

Unit 25: Sumo Wrestling

25A : Comprehension

Sumo wrestling is the national sport of Japan. It was originally a religious ritual performed to the gods to wish for a good harvest. Ritual is therefore an important part of the sport. Unlike many other sports, the winner shows no expression of joy upon winning a match. 1

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 heavyset people usually do not possess. 5



Wrestlers try to push each other out of the ring or down on the floor. Before actual physical contact, 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 can go up to two or three minutes. 10 15

The size of the wrestler is important. The heavier the wrestler, the lower his center of gravity, thus the harder to push or toss him out of the ring. In order to put on weight and build up body mass, sumo wrestlers eat a high-protein stew and a large amount of food, 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 doing chores besides working out. Wrestlers live in a lifestyle that is completely dedicated to the sport as they are considered role models. Sumo is a way of life as well as a sport. 20 25

Sumo wrestling is a hierarchical sport. Promotions depend on winning records. The more matches a wrestler wins, the more quickly 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 a winning record. 30

Sumo wrestling is one of the oldest martial arts in Japan, and it is still the major sport that attracts both men and women in Japan. In fact, it is becoming

more and more popular outside Japan; men from different countries are coming to Japan and being trained to be sumo wrestlers.

Nevertheless, as a sport, sumo is not without controversy. It has been criticized as discriminatory since participants are limited to men only. Not only are women excluded from being sumo wrestlers, they are also prohibited from entering the wrestling ring as it is regarded traditionally as a violation of the purity of the ring. Sumo wrestling, being a religion-originated sport in which traditions are strictly observed, is unlikely to have drastic changes in the near future. It probably will be a long time before one can see a female sumo wrestler.

Vocabulary

sumo wrestling (n) 相撲	glance (n) 匆匆一看 / 一瞥
shove (v) 推	agility (n) 敏捷
opponent (n) 對手	stew (n) 燉肉
athlete (n) 運動員	chore (n) 雜務
hierarchical (adj) 等級制的	martial arts (n) 武術
purity (n) 純正	controversy (n) 爭議
drastic (adj) 猛烈的	

Guess the meanings of the following words (Explanations see answers 1-4):

ritual (n)	toss (v)	dedicated (adj)	observe (v)
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Questions 5 – 8: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

5. How is sumo wrestling different from other sports?

6. What does a wrestler need to do to his opponent in order to win a match?

7. Why do wrestlers try to put on weight?

8. Why does the author think that sumo wrestling is unlikely to have drastic changes?

Questions 9 –13:

Decide whether the following statements are True, False or the information is Not Given. Put a tick in the appropriate box provided for each of the statements.

	True	False	Not Given
9. Not all the sumo wrestlers are fat; some are of medium-built.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Sumo wrestlers are respected in Japan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. All sumo wrestlers are male Japanese.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Sumo wrestlers live a well-disciplined life in sumo stables.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. It is impossible that a younger and newer sumo wrestler has a higher ranking than an experienced sumo wrestler.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Questions 14 – 17: Choose the best answer for each of the following questions.

14. Why do some people think that sumo wrestling is a discriminatory sport?
- A. Because only fat people can be sumo wrestlers.
 B. Because women are not allowed to be sumo wrestlers.
 C. Because it is religion-orientated.
 D. Because it is hierarchical.
15. Which of the following is not true of sumo wrestling?
- A. It is one of the oldest martial arts in Japan.
 B. The winner shows happiness upon winning a match because he can be promoted.
 C. It is the national sport of Japan.
 D. It is getting more and more popular outside Japan.
16. What must a good sumo wrestler have in order to win a match?
- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| 1. strength | 2. agility |
| 3. concentration | 4. big body mass |
- A. 1, 2, and 3
 B. 2, 3 and 4
 C. 1,2 and 4
 D. All of the above
17. Which of the following are true about sumo wrestlers?
- | |
|---|
| 1. They are well-trained athletes. |
| 2. They eat a high protein stew to build up their strength and body mass. |
| 3. They are devoted to their career as a sumo wrestler. |
| 4. They need to do chores. |
- A. 1 and 2
 B. 1, 3 and 4
 C. 1, 2, and 4
 D. All of the above

***Answers on page A24.*

25B : Grammar & Usage

(1) Double Negatives

When we use two words with negative meanings in a sentence, it is called double negatives.

➤ **Double Negatives = Positive**

Double negatives have the same meaning as affirmative. Usually, such an expression conveys a weaker affirmative than would be conveyed by the corresponding positive adverb or adjective.

Example from the passage:

As a sport, sumo is **not without** controversy.

