/#/public-dashboard>)
- CPR training
(<https://www.redcross.org/take-a-class/classes/adult-and-pediatric-child-and-baby-first-aid/cpr/aed-online/a6RVx000000XaW9.html>)

Note that RGU Garages have no branding license for the use of the RGU name and/or logo, and may not use these designators in any gear, signage, social media, or advertising. Rather, a RGU Garage may identify itself as such, and use the RGU Garage logo for non-commercial applications (social media, online presence, etc).

13. A Note on Rank, Promotions, and Competitions *by Master Rickson Gracie*

At the original Gracie Academy, run by my father and my Uncle Carlos in Rio de Janeiro, there were only three belt ranks: students wore the white belt, instructors wore a dark blue belt, and those training to become instructors wore a light blue belt.

When my father and other masters of the time formed the Jiu-Jitsu Federation of Guanabara in 1967, it was with the intention to make Jiu-Jitsu a recognized sport, with formalized rules for competition. As part of this effort, this panel of masters created the belt system with which modern practitioners are familiar. This belt system was created to ensure that practitioners were competing against opponents of a comparable skill and training experience. In other words, these belts were created expressly for the purpose of organizing competitions of "Jiu-Jitsu vs. Jiu-Jitsu," and had nothing to do with the study or practice of the core art of self defense against an untrained aggressor.

Nowadays, most if not all Jiu-Jitsu schools use this belt system, and likewise organize most if not all of their classes and training around the study and practice of what works in a "Jiu-Jitsu vs. Jiu-Jitsu" contest. This is a great practice, and one to which I have dedicated a lot of my life. Moreover, I fully expect that RGU Affiliates will continue this type of practice and training, and continue to offer it to students who love it—and to students who, having completed the course of study outlined in the Level I Instructor Certification, discover that they want more from their Jiu-Jitsu practice. However, as I have said, the mission of Rickson Gracie United is to preserve and spread the core art of Invisible Jiu-Jitsu to students of every level—especially those not being served by the current model. The course material and curriculum outlined in the Level I Instructor Certification are designed with this objective—and only this objective—in mind. Accordingly, the question of rank and ranking standards—which pertain only to this more advanced practice of Jiu-Jitsu vs. Jiu-Jitsu—falls outside the scope of my current focus and concern. Affiliate student promotions must therefore be left to the discretion of individual affiliate instructors.

Likewise, for this reason, it is inappropriate for any student's rank to be considered a "Rickson Gracie United" rank, or representative of "Rickson Gracie United's" standards, or my personal standards. All rank given must therefore also be considered to be under the auspices of the awarding Instructor and his or her club, school, or academy, and not "Rickson Gracie United." Any certificate awarded or other documentation created or presented along with the belt promotion itself should reflect this, naming only the club, school, or academy and the awarding instructor(s), and not "Rickson Gracie United."

Similarly, while I fully support any affiliate or sub-affiliate instructor(s) and/or affiliate or sub-affiliate students who want to engage in competitions, it must be understood that Rickson Gracie United is not a competition team. While I believe with all my heart that the principles we will explore, develop, and share in this endeavor—strategy, base, weight distribution, connection, leverage, timing, and distance—form the basis of effectiveness in any situation, whether that be a street fight or a Jiu-Jitsu competition match, our focus will not be on the modern competition game, and the specific moves, countermoves, strategies, and counter-strategies required to give the best chance of success. This development must necessarily occur within the further "Jiu-Jitsu vs. Jiu-Jitsu" training that each club, school, or academy conducts with students who enjoy that part of the practice. Accordingly, it is my feeling that any club, school, or academy representatives wishing to enter a competition should do so under that club, school, or academy's name only, without the "Rickson Gracie United" descriptor.

Notwithstanding the above, I recommend that all Rickson Gracie United Affiliates follow the general ranking guidelines I previously outlined in the JJGF articles when awarding rank to their students. These include the following:

- *A student must be at least 16 years of age to receive the rank of blue belt.*
- *A student must be at least 17.5 years of age to receive the rank of*

brown belt.

- *A student must be at least 18 years of age to receive the rank of black belt.*
- *Black belts who compete but do not teach wear a black belt with a white bar.*
- *Black belts who teach, and who are in the process of becoming full instructors, wear a black belt with a red bar.*
- *Black belts who have completed their instructor apprenticeship wear a red bar with a white border at each end (Professor rank).*
- *Only black belts who 1) have achieved the rank of Professor and 2) are actively involved in teaching and/or service to the art earn degrees. Degrees occur on the following timeline:*
 - *1st degree - 3 years as a Professor*
 - *2nd degree - 6 years as a Professor (3 years between degrees)*
 - *3rd degree - 9 years as a Professor (3 years between degrees)*
 - *4th degree - 14 years as a Professor (5 years between degrees)*
 - *5th degree - 19 years as a Professor (5 years between degrees)*
 - *6th degree - 24 years as a Professor (5 years between degrees)*
 - *7th degree (coral belt) - 31 years as a Professor (7 years between degrees)*
 - *8th degree (coral belt) - 38 years as a professor (7 years between degrees)*
 - *9th degree (red belt) - 48 years as a professor (10 years between degrees)*
- *A Professor must have 2 degrees to award a black belt.*
- *A Professor can promote up to 1 degree below their current rank.*

Additionally, it is envisioned that senior members of Rickson Gracie United (members of the Board of Advisors, Proctors, and Certified Instructors) will take responsibility for the promotion of junior affiliate heads as needed. This includes both junior black belt, as well as colored belt, Certified Instructors and affiliate heads.

14. Termination of Affiliation/Expulsion from Rickson Gracie United

Termination from Rickson Gracie United may occur at any time, for infractions including but not limited to the following:

- Failure to abide by the Rickson Gracie United Code of Conduct.
- Failure to abide by the Rickson Gracie United Zero Tolerance Policy.
- Failure to complete or maintain a Level I Instructor Certification.
- Failure to maintain other required certifications for a period greater than 2 months.
- Actions that negatively impact the reputation of Rickson Gracie United or Rickson Gracie.
- Failing to pay the monthly affiliate fees, or sub-affiliate fees.

Notice of termination or expulsion from Rickson Gracie United, the cause, and its effective date will be provided by Rickson Gracie and/or the Rickson Gracie United Board of Advisors.

Note that the above list is not exhaustive, and Rickson Gracie—or, in his absence or by his appointment, the Rickson Gracie United Board of Advisors—retain the right to terminate an affiliate's membership at any time, at his/their own discretion.

Note that an affiliate's termination by the Board of Advisors requires a two-thirds or greater, depending on the composition of the board, majority (2/3, 3/5, 5/7, 6/9).

Note also that all fees, including but not limited to fees paid during an affiliate's pending period, application fees, certification fees, etc., are non-refundable. This includes fees paid for RGU certifications that the applicant fails to successfully complete for any reason whatsoever.

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