

Balance

Balance is the ability to keep the body in a stable upright position. This stable base then allows for more complicated movement to occur. Children with poor balance might be fearful of situations where their balance is threatened such as climbing above the ground, being on an unstable platform e.g. scooter, using stairs without a handrail.

TRAMPOLINE TIME

Why do it? Balance, fitness, physical outlet for stress

Where: on a trampoline preferably with a net or with constant adult supervision

What do we need? Strictly One person on at a time

How: Children will know what to do!

Challenge: Can you bounce onto your bottom and then onto your feet?

Watch It! Always check your trampoline mat for tears, springs that might be coming loose or anything else that might pose a safety risk.

SPACE HOPPER

Why do it? Balance, physical outlet

Where: clear space

What do we need? Space Hopper

How: Child sits astride the space hopper and holds onto the handle at the front. They push off with their legs and bounce back on the hopper.

Challenge: Can you go around obstacles.

Watch It! Watch out for near stairs and terraces.



HOPSCOTCH

Why do it? Balance whilst moving, movement planning

Where: level area inside or out

What do we need? Hopscotch pattern on plastic mat, or chalk on a hard surface,

How: Demonstrate hopping through the pattern with single hops on single squares and two feet hops on doubles. At the semi-circle at the end see if your child can hop completely around in a circle to face back the way they came.

Challenge: Use a marker or stone to skip a box

Change it: Make it longer if you are using chalk

STILT CAN WALKING

Why do it? Balance whilst moving,

Where: level area

What do we need? Stilt cans with rope handles

How: child steps up onto each can and carefully walks holding onto the rope handle.

Challenge: Can you go around obstacles

Change it: Can you walk backwards

Watch It! .If your child is very timid with this, provide close physical support until their balance improves. Try some Vestibular (inner ear) activities if your child continues to struggle with balance issues.

TIGHTROPE WALKER

Why do it? Balance, movement planning

Where: Outdoors or indoors

What do we need? Long rope 4.5 m (15 foot)

How: Stretch the rope out on the floor or grass. (If inside tape ends down to keep it in place.)
Make a game out of walking on top of the rope, without stepping off it.

Challenge: Try walking backwards on the rope. Try walking on tip toes!

Change it: Jumping with both feet to one side, then to the other. Do same thing hopping on one foot over the other, either in front or behind the other.

ROYAL WALK

Why do it? Balance

Where: Inside or Out

What do we need? A small book or bean bag toy to balance on one's royal head,

How: practice walking with the book on your head, as if you are in training to wear a crown.

Challenge: Can you walk up and down the stairs without losing the book

Change it: Can you do two books? Can you walk heel to toe?

STORKS GAME



Why do it? Balance whilst standing still

Where: Indoors or out

What do we need? Level area to stand on with clear space

How: Balance on each foot. Count the seconds you can stay balanced.

Challenge: Can you shut your eyes and still keep your balance

Watch It! Be close by to catch your child if they lose their balance

CROOKED MILE

Why do it?

Where: level area inside or outside

What do we need? Masking tape or rope

How: Make a relatively short and straight path out of tape or rope on the floor. The child walks over the line cross-legged (right leg on the left side, left leg on the right side of the path).

Challenge: As this gets easier, change the path to a gentle curve

Change it: Ask the child to do the crooked mile backwards, or on more difficult paths such as numbers, or letters of the alphabet.

LOW WALL WALK

Why do it? Balance on the move

Where: very low brick wall e.g. 4 or 5 courses high, (clear of garden obstacles), smooth garden edging, and kerbing.

What do we need?

How: Hold your child's hand whilst they attempt to walk along the low wall.

Challenge: Can you let go

Watch It! Only do this with your full supervision and where there are no other obstacles or safety concerns.

Motor or Movement Planning

The ability to learn a new movement sequence and successfully repeat this sequence until it becomes an automatic skill. E.g. learning to ride a bike requires many different patterns of movement that when done well allows the child to successfully balance, steer and move forwards on a bike.

TWISTER®

Why do it? Movement planning, body awareness, Use of left and right hands and feet, crossing the midline

Where: Space to spread out Twister mat

What do we need? Twister® Game available commercially, at least two people to play

How: Each child spins the spinner and follows directions e.g. Left foot on red. Keep playing until one player loses their balance.

Help: Mark your child's dominant foot and hand with a sticker to help them orientate their body correctly.

