

*The old playground games weren't just fun, they kept you fit too. But what would the modern generation think?*

**G**irls and boys, come out to play... goes the rhyme. And for centuries children have been doing exactly that, inventing fun ways of passing the time while keeping fit into the bargain.

Today, though, with children having such a range of pastimes to choose from — including computer games — there's a danger that some of the old favourites will die out.

Not if *Take a Break* has anything to do with it! We've taken some traditional playground pursuits and introduced them to a new generation. But what will be the reaction...?

## FRENCH SKIPPING

**Cheryl Cottrell, 50, from West Norwood, London, says:**

'Our daughter Marcy, 11, usually gets most of her exercise jumping up and down on the trampoline, though she likes watching films as well. She hadn't come across French skipping, or elastics as we always used to call it.

'When my husband Steve and I were children back in the Seventies, it was all the rage in the school playground. But when Marcy and her sister



Kids playing hopscotch on a London street in the Fifties

# Bring back playground games!

Ruby, 15, were little they mainly played make-believe games, or hide-and-seek.

'However, both our girls were up for a challenge. We got a piece of normal sewing elastic and tied it together to form a long loop. Then Steve and I stood at either end while the girls positioned themselves



Cheryl, Marcy, Ruby and Steve

in the middle.

'At first, they just jumped from one side to the other or in and out. Then, gaining more confidence, graduated from jumping at ankle height to knee height, with a few moves thrown in. They didn't quite get to waist height though — maybe next time!

'After 10 minutes the girls were looking flushed, but having fun. "Even though it's old-fashioned, I can see it catching on," Marcy said. "I really enjoyed it."

'Our dog Molly did too, as she got her paws every which way while our chickens flapped around excitedly. I think everyone was surprised how such a simple thing could be such good exercise, and enjoyable too.'

## HOPSCOTCH

**Anna Pattenden, 49, from Hither Green, London, says:**

'My son Matthew, who's 10, would happily play on his Nintendo 3DS or the laptop all day if I let him... but I don't! His school has hopscotch in the playground and he has tried it before, but neither he nor his friends James and Kaydee, both nine, really knew the rules.

'I grew up in the Seventies when everyone was out on the street playing all sorts of games, and I remember enjoying hopscotch for hours with my friends. Everything seemed a lot simpler then and it was that aspect that my son and his friends loved — it cost nothing and all they needed was some chalk and a stone.

'Back home, the boys took turns drawing a square or two together, and had fun getting the shape and size just right!

'They then aimed their stone



Matthew, James and Kaydee

from one to 10, turning round and picking it up without treading on any lines or falling — not as easy as it sounds. "It's quite a challenge," said Matthew. "In fact, I'm puffed out!"

'The boys carried on playing and the great thing was, there weren't any arguments and they all had a real laugh!

'I had a go myself and was reminded that it's quite a good workout — my calf muscles were aching the next day! It might be something we did as kids, but hopscotch is still a timeless classic.'

## MORE FUN AND GAMES

**Skipping:** Still very popular both in playgrounds and in the gym, this is an excellent fat-busting cardio workout. Expect to burn about 350 calories per half hour. More if you chant while you do it!

**Leapfrog:** Jumping over each other's backs was great exercise, though could be a bit

scary for the person being jumped over, when Ten-Ton Tommy came along...

**Hula Hoop:** Children have twirled, rolled and thrown hoops throughout history. The 'modern' version, invented in 1958, tones abs like nobody's business!



**British Bulldog:** This was basically rugby without a ball, without protection and without rules! One team had to get to the other side of the playground without being stopped by the opposing players. Bloodshed was common — which was why it was usually banned by those killjoy teachers!