

# HOMESCHOOLED



HELPING YOUR YOUNG ATHLETE BUILD A STRONG FOUNDATION: *Part Three*  
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## *Plyometric Foundation for Young Athletes*

This will be a fairly short article, because I really don't think young athletes (under the age of 12 or 14) need to do plyometric training. Now I can hear you saying, but won't that improve their power and speed. Yes, it probably will, but so many sport coaches get carried away with plyometrics that the risk of overuse injury far outweighs the benefits. And, as I have said before, I have yet to see a 12 year old miss out on that multi-million dollar contract because his vertical jump was not good enough.

I have heard some coaches say that a young athlete should not jump over anything higher than a curb. Have you ever seen kids playing in a school ground – jumping off the monkey bars, running, hopping, rolling, squatting, lunging – it is all there and within my favorite training context for young athletes, PLAY! If you are creating a fun workout for your youth soccer players, I have no problem if it contains some jumping activities, just do not get carried away and keep your mind on the long term development of these young people rather than winning the tournament this weekend.

Your athletes are going to jump, so why not teach proper form for jumping and landing. Not only does this help their movement efficiency, it can also reduce the risk of ACL tears. Now that is a great tool for long-term development! Here are the key points for jumping:

- Teach the athlete to keep their knees in-line with their ankles as they jump and land – do not allow the knees to pinch inward.
- Upon landing the jump the balls of the feet will land first, followed immediately by the rest of the foot as the athlete 'sits' back slightly in the hips.



- The athlete should jump without the full foot coming into contact momentarily. If the athlete lands and jumps from the balls of the feet, they are using a quadriceps dominant pattern and reducing the use of their glutes (butt). This is thought to be a contributing factor to non-contact ACL tears. The glutes are also capable of producing huge amounts of force, so if you want to improve your athletes power, teach them to use their glutes.

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