

HOW TO START PARKOUR

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE





TABLE OF CONTENTS

WHAT IS PARKOUR?

HISTORY OF PARKOUR

WHO CAN DO PARKOUR?

WHAT EQUIPMENT DO I NEED?

WHERE DO I GO TO PRACTICE?

HOW DO I GET INTO SHAPE?

BASIC PARKOUR MOVEMENTS

INTERMEDIATE PARKOUR

ADDITIONAL VIDEO INSPIRATION

FOREWORD



2018 is my 14th year practicing parkour. As I reflect on my journey, it's incredible how much I've seen parkour grow. Unlike when I started, there are now many fantastic leaders and resources for new people to learn from. I'm happy to share my knowledge with you so that you don't make the same mistakes I did as a beginner in parkour.

In this article, you'll find a collection of information to help jumpstart your parkour journey. While this article was written to be highly educational, it is also intended to be concise. Want to know more details about the topics I summarize? Take some side adventures by clicking on the links, photos, and videos I've included.

Are you ready to take the red pill? There's no turning back. Welcome to the world of parkour, where you will tap into your inner child and accomplish things you never thought possible.

— Ryan Ford, co-founder of ParkourEDU



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WHAT IS PARKOUR?

Parkour is a movement art and training methodology in which the mind and body are prepared to safely and efficiently navigate any environment (urban or natural), utilizing movements such as vaulting, running, climbing, jumping, swinging, balancing, and quadrupedal movement to pass over, under, through, and around all types of obstacles. By its very nature, parkour encourages sustainability, adaptability, exploration, self-reliance, health, creativity, and mental fortitude. While there are instances when flipping and spinning can help a parkour athlete achieve particular objectives, extraneous or purely aesthetic movements are not typically considered parkour.

⇒ Video Example ⇐

Originally intended as a synonym for parkour, **freerunning** evolved into a style of movement similar to parkour that also incorporates acrobatics and extraneous movement for fun, creativity, difficulty, and aesthetics. Freerunning allows an individual to express themselves by overcoming mental and physical obstacles without being limited to traditional parkour's ideals of efficiency and utility.

⇒ Video Example ⇐

Most practitioners of parkour and freerunning nowadays are not concerned with the names or labels of their style of movement. It is good to know the definitions and differences between movement arts like parkour and freerunning, but the modern trend is to experiment with and blend both. For the sake of simplicity in this article, I am going to refer to “parkour and freerunning” as simply, “parkour.”

Because parkour tends to be sensationalized in the media with roof gaps and flips from monolithic heights, the public has many misconceptions of what parkour truly is. Most importantly, parkour is not reckless risk taking or jackass type stunts. Parkour is practiced with a sense of sustainability, respect, and discipline. Practice with a sense of sustainability so that your body is capable of moving well for your entire life. We should all respect the environment and other people so that we can maintain good relationships with the places we train at and the people we train around. The irresponsible actions of one person or group can negatively affect parkour for everyone. Lastly, pay attention to **the original philosophies and ethics** that helped shape parkour early on. Even if you have other main reasons for training

parkour, there is plenty to be learned from traditional parkour mantras such as *être et durer* (to be and to last), *être fort pour être utile* (be strong to be useful), perpetual self-improvement, and developing a warrior-like spirit.

OTHER MOVEMENT ARTS

At some point during their training, most people who do parkour also experiment with other styles of movement. Continue reading for some common, beneficial forms of cross-training and some video examples of each.

Another discipline that is similar to parkour and freerunning, **tricking** is a free-form, modern offshoot of martial arts that incorporates kicks, flips, and twists into long sequences purely for creativity, aesthetics, and increased difficulty. In tricking, the only obstacle is gravity, which means that it is typically practiced in flat, open spaces like grassy fields and gymnastics floors.

⇒ Video Example ⇐

Obstacle course racing (OCR) is a booming sport in which competitors race through long courses, overcoming occasional obstacles and unique challenges along the way. While these races typically favor cross-country or trail running skills, they also commonly include challenges such as overcoming walls, crawling under barbed wire, carrying heavy objects, jumping over small fire pits, or throwing at targets.

