



# A Guide to Balance Training



Rehabilitation

# WHAT IS BALANCE?

Balance is the ability to maintain the body in its upright posture.

It is one of four types of exercise – balance, endurance, strength and flexibility.

Many people are not aware of their lack of balance until they try balance exercises. Poor balance can increase falls in older adults.

Always speak with a clinical exercise physiologist before starting a balance training program.

## BENEFITS OF BALANCE TRAINING

### **Balance Training Directly Improves:**

- ✓ Posture and body awareness
- ✓ Quality of Life
- ✓ Confidence
- ✓ Coordination and muscular strength

### **Additional Benefits of Balance Training:**

- ✓ Decreases risk of injury and falls
- ✓ Makes exercise fun and more functional
- ✓ Adds variety to your exercise program

# IMPORTANT BALANCE TRAINING GUIDELINES

<b>Frequency</b> (How often)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Daily – balance is a skill that often requires daily practice.</li></ul>
<b>Intensity</b> (How hard)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Should not be done at a high intensity.</li><li>• Should not exceed your target heart rate or moderate/ somewhat hard intensity.</li></ul>
<b>Time</b> (How long)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This can vary based on your experience, skill level, and the type of activities you choose.</li></ul>
<b>Type</b> (What to do)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Static:</b> maintaining a still/fixed posture.</li><li>• <b>Dynamic:</b> maintaining upright posture while moving or changing positions.</li><li>• It is important to be comfortable with your ability at the current level you are at when choosing or progressing balance exercises.</li><li>• Many exercise have balance skills built-in, such as yoga, walking on the treadmill without handrail support.</li></ul>

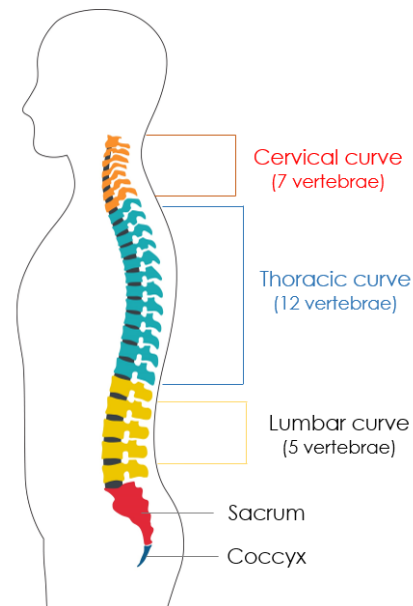
## FACTORS THAT CAN AFFECT BALANCE

There are many things that can influence your balance. Below is a list of examples in no particular order:

- Vision
- Inner Ear Problems
- Joint Issues
- Muscular: weakness, tightness, imbalance
- Spatial Awareness
- Low Blood Pressure
- Low Blood Sugar
- Poor Posture
- Decreased flexibility

# BALANCE TRAINING NEEDS GOOD POSTURE

- Good posture helps to maintain the natural curves of the spine, while poor posture can stress or pull muscles and cause pain.
- A healthy back has 3 natural curves, as shown in the picture to the right.



Source: <https://www.freepik.com/free-photos-vectors/infographic>

## Why is good posture important?

- ✓ Keeps bones and joints properly aligned.
- ✓ Prevents strain and overuse problems.
- ✓ Reduces stress on spine and ligaments.
- ✓ Prevents spine from being fixed in an abnormal position.

## Tips for Good Posture

- Keep your shoulders back and relaxed.
- Avoiding tilting head forward, backward, or sideways.
- Let hands fall naturally at your sides.
- Draw your belly in.
- Keep pelvis/hips straight (don't tilt forward or backward).
- Keep feet hip distance apart.
- Distribute bodyweight evenly on both legs.

## BALANCE EXERCISE GUIDE

Below is a list of exercises that we recommend for you. Each exercise has a different number of levels that you can progress to. It is important to focus on technique and safety before progressing.

Start at level 1 and progress to the next level based on your comfort and safety. It might take you a couple sessions to progress to the next level, that's okay! You can be at a different level for each exercise.

<b>Balance Exercise</b>	<b>Levels</b>
Standing Tandem	6
Tree Pose	4
Warrior 3	4
Bird Dog	4

# STANDING TANDEM

## Level 1:

- Start with your feet hip-width apart.
- Stagger your feet so one foot is slightly ahead, but beside the other.
- Maintain your balance and distribute weight evenly on both feet.

