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## **Balance**

Balance is one of the most important fitness terms that support all fundamental movements. Without proper balance athletes will struggle to perform skills efficiently and risk injury.

Balance involves three areas of the body

- sensory receptors in the muscles and tendons
- eye sight
- inner ear

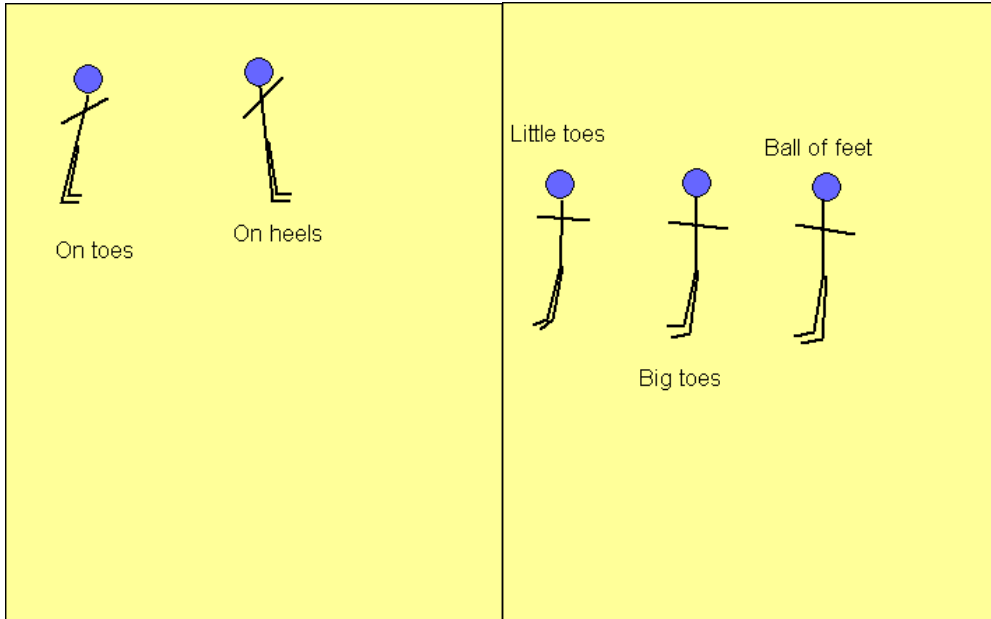
When training balance it is important to make use of all three areas so when one area is challenged the other two can compensate. Too many people rely on one area for balance.

There are two types of balance;

- static or stationary
- dynamic - movement balance

### **Where is your weight?**

It is important that athletes know where they distribute weight on their feet. This little progression is to help athletes become of weight distribution. Standing straight with the core activated, do the following activities but try to keep the entire foot on the floor.