⇒ Video Example ⇐

B-boying, often referred to as breaking or breakdancing, was developed as a street style of dance in the 1980s. The dance consists of four main elements: toprock, footwork, power moves, and freezes. As breaking has evolved, elements from tricking, gymnastics, and martial arts like capoeira are often mixed in with the dance.

⇒ Video Example ⇐

Climbing is a physical discipline in which participants climb natural or artificial rock walls. There are many types of rock climbing including free climbing, aid climbing, and **free soloing**. Other variations include **bouldering** and **buildering**, which require no special equipment because climbers typically don't go higher than about 15 feet off of the ground.

⇒ Video Example ⇐

Gymnastics consists of acrobatic movements and bodyweight exercises that test an athlete's abilities in domains such as strength, power, flexibility, balance, and coordination. **Tumbling** is an offshoot of gymnastics, focusing on floor acrobatics, that has also been extensively studied, adapted, and modified by cheerleading and martial arts.

⇒ Video Example ⇐

Martial arts consists of thousands of different styles and practices of combat learned for self-defense, health and fitness, or mental and spiritual development. Some martial arts like **capoeira**, ninjutsu, and **kung fu** have been instrumental in the evolution of other movement arts.

⇒ Video Example ⇐

As the traditional practices of dance, gymnastics, and martial arts continue to evolve, more movement arts arise that combine familiar movements with original ones. Recently, other movement arts such as **circus arts**, **street workout**, **pole fitness**, **aerial dance**, and **slacklining** have permeated mainstream culture and provided inspiration to parkour practitioners. Parkour gyms such as **APEX School of Movement** aim to provide a place where movement artists of all types can train alongside and collaborate with each other.



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HISTORY OF PARKOUR

It could be argued that parkour is a timeless practice, utilized throughout the ages by cavemen, ninjas, [Jackie Chan](#), or even the first primitive animals that slithered, scampered, and swam to evade predators or chase after prey. However, the first conscious system of parkour practice emerged from the outskirts of Paris, France in the mid 1980s. In the suburban towns of Lisses, Evry, and Sarcelles, a group of young boys and girls began to experiment with alternative forms of moving through urban and natural environments.

As childhood games progressed to casual training, the group of young people began to develop the fundamental movements and ideals of their practice. After several years of pushing their limits to higher levels of physical and mental mastery, the core group consisting of the most dedicated practitioners named themselves the “Yamakasi” (Lingala for “strong spirit, strong body, strong person”) and their practice “l’art du déplacement” (“the way of movement” according to [Breaking the Jump](#)). [The Mouvement](#) credits the nine founding members of the Yamakasi as [Williams Belle](#), [Yann Hnautra](#), [Châu Belle Dinh](#), [Sébastien Foucan](#), [Laurent Piemontesi](#), [Charles Perriere](#), [David Belle](#), [Malik Diouf](#), and [Guylain N’Guba Boyeke](#).

In [Breaking the Jump](#), Julie Angel points out that different members of the group drew inspiration for their practice from different sources including their families, [Dragon Ball](#), [Bruce Lee](#), [Jackie Chan](#), and [Jean-Claude Van Damme](#). As the Yamakasi’s warrior-like ideals eventually led them down a path to death-defying jumps and acrobatics, the media began to take notice and a world of new opportunities was opened.

The Yamakasi were first featured by the French news station Stade 2 in a [1997 TV report](#) that led to other important media opportunities. The next year, two of the founding members, David Belle and Sébastien Foucan, decided to leave the Yamakasi to pursue their own path. David Belle’s group coined the names “parkour” (their practice) and “traceur / traceuse” (a male / female practitioner of parkour), and defined the practice around efficiency and utility of movement. Not long after this split, two of the remaining seven Yamakasi earned parts in a theatrical play called

Notre Dame de Paris. Over the next couple years, almost all of the Yamakasi members performed in this internationally successful show.

