

Netball

The most fun you can have with your sneakers on

Fourteen players, a metal ring and a ball.

In the UK, it has traditionally been known as a women's game but Netball is becoming more and more popular as a pastime for both men and women. Amongst the Antipodean community especially in London, Mixed Netball is growing rapidly. Netball is similar to basketball in that a ball is passed through a hoop at the end of the court to score. Although the object is to score as many goals as possible, the similarity ends there. The ring is 3.05m off the ground and only the 'goal shoot' and 'goal attack' position players can score. There are seven players per team and each one has to stay in their part of the court, depending on their position. The game is very possession focused, with passing and team work an important aspect of the game. From the moment a player gets possession they have three seconds to pass. When receiving the ball, the player must not lift their grounded foot (the foot which first touches the ground when you land) until they have released the ball.

Who am I going to play with?

With England boasting approximately 6000 school and club sides, finding a venue near you shouldn't be a problem. With most social leagues, you can either register a team, a small group or as an individual where you will be placed in a team. Many of the clubs have trials pre-season to determine which team you will play in. During the season you are required to commit to games and trainings unlike social leagues where you usually only need to commit to games. Regardless of which option you decide to take, it is a great way of meeting new people. Both social and club based competitions usually provide social and presentation nights during and at the end of the season. You can find information about Acton, Islington and Southfields netball leagues at: www.theallnations.com. All Nations might even come to you - they are always on the look out for new courts and if you recommend one and they end up running a league there, you can earn yourself £150. Another great Antipodean-focused club is at: www.commonwealthnetballuk.com. Further London clubs can be found at: <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/the.beehive/clubdirectory/london.htm>

What am I gonna wear?

This will depend whether you play in a social or club-based competition. Most social competitions provide all equipment including bibs. There is no specific footwear needed to play, but you will need something that gives you adequate cushioning to absorb the shock your body receives from this stop/start game. Because of the unique demands on the knees, feet and ankles during play on court, some shoe manufacturers such as Asics have brought out pivot shoes with multi-directional soles. A ball can range from £8 to £20, good brands include Mitre and Gilbert. Balls, uniforms and trainers can be found at: www.newitts.com/shop/1/12/netball.htm



Image: www.hewitts.com

Before you go on court

Netball places a lot of stress on the knees from the jumping and landing, so let's try to prepare them for the season.

Plyometric jumps

The key to plyo's is to spring off explosively and land as lightly as possible. This would also be the ideal way to jump, when jumping for a ball or defending. Stack two aerobic blocks on top of each other or find something of about 45cm in height. Stand on the ground, feet shoulder-width apart and with knees slightly bent. Now explode off the ground and land lightly on the blocks, then off the blocks to land softly back on the ground. Bend your knees as you land to absorb shock and reduce knee and back impact. 10 reps x 5 sets

Ball skills and pivots

Find a room where you can bounce the ball off the wall. Stand in the middle of the area and bounce the ball off one of the walls. Try to catch it, pivot on the grounded foot and bounce it off the next wall. Throw and bounce the ball on to the wall at different heights with one and two hands to simulate real play. You should be able to complete each pass well within three seconds, so decrease the time you have to release the ball after each set. Also determine how accurately you're hitting the point on the wall you're aiming for. 15 clock-wise pivots and passes x 3 sets; 15 anti-clockwise pivot and passes x 3sets; 15 random pivot and passes x 3 sets

Off the mark sprints and jogging

Netball requires a lot of off the mark sprints, therefore you need to be an-aerobically (without oxygen) fit as well as aerobically fit (with oxygen), so that you can recover quickly from lactic acid build-up, as well as having healthy cardiovascular fitness to last a game (even though substituting players is allowed). Start on one side of the court, sprint to the 1st line, jog back, sprint to 2nd line, jog back, then sprint to the other side of the court and repeat the circuit. Then straight into five laps around the courts. Complete this full exercise four times.



Luke Taylor trains his clients at the Imperial Rowing College in Putney, in parks, homes and even in their offices. For more info contact Luke at:

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