



Natural Sports

# About Parkour

## **How is Parkour different from conventional sports?**

Parkour is unlike the conventional sports that most have taken part in at school because parkour, in its very nature, is non-competitive. Practitioners do not compete against one another to beat each other and there are no judges. The very nature of parkour includes an ethos of self-improvement and self-development through movement.

Parkour is less rigid than a gymnastics approach in certain aspects such as form, however it is founded on the principle of discipline. Self-discipline is paramount in parkour because a practitioner will be training away from a coached environment on occasion and will effectively have to act as their own coach: advising themselves as to when something is out of reach, dangerous, safe, when you should stop, whether you should do more conditioning, etc.

When practitioners train together there is an atmosphere of healthy competition in the true sense of the word; we get the word "competition" from the Latin "competere", which originally meant "to strive together". This is what they are referring to when they train together as a group: They are striving together to achieve excellence in movement.

## **The Spirit of Parkour**

As well as being a physical discipline, Parkour is rooted in an ethos of developing and sustaining mental strength. The pioneers of Parkour would push themselves to the very edge of their limits in their training, to the point that their military training would pale in comparison. There is a well-known phrase often used within parkour that encapsulates a large part of the spirit: 'one must become strong to be useful to others'. Another strong ethic within Parkour is that of teamwork and camaraderie.

The constant development of the individual, physically and mentally, in a positive direction, is an important part of the practise of Parkour.

## **History of Parkour**

Trying to pinpoint the exact moment of the birth of Parkour is no easy task. In fact, it may actually prove impossible. Something as nebulous and indefinable as this thing we practise tends to defy classification.

Suburban towns of Evry, Sarcelles and Lisses, places no different from any other of the hundreds of satellites orbiting the French capital, save for one small fact: these places were home to a group of nine young men widely acknowledged as having crystallized a number of influences to create something then called l'Art du Deplacement, sometime in the 1980s.

Yann Hnautra and David Belle, who drove much of the early training and have since become known as the originators of the art. These childhood friends formed the group which called itself 'Yamakasi', a Lingala word meaning 'Strong man, strong spirit'

In fact, the later term for the discipline 'parkour' is perhaps indirectly attributable to Raymond Belle, who introduced his son to the military training methods of Georges Hebert, a man who had a powerful influence on the development of physical education in France

From parcours, meaning 'course', came the altered parkour, for which David acknowledges his friend Hubert Kounde as having coined.

Raymond Belle encouraged them both to better themselves, stating that with dedication they could reach their dreams.

2003 that an accurate insight into the depths of the art was released for public consumption when the UK's Channel 4 produced a ground breaking and award-winning documentary entitled Jump London, featuring Foucan and the Vigroux brothers unleashing their skills upon an unsuspecting London cityscape.

Parkour organisations are keen to impress upon people however, that while parkour was a term intended to liberate people from the limiting, conventional methods of movement and travel, it is just a term.

While communication requires the use of some accepted terminology, what is actually being communicated is far more important than any name or label. Movement is movement, and it is mastery of their own movement and the constant development of their body and mind that they seek through the practise of Parkour.

### **Risk-takers or Self-challengers?**

Although parkour is not an extreme sport, it does carry inherent risk with it just as any athletic training discipline does.

The experienced traceurs do not engage in the activity in order to experience the adrenaline-rush that comes from excessive risk-taking. Rather, they view their practise as challenging themselves to overcome limitation and the restraints of fear and inhibition.

The goal of complete functionality within any situation is paramount, and in order to achieve this state both mentally and physically it is necessary to face and overcome the challenges that are part and parcel of parkour training.

The training in parkour enables the practitioner to learn to manage risk and through exposure to challenging situations to become a better, safer person all round.

What will they learn with a Natural Sports Parkour Training Facility?

The practitoners will learn an array of functional movements, beginning with the fundamentals of jumping, landing, vaulting, and climbing safely; steadily building on this foundation to the ultimate goal of being able to adapt to, and overcome, any given environment. It gives the practitioner the tools to move both safely and efficiently in any environment.

Overall, the practitioner will learn that their body is an extremely powerful and sophisticated system, able to adapt to extreme challenges and complete seemingly impossible movements and will ultimately learn how to become a strong and useful person to themselves and to others.

### **The benefits of Parkour and Physical Activity**

For young people especially Parkour is an attractive discipline as there is no right or wrong way to carry out a move. They are free to use their imagination and be as creative as they wish about the way in which they challenge themselves. It is also considered by peers as a cool activity which requires a lot of skill.

People in their late teens and beyond tend to look at Parkour in more of a practical way. The key reason for starting is to have fun, but they are also attracted to it because they are aware of the wider benefits. More often than not they want to have fun, lose weight, keep fit and get stronger.

## Key facts

- Parkour is a form of physical activity therefore assists in combating cardiovascular disease, stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes and cancers.
- Physical activity in combination with a healthy balanced diet has a direct relationship with helping to prevent obesity or persons being overweight.
- The effect of physical activity on psychological wellbeing has been researched to show a positive relationship.
- An increase in self-confidence and overall wellbeing can have a positive impact on learning.
- Parkour is proven to have a direct impact on reducing antisocial behaviour.
- A Parkour Training Facility is a positive use of an existing space and can enhance any existing facilities whether it is a play or fitness area.
- Parkour encourages community building, social inclusion, breaking down cultural barriers and gender stereotyping.