The success of Notre Dame de Paris caught the eye of film director **Luc Besson**, and this ultimately led to another high profile media opportunity for the Yamakasi, Besson's 2001 film titled "**Yamakasi**." That same year, David Belle was featured in a **BBC commercial**, and two years later, Sébastien Foucan was featured in **Jump London**, an award-winning documentary produced by **Mike Christie**. Jump London aired on national television in the UK and was later shown internationally, exposing a global audience to this practice for the first time.

Interestingly, the word "freerunning" was originally created for Jump London as an English sounding synonym for parkour. Over the next few years, freerunning became known as the acrobatic version of parkour and included movements that did not demonstrate utility or efficiency. One main reason for this distinction was because Jump London highlighted some flips and spins. Additionally, Sébastien Foucan was credited as the founder of freerunning. In 2005, Jump London was followed up with a sequel, **Jump Britain**, that focused on Foucan and the rise of the parkour and freerunning scene in the UK and around the world. Through the two Jump documentaries, these movement arts received exposure as a legitimate practice and gained a valuable launching pad that would help them become featured and practiced around the world. Around the same time, the advent of YouTube and other similar social media platforms made video content creation and sharing more accessible to all, helping to spread these movement arts more rapidly around the world.

EVOLUTION OF PARKOUR, L'ART DU DÉPLACEMENT, & FREERUNNING

After all of this major media exposure, parkour, freerunning, and l'art du déplacement began to evolve organically through the independent practice of many international communities. The English speaking world was introduced to the names parkour and freerunning while the French name l'art du déplacement was mostly unused. Additionally, there wasn't an easy to find or agreed upon version of the history among the founders and the definitions of the three terms were unclear. The visual examples of the different practices often looked the same and in another **Stade 2 news report**, David Belle's group of traceurs used acrobatics that didn't adhere to parkour's defining elements of efficiency and utility. Confusion over

parkour's definition was further compounded by David's viral video "[Speed Air Man](#)," which also featured acrobatics. Naturally, a lot of debate from 2005-2010 within the international community boiled down to defining the differences between parkour, l'art du déplacement, and freerunning. Because the name l'art du déplacement remained largely unused outside of France, the debate in the English speaking world centered around defining parkour and freerunning. One side of the argument claimed that parkour and freerunning are pure and separate practices because parkour only uses movements of utility while freerunning is centered around self-expression. The other side of the debate held the position that movement is movement, regardless of intention, so they used the two terms interchangeably. The prevailing conclusion nowadays is that despite having different intents, the movements and training methods of parkour and freerunning often overlap.

First, we see this overlap in parkour where either an acrobatic movement is the most efficient technique for the challenge or where acrobatic movements play a role in the training methodology to help develop important air awareness skills that a practitioner will need in some falling scenarios and other occasional areas of non-acrobatic training. We see this overlap in freerunning where strong, efficient techniques are built into a beautiful flow of aesthetic acrobatics or enhance the creative potential a practitioner can explore with more options and shapes. Second, we also see this overlap in the way most practitioners train as they don't restrict themselves to either parkour or freerunning but instead find their own balance of both. Third, even when not utilizing specific acrobatics, relative ideas of efficiency and utility lead practitioners to prepare themselves with sometimes odd challenges that on the surface don't appear to be efficient or useful.

What it comes down to is that sometimes an outsider cannot spot exactly whether parkour or freerunning is being trained, and only the practitioner knows their true intentions. Furthermore, those intentions can sometimes span both practices in the same moment, and for all of the above reasons, parkour has become the most often used umbrella term for simplicity when not making specific references to parkour or freerunning.

Even though the transition to the English speaking world didn't bring with it the term l'art du déplacement, the four remaining members of the Yamakasi continue to develop their practice. Although it can still be difficult to determine the difference between l'art du déplacement and freerunning, the Yamakasi's ADD Academy website presently defines

their practice as, “[aiming] at the (re-)appropriation of one’s environment, via moving one’s body in respect of the environment, of nature, of other people and one’s surroundings.”

It’s good to know the differences between all movement arts such as parkour, slacklining, l’art du déplacement, freerunning, and dance, but the modern trend is for practitioners to experiment with all forms of movement. There are many overlapping techniques in all movement arts, and cross-training often improves performance across many styles of movement. Additionally, most movement arts share the same physical and mental benefits. Whatever movement art you choose to focus on, it is important to learn about the roots of what you practice.

