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A a comprehensive guide to set: tips (especially for setwithfriends) / for setwithfriends)

§ by Offset, Sep 24, 2021, 9:15 AM

SET: https://setwithfriends.com/

Rules: https://setwithfriends.com/help

Opening Remarks: Hey! These are just some tips I sent in a server while perhaps getting carried away since I just love the game so much. Some of these aren't originally from me, and some may be well-known already, and some I have already sent before, but here goes! I will try to give enough tips to cover all levels of play in a somewhat organized fashion from my experience of playing SET. Also on this blog a while ago, I remember the vote was strongly in favor for a post about a comprehensive guide about SET and how I play. I'm also more than aware by no means am I even close to a perfect player and there are some things I probably do that aren't optimal, but I hope even any of these can help. Most of these tips you might have even subconsciously figured out also, but I hope this covers everything I know of (except 2 secrets!).

First and foremost, you HAVE to practice A LOT. And regularly (daily if possible). Like in the thousands of games, tens of thousands of games, which could take several months, to get around to a top 10/leaderboard time. This overall practice really makes up most of SET, so you won't get good at the game overnight. You will need to put the work in. Your pattern recognition will develop from regular observation and motivation towards getting better. You will notice improvement quickly at first but stagnate pretty soon. Obviously you don't need to be that sweaty but the point is regular practice will show clear improvement over time!

Setting Up Your Board

Yes, the setup may not be the most important part of the game to most people, but I'd rather get this out of the way so that you can get used to playing this way, as I truly believe this is the most optimal way to set up the board to play for fast times. Feel free to skip to the next section if you are happy with your setup of the board and key use.

- *play using the keys.*

The default orientation has a grid where you would key as such:

1 2 3
q w e
a s d
z x c
r t y
f g h

This is something I find very unintuitive. I recommend switching your board's orientation at the least to be landscape.

+ **July 2024**
    i've been watching the twins again
+ **February 2023**
+ **September 2022**
+ **April 2022**
+ **March 2022**
+ **December 2021**
+ **November 2021**
+ **October 2021**
+ **September 2021**
+ **August 2021**
+ **July 2021**
+ **June 2021**
+ **May 2021**

💬 **Shouts**

this is great

by Awesomeness_in_a_bun, Dec 15, 2024, 11:15 PM

hi purplepenguin2 ok i will

by Offset, May 12, 2024, 3:23 PM

when new post 🙁

by purplepenguin2, May 10, 2024, 10:10 PM

i found the 2,000,000th blog/forum!!!

by Solocraftsolo, Apr 17, 2024, 5:22 PM

The 200000th blog

172 shouts

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keys. The ' key is the equivalent of transposing a matrix for how it shifts the cards on the board to rotate from portrait to landscape mode, an entire board orientation. The ; key rotates just the orientation of each card on the board from being horizontally wider to vertically taller. In this orientation (just after hitting the ' key), you would key as such:
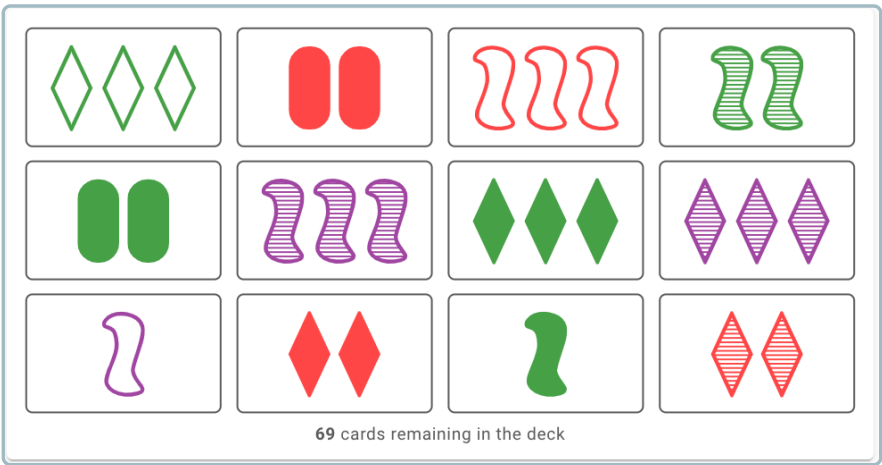
```
q w e r t y
a s d f g h
z x c v b n
```

Much more natural!

Now comes the debate of horizontally wider cards vs. vertically taller cards. You want to make your scanning as optimal as possible, so a square board would be ideal.
Horizontally wider cards may seem more appealing as you are probably used to it from the default setting, but this makes your board's ratio 20:9 whereas the landscape board with vertically taller cards has a 5:4 ratio, much closer to 1:1, our beloved square.

