

## Taekwondo!

Hello everyone! My name is Stephen Cannell, Coordinator for International Relations at Toyohashi City Hall. Today I'd like to introduce to you all one of the events at next year's Olympics, Taekwondo. I'll tell you about the rules, some of the great things about Taekwondo, and introduce you to some of the athletes we may be seeing at the Olympics next year.



Let's start off with a brief introduction to Taekwondo and its origins.

Contrary to what you may think, Taekwondo is actually quite new to the martial arts world. It was founded about 60 years ago. It is a combination of multiple martial arts including Korean Taekkyon, Japanese Karate, especially the *Shotokan* style, as well as Chinese martial arts. There are currently around 80 million people practicing Taekwondo all over the world. It is a sport featuring lightning fast kicks and lightning fast reflexes. The competitors devote years to mastering their techniques.

Taekwondo's rules are rather simple. A match consists of 3 rounds, each round being 2 minutes long. Competitors fight on an 8 meter wide, octagon shaped mat. The outcome is determined either by knockout or by the amount of points each competitor earns during the match. In order to make accurate scoring decisions at the Olympics, special padding containing sensors is used.

Flexibility is very important in Taekwondo. The more you can extend your legs, the further you can kick, and the easier you can avoid your opponent's attacks.

Kicking is the main form of attack in Taekwondo. Punching is allowed, however it only results in one point. Kicking, on the other hand, can lead to many

more points. There are a variety of kicking techniques, including side kicks, spinning air kicks, spinning hook kicks, etc. If you would like to see videos of a variety of Taekwondo kicks, have a look at <https://keritube.com/>

The amount of points earned from a successful kick depends on the type of kick, and where you hit your opponent. A straight kick to the body is worth 2 points, to the head is worth 3. Spin kicks are worth 4 and 5 points, respectively. Punches to the body are worth 1 point, and punches to the head are not permitted. Competitors may be penalized points if they are running away from their opponent without attacking for a long period.

Of the 80 million Taekwondo practitioners in the world, only 128 will qualify for the Olympics in 2020. Those 128 have yet to be determined, but here are a few Olympic hopefuls: Currently ranked 8<sup>th</sup> in the men's 80kg weight class is Germany's Alexander Bachmann. Bachmann was the 2017 Taekwondo world champion. Also from Germany is Madeline Folgmann, currently ranked 16<sup>th</sup> in the women's 57kg weight class. Toyohashi is serving as Germany's Host Town for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

Among Japan's strong athletes are Miyu Yamada, currently ranked 25<sup>th</sup> in the women's 49kg weight class, and Sergio Suzuki, currently ranked 47<sup>th</sup> in the men's 58kg weight class, and from my home country of America, Paige McPherson (ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in the women's 67kg weight class) and Jonathan Healy (ranked 9<sup>th</sup> in the men's 80kg weight class) are looking strong.

Who will compete? Who will win? I can't wait for the Olympics to start!