



UNIT - PARKOUR

*“There are no limits, only obstacles, and any obstacle can be overcome.”
David Belle*

WHAT IS PARKOUR?

Parkour (pronounced par-KOOR): In the strictest sense as defined by David Belle, Parkour is the art of moving through your environment as swiftly and effectively as possible using only the human body.

More broadly, it might be defined as the discipline of developing the physical and mental capacity of the human being while through training to overcome obstacles.



Parkour, the name of which derives from a French word meaning "route," is a system of movement that takes the most direct route between two points. Parkour was developed in urban environments. Most traceurs, as they're called, practice in these environments. This route can involve leaping over obstacles, climbing walls, or traveling along rooftops. Parkour practitioners value spatial awareness, efficiency of movement and a knowledge of the urban landscape.

- Parkour is the act of moving from point “a” to point “b” using the obstacles in your path to increase your efficiency.
- A practitioner of parkour is called “traceur” or “traceuse” if she is female.
- The word comes from the French “parcours”, which literally means, “course”, “the way through”, or “the path”.
- Parkour emphasizes strength, flexibility, balance, body control, creativity, fluidity, discipline, and precision.
- Parkour movements include running, jumping, vaulting, climbing, balancing, and crawling.
- Parkour practitioners value community, humility, sharing of knowledge, and the importance of play, while demonstrating respect for all people, places, and spaces.

PARKOUR HISTORY

It was birthed in France in the suburbs of Paris in the 1980's by a group of young men, including but not limited to David Belle, Sebastien Foucan, Yann Hnautra and Chau Belle-Dinh. They called their activities as “l'Art du Deplacement”. At the core of this group were 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 word meaning 'Strong man, strong body, strong spirit', and for over a decade they practised their discipline together and alone.

The roots of their training can be traced back to (among many other things) the training systems of George Hébert, a French naval officer in the French army and physical educator. Because he was a soldier, he often traveled to Africa, where he was impressed by the efficient, flowing athletic movements of most of the African tribes he visited. After he had returned to France, he began to develop a method of natural movement for officers serving in the military, in which both men and women were trained to move efficiently and fluently around a wide variety of obstacles in their path. The discipline called “méthode naturelle” and “parcours du combattant”, started to be regularly used to train soldiers, setting the stage for the later development of Parkour.

One of the influences that inspired the Yamakasi to explore the urban-rural environment in entirely new ways throughout their childhood was David's father, Raymond Belle. 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.

The influence of David's father was more than just an introduction to Hebertism however; he also instilled in his son the roots of what would go on to become the philosophy of Parkour. Sebastien Foucan (who trained with Yann Hnautra and David Belle during the critical birthing period of Parkour) speaks of how Raymond Belle encouraged them both to better themselves, stating that with dedication they could reach their dreams.

According to one of the group, the start of the 'big jumps' came at around age fifteen. They began to develop and refine a fundamental set of movements: vaults, jumps, climbs, rolls. They taught themselves to be athletes, moving through their environment in a way never before seen in an urban setting. Obviously it is these 'big jumps' that have grabbed the attention of the world's media and mainstream consciousness, though all experienced practitioners are quick to play down the significance of the more spectacular aspects of Parkour.



The inventor of Parkour

The most well-known founding figure of Parkour is David Belle, who learned about the methode naturelle discipline by his father back in the 1980s. The group he trained in, came up with the term "parkour," which came from Parkour is also acknowledged as "l'art du déplacement", and some people just call it "PK."

Due to differences in personal philosophy their initial training (that had no real name) split into slightly different activities and became parkour, "l'art du déplacement" and "freerunning".

L'art Du Deplacement: Literally, the art of displacement/forward movement. This is the term originally used for the training done by David Belle and his peers in Lisses (France), before the term Parkour was invented. The practice is essentially identical to Parkour but the philosophy is more about developing the strength, courage, and capacity of the human being; utility and aesthetic movements are both important.

Freerunning: Another term used for Parkour and L'art du Deplacement. Invented by Sebastien Foucan, the name follows from Foucan's focus on the aspect of freedom offered by the training of this discipline. For many, the practice is not really different from Parkour, though it focuses very much on aesthetic movements and acrobatics.

WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR? / HOW CAN IT HELP ME? WHY PRACTICE PARKOUR?

