

## "Skip it" for fun & fitness

By Carol Krucoff

One of the world's best exercise devices costs less than \$15 and is easy enough for a child to use. But jump ropes aren't kid stuff any more. Professional athletes, in a variety of sports, now jump rope for the same reason boxers have "skipped it" for years. An unparalleled all-around workout, jumping rope is a great fat burner that also strengthens the heart, muscles, and bones and improves agility, coordination, timing, and explosive power.

Like many other adults I was turned on to the joys of jumping by a child. My daughter, Rae, joined the Bouncing Bulldogs Rope Skipping Demonstration Team in our hometown of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, when she was 8. Now 18, Rae has competed and performed in 10 countries on four continents with the Bulldogs who have won the USA Jump Rope National Championship for the past three years.

Watching these kids do amazing tricks is like listening to catchy music...it's hard to sit still. So I borrowed a rope from my daughter and found that rope skipping is as much fun as it looks. Although I was concerned it might be hard on my joints, I discovered that it's actually easier on the knees and hips than running—you land on the balls of your feet, so your calves and shins absorb and control the impact.

### 6 Great Reasons to Jump

- Low cost. All you need is a rope and a pair of athletic shoes.
- Simplicity. If you can jump, you can jump rope.
- Effectiveness. It burns about 200 calories in 15 minutes, depending on your weight and how fast you jump.
- Convenience. You can jump rope indoors or out, year-round, at virtually any time of day.
- Versatility. Challenge yourself by jumping for speed, dancing, or adding gymnastics.
- Family friendliness. Everyone can participate at their own level. Even grandparents who may not want to jump can get an upper-body workout turning the rope for Double Dutch.

### Getting Started

**1** Choose a simple, plastic, clothesline-type rope. To find the right length, step on the center and hold the handles. They should reach to a point midway between your waist and your armpits. For Double Dutch, use two cloth or beaded ropes, each about 14 feet long.

**2** Wear comfortable, well-cushioned athletic shoes. Cross trainers or running shoes are generally best.

**3** Warm up with some easy activity—like walking in place—for a few minutes, then do some easy stretches before jumping.

**4** Keep your shoulders relaxed and your elbows close to your body as you jump.

**5** Start by alternating brief periods of jumping with resting moves such as

turning the rope alongside your body without jumping. Over time, do fewer resting moves and more jumping. Your goal is to jump continuously for at least 10 minutes. If you're a man over 40 or a woman over 50 and you've been sedentary, check with your doctor before beginning this or any other vigorous activity.

**Top jump rope competitors** perform eye-popping tricks such as back flips, but even mere mortals can have fun and get a great workout with basic moves (see next page) adapted from the Bulldogs' new instructional DVDs, *Bouncing with the Bulldogs*.



### Jump Rope Resources

**USA Jump Rope** This nonprofit organization offers jump rope workshops, camps, seminars, and tournaments at the state, regional, and national levels. Go to [www.usajrf.org](http://www.usajrf.org)

**Jump Rope for Heart** Visit [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org) to learn about this American Heart Association program in which about 6 million children participate annually in "jumpathons."

**Bouncing with the Bulldogs** These two instructional DVDs, featuring the National Champion Bouncing Bulldogs, are \$19.95 each or \$35 for both and are available at [www.bouncingbulldogs.org](http://www.bouncingbulldogs.org)



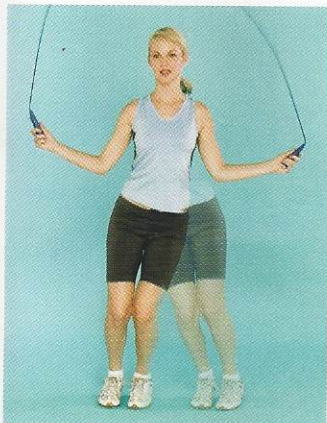
# OF JUMPING

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## Single-Rope Moves

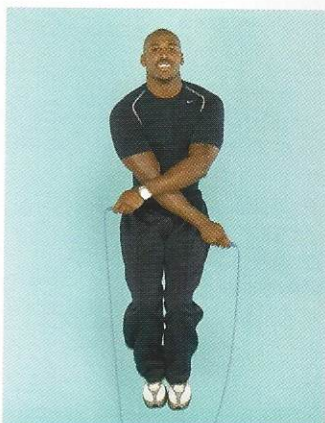
### Single-Bounce Freestyle

Begin with the rope behind you and use your wrists to turn it forward over your head, keeping your arms as still as possible. Jump over the rope with your feet together, allowing one jump for each rotation of the rope. From Single Bounce, add these tricks.