## Level 2:

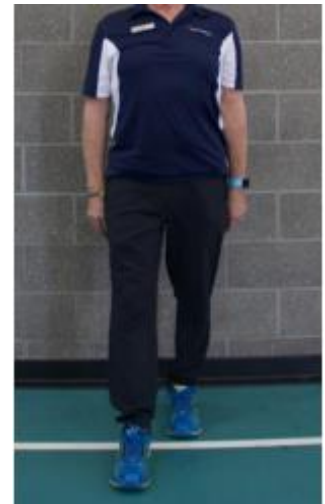
- Start with feet hip-width apart.
- Stagger your feet with one in front of the other until the heel of the front foot is touching the toes of your back foot.
- Maintain your balance and distribute weight evenly on both feet.

## Level 3:

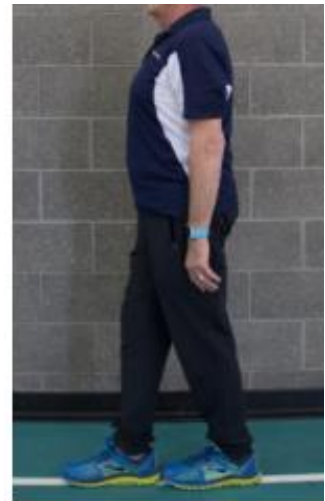
- Start with feet hip-width apart.
- Slowly bring one foot just off the ground.
- Maintain your balance and distribute weight evenly on stable foot.

**Repeat each level on both legs.  
Always remember to breathe!**

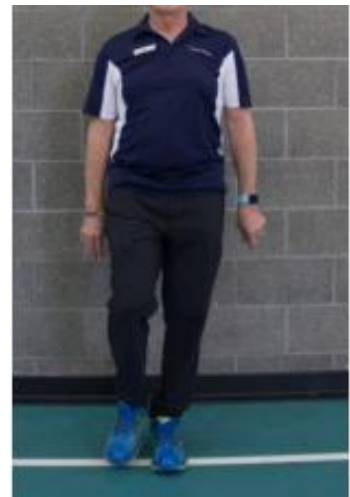
## Level 1



## Level 2



## Level 3



# STANDING TANDEM CONTINUED

## Level 4:

- Start with feet hip-width apart.
- Slowly bring one foot off the ground and move that foot in small circles. Once mastered, slowly increase the diameter of the circle.

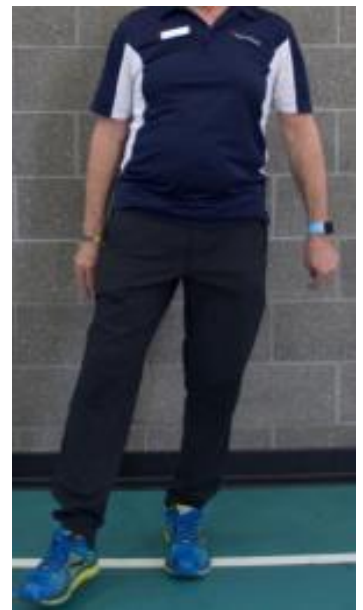
## Level 5:

- Start with feet hip-width apart.
- Slowly bring one foot off the ground and move one hand in small circles at the side.
- Once mastered, slowly start moving both hands from the side to the centre.

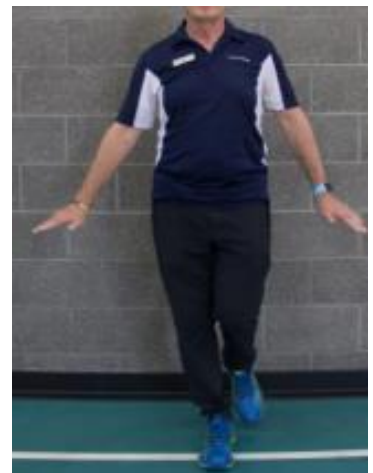
## Level 6:

- Start with feet hip-width apart.
- Slowly bring one foot just off the ground and pass a small object from hand to hand in front of you.

## Level 4



## Level 5



## Level 6



**Repeat each level on both legs.  
Always distribute weight evenly on  
stable foot.**

# TREE POSE

## Starting Position:

- Start with your feet hip-width apart and hands on hip.
- Spread the toes of the right foot wide and into the floor.
- Place your left heel against your right heel and point left foot and knee out to the left.
- Draw the low belly in towards the spine. Chest up and draw shoulders back and down.
- Find a spot to focus on 3-5 feet in front of you.