OBSTACLE COURSES

Why do it? Movement planning, body awareness, concepts of direction

Where: Outdoors or indoors if enough space

What do we need? various objects to crawl under, run around, hop over e.g. large boxes, old chair, air dryer, rope, toy traffic cones, crawling tunnels, hula hoops etc. Check out the toy box and wherever you have large bits and pieces.

How: Set up a course and show the way to do each section.eg walk along the rope, crawl through the chair tunnel, hop to the hula hoop, tip toe to the box.

Challenge: Can you do this whilst carrying a soft toy. You could set up a relay if you had a number of children to play.

Change it: Vary the course after a while to keep it interesting.

Watch It! .Make sure there is enough space to do each action safely.

SIMON SAYS GAME

Why do it? Movement planning, Crossing the midline

Where: Anywhere

What do we need? Bodies

How: Leader of the game says, "Simon Says" but demonstrates the action instead of saying it. Children watch the leader and copies. If teacher changes position without saying "Simon Says" the children mustn't copy or they will be out!

Challenge: Use lots of crossed positions e.g. left hand is crossed to right ear.

Change it: Try balance ideas, finger positions etc.

SKIPPING WITH A ROPE

Why do it? Movement planning, Balance, fitness

Where: Outdoors with space to move

What do we need? Child's skipping rope, lots of patience

How: Before picking up the rope, get your child to practise the wrist movement first, Show them how to make circles with their wrists whilst their elbows are roughly at their sides. Explain that this is one of the secrets to great skipping.

Next get them to stand holding the rope with their feet slightly apart and the rope at the back of their heels. Ask them to just practise flipping the rope over their heads, so that it lands at their toes.

The next step is to get them to hop with both feet (or one if they find that easier) over the rope.

With lots of repetition this sequence of movement creates the rhythm of skipping.

Change it: Can you jump to a rhyme. There are lots of jump rope rhymes on the internet.

Watch It! .If your child is getting too frustrated with this due to poor balance, try balance activities first and try skipping once they improve.

Vestibular Activities

These activities stimulate the sensory system that helps adjust our balance. Please observe your child closely during these activities for signs of over- stimulation. Allow them to control how much movement they would like. Never force them to do more than they feel comfortable doing.

If you overstimulate the vestibular system your child may become ill. The following are signs to watch out for nausea, pale face, sweating or rapid breathing.

SWINGING

Why do it? Stimulates the inner ear

Where: Playground or home equipment

Ideas

- Conventional swing ⇒ Forwards and backwards
- Lying on tummy across a round tyre swing
- In a hammock
- From monkey bars or a flying fox

Watch It! Watch their face for signs of fear or discomfort. Remind them to let you know when they have had enough.

ROLLING

Why do it? Stimulates the inner ear

Where: Inside and Outside

Ideas

- Egyptian Mummies- Roll # up in a sheet and unroll again
- Roll down little hills (grassy or sandy)
- Play games that involve rolling around on the floor e.g. roll down the hallway

SPINNING

Why Do it? Stimulates the inner ear

Where: Inside and Outside

Ideas

- Spin self around on a scooter board using your hands
- Spin self around on a swivel office chair. Go one way and then change to the other.
- Pretend to be a spinning top (walk around on the spot, first one way then the other)
- Run around a tree! "Play chasey", swap over who is chasing who!
- Playground equipment may have roundabouts, individual spinning platforms etc

HEAVY ACTIVITIES

These activities use large muscle groups to bear some weight against the force of gravity or another person. It takes strength and stamina to keep doing these activities. Muscle tone (the tension in muscles) builds up during these activities and might help children with low tone to be more successful at sitting at their desk or dinner table (in the short term) and using their hands to do fiddly activities. Children's awareness of the position of their joints is also enhanced by heavy activities. Another benefit of heavy activities is that they can be calming and help children feel more in control of their bodies.

TUG OF WAR

Why Do It? Heavy activity

Where: indoors or out

What do we need? Tea Towel or small bath towel, rope or line to mark the floor, two players

How: Place the line down on the floor between the players. Each player grasps the towel and pulls. The winner is the player who pulls the other player over to their side of the rope. Try a competition with the overall winner being the best out of three or five turns.

Challenge: Can you do this with one hand,

Change it: Try doing this sitting or kneeling

Watch It! Watch out for obstacles immediately behind the players, show players how to avoid sudden falling over.

CLIMBING

Why do it? Heavy activity

Where: playground with climbing frames, sturdy trees in the garden or park

What do we need? Hands

Challenge: Can you visit a rock climbing wall where they use harnesses?

Watch It! Commonsense safety applies; don't push your child to go beyond the height they feel comfortable with.

