

Skip to It!



Blast off pounds and boost your energy with a simple skipping rope.

By Barb Gormley



Think you need a pricey gym full of high-tech exercise toys to push yourself to the next fitness level? Try the humble skipping rope instead. Skipping is a serious muscle toner for the calves, shoulders and arms. And it blasts calories at an intensity that rivals running.

The trick is to begin slowly, says Pete Estabrooks, a Calgary personal trainer who incorporates skipping in his workout classes. “You don’t start a running program with a marathon, so don’t start a skipping program by trying to skip for five or 10 minutes.”

Warm up by grabbing both handles in your right hand and whipping the rope vertically on one side, like a propeller, as you do small two-foot bounces; switch hands and do the other side. Once you’re warm, alternate intervals of 30-seconds of marching, easy jogging or low impact knee-ups, all without the rope, with 30-seconds of skipping. This mix-it-up strategy lets you catch your breath and helps you avoid muscle fatigue.

Feel klutzy? Get over it!

Keep practising and you’ll be skipping like a schoolgirl in no time.

Myth Alert

You don’t have to be a boxer and super-coordinated to skip. Anyone can master it with the right approach and a little practice.

The Basics

Keep your jumps as small as possible – just high enough to clear the rope – and land softly on the balls of your feet. Turn the rope from the wrists only, and keep the arms still. Crank up the tunes for motivation and to help find a rhythm.

Accessorize

Women need to wear their most supportive sports bras – this is one bouncy activity – and everyone needs to wear cushiony

exercise shoes. Plastic or leather ropes with ball bearing handles turn the easiest. To determine the correct length of your rope, hold a handle in each hand in front of you and put one foot on the centre of the rope. The handles should come just to your armpits.

Training Tips

Read *Jump Rope Training* by Buddy Lee for a variety of jumping moves with photos and descriptions.

RopeSport Jump Rope Workout Set is a kit that includes a skipping rope and two DVDs. One DVD teaches basic technique through to fancy crossover moves; the other has two workouts set to music that build in tempo and complexity.

Try It at Home

Find a large space with enough clearance for your rope. A wooden floor, not tile or concrete, is easiest on the joints. Have wall clock nearby to time your intervals – your wristwatch will be a blur!

Start each of the following exercises with the rope behind your feet with your elbows close to your sides. Keep your forearms down and out at a 45-degree angle and your hands in a “hitchhiker” position.

Boxer’s Jog

Jog over the rope shifting your weight from your right to left foot and side to side. Continue for 30-seconds, then march, walk or jog on the spot for 30-seconds.

Heel Taps

On every second jump, tap a heel to the floor in front. Continue for 30-seconds, then march, walk or jog on the spot for 30-seconds.

Cross Country Ski

Go Scissor your legs forwards and backwards keeping your back heel lifted and your weight centred between your feet. Continue for 30-seconds, then march, walk or jog on the spot for 30-seconds. □

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