

# I Revived a Childhood Skill and Won a Surprise Trip Abroad

Author Joy Jones created a masters team of double Dutch jump ropers



**I**T LOOKS TRICKY, but double Dutch is easy to learn, even if you're older. Jumping two ropes that are swinging in opposite directions is more rhythmic than single rope jumping. And you rarely fall down, because your feet stay pretty close to the ground. You can pick up the basics in under 10 minutes—you just have to be willing

to look foolish and have fun.

I learned how to double Dutch as a child—it's seen primarily among Black girls in cities in the Northeast. Then I grew up and put my jump ropes away. But I got back into it about 17 years ago, when I formed the performance group DC Retro Jumpers. The founding members are women

over 50, but we've got all ages in the group now. Our motto is, "Not everyone likes to exercise, but everyone likes to play."

A few years ago, a reporter saw my group performing at a street festival and wrote about us. The next thing I knew, we were on a plane to Russia to tour, as part of a cultural exchange sponsored by the U.S. embassy in Moscow! Our first day, we double Dutched in Moscow's Red Square. We also performed in St. Petersburg and Belgorod. We were well received everywhere.

Our handlers on the tour were all Russian men, and they were huge fans of hip-hop music. One of them came to see us in the U.S. He even entered a hip-hop dance competition in Baltimore and placed in the semifinals. So I guess you could say that the cultural exchange was a success.

I'd encourage anyone to return to something they loved as a child, or try a kids' skill you've always

wanted to learn. If people think you're immature, who cares? For me, double Dutch is like a combination of confetti and champagne: It releases a happy feeling and makes everyone around you feel good, too.  
—As told to Sharon McDonnell

*Joy Jones, 66, is a semiretired public library associate and the author of five books, including one about double Dutch called Jayla Jumps In.*