Rope jumping, also known as rope skipping, is a physical activity with a long history. It is reported that the ancient Egyptians used vines, and later rope, to create playful games, and the ancient Chinese participated in a game called hundred rope jumping during the celebration of the Chinese New Year. The modern-day version of “jump rope,” as it is traditionally called in the United States, has its roots in The Netherlands and came to America with Dutch settlers in the 1600s. Today, jump rope is a recognized competitive sport in more than 20 countries and is overseen by the Fédération Internationale de Saut à la Corde, or International Rope Skipping Federation (n.d.).
Jump rope is a meaningful activity for physical education (Rink, Hall, & Williams, 2010). It often is taught in physical education courses to encourage participation in the American Heart Association’s (AHA) Jump Rope for Heart fundraising event (AHA, n.d.). In addition to the curricular and philanthropic reasons that jump rope is included in physical education programs, the physiological demands of the activity alone are quite high, at 8.0 to 12.0 metabolic equivalents (Ainsworth et al., 2011). Moreover, not only is jumping rope a skill that enhances motor skill development and improves cardiorespiratory endurance, but it also develops the affective domain. These physiological, sociological and psychological outcomes demonstrate why jump rope is a popular activity within physical education curricula today and is helpful for students to meet the National Standards established by SHAPE America – Society of Health and Physical Educators. The specific standards that are addressed through jump rope are:

- Standard 1: The physically literate individual demonstrates competency in a variety of motor skills and movement patterns.
- Standard 2: The physically literate individual applies knowledge of concepts, principles, strategies and tactics related to movement and performance.
- Standard 3: The physically literate individual demonstrates the knowledge and skills to achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical activity and fitness (SHAPE America, n.d.).

Lastly, and importantly, students really enjoy jumping rope. Many teachers, as well as their students, know the fundamentals of jump rope. At times, however, boredom occurs, potentially lessening the productivity of the activity. A meaningful way to prevent boredom during jump rope activities is to introduce new exercises, known as “tricks” (the preferred term for those officially involved in the sport). These new activities build on previous skills by introducing more complex movements, which in turn build greater coordination and increase or maintain physical fitness. Many components exist for a unit on jump rope such as individual jumping, two-person one-rope, long rope, and double Dutch, and all are important and can be implemented in a well-planned unit on jump rope. This article focuses specifically on the individual aspects of jump rope and provides a brief review of rope sizing, the basic jump rope technique, and specific tricks to enhance the enjoyment and the challenge of the activity for students and teachers alike.

**Jump Rope Fundamentals**

The jump rope needs to fit the jumper. To size the rope properly, a jumper stands on the rope, places his or her feet together, and ensures that the ends of the rope handles come up to roughly the arm pits (see Figure 1). If the rope is too long — assuming that a plastic or beaded rope is being used — knots can be tied in the rope itself, below the handle. If knots are tied above the handle, which is a common mistake if the knot is tied above the washer holding the handle in place, they prevent the proper rotation of the rope, and the rope tangles.

Once the jump rope is sized correctly, the jumper must begin to develop a rhythm with the rope. To do this, the teacher and the jumper must use the correct operational terminology for jump rope. The most common terms are as follows:

- **Jump**: when a jumper actually jumps over the rope.
- **Bounce**: when a person jumps, but the rope does not cross under the feet.
- **Missing**: when the rope hits a part of the body, or when the feet or another body part land on the rope, resulting in the rope stopping and preventing further jumping.

One of the most fundamental skills to develop is the “double bounce” (technically a jump and a bounce), and this skill helps the jumpers to develop rhythm with their rope. The double bounce involves a jump of the rope with a bounce in between, so proper verbal cues to use would be “jump, bounce, jump.” Remember that this is a slow-paced style of jumping. It helps

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**One of the most fundamental skills to develop is the “double bounce” […] and this skill helps the jumpers to develop rhythm with their rope.**

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Figure 1. The height of the rope handles reach to the arm pits when standing on the rope.
the jumpers to keep a steady rhythm even when the rope is
not passing directly under their feet. In more advanced moves,
rhythm is critical for performing the tricks successfully, so
developing the double bounce is very important.

