Development

Balance is a stability skill and starts developing soon after birth as children start acquiring skills such as rolling, sitting and walking. It is very important to give young children plenty of opportunities to develop this skill as it is an essential part of everything we do and it affects the development of locomotor and object control skills. Balance should be a key focus in any physical literacy program in the early years.

*Static Balance is balance while you are still, for example standing on one leg. Dynamic Balance is balance whilst on the move, for example walking along a balance beam.*

Skill Criteria Checklist (for balancing on one leg - Static Balance):

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Support leg still, foot flat on ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Non-support leg bent, not touching support leg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Can balance on either leg</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Eyes focused forward</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Head and trunk stable and upright</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Arms still, may be extended for extra balance</td>
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**TEACHING STRATEGIES**

Beginners (at the emergent level of balance skill development)

- Focus on skill criteria number 4 & number 5
- Encourage children to keep their head and eyes up while performing balances
- Set-up obstacle courses that incorporate different balance challenges – balance along a line, stand on one leg, balance a bean bag on your head
- Play fun balancing games such as Musical Balances that challenge children to make different animal balances e.g. flamingo – stand on one leg
• Try some of our fun games that involve balancing: Beans, Turtles, Snakes and Islands

Developing

• Introduce more difficult balance obstacles into your obstacle courses – balance beams, over and under hurdles, jump from hoop to hoop
• Try balancing on one leg on preferred and non-preferred leg
• Practice balance on the move by performing different movements:
  o Running on tip toes
  o Giant steps
  o Hopping
  o Running backwards
  o Changing directions
  o Starting and Stopping
• Play balance challenges and have fun trying Balance Twister, Rock, Bridge, Tree Tag and Octopus Tag
• Try catching with different sized balls
• Play games such as Catch Tag and Sticky Catches

Acquired/accomplished level

• Make harder obstacles in obstacle course – pick up bean bags or kick cones over while walking across balance beam, balance bean bag on head while standing on one leg, balance on one leg with your eyes closed
• Try out different equipment – bear feet rope walkers, jumping balls that you sit on, stilts
• Play games that involve dynamic balance such as Netflix and static balance such as Balance Twister

### Teaching Cues

- ✔ Head up
- ✔ Aeroplane arms
- ✔ Eyes forward looking at something ahead of them e.g. tree
Common Errors

- Arms waving erratically
- Looking at the ground
- When balancing on one leg: tucking non-support foot onto or behind support leg