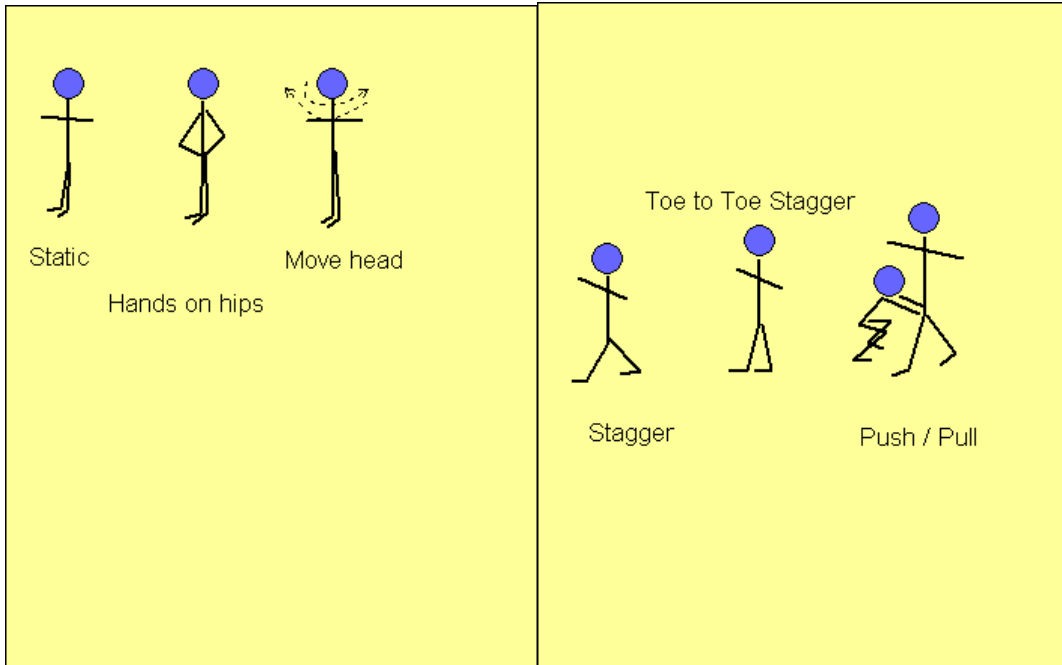


1. Lean forward to feel the weight on your toes. Where is your head in relation to your knees and shoulders?
2. Lean backward until the weight is on your heels. Remember to keep your feet on the floor. Where is your head in relation to your knees and shoulders?
3. Put the weight on your little toes. What do you feel at your knees? What is happening to your ankles?
4. Put your weight on your big toes. What do you feel at your knees? At your ankles?
5. Put your weight on the balls of your feet. Where is your head in relation to your knees and shoulders?

### **Static balance**

It is important to test the athlete's static balance first. Here is a simple progression.

1. Do these early in practice before fatigue set in
2. Maximum time necessary is about 2 to 3 minutes
3. The athlete should be able to hold the balance for 20 to 30 seconds.
4. If the athletes do not pass have the athletes work on the skill daily for about 2 minutes a day, until they can progress to the next level.



These activities may appear simple to the casual observer. We often take balance for granted. You will find these more difficult when you actually do the activity. Especially athletes who have had injuries in the past.

## **Two feet**

### Activity 1

Stand straight with feet side by side in a narrow stance, arm out stretched at shoulder height.

### Activity 2

Hands on hips. This restricts the use of arms to balance.

### Activity 3

Move the head from side to side and up and down. This challenges the vision and starts to use the inner ear. The arms can be outstretched or on the hips.

### Activity 4

Close one eye. Try with the other eye closed. Both eyes closed.

### Activity 5

Move the body by leaning and moving the upper body. You can add a light weight such as a ball or a medicine ball.

### Activity 6

Toss a ball to the person. Have them bounce the ball This challenges the vision.

### Activity 7

Have someone apply light pushes and pulls to disrupt the balance. Also have the athlete attached to a bungee cord. Close the eyes and do this activity.

### Activity 8

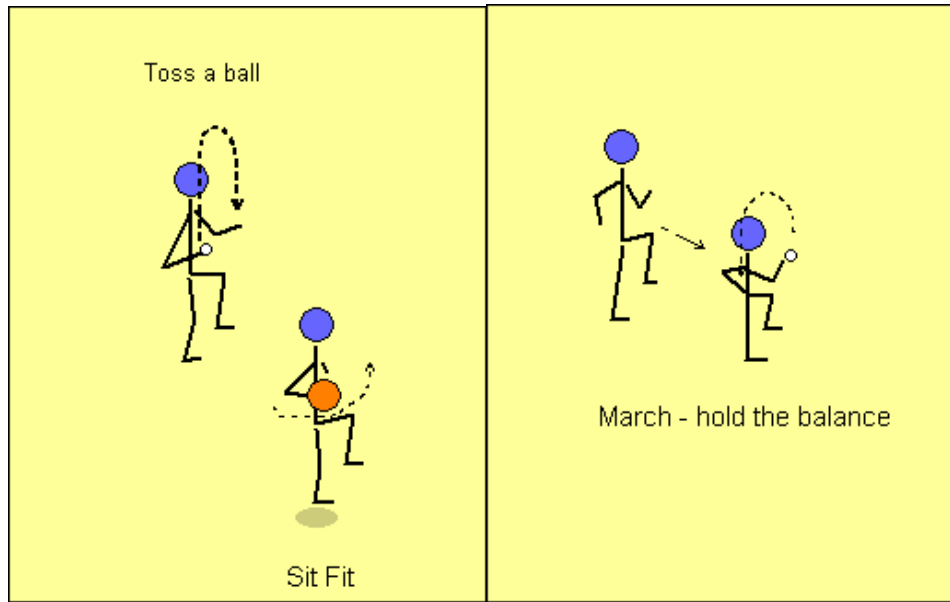
Add an unstable surface. This could be on an exercise mat, sit fit or wobble board. Safety is important.

