

the school years toolkit

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Balance

Balance is our ability to maintain a stable posture while engaged in motor activity. It allows us to complete all tasks required of us throughout our day in a safe and productive manner.

If you have used this Advice Sheet and not seen improvement after four months, please contact CYPIT.

What you may see

A child with balance difficulties may demonstrate:

- Frequent tripping
- Difficulties with activities with feet off the ground
- Can't ride a bike
- Difficulties staying sat upright on a chair
- Difficulties going up and down steps and stairs
- Difficulties accessing playground equipment
- Poor performance in PE and Games
- Difficulties negotiating new, unfamiliar and uneven surfaces
- Poor concentration and attention
- Difficulties joining in some peer games.

Strategies and Advice

Encouraging your child to experience a variety of movement sensations will help improve balance and build up confidence when standing or sitting on unstable surfaces.

Playground equipment

Playing on swings, slides, balance beams, climbing frames and ladders.

Trampoline

It is important to supervise your child at the beginning. You can start with a mini trampoline with a support bar at the front, if the child is nervous. If using a large garden trampoline, please ensure that there is a surrounding safety net. Start off sitting and bouncing, then kneeling and standing. Once they have gained confidence they can try:

- Jumping and clapping hands in front, behind the body and over the head

Section 5 **advice** sheets

- Jumping with feet apart and then together
- Hopping on alternate feet
- Jumping sideways, forwards and backwards. Twirling around
- Catching a ball while jumping.

Rolling

- Let your child roll down a grassy slope at the park or in the garden.
- Roll at home with use of a blanket/parachute.

Hopscotch

- Let your child try jumping with both feet together and then move up to hopping on one foot.

Walking along a taped length

- Start off with tram tracks of parallel lines and progress onto single tape line.
- Place the tape on the floor and let your child pretend they are a circus performer.
- Encourage your child to walk forwards and backwards, heel/toe along the line.
- Take turns with your child and keep a score on how many times the line was stepped off.
- Make it fun and have prizes.

Stilts

- You can buy these in toyshops. The ones to start with are shapes that support the whole foot with a length of rope to hold onto.

Stepping Stones

Place cardboard or carpet cut-outs of circles, squares or triangles on the floor. See if your child can follow the course by placing one foot on each "stone". Vary the distance between them.

Balance in crawl position

- Let your child practise keeping balance by lifting up one leg or one arm. Make it more difficult by getting them to lift up a leg and arm at the same time.

Statuses

- See if your child can jump off a low wall, step, or sturdy box and maintain the landing position for a few seconds – like a statue.

Standing on one leg

- When standing on one leg, initially hold their hands. Then encourage letting go of your hand support by reducing the point of contact i.e. from whole hand to fingertip touch.
- Get your child to try to maintain balance on one leg with hands on hips. Make it more difficult by getting them to swing their free leg and, later, to slowly make shapes in the air

Section 5 **advice** sheets

with their other foot.

- When learning to stand on one leg, get your child to look straight ahead, focus on an object and slowly lift their leg and hold it raised as long as possible.

Aeroplanes

- Have your child lie on the floor on their tummy. They then need to lift their head, shoulders and arms off the floor.
- Count to 10.
- Now lift their legs off the floor as well, keeping the legs straight. Count to 10 and relax.
- Progress to maintaining this position while lying on their tummy on a therapy ball.

Suggested resources

Balance Boards

Davies Sports- Lee Fold, Hyde, Cheshire SK14 4LL

- Tel: 0845 120 4515
- www.daviessports.co.uk

Physio Med Services Ltd- Glossopbrook Business Park, Glossop, Derbyshire SK13 7AJ

- Tel: 01457 860444
- www.physio-med.com

Disc 'O' sit/Wobble cushion

Homecraft-Roylan- Nunnbrook Road, Huthwaite, Sutton in Ashfield, Nottinghamshire NG17 2HU

- Tel: 08702 423305
- www.homecraft-roylan.com

Special Direct- TTS, Park Lane Business Park, Kirby-in-Ashfield, Nottinghamshire NG17 9LE

- Tel: 0800 318686
- www.specialdirect.com