

Softboot Carving Cheatsheet – James’ 9 Elements Inspired

How to Use This Cheatsheet

Think of this as a roadmap for your carving journey, not an exam. The goal is steady, confident progress, not perfection on every drill.

Progress rule: “Progress step by step, but treat earlier drills as home base. When something feels off, drop back a level, fix it slow, then return to the higher drill.”

Move on when you can do a drill cleanly about 8–9 times out of 10 at a comfortable speed. If a new drill feels sketchy, it’s normal (and smart) to step back one drill, tidy things up, then move forward again.

The 9 Elements (with Hips/Pelvis Tilt)

Arms – Both hands in front, “tray” visible, no back hand flying behind you.

Shoulders – Always level; imagine carrying a drink on a tray and not spilling it.

Obliques – Side crunch, not waist hinge; they keep your upper body stacked over the edge.

Hips/Pelvis – Where your belt buckle and pelvis point, and how they tilt.

Knees – Together and into the turn, like a motorbike knee dragging.

Rotation – How much your torso is facing along the board vs. across the hill.

Compression – How tall at transition vs. how low at apex.

Fore-Aft – Where the pressure is along the board (front vs. mid vs. just in front of rear foot).

Transition – How you change edges: one smooth roll vs. pivot-then-edge.

Hips/Pelvis – Direction + Tilt Cues

Heelside – Belt buckle and tray facing along the board/toward the nose. Pelvis neutral to slight posterior tilt: “butt over highback, ribs over belt buckle, not hunched at the waist.”

Toeside – Belt buckle and tray facing in the same line as the front binding angle. Pelvis neutral to slight anterior tilt: “knees over toes, chest over knees, hips over the middle of the board.”

Heelside Carving Curriculum

Step	Drill / Focus	TL;DR – Quick Glance	9-Elements Focus (What to Feel)	Troubleshooting (Symptoms → Quick Fix)
1	Static Heelside Posture + Tray	Find your relaxed heelside carving stance: hands in front, shoulders level, butt over highback.	Arms – Both hands visible in front like a tray; no back hand behind you. Shoulders – Level; imagine not spilling a drink on the tray. Obliques – Light rear-side crunch to keep torso stacked, not folded at the waist. Hips/Pelvis – Over bindings, belt buckle pointing along the board; neutral to slight posterior tilt (butt over highback). Knees – Soft, slightly together, pointing along the board. Rotation – Torso facing generally along the board, not across the hill. Compression – Small; feel how bending knees increases heel pressure. Fore – Aft – About 50/50 or slight front bias. Transition – This is the shape you snap into whenever you’re solidly on heels.	Back hand drifts / tray tilts – Think “money hand forward” and keep both hands in your field of view. Butt sticks out / hunching – Bend at knees and hips, not waist → cue “butt over highback.” Feeling wobbly standing still – Widen stance slightly and look at the horizon, not your board.
2	Heelside Edge Traverse – Thin Track	Ride across the hill on heels only. Aim for a	Arms – Tray quiet; no arm swings to steer. Shoulders – Level while the board tilts.	Track wide or smeared – You’re twisting or flattening → focus on ankle/knee roll, not shoulders.

		thin, consistent trench with no wiggles.	<p>Obliques – Rear oblique keeps upper body leaning slightly away as board leans in.</p> <p>Hips/Pelvis – Over bindings, tipped slightly into the hill but still facing along the board.</p> <p>Knees – Together and into the hill like a motorbike knee.</p> <p>Rotation – Hips and shoulders roughly along the board direction.</p> <p>Compression – A little more bend as you feel speed pick up or snow get firmer.</p> <p>Fore – Aft – 55/45 front/back; pressure mainly under front half of heel edge.</p> <p>Transition – One smooth roll from flat to heel, then just hold it.</p>	<p>Chatter on steeps – “Compress more” gradually as speed builds; don’t stomp the edge.</p> <p>Heel washing out – Make sure you’re in a true posi-posi stance (e.g., +27–30 front / +12–15 back) and keep butt over highback, not behind it.</p>
3	Heelside J-Turns	From a gentle straight glide, roll to heels and let a clean J carry you across the hill – no pivot.	<p>Arms – Hands stay in front; tray doesn’t swing to start the turn.</p> <p>Shoulders – Level as you roll onto heels.</p> <p>Obliques – Rear oblique works more as the J deepens.</p> <p>Hips/Pelvis – Move slightly forward and into the hill; belt buckle along board.</p> <p>Knees – Bend more through the J; knees travel into the hill.</p> <p>Rotation – Add gentle rotation so torso faces more down/along the new direction by the end.</p> <p>Compression – Taller at start, lowest near the bottom of the J.</p> <p>Fore – Aft – Start ~60/40 front; finish closer to mid-board as the J closes.</p> <p>Transition – Stay on clean heel edge the whole way; no flat-and-pivot.</p>	<p>Skid at top of J – Commit to heels within the first board length and soften shoulder input.</p> <p>Board shoots away – Too much back-foot push; think “roll and sink,” not “kick and twist.”</p> <p>Chatter mid-J – Smooth how quickly you add rotation and compression – spread it over the whole J.</p>
4	Linked Heelside	Link mellow S-turns where your only job is	<p>Arms – Tray stable; both hands visible each way.</p> <p>Shoulders – Level through entire S-turn.</p>	Heelside chatter – Check three things at apex: shoulders level, butt over highback, knees together into the hill.

