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How Is Park Skateboarding Judged?

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How do you turn 45 seconds of skateboarding into a number? Judges have to do it every time a skater finishes a run. At the Paris Olympics on 6 August 2024, Sky Brown's best run in the women's park final earned 92.31. It was good for bronze, her second Olympic medal. The gold medalist scored 93.18, less than one point higher. Three skaters finished within one point of one another. This book follows that final to see how judges are asked to weigh a run, and how the numbers are made.

Park skateboarding is ridden in a bowl, a ramp with curved walls that wrap all the way around. The event has a simple shape. The Paris event was held at the Place de la Concorde. There, 22 skaters from 12 countries rode in a first round, and the best eight went on to the final. Each skater took three runs of 45 seconds. Only the best run counted, so a skater could make a mistake in one run and still win with another.

World Skate is the sport's world body. Its rules say five judges score each run, and a head judge runs the panel without scoring. Each of the five gives a mark from 0 to 100. The highest and lowest marks are dropped, and the other three are averaged to two decimal places. That average is the run's score. Suppose the marks were 90, 91, 92, 93 and 94. The 90 and the 94 would go, and the score would be 92. These are World Skate's rules. NBC reported the same method for the Tokyo Olympic final in 2021.

Sky's Paris final shows why three runs matter. She had come fourth in the first round, with 84.75. The best eight there went on to the final. In the final, her first run scored 80.57. Her second scored 91.60, enough for silver at that moment. Her third scored 92.31, her best, and that was the score that counted. In the end two skaters scored higher, and Sky took bronze. The silver medalist scored 92.63, and Olympedia noted that the gold medalist won despite a fall in her first run.

What do five judges look for? World Skate's judging guide was updated in May 2025, after Paris, and describes how it asks judges to work today. It lists seven criteria for a run. The first is difficulty: how hard a trick is to do, which also depends on the obstacle where it is done. The second is variety. A run with a wider range of tricks, at the same or higher difficulty, makes a stronger overall impression. The guide says it does not restrict styles, trick selection or obstacle use, so no one way of skating is required.

The third criterion is execution, which measures how well a trick is done from start to finish. The guide names style, speed, distance, energy and height across the beginning, middle and end of each trick. It calls the quality of the landing a decisive part, so a hard trick that is landed badly loses ground. Next comes use of the course. A run that moves through the course

smoothly, uses its key obstacles and keeps its speed and composure is rewarded, and so are creative, difficult lines.

Three more criteria are about the run as a whole. Consistency means landing tricks without falling off the board during the run, and not finishing the full time counts against it. Flow is how well a skater connects tricks in a continuous, fluent way. Repetition goes the other way. Repeating tricks, or using the same obstacle again and again, is penalized in proportion to how much it happens. A run needs to be varied and to hang together, and a skater who cannot finish the full time is marked down for consistency.

You might think more tricks always mean more points. The guide says more tricks are typically better, but a higher number does not necessarily mean a higher score. Difficulty, variety and execution are the decisive factors. Judges combine all the criteria into one point award, called the overall impression, and it matches where that run ranks in its round. A run is compared with the other runs in the round, not with a perfect run. The guide says scores do not consider an athlete's past results or potential.

Park skating has a vocabulary that announcers use. A drop in is rolling from a flat platform into a steep transition, as at the start of a run. A grind slides the trucks along an edge, called a lip. An air is riding with all four wheels off the ground. A kickflip is a rotation of the board around its lengthwise axis. A McTwist is a 540-degree turn, one and a half full turns, performed on a ramp. To bail is to fall. A grab is holding the deck with a hand in the air. These are names for what judges see.

The scale runs from 0 to 100, with two decimals. World Skate says the points are only a tool to create a round ranking, and that the scale is calibrated to the number of athletes, the gender category and the level of skating in that round. Scores are shown to two decimal places, such as 92.31. That matters when you compare numbers. In Tokyo the winning score was 60.09. In Paris it was 93.18. The guide says the same run may score differently in different events, so the two numbers cannot be compared like points on one ruler.

Skateboarding is older than its Olympic story. One history says the urethane wheel arrived in 1973 and the first skatepark opened in Florida in 1976. The Olympic story began on 3 August 2016, when the International Olympic Committee, meeting in Rio, voted to add skateboarding and four other sports to the Tokyo Games. The others were baseball and softball, karate, sport climbing and surfing. Skateboarding made its Olympic debut there with four events. Rio was the IOC's 129th Session. Paris in 2024 was the second Games for skateboarding.

Sky was 13 in Tokyo. The women's park event took place on 4 August 2021 at Ariake Urban Sports Park. Twenty skaters from 13 countries took part, and Sky was second in the first round, with 57.40. The final used the same three 45-second runs. Hers scored 47.53, 47.37 and 56.47, and the last was the one that counted. Gold and silver went to Japan. The run put her third, behind scores of 60.09 and 59.04. Olympedia, a reference site for the Games, wrote

that nobody younger than Sky and the silver medalist had won an Olympic medal since 1936.

Sky has won the world title twice, through November 2026. On 12 February 2023, at the World Championships in Sharjah, in the United Arab Emirates, she scored 90.83 on her third run and was reported as Great Britain's first skateboarding world champion. In March 2026, in São Paulo, Brazil, she won again with 88.16. That final did not finish. Heavy rain made the bowl unsafe, and officials halted it after all eight finalists had made two runs. The rules say one completed run is enough to count a final if everyone had an equal chance.

Later in 2026, two events showed how close the top of the sport is. In June, at the World Cup in Rome, Sky posted three runs over 90 points, which World Skate called unprecedented, and finished second. The winner's extra Golden Run then scored 96.33, the highest score in women's park on the World Skateboarding Tour, World Skate said. In October, at the World Skate Games in Paraguay, World Skate and olympics.com reported Sky second. A Golden Run is one extra run for the top five skaters.

World Skate's rules have one for safety gear. They say all park athletes, whatever their age, must wear a helmet in practice and in competition. The next Olympic chapter is scheduled: Los Angeles in 2028 will have park and street events, with 22 skaters in each, and ranking points can be earned from 11 June 2026 to 11 June 2028. The ranking is issued on the first day of each month. Whoever drops in first at the Games will start the clock again, with five judges watching.

Questions

1. How is a run's score worked out?

A. The middle three marks are averaged
B. All five marks are added together
C. The head judge alone picks one mark

2. Why can the Tokyo and Paris winning scores not be compared like numbers on one ruler?

A. The Tokyo judges used a different 0-10 scale
B. The Paris judges were looser by rule
C. Each event's scale is set to its skaters

3. In the sentence 'the scale is calibrated to the number of athletes,' what does calibrated mean?

A. Broken
B. Set to fit
C. Printed

4. What do the judges combine into one point award?

A. Only the single hardest trick of the run

B. The total number of tricks in the run

C. All the criteria together

5. What is needed to validate a final that rain stops early?

A. One completed run, if all had an equal chance

B. Three full runs for every finalist

C. A restart on the next day, no matter what

Words to know

execution: how well done

consistency: steady landing

calibrated: set to fit

repetition: doing again

debut: first appearance

Answer key: How Is Park Skateboarding Judged?

1. A. The middle three marks are averaged
2. C. Each event's scale is set to its skaters
3. B. Set to fit
4. C. All the criteria together
5. A. One completed run, if all had an equal chance