



Secondary School Parkour Club Kit

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Last Updated 23/08/2018



Overview

Parkour is a popular activity among young people and the number of people practicing in New Zealand is increasing every day. With schools being excellent training grounds for parkour and young people spending a significant amount of their week at school, it is only natural that they will want to practice parkour at school.

This resource is aimed at ensuring that schools and students interested in parkour training at school are aware of what parkour is, how it can be trained safely, and be of benefit to the school and students.

What is parkour?

Parkour is a training method involving both physical activity and philosophy; a way of moving and a way of thinking combined. Its underpinning concept is that of overcoming physical obstacles in the environment using the body. As a training method, no specific movement skills or fitness are necessary in order to begin participating. While there are ways of moving that are safer, quicker, more effective and/or more efficient, there are no rules binding the practitioners to any specific way of moving or responding to a situation. This element is unique to parkour and allows practitioners of all ages, genders, physical and mental capabilities from participating and benefiting from parkour.

With no specific equipment required, parkour is extremely practical; exploring real-world movement patterns that are essential for an abundant and fulfilling life. These movement patterns include:

- Running, jumping, climbing, vaulting, swinging, rolling, moving on all fours and balancing.

The philosophies of parkour include:

- To be and to last – to live and train in a sustainable manner (i.e. exercise for health, not for trophies),
- Be strong to be useful – use the skills gained through training to benefit others (i.e. skills for community, not just for self) and
- Obstacles can be overcome – this is the inherent philosophy that must be believed in order to practice parkour (i.e. having a positive attitude towards challenges).



The physical benefits are obvious, but some of the greatest outcomes from parkour training are the increases in self-esteem, self-efficacy, confidence, ability to assess risk, and a positive attitude in the face of challenge and uncertainty.

Ultimately, parkour is a robust self-development tool packaged within a fun physical activity that feels and looks like play.

What does parkour training look like?

Parkour training can and should be extremely varied*. Here are some ways parkour is trained around the world:

- Drilling single or multiple movement skills over and over again
- Practicing different ways of overcoming the same obstacle
- Purposely moving from A to B as quickly and efficiently as possible
- Playing movement based games on/around obstacles (e.g. the ground is lava, tag variations)
- Exploring the environment with no intended destination
- Coming up with movement challenges and trying to solve them
- Moving creatively
- Personal expression through movement

Most of these things can be practiced by oneself or in a group. Regardless of how parkour is trained, parkour practitioners should be respectful of the spaces they use, the people who live/work there and the other users in those spaces, not to mention their own bodies.

**NOTE: Proper parkour training does not involve reckless jumps on rooftops.*

Principles for training parkour inside

Parkour was born outdoors and so truly finds its feet as an outdoor activity, but training inside can be a valuable alternative when done with the right mind-set. Take the following elements into consideration:

Equipment: Freerunning, gymnastics, and tricking are activities that are either incorporated with or confused with parkour training. These activities often make use of mats and trampolines for learning and honing flips, twists, and spins. Parkour on the other hand is more focused on practical movement skills rather than the more



acrobatic movement skills. There's no reason why both can't be practiced at the same time, but it's important to note that trampolines, mats and other soft or bouncy obstacles are not necessary for parkour training and can even be detrimental. When parkour is the goal, replicating the outdoor environment is important – use hard materials as much as possible.

Feedback:

Replicating the outdoor environment is important for safe and sensible transitions between indoor and outdoor training. One of the main reasons for this is the concept of feedback. Feedback refers to the information the body receives when coming into contact with obstacles. Hard surfaces are unforgiving and give a lot of feedback to the body, requiring sensible interaction. Soft surfaces on the other hand remove the consequences of bad technique, making it difficult to understand and improve skills.

Example:

The parkour roll is a skill for dissipating landing forces and preserving momentum. It doesn't take long to learn how to roll on soft surfaces because it never really feels like you're doing it wrong. That's because the soft surfaces don't give feedback, so the practitioner will not know what parts of their back (shoulder, spine, hips, etc.) make contact with the ground when rolling. Injuries are likely to occur when transitioning this "mat roll" to a hard surface. Therefore, it is important to brave discomfort by learning to roll on hard surfaces first so that appropriate feedback is given to the body. This is likely to prevent serious injuries in later training. *In short: Learn on hard to perform it anywhere. Learn on soft and have to relearn as well as face potential injury.*

Risk Assessment:

The most important aspect of safety in parkour is how a person chooses to interact with an obstacle and whether the obstacle(s) and their chosen movement(s) is something appropriate for that person. Every practitioner is responsible for the risks they choose to take. Staff and students should be wary of believing that a padded indoor space is automatically safer than a hard outdoor space. There can be a tendency for participants to assume that indoor/padding = safe. As a result there is often a tendency to switch off personal risk assessment skills. This often results in pushing boundaries of distance, height, speed and challenge before quality skills have been attained. This risks



injury, which is both counterproductive to training and ultimately conflicting with the philosophies of parkour.

Principles for training parkour outside

Parkour is all about adapting to the environment. When training outdoors, there's little opportunity to move obstacles around to suit oneself (unless supplementing it with additional equipment). Instead, one has to change one's own attitude and movements to overcome the fixed obstacles. Training outside does expose practitioners to the elements, so there are certain things to consider in order for outdoor training to be appropriate and safe.