After achieving the double bounce, one can work on speed
for the single-bounce jump, which is what is viewed as the tra-
ditional type of rope jumping, where the rope passes under
the feet on each jump. Here, having a smooth, constant rhythm
should be encouraged. As always, missing is part of the learn-
ing process and is not negative. Everyone misses, even the best
jumpers in the world, so it is important to stress that to new
learners. The verbal mantra here for new jumpers is: “Missing
is okay.”

Footwork development is critical for most activities. By in-
corporating footwork into the jump rope activity, the jumper is
able to enhance hand-eye-foot coordination. When teaching
footwork for jump rope, it is sometimes necessary to teach the
footwork first, without the rope. Once the footwork is mas-
tered, the rope is added, and eventually “tricks” are included to
make the skill more complex. For more detailed information
concerning the footwork used in jump rope, please see the ex-
cellent work of Nye (2010).

Difficulty can be added to jump rope by combining all of
these skills or increasing the speed at which they are performed.
Performing a “multiple-under jump,” where the rope passes un-
der the feet more than once per jump, is another way to make
the trick more challenging. Jump rope has an unlimited array
of tricks because of the ability to continue to add more dif-
ficulty to the basic skills. Ultimately, randomizing and combin-
ing skills makes jump rope more challenging and interesting
for the students.

Levels of Tricks

Various levels of tricks are used, similar to the format of
gymnastics, with Level 1 being the most basic and Level 5
being the most advanced. The tricks are progressive, mean-
ing that mastery for Level 1 tricks is necessary to progress to
Level 2 tricks. The number of tricks an instructor can introduce
depends on the length of the unit and the experience of the
instructor. If 30 Level 1 tricks are to be introduced, an appro-
priate expectation is that a jumper completes 25 (roughly 80%
to 85%) of the tricks before attempting to complete Level 2
tricks. Lists of tricks are helpful for delineating which ones are
included within each level (see Table 1). This gives the teacher
many options for each student to work on a variety of tricks.
Once mastery is achieved within a level, a new list is provided,
and these lists are used as a method of assessment, which will
be discussed later in the article.

Higher-level tricks are typically performed in a competi-
tive setting and are used to measure a degree of difficulty. In
the physical education setting, higher-level tricks allow stu-
dents to set goals for the number of tricks to be learned and to
track the progression of skills. They also can motivate the most
skilled individuals in the classroom to continue to progress. The
tricks that are introduced in this article are Level 1 tricks. To
modify the trick to make it for Level 2, each trick could be
performed backward or with multiple unders. When tricks are
performed backward, the skill movement patterns are likely dif-
erent. However, the majority of backward tricks, which require
the hand moves to be switched from forward-to-backward to
backward-to-forward, should be attempted after the forward
movement is learned. For multiple unders, a higher jump and
faster hands are necessary. The trick can stay the same, but in-
stead of performing the trick while on the ground prior to the
jump, the entire trick is performed in the air and must include
at least two rotations of the rope under the feet (or to the side
in the instance of a side swing) for the trick to be performed as
a multiple under.

Body Alignment

Posture is important in jump rope. When teaching any of
the tricks mentioned in this article, it is important to empha-
size to the jumper that good posture be maintained. One of
the critical components of helping a jumper to maintain proper
posture is to focus on the knees. The knees must be bent slightly
when landing to avoid hyperextension of the knees, which
could lead to injury. Additionally, for these tricks, an upright
body position is paramount. This requires that an individual
keep the ears, shoulders, hips, knees and ankles in alignment to
form one long line.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Trick”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double Bounce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Bounce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side Swing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisscross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side-Swing Crisscross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180 Turn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>360 Turn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mad Dog 360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double-Under Side Swing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double-Under Crisscross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side-Swing Double-Under Crisscross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>360 Turn in the Air</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triple-Under Side Swing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triple-Under Crisscross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side-Swing Triple-Under Crisscross</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rope Manipulation

After the basic jumping technique and footwork are mastered, teachers should add tricks to increase skill development and difficulty. When teaching tricks involving rope manipulation with the hands, it is important to use cues and to recognize when mastery of a skill is achieved. Skill mastery of a trick is achieved when the jumper is able to perform the trick on both sides of the body for a total of three consecutive attempts. Once that is achieved, the jumper can perform the skill backward to continue to be challenged and to increase the level of difficulty to a Level 2 trick.