## Overall Health

Physical activity throughout a person's life span affects cardiovascular disease, stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes and cancers.

It is recommended that an adult should have a sustained level of 30 minutes physical activity per day, 5 days a week and a child should have 60 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity each day.

## Obesity

*"Physical activity in combination with a healthy balanced diet has a direct relationship with helping to prevent obesity or persons being overweight."*

The high levels of obesity in children are recognised nationally and the National Childhood Measurement Programme and the Department for Health's social marketing 'Change4Life' campaigns aim on tackling this rising concern. The degree to which inactivity is responsible for current obesity rates has not been established but there is evidence to suggest that children who are less active are more likely to have excess fat.

Organisations representing nearly every doctor in the UK have united in a single campaign to tackle rising levels of obesity. A spokesman for the campaign, Prof Terence Stephenson from Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (AoMRC), said "Almost a quarter of adults in the UK are thought to be obese and some predictions suggest half of children will be obese or overweight by 2020, with Prof Stephenson saying they were "storing up problems for the future. This is a huge problem for the UK. It's much bigger than HIV was, much bigger than swine flu. Every doctor I've ever spoken to feels obesity is a huge problem for the UK population."

The Department of Health said it welcomed the colleges' "emphasis on obesity as this is one of our key public health priorities," and highlighted the change4life campaign to encourage healthier living, and the "responsibility pledge" by some food and drink companies to improve public health.

The latest NCMP (National Childhood Measurement Programme) data shows a positive correlation between deprivation and levels of childhood obesity.

The study provides high-level analysis of the prevalence of 'underweight', 'healthy weight', 'overweight', 'obese' and 'overweight and obese combined' children, in Reception (aged 4–5 years) and Year 6 (aged 10–11 years), measured in state schools in England in the school year 2010/11.

### **Key Facts**

1. In Reception, over a fifth (22.6%) of the children measured were either overweight or obese. In Year 6, this rate was one in three (33.4%).
2. The percentage of obese children in Year 6 (19.0%) is over double that in Reception (9.4%)
3. The prevalence of children with a healthy weight was higher in Reception year (76.4%) than Year 6 (65.3%). In both years a higher percentage of girls were at a healthy weight than boys. In Reception year 77.9% of girls and 75.0% of boys were a healthy weight and in Year 6 this was 66.6% and 64.0% respectively.
4. The overall prevalence of underweight children is higher in Year 6 (1.3%) than in Reception (1.0%). In Reception, a higher percentage of boys were underweight than girls (1.2% and 0.8% respectively); whereas in Year 6, a higher percentage of girls were underweight than boys (1.5% and 1.1% respectively).
5. Obesity prevalence varied by Strategic Health Authority (SHA). South Central SHA has the lowest obesity prevalence for both Reception and Year 6 (8.1% and 16.5% respectively) whilst London SHA showed the highest obesity prevalence (11.1% and 21.9% for each age group respectively).
6. As in previous years, a strong positive relationship existed between deprivation and obesity prevalence for children in each age group. The obesity prevalence among Reception year children attending schools in areas in the least deprived decile was 6.9% compared with 12.1% among those living in areas in the most deprived decile. Similarly, obesity prevalence among Year 6 children living in areas in the least deprived decile was 13.8% compared with 23.7% among those living in areas in the most deprived decile.

### **Overall Wellbeing and learning**

The effect of physical activity on psychological wellbeing has been researched to show a positive relationship. Physical activity, sport and exercise can have a positive impact on self-esteem and body image. A review of research articles largely from the USA and Australia show that there is a positive impact through the provision of outdoor facilities on children and adolescent's physical activity levels and consequently their health.

### **Anti-Social Behaviour**

According to figures from the Metropolitan Police, when sports projects were run in the Borough of Westminster during the 2005 Easter holidays, youth crime dropped by 39 per cent, the following year, when Parkour was added to the projects, youth crime fell by 69 per cent.

“As a non practitioner the one thing that has struck me about Parkour is the sense of community there is within Parkour circles and the willingness to work together to achieve a common goal. There is also a great willingness to help others”.

### **Positive use of existing space**

With growing numbers of organised Parkour groups across the country, public acceptance of the activity and the way that users view and use their environment is fast expanding.

Parkour Training Facilities can enhance an existing space and experience has shown us that when a facility has been installed the local Parkour community take ownership and pride in the location and ensure that the facility is looked after.

Parkour is not only beneficial for those who choose to practice, but for their community as a whole.

“If Ten Downing Street can open its doors to something as adventurous as freerunning I hope it will inspire other people to see what their building could be used for”.

David Cameron, Prime Minister, The Times (October 2011)

Parkour Training Facilities cater for anyone over the age of 8 years old (ParkourUK recommended age for beginners) and therefore cater for a very large demographic that in most play areas is under catered for.

### **Social Inclusion**

Parkour encourages community building and helps to break down cultural barriers and gender stereotyping.

As an activity that holds no rules when it comes to people who can learn Parkour, it offers an accessible variant of exercise to all, because of this it bring people together from all sorts of backgrounds, irrespective of age, physical ability, gender, or class. Parkour caters for all ages and abilities including those with physical disabilities.

A Parkour Training Facility can help develop an already existing community, or build foundations for a new one to flourish.