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TRADITION • DISCIPLINE • AGILITE • TECHNIQUE
FRENCH BOXING

What is Savate?

Savate, also known as 'French boxing', is a typically French martial art and combat sport. The aim is to strike the opponent with the fists and feet, in accordance with specific rules. The sport is contested between two fighters in a ring. Each valid strike earns the fighter points. The winner is decided on points or by knockout.

Savate is the only combat sport in the world where kicks are delivered exclusively with the tip of the shod foot.

How do you practise Savate?

1 — Assaut

A technical points-based match, with no knockouts. Strikes are judged on their accuracy and technique. Ideal for beginners. Suitable for ages 7 and over, with a minimum of a red-glove grade.

2 — Combat

A competitive match in which knockouts are permitted. Strikes are delivered with full force. Open only to participants aged 18 or over who hold at least a yellow belt.

3 — Fighting stick

A variation using a wooden cane. The principle remains the same: to strike without being struck, with elegance and precision.



The Principle of Sport

In each round, the two fighters face off in the ring. The fighter who lands a precise blow on their opponent scores points. The match continues in this way until the end of the rounds or until a knockout. The winner is the fighter who scores the most points or who knocks out their opponent.

The Number of Rounds

Format	Duration & Number of rounds
Sparring (junior)	3 rounds of 1 minute 30 seconds
Sparring (senior)	4 rounds of 2 minutes
Competition	5 rounds of 2 minutes
Rest period between rounds	1 minute 30 seconds (each fighter in their corner)

The Stages of Sport

1. Draw lots

Before the fight begins, a coin is tossed to decide which corner each fighter will occupy. The coach helps the fighter choose a strategy based on their opponent. If you're a beginner, this is a great opportunity to learn how to manage your stress!

His posture speaks volumes about his state of mind.

A quick tip: Keep your shoulders relaxed and your eyes fixed on your opponent. A guard

2. Custody

Each fighter adopts a guard before starting. It must protect the face and body whilst allowing for quick attacks. The guard is the foundation of everything in savate.

A quick tip: During the draw, take the opportunity to observe your opponent's demeanour.

Quick tip: Relax your shoulders and focus your gaze on your opponent. Defense

3. Permitted strikes

Each fighter takes turns or attacks simultaneously. The aim is to hit the opponent whilst dodging their blows.

- Kicks using the ball of the foot: roundhouse, front kick, back kick, low kick.
- Punches: straight, hook, uppercut.
- Prohibited strikes: knee strikes, elbow strikes, clinching, strikes to the back of the head.

A quick tip: Vary your attacks to catch your opponent off guard. A foot-fist combination is often formidable and difficult to predict.

Famous Savate Champions

Over the centuries, savate has produced an exceptional line of champions who have left their mark on the history of the sport.



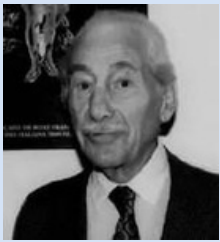
Louis Vignerot (1827–1871) — Legendary marksman

Described as 'the most formidable marksman ever known', in 1854 he defeated the champion of Dickson in a historic boxing match, demonstrating the technical superiority of savate. This feat sparked enthusiasm among the leading writers of the time.



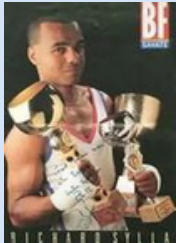
Joseph-Pierre & Charles Charlemont (1834–1914 / 1862–1944) — **Founders of the Modern French boxing**

Father and son, they founded the Académie de Boxe Française, codified all the rules and sporting techniques. Charles became an amateur world champion in 1900. Their school trained generations of fencers right up until the Second World War.



Pierre Baruzi (1886–1975) — **11-time French champion**

A pupil of Charles Charlemont, he was the overall champion at the French Championships 1937 and carried the torch for savate after the Second World War, becoming the spiritual father of the sport's revival in the 1960s.



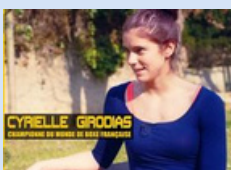
Richard Sylla — **A legend from the 1960s to the 1990s**

10-time French champion, 3-time European champion and 5-time world champion. In 137 In all his fights, he was defeated only four times. His exceptional record makes him one of the greatest boxers of all time.