	S-Turns – Apex Focus	to get lowest and most forward at mid-turn, then hold it.	Obliques – Rear oblique engaged most at apex of each heelside. Hips/Pelvis – Hips facing along the board; butt over highback at apex. Knees – Deepest bend at mid-turn; knees together and into the hill. Rotation – Neutral at edge change, most along-the-board at apex. Compression – Tall at transition, lowest at apex, then holding through the patience zone. Fore – Aft – More front early, drifting slightly toward mid-board past apex. Transition – One smooth roll; no pivot mark at the top of each turn.	Feeling rushed – Slow the edge change and count a quiet “hold, hold” through mid-turn. Tracks show smear at top – Work back on J-turns and traverses until top of the turn is clean.
5	Heelside Up – Unweighted Laps (Compression–Decompression)	Practice standing tall at transitions and lowest at apex in a smooth rhythm – like breathing with the turns.	Arms – Tray matches your height: high at edge change, low at mid-turn. Shoulders – Stay level even as you move up and down. Obliques – Rear oblique crunch deepens as you sink toward apex. Hips/Pelvis – Glide forward as you sink, drift back slightly as you rise toward transition. Knees – Straighten (not locked) at transition, deepen into apex. Rotation – Neutral at edge change, layered in as you sink toward apex. Compression – Exaggerated but smooth: tall–low–tall timing. Fore – Aft – Forward as you sink, easing back as you rise. Transition – Edge change happens at your tallest point.	Timing feels off – Say “tall” at edge change and “low” at mid-turn out loud for a few laps. Board feels grabby switching edges – You’re compressing too early; wait to sink until after you’re on the new edge. Leg burn fast – You’re muscling; reduce the range a bit and let the board rebound help you up.
6		On your favorite	Arms – Calm, in front, no flail; tray rock solid. Shoulders – Level everywhere, especially at apex.	Wide or zig-zag track – Go back to traverses and J-turns to clean up the top of the turn.

	Heelside Pencil-Line Attempts	groomer, try full linked turns aiming for the thinnest possible heelside track you can make.	Obliques – Strong rear crunch at apex to keep torso stacked over edge. Hips/Pelvis – Hips forward along board; butt directly over highback at max load. Knees – Deep and together into the hill at apex. Rotation – Fully along-the-board at apex, neutral at edge change. Compression – Natural, not forced; lowest exactly where the track is tightest. Fore – Aft – Pressure moves smoothly from front toward mid-board past apex, never jumping suddenly to the tail. Transition – No pivots; just one smooth roll edge to edge.	Random chatter patches – Check stance (posi–posi), compress earlier and smoother into apex, and slow down one notch. Feeling terrified – Back off the steepness; pencil lines are built on mellow laps first.
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Toeside Carving Curriculum

Step	Drill / Focus	TL;DR – Quick Glance	9-Elements Focus (What to Feel)	Troubleshooting (Symptoms → Quick Fix)
1	Static Toeside Posture + Tray	Find your relaxed toeside carving stance: knees over toes, chest over knees, hands in front.	Arms – Tray in front; both hands visible. Shoulders – Level while you tip forward. Obliques – Front-side crunch to stay stacked over the edge, not folded at the waist. Hips/Pelvis – Over middle of board; belt buckle and tray facing in the same line as front binding angle; slight anterior tilt. Knees – Soft, pushed over toes. Rotation – Torso roughly matching front binding angle. Compression – Small but enough to feel toes digging in. Fore – Aft – Slight front bias. Transition – This is your home base whenever you’re solidly on toes.	Feeling like you’ll go over the bars – Widen stance and keep hips over middle of board, not over nose. Burning calves – Ease off the fold at the ankles; drop knees and hips instead. Tray tilts – Reset shoulders level and imagine the drink again.