## **One foot**

Many of the actions that occur in a sport like basketball require the athlete to balance on one foot for a brief moment in time. These exercises can help the athlete move efficiently and prevent serious injuries that could occur.

The athlete can be taken through the same progressions as was done for two feet:

- Arms out stretched at shoulder height
- Hands on hips
- Move the head from side to side and up and down
- Close one eye
- Both eyes closed.
- Move the body by leaning and moving the upper body
- Swing or chop a ball
- Toss a ball
- Bounce a ball
- Apply light pushes and pulls to disrupt the balance.
- Add an unstable surface



### **March progression**

A good way to practice the one foot balance is to march and hold the balance phase on one foot. Hold and then march to the other foot. Each player can work at their own level of difficulty.

Hold the lead leg for 2 -3 seconds. Tossing a ball is a good way to warm up the nervous system.

March in different directions;

- Forward
- Backward
- side ways

### **Advanced one leg balances**

#### 747's

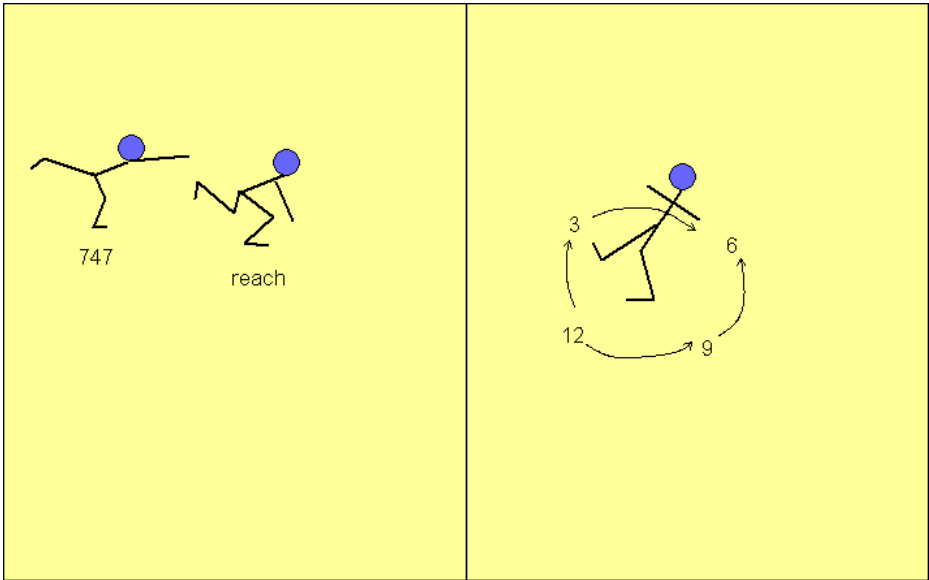
Balance on one foot and slowly extend the back leg behind you and both arms in front. Your body should be parallel to the floor.

#### Reach

Begin the same as the 747 but only reach and touch the floor in front of your toe. Raise up and now touch a spot to the inside of your toe. Now touch a spot to the outside.

