

BALANCE ACTIVITIES & GAMES

Progress from one activity to another in order as each activity becomes more challenging.

1. **Stand with one foot on the ground while the other foot is resting on a stool in front of the other foot.** This is the primary skill in working towards balancing on one foot. If this is too easy, replace the stool with a ball that your child has to rest his or her foot on. Then, progress to just standing on one leg.
2. **Simply stand on one foot!** Make this into a contest with the whole family and see who can maintain their balance the longest. To make it more challenging play a game (such as catch or balloon tennis) while balancing.
3. **Put two lines of tape on the ground and practice walking on a pretend balance beam.** The space between the two pieces of tape could start large (6 inches) and progress to 4 inches apart. If your child steps out of bounds, he or she has to start again. By employing a balance beam that is flush with the ground, this will decrease any possible fear of falling. Once this becomes easier, utilize a real balance beam to work on more challenging balance skills. Start with something low like a 2x4 piece of wood, then progress to walking on the edge of curb (not near traffic).
4. **Stand with feet together or in tandem (heel to toe).** Once your child can stand and maintain balance for 20seconds, try getting them to walk heel to toe along a tape line on the floor, as above. Then progress to walking backwards.
5. **Sit on an exercise ball while playing a board game at the table.** Don't let your child put his or her feet on the ground while playing unless they need to make sure they don't fall.
6. **Play hopscotch only while jumping on one foot.** No switching feet is allowed! This makes the game slightly more challenging.
7. **Obstacle course/Playground.** Any activity that requires a change in position, direction or ground surface will help improve balance.
8. **Stand on a balance board BOSU ball or wobble cushion.** This can be a very challenging activity just to stay upright! A BOSU ball is an exercise ball cut in half with a flat plastic surface on the bottom. If your child gets really good at standing on top of the BOSU ball, turn it upside down so that the ball is underneath and he or she is standing on the flat side. Once this is mastered, play catch while standing on the BOSU ball.
9. **Try any of the above activities with your eyes closed.** Balancing with your eyes closed is significantly harder than having your eyes open. Therefore, if your child has mastered all of the above activities, make it one step harder to keep them challenged!

The possibilities are endless! Get creative and make these activities easier or harder depending on your child's progression of skills. Ensure your child's safety during these activities is very important. Utilize pillows, mats, and adult supervision when practicing these activities.

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General ideas to improve balance. These are not listed in any specific order, please try anything that sounds appealing.

- Enjoy the large playground toys at your Neighbourhood Park or school. Climb down as well as up the playground ladders.
- Play on the trapeze swings, ropes or rings at the playground.
- Swinging – lie on tummy on a swing, suspended tire or inner-tube. Incorporate some ball play like aiming, throwing and catching.
- When out for a walk, walk on the curb; or walk along with one foot on and one foot off the curb.
- Swimming is an excellent activity to promote strong tummy muscles and motor planning. Consider lessons or family swims.
- Climb in and out of a large box or inner-tube.
- Suspend a ball on a string, hit and/or kick it. Kick a ball.
- Walk on uneven ground and inclines; walk on the beach in the sand; climb on/over logs and rocks. Build a driftwood castle!
- Ride a bike or scooter.
- Play jumping games
 - Jump up as many times in a row as possible
 - Jump forward as many times as possible, like a bunny or frog. Jump as far forward as possible. Jump forward and then backward. Jump sideways. Jump in a square.
- It's harder and takes more muscle effort to do movements slowly, so try to do some of the games in "slow motion". Play statue games and stop/start games like red light/green light. Try to see who can do things the slowest, i.e. walking across the room, pretending to jump, stepping over a rope. Be a giant, take big steps and move slowly.
- Hopscotch – start with a simple pattern and begin jumping with two feet.
- Walk between 2 chalk lines drawn on the sidewalk to make a path. Start with the lines 6" apart and as skill improves, move closer together. Make a winding path.
- Play some games with favourite toys in kneeling and half-kneeling
- Along the lines in the parking lot at the park, or along the sidewalk, pretend you are walking on a tightrope, like in the circus, walking one foot in front of each other.
- Jump rope is an advanced skill but may be fun to try.

HAVE FUN!