THE RISE OF PARKOUR EDUCATION

As parkour has grown in popularity around the world, so has the need for good parkour teachers and facilities. These coaches help guide efficient training practices and reduce injuries. The many parkour facilities that have popped up around the world are even further fueling the growth of the discipline. Modeled primarily as educational facilities that both mimic the real world and provide mats and soft surfaces for safety, parkour gyms are a popular tool for modern practitioners to progress their skills. Many practitioners now use the gym as a community place to learn and practice with the ultimate goal of applying all their skills to environments not purpose-built for parkour.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- [Breaking the Jump by Julie Angel](#)
- [No Obstacles by Alec Wilkinson \(New Yorker Magazine\)](#)
- [Generation Yamakasi](#)



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WHO CAN DO PARKOUR?

Anyone can do parkour. If you think parkour is only for shirtless and athletic teenage guys, I don't blame you; parkour videos on YouTube have been known to be dominated by a young male crowd. But don't let that fool you, I have trained with countless people of all ages and abilities. The two most common excuses I hear are, "Maybe if I was younger" or "I'm too out of shape."

Even if you think you are too old or too fat, parkour will help you shed the pounds, revive your health, and make you feel young again. Whether you are working on moving over a low barrier or learning a backflip; parkour is about exploring and improving upon your own capabilities. Some of the most inspiring traceurs are [overweight](#), [one-legged](#), [dealing with social inequalities](#), [45 years old](#), or [living with cerebral palsy](#). Through parkour, anyone can learn to overcome all types of obstacles ranging from actual walls and barriers to gender stereotypes and disabilities. If you are still unsure if you can do parkour, check out my other blog post, [Too Old, Too Fat, Too Weak for Parkour? NO, You Are NOT! Start With These 5 Basic Exercises](#).

WHAT EQUIPMENT DO I NEED?

One beautiful thing about parkour is that you don't need any equipment to do it. However, if you aren't a nudist and you practice in an unpredictable, outdoors area, you will want some athletic clothes and shoes to wear for minor protection. Conversely, we do not recommend gloves, helmets, or pads in your practice. It is possible to do all the basics of parkour safely without pads or helmets, so you should strive to learn good technique rather than relying on equipment. Even though parkour will eventually result in blisters and calluses on your hands, over time your hands will become tougher. Gloves can reduce hand sensitivity and ultimately make parkour more dangerous.

CLOTHING

When first starting out, parkour clothes should be whatever athletic clothes are most comfortable to you. Because parkour is an incredibly dynamic activity, your clothing should not restrict you at all. Some people prefer hoodies and pants to get a little extra protection against hard or rough surfaces during specific movements such as rolling or climbing. Another school of thought is that you should practice in different types of clothing so that you know how to adapt your movement to less ideal garments such as jeans or coats.

SHOES

Parkour shoes are a complicated subject. If you ask a hundred experienced traceurs what their favorite parkour shoe is, you will probably get at least 10-20 different answers. As a beginner, your primary focus should be low-impact movement with good form. Shoes with minimal padding will promote better technique because of the instant feedback they provide. You will be less likely to do jumps or drops outside of your limits because if you do them wrong, you will get hurt! **Training in minimalist shoes will also make your feet and entire body stronger in the long term.** I'm not saying everyone should train barefoot all the time, but you should slowly try to fix the problem of weak and stiff feet, not simply treat the symptoms by wearing a ton of extra padding and support.

If you have been wearing heavily padded shoes for your whole life, your feet are probably de-conditioned and not ready for a sudden switch to minimalist shoes. In this case, I recommend getting a pair of minimalist shoes that are only for non-athletic activities at first. For parkour and other sports, you can use padded shoes with the intent of switching to a slightly less padded shoe every few months. As you get stronger and more used to less padding, start doing warm-ups and/or light parkour with minimalist shoes. The eventual goal is to do the majority of parkour training in minimalist shoes. For occasional training sessions, competitions, or performances that are more impactful than normal, it's ok to wear padded shoes for extra protection.

