

BALANCE ON ONE FOOT



About the skill

Balance is fundamental to everything we do, whether moving or maintaining a stationary position. Static balance involves a stable centre of gravity that remains within the base of support; for example standing in one place or performing a headstand. The degree of stability maintained by a child affects the performance of many locomotor skills such as jump, hop, and skip, and ball skills such as the



catch and two handed strike, and is particularly important when accuracy is required (for example, the underarm throw or punt). Being able to maintain stability is also important in everyday activities such as reaching to get something out of a tree, or simply getting dressed.

Standing on one foot is an example of static balance.

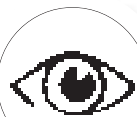
Skill Criteria	Why Are They Important?
1 Support leg still, foot flat on ground	Indicates competence. If the child starts to move their support foot (shuffling or hopping), loss of balance may be imminent.
2 Non-support leg bent, not touching support leg	Indicates confidence in ability to balance.
3 Can balance on either leg	This criterion checks for symmetrical development. Some children are able to balance on one leg only.
4 Eyes focused forward	Children under the age of 7 are very dependent on vision to help them balance. As the proprioceptor (muscle, tendon and joint receptors) and vestibular (inner ear receptors) systems mature, vision becomes less important and children can balance more successfully with their eyes shut.
5 Head and trunk stable and upright	A stable head and trunk assists balance.
6 Arms still, may be extended for extra balance	The arms may be held out to the side to counter-balance any body or foot movement. Excessive movements may cause loss of balance.

- **Verbal Cues**
- ▶ Aeroplane wings
 - ▶ Focus your eyes



Successful Teaching Strategies

Beginning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the importance of focusing the eyes on a feature. You could draw or hang a picture for the child to look at. • Provide support by holding the child's arms out to the side. Gradually reduce your support to one arm, then none... • Suggest the child holds onto the back of a chair or a table top with both hands, then one hand, then.....let go! • Challenge the child to balance on different body parts, for example one foot and one hand, two hands and one knee. • Challenge the child to balance on their tip toes. • Develop a circus theme. Many acts involve balance - clowns, acrobats, tightrope walkers.
Developing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold up numbers, letters, colours, or pictures for the child to identify and name while they are balancing. • Encourage the child to balance on either foot. • Play games that require balance such as Statues, Simon Says.
Consolidating	<p>Challenge the child to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance on one leg with eyes closed, hands on hips or arms folded across the chest. • Balance on one leg with a bean bag on the head, the back of the hands, or on one shoulder. • Balance in different ways with a partner, or a small group.



Intervene if you see..

- Arms waving erratically.
- Tucking non-support foot onto or behind support leg.
- Lifting the non-support leg too high.