‘not’ and ‘without’ both have negative meanings; using them together conveys an affirmative meaning. However, the meaning is weaker than saying ‘sumo is a controversial sport’.

More examples:

- ◆ It is **not uncommon** to see double negatives in English.
- ◆ She is **not an infrequent** customer.
- ◆ I haven’t heard of this book, but the author is **not unknown** to me.

Although many grammar books advise students to avoid using double negatives, it is acceptable to use two negative words to create a positive meaning when we can do so in a correct way.

➤ **Double Negatives = Negative**

Sometimes, the use of double negatives still conveys negative meanings. This is mostly used when speaking in order to give emphasis to the negative meaning. You may have come across such usage in lyrics or in movie dialogues. E.g. The Rolling Stones: ‘I **can’t** get **no** satisfaction.’ (=I can’t get any satisfaction.)

Pink Floyd: ‘We **don’t** need **no** education.’ (=We don’t need any education.)

Keep in mind that *using double negatives to convey negative meanings is not considered proper or standard in English. Students should avoid using double negatives to convey negative meanings in writing.*

(2) once

‘once’ (adverb/conjunction) can be a confusing word at times. It has several meanings:

- **at some time in the past, but no longer**
e.g. She once was a beauty. (→ She is no longer beautiful.)
- **one time**
e.g. He plays golf once a week. (regularly, one time every week)
I will do it once only. (only one time)
- **as soon as something happens**
e.g. Once the sun goes down, the temperature drops. (as soon as)

Example from the passage:

Once a wrestler moves up to the top rank, he is not supposed to lose at all.

In this sentence, ‘once’ means ‘as soon as’.

‘Once’ also has other meanings when it is used with other words in a **phrase**:

at **once** = immediately

all at **once** = (something happens) suddenly

once and for all = completely or finally

once in a while = (something happens) sometimes, but not very often

once upon a time = a long time ago

for **once** = only this time

25C : Sentence Patterns

Contrary to...

We use 'contrary to' to introduce a belief or opinion that is true but is mistaken or misunderstood.

Example from the passage:

Contrary to its appearance, sumo wrestling is a sport that requires not only strength, but also speed and agility.

'Contrary to' is used here to correct the wrong impression:

The appearance of sumo wrestling may give an impression that it is done in a slow or clumsy way because the wrestlers are very heavy, but this is not true.

The main clause expresses the fact despite the misunderstanding.

More examples:

- ◆ **Contrary to** some people's belief, pencil is not made of lead; it is made of graphite.
- ◆ **Contrary to** the complicated look of this machine, it is rather simple to use.
- ◆ **Contrary to** your impression, Stephen is actually very shy.

25D : Revision Exercise 1 – Grammar & Usage

Complete each of the following sentences by choosing the best option for the blank. Write your choice in the space provided.

1. You are not supposed _____ anything in this exhibition room.
A. to touch B. touching C. touch D. for touching
2. The _____ a child is, the more sleep he needs.
A. young B. youth C. younger D. more young
3. The leaders from different countries will discuss how to _____ peace in the world.
A. preserve B. reserve C. protect D. maintain
4. I go to the beach _____ in a while.
A. some times B. a little C. once D. sometimes
5. _____ first glance, golf seems like a boring sport.
A. In B. At C. With D. By
6. _____ to what was reported on television, the murderer didn't escape from the prison.
A. Different B. Contrary C. Opposed D. Against
7. Though unexpected, I was _____ joy to see my ex-girlfriend at the party. She was still lovely and we had a pleasant conversation.
A. not B. without C. not without D. without no
8. This building was _____ a parking garage, but it is now used as an indoor playground.
A. original B. originally C. origin D. originated
9. Despite the large _____ of food intake, my brother is not fat at all because he exercises a lot.
A. number B. meal C. sum D. amount
10. _____ improve her English, she reads an English novel at least an hour a day.
A. In order to B. In order that
C. For D. Want to

***Answers on page B6.*

25E : Revision Exercise 2 – Vocabulary

Choose an appropriate word from the vocabulary section to complete each of the following sentences. Use the correct form of the word.

1. Kevin scored higher than all his _____ and won the spelling contest.
2. Whoever _____ these rings the farthest will win the game.
3. He always helps his wife with all kinds of household _____.
4. The attacker grabbed Tim and _____ him into the corner.
5. This organization is extremely _____; everyone is ranked and juniors have to listen to seniors.
6. Mother Teresa _____ herself to charity, especially helping homeless children.
7. I do not have the _____ to juggle three balls at the same time.
8. Many people suffer from the _____ decline of the housing market.

***Answers on page B7.*