For the purpose of visual comparison:

69 cards remaining in the deck

^a 20:9 ratio, imagine for larger boards

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👤 **About Owner**

- **Posts:** 14
- **Joined:** Nov 11, 2020

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69 cards remaining in the deck
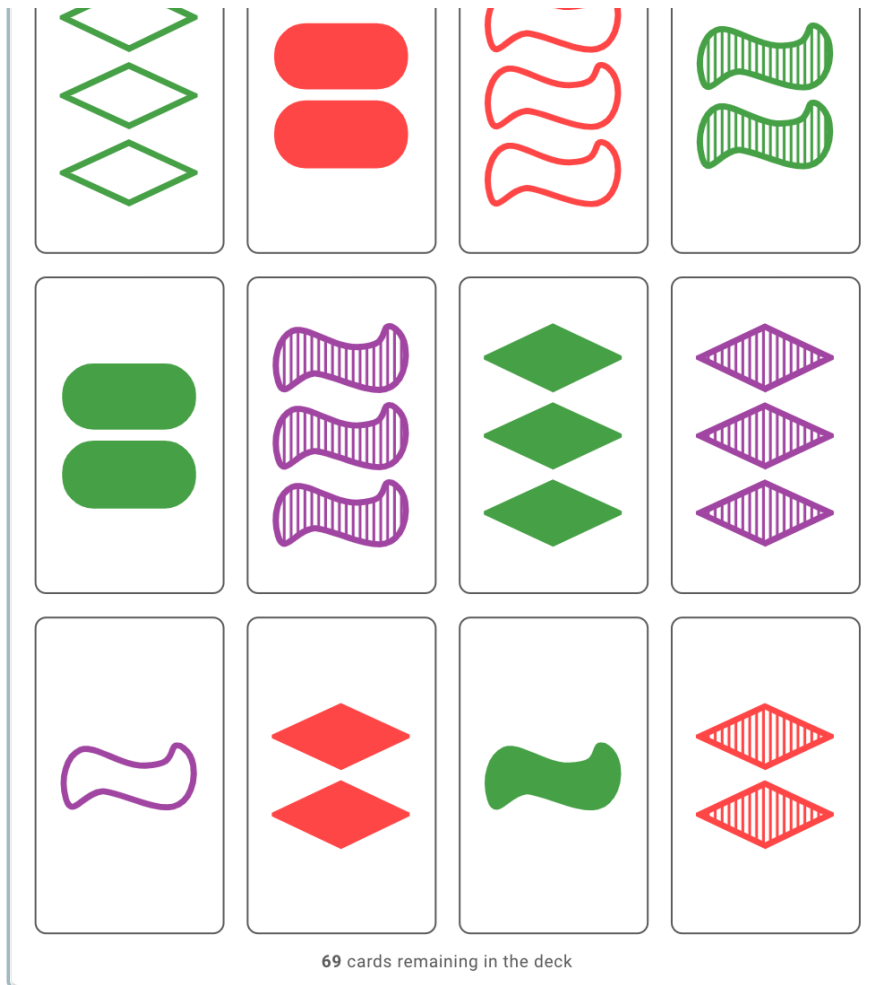
^a 5:4 ratio, much more pleasant even if the board expands

Now this setup is ideal in my opinion, but you could play in other orientations too. Any orientation works as long as you get comfortable with it, but I just feel this is optimal and simplest. And for your fastest times, you can get right around 40 - 45 seconds with enough practice, but I truly believe for your fastest times this orientation helps the most. Thank you MarkG and Gruskinator for convincing me that this is by far the most optimal setup.

Additionally, I now play with the board 67% zoomed out.

For reference, I played SET with my mouse until I was at 1:09, and less than a week after I had gotten used to the keys, I got a 0:46 time (after just hitting the ' key). And when I switched from a landscape orientation with horizontally wider cards to a landscape orientation with vertically taller cards, I went from being stuck at 31-34 to now getting quite a few sub30 times (after just hitting the ' and ; keys). While I am strongly advocating for this particular setup, the most important thing is to find what's comfortable for you. I just think getting comfortable with this setup is the most natural.

A Simplified Breakdown of SET

Now to be honest, SET is heavily reliant on practice and that made up the

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improve at this very quickly and noticeably at first and by lucky boards alone and without much strategy, solely from blasting thousands of games, I do believe anyone can get to around a 0:40 - 0:45 game. It was after this where I noticed how much using strategies helped for chasing faster times.

In SET the two main stages of a game to me are:

- when you're in a rhythm and absolutely rolling (involves a bit of luck and "set vision")
- when you're stuck on your current board and trying to find the set through careful searching, as set vision fails you.

Set vision alone can get you some fast and hot streaks but it is luck based and you won't be able to develop consistency for fast times, so something that MarkG had graciously advised to me was creating a type of protocol for boards you're stuck on to try to plan how you would iterate among a board given the properties of the cards that show up, which would greatly lower your gaps between boards you would typically be stuck on for longer. I still don't have this down anywhere close to perfect but I'm definitely improving this over time.