There are a few other general things to look for in a good parkour shoe. Even though good technique can make up for a lack of grip, look for a shoe with a relatively smooth sole because it generally has more surface area and therefore, better grip. Some rubber compounds are grippier than others, and you can usually determine this quickly by feeling the sole with your hands or testing out the shoe. Avoid hard, plastic materials on the sole of the shoe (usually the arch). For obvious reasons, it is good to have shoes that are lightweight and flexible but also durable. Lastly, it is important to find a shoe that does not have an elevated heel because it puts the Achilles tendon in a constantly shortened position that will limit performance and ankle mobility in the long run. Additionally, an elevated heel creates a longer lever out of the foot/ankle which means if you roll an ankle, the injury will likely be more severe than if you were barefoot or in minimalist shoes.

WHERE DO I GO TO PRACTICE?

Another amazing thing about parkour is that you can practice it in any environment, **natural** or manmade. While people typically practice parkour with obstacles like benches, walls, and rails, you can also practice a lot of parkour basics, such as quadrupedal movement and rolls, in the middle of an open, grassy field. A common excuse that I hear from novices is, “I don’t have any good spots to practice at.” Even though spots that are dense with obstacles are usually considered better, limiting yourself to a single obstacle or “bad” spots can be just as beneficial. Don’t go searching for places to do a particular trick you saw in a video; the true spirit of parkour is to adapt to any obstacle at hand. **Even a simple rail can provide plenty of opportunities for practice.**



Parkour is a global phenomenon so you have a good chance of finding other traceurs in your area to practice with. The best way to find the local parkour community is to search the Internet and Facebook for websites and groups in your area. Once you’ve found your local hub, you can stay updated on community events and training meetups, also known as “jams.” You may even have a parkour gym or program in your area. These are typically great places to get started, learn from **experienced coaches**, and train in a safe and controlled environment. If you don’t have a parkour gym near you, you may be able to find a gymnastics, climbing,

CrossFit, or martial arts gym where you can learn some of the basic moves. However, try not to limit yourself to these “safe” indoor facilities. Real parkour is done with unforgiving, real-world type obstacles like trees, scaffolding, walls, and rocks. A gym full of padded progressions and a plethora of obstacles can be a prime training spot, but you should also consistently test your skills and creativity in other environments.



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HOW DO I GET INTO SHAPE?

The best way to start getting into shape for parkour is by doing parkour. Because everyone begins at a different level, there are no prerequisites for parkour. You don't have to start out with anything difficult or high impact. In fact, you should play it safe at first and stick to simple movements while you build up your level of fitness. Balance along curbs, step over benches, or play a rousing game of "Don't touch the ground, it's made out of lava!" Try to play for at least 30 minutes a day and you will naturally start developing many of the basic skills of parkour.

If you are still worried about hurting yourself or you want to start out with a more structured plan, add jogging, stretching, and some basic bodyweight exercises to your workouts. Focus on good form in order to safely develop strength through exercises like [air squats](#), [dead hang pull-ups](#), and [push-ups](#). Be sure to frequently try new movements such as my [top 10 exercises for beginners in parkour](#) so that you don't get bored or run into plateaus. Better yet, grab a copy of my book, *[Parkour Strength Training](#)*, so that you can gain access to the many years of experience and wisdom that I have gained on top of preparing your body for parkour.

BASIC PARKOUR MOVEMENTS

There is no exact formula for learning the basics of parkour. Everybody comes from a different background and will have their own strengths and weaknesses. The most important thing is to be safe. The second most important thing is to have fun! When you start out, push your limits slowly, be creative, and experiment with all types of movement. If you are looking for a bit more structure during the beginning of your training, start with simple techniques and gradually build up to more complex ones. Similarly, start out with the most low to ground skills and carefully work your way up to ones that are higher off of the ground.

