**What is Parkour?** – From nerdfitness.com’s article on parkour, it is “natural, effective movement”. Parkour does not only apply to the sport, where one moves from one point to another in the fastest and most efficient way possible, but also applies to everyday life in how you encounter obstacles and overcome them. A male practitioner of parkour is called a *traceur*, and a female practitioner is called a *traceuse*.

However, as we are looking at the physical aspect of parkour, we will focus on the former definition of parkour – *the sport of traversing environmental obstacles by running, climbing, or leaping rapidly and efficiently.* [http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/parkour]

**History of Parkour** – The origins of parkour can be traced back to a French naval officer named Georges Hérbert, who is credited for the creation of the modern military obstacle course which was called *“parcours”*  (which the word parkour is derived from), and for promoting natural movement. The credit for the founding of parkour would go to Raymond Belle, who followed the teachings of Hérbert’s natural movement, and his son David Belle. Parkour is a relatively new sport, as Hérbert lived in the early 1900s and David Belle is still alive today (born in 1973), but has gained a large following recently as movies such as *Casino Royale* and games like *Assassin’s Creed* make use of parkour. Ironically, as parkour was developed from military obstacle courses, modern military forces are now looking to incorporate parkour into their training programs.

**Misconceptions of Parkour** – Often parkour and freerunning are seen as the same thing, but they have some differences. Parkour is a method of moving from one place to another in the fastest and most efficient way, emphasis on efficient. Freerunning is a much more acrobatic, and is meant more for personal development rather than a means of movement (all those flips and spins aren’t exactly effective when you’re trying to escape a horde of zombies). For parkour, simple is best.

**Safety Precautions** – The most important rule of parkour is to trust your instincts. If you feel that you cannot do a certain skill, don’t push yourself to do it just yet, practice the steps involved in the move and when you feel confident, try it. However, don’t be too overconfident and overestimate your abilities and training level as that will be when you get injured. Master the basics before moving onto more advanced techniques.
 The environment in which you practice parkour is also a point of safety. When you practice note the weather conditions, is it wet, dry, hot, cold, dark, sunny etc.? You don’t have any control over these, but make sure you keep the conditions in mind as they may hinder your movement. As you become accustomed to noticing these conditions, you will be able to adjust quickly to any potential hazards.

**Equipment** – No equipment is needed for parkour, but it is advisable to wear light, comfortable clothes that don’t restrict your movement. Common clothing choices would be a t-shirt and sweatpants. In addition, comfortable shoes are also a solid choice for parkour, and would ideally be light and flexible, although some practitioners may choose to go barefoot for greater tactile feedback.

**Additional Notes -** Parkour is a non-competitive sport, so encourage others when you practice together and work to improve yourself and not to beat others. There are no real set moves in parkour, but there are some techniques that are often taught to beginners.

**Parkour Training Exercises**:

Basic Parkour Training Routine:

* 10 squats leading up to plyometric box jumps
* 10 push ups leading up to plyometric push ups (clapping push ups)
* 10 leg lifts
* 10 pull ups

Additional Body Weight Circuit Training:

Start with a short warm up

* 20 body weight squats
* 10 push ups
* 20 walking lunges
* 10 dumbbell rows
* 15 second plank
* 30 jumping jacks
* Do three of these sets

RESOURCES:

* <http://www.nerdfitness.com/blog/2010/08/12/the-definitive-guide-to-parkour-for-beginners/>
* http://www.youtube.com/AmericanParkour