Tips to Use for Your Protocol

When you first start, it's going to be really tempting to look at each card in order to identify it and search card by card, or brute force/iterate. Your goal should be to get to the point where you can take the board in as a whole, rather than looking at individual cards, which is why I spent so much time on creating an ideal setup to start this off in order to take the entire board at once, and put less strain on your peripherals. It's like that quote from the magical movie *Now You See Me*: "The closer you look, the less you see!"

- look for cards with similar characteristics, so sets that share 2-3 characteristics are usually how my subconscious set vision starts as I notice sets with 2-3 characteristics in common much more often 0-1 characteristics in common, and I know my weakness is sets of this nature (especially all-different in each characteristic, or all twos) so when I am stuck or not able to rely on set vision, I have an idea of where to start. It's also important to train yourself to find different sorts of sets and know your strengths + weaknesses when it comes to your pattern recognition. Ideally, you'd wish for a 100% efficient protocol for you, and as of right now with the way I play, I bias towards searching for 2s and all-different types of sets -> which together constitute 30.83% of all sets and so I rely on the other 69.17% of sets with my own vision (thanks MarkG!).

- try to notice abnormalities on the board, namely traits that show up super in common or super rarely. And do your best to get accustomed to working around this to be almost equally comfortable to searching/scanning through each trait. My best trait scanning-wise is color, followed closely by shape and number, and finally shading is my weakness, but not by much. Practice looking through each quality, and often you can tell the kind of set it will be just by searching through 1 or 2 characteristics alone.

you've taken and what cards are left to come. Do not waste time trying to scan the same way over and over as it will lose you on time and make you more stressed/annoyed, resulting in slower gameplay. Be efficient and stay relaxed.

- put a heavy emphasis on the three new cards that come up on the board. Although the average number of sets per board is around 2.79 sets per board in theory (and this number obviously dwindles down over time as you go throughout the game), it's likely of course if you found a set in 3 cards, that sometimes you will be able to find a set among the 9 other cards as the board transition animation (or during the time it takes to deal for irl play!) goes on as finding a set in the 9 cards is theoretically easier than in 12 cards (so there must have been disjoint sets on the original board). But if you can't find a set contained in the 9 cards, then iterating from the three new cards makes sense, and you will eventually have trained yourself to recognize disjoints from the original board, so search starting from the new cards or recognizing the other set much faster.

- and of course, if the board expands beyond 12 cards, this may seem obvious, but at least one of the cards in the set must be in the 3 furthest appended cards, the last row/column of 3 depending on your setup (hopefully column! :P), so it's a good idea to treat your scan differently in this circumstance and emphasize those 3 cards in your scanning/trait searching.

Improving Over Time

- *quitting games:* I highly recommend quitting games somewhat often if you have a gap or get stuck (so find the set to know what eluded you first, THEN ONLY move on to the next game) as maintaining your momentum is CRUCIAL in getting fast times. But don't quit too often, find a middle ground that's also enjoyable for you as finishing too many games can force you to play through annoying gaps and quitting too much can frustrate you from not finishing enough games.

For me personally, I just try to make the game fun for me in any way (which is the most important part of course!) I can that also seems helpful to me:
- on my main account, I try to only get the fastest cream of the crop times I can get so I quit a lot
- on another account I finish every game to improve on my consistency when getting stuck
- play with similarly level players to build a competitive but healthy rivalry which motivated me to get better! This is super underrated and really pushes you to play :D and I'm so thankful to have met so many friends on SET who have pushed me to be most importantly a better person but also make me want to get better at SET as well!
- I spectate other people's games (typically slower ones) to find every set on the board
- I play the daily SET game every day which is a board of 12 cards with a total of 6 sets on it with the goal to find all the possible sets as fast as possible

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often!

How I Play

- so the first thing I do (once the transition animation between boards finishes) is I look at the corners which makes me take in the entire board and I have an idea of what's going on board related -- really any kind of scan helps, but this has had the most success for me from what I've noticed and gets me the most possible information as a first scan

- in rapid succession, I complete my other scans: usually a horizontal scan and a vertical scan of some sort, based on instinct of where i feel the set is, but in general the initial corner scan makes me circle the board already compared to just staring and fixating on the middle, which usually gives me enough of an idea about the board itself.