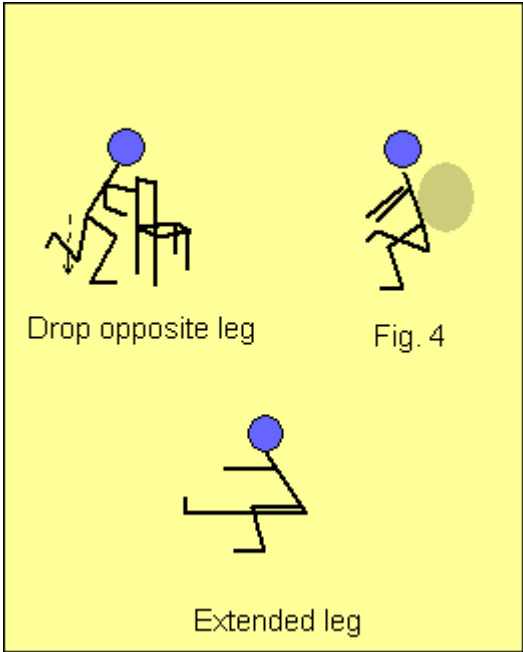
#### Opposite leg

Take the right leg and move it to the #12 on a clock (in front of you). Bring the leg in and now move it to 1 o'clock. Return to the middle and go to 2 o'clock. Continue to the #6. Use the left leg for the numbers on the other side of the clock. You can also use a sweep action without returning to the middle each time.



You can use the same loading as before. Adding a ball is excellent

**One leg squat progression**



Moving on a basketball court has been described as a series of one legged squats interspersed with the occasional two legged squat. It is very important that players have the strength, balance and flexibility to perform these correctly. To begin with you can use a chair at your side or stability ball on your back or side to support the movement.

Opposite leg drop

The object here is to drop the opposite knee as close to the floor as possible. Try to make this a hip squat action and not a knee squat.

Fig. 4

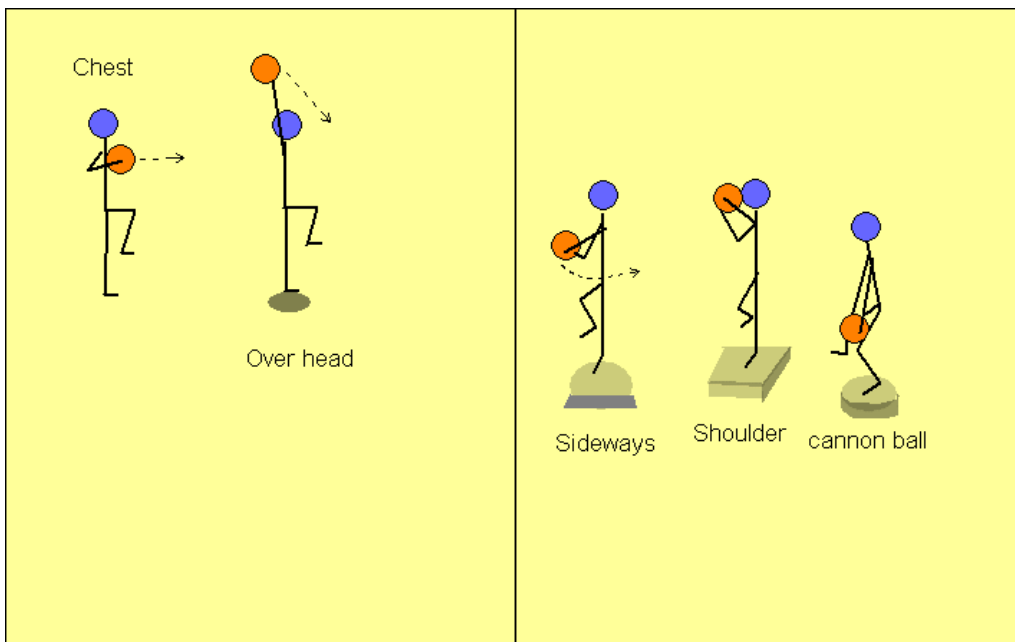
Cross the opposite leg over top of the supporting leg. Sit trying to get the supporting thigh parallel to the floor.

Extended leg

Keep the non-support leg straight. Start with the hips bending first. Go until both thighs are parallel to the floor.

**Passing on one foot**

Passing a ball while balancing on one foot is a great way to challenge the nervous system while working on balance at the same time.