Jump Rope Tricks

Side swing

To perform the side swing, the jumper begins in the ready position, with the feet approximately shoulder-width apart and the hands holding the rope at the hips (see Figure 2). For a right-side swing, the left arm crosses over to the right side of the body while the right arm stays in the ready position (see Figure 3). It is vital that the left arm not cross over the right arm. The hands follow one another, so the term follow is an excellent verbal cue. Once the right-side swing has been performed, the left arm moves back to its ready position, with the right hand following. A jumper performs only one side swing per side so that the rope does not coil. Once a student performs the side swing without jumping, the side-swing jump is incorporated. The side-swing jump involves performing one side swing and returning to the ready position to jump over the rope (see Figure 4). The same steps are repeated for the other side. Mastery of the side swing includes the jumper completing a right-side swing, a jump, a left-side swing, a jump, and repeating a sequence of at least three repetitions. One major hint to help the jumper stay on rhythm is for the jumper to perform a
jump during every side swing as well as during the jump. Technically, it is a “bounce” when the rope fails to travel under the feet. So an easy way to have students perform this trick is by using the verbal cues of “bounce, jump, bounce.”

**Crisscross**

The next basic rope manipulation is the crisscross. The crisscross involves crossing the arms against the body at about hip height while jumping over the rope (see Figure 5). The appropriate cue for this trick is “Reach for your pockets” so that the jumper does not bring the arms up toward the shoulders, thus raising the rope too high off the ground. The jumping height needs to stay consistent. If the jumper fails to reach low enough, the rope will not reach the ground and the jumper would have to jump too high for the rope to pass under the feet. Once the crisscross is accomplished, whichever arm is on top for the crisscross is the side on which the trick is completed. The jumper must now work to complete the crisscross with the other arm on top. Again, mastery of the skill requires the completion of the skill three times on both sides of the body. For complete mastery of the trick, the jumper performs the trick backward.

**Side-swing crisscross**

Combine the side swing and crisscross once a student masters them individually. When performing the right-side swing, after the rope hits the ground, the right arm reaches across the body toward the left hip; use the cue “Reach for your pockets” (see Figure 6). Both hands stay close to the height of the pockets to keep the rope at the proper height. Call out, “Side swing, crisscross,” to help the jumpers with their timing. When performing a side swing to the left side, the left arm is on top for the crisscross that follows the side swing. To stay on beat, the jumper bounces while performing the side swing so that the timing is correct to complete the crisscross that follows.

**360**

A 360 is performed on the ground and further broken into what is called a Mad Dog 360. First, to perform a 360 on the...
ground, the jumper decides in which direction to turn. If turning to the left, the jumper performs a side swing to the left side, and as the rope hits the ground, the jumper will turn, while keeping the rope in the air and in front of the body, until returning to the starting position (see Figure 7). The key is that the trick is performed “on the ground,” so the jumper actually turns in a complete circle, hence the name 360. The cue is to have the jumper “follow the rope” as it stays in the air. Once the 360 is achieved, it is performed on the other side so the jumper can work on the 180. When performing the 180, the side-swing motion is still used at the start, but the jumper turns to the wall behind where he or she started and jumps backward. After achieving the 180, the jumper combines two 180s. The jumper performs the 180 but turns back to the same direction that he or she originally faced (see Figure 8). To go from jumping backward in the direction one started with, the rope stays in the

Figure 7. If turning to the left, the jumper will perform a side swing to the left side, and as the rope hits the ground, the jumper will turn, while keeping the rope in the air and in front of the body, until returning to the starting position, where then the jump takes place.