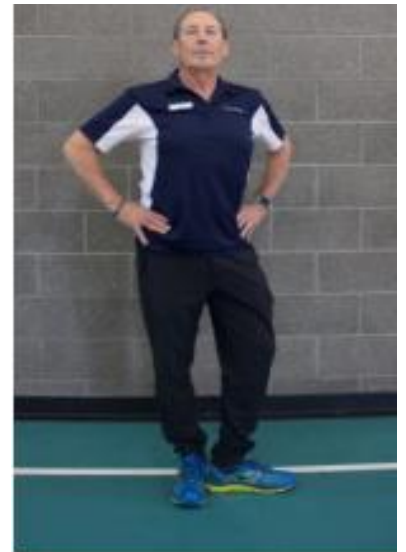
## Level 1:

- Slowly raise your left heel off the floor, while keeping your left big toe touching the floor.
- Turn your left knee out to the side and place the bottom of the left foot on your inner right shin.
- Left toes should still be touching the floor.

## Level 2:

- Slowly raise your left foot off the floor, starting with the heel.
- Lift toes completely off the floor.
- Turn the left knee out to the side and place the bottom of that foot onto the inner right shin, keeping the ball of the left foot by the right ankle.

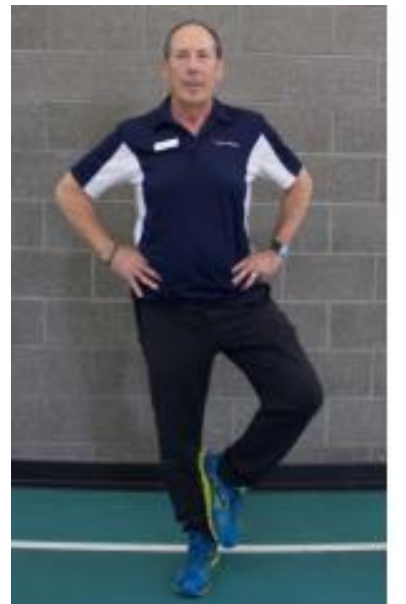
## Starting Position



## Level 1



## Level 2



**Repeat each level on both legs.  
Always remember to breathe!**



# TREE POSE CONTINUED

## Level 3:

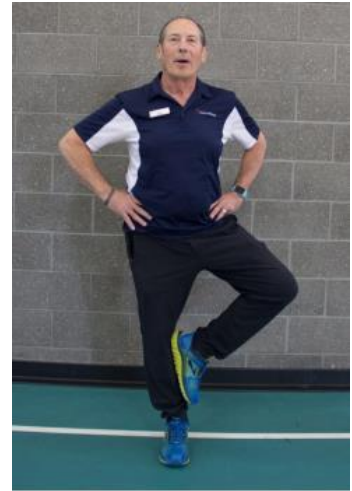
- Slowly raise your left foot off the floor, starting with the heel.
- Lift toes right off the floor.
- Turn the left knee out to the side and place the bottom of that foot onto the inner right shin. Position the ball of the foot by ankle or slightly higher (but not pressing on knee joint).
- Lift hands over head and extend them straight up to the sky (ensure the low back feels okay).

## Level 4:

- Slowly raise your left foot off the floor, starting with the heel.
- Lift toes right off the floor.
- Turn the left knee out to the side and place the bottom of the left foot onto the inner right thigh (above but not on knee joint).
- Hands may stay on hips or lift hands overhead and extend straight up to the sky (ensure the low back feels okay).

**Repeat each level on both legs.  
Always remember to breathe!**

## Level 3



## Level 4



# WARRIOR 3 (HANDS ON TABLE)

## Starting Position:

- Hands on the table and spread the toes of the right foot wide and into the floor.
- Straighten spine, chest up and pull shoulders back.
- Bring left foot slightly backwards,
- Find a spot to focus on 3-5 feet in front of you.

## Level 1:

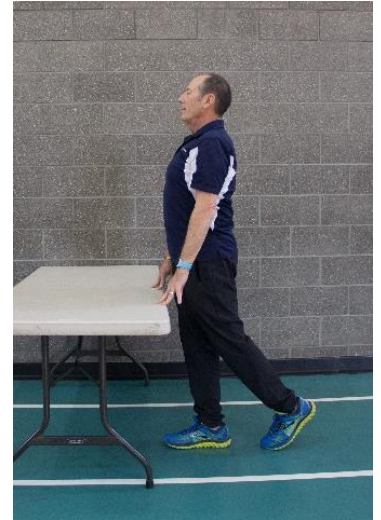
- Slowly raise your left foot off the floor and extend your leg straight behind. Keep left big toe touching the floor.
- Begin lifting both hands off the table and balance on your right foot.
- Keep your spine straight and chest up.

