

Fit Facts™

FROM THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EXERCISE®

JUMPING ROPE: NOT JUST FOR KIDS ANYMORE

Remember the song, "Not last night but the night before, twenty-four robbers came knockin' on my door?"

Those were the days when playing hopscotch, jumping rope and hanging on the monkey bars were our primary occupations.

While hopscotch and swinging from the jungle gym may no longer be a part of our leisure time, jumping rope could be. Not only is it a great cardiovascular alternative to your usual aerobic workout, jumping rope can increase body awareness and develop better hand and foot coordination.

ROPING ESSENTIALS

One of the greatest things about jumping rope is how little it takes to get started. All you really need are some comfortable shoes and a good rope. The best shoes for jumping rope are either aerobic shoes or cross-trainers. Be sure your shoes have a reinforced toe and provide a lot of cushioning for the ball of the foot.

Jump ropes have come a long way since most of us were skipping around the playground. Today, they are made from a variety of materials and feature various grip styles. Some ropes are weighted or have heavy handles. These ropes are usually too cumbersome and are not recommended. Instead, choose a light-weight rope with foam grips so it won't slip away from you even if your palms get sweaty.

Here's how to choose the right length rope for you: Step one foot on the center of the rope and bring both handles up to the chest. The handles should reach about chest-high.

LEARNING THE BASICS

Here is a breakdown of the do's and don'ts of jumping rope:

- ✓ Lightly grip the handles near the end closest to the rope.
- ✓ Keep your shoulders relaxed and your elbows close to your body.
- ✓ Your knees should be bent slightly.



- ✓ Turn the rope from the wrist and aim to keep a smooth arc in the rope as it passes over your head.
- ✓ Never hunch over. Keep your back straight and head up.
- ✓ Jump low to keep the impact on your knees and ankles to a minimum.

JUMPING ROPE — '90'S STYLE

If it's been a while since you've swung a rope, you can rest easy — the essentials are still the same. And the essentials are all you really need to know to get a good workout. But if you want to create a fun and exciting workout, you'll have to add an extra element: a little pizzazz.

The easiest way to do this is to turn on some upbeat music to get you motivated. Fun, exciting music is the best way to keep your energy up during your workout.

Once you have mastered basic jumping, try getting a little creative. Jump backwards or vary your foot patterns. Try bringing your knees up or scissoring your legs. If you find yourself needing a break but you don't want to stop completely, twirl the rope from side to side.

If you're finding it difficult to come up with new moves, head to the video or bookstore. There are several new tapes and books on the market to help you add some variety to your workout. The point is to stick with it. You're sure to notice a marked improvement in your endurance level, which will help any other sports or activities you may do. And who knows? Jumping rope might even make you feel like a kid again.

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