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Locals step into a sport that's viewed skeptically by some

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 By [Alicia P.Q. Wittmeyer](#)
 The Virginian-Pilot
 © March 29, 2010

And you thought you knew how to climb stairs.

Sure, you may know enough to get yourself upstairs to bed every night, or to get to your desk in your second-story office.

But if you want to go beyond practical stair climbing and move on to stair-climbing-as-sport, you're going to need some lessons in technique.

That's where Trevor Folgering steps in - so to speak.

"Oh, these are nice stairs," Folgering said, surveying the stairwell of Dominion Tower on Sunday afternoon. "Great tread, awesome. You can definitely go two at a time on these."

Folgering, the founder of the Canadian Stair Climbing Association, along with fellow stair climber Ken Myers, held a boot camp for aspiring climbers Sunday to help prepare them for a race up either 25, 50, or 100 flights of stairs at Dominion Tower in April.

Stair races have been around since at least the 1950s, but it was 1978 when the world of stair climbing entered the modern era, with runs up the Empire State Building and the CN Tower in Toronto, according to the stair climbing Web site [towerrunning.com](#).

Today there are more than 100 stair climbing events held across North America.

To the uninitiated, stair climbing may seem odd. It has none of the "communing-with-nature" appeal of running or biking. Instead, it takes place inside, in what can sometimes be the darkest, dingiest, dustiest spaces in a high rise. On Sunday, several boot camp attendees who had just finished a practice climb of 21 flights returned to the main workout room coughing.

Folgering, a Canadian from just outside Toronto, knows his hobby of choice can sometimes be eyed askance by other active types.

"They look at you and think, 'that guy's a little loopy,'" he said. "But it's just another sport."

Folgering said he wants to mainstream the sport, partly through founding a U.S. counterpart to his Canadian association. They plan to have their first

1 OF 3 PHOTOS: Elite stair climber Trevor Folgering, right, cheers participants as they climb the stairs of Dominion Tower during stair-climbing boot camp in Norfolk. The event was in preparation for April's race up Dominion tower. (Hyunsoo Leo Kim | The Virginian-Pilot)

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For more information:
 Step up for the Up Center
 When: Sunday, April 25, 2010, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
 Where: Dominion Tower

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event in Miami next March, and hold their championships in Las Vegas.

Folgering and Myers offered stair climbing tips Sunday. Climb by putting your heels down first, instead of your toes - easier on the knees. Use the landings between flights to rest your legs, but "always pass on the up," Myers said, because passing on the landings requires too many steps.

On handrails, Myers and Folgering differ. Myers has a sort of "whatever it takes" approach. But Folgering says they should be considered a last resort; he considers them a hindrance to efficient climbing.

Janel Holt, 30, of Norfolk, did leg crossover exercises and practiced relaxing on the landings. She will compete in the 25-flight race in April, and, she said, she feels ready.

"I just wanted to try something different."

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