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

Girls 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 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 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.'

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!

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

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...

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!