PARKOUR is a movement activity that promotes health and fitness whilst teaching young people to master their bodies and minds. There are three core philosophies that PK practitioners ascribe to:

- 1) Être et durer – to be and to last (to live and train in a sustainable manner),
- 2) Être fort pour être utile – be strong to be useful (use the skills gained through training to benefit others) and

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3) Obstacles can be overcome (the inherent philosophy that must be believed in order to practice parkour).

The immediate benefits are the physical ones - moving around your environment in creative ways will make you fit, strong and flexible. That's only scratching the surface however, the real lasting benefits are mental, social and spiritual. Another reason to practice would be:

– Physical Health. Parkour is great exercise

Running, jumping, climbing, swinging. Parkour is a full-body workout that will simultaneously improve your body awareness and coordination, your physical health:



- Able to generate more speed and power
- Better movement quality
- Enhanced joint range of motion and higher bone mass density
- Heightened spatial awareness and proprioception (the ability to sense the position and location and orientation and movement of the body and its parts)
- Help with maintaining a healthy weight
- Improved balance and coordination
- Greater muscular strength, endurance and flexibility
- More knowledge of and ability to apply practical movement skills

Combined, these things contribute to improving one's quality of life, by improving movement ability/quality, strengthening the immune system, reducing the severity and chance of physical injury and helping with sleep.

– Mental and Emotional Health. Parkour is a challenge

The positive benefits of exercise on mental/emotional health are getting greater press in recent years. Parkour, with its holistic, inclusive and non-competitive nature can improve practitioner mood, enhance creativity and attitude, release stress and reduce incidences of depression, but also risk assessment and problem solving skills and forward thinking.

- Able to appropriately assess and measure risks, helping to overcome fears and anxieties
- Better problem solving skills
- Creates forward thinking individuals who think about the consequences of their actions
- Improved self-esteem (confidence in one's own worth or abilities; self-respect) and self-efficacy (the measure of the belief in one's own ability to complete tasks and reach goals)
- Greater intrinsic motivation to achieve goals
- Provides a positive outlet for reducing and relieving tension

Parkour will require you to push yourself physically and mentally. Starting out, you may not be able to do certain moves, but with time, you'll gain the strength and coordination you need to master them. You'll face obstacles that you think you could never do, but when you dig deep within yourself, you'll find that you can push your body beyond what you saw as its limit. As you overcome these challenges you'll gain confidence in yourself that will carry over into other parts of your life.





– Social Health. Parkour is a great way to make new friends

Parkour is about training the individual, yet paradoxically it opens up many doors for working and interacting positively with others (whether it be friends, family or strangers). This creates a culture of individual and shared responsibility, respect for one another and for the ones surroundings.

- More opportunities for participation - without the threat of “not being [blank] enough”
- Chances for teamwork and collaboration
- A willingness and desire to travel, explore and meet new people
- Stimulates national and regional pride (for community, architecture, history, etc.)
- New opportunities for volunteering and employment
- Greater awareness of, interaction with and appreciation for the environment
- Develop important leadership skills (parkour practitioners often share their knowledge with others and become instructors themselves)



Parkour is a social sport. It's typically done in groups, and the parkour community is very friendly and supportive. It's not competitive; rather, the goal is to have a good time and to help each other improve.

– Spiritual Health. Parkour makes you more creative

Parkour requires you to look at your environment creatively, you do the way that you want. Every fence, wall, or gap becomes an opportunity to try a new move. This sort of playfulness and creativity can seep over to other areas of your life, helping you find creative solutions to problems at work or in your relationships.

By highlighting our individual strengths, talents, skills and passions, parkour helps to show us that our existence is meaningful and that we've a purpose that only we can fulfil. The notion that obstacles can be overcome, be explored as a way of life and for some is a spiritual pursuit in itself.

– Parkour is fun!

In parkour, you basically treat the world around you like a giant playground and just we want to run around, explore without limits, and simply play again.

The best thing about parkour, above and beyond all of the examples given, is that parkour is fun! It is fun to run and jump and play. There are many paths to selfimprovement but not all of them are fun. Parkour provides an avenue that is not only filled with challenge, learning and change but one that is filled with joy and satisfaction.

