

## **Parkour: Physical Skill**

Parkour is a holistic training discipline using movements that developed from military obstacle course training. Practitioners aim to get from A to B in the most efficient way possible, which is done using only the human body and the surroundings for propulsion, with a focus on maintaining as much momentum as possible while still remaining safe. Parkour can include obstacle courses, running, climbing, balancing, swinging, vaulting, jumping, rolling, crawling, sliding and the like, depending on what movement is deemed most suitable for the given situation or obstacle to overcome.

**Movement note:** There is no official list of “moves” in parkour, however the style in which practitioners move often sets them apart from others. Some examples of the ways in which practitioners move include the following:

- Running towards a high wall and then jumping and pushing off the wall with a foot to reach the top of the wall.
- Moving from a position hanging from a wall-top or ledge, to standing on the top or vaulting over to the other side.
- Vaulting over obstacles.
- Jumping and landing accurately with the feet on small or narrow obstacles.
- Jumping and catching a ledge with the hands while the feet land on a vertical surface below.
- Using a rolling motion to help absorb large impacts.

Use the character’s skill percentage (see below) when attempting a move they consider to be related to parkour practicing. Each successful move costs 1 action to perform, and performing a successful move means the character continues to maintain the speed they were moving or running at.

### **Parkour – Physical Skill levels**

**Secondary Skill:** The hobbyist. These people are self-taught and practice at locations that minimizes the potential injuries they can (and do) sustain while practicing including parks, playgrounds, and abandoned locations. Their inspirations come from movies, television, documentaries video games and online-video media. Hobbyist’s commonly practice with likeminded friends and usually while hanging out or while doing other physical activities like skateboarding or jogging. **Base Skill:** 20%+5% per level.

Attribute bonuses include +1D4+1 to S.D.C., +1 bonus to roll with punch or fall, +1 to P.S. (if P.S. is less than 16), and +1 to SPD (if SPD is less than 16). Also adds +5% to *First Aid* and *Climbing* skills (if taken) and adds an extra ½ foot to jump distance (both up and across).

**Parkour “Traceur”:** (costs two Elective skills: not available as a secondary skill)

A professional practitioner of parkour is often called a *traceur*, with the feminine form being *traceuse*. They’re nouns derived from the French verb *tracer*, which normally means “to trace”, as in “tracing a path”, in reference to drawing. A traceur takes their training to the next level, which includes a surprising amount of philosophy, theories, while blurring the lines between performing athletics and creating art. For some at this level, Parkour becomes a way of life. These are the ones who dare to leap across rooftops and more dangerous obstacles.

**Base Skill:** 40%+5% per level. Attribute bonuses at this level include +2D6 to S.D.C., +2 to M.E., P.S., P.P., P.E. and SPD. Other bonuses include +3 to roll with punch or fall, adding an extra foot to jumping distance when performing a parkour related move (up and across), and adding a +10% bonus to the following skills (if taken): First Aid, Philosophy, Climbing, Performance, Land Navigation, and Wilderness Survival.

**Traceur notes and philosophy:** Developed in France in the late 1980’s, Parkour became popular in the late 1990s and 2000s through films, documentaries, television, video games, online video-sharing and advertisements featuring these practitioners and others. Parkour is considered to be a sport with events, competitions, and official teams around the world, although this is controversial as many practitioners are philosophically opposed to competition.

Parkour is an activity that can be practiced alone or with others. Although it can be practiced in any location, it is commonly practiced in urban spaces. Parkour involves seeing one's environment in a new way, and imagining the potentialities for navigating it by movement around, across, over, under or even through its features.

Parkour is practiced with little equipment. Commonly light garments like t-shirts, sweatpants, or tracksuits with light, flexible running shoes with good grip are worn while practicing. In recent years parkour specific shoes and athletic wear have become available for purchase.

In its earliest inception, Parkour was developed as a skill that would be useful in life rather than just training to kick a ball or perform moves in a padded, indoor environment. It’s not about practicing for a game or a sport, but something vital which enables one to survive the many physical hardships of life. Training at this level involves a lot of repetitions to find the best way of doing things.

In its early development parkour was not necessary based on specific techniques, such as jumps and vaults. Its earliest practitioners went through all sorts of challenges that forced them to find physical and mental strength in order to find a way through. This could for example mean to choose training without food or water, or to sleep on the

floor without a blanket in order to learn to endure the cold. These practices are still used today.

Adopting a variety of philosophies and values are considered to be a part of training. Traceurs are required to convey the values of honesty, respect, humility, sacrifice and hard work. For example, no one is allowed to be late for training since it holds back the whole group. If someone completes a challenge it means that everyone else has to do the same thing. During training no one is allowed to be negative or complain. Few excuses are allowed during training. For instance, if someone claimed that his shoes were too worn out to make a jump, he has to do it anyway, even if it means doing the jump barefoot. At the same time, everyone is required to learn and understand their own limits.

Respecting your health and your physical well-being is one of the foundations of Parkour. If any traceur hurts himself during or after the execution of a movement, the movement is deemed a failure. If a movement only was executed once it's deemed as if it hadn't been executed at all. Every movement had to be repeated at least ten times in a row without the traceur having to push his limits or sustaining any injury. If any mistake is made, everyone in the group has to start all over again.

