



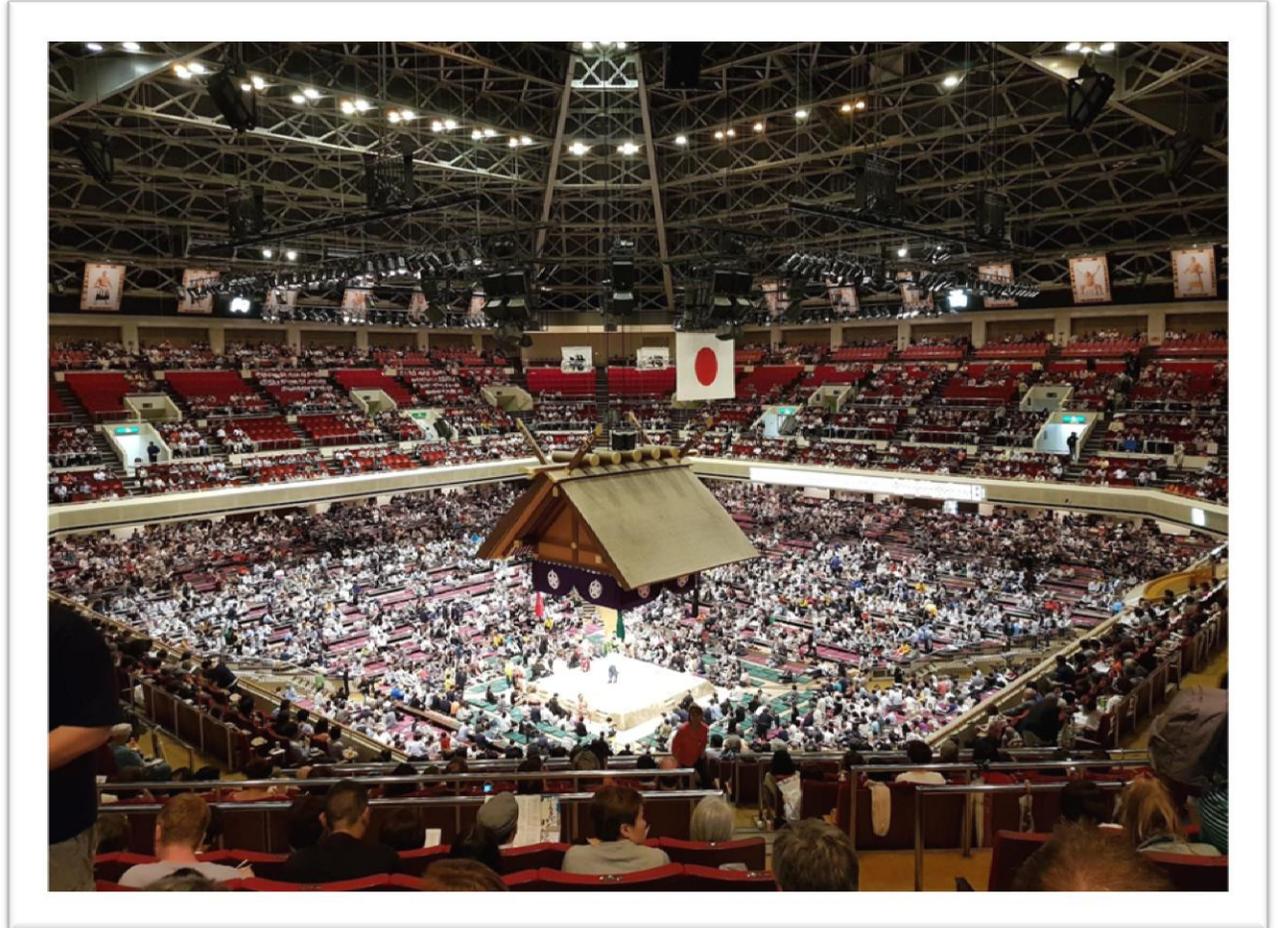
Asia New Zealand
Foundation

Te Whītau Tūhono |

Education resource

How to be a sumo wrestler

Year 7-10 PE unit



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History



- Sumo is Japan's oldest sport, dating back to the 5th century.
- Sumo started as a Shinto ritual to ask gods for a good harvest. Many of the rituals associated with the sport trace back to the Shinto religion.
- Early sumo had few rules and was a rough martial art involving elements of boxing and wrestling.
- Sumo was used to train samurai and settle disputes.
- In the 14th century sumo became a professional sport.
- In the 16th century sumo wrestlers started touring Japan.