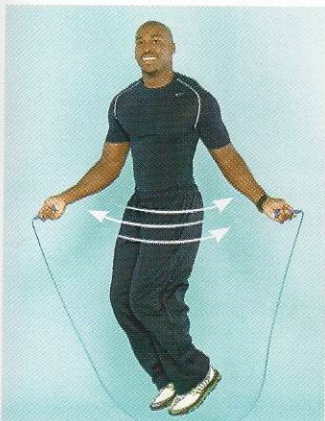
#### Skier

Keep your feet together and jump toward the left side of your body, then move both feet to the right side for the next jump. Continue alternating sides with each jump.



#### Crisscross

When the rope comes in front of you, cross your arms so your elbows are almost touching and your hands are near your hips, then jump over the rope with your arms crossed. After you've jumped, open your arms and continue with Single Bounce.

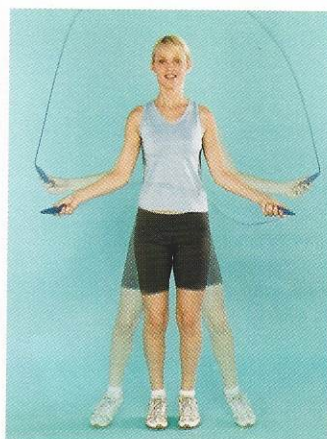


#### Twister

Keeping your upper body still, twist your hips from side to side with each jump.

#### Backward

For freestyle moves, above: begin with the rope in front of you and turn it backward over your head.



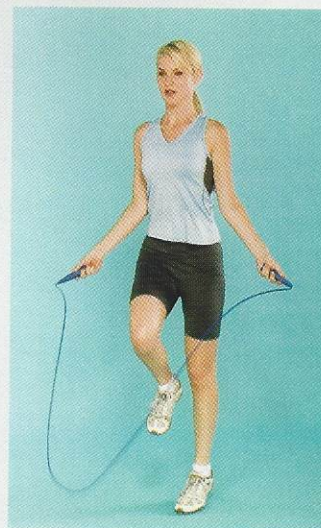
#### Side Straddle

Move your feet about shoulder-width apart for the first jump, then bring them together for the second jump. Continue alternating these two foot positions with each jump.

## Single-Rope Speed Jumping

Unlike Single Bounce, where you jump with your feet together, you do speed jumping with a jogging step—similar to jogging in place—and skip over the rope, one foot at a time. Bring your knees up in front of you and allow one jump (with either the right or the left foot, but not both) for each rotation of the rope.

Set a timer for 60 seconds and see how many complete jumps you can do in that time. (In competition, each time the right foot hits the ground—without a miss—is considered one complete jump). Over time, try to increase the number of complete jumps and reduce the number of misses within a specified time period—such as 30 or 60 seconds or 3, 5, or 10 minutes. (For added inspiration, try jumping to music with a motivating beat, such as the Pointer Sisters' hit "Jump.")

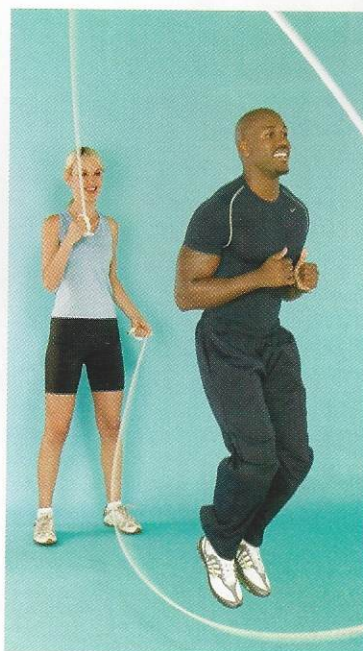


## Double Dutch

**Turners** Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, your knees slightly bent, and a rope in each hand. Keep your elbows close to your sides and turn your arms inward, in circles, without letting them cross the center line of your body. Alternate turning the ropes so one is in the air as the other brushes the ground.

**Jumper** To enter the ropes, stand one arm's length away from a turner and wait for the rope next to you to be in the air, then move between the ropes and begin jumping.

You can do both freestyle tricks and speed-jumping in Double Dutch ropes. For added fun, try Double Dutch pairs freestyle, with two jumpers doing tricks in the ropes at the same time. BHL



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