A SKATE LABS FIELD GUIDE

THE GAME OF SKATE PLAYBOOK

How to pick tricks, set the pace and actually win a game, in the parking lot or by video

A SKATE LABS FIELD GUIDE

THE GAME

READ IT ON YOUR PHONE



TAPE 04 / GAME DAY

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BEFORE WE START

SKATE is the oldest game in skateboarding, and it's still the best. One person sets a trick. If they land it, the other person has to match it. Miss the match and you take a letter. Spell S.K.A.T.E. and you're out.

That's all the rules you need to play. But there's a lot more going on in a good game: picking tricks you can land under pressure, knowing when to go for a banger and when to play it safe, and not tilting when you're on S.K.A.T.

This book is about that stuff. It's the game itself, not how to learn tricks (that's *Your First Tricks*) or how to film them (that's *Film and Edit With Your Phone*).

What's inside:

- [ ] The rules, and the house rules people argue about
- [ ] Building your trick list
- [ ] Setting: when to play safe and when to go big
- [ ] Matching: how to handle pressure
- [ ] Stance as a weapon
- [ ] Playing someone better (or worse) than you
- [ ] Etiquette and calls
- [ ] Playing by video with Global SKATE
- [ ] Practice games you can run alone

THE RULES, AND THE HOUSE RULES

The basics

01 Decide who sets first. Rock paper scissors works.

02 The setter tries a trick. If they land it, the other player has to land the same trick.

03 If the matcher misses, they get a letter.

04 If the setter misses, no letters. The turn passes and the other player sets.

05 First to spell S.K.A.T.E. loses.

House rules people argue about

Agree on these before you start, or you'll argue about them halfway through.

- **Flat only, or anything goes?** Flat ground keeps it fair and quick. Using curbs, ledges or stairs makes it more creative but less even.
- **Last-letter redo.** Lots of crews give you two tries on your final letter. Decide up front.
- **Stance has to match.** If the setter does it switch, you do it switch. Usually yes.
- **Does it have to be clean?** Sketchy landings, toe drags, a hand down. Decide what counts.
- **No repeats.** Many people don't allow the same trick twice in a game.
- **Same direction.** If they spin frontside, you spin frontside.

There's no single "right" set. The right set is the one everyone agreed to before the first trick.

BUILD YOUR TRICK LIST

The best SKATE players aren't always the best skaters. They're the ones who know exactly which tricks they can land on demand.

Make three lists

Write down your tricks in three groups:

- **Locked.** You land these nine times out of ten, even tired, even nervous.
- **Usually.** You land these more often than not, but they can go wrong.
- **Sometimes.** You've landed them, but you can't count on them.

Be honest. A trick you landed once last summer is a "sometimes."

Your locked list is your foundation

Most games are won on locked tricks. If you set a locked trick and land it, you put pressure on your opponent. If they miss, you're ahead, and you barely took any risk.

Grow the list on purpose

Each week, try to move one trick from "usually" to "locked," and one from "sometimes" to "usually." Practicing for SKATE is different from practicing for a line: you want reps on demand, not one perfect make.

SETTING: SAFE OR BIG

When you're the setter, you have a choice every time: something safe you'll land, or something hard they might miss.

Early game: play your locked tricks

At the start, nobody has letters. Use your locked list. Every make is a chance for them to slip. You're building pressure without risking anything.

Look for their weak spots

Watch what your opponent struggles with. Do they hate switch? Are their heelflips sketchy? Do they always land their shuvs a little sideways? Set tricks that hit those spots, as long as they're on your locked list too.

Go big when it's worth it

The setter doesn't get a letter for missing. So a hard trick only costs you the turn. That makes "sometimes" tricks a reasonable risk when:

- [ ] You're ahead and can afford to lose the turn
- [ ] Your opponent is clearly struggling with that kind of trick
- [ ] You've been landing it today

Don't burn your best trick early

If you have one trick your opponent probably can't match, save it. It's more powerful when they're on S.K.A.T. and a letter ends the game.

MATCHING UNDER PRESSURE

When you're the matcher, the pressure's on you. Here's how to handle it.

Slow down

Take a breath before you try. Roll around a bit. Rushing a match is one of the easiest ways to miss it.

Watch their attempt closely

Notice how they set it up: where their feet were, how fast they were rolling, which direction they spun. If it's a trick you don't do often, copying their setup can help.

Pick your speed on purpose

A lot of flatground misses come from rolling too fast or too slow. Use the speed you land the trick at, not the speed they used, unless the rules say otherwise.

Commit

Most missed matches are half-committed tries. If you're going to try it, commit fully. A full-commit miss teaches you something. A bail halfway teaches you nothing and still costs a letter.

Use your last-letter redo wisely

If your house rules give you a redo on the final letter, don't waste the first try being scared. Treat the first try like a real attempt.

STANCE AS A WEAPON

Stance is one of the biggest tools in SKATE. The four stances:

- **Regular:** your normal stance (whichever foot forward feels natural).
- **Switch:** your opposite stance, rolling with the other foot forward.
- **Fakie:** your normal stance, but rolling backward.
- **Nollie:** your normal stance, popping off the nose instead of the tail.