– Other Characteristics:

There are many positive characteristics that parkour practitioners have developed or others have seen develop in them through their training. Many of these cross the borders of one aspect of health and into another – are birthed in one and actioned in another. Such as:

- Precision and control
- Dedication and discipline
- The ability to teach oneself
- Altruism



HOW TO GET STARTED WITH PARKOUR

Be safe. Don't take unnecessary risks. Your goal is to have a good time and push yourself beyond your comfort zone, but without hurting yourself. Your first question before any movement should be, "How can I do this without injuring myself?" Make sure to train with a group or a partner so they can spot you on demanding moves and call for help if needed. Before any training session, check the environment for any potential hazards, like broken glass. In short, don't be stupid.

Take it slow. Know your limits. Just because those around you are doing crazy flips and aerials from giant buildings, doesn't mean you have to. Don't try to do too much too soon. It's going to take a while for your body to adapt to the physical demands of parkour. Don't move on to more complicated moves until you've mastered the basics. On a related note, don't get so cocky about your abilities that you don't take every move seriously. Pride usually goes before the fall, and in parkour that fall can really hurt.

Respect private property. Stick to doing parkour in public spaces like parks and city places. Try to avoid times with high pedestrian traffic. If somebody asks you to leave, politely say, "Sure thing!" If the police confront you, be courteous, explain what you're doing, and comply with requests to take it somewhere else. Parkour is a new and unfamiliar sport. Anything you can do to give it a good name will help in making it more acceptable.

BASIC PARKOUR MOVEMENTS

LANDING

Another movement that is important to learn is how to land.

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.



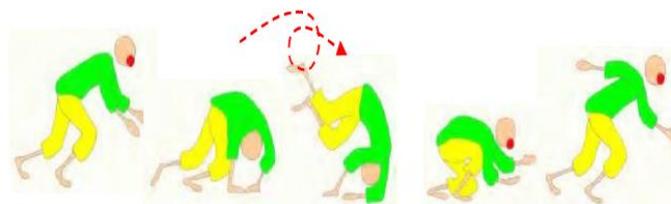
FALLING / ROLLING

Rolls in all directions are important for you to master because they may be used intentionally as a landing method or accidentally as a falling technique.

Being familiar with movements such as handstands, dive rolls, cartwheels, and full turns will further reduce the risk of injury in a falling scenario.



Roll: The body is rolled across the ground shoulder first, ending at the opposite hip. Similar to the roll used in grappling martial arts. The body is rolled across the ground shoulder first, ending at the opposite hip.



BALANCING

Balance plays a role in nearly every movement in PK so if your balance improves, you will improve everything else.

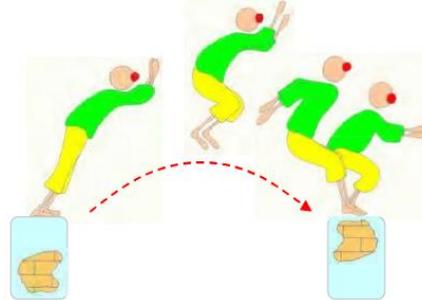




JUMPING

Once you have a basic understanding of balance, you should learn proper jumping form at ground level, starting from a stand.

Precision Jump: A jump where a traceur lands on a precise surface like a rail, or wall ledge. Both legs jump together and the arms swing forward to help initiate forward momentum.



Cat Leap or Cat Jump: A jump where the traceur lands with his hands on the top of an obstacle and his feet on the obstacle.

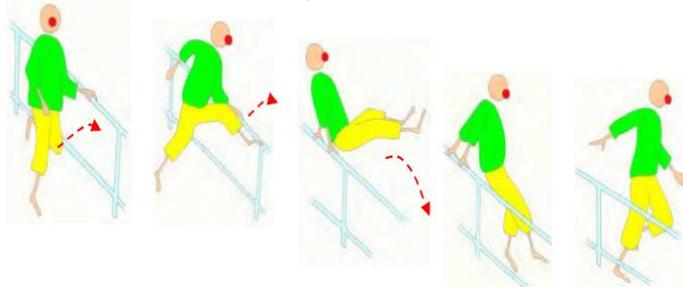


Cat 180: From Cat Hang position, 180 jump to another wall landing in Cat Hang position

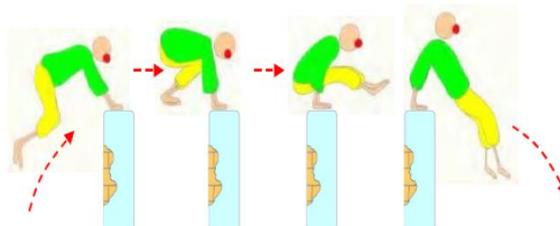
VAULTING

Vaulting typically consists of overcoming low-level obstacles, 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.

