

## Perfecting your Jumps

How do you get that unbelievable hyper extended jump? Its two parts practice, four parts technique, six parts stretching, and eight parts exercises. That's right... exercises!

Some people are born with great flexibility and strength. Others have to work at it. These exercises will help improve your jumps. Just like any exercise, start with a warm-up, don't overdo it and be patient! You may not see results for a few weeks, but when you do, you'll be a part of the 10%, not the 90%!

### Leg Explosions

To get that elusive height, try these exercises. In addition to height, you'll also end up with strong leg and calf muscles!!! Start with your feet together. Take a slow dip so that your knees are no further than a ninety degree angle. Explode into the air without using your arms. As you land, absorb the landing and return to the ninety degree angle and explode again. This is the exact same move you will use when you perform your jump, so make it perfect before you move on.

Start with three sets of five controlled jumps and work up to doing 15 in a row.

### Sitting Toe Touches

This exercise helps to isolate the hip flexor and abdominal muscles that lift the legs into the jump position. Start by sitting on the floor in a tuck position. You should be balanced so that your feet are slightly off the floor and your arms are in "daggers".

Next, quickly lift your legs and arms to the toe touch position and return to the seated tuck position as quickly as possible. It will take several of these to learn the proper balance. Focus on good technique, keeping your toes pointed, your legs straight, and your back upright. In addition to the increased strength, this exercise helps you to practice the proper technique of "sitting back" in your jumps. Again, start with three sets of five and work up to 15 reps in a row.

### Straddle Lifts

This exercise, and its variations, really isolates the hip flexors. Since this muscle is rarely used in other exercises, take caution not to overdo it in the beginning! Start by sitting on the floor in a straddle position. Place your hands on the floor on an imaginary line drawn between your knees. This helps you not to sit back and use your abs (remember, we're working the hip flexors here!).

Lift one leg about two inches off of the floor for a count of two and then set it back down. Keep your leg straight and your toe pointed. Then, repeat with the other leg. Do these five times (approximately 10 seconds on each leg). Work slowly up to holding each leg twice for a count of five, and then once for a count of ten. Once you have built up some strength, you can lift both legs at once. Remember NOT to lean back! You can also perform "reps" with this exercise by lifting the leg(s) up in repetition without letting them touch the floor.

Remember the key to a good toe touch is good form in the air with hips under shoulders, straight and flexible legs, and height. You can achieve all of these things by working on the exercises every day. To see your progress, videotape your jumps each week and compare them to the previous week and to the first session!

## **Jump conditioning**

If what you are looking for is a jump conditioning routine that is based on lots of repetition, you have to try this advanced jump drill. After only a couple of weeks of practice, it is really starting to make a huge difference in my team's jumps. Not only does it build stamina, this drill develops timing and synchronization as well.

Work on your squad's jump technique before doing this drill. Make sure their technique is perfect before moving on to this routine. Part of the goal of this conditioning is to make perfect jumps effortless. It would be counterproductive to drill jumps with poor technique.

Set them up in a formation, but make sure to mix up the formations from practice to practice so that no one is always in the back. Put on some fast-paced cheer music and start counting!

### **The 8-count goes like this:**

- 1-Set High V
- 2-Hold
- 3-Start Jump
- 4-Hit Jump
- 5-Land Jump
- 6-Hold
- 7-Stand
- 8-Hold

### **Using that as your basic count, go through the following set of jumps:**

- 5 T jumps (start with a prep and then jump straight up, hitting a T with your arms)
- 5 tuck jumps
- 5 left hurdlers
- 5 right hurdlers
- \*Take three 8-counts to breathe\*
- 5 pikes
- 5 toe touches
- 10 toe touches
- 5 toe touches
- 5 pikes
- 5 right hurdlers
- 5 left hurdlers|
- \*Take three 8-counts to breathe\*
- 5 tuck jumps
- 5 T jumps
- 5 sets of double whips

**The only variation in the count is for the double whips:**

- 1-Set High V
- 2-Hold
- 3-Start Jump
- 4-Hit Jump
- 5-Whip
- 6-Hit 2nd toe touch
- 7-Land Jump
- 8-Hold
- 1-Stand AND High V

That's 75 jumps! You can usually get this done in about six to seven minutes, and the girls get a great cardiovascular workout. Make sure that your squad has been practicing jumps for a while and is properly conditioned before starting this routine! You don't have to do this routine exactly; work up to this number of jumps and use the jumps that your squad practices most. Start off with one of each and three toe touches, then three of each and five toe touches, etc. Take a five eight-count break in the beginning and gradually decrease the amount of time you rest in between sets. Tailor the routine to fit your squad's physical ability.