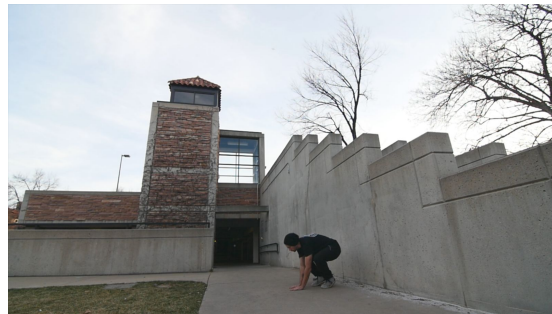
QUADRUPEDAL MOVEMENT

The first parkour movement that you should learn is how to move along the ground on all four limbs. The weight transfer skills, coordination, and full body conditioning gained from **quadrupedal movement** are valuable foundational skills for other movements including landing, falling, and vaulting. While moving on all fours seems simple, the challenge it can provide for all ability levels is a testament to its importance for all practitioners. In addition, moving quadrupedally has many practical applications, including moving under obstacles, over irregular surfaces, and up or down steep terrain.



LANDING

Another critical movement to learn is how to land properly from all sorts of drops and jumps. However, it should be noted that squatting and standing are prerequisites for good landings. Once you understand proper standing posture and squatting technique, you are ready to learn how to land. It is important not to lose yourself in the guts and glory of flashy



flips and gigantic jumps. Gentle, quiet landings make parkour sustainable. Nothing will put you out of this game faster than bad landings. Anyone can learn to throw a flip or a big jump, but the landing reveals true skill. Once the symmetrical, bipedal landing is learned, falling techniques become an extension of the landing. Additionally, you will eventually learn that there are many different types of landings in parkour such as precision landings, hard landings, and soft landings.

FALLING

At some point, early on in your parkour journey, you will **fall, fail, or bail**. It is important to master **rolling** in all directions because rolls may be used intentionally as a landing method or accidentally as a falling technique. Being familiar with movements such as dive rolls, cartwheels, and handstands will further reduce the risk



of injury in a falling scenario. Ukemi is an important part of martial arts that addresses falling technique among other things. This concept is even more critical to apply to parkour because the real world is not made out of squishy mats; it is full of hard, irregular, and unpredictable surfaces and obstacles. A solid understanding of falling skills will help prevent serious injuries while simultaneously increasing mental game and athletic longevity. To learn more on this topic, read **this**.

BALANCING

Once you have learned quadrupedal movement, landing, and falling, you are ready for **balancing**. The basics of balance should be learned before jumping because jumps may begin and end in unbalanced positions. When balance is coupled with landing skills, jumps can be performed safely. At this point, you will be prepared to land, roll, or fall if something goes wrong. Balance plays a role in nearly every movement in parkour so if your balance improves, so will everything else. One



of the best ways to improve balance is to practice moving along challenging surfaces such as lines on the ground, sidewalk curbs, or rails.

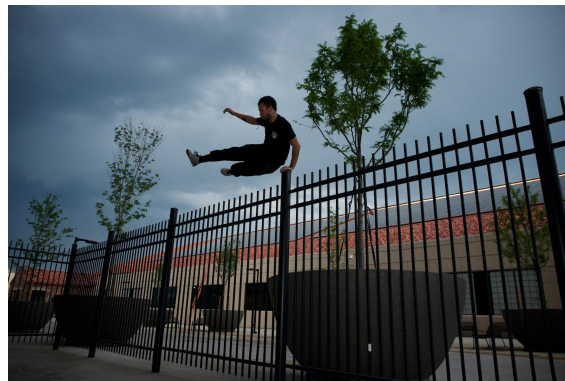
JUMPING

After you have gained a basic understanding of balance, you should learn proper **jumping** form at ground level. As you begin to understand all parts of the jump, try a jump to a precise landing that is low to the ground. As the standing jump and precision landings are mastered, running jumps are next. Countless techniques in parkour incorporate a jump so it should be practiced in all kinds of ways; taking off one or two feet, landing on one or two feet, with a run-up, from a stand, across a gap, at a weird angle, and so on.