Figure 8. When performing the 180, the side-swing motion is still used at the start, but then the jumper turns to the wall behind where he or she started and jumps backward. The jumper will perform the 180 but then turn back to the same direction that he or she had originally faced.
air during the 180 turn, and the jumper jumps forward again. Hence, the backward jump is completed, and with the rope in front of the jumper, he or she returns to the starting direction. Combine these three tricks into the Mad Dog 360: A 180, one jump backward, a 180 back to the starting position, one jump forward, and a 360 turn.

**Multiple unders**

Multiple unders are useful for increasing the difficulty of any trick. A double under is when the rope travels under the feet two times per jump. A triple under is when the rope travels under the feet three times per jump. The key to multiple unders is to turn the wrists very quickly. A double under does not require a maximal jump, whereas a triple under would require a maximal jump. A maximal jump occurs when an individual jumps as high as possible to allow maximal hang time in the air. An appropriate progression to performing multiple unders is first to increase the speed of the single jump, then to master the double unders, and finally, to achieve the triple unders. Coupling the crisscross and the side-swing crisscross with double unders is necessary before attempting the triple unders. Progression of skill is important.

**Safety**

Jump rope is a high-impact activity that involves object manipulation. So an emphasis on safety is important. First, each individual jumper needs a specific amount of space to jump safely. To verify that adequate space is secured, the jumper holds his or her arms outstretched, at shoulder height, and turns in a complete circle, where no contact is made with another person or object. This prevents the jumpers' ropes from striking or entangling with another person or rope. Second, when performing jump rope properly, jumpers must land on the balls of their feet and keep their knees slightly bent. At no time should jumpers land on their heels; this indicates that the jumpers are locking their knees, which may lead to injury. Last, appropriate clothing and footwear are important for safety. Jumpers must wear "athletic" clothing, preferably shorts and T-shirts that are not excessively baggy, and appropriate socks and shoes that provide support for the arches and the balls of the feet. Generally, tennis shoes or sneakers are recommended.

**Jump Rope Assessment**

For jump rope, assessing both the effort and the activity itself is advisable. Miller (2014) stated that the assessment should be broken down into achievement and improvement and that effort can be a subjective form of assessment. In the case of jump rope, it is apparent when students are continuing to practice a trick versus moving on to a different trick before they have mastered the first. This is problematic during the development of tricks because the students likely lack the skills necessary to progress. Therefore, when assessing the students, assess basic (Level 1) tricks first and use those marks as a means of monitoring students' progression of skill. This allows the teacher to assess National Standards 1 through 3. If a student performs only specific tricks because of a lack of motor ability, effort is assessed as an alternative.

Improvement is difficult to assess because of motivation. Students who know that they must improve may not perform at their best for the pre-activity assessment. If a student performs all of the Level 1 tricks (including the footwork that was introduced in the Nye, 2010 article) at the beginning of the unit, the expectation is for the student to move on to Level 2 tricks. Competition is a means of evaluation, but caution should be taken to encourage rather than discourage participation. Hence, self-improvement is emphasized over competition among students. The amount of time spent on the jump rope unit dictates the number of tricks to be taught and the number of tricks that a student should be able to perform by the end of the unit. As a general guideline, based on experience working with dozens of jumpers at numerous workshops and camps, the authors have observed that for each hour spent working on tricks, a reasonable expectation is for students to master at least two new tricks. Again, mastery of a trick is defined as the trick being performed correctly three times successively.

**Conclusion**

The inclusion of tricks in a jump rope unit promotes student interest and skill development. A proper progression of jump rope skills is necessary to allow for continuous trick building and for all students to be actively engaged in the learning process. Allowing students to progress if they have successfully achieved a skill is important, and utilizing short cues to assist the jumpers is helpful. Jump rope is an excellent activity for helping students to meet the National Standards, and it promotes cardiovascular and motor skill development.

**References**


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