Suitable Obstacles: In New Zealand there are little to no parkour specific obstacles outside. That means we use existing infrastructure for our training. Before starting, ensure that both the school and the students know what areas are on and off-limits for parkour training. Always make sure to test specific obstacles for their sturdiness and grip before trying a movement. This is especially important with obstacles students are unfamiliar with, trying new skills, or if it is or has been raining.

Other Users: There may be other staff and students using the spaces that are suitable for training. Talk with other users and see if you can use the space, but always give others the right of way. Remember, there are always other times and places to train. Never disrupt the learning of your peers by being loud or training too close to any classes in progress.

Risk Assessment: Except for grass and sand, obstacles outside are typically rough, hard, and unforgiving. This is actually important for training safely, but requires practitioners to have a sensible training ethic:

- Don't try anything beyond your ability.
- Don't go anywhere you can't get back from.
- Always check your surfaces first.
- Practice the landing or end of a movement first, so you know what to do when you get there.
- Break things down or try easier versions and build up gradually.



- Change your movement skills, speed, difficulty and training location to suit the weather.

At the end of the day, nobody wants to break property or themselves. In both instances it's costly for the school and/or student and ruins further opportunities for training.

Participation and professional development

Each parkour practitioner decides what obstacles to overcome and movements to use. With that in mind, parkour can and should be practiced by both students and staff.

Staff: Staff will have a greater working knowledge of the school, its rules and what is or isn't appropriate as discussed with the principal and senior sport/PE staff. Also, the benefits of parkour are not exclusive to young people, they're valid for all practitioners of all ages and abilities. Staff should at the very least, be involved in supervision, though we highly encourage staff participation as well.

Students: At the present time, the most experienced parkour practitioners in schools are usually students. It is therefore important to make use of these students to take responsibilities in coaching and mentoring newer practitioners (both staff and fellow students). These leadership opportunities could also be able to provide assessment opportunities for senior students.

NZ Parkour can provide professional development for both groups to improve the quality of practice and instruction at your school.

Questions for consideration

When establishing a parkour club at your school, consider the following:

- How will the sessions be run? Structured or un-structured?
- Will there be staff or students specifically available for coaching or mentoring others?
- What staff and students will be regularly involved?
- Who is responsible? How will injuries or other issues be resolved?
- If equipment is being used, who is taking care of it?



Letter to School

Dear school,

With the growing popularity of parkour, we want to ensure that our young people have training opportunities available to them and a supportive environment for them to do so safely.

Young people love to move and have fun and it is natural and encouraging that they want to do it at school. You're in a powerful position to deny or allow access to this incredible activity, so please make any and all decisions with due diligence.

Initially there may be some things that seem scary about parkour, but it's a very positive activity and in consultation with your students you will be able to ensure that both the school and the students can end up with a positive result.

Topics of note:

1. Parkour isn't traditionally competitive, so practitioners should be learning new skills at an appropriate rate to their level of understanding, confidence and physical ability. When this happens, even minor injuries can be rare.
2. Parkour is inclusive of all ages and skill levels, often grabbing the attention of those not interested in sport or other main-stream physical activities. Capitalise on this!
3. You probably have gym equipment and/or campus infrastructure that will be excellent for parkour training, as well as some things you may want to reserve. Work with students to designate what areas are allowed to be used and at what times.
4. Parkour is an excellent tool for self-development, building confidence, self-esteem, creativity and sound risk assessment skills, not to mention the more obvious physical benefits.

We look forward to working with you and your students to develop a thriving parkour club at your school.

Kind regards,

Parkour NZ



Letter to Students

Dear students,

Parkour!

It's fun and you can do it almost anywhere. We think it's awesome that you're interested in parkour and hope we get to train with you some time soon. In the meantime, if you want to train parkour at school and do it well, you need to do a few things:

1. Meet with your principal and other key staff members to discuss parkour training at your school. Some conversation points:
 - a. Where can you train?
 - b. When can you train?
 - c. Who can participate?
 - d. Who will supervise?
2. Always respect your schools equipment and property.
 - a. Although unlikely - if you're training responsibly - if something is damaged, inform the school and let them know exactly what happened.
3. Always respect your peers.
 - a. Parkour is not typically competitive, so leave your ego at the door when you're training with others. Use positive and supportive language with other participants as well as non-participants.
4. Always respect yourself.
 - a. Be sensible and don't push yourself so hard that you get injured and definitely stop training if you are injured.

Have fun and train safely.

Kind regards,

Parkour NZ



Contact

If you want help setting up a parkour club at your school, want to get some professional coaches to run some workshops or professional development, want to purchase your own set of mobile equipment, or even help you integrate parkour into your PE curriculum, then we'd love to talk to you.

Choose your preferred method below:

Phone: +64 27 747 8426
Email: contact@nzparkour.co.nz
Website: <http://nzparkour.co.nz>
Facebook: [facebook.com/theNZPA](https://www.facebook.com/theNZPA)
Twitter: twitter.com/nzparkour

If you found this resource helpful, please let us know. It's important for us to know what schools are practicing parkour and are benefiting from our resources.

We look forward to hearing from you.

- **The Parkour NZ Team**