

# The Schulte method of mapping out a freestyle.

by Dave Schulte

Freestyles, as we know them today, have been performed for judges and audiences since the mid 1990's. Yet if you ask all of the competitors how to set one up? Or how are they judged? You would get many different answers. The reason you would get so many different responses is that there is no "set" way to do it. In this article you will learn my way of organizing and laying out a freestyle for a competition. I will cover everything from selecting your music to performing it for the judges.

Assuming you already have a decent skill set, and many tricks in your arsenal, you should be able to implement my method almost immediately. The first thing you need to do is find your music. Do not just pick your favorite song, or pick one by a "cool" band. Select music that matches your style of play. If you are mostly a slow complex type player full of innovation and creativity, or if you are a speed demon hitting the basic elements quickly, your music should match the majority of your style. Ultimately, you would want to try and fit a fair amount of both types in your freestyle so you can get the speed points, and the difficulty points in the same performance. The hard part is finding the balance between the two to win the contest. Every judge is different, some want difficulty and creativity above all else, others are strictly technical trick counters, and still others want to see a performance. Your best bet of placing high, or winning a contest is to combine all of these items into a perfect routine. If you have the ability, you might want to try to put together your own song or compilation of songs. Edit it to the correct length, and get the parts of the songs that you want in your freestyle. Make sure it has some crescendo and decrescendo parts in the music, as well as a tempo switch if possible. Dramatic changes in the music that match dramatic changes in tricks will be fun, as well as getting you choreography points. Once you have the song selected and edited down to 3 minutes, burn it to two separate compact disks to bring with you to the

contest. It is a good idea to have a back up cd and carry it in a separate bag in case yours is lost or stolen.

Now it is time to map out the song. Basically you want to listen to it over and over, determining the natural breaks or changes in the music. It is best to have these breaks in about 10-20 second intervals, and they should be easily distinguishable with either a specific instrument change, or vocal element that you will be able to pick out quickly. (See example Freestyle Map) The advantage to breaking down the freestyle into small segments is so you will be prepared for the unexpected. When the knot, tangle, string miss, mind fade, or panic hits you will be able to get back on track when the next segment begins playing. It will keep you from rushing your tricks and looking panicked, and it also will help you remember to do all of the tricks you wanted to do in your performance. Now that the song is mapped out, it is time to start putting the tricks into the map. But before you start writing, start playing to it. Listen to the song over and over while you are throwing. Change up your environment and use different yo-yos while you play. This will help you to vary the type of tricks and space requirements you can use in the freestyle. Mix up your front style tricks and your side style tricks to provide more of a variety in your routine. Remember you will be on a large stage at the contest, so try to picture that, as well as an audience. (that is why you are freestyling after all.....the audience.) Use all of the space around you, think up, down, and all around to fill that visual space on the stage. You would be amazed to see how much better a freestyle that uses all of the visual space scores compared to one that only plays in one plane. Find specific parts of the song that really match a particular trick you want to use. Also consider the aspects of stage presence, use of the stage, looking at the audience, choreography, and moving to the music) After you have played enough, start filling in trick segments on the map. Many tricks/combos do not have names. That is not important, as long as you know what you mean when you write it out. Do not feel overwhelmed, or required to fill everything out now. Some of the elements can be filled out later as you work. Do not sacrifice tricks, or difficulty points for

stage presence, but try to put them all together if possible. There are many tricks you can do without looking during part of it, that is a great place to add some stage presence.

Once the freestyle is completely mapped out, its time to put in the hard work.....practice it! I recommend you do the freestyle as written on your map many times in the first week. You want to commit it to memory. Start by trying to work out the first minute without looking, once you have that down, add the next segment of the song and so on until you are done. (if it helps to have your map written on index cards, and placed on the stage in there locations, that is fine for the first week of practice) Do not be afraid to make slight changes as you are learning new tricks, or find better ways to add stage presence into the show, but make sure to keep the framework of the freestyle in place.

Finally contest day arrives. Do not be scared or nervous, your freestyle mapping, and practice will keep you on track. Stay focused, and remember why you are up there, to entertain the audience. It is called a freestyle performance for a reason, so don't just do the tricks, perform them on the stage. Be aware of the judges, after all they are part of the audience, so look at them when performing. If you know a specific judge is famous for liking a certain type of trick or element that you have in your freestyle, do that part aimed at them. A judge who enjoys a freestyle will obviously give it more points, so make the judges like the routine. Above all else, enjoy yourself. Yo-Yoing is fun, so show it!

If you follow my method of mapping out your freestyle, you are not guaranteed to win, or even place. But you will increase your odds of doing your best, and putting on the best show possible. Good Luck.