Name: _____ Date: _____

Forty-Five Seconds in the Bowl

Reading level 8 (4th grade) · 866 words

A signal is given. A skater rolls over the edge of a deep, curved bowl. This is called dropping in. The clock starts when both feet are on the board. The skater has 45 seconds. That is one run in park skateboarding. Sky Brown skates for Great Britain. She has taken runs like this at two Olympic Games and won a medal at both.

A bowl is a ramp with curved walls that wrap all the way around, like a cereal bowl. Skaters have words for what they do. An air is riding with all four wheels off the ground. A grind is a trick where the trucks slide along an edge. Trucks are the parts that hold the wheels. The edge is called a lip.

A stopwatch cannot score a skateboard run, so people do it. In Tokyo, five judges watched each run. Each judge gave a score from 0 to 100. The judges do not add up one point for each trick. They think about the whole run at once. World Skate, the sport's world body, calls this the overall impression.

Then comes some math. The highest score and the lowest score are thrown out. The three in the middle are added up and divided by three. That gives the average. The average is the score for the run. Say the five marks were 90, 91, 92, 93 and 94. The run would score 92.

In the Olympic events, a skater gets three runs. Only the best one counts. A skater with a rough run still has two more chances. In Tokyo, the final worked the same way as the first round. Each skater had three runs of 45 seconds. Then the best scores were ranked from highest to lowest.

Skateboarding was new to the Olympics in 2021. In 2016, the International Olympic Committee voted to add five sports to the Tokyo Games. Skateboarding was one of them. It made its Olympic debut with four events. There was a park event and a street event. Each had a men's contest and a women's contest.

Sky Brown was 13 when she rode in the women's park event in Tokyo. It was held on 4 August 2021. The place was Ariake Urban Sports Park. Twenty skaters took part. They came from 13 countries. The best eight after the first round went on to the final. Sky was one of them.

In the final, Sky's first two runs each scored about 47 points. Her third run scored 56.47. That was her best, so it was the score that counted. Two skaters scored higher. Sky finished third and won the bronze medal. The gold medalist scored 60.09.

The Tokyo podium was very young. Olympedia, a site that keeps Olympic records, wrote that it had the youngest average age of any podium. Nobody younger than Sky and the silver

medalist had won an Olympic medal since 1936. No Olympic medalist from Great Britain had been younger than Sky.

Three years later, the Games went to Paris. The women's park event was on 6 August 2024. It was held at the Place de la Concorde. This time 22 skaters from 12 countries rode in the first round. The best eight went to the final. Sky came in as a medalist from Tokyo.

Eight skaters rode in the Paris final. Sky's third run scored 92.31. It was her best of three, and it won her a second bronze medal. The gold medalist scored 93.18. The silver medalist scored 92.63. Gold and bronze were less than one point apart.

Is a score like a ruler? Not quite. World Skate says the points are only a tool to rank the runs in a round. The judges set the scale for the skaters in that event. So the same run could score differently on another day. In Tokyo, the gold-medal score was 60.09. In Paris, it was 93.18.

In February 2023, Sky won the park world title at the World Championships in Sharjah, in the United Arab Emirates. She scored 90.83 on her third run. Reports called her Great Britain's first skateboarding world champion. In March 2026, she won the world title again, in Brazil. Her score was 88.16.

That 2026 final ended early. Heavy rain made the bowl unsafe, so officials stopped the contest. All eight finalists had made two runs. The standings at that point decided the medals. World Skate's rules say a final can count if everyone had an equal chance. At least one full run is needed. Sky was in first place.

World Skate's rules say all park athletes must wear a helmet in practice and in competition. That is true at any age. In October 2026, World Skate reported that Sky won silver at the World Skate Games in Paraguay. The event was a world championship for park skaters.

Skateboarding is on the program for the Los Angeles Games in 2028. Park and street will each have a men's event and a women's event. Each event will have 22 skaters. Skaters earn ranking points from 11 June 2026 to 11 June 2028. When the first skater drops in, the clock will start, as it did in Tokyo and Paris.

Questions

1. How many runs does an Olympic park skater get, and which one counts?

A. Just one run, then the judges decide
B. Three runs, and the best one counts
C. Three runs, with all scores added

2. Why does the book say a score is not like a ruler?

A. The scale is set for that event
B. Judges change the scores after each event
C. Scores never change from day to day

3. What happens to the highest and lowest of the five judges' scores?

A. They are doubled
B. They are kept for the next run
C. They are thrown out

4. In the sentence 'The three in the middle are added up and divided by three. That gives the average,' what does average mean?

A. The number you get by sharing the total
B. The very top score of the five
C. The lowest score of the five

5. Why could the 2026 world final in Brazil be counted after the rain?

A. The judges gave every skater full marks
B. All eight had made two runs, an equal chance
C. Rain only stopped the last skater

Words to know

bowl: curved ramp
lip: edge
grind: slide trick
average: fair share
debut: first appearance

Answer key: Forty-Five Seconds in the Bowl

1. B. Three runs, and the best one counts
2. A. The scale is set for that event
3. C. They are thrown out
4. A. The number you get by sharing the total
5. B. All eight had made two runs, an equal chance