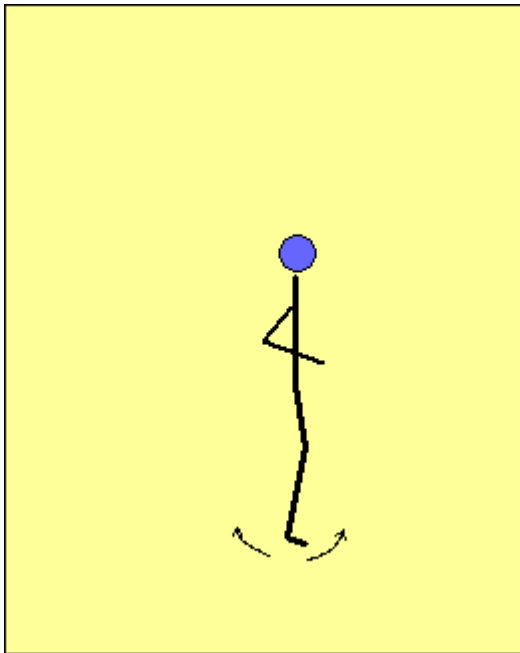
- Start by passing to yourself.
- Add a partner
- Add an unstable surface like a Bosu ball, Sit fits or wobble boards  
Medicine ball
- Add re load action first - fake a hard pass then make the pass - this makes you regain your balance before making the pass

Types of passes

- chest - re load chest
- overhead - re load overhead (bounce it hard off the floor)
- cannon ball - with two hands between the legs in an up ward motion - re load cannon ball

- side toss - re load side toss
- should pass re load shoulder pass
- one arm flicks - re load flicks

### **Heel to toe rocking**



Have the players rock from heel to toe

- a) flat surface
- b) unstable surface (mat)
- c) wobble board

To help players understand weight shift.

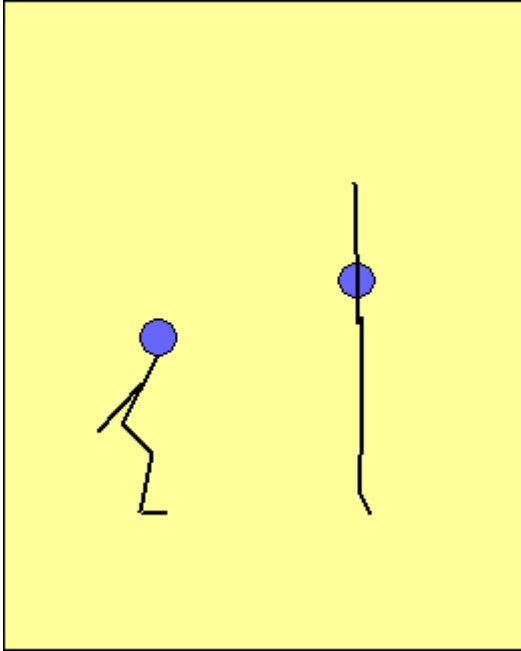
Then add to shooting

### **Raise up on both feet**

Start in a 1/2 squat position. Swing the arms and raise up into full extension balancing on the toes with the arms over the head

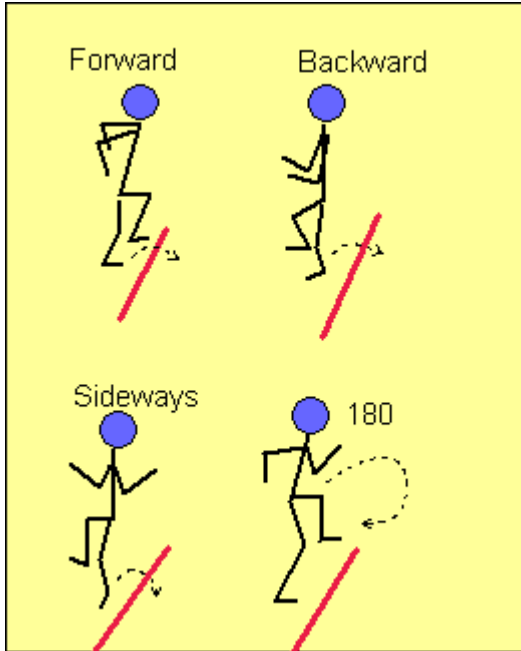
Do this first standing then add a jump.

Emphasis proper knee bend and core position at the start and balance on take off and landing



### **Hops**

Start on one foot and hop to land on balance. Only a couple of reps are required. You do not need a high jump. Hold the landing.



- Forward
- Backward
- Sideways right
- Sideways left
- 180°
- Close your eyes
- On an exercise mat