

**Exercise 1**

Read the article about an activity called parkour, and then answer the questions.

Parkour

Journalist Sebastian Kyte writes about his experience

Have you ever heard of parkour? The aim is to move from one point to another in an urban environment, without any equipment, and in the quickest and most efficient way. This usually involves running, jumping and climbing. I'd seen videos of people doing this in cities – even jumping from one roof to another – and always thought it looked amazing. So when I heard there was a new beginners' course at my gym, I signed up immediately. The advert said it was particularly good for improving fitness, but what I actually found is that I had great fun.

Before the first session, I decided to find out more about parkour. The name comes from the French word 'parcours', which can be translated as 'route' or 'journey', but it's also often known as freerunning. A French man, David Belle, is considered to be the person who started parkour in the 1990s, although it's based on activities and military training that have been used for centuries in other countries. David and eight friends developed a system for training, using a range of movements and challenges. They began calling themselves Yamakasi, which comes from a phrase in Lingala, a west-African language, meaning 'strong in one's person' or 'strong man, strong spirit'. I certainly felt more confident after a few weeks, although I can't claim that it made me stronger.

There were seven of us in my group, ranging in age from 16 to 57. Jeff, our trainer, was an incredibly calm person, and moved like a dancer. When I asked him if that was what he'd done before, he said he'd actually been a circus performer. He explained we would spend the first three sessions in the gym, learning various movements, before trying them outdoors. As the weeks passed, I became more aware of safety, which was an aim of the course. We practised swinging from bars, which looks easy but is the opposite, and did lots of forward and backward rolls, which are useful when you land after a jump. Before either of these, we spent some time running on both hands and feet – apparently having four points on the ground makes you more stable, although most of us couldn't stop laughing while we were doing it.

In the fourth week, we went to the local park to try some moves. First, we watched Jeff calmly running and jumping between large blocks of stone, and over a tall metal fence. Fortunately, we only practised on a park bench, which was much lower and easier to manage. I noticed my ability to balance was starting to improve. I'm nowhere near Jeff's standard yet, but I'm going to keep trying!



Question 2

What was the name of the group of friends who started parkour?

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