

## Challenge Yourself Through Parkour

By Hallie Shepps

To view video: cut and paste the following link in your browser:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0lk4caQGiU&feature=youtu.be>

Running through obstacles courses? Climbing up walls? Twins Rachel and Carissa Skye never thought they'd be able to do these activities at MIT while earning PE points, but they were given the opportunity to do so through Parkour. Parkour is a new PE course that is the practice of moving over, around, and through obstacles. The course focuses on developing the fundamental attributes required for movement, which include balance, strength, dynamism, endurance, precision, spatial awareness and creative vision. It is a way of training one's body and mind functional, effective and liberated, and is a way of thinking based on rigorous self-discipline, autonomous action, and self-will.

Carissa is a currently a sophomore in course 8, physics, and Rachel is a sophomore in course 3, material science and engineering. When asked why they decided to enroll in Parkour, Carissa stated "because it sounded awesome, and running obstacles courses is fun." Rachel agreed and also mentioned that it seemed like one of the more physically active physical education courses. They have previously taken a ballroom dance and yoga class together and when asked why they wanted to take parkour together, Carissa exclaimed "Doing a scary thing with someone you know is less scary." And lucky for the twins, they are not competitive with each other, and are there to support and encourage each other, especially during a new and sometimes scary activity.

A valuable lesson the girls learned from Parkour was comradery. “We were all learning something new and hard together, and even if some of us were better than others, ultimately we were all doing the same thing, and all falling over sometimes as well,” mentions Carissa. Even though it is technically an individual activity, there is still a lot of teamwork involved. “The instructors would sometimes split the class into two groups and would could give us a task that was hard to accomplish for only one person, but possible to do if we worked together as team,” Rachel states when asked about her favorite moments in Parkour.

During one lesson, the instructors took the class outside and showed them how to do parkour in a non-structured environment. There were two pillars placed near each other and the students were instructed to jump from one to the other. Normally, on the ground this would be an easy task, but the added height created an additional fear. “You had to get past the mind-block of ‘but what if I fall?’ and know what you are capable of achieving.” Carissa recalls as she remembers her thoughts when presented with the new obstacle. This enhanced their trust in themselves, and took them outside of the comfort zone.

Eli Stickgold, MIT alum '11, one of the parkour instructors, adds a unique twist to the class being that he is a former MIT student. “I tend to have probably the most analytical approach to teaching of the local Parkour coaches,” he stated, “I try to emphasize not only what to do, but some of the underlying physical mechanics behind why it works. It's not the only way to coach by any means, but it can be very helpful in getting beginners, especially MIT students, onboard with our activities.” Stickgold believed that MIT students would enjoy the activity, as they are similar to many parkour enthusiasts in the sense that they like to explore and push boundaries.

Both Carissa and Rachel agreed that the class was tough, but extremely fun, and they would definitely recommend it to a friend. After the course, Carissa found herself to be a bit more in control of her body, and more aware of where she was stepping. The class teaches you how to take on new obstacles, trust yourself, and safely learn your limits.

To find out more information about Parkour check out [mitpe.mit.edu](http://mitpe.mit.edu)!