## Level 2:

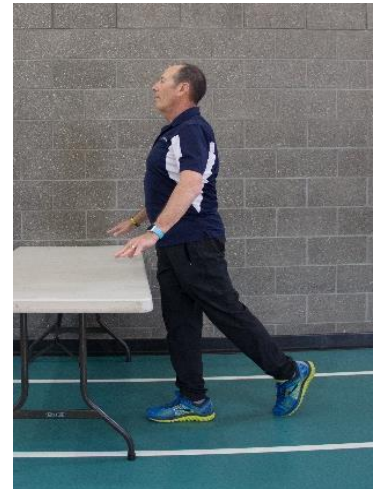
- Slowly raise your left foot off the floor and extend the leg straight behind.
- Keeping your left leg straight (not locked), lift toes off the floor.
- Begin to lift both hands off the table. Balance on the right foot, keeping the spine straight.

**Repeat each level on both legs.**

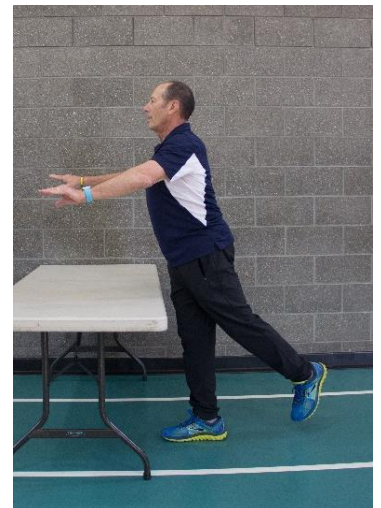
## Starting Position



## Level 1



## Level 2



# WARRIOR 3 (CONTINUED)

## Level 3:

- Slowly raise your left foot off the floor and extend the leg straight behind.
- Keeping your left leg straight (not locked) lift toes off the floor.
- Continue to lift the left heel towards to sky, leaning your belly towards the table with shoulders back.
- Begin to lift both hands off the table. Balance on the right foot, keeping the spine straight.

## Level 4:

- Lift the left foot off the floor and extend the leg straight behind.
- Keeping the left leg straight, but not locked, lift toes off the ground.
- Lift left heel towards to sky, leaning the belly towards the table. Balance on the right foot, keeping the spine straight and shoulders back.
- Bring arms along the sides of the body, palms facing the ground.
- Create a long, straight line with the body from the top of the head to the lifted heel.

## Level 3



## Level 4



**Repeat each level on both legs.**

# BIRD DOG

## Starting Position:

- Start with your hands and knees on the ground. Choose a comfortable surface.
- Keep your hands directly under shoulders and knees directly under hips.

## Level 1:

- Slowly raise one knee off the ground keeping your leg bent.
- Maintain your shoulder and hip in the starting position
- Hold your leg in the air for 5 seconds. Breathe.
- Repeat with other leg.
- With both knees on the ground try to raise one arm slightly off the ground, while keeping shoulder and hip in starting position.
- Hold for 5 seconds. Breathe.
- Repeat with other arm.

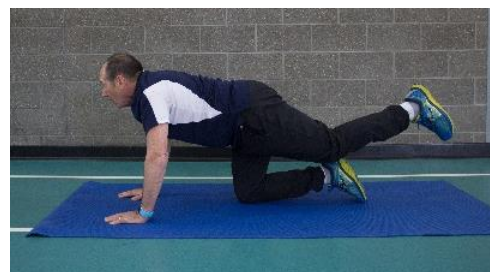
## Level 2:

- From the same starting position as level 1, try to fully extend one leg or one arm at a time.
- The more you extend the harder it is.
- Hold for 5 seconds and remember to breathe!

## Starting Position



## Level 1



## Level 2

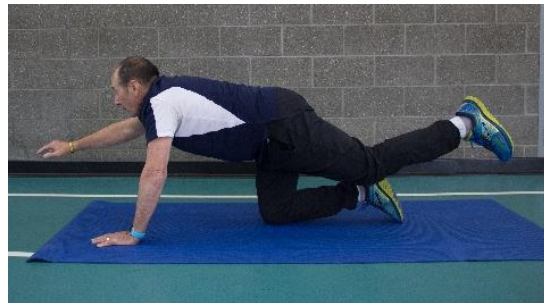


# BIRD DOG (CONTINUED)

## Level 3:

- Slowly raise one arm off the ground AND move the opposite knee off the ground.
- Hold for 5 seconds and remember to breathe.
- Make sure your hips and shoulders do not twist.
- Repeat on other side.

## Level 3



## Level 4:

- Gradually fully extend the arm and leg out.
- Hold for 5 seconds. Breathe.
- The more you extend the harder it will be.
- Repeat on other side.

## Level 4



# TRACKING BALANCE IMPROVEMENTS

One way to see if your balance is improving is to time yourself while standing on one foot with no support for as long as possible.

Try each foot and stay close to something sturdy in case you lose your balance.

Record your time once every month. If your balance is improving, the time that you stand on each foot should increase.

Time Standing (seconds)	Baseline	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5
Date						
On right foot						
On left foot						