VAULTING

A good next step after learning to jump is to practice **vaulting**. Vaulting typically consists of overcoming low-level obstacles (knee to chest high) with the use of arms and legs. Broken down into parts, a vault begins with a run-up followed by a jump. As the hands contact the obstacle and you pass over the top, you are essentially doing a variation of quadrupedal movement. For example, **ground kongs** are a great progression for kong vaults, and the arm position of a lazy vault resembles that of a **crab walk**. Depending on the outcome of these movements, the vault will end with a landing, a roll, or a fall, all of which you should be familiar with at this point. There are many types of purposeful and flashy vault variations, so experiment and see what you can come up with!



WALL RUNNING

Wall running is the next movement skill to learn and includes any technique involving a run-up with a foot strike on a sloped or vertical wall. Wall running techniques, which include **wall runs**, tic tacs, and **pop vaults**, are used to change directions, move over low obstacles, and grab high obstacles (taller than your standing reach).

While vaulting and wall running variations are numerous, they almost always combine running and jumping with several other foundational movements.



BRACHIATING

As more techniques are mastered, movements begin to apply to increasingly taller obstacles. With all the basic ground level techniques out of the way, the next skill you should learn is brachiating. Brachiating consists of swinging or shimmying along overhead obstacles like bars and branches. There are many brachiation techniques in parkour, including **pull-ups**, **muscle-ups**, **underbars**, **sloth shimmy**, monkey bars, laches, and tap swings. These techniques usually rely on the arms and methods to harness the power of gravity, conserve energy, and preserve momentum.



CLIMBING

As you get stronger and become comfortable relying on your arms, climbing should be introduced as a means to conquer the tallest obstacles that other techniques cannot. In parkour, there are



many types of climbing (also known as **buildering**) ranging from cat leaps, **climb-ups**, and climb-downs to crack climbing, laybacks, and stemming. Although a lot of climbing in parkour has more of a horizontal component to it, keep in mind that vertical climbing becomes inherently more dangerous as you get higher above the ground. To climb safely more than a few feet off the ground, you should possess good upper body strength and solid technique in landing, falling, and brachiating.

FLIPPING & SPINNING

Now that the basics of safe and efficient movement have been addressed, you will be better suited to contend with the complexities of flipping and spinning. While these techniques are typically for aesthetics only, they bring a higher level of understanding to movement. Most of the previous skills learned were natural to our childhood development and evolution as a species, but flipping and twisting techniques served little to no purpose to our survival and are relatively harder for us to learn. There are infinite ways to mix flipping and twisting techniques into movement, but the basics of flipping and twisting include techniques like **wall spins**, front flips, back flips, and side flips. Flipping and twisting will also further increase body awareness and falling skills so that the risk of injury from falling is even further reduced.



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INTERMEDIATE PARKOUR

Once you have mastered the basics of parkour, there are infinite ways to expand upon your movement arsenal. Depending on what you like about parkour, you may choose to focus on acrobatics, strength moves, big jumps, **time trials**, or something else. It is a good thing to be well rounded and **address your weaknesses**, but it is also important to develop your own style that you excel at.

With so many new things you can choose to learn at this point, I'm not going to give you much guidance for now. Just experiment and see what you can come up with on your own. Or if there is some move in particular you want to learn, ask for help or look for some quality articles or tutorials to boost your understanding. More importantly, at this point in your practice, think less about training single moves and more about applying your skills to longer sequences of movements, obstacle courses, and less structured, playful games like **add-on**.

PARKOUR JAZZ

Even though parkour is typically thought of as fluid and fast movement without any stops, the nature of learning a new art or sport requires you to first isolate individual techniques. Next up is combining those techniques into longer sequences. Finally, you should aim for spontaneous movement that is free of any pre-planned movements or choreography. Parkour is a lot like jazz. First you must learn to play the notes and chords (single moves), then you should learn to put them together into bars, measures, and songs (combinations and lines), and finally, you should forget everything you know and just improvise (play, compete, or perform). This state of thoughtless **flow**, also known as "the zone," is obtained through years of practice and is the ultimate goal of athletes in all sports.

As a total beginner, a large amount of your time spent practicing will be dedicated to learning and repeating single moves. Some movements might even need to be broken down into smaller parts in order to be mastered. For example, somebody who is having trouble learning a vault may need to break it down even further and simply practice the run-up and take-off. In order to commit movements

to muscle memory and be able to perform them in thoughtless succession, you must first isolate the individual moves.