Why stance matters

A trick that's easy in regular can be really hard in switch or nollie. So the same trick name is basically four different tricks. If you're comfortable in a stance your opponent isn't, that's a huge edge.

Practice your weakest stance

Most people are worst at switch or nollie. Even getting a couple of simple tricks locked in your weak stance gives you more options to set and fewer tricks you're scared to match.

Fakie is the sleeper

A lot of people overlook fakie. Fakie ollies, fakie shuvs and fakie flips are often easier to learn than their switch versions, and they still put pressure on opponents who never practice them.

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PLAYING SOMEONE BETTER, OR WORSE, THAN YOU

Playing someone better

- **Stay on your locked tricks.** You're not going to out-trick them, so don't try. Make them beat you on consistency.
- **Pick your one weird trick.** Everyone has a trick they can do that others can't. A weird no-comply variation, a specific fakie trick. Save it for when it matters.
- **Don't tilt.** Losing a letter to a great skater isn't a disaster. Stay calm and keep landing your stuff.

Playing someone newer

- **Set things they can learn from.** A good game should be fun for both people. Setting your hardest trick every time isn't a game, it's a demo.
- **Mix in simple tricks.** Let them land some matches. Confidence makes people want to keep playing.
- **Offer a tip if they ask.** SKATE is one of the best ways to learn from each other.

Handicaps

If skill levels are really far apart, try a handicap. The stronger skater only gets "SK8" or the weaker one gets extra letters. It keeps the game close and fun.

ETIQUETTE AND CALLS

Call your trick if your crew does

Some crews say the trick out loud before they try it. If you do, try exactly what you called.

Be honest about landings

If you didn't land it clean by the rules you agreed on, own it. A fair game is a fun game. Arguing every call kills it.

Don't stall

Take a moment before a hard match, sure. But don't spend ten minutes on one trick. Keep the game moving.

Respect the spot

Playing at a park? Don't take over the flat area if other people are trying to skate lines through it. Playing in a parking lot or a street spot? Keep an eye out for cars and people, and move if you're in the way.

Good game

Win or lose, say good game. Then run it back.

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PLAYING BY VIDEO WITH GLOBAL SKATE

Not everyone has a crew right around the corner. That's what Global SKATE is for: the same game, played by video, with a friend across town or across the world.

How it works

- You challenge a friend with a challenge link. Links are single-use and expire after 7 days.
- You set a trick by landing it on film first, with one official take filmed in the app. No clips from your gallery.
- Your friend gets 24 hours, 72 hours (the default) or 7 days to match it.
- Your opponent makes the call on your clip. If you disagree, a person reviews it. Software never hands out letters.
- You get one redo on your final letter.
- When it's over, hit **Skate again** to run it back.

What changes when you play by video

- **One take means no warm-up attempts on camera.** Warm up first, then film when you're ready.
- **You have time.** Unlike a parking lot game, you don't have to match right now. Use that. Wait until you're warmed up and feeling it.
- **Flat-ground list.** Games use 25 flat-ground tricks, in Regular, Switch, Fakie or Nollie. That makes your stance work from chapter 5 even more important.

- [ ] **Frame it well.** Your opponent has to see the landing to make the call. Get the board and your feet in frame.

Global SKATE is free and in testing on iPhone and Android, for skaters 18 and over.

PRACTICE GAMES YOU CAN RUN ALONE

No one around? You can still practice for SKATE.

Ten in a row

Pick one trick from your "usually" list. Try to land it ten times in a row. Miss and start over. It's brutal, and it's the fastest way to make something locked.

Stance ladder

Pick a simple trick. Land it regular, then fakie, then switch, then nollie. Then pick another trick. Find out which stances are your gaps.

SKATE against yourself

Write down tricks on scraps of paper, mix them up and draw one. You have to land it. Miss and you get a letter. It's a good way to practice tricks you'd never pick on your own.

Pressure reps

At the end of a session when you're tired, try your locked tricks. If they're still locked when you're cooked, they're really locked.

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CHEAT SHEET

- [ ] **Agree on house rules first:** flat only, last-letter redo, stance must match, what counts as clean.
- [ ] **Know your lists:** locked, usually, sometimes.
- [ ] **Early game:** set locked tricks.
- [ ] **Late game:** save your best trick for when a letter ends it.
- [ ] **Matching:** slow down, watch their setup, pick your speed, commit.
- [ ] **Stance:** practice your weakest one. Don't sleep on fakie.
- [ ] **Good etiquette:** honest calls, keep it moving, respect the spot, say good game.
- [ ] **By video:** warm up first, frame the landing, use your time.

RUN IT BACK

Challenge the friend you miss skating with most. Set something you can actually land, and see if they can match it.

Join the testers at **skatelabs.app/testers**. Global SKATE is a free Game of SKATE played by video, in testing on iPhone and Android, for skaters 18+.