Lazy Vault: A type of vault where the obstacle is approached obliquely and the legs pass over the obstacle first; one or two hands can be used, and are placed on the obstacle as the body passes over it.

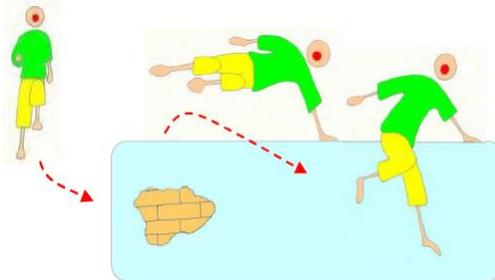


Cat Pass Vault or Monkey The body passes over the obstacles with the legs in between the arms. A vault where the body passes over the obstacles with the legs in between the arms. This is called a squat over vault in gymnastics. One of the most versatile vaults; excellent for clearing long and high objects and getting extra distance.

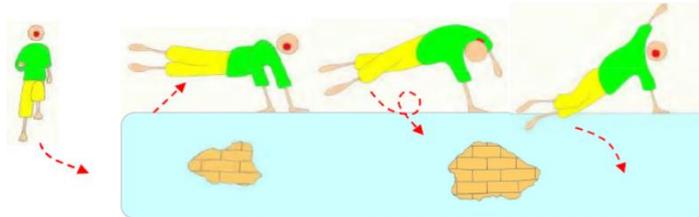




Speed Vault: A variation of the single-hand vault, but as the name implies the key to the speed vault is speed. The form is similar to a hurdle over an obstacle, but with the body leaning sideways and the hand tapping the obstacle as you go over.



Reverse Vault: A vault where the body turns over behind the hands completing a 360 over the obstacle.



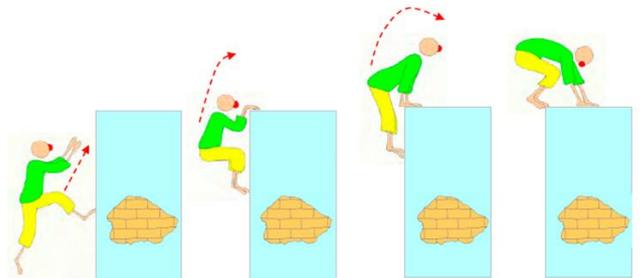
Dash vault: A vault where the traceur jumps over the obstacle and puts his hands down as his legs pass the obstacle to help push him off.

Kash Vault: A vault which begins like a cat/kong but finishes like a dash.

WALL RUNNING

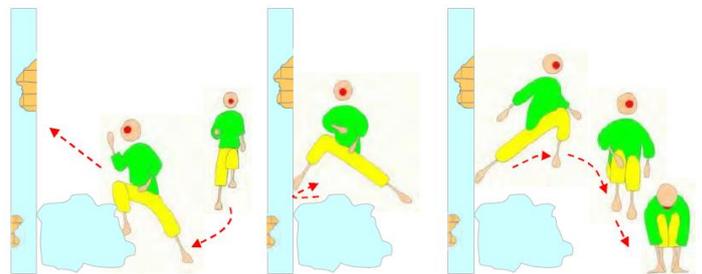
It includes any technique involving a run up with a foot strike on a vertical wall.

Wall running techniques, which include wall runs, tic tacs, and palm spins, are used to change directions, move over low level obstacles, and grab high-level obstacles



Wall Pass: Technique involving running toward a wall and then converting the forward momentum into a jump. A wall pass involves taking one or more running steps up a vertical surface and catching on the top with your hands in order to pull yourself up and onto or over the obstacle.

Wall Run: A run along the top of wall.



Tic Tac: A technique where the traceur pushes of one object with her foot to gain height and reverse momentum in order to overcome another obstacle.

Palm Spin: A 180 spin on a wall or rail using both hands

Underbar: The traceur jumps feet first through an opening and grabs a bar at the top to aid him through.