Humility is also an important principle. No traceur is allowed to feel superior over someone else; for example, executing a movement only to show off in front of someone who could not perform the movement. If any traceur claims that he had completed a difficult and dangerous challenge that should not be attempted unaided, he had to prove his claims by doing the challenge again. Anyone who lied violated the principle of humility.

Despite the huge emphasis on the collective, each traceur has to progress and develop independently. Every practitioner has to encourage the others and show confidence through their behavior. If someone in the group violated the principles, the group could meet without the offending traceur to discuss various punishments. Any traceur who was deemed unsuitable could be temporarily or even permanently banned from the group in order to uphold the disciplines, values, and principles. Despite the huge emphasis on the collective and the principles, everyone is required to find their own way in Parkour to fulfill their personal development. The aim of parkour is to create the means to be yourself.

According to traceur Williams Belle, the philosophies and theories behind parkour are an integral aspect of the art, one that many non-practitioners have never been exposed to. Belle trains people because he wants "it to be alive" and for "people to use it". Châu Belle explains it is a "type of freedom" or "kind of expression"; that parkour is "only a

state of mind" rather than a set of actions, and that it's about overcoming and adapting to mental and emotional obstacles as well as physical barriers.

A newer convention of parkour philosophy has been the idea of "human reclamation". Andy (*Animus* of **Parkour North America**) clarifies it as "a means of reclaiming what it means to be a human being. It teaches us to move using the natural methods that we should have learned from infancy. It teaches us to touch the world and interact with it, instead of being sheltered by it. It is as much a part of truly learning the physical art as well as being able to master the movements, it gives you the ability to overcome your fears and pains and reapply this to life as you must be able to control your mind in order to master the art of parkour."

Academic research on parkour has tended to describe how parkour provides a novel way of interacting with the (urban) environment, that challenges the use and meaning of urban space, metropolitan life, and embodiment. Traceur Dylan Baker says "Parkour also influences one's thought processes by enhancing self-confidence and critical thinking skills that allow one to overcome everyday physical and mental obstacles".

It's worth noting that a campaign was started on 1 May 2007 by the Parkour.NET portal to preserve parkour's philosophy against sport competition and rivalry. In the words of Erwan LeCorre: "Competition pushes people to fight against others for the satisfaction of a crowd and/or the benefits of a few business people by changing its mindset. Parkour is unique and cannot be a competitive sport unless it ignores its altruistic core of self-development. If parkour becomes a sport, it will be hard to seriously teach and spread parkour as a non-competitive activity. And a new sport will be spread that may be called parkour, but that won't hold its philosophical essence anymore."

Red Bull's sponsored athlete for parkour, Ryan Doyle, has said, "Sometimes people ask, 'Who is the best at parkour?' and it's because they don't understand what Parkour is; 'Who is the best?' is what you would say to a sport, and Parkour is not a sport, it is an art, it's a discipline. That's like saying, 'What's the best song in the world?'" This seems to be a highly consensual opinion of many professional traceurs who view parkour as a style of life more than a set of tricks, as has been popularized by YouTube and most media exposure.

In an interview with the press, professional traceur David Belle explains that parkour is a training method for warriors. "So many people try to train easy. 'Come do parkour! It's really cool!'

But if tomorrow I made you do real training, you would end up crying. That's what you need to know: you are going to cry, you are going to bleed and you are going to sweat like never before."

Belle is an influential proponent of discipline and control in parkour, saying, "Precision is all about being measured," and going on to describe parkour as an art that requires huge amounts of repetition and practice to master. Parkour to Belle is a method of self-refinement and is to be used for learning to control and focus oneself.

A point has been made about the similarities between the martial arts philosophy of Bruce Lee and parkour. In an interview with *The New Yorker*, David Belle acknowledges the influence of Lee's thinking: "There's a quote by Bruce Lee that's my motto: 'There are no limits. There are plateaus, but you must not stay there, you must go beyond them. A man must constantly exceed his level.' If you're not better than you were the day before, then what are you doing – what's the point?" If two roads open up before you, always take the most difficult one. Because you know you can travel the easy one."

"With parkour, I often say, 'Once is never'. In other words, someone can manage a jump one time but it does not mean anything. It can be luck or chance. When you make a jump, you have to do it at least three times to be sure you can actually do it. It's an unavoidable rule. Do it the hard way and stop lying to yourself. When you come for training, you have to train, even if it means doing the same jump fifty or a hundred times."

In his book, David Belle made a point that the most important aspect of Parkour is not the physical movements, but rather the practitioner's mentality and understanding of Parkour's principles.

"When young trainees come to see me and give me videos telling me to check out what they are doing, I just take the tape and throw it away. What I'm interested in is what the guy's got in his head, if he has self-confidence, if he masters the technique, if he has understood the principles of Parkour. I just can't deal with guys who do Parkour because they saw videos on the internet and thought it was kinda cool and want to do even better." —David Belle

Further, he states the importance of being aware of your abilities and limitations and to be true to yourself. "When a young person asks me: 'Can you show me how to do this?' I simply answer: "No, I am going to show you *how* I do it. Then, you'll have to learn with your own technique, your own way of moving, your style, your abilities and your limitations. You are going to learn to be yourself, not someone else."