Life of a sumo wrestler

- All sumo wrestlers live in stables where they train, eat and sleep. They cannot leave the stable without the stable master's (coach's) permission.
- Sumo is hierarchical, with younger and older wrestlers being treated differently. Young wrestlers prepare meals and clean the stable, and older wrestlers mentor the younger wrestlers.
- Training starts at 7am and runs until lunchtime. Training involves stretching, weights training, working on the movements, wrestling each other and Shinto rituals.

Life of a sumo wrestler (continued)

- Lunch is the first meal of the day. Wrestlers eat a dish called *chankonabe*, a large stew with protein such as chicken, eggs, fish and beef, tofu and vegetables. Rice is also eaten.
- The average sumo wrestler consumes 20,000 calories a day (10 times more than an average male).
- After lunch, sumo have a sleep and then train again in the afternoon.



Rituals

- Shubatsu is a purification ceremony. Salt is thrown into the ring to purify it before a match [Shubatsu video](#)
- Shiko (stomp) - Before a match, wrestlers stomp the ground to scare away evil spirits. [Shiko video](#)
- Wrestlers go back to their corner and receive the *chikara mizu*, a ladleful of the “strength water” with which they rinse their mouth, and use the *chikara gami*, a piece of paper to wipe their lips afterwards. [Pre-match rituals video](#)
- Once the bout is over, the two wrestlers return to their respective sides and bow again. The loser leaves the ring while the winner squats and makes a swiping motion with his right hand. If there is prize money for the bout it is handed over by the *gyōji* (referee) on his *gunbai* (war fan).
- Before picking it up the winner performs a three-stroke motion in the air called *tegatana*. [Tegatana video](#)

Rules

- The basic aim of Sumo wrestling is to get your opponent out of the ring, or make them touch any part of the ring with any part of their body apart from their feet.
- When both wrestlers put their hands on the ground the match begins.
- A wrestler is disqualified if they pull hair, eye gouge, hit with a closed fist, choke or grab the crotch area of their opponent.
- The match can also end if one of the wrestlers loses his *mawashi*, or loincloth. The wrestler who loses their loincloth is disqualified.

Techniques and strategies

- Shiko: The Shiko movement is part of a Shinto ritual used to scare away evil spirits. Sumo wrestlers do slow repetitions of hundreds of shiko in a row as a warm up. [Shiko video](#)
- Mata-wari: Full leg splits, with face and chest on the floor. Sumo wrestlers are extremely flexible and must be able to do the splits. [Mata-wari video](#)
- Suri-ashi: Sliding the feet, in sync with the arms, establishes the basic posture and movement style for Sumo. It's critical to stay low and keep connected with the ground. [Suri-ashi video](#)

Techniques and strategies (continued)

- Tachi-ai: The opening charge in sumo is explosive. Matches are often won by beating the opponent off the line. [Tachi-ai video](#)
- Koshi-wari: Compress the upper body, and lower your back, bending the knees. This develops flexibility and strength, training the wrestler to maintain a low stance. [Koshi-wari video](#)

Yokozuna (Grand champion)



- At the moment there is one *Yokozuna* (Grand champion) called Asashōryū Akinori from Mongolia.
- Once a wrestler reaches the rank of *Yokozuna*, he cannot lose the title. However, he is expected to retire as soon as his results start to decline.
- There have been less than 100 *Yokozuna* since the 1600s.
- Photo - From the sumo museum of some of the past *Yokozuna*

Tochinoshin

- Tochinoshin Tsuyoshi is from Georgia and is currently one of the top sumo wrestlers.
- Tochinoshin weighs 170kgs and is one of the tallest wrestlers ever at 1.92m.



Sumo facts

- Sumo wrestlers are not allowed to drive cars! This is a rule enforced by the Sumo Federation after one of their wrestlers had a car crash.
- The *mawashi* (the belt a wrestler wears) can be up to 9 metres long.
- Sumo wrestlers must wear traditional robes, grow their hair and wear their hair up at all times when in public.
- There are no weight classes in sumo.



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