

**PHYSICAL THERAPY
ACTIVITY RECOMMENDATIONS
BALANCE SKILLS**

Balance skills or equilibrium reactions involve shifting the body weight in order to keep from falling. If the body's center of gravity changes, equilibrium reactions are essential to regaining stability. If equilibrium or balance is immaturely developed in the brain, the child may be clumsy in gross motor activities. The following are some activities that will improve balance skills.

18 months - 3 years

1. Place the child in a cardboard box, on a blanket, or a scooter board and slowly pull them around the room. Vary the speed and direction of movement to challenge them. Try the activity in a sitting position then in a kneeling position.
2. Practice walking on soft surfaces like sand, pillows, a mattress or couch cushions. Practice attempting to jump on the same surfaces.
3. Sit on the floor and kick a ball that's rolled to them with both feet. Use hands for support if needed.
4. A rocking horse or a bouncing ball are good things to sit and move on.
5. Attempting to stand on one foot for 2-3 seconds. Try to pop bubbles with your toes, try to place beanbags or similar objects on your feet and balance them. Start by holding onto a stable object then decrease the support required.
6. In a crawling position, toss small balls, beanbags, pop bubbles, etc. to elicit lifting limbs from the floor to perform the activity.
7. Walk on tip toes (shhhh, be very quiet) or stomping flat feet (very loud) or on your heels.

3 years - 5 years

1. Get into a kneeling or half kneeling (one leg up with the foot flat, other leg on the knee) position to play catch with a large ball, beanbags, pop bubbles, ring toss, etc..
2. Stand on a variety of surfaces to play catch such as sand, on a ramp, on a mattress, on pillows, etc.
3. Swinging on swings, merry-go-rounds, and teeter totters promote good balance skills.
4. Hippity hop balls or sit-n-spins.
5. Jumping and/or walking on an inner tube, tire, or cushions
6. Jumping then hopping on one foot from one surface to another, on a chalk outline, over cracks in the sidewalk or between squares in a linoleum floor.
7. Walk a balance beam: car bumpers in parking lots, the edge of the sidewalks, border boards at most parks, a chalk line on the ground, a small rope. Practice without stepping off then practice walking it backwards.
8. Kicking a ball back and forth or at a wall. Have the child vary which foot they kick with. Begin with a stationary ball if necessary.
9. Simple obstacle courses combining activities i.e. jumping, hopping, tandem walking, crawling.

5½ years and up

1. Dribble the ball with your feet (a soccer dribble) and kick into a goal.
2. Roller skates or a twister game.
3. Make a trail on the floor (masking tape, chalk, etc.) and follow it in a heel-toe step. Master it forward then backward. Use a 2x4 as a simple balance beam.
4. Hop scotch games or balancing on one foot while trying to pick something up off the floor. Make it food and they get the reward of eating it!
5. Balance on one foot (right and left) for 10 seconds. Try again with your eyes closed.