

## Jump Rope

Jumping or skipping rope was considered to be a proper exercise for children. Instructions appeared in both girls' and boys' activity books from the early 1830s through mid-century. We couldn't find any evidence of jumping rhymes being recited while jumping rope during the mid-nineteenth century, but we keep looking.

### THE JUMPING ROPE.

A long rope is swang round by a player at each end of it; when it moves tolerably regular, one, two, or even more boys, step in between those who hold the rope, suffering it to pass over their heads as it rises, and leaping up so that it goes under their feet when it touches the ground, precisely as in the case of a common skipping-rope. The principal difficulty in this sport is, to run between the players at the proper moment of time, that is, just as the rope is at highest elevation, so as to be ready to jump over when, in its circuit, it comes toward the feet. Care must be taken that due time be kept in the leaps, so that they may perfectly accord with the motion of the rope.

There is another mode of playing with the long skipping-rope, namely, by the player at one end of it, advancing a step or two toward the other, keeping the hand which holds the rope on the outside, and then, with the assistance of the player at the other end, turning the rope round, and skipping over it in its circuit.

Some jump ropes had handles and others did not. In her diary, Caroline Cowels Richards, from Canandaigua, New York, mentioned purchasing "... two jump ropes with handles ..."

### SKIPPING ROPE.

THIS play should likewise be used with caution. It is a healthy exercise, and tends to make the form graceful; but it should be used with moderation. I have known instances of blood-vessels burst by young ladies, who, in a silly attempt to



skip a certain number of hundred times, have persevered in skipping after their strength was exhausted. There are several ways of skipping a rope:—

1. Simply springing and passing the rope under the feet with rapidity, once, twice, or even thrice.
2. Crossing arms at the moment of throwing the rope.
3. Passing the rope under the feet of two or three, who skip at once, standing close, and laying hands on each other's shoulders.
4. The rope held by two little girls, one at each end, and thrown over a third, who skips in the middle.

The more difficult feats should not be attempted, until the simpler ones are perfectly learned. A smooth hard surface should be chosen to skip upon, where there is nothing to entangle or obstruct the feet

John Janney wrote in his book, *An American Farm Lad's Life in the Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century* the following about jumping rope. "Jumping rope was the favorite amusement for the girls. They did not have the ropes with handles now used, but got neat little grape vines from the woods or fence rows. There were two kinds; one long rope turned by a girl (or a boy) at each end, in which three or four girls could jump at once; the other a single one, and the contest was to see who could jump the oftenest without tripping. It was not rare for a little girl to jump fifty times and sometimes one hundred without tripping or missing. Jumping the rope where two were turning was a good exercise. A girl would jump the rope and run around the one turning, and jump the rope the other way, and then around the girl at the other end. Half a dozen of them would jump together."