Name: _____ Date: _____

Ranking a Run: How Park Judging Works

Reading level 13 · 1541 words

A park run lasts less than a minute and ends in a number that can decide a medal. In the Olympic women's park final in Paris on 6 August 2024, the top three scores were 93.18 for the gold medalist, 92.63 for the silver medalist and 92.31 for Sky Brown, so gold and bronze were 0.87 of a point apart. Nobody can time a trick the way a stopwatch times a sprint, and nothing in the sport works like a goal count either. This book asks how a panel of judges turns what it sees into a ranking. Sky Brown's Olympic record is its thread. She has won two bronze medals, one in Tokyo and one in Paris.

World Skate's judging guide begins with an admission. It says the criteria do not exist to define good skateboarding, only to provide 'a framework for quantifying it.' The foundation is what it calls skateboarding common sense. That means personal experience of skating, an understanding of mechanics, and knowledge of the sport's history and its current state. The May 2025 edition then lists seven criteria for a run. They are difficulty, variety, quality of execution and landing, use of the course and obstacles, consistency, flow and repetition. The guide does not restrict styles, trick selection or obstacle use. ESPN's explainer for Paris printed a shorter list of five criteria that combined some of these.

The seven are not scored separately. Judges weigh them together into an overall impression, which becomes 'a point award corresponding to the ranking position' of the run within its round. Difficulty, the guide says, is the most distinctive criterion, and it counts the obstacle on which a trick is done. Execution covers style, speed, distance, energy and height across the start, middle and end of a trick. The landing is a decisive part. More tricks are typically better, but a higher number does not necessarily mean a higher evaluation. In principle, a shorter run of harder, cleaner tricks can outrank a longer, weaker one.

The guide is blunt about what the numbers are. They are 'only a tool to create an event round ranking.' It adds, 'There are no firm and absolute evaluations for any performances.' The scale is calibrated to the number of athletes, their gender category and the level of skating in the round. Each run is ranked against that round's field, with no credit for past results or potential. The guide gives estimated ranges as benchmarks. A score from 50.01 to 70 means a standard level of the criteria was met, 80.01 to 90 means expert, and 90.01 to 100 means master. Those ranges come from a 2025 document that came after both Olympic finals, so the gap between 60.09 and 93.18 is not a jump in skill that the bands explain.

The arithmetic is simple. Under World Skate's park rules, five judges each score a run from 0.00 to 100, and a head judge does not score. The highest and lowest marks are dropped, and the other three are added and averaged to two decimal places. The result is reported to

two decimals, as with Sky Brown's 92.31 in Paris, and the skater's best run is the one that counts. With the marks 90.0, 91.0, 92.0, 93.0 and 99.0, the 90.0 and the 99.0 go and the run scores 92.00. The marks are an example. Statisticians call the method a trimmed mean. Its effect is that one outlying mark cannot move the result very far. NBC reported five judges and the same method for the Tokyo Olympic final in 2021.

The rule book allows more variety than the Olympics used. Park runs may number two to four per skater, lasting 30 to 50 seconds, and a skater's highest-scoring run counts. A park competition typically has a qualifier, a semifinal and a final. Tokyo and Paris used three runs of 45 seconds in a prelim and a final, with the best run deciding. That helps a skater recover: Olympedia says the Paris gold medalist won 'despite a fall in her initial run.' A tie is broken first by the second-highest run, and then by a vote of the judges. In both Tokyo and Paris, the best eight skaters from the first round reached the final.

Newer formats add tension. World Skate's rules allow a Golden Run: after the first runs, only the top five skaters take one extra run, in reverse order, so the leader goes last. They also allow a First Wall Rebate, which lets a skater who bails on the first trick restart within 30 seconds. Both options must be announced in the event bulletin before the event starts. Tokyo and Paris had no extra run. At World Cup Rome in June 2026, Sky Brown set the pace with three runs over 90, and the winner's Golden Run scored 96.33, which World Skate called the highest-ever in women's park on its tour.

Clock rules are exact. The timekeeper starts the clock when the skater has both feet on the board. A skater has five seconds to begin after the signal, and a trick counts only if it clearly began before the horn ends the run. Weather is a listed contingency: the rule book names a field of play that 'frequently gets wet due to rain, regardless of the amount' as a reason to change plans. If a final cannot be finished, one completed run for everyone can validate the results, as long as all had an equal chance. That is how the world final in São Paulo, Brazil, ended in March 2026. Rain stopped it after all eight finalists had made two runs, and Sky Brown led with 88.16.

