

When you think of jumping rope what comes to mind? Adorable little girls with bouncing pony tails, yelling with delight as they skillfully jump over a fast revolving rope? Well, you would be correct if you watched the BAC Rope Runners – primarily made up of girls 5 to 12 years of age – practice their intricate routines that include jumps, skips, twirls, kicks, and flips!

However, if you think jumping rope is just for adorable little girls, think again. Professional boxers, such as Evander Holyfield and Oscar de la Hoya, were arguably two of the most well-conditioned athletes in the world who stayed fit by skipping rope in their training routines.

The American College of Sports Medicine and the US Olympic Committee Sports Medicine Council agree that rope skipping is an excellent form of exercise. “According to research, a 10-minute program of jumping rope can be as effective as 30 minutes of jogging for improving your cardiovascular health,” says Buddy Lee, a former U.S. Olympic wrestler and author of Jump Rope Training. In addition to cardiovascular conditioning and endurance, jumping rope improves agility, balance, bone and muscle strength, eye-hand-foot coordination, speed, timing, and vertical jumping ability.

For those of you who would like to lose weight; rope skipping burns up to 1000 calories an hour. Jumping rope at about 130 revolutions per minute is similar to running at 6 miles per hour or cycling 12 miles per hour. Just 10 minutes of rope skipping is equivalent to a one-mile run.

Jump ropes are inexpensive and portable, too. For those frequent flyer business people who wish to engage in exercise while away on business a good jump rope will cost just \$10 - \$15, and can be neatly rolled and packed in to any small space.

It's also a sport that can be enjoyed by individuals, groups, and families. My eight year old son, Michael, and I have had a renewed interest in jumping rope. For my part, the excitement of watching the BAC Rope Runners practice is captivating, coupled with the fact that in order to keep up with the rope skippers in Scott Crossen's boxing class, I'd have to practice.

For my son, Michael, he's always enjoyed jumping rope and at one point took part in the BAC Rope Runners. Feeling a little overwhelmed with all the cute girls in class he decided to try karate instead. Recently, his renewed interest in rope skipping is due to a combination of watching me jump rope more frequently and observing the men and women in the boxing class who skip using a series of simple and complicated rope and foot routines.

When possible, Michael joins the boxing class during the rope skipping portion of the class. He enjoys the presence of the male rope skippers and, of course, showing off his 8-year old rope skipping abilities. The class participants are impressed. As we left last night's class, Michael whispered to me, with sweat dripping from his forehead, “Mom, that was fun and a really good workout!”

This schoolyard and ancient Egyptian pastime (dating back to 1600 AD) strengthens and tones not only your legs, but also your abdominals, arms, back, buns, chest, and shoulders. To get started with your jump rope regimen, follow the advice below:

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- Purchase a jump rope with the proper length. Step on the middle of the rope and pull the

handles up – they should reach your armpits.

- Wear well-cushioned athletic shoes and jump on a shock-absorbing surface, such as wood flooring or aerobic floors.
 - Warm up your heart and muscles by lightly jogging in place for approximately three minutes.
 - Keep your knees slightly bent and jump high enough to clear the rope (about 1 inch off the ground) while landing lightly on the balls of the feet.
 - Bend elbows to a 45 degree angle and keep arms relaxed at your sides. Turn the rope, making small circles with your wrists. Try to refrain from using your arms more than your wrists.
 - Maintain good core posture by keeping shoulders down and shoulder blades pinched together lightly, abdomen engaged (drawing navel toward spine), keeping your head positioned slightly forward with eyes focused on the floor approximately 8 feet in front of you.
 - Stay relaxed and remember to breathe!
 - Many adults give up rope jumping because they miss many steps. This improves with time and practice. Try jumping rope for one minute and then marching for one minute, alternating until you've reached 5 - 10 minutes. Progress slowly and add 1 – 2 minutes per work out session.
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