- up until the sub40 level, as soon as I found a set, I took it (and it works pretty well but now I'm trying to see if something else can work for me, which has shown some success for me in speedrun chasing sub30 times, *will expand upon later as it's a bit advanced*)

- the next thing I do is I look at the characteristics that come most naturally to me from the board itself, then I go in increasing order of traits comfort-wise (shading, number, shape, color) with the thought that if it was within a trait I was comfortable with in the first place, I would have likely seen it from set vision already. And then I place a heavy bias on my least comfortable types of sets: all different and the twos, or usually sets with 0 or 1 characteristics in common. Sometimes this may start from the biggest extremity (too many of or too little of) on the board, other times I just have a feel based on the cards I've taken already for what types of sets to look at.

- other times I'll have pairs planned out from the previous board, so as I take a set and it transitions off the board, I look at the cards left during the animation if I can spot the disjoint quickly, but if not, I've already paired up the remaining cards in my head from scanning to find a disjoint and have potential third cards in my mind and see if it shows up in the 3 new cards. If it does, then great! If not, then I start from the 3 new cards and I search along characteristics from those cards.

Advanced Tips for Fast Players

Currently I'm actively working on something that I think has really helped my consistency, which I would only recommend to MAYBE those in the sub50 range, but much more for those at sub40 and want to get closer to sub30, is to do these two things:

- always actively search for disjoints and prioritize them over anything else (which I'm trying to get a protocol for but still haven't fully developed yet, but I'm getting better at getting set vision particularly for disjoints!)
- try to keep track of characteristics roughly throughout an entire game -- I

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tracking more characteristics for the entire game -> this has helped me for several of my sub30s by giving myself a bias near the end of games even when I know I'm doing well and about to tense up, I'm able to calm myself down by just playing and keeping in mind what characteristics will be left over near the end of games.

And I think what's made me much more consistent now for faster games is not always going for the first set I see and sometimes taking disjoints that speed me up (and if I see any set from set vision immediately afterwards, I will automatically take it to keep rhythm and not wait to calculate disjoints on every board). It's gotten to the point where now I'm usually seeing disjoints (if they exist on a board) and naturally end up taking those honestly. But sometimes this does fail and I will end up with a relatively slower time but that's just where my consistency is right now, and I wouldn't necessarily do this until you get really fast at set!

Closing Remarks: And finally, consistency is a much more important and a better measure of a SET player's skill in my opinion than just a fastest time. The more you play, the more likely you're just going to hit the right board and find your lucky stride for an amazing time! I really hope you play the game, it's wonderful :D

~ Offset

17 sets found find a set

Comment

17 Comments

yay you posted !!! this is actually such a high-quality post i love it so much you're amazing in every way ily!!!!!!!!! 😳

thank u so much for ur unconditional support ily!! 😳

§ by aethyr, Sep 24, 2021, 11:24 AM   Report

this is an absolutely monstrous post but really really useful and well made tysm for this

lol np

§ by RedFlame2112, Sep 24, 2021, 3:25 PM   Report

(by monstrous i mean monstrously long lol)
@above nou aethicc 😳

§ by RedFlame2112, Sep 24, 2021, 3:26 PM   Report

HOLY HECK HOW HIS HOFFSET HSO HGOOD? bruh i needed this thanks for this post bruh i'm saving this

h   a comprehensive guide to set: tips (especially for setwithfriends)

i hope these helped!

§ by centslordm, Sep 24, 2021, 3:40 PM   Report

long post unlike ur pp

smh rude pphead :D

§ by iabzcq, Sep 24, 2021, 8:24 PM   Report

where is explanation of coprime sets 🙁

rip i suck at ultra sad

§ by sub_math, Sep 24, 2021, 10:29 PM   Report

😳 😳

mewmew

§ by mango5, Sep 25, 2021, 1:53 AM   Report

SOUND ON GANG

why

§ by tenebrine, Sep 26, 2021, 10:21 PM   Report

o set looks interesting
unfortunately i cant play set coz exams :painsive:

hopefully you have time to play!

§ by mathlearner2357, Sep 27, 2021, 8:00 AM   Report

good moring

go0d3 moaning staring

§ by gruskinator, Sep 28, 2021, 5:50 PM   Report

good stuff, appreciate the explanation for the scrubs like me

you are full of good stuff, appreciate you in my life

§ by Tom_Buchanan, Sep 30, 2021, 6:59 AM   Report

woah epic
i read this post and all the knowledge with it
i am instantly set genius!!!

sorry i got to this super late but thanks man! hope it helps

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tatul uh dis emayul: she wownts da tip

§ by gruskinator, Feb 19, 2022, 3:00 PM   Report

@above yeaaaah

§ by mango5, Feb 19, 2022, 3:04 PM   Report

i play horizontal and its kind of annoying when it expands but how do
people manage a whole sideways card

§ by pandabearcat, Feb 19, 2022, 3:33 PM   Report

@pbc yeah ikr

§ by foreverlulu1, Mar 8, 2022, 5:08 AM   Report

@pbc upvote

§ by pog, May 11, 2022, 10:25 PM   Report