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 IOC's 129th Session in Rio voted to add five sports to Tokyo 2020, including skateboarding, which made its debut with four events. Tokyo's women's park had 20 skaters on 4 August 2021 at Ariake Urban Sports Park. Paris, the second Games, had 22 skaters on 6 August 2024 at the Place de la Concorde. Los Angeles is scheduled to host park and street again, with 22 skaters per event. The Tokyo Games carry the name 2020, but their skateboarding events were held in 2021, so the sport's first Olympic medals were awarded that summer.

Tokyo's women's park podium had the youngest average age of any Olympic medal podium,

Olympedia wrote, and nobody younger had won an Olympic medal since 1936. Sky Brown was 13. World Skate has since set a minimum age for its events, counted by birth year: 11 in 2025, 12 in 2026, 13 in 2027 and 14 from 2028. For the Los Angeles Games, athletes must have been born on or before 31 December 2014. The minimum age counts the calendar year of birth, not the exact birth date. The sport that began as a street pastime now has an eligibility table, a ranking calendar and a rule book that fixes the helmet. All park athletes, of any age, must wear one in practice and competition.

Sky's two Olympic finals look different in numbers and alike in ranking. In Tokyo she was second in the first round with 57.40, then scored 47.53, 47.37 and 56.47 in the final. In Paris she was fourth in the first round with 84.75, then scored 80.57, 91.60 and 92.31. Both times her best run came last, and both times it earned third place. Her Tokyo first-round mark of 57.40 was higher than her final mark of 56.47, yet it only ranked her second in a different round. The gold-medal scores were 60.09 and 93.18. By the guide's own logic, a number only means something inside its round, so the position matters more than the score.

Sky's world titles bracket the Paris Games. In Sharjah on 12 February 2023, she led with 89.63 after her second run, then scored 90.83 on her third and was reported as Great Britain's first skateboarding world champion. The Tokyo gold medalist was among those behind her. In São Paulo in March 2026, her 88.16 held first place when rain ended the final. Park and street are the two Olympic skateboarding disciplines, and both of these titles were in park. Her words afterward were short: 'This means so much.' At the World Skate Games in Asunción, Paraguay, in October 2026, the final used three runs and a Golden Run, and World Skate and olympics.com reported Sky second.

Qualifying for Los Angeles runs on a ranking. Points can be earned from 11 June 2026 to 11 June 2028, in two phases that meet on 31 March 2028. Each event has 22 places: 20 by the World Skateboarding Ranking, one for the host country and one universality place. At most three skaters per country per event can qualify through the ranking until 20 are filled, and the ranking is issued on the first day of each month. Places will go to skaters by name from the ranking of 11 June 2028. Every point in that ranking began as a panel's marks: five judges, three kept marks and one best run.

Questions

1. Why does the book say the Tokyo winning score (60.09) and the Paris winning score (93.18) are safest to compare only within one round?

A. Judges in Paris were more careful, so scores rose
B. The guide says scores are calibrated to each round's field
C. Tokyo used a different number of judges

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

A. Counted twice
B. Chosen at random
C. Set to fit

3. What does a Golden Run give?

A. Every skater a second attempt at any run they wish
B. One extra run for the top five
C. A free restart after a fall in the final

4. How is a tie in a runs format broken first?

A. By the second-highest run
B. By the youngest skater
C. By the first run

5. What does the São Paulo 2026 ending show about World Skate's rules?

A. Medals must be shared among finalists when rain falls
B. A final can count after rain if all had an equal chance
C. Rain always cancels the result of a final

6. What does 'overall impression' mean in the guide?

A. The skater's past results taken together
B. The judges' mark for the very first trick
C. All criteria combined, matched to the run's rank

Words to know

calibrated: set to fit
contingency: backup plan
rebate: second chance
execution: how well done
outlying: far from others

Answer key: Ranking a Run: How Park Judging Works

1. B. The guide says scores are calibrated to each round's field
2. C. Set to fit
3. B. One extra run for the top five
4. A. By the second-highest run
5. B. A final can count after rain if all had an equal chance
6. C. All criteria combined, matched to the run's rank