

# Ankle Hops for Speed and Quickness

Ankle hops are always a great exercise for athletes. How much they contribute to speed and quickness however, depends upon how the exercise is executed. When executed well they are great for all athletes involved in sports that require running and/or jumping.

They can be used in baseball, basketball, football, track, tennis, hockey, volleyball and other team, dual and individual sports. Ankle hops can assist greatly in improving your ability to push-off in the running stride or in jumping for height or distance. As a result, ankle hops increase running speed and quickness.

However, how ankle hops are executed is the key to whether they are of benefit. For example, to execute the most effective ankle hops, you should rely mainly on ankle joint extension to jump up and down with her without forward movement. The knees must bend slightly, but you must strive to eliminate knee action as much as possible and concentrate solely on ankle joint extension.

In addition, the ankle hops should be executed in a true plyometric fashion. This means they must be as explosive as possible. If you see someone doing ankle jumps effectively, you will see complete extension of the ankle with the toes pointed downward when he is up in the air.

Landing is on the balls of the feet (almost mid-foot) and then almost immediately up again. Contact time should be minimal. In fact, the shorter the contact time the higher the jump. There should be very little action at the knee and hip joints and the trunk should be basically erect.

However, ankle hops are executed quite a bit differently by some players which do not provide the same benefits. For example, the athletes go into a deep knee bend while balanced on the balls of the feet and then hop or leap as far forward as possible and land on the balls of the feet without allowing the heels to touch the ground.

But jumping forward and landing only on the balls of the feet and holding that position can be extremely stressful to the muscles and joints. If you take very small hops forward, you can get by with it but the jumps should not be maximal unless you are physically prepared for the physical loads. When executed in this fashion the jumps serve to develop greater strength, not speed or quickness.

When you go into a deep squat as advocated, you must rely on strong knee and hip joint extension for the leaping rather than ankle extension. It is extremely difficult to concentrate on ankle joint extension when you are executing a maximal jump with the knees and hip joint.

Such ankle jumps, even though they are advocated as another form of plyometric training, are not true plyometrics. The landing and takeoff take much too long and it is rare to see full ankle joint extension. They are simply deep squat jump exercises.