Once a beginner has mastered several movements, they can work on the ability to integrate these movements into short combinations, pre-planned lines, and courses. Many times, it is not the single tricks and moves that defines skill, it is the ability to link the moves together with speed, grace, and creativity. While an expert can put together a long string of movements that seamlessly blend together, a beginner may link a similar string of movements punctuated with stutter steps, hesitations, and a lack of planning that puts them in poor position to move effortlessly into the next technique. Stutter steps are typically eliminated when students learn to take bigger strides as they enter and exit a movement. Additionally, the ability to judge distances and foot placement as you navigate obstacles will help you link everything together. Hesitations are eliminated with confidence through repetition and experience. The more perfect repetitions you do, the more confident you become and the less likely you are to second guess yourself during a movement. Experiencing all kinds of movements and obstacles will help you adapt to new scenarios. The last important thing to consider for linking movements together is planning. A quick survey of the line or course at hand will tell you a lot about how to link things together. While a beginner might not be able to react to mistakes or misjudgments on the fly like an expert, thinking before moving will help you link things together more smoothly.

As a parkour practitioner transcends an expert skill level, they will have such a big arsenal of movements committed to muscle memory that they are capable of executing and linking movements without thinking. This practitioner is highly adaptable and can make instantaneous adjustments to preserve unbroken movement. This ability to improvise is what will increase your odds of successfully using parkour in an emergency situation. Even if this real-life test never happens to you, these skills are still invaluable as a performance or competition athlete. Performances and competitions are like simulated, high-pressure emergency situations. Even a choreographed performance or a carefully planned course-running strategy can go awry. Your ability to improvise determines whether or not you overcome this adversity. Another form of improvisation is play, which can be developed through creative movement and drills like **10 second drill**. Improvisation is

not just for experts. Parkour practitioners of all levels can work on improvising at different scales using the movements that they have mastered.

INTERMEDIATE PARKOUR STRENGTH TRAINING

As you get stronger, it is important to keep challenging yourself with tougher exercise progressions and workouts. There are tons of bodyweight exercises, for the upper body especially, to challenge even the strongest athletes. To get some more ideas, read my article about the [best bodyweight exercises for intermediate parkour practitioners](#) or check out my book, *Parkour Strength Training*.



Once you have mastered basic bodyweight exercises such as squats, pull-ups, and push-ups, it is time to start considering the addition of weightlifting to your workouts. In some ways, weightlifting is the antithesis of parkour. Weightlifting requires special equipment, lacks creativity, and is mostly limited to specialized gyms. However, there is no denying the fact that weightlifting can increase strength and power like nothing else. When done right, weightlifting is a powerful supplement to your parkour and plyometric training; it will increase your jumps, fortify your

landings, and boost your climbing to new heights. If you want to learn more, read my article about the [best weightlifting exercises for parkour athletes](#).

PARKOUR IN REAL LIFE, TIME SENSITIVE CHALLENGES & EMERGENCIES

As you hone your skills and craft a solid foundation of movement, you may find that you want to dedicate a portion of your training to the parkour that is especially practical for the challenges that life may sometimes present. Parkour randori is a project that zooms in on this aspect of training. To learn more on the topic, scope out this short article about [parkour randori](#).



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◦ **PARKOUR 100 SERIES** ◦

ADDITIONAL VIDEO INSPIRATION

Nowadays, there are countless inspiring and educational resources for parkour online. No matter who you are, you can find stories, ideas, and people to identify with. I encourage you to explore these resources and never stop learning. Never stop moving. As you continue to progress in your training, keep seeking out more wisdom of all types and in all formats. Here is a final list of a few additional video resources to help you find your own way.

- [The Monkey's Back](#)
- [Trü Beauty: A Luci Romberg Story](#)
- [Out of Time](#)
- [Parkour and the Art of Play \(TEDx Talk\)](#)
- [Jump Westminster](#)
- [Parkour Pilgrimage](#)
- [Nature of Challenge](#)
- [Professor Longhair, Big Chief](#)



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