

# [Sumo wrestling](https://assignbuster.com/sumo-wrestling/)

Sumo wrestling is one of the oldest forms of martial arts in Japan, and it is still a major sport that is popular with both men and women there. In ancient times, sumo contests were held only in the courtyards of Shinto shrines as a religious ritual performed for the gods to encourage them to grant a good harvest. Ritual is, therefore, an important part of the sport. Before each match, contestants sprinkle salt on the ring and rinse their mouths in a ritual purification. Nowadays, sumo wrestling contests are held in gymnasiums, Convention centers and Stadiums.

At first glance, sumo wrestling seems to be a strange sport with big, fat wrestlers wearing diaper-like aprons, shoving each other inside a tiny ring. Contrary to its appearance, sumo wrestling is a sport that requires not only strength, but also speed and agility, which heavy-set people usually do not possess. The wrestlers try to push each other out of the ring or down on the floor. Before actual physical contact, the wrestlers will stare at each other for minutes to break the concentration of the Opponent.

The fight usually lasts for only a few seconds but sometimes it can go on for two to three minutes. The objective of a sumo bout, however, is not to injure the Opponent, but to simply eject the other man from the arena, or cause some part of the body other than his feet - or even a fingertip - to touch the floor. In fact, if some blood spots the floor of the ring during a match, the bout has to stop until every trace of blood has been meticulouslv removed. The size of the wrestler is also important. The heavier the wrestler, the lower his center of gravity, and thus the harder to toss him out of the ring.

In order to put on weight and build up body mass, sumo wrestlers eat a large amount offoodincluding a high-protein stew, and they go to bed right after eating. The heaviest sumo wrestler on record was 225 kilograms. Despite their large size and heavy weight, sumo wrestlers are well-trained athletes. They live in special sumo stables, following extremely strict rules and besides having their physical workouts, they have to complete other necessary chores. The wrestlers practise a lifestyle that is completely dedicated to the sport.

To them, sumo is not only a sport; it is a whole way of life. This positive dedication has encouraged the Japanese to adopt them as role modeis. Hierarchy is a central aspect of sumo wrestling. Rankings depend on winning records. A sumo wrestler's ranking depends solely on the number of matches he wins during official tournaments. The more matches a wrestler wins, the quicker he can move up the rankings. Once a wrestler moves up to the top rank, he is not supposed to lose at all. He is expected to retire if he is unable to maintain his winning record.

In fact, if a grand champion's losses outnumber his wins during the course of these tournaments, he will fall from the top ranks and will be expected to retire like the rest. Today's professional sumo wrestling has its roots in the Edo period. The wrestlers during this period were mainly samurais who needed an alternative form of income. Even the wrestling ring can be traced back to the 16th Century Edo period. In earlier times, the fighting space was simply the area given to the wrestlers by spectators. In the 16th Century, an important warlord named Oda Nobunaga introduced the ring in a tournament he organized. It is a platform 4. 5 meters in diameter and 16. 26 Square meters in area made of clay mixed with sand set on top of rice straw bales. Despite sumo wrestling's archaic rituals and traditions, the sport continues to draw new fans and growing international interest. Hundreds of sumo wrestlers of various nationalities compete to earn comfortable livelihoods, participating in matches not only in Japan, but in Europe, North America and Britain. Grand Champions attain celebrity Status and enjoy the intense adoration of dedicated fans. Present day sumo wrestlers consist of anybody who is interested in the sport and professional wrestlers come from all walks of life.

Nevertheless, as a sport, sumo is not without controversy. It has been criticised as discriminatory since participants are limited to men only. There is a rule which prevents women from being sumo wrestlers and another which prohibits them from entering the wrestling ring altogether. These barriers exist because the Japanese believe women's presence in the ring will violate its purity. Sumo wrestling, being a religion-originated sport in which traditions are strictly observed, is unlikely to undergo drastic changes in the near future. It will probably be a long time before one can see a female sumo wrestler.