

What is Parkour?

The term 'Parkour' originated in France in the 1980s and was adopted from 1998. It derives from the French word 'parcours' meaning 'route' or 'course'. Used interchangeably, "Parkour, Freerunning, Art Du Deplacement, is the non-competitive physical discipline of training to move freely over and through any terrain using only the abilities of the body, principally through running, jumping, climbing and quadrupedal movement."

Why is Parkour coaching growing in popularity in schools?

The 2016 edition of [Safe practice in Physical Education and Sport](#), in 'Outdoor and Adventurous Activities'. Many teachers and students would have come across different versions of activities similar to Parkour/Freerunning, and quite clearly they are very engaging and active pastimes

As inactivity increases children are often missing fundamental skills and unsupervised play is becoming increasingly rare. Especially in cities. Which is a growing problem as, in the early years – it is incredibly important to children's physical literacy development.

Parkour's roots and its day to day practice are founded in play. Many of Parkour's principles have proven a great way to use playground games for delivering Physical Education.

This coupled with Parkour's ever growing presence in popular culture has created an appetite for the sport among students and teachers.

How can Parkour be used?

As a sport, Parkour aims to develop the functional strength and fitness, balance, spatial awareness, agility, coordination, precision, *control and creative vision that are required to achieve the movement, whilst at the same time aiming to build confidence, determination, self-discipline and self-reliance, and a responsibility for one's actions.*

These outcomes can resonate across all sport and physical activity – with Parkour being a great foundation sport for general physical preparedness, a key outcome in physical education.

Whether delivering specific Parkour lessons or adding a Parkour 'flavour' to your own activities, the sport provides an opportunity to create confident and capable movers and to link 'play' into your education; which increases participation rates and enjoyment of PE classes.

Where did Parkour come from?

Parkour developed from a group of young people living in the suburbs of Paris in the 80s. The group were exploring the meaning of strength through play, challenge and exploration of their environments.

Influenced by their environment, military training, gymnastics, martial arts and other sports, Parkour slowly emerged as its own discipline with its own philosophy, movements and style. Popularised in the early 2000s through media coverage,

documentaries and film appearances, Parkour solidified its place in popular culture growing exponentially online with the birth of YouTube and social media.

The Parkour you see today often looks different from the originators vision but has retained its philosophy of taking a methodical, thoughtful approach to overcoming obstacles and challenge. It is integral to teaching the discipline that this approach is built into learning – explicitly through instruction/discussion or implicitly through play and movement games.

What are the different terms?

Practitioners generally use one of three names:

Parkour; Freerunning or L'Art Du Deplacement. As an introductory teacher, you should be aware of these three names and within the discipline there is significant discourse about what the names mean and represent but when it comes to using the discipline to teach movement in your classrooms they can be interchangeable. The important thing to remember is that the discipline is much more about the mindset and approach than it is about any particular set of movements.

How can I use Parkour?

As a sport, Parkour aims to develop the functional strength and fitness, balance, spatial awareness, agility, coordination, precision, control and creative vision that are required to achieve the movement, whilst at the same time aiming to build confidence, determination, self-discipline and self-reliance, and a responsibility for one's actions.

These outcomes can resonate across all sport and physical activity – with Parkour being a great foundation sport for general physical preparedness, a key outcome in physical education.

Whether delivering specific Parkour lessons or adding a Parkour 'flavour' to your own activities, the sport provides an opportunity to create confident and capable movers and to link 'play' into your education; which increases participation rates and enjoyment of PE classes.

Is Parkour really something that can be delivered safely in schools?

A large proportion of the concerns around Parkour come from the fact that it is new and therefore isn't seen as socially acceptable. If we think about other sports such as football, hockey or rugby we can quickly see that it's not uncommon in these sports for injury to be seen as a typical part of participating. Bumps, bruises and sprains happen without any widespread concern for the overall safety of the sport.

It is important that you can consider the safety of Parkour on its own merits in the same way. Parkour can take place in a controlled, considered environment with no moving equipment such as a ball or racket and with very little risk of collision with others as you may see in team sports.

As with any other sport a great deal of the safe practice guidance has been developed alongside the national governing bodies (NGB) of many different sports and activities.

Parkour/Freerunning is a recognised 'sport' by the UK Sports Councils (Sport England, Sport Wales, Sport Scotland, Sport Northern Ireland & UK Sport) & Parkour UK as the recognised NGB for the sport, and has worked with afPE to develop appropriate professional learning to enable Parkour to be carried out safely in schools.

I would like to see some school based Parkour/Freerunning being delivered at my school. Could I bring in a coach, and if so, what can I look for as part of my competency assessment of the coach?

Parkour UK has various [Awards, CPD & Qualifications](#) for training and development. As with most activities delivered by external coaches, for Parkour/Freerunning, schools should be looking for an individual to hold at least the [Parkour UK 1st4sport Level 2 Certificate in Coaching Parkour/Freerunning \(or the previous QCF equivalent\)](#).

In addition to this they should provide proof of qualification and appropriate insurances. Additionally it is recommended a Disclosure and Barring Service check / membership is supplied (NB a DBS certificate is not always required unless the coach is likely to be working alone with a group of students). Parkour UK can provide this service for their organisations/members.

Does holding the qualifications outlined above, enable the coach to deliver the Parkour/Freerunning session alone?

In a curriculum setting, it is ideal for a (PE) teacher to work alongside a coach as part of their on-going professional development and as part of the process of them becoming qualified. The teacher retains responsibility for the class the coach is working with. If therefore the teacher decides to allow the coach to work 'at a distance' from the them, this should only happen after a period of observation and competency assessment has been carried out. 'At a distance' means that the responsible teacher is easily and quickly on hand to intervene or help out should the need arise. (See [Safe Practice in PE and Sport](#) for more information).

What about YouTube videos that show Parkour as an extreme and dangerous sport?

When we watch a high level skier flying down a black run at 100mph, we don't assume that an introductory ski lesson is dangerous to a child. When we see a footballer stretchered off the pitch in a premier league game, we don't try and stop the local Under 8s league from flourishing. Parkour is similar. The introductory sport is very different from the extreme video clips popular on YouTube.

Many students are drawn to Parkour as a result of watching exciting clips and films on social media sites. Of course, the media version of any sport highlights the best performances and the worst performances and don't reflect the reality of the sport – but they do serve as an initial engagement tool and a 'way in' for pupils to show an interest.

Try to engage with this type of media positively and constructively with your pupils and draw a relationship between what they see and what they can achieve.



Some examples of successful parkour delivery with young people can be seen here:

[Jump Westminster - YouTube](#)

[Aberdeen school sees parkour transform students' health - BBC News](#)

[JUMP Parkour Youth Classes - YouTube](#)