Farid Khider — **Two-time World Champion**

Six-time French champion in French boxing, one-time European champion and two-time champion in the world. As a practitioner of other martial arts as well, he embodies the versatility and technical excellence of savate at its very highest level.



Cyrelle Girodias — **Women's World Champion**

Three-time world champion and four-time French champion. She is one of the great ambassadors for women's savate, a discipline in which women now account for over 40% of registered members.

Famous figures associated with Savate

Beyond its champions, savate has always attracted prominent figures from the worlds of the arts, literature, cinema and politics — a testament to its unique cultural influence.

Literary and artistic figures of the 19th century



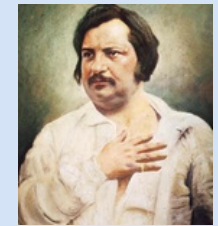
Alexandre Dumas (1802–1870) — Novelist — *The Three Musketeers, The Count of Monte-Cristo*

One of France's greatest writers was a regular at the savate gyms in Paris. He— Although he practised the sport himself, he was a fervent advocate of the discipline and wrote of it: 'Our boxing is exactly the same as English boxing. Except that it is the complete opposite.' His enthusiasm helped to establish savate within the culture of the Parisian aristocracy.



Théophile Gautier (1811–1872) — Romantic poet and writer — *Captain Fracasse*

A practitioner of savate and one of its most ardent intellectual advocates, it was he who, in his work **Le maître de chausson** (1840), coined the very term 'French boxing'. He extolled its virtues: "French boxing is a profound science that demands great composure, calculation, agility and strength. It is the finest expression of human vigour."



Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850) — Novelist — *The Human Comedy*

As the author of one of the most monumental literary works of the 19th century, Balzac was one of the circle of celebrities who frequented the Parisian savate halls. He incorporated references to the sport into his novels, helping to establish its practice within the social and cultural life of the time.



Ernest Hemingway (1899–1961) — American writer — Nobel Prize in Literature 1954

During his time in Paris in the 1920s — the period covered by his novel **A Moveable Feast** — Hemingway, a keen fan of combat sports, took up French boxing. The sport was in keeping with his penchant for physical discipline and pushing himself to the limit, values he upheld throughout his life and in his work.

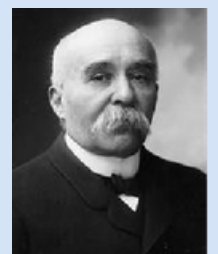
Cinéma & Spectacle



Jean Gabin (1904–1976) — Actor — *A legend of French cinema*

An iconic figure of French cinema, Jean Gabin exemplified the link between savate and French popular culture. In the film **Le Tatoué** (1968), alongside Louis de Funès, his character takes a course in French boxing — a scene that has become a cult classic, reflecting the place of savate in the collective imagination of the time.

Politique



Georges Clemenceau (1841–1929) — Chairman of the Board — *'The Tiger'*

One of the most powerful political figures of the Third French Republic. In 1907, when he established his legendary regional mobile brigades — the famous 'Tiger Brigades' — Clemenceau made savate the official training discipline for his elite law enforcement forces. This decision established French boxing as a state martial art, combining martial efficiency with French panache.

International Tournaments & Competitions

Savate has a global competitive circuit organised by the International Savate Federation (FIS) and the European Savate Confederation (CESAV). The Assaut and Combat championships alternate each year.

Compétition	Venue & Date
2025 World Combat Championships	
2025 European Assault Championships	Plovdiv, Bulgaria — 2–6 July 2025
2024 World Assault Championships	Weiz, Austria — 4–7 September 2025
World Assault Championships (Senior)	Podčetrtek, Slovenia — October 2024 (11 titles for France)
	Longwy, France — November 2024 (8 gold medals for France)

France is the world's leading nation in savate.

At the last World Assault Championships, the French team won 11 titles out of 16 medals

Where can I practise Savate?

Savate is organised through clubs affiliated to the French Savate Boxing Federation French Federation (FFSAVATE). It has over 56,000 registered members, 40% of whom are women and 43% under the age of 18, spread across 771 clubs in France.

In France

To find an affiliated club near you, consult the official directory on the federation's website: www.ffsavate.com/clubs/trouver-un-club

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