

Developing balance skills

When developing motor skills all children should expect at times to lose their balance. However, with practice they can all improve their balance and co-ordination

Why is it important to have good balance?

Balance is the building block for every skill we learn. In order to move safely, a child must be able to adopt a balanced position and then move from this to another balanced position.

What might I notice if my child has poor balance?

- They may Bump into objects or furniture more than you would expect
- They may trip or fall over far more often than their peers
- They may dislike physical / outdoor play and activities
- They are unable to balance on one leg for 2-3 seconds at four years of age

How can I help my child improve their balance?

Give them lots of opportunity to play outdoors and play with them.

Take time to practise the things that they find difficult and work on the activities listed below to help improve balance.

Encourage your child to think about:

- Keeping their head upright
- Bending at the knees
- Transferring weight from one foot to another
- Keeping feet hip distance apart
- Using their arms to assist in keeping balance

Activities

- Stepping stones games: walking, jumping and hopping into and over obstacles. The obstacles can be physical items such as a hoop, or drawn on the ground with chalk. Include going backwards and sideways
- Playing games creating different styles of walking e.g. fairy steps, giant steps, rabbit jumps, crab walks, moon walks (slow motion)

- Following a taped or chalked line, make it zigzag or curvy, walk in different ways, e.g. on tiptoes, heel-to-toe, backwards, sideways.
- The child holds an item whilst walking along e.g. sweet on a spoon, bean bag on their head, ball on back of a hand
- Use music for rhythmic stepping or marching
- Walk along uneven surfaces or objects such as benches, sand or cushions spread along the floor
- Musical statues - stop and hold the position for a count of 10. No holding your breath!
- Whilst sitting on an exercise ball, or in high kneeling, bat a balloon to and fro with a partner.
- Push and pull games – tug of war. Try these in sitting, high kneeling as well as standing.
- Twister game, Hullabaloo or hopscotch
- Kicking a ball, stopping it cleanly with the foot before kicking it back.
- Trampoline games.
- Obstacle courses.

Postural control

Postural control is the ability to control the muscles of the tummy, back, shoulders and pelvis.

Having good postural control is important in order to be able to balance.

Aeroplanes

The child lies on the floor on their tummy and lifts their head and arms to fly like an aeroplane for 10 seconds.

Tummy skate boarding

The child lies on a skateboard and propels themselves around with their hands.

Crab walking

The child is CYPIT on the floor with their hands on the floor behind them and their knees bent so their feet are on the floor in front. They lift their bottom and try to walk in different directions.

Bridging

The child starts lying on their back with their legs bent and feet on the floor. Ask them to make a bridge by lifting their bottom up off the floor. Roll a ball or a toy car under their bridge.

Two point balance

The child starts on hands and knees. They lift one leg straight out behind and lift the opposite arm straight out in front. They hold for 10 seconds. They throw bean bags into a target in this position.

Half kneeling

The child starts in kneeling up position and then lifts one leg to place their foot in front of them. In this position they play throw and catch, target games etc. Remember to swap which knee is down and which foot is forward.