



Jump Rope To Improve Running Form

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One key component to efficient running form is good posture. Those who run with their posture out of alignment will waste energy trying to maintain an inefficient position.

To run our best, we want to run tall with a slight lean from the ankles. We want our feet to land under our center of mass, not out in front of us. If viewing from the side, we should be able to draw an imaginary line from our head, down our spine, through our hips to where our foot lands under our hips.

Momentum, from pushing off the ground with our back foot, carries our body forward over our planted foot. The back foot comes forward, traveling directly under our level hips and lands beneath our center of mass. Optimal cadence is approximately 180 steps per minute. Overstriding heel-strikers often have a hard time achieving this 180 step tempo, most due to the center of mass being behind the foot as it lands too far forward.

Jumping Rope:

One of the best reasons to jump rope as a runner is it reinforces efficient running form. Jump rope with poor form and you will not be able to sustain the rhythm and pace needed to jump continuously. Jump with proper form and you will find your flow. It just so happens that proper form for jumping rope mirrors ideal posture for running efficiently. To successfully jump rope, the feet must land under the center of mass, directly under the hips, while the spine is held straight and tall. Slouching results in failed jumps. To practice ideal running form, consider adding jumping rope as a warm up, cool down, or cross-training activity.

How to get started:

Initially I assumed that since children can jump rope, getting started would be easy. I quickly learned that I had many questions: What type of rope? How long should it be? Where should I jump? How should I jump? To help me get the answers I needed I consulted Michael Schwartz, an experienced Crossfitter. He helped me figure out everything I needed to get started!

What Type of Rope: There are many types of ropes available, including beaded and weighted ropes. Schwartz explained that as an athlete I should consider a speed rope, which is a lightweight cable coated with plastic. These ropes are built to turn fast enough to sustain the paces needed for an adequate workout. He recommended I look at ropes from <http://www.rxsmartgear.com>. Another highly recommended site for quality jump ropes is <http://www.roguefitness.com>. However, any jump rope that works for you is good enough. Keep it simple.

Correct Rope Size: Some ropes may be adjustable while others require you to purchase the appropriate length of cable. To find the proper length of rope for you, the simplest method is to add three feet to your height. However, jumpers under 5 foot 6 inches and more efficient jumpers may find that three feet is a bit too long for them.

A second method is to use a measuring tape (or the actual jump rope cable if it is too long and you need to cut it). Line up the starting end of the tape or cable with the base of your pectoralis major muscle. Step on the tape or cable with one foot. Bring the remaining length of tape or cable back up to meet the starting end, at the base of your pectoralis major muscle. If you are



measuring from your armpit you are measuring too high. The distance of this entire round-trip measurement should be very close to your height plus three feet. Cut the cable and make note of the length. Error on the side of cutting the rope too long if you are not sure. You may find that some further adjustments may be needed to find your optimal length rope, but this should get you started.

Where to Jump: Schwartz recommended that I not jump directly on the concrete pavers in my yard as this will quickly degrade my rope. Instead, he suggested that I get a 4ft x 4ft piece of plywood and place it over the grass to create a supportive, shock-absorbing surface for my workout. Other easier suggestions include jumping on a mat or cardboard to protect the rope from breakage. When selecting where to jump, make sure that the mat, cardboard, or plywood surface is large enough to not catch the rope.

My Very Simple Jump Rope Routine:

When I first got started, I tried few different methods of jumping. Eventually, I decided that I needed to keep it simple. This routine makes a good warm up, emphasizes good running form, and can be lengthened to become an additional workout.

- (1) Double Hop (2 jumps per one turn of rope) x 30 jumps, recover 5-20 seconds
- (2) Single Hop (1 jump per one turn) x 30 jumps, recover 5-20 seconds
- (3) Left Leg, single hop x 30 jumps, recover 5-20 seconds
- (4) Right Leg, single hop x 30 jumps, recover 5-20 seconds
- (5) Running Step (Alternating Left Foot - Right Foot in a running motion) x 60 jumps (if counting each foot plant as 1 jump), recover at least 20 seconds before starting set over.

The routine takes between 5-10 minutes to complete. Do it once as a warm up before other types of training. Repeat this multiple times to make it a stand alone workout.

Jumping rope can be harder on the body that it seems like it should be. I recommend jumping rope only up to 3 days per week. Expect muscle groups that have not been used regularly to feel stressed, tired, and sore. Advanced jumpers can reduce the recovery between types of jumps all the way down to 0 seconds and/or repeat this series many times in a row. Eventually, you will become proficient enough to add more challenging jump steps to the set, such as **Double-unders**, where the rope must pass under the feet twice per jump.

Efficient running form and jumping rope both require good posture. A great way to train the body to hold efficient running form is by adding jump-rope to your training plan. I hope this article helps you get on your way to becoming a more efficient runner.

Thank you for taking the time to read through this article. If you have any questions or are interested in coaching, please email me a shanmcginn@gmail.com

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