PUSH UPS

Why do it? Heavy activity

Where: level area inside or out

What do we need? Body, optional mat on floor or grass

How: Child lies on the floor on their stomach

Hands are placed at about shoulder level, with elbows bent.

Push up from floor, straightening arms.

Lift body up with the knees staying on the floor.

Lower body slowly back to the ground by bending elbows.

Try to keep the body as straight as possible.

Challenge: go to toes. How many can you do? Remember slow and steady is better than fast and furious!

Change it: Do standing against a wall, with feet 30-40 cm from wall, bending with your elbows.

WRESTLES

Why do it? Heavy activities, physical outlet

Where: safe area inside or out

What do we need? Bodies

How: Boys and Dads often do this very naturally! But Girls can join in the fun, too!

Challenge: Can you kneel on all fours and stay put!

Watch It! Commonsense applies! This is about controlled wrestling, with lots of pulling and pushing bodies. Adults need to use their superior strength carefully. No kicking, biting, scratching or punching of course!

ANIMAL WALKS TRAIL

Why do it? Heavy activities

Where: indoors or outdoors

What do we need? Animal walks cards (see resources for Moovy groovy Fun)

How: Lay the cards out at intervals approximately 3 metre intervals. Your child has to perform the pictured animal walk until they reach the next card.

Watch It! Adults can demonstrate the animal walks but need to be aware that it is much more physically demanding on adult joints than for young children.

BEACH BALL VOLLEY BALL

Why do it? Heavy activity

Where: Indoors or out

What do we need? Gym Ball or Fit Ball, or large inflatable Beach Ball, two players

How:

1. Ask your child to stand with their arms bent at the elbow and their hands up like stop signs.
2. Tell them, "When I throw the ball to you, hit it back to me" "Don't try to catch it, just hit it back to me."
3. Check that your child's arms are in the correct position and throw the ball to them.
4. Catch the ball as your child hits it back.
5. Explain that if the ball hits the floor it will count for one strike or penalty. Set a 5 penalty limit to start with.
6. Continue playing the game counting each time the ball lands on the floor. When five is reached the game is finished

Challenge: Can you count backwards with each hit? Try starting at 10 first. Can you spell out your name or other words with each hit? Can you go all the way through the alphabet with each hit?

PUSH BACKS

Why do it? Heavy activity

Where: Floor space,

What do we need? Bodies

How: Each person stands opposite each other

Players have their elbows bent, palms facing each other "like stop signs"

Push against the other player's palms.

The winner is the person who can push the other player to step back.

Challenge: Play in a half kneeling position or sitting cross -legged

Eye hand Co-Ordination

This skill combines our vision and our hand movements. Eye hand co-ordination allows us to connect with objects accurately such as in catching a ball or cutting along a line with scissors. Our visual attention is vital if we are to learn how to connect accurately with our hands and other objects. Encouraging children with activities that slow this process down, allows them the confidence to develop in this important area.

BUBBLE CLAP

For: Eye Hand Coordination

What Do We Need? Bubble mixture and wand. Two hands.

How: Gently blow bubbles up into the air.
Child watches bubbles and pops them by clapping their hands around a bubble.

BALLOON TAP

For: Eye Hand Coordination

What Do We Need? Blown up balloon, hands.

How: Balloon is thrown up in the air.
Child needs to keep the balloon airborne by tapping it with their dominant hand.

Challenge: Have two balloons going at once!

Change It Use a line to mark a simple court like in Volleyball. Score points for making the balloon land on the other player's side of the court.

BALL IN A BUCKET

For: Eye Hand Coordination

What Do We Need? Five tennis balls or rolled up socks, small bucket or icecream container.

How: Place the bucket 2 metres away from Child.
Child aims to throw balls into the bucket.
As aim improves, move the bucket further away.

Challenge: Can you do this standing on one leg?

Variation: Use small juggling balls or other soft throwing objects.

CATCH!

For: Eye Hand Coordination

What Do We Need? Variety of different sized balls

How: Players stand approximately 1 1/2 metres apart.
Take turns throwing and catching the largest ball available to each other.
When handling the large ball accurately, reduce the size of the ball to make it more challenging.

Challenge: Increase the distance between players.

Change It Find other safe objects to throw or pass to each other. Try high throws and low throws.

TOTEM TENNIS

For: Eye Hand Coordination

What Do We Need? Ball on a string eg Totem tennis or orbit tennis, or tennis ball in a stocking temporarily hung from ceiling etc. Bats or hands.

How: One player picks up ball and swings it.
Child attempts to bat at it with hand or bat.