2	Toeside Edge Traverse – Thin Track	Ride across the hill on toes only. Aim for a thin, steady trench with no chatter.	Arms – Tray quiet; no arm steering. Shoulders – Level as board tips. Obliques – Front-side crunch keeps torso over edge. Hips/Pelvis – Over middle of board, pelvis slightly rolled toward toe edge. Knees – Over toes, slightly together. Rotation – Torso aligned with front binding. Compression – More bend as speed increases for grip. Fore – Aft – 55/45 front/back; pressure in front half of toe edge. Transition – One smooth roll from flat to toes, then hold.	Wobbly or zig-zag track – Stop twisting at the waist; steer from ankles/knees. Chatter on steeps – Add smooth compression and keep knees over toes, not behind them. Edge washing – Check board width/boot overhang and reduce angulation if you’re booting out.
3	Toeside J-Turns	From a gentle straight glide, roll to toes and let a clean J carry you across – no pivot.	Arms – Hands in front; no windmilling. Shoulders – Level while tipping into the hill. Obliques – Front-side crunch increases as J deepens. Hips/Pelvis – Slightly forward; belt buckle and chest in line with front binding. Knees – Deepen bend through J; knees drive toward the hill. Rotation – Add gentle along-the-board rotation during the J. Compression – Tall at start, lowest near bottom of J. Fore – Aft – More front early, drifting toward mid-board late. Transition – Stay on toes from entry to finish; no flat-and-pivot.	Skid at top of J – Commit to toes earlier and reduce sudden shoulder twist. Board feels too aggressive – Back off slightly on how fast you add rotation/compression. Feeling like you’ll fall inside – Keep hips over middle of board, not way over the edge.
4	Linked Toeside	Link mellow S-turns and focus on getting	Arms – Tray stable. Shoulders – Level all the way.	Toe chatter – Add compression gradually as you approach apex; don’t jam all pressure at once.

	S-Turns – Apex Focus	lowest and most forward at toeside mid-turn, then holding it.	Obliques – Front-side crunch strongest at toeside apex. Hips/Pelvis – Over mid-board, rolling toward toe edge; belt buckle in front-binding line. Knees – Deepest bend at mid-turn; over toes. Rotation – Neutral at edge change, most along front-binding line at apex. Compression – Tall at transition, lowest at apex, then hold. Fore – Aft – More front early, easing back toward mid-board past apex. Transition – One smooth roll edge-to-edge; avoid pivot marks at top.	Feeling locked and stiff – Breathe out through mid-turn and let ankles flex; don't freeze. Tracks show smear at top – Revisit J-turns and traverses until your tops are clean.
5	Toeside Up – Unweighted Laps (Compression-Decompression)	Practice tall-at-transition, low-at-apex rhythm on toeside in linked turns.	Arms – Tray follows your height change but stays calm. Shoulders – Level as you rise and sink. Obliques – Front-side crunch deepens as you sink toward apex. Hips/Pelvis – Glide slightly forward as you sink, back toward center as you rise. Knees – Straighten (not locked) at transition, deepest at apex. Rotation – Neutral at edge change, increasing toward apex. Compression – Exaggerated but smooth; no sudden drops. Fore – Aft – Forward as you sink into apex, easing toward mid-board as you come out. Transition – Edge change at your tallest point.	Timing feels off – Count “tall” at edge change and “low” at apex for a few runs. Board feels jerky – You're compressing too soon; wait until you're solidly on the new edge. Tired quickly – Reduce how deep you're going; keep the rhythm but shrink the range.
6	Toeside Pencil-Line Attempts	On a friendly groomer, try full linked turns aiming for the cleanest,	Arms – Quiet, in front, matching your torso. Shoulders – Level, especially when you feel the most pressure. Obliques – Strong front crunch to keep chest over edge, not diving inside.	Track fat or smeared – Go back to traverses/J-turns to clean up tops and exits. Random toe-edge blowouts – Ease off how hard you drive knees at the very apex; focus on smooth pressure build instead.

