

the **early years** toolkit

hope making a difference choice understanding friendly
together quality understanding dedication hope enthusiastic specialist compassion
personal community people together help care understanding specialist dedication safe local support trust depend
equality care choice independence respect community trust together quality
tion hope enthusiastic specialist compassion safe health service local dependable help equality care d

Helping a child develop their balance

Why is it important to have good balance?

In order to move safely, a child must be able to adopt a balanced position and then move from this to another balanced position. Good balance skills enable you to correct yourself and stay upright in unstable conditions, for example uneven ground, walking in crowds or standing on one leg.

What might I notice if my child has poor balance?

If your child has poor balance you may notice that they

- trip or fall over far more often than their peers
- dislike physical / outdoor play and activities
- are unable to balance on one leg for two to three seconds at four years of age.

How can I help my child improve their balance?

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

General activities that improve balance

- Playing regularly in the garden, playgrounds and parks
- Walking on a variety of surfaces such as gravel, sand, pebbles, wood chip
- Soft play areas that allow children to experience a wide variety of challenging activities in a safe environment
- Learning to ride a bike or scooter. Start with stabilisers until skills progress
- Space hoppers or gym balls
- Trampolines which help with strength and flexibility as well as balance
- Swimming
- Ballet, gymnastics and martial arts classes
- Stepping stones – try making your own out of card or paper. Vary the

distance apart that you place them

- Standing with feet as close together as possible to play throw and catch
- Walking along a line on the floor e.g. a chalk line on the playground/a piece of string at home

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. Gymnasts and ballet dancers are examples of people with excellent postural control.

Activities that improve postural control include:

- Aeroplanes – the child lies on the floor on their tummy and lift 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.
- Human footballs – the child starts lying on their back. They bring their knees up to their chest and cross arms over chest without holding their knees. Their chin should be on their chest. They hold for as long as they can up to 30 seconds.
- Crab walking – the child s 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 (as if to stand up from the floor). In this position they play throw and catch, target games etc. As their balance gets better, you can avoid throwing directly to their hands to challenge them further. Remember to swap which knee is down and which foot is forward.
- Standing on one leg – If this is too hard rest one foot on a low box.