

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
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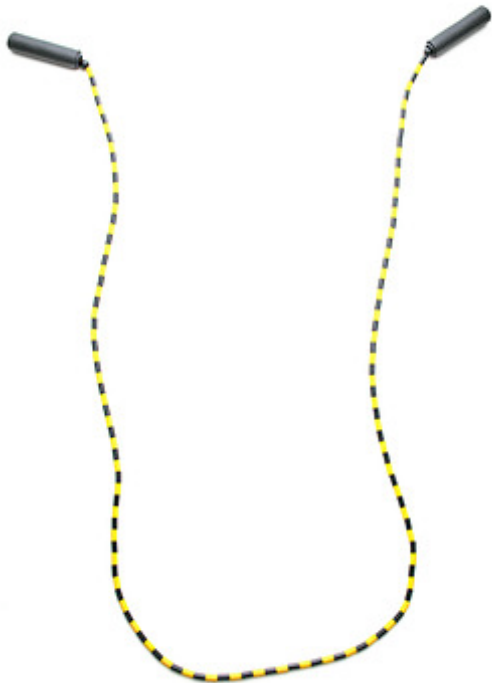
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

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Learning the Ropes

Forget the treadmill. To get fit quickly and easily this spring, do like boxers do and jump around



Photographs by F. Martin Ramin for The Wall Street Journal, Styling by Anne Cardenas

THE SEGMENTED ROPE | Because the rope is covered in durable plastic, this is the ideal choice if you jump on rough, outdoor surfaces. Lifeline USA Segmented Power Rope, \$12, amazon.com

Peter Nestler, who jumps rope for a living, recently executed an extended double dutch sequence for Adam Sandler's next movie, "Jack and Jill," as Mr. Sandler's stand-in. When he was finished, Katie Holmes, the film's co-star, approached Mr. Nestler, he said, and told him it was the most amazing thing she'd ever seen.

I know the feeling. I jump rope out on the street in Astoria, Queens, for exercise, observed by my coterie of elderly Eastern Europeans.

"When's the fight?" one asked recently.

Traditionally the turf of the boxing ring and schoolyard, jumping rope is nearly perfect exercise in terms of conditioning, cost-benefit and convenience. It's just you, a rope, a pair of shoes and the ground.

It is a kind of complete physical engagement that few other activities offer. And once you catch the "swing," it's pretty satisfying stuff: a personal lyricism that jogging and other aerobics will never have.

"To coordinate that kind of rhythm, the whole body has to be in sync—core, shoulders, legs," said Brian Nguyen, the actor Mark Wahlberg's personal trainer. Mr. Nguyen trained with Mr. Wahlberg for his role in last year's film "The Fighter." "It's a very intense

movement for the body," he explained.

Jumping is also gentler and kinder, though. "You're getting the most bang for your buck, because you're working almost every part of your body, but there's not the impact of running, because of the way the foot lands," said Alexis Colvin, an assistant professor of sports medicine in the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at Mount Sinai Medical Center in Manhattan.

THE PURIST'S SPEED ROPE

John
Snow,
the



F. Martin Ramin for The Wall Street Journal, styling by Anne Cardenas

Many pros use uncomplicated, inexpensive plastic ropes—sometimes simpler is better. Orange Crush, \$8, punkrope.com

manager of Trinity Boxing Gym in Lower Manhattan, has basic pointers. He has me jump in place, without a rope, practicing my arm movement: elbows to my sides, turning the wrist and bending and rolling the elbow, breathing through my nose, setting a pace, staying focused and loose. Mr. Snow called it "controlled relaxation," an eloquent attitude towards life, as well as rope jumping.

Tim Haft, who leads the Punk Rope class at the Greenpoint YMCA in Brooklyn, stresses the importance of sizing the rope you use. Most ropes can be adjusted by making knots next to the handles. "Stand on the middle of the rope with one foot," he said. "The handles should come up to just below your shoulders."

Mr. Haft uses an inexpensive plastic-cord "speed" rope with simple handles. Ropes with ball-bearing handles are also available and can facilitate your swing. Weighted ropes will give your arms and upper body more exercise; plastic-bead ropes are sturdier for outdoor jumping on harder surfaces, though you should be using a giving platform like a pliant wooden floor, a mat or grass. Cotton-cord and leather ropes look great; no one except stylists use them.

Shoes are important too. Wear something flat, like a cross-trainer or a wrestling shoe, not a running shoe. When you jump, land on the ball of your foot, not your heel.

Like most trainers I spoke to, Frank Powers of Serpico Powers training studio in Manhattan bases his rope routine with clients on a boxer's three-minute round: three one-minute rounds, with a 30-second break between, then three two-minute rounds, then three three-minute rounds.

"When you can jump for 10 minutes comfortably, you're at a decent fitness level," he said.

But for me, it's all about the "swing," casually watching the cars go by on 28th Avenue, the steady exhilaration of the light-footed step and sailing repeatedly up into the air. Michael George, an ex-boxer who has trained Julianne Moore and others, likened it to a dance—that's exactly what it is.

—William L. Hamilton

THE ERGONOMIC ROPE



Fancy handles mean you'll be able to workout more comfortably, longer. Harbinger Trigger Handle, \$11, amazon.com

F. Martin Ramin for The Wall Street Journal, styling by Anne Cardenas

The Ergonomic Rope

THE HIGH TECH ROPE

The handle's swivel bearings help eliminate tangling and friction. Aero Speed, \$39, buddyleejumpropes.com



Photographs by F. Martin Ramin for The Wall Street Journal, Styling by Anne Cardenas

The High Tech Rope

THE WEIGHTED ROPE

Go for this heavier kind of rope to give your arms and upper body a more intense workout. The Beast, \$20, punkrope.com



F. Martin Ramin for The Wall Street Journal, styling by Anne Cardenas

The Weighted Rope

How To: Do a Criss-Cross Jump



STEP ONE

Do a standard "single bounce" jump step for a few swings of the rope to set your pace.



STEP TWO

As the rope begins to swing down, begin the cross by folding your arms over each other and across your chest.



STEP THREE

If you're right-handed, lead with your right arm and pass it in front of your left. (As you improve, alternate.)



STEP FOUR

Jump through the loop that your cross has created, swinging the rope under your feet and behind you.



STEP FIVE

Let the rope clear your head before you begin to uncross. Your feet should be on the ground.



STEP SIX

As the rope passes in front of you, unfold your arms and bring them to your sides.



STEP SEVEN

Jump through the uncrossed loop, as you would for a basic bounce.

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Tuesday May 10, 2011 at 7:00 pm

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