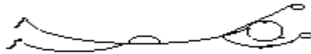


What is Postural Control?

The aim of these exercises is to improve postural control (strength and stability in your back and tummy). It helps to provide a stable base of support needed to develop balance and refine hand function.
Try these activities before the balance activities.

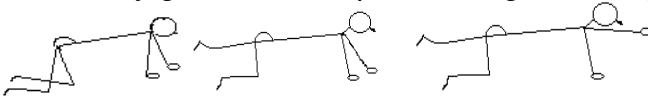
Pretending to be “superman or superwoman”!

- Lift upper body/arms and legs off the ground whilst lying on stomach.
- Work towards keeping legs straight and thighs slightly off the floor.
- Work towards keeping arms straight and palms facing forwards.
- Chest is slightly off the floor but avoid bottom being in the air.
- If it is difficult to sustain both arms and legs, try doing each arm/leg separately.
- Doing activities lying on the stomach and propping on arms also helps develop this skill (e.g. while reading, drawing or watching TV).



4 point kneeling

- Weight bearing through all limbs in a crawling position.
- Lift right arm up and hold this position for a count of 5 - work up to 10.
- Do the same with other arm.
- Repeat this with lifting one leg and counting and then the other leg.
- When strong enough encourage lifting alternate leg and arm together.
- Play games in this position e.g. reaching out to place or throw beanbags into a bucket.



Curling into a ball

- Cross arms across chest, then bend knees up to chest (ideally, you should not use hands to hold knees up) and then lift head and curl up. Hold this position and time it.

Upright or high kneeling

- On both knees (do not sit back on bottom) play ball games between partners or in a circle group. Like catch, throw into bucket/box in middle (ball or beanbag). Kneel at table to do some tabletop activities.
- Statues game; with partner using straight arms, palm to palm, push each other to see who falls over first.
- Get up/down from floor via a 1/2 kneel without using hands to assist.





Improving - Balance

Getting your child to become familiar with body movements, helps maintain or regain balance. The movement can either be small (like the movements we make to keep a sitting position when we turn a corner in a car) or large like extending our hands and arms if we fall to protect our bodies). All children challenge their balance from a very early age, e.g. a baby rocking on hands and knees, a young child trying to stand on one leg, etc.

Helpful strategies

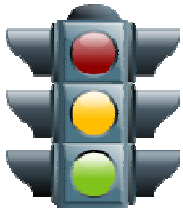
- Introduce difficult activities in stages, e.g. jumping off a two-inch then six inch step etc.
- Allow your child to tell you when they lack confidence and work at that level before attempting improvement.

Activities

- Sit and catch: child should sit on an unstable surface, e.g. a wobble board or cushion and watch a ball rolled towards them, catch it and roll it back. Do this to either side.
- “Poorly paw”: Begin with the child on all fours. Get them to lift each 'paw' (arm and leg individually). When the child is ready ask them to lift an arm and leg on one side, then opposite arm and leg.
- Twister game.
- Walking on rough ground, sand, hilly land or cushions from the couch.
- Stepping-stones.
- Pretend tight rope walking – starting with a wider “walk the plank”, moving to a rope/line on the floor.
- Walking 'Heel to toe' and on tiptoes.
- Kicking a ball, stopping it with feet before kicking it back.
- Musical statues.
- Hopscotch and other hopping games.
- Jumping into a hoop or onto a mat, progressing to jumping off a low step.
- Climbing on frames, nets, rope ladders and wall bars

Other Activities

- Trampolining
- Swimming
- Horse riding
- Gymnastics
- Pulling self along on tummy with arms e.g. along a bench or whilst laying on a scooter board (wide skateboard).
- Space hopper or gym ball activities
- Wheel barrow walks – supporting under the hips initially but moving towards ankles as the child becomes more stable
- Using a scooter
- Wii fit has games for balance and coordination



What is motor planning?

Motor planning is the ability to conceive, organise and carry out a sequence of unfamiliar actions. It can affect a child's ability to perform everyday activities. It is not just organising body movements but also organising thoughts and ideas, language, time, and possessions. A child may appear clumsy, accident prone, messy and/or disorganised.

Strategies to help

- Explain the activity well. Using verbal and visual instruction to demonstrate if necessary. If needed break down into parts and practise those first.
- Get your child to imagine successfully completing the task i.e. good motor planning. Stop & Think first! Ask your child to talk through the stages
- Repetition is helpful. Your child may need more repetition than others when learning new tasks. May also need help in planning projects/homework tasks - work out the steps needed to achieve the end product.
- "Hands on" help may be necessary at first to actually give your child the "feel" of the required movement or position.
- Help your child to think about what went well with a task, what they could change (may include speed, force of movement, timing, directions). Give feedback if they are unable to and work out how to change the task.
- Encourage self-monitoring – tell me why that went wrong, what worked? Asking questions like "did you throw too far or too short? How could you make the ball go further?" will help you child to consider the different parts of the task.
- Reward and encourage participation, and focus on the successes

Use Goal-Plan-Do-Check as a strategy to learn new tasks

- GOAL: What do I want to do?
- PLAN: How am I going to do it?
- DO: Complete the task
- CHECK: How well did my plan work?

Activities to try:

- Jigsaws and Activity Books - dot-to-dot, mazes
- Scissors - Cut and paste activities, using sticky tape as well as glue, junk modelling
- Construction toys such as Lego, Knex, railway tracks
- Threading e.g. beads in sequence or coloured macaroni
- Obstacle Courses – under and over obstacles, climbing, walking along a line
- Animal Walks: e.g. Bear (on hands and feet), bunny hops
- Hokey Cokey, Simon says....
- Jumping e.g. from mat to mat, or on paving, moving to more complex jumps – star jumps, jumping jacks and skipping.
- Twister
- Ball games: such as throwing a beanbag into a box, ball at a target, simple throwing and catching. You can later move to more complex task such as bouncing a ball, or throwing and catching against a wall.