		<p>thinnest toeside trenches you can make.</p> <p>Hips/Pelvis – Over mid-board, slightly toward toe edge; belt buckle along front-binding line.</p> <p>Knees – Deep and over toes at apex.</p> <p>Rotation – Fully along front-binding line at apex, neutral at transition.</p> <p>Compression – Natural, lowest right where track is tightest.</p> <p>Fore – Aft – Smooth pressure shift from front toward mid-board past apex.</p> <p>Transition – No flat pivot; pure roll from toe to heel and back.</p>	<p>Feeling nervous – Dial it back to easier terrain and slower speed; toe pencil lines build from comfort, not fear.</p>
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Phases of the Turn – Pencil-Line Carving Cheatsheet

This sheet is based on James’ “Nine Elements” softboot carving framework, but zooms in on the phases of the turn. Each row shows where you are in the turn, what you’re aiming for, the most common symptoms when something’s off, and simple drills to bring it back toward clean pencil-line carves.

Turn Phase	What You’re Aiming For	Common Symptoms / Mistakes	Go-To Fixes / Drills
Neutral / Edge Change (around 0°)	Tall-ish, light, rolling smoothly from one edge to the other in one motion (no pivot). Center of mass passes over the board; weight briefly ~50/50. Think: “up, light, new edge.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little pivot or skid before the edge bites. • Board feels grabby or hooky as you switch edges. • You feel rushed and “late” into the new turn. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mellow edge-change-only turns: roll ankles/knees, don’t twist shoulders. • Count “1 tall = edge change, 2 sinking = into the turn.” • Compression – decompression drill at slow speed until the roll feels automatic.
Early Initiation / Dive (0 – 20°)	Calm commitment to the new edge: light but already tipping the board, starting to move pressure toward the front. Center of mass begins moving downhill into the new turn.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hesitating on the old edge, then jerking onto the new one. • Speed spike before the board really starts to turn. • “Missing” the top of the turn and only carving halfway through. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think “as soon as I change edges, I’m already diving into the new turn.” • Small J-turns (heel and toe) focused on early commitment. • Keep shoulders level and tray in front so initiation comes from ankles/knees, not shoulders.
Build to Apex (20 – 90°)	Smoothly add rotation, compression, and fore – aft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the work happens late (no load until mid-turn). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Layer cues: “edge first, then rotate, then compress” instead of all at once.

	pressure until you reach max load at apex. Board is bending, edge gripping, but you're relaxed enough to adjust.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Or everything added at once, spiking pressure and causing chatter. • Feeling either totally passive or like you're fighting the board. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knee-touch drills to feel where apex should be and how low to get. • Track should tighten smoothly, not kink halfway through.
Apex / Max Load (around 90°)	Lowest, most rotated, most forward point. Edge pressure high but even; you feel locked in, not chattery. This is the "knee-drag" zone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board chatters or skips, especially on heelside. • Hanging on instead of balanced over the edge. • Standing up early to escape the pressure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check big three: shoulders level, butt over highback (or hips over toe edge), knees together into the hill. • If it chatters, slow the build-up into apex rather than backing off entirely. • Compression – decompression laps to sync "lowest point" with the real apex of your track.
Patience Zone (90 – 140°)	Hold the shape: same rotation, compression, and fore – aft while the board finishes the arc and scrubs speed. Mentally quiet; where pencil lines are made.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing up as soon as the board bites. • Pushing harder and harder, causing chatter/blowouts. • Feeling the need to "do something" instead of letting sidecut work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mantra: "Hold, don't rush." Count a soft "one-one-thousand, two-one-thousand." • Watch your shadow/track to see if you're rising early. • Big mellow C-turns on easy groomers are perfect practice.
Finish & Pre-Transition (160 – 180° + edge change)	Edge pressure drops and board is heading across the hill. Gently shift a bit toward the rear to help unweight and roll into the next turn in one smooth move.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard jab off back foot and pivot at the top of the next turn. • Staying too far forward and feeling "stuck" on the old edge. • Edge change feels late and violent instead of light and floaty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think "tiny kick then float": small rear-foot push to get light, not to spin the board. • Sync this with the "up" phase in compression – decompression laps. • Aim for earlier edge change instead of riding flat for a long time.