



## Month 7: Stretch it Out and Balance

### School Age

#### **Balance Beam**

Make a balance beam from a sturdy board (10-15 cm wide and 2.5 m long). Start teaching your child how to move along the board on the ground. Once she is comfortable, make the board into a balance beam by raising it up. Place in on solid supports, like cement blocks, no more than 25 cm off the ground. Make sure it won't tip over. Now she can try walking along the raised board, she can walk forward, sideways and backwards.

As your child masters the balance beam, continue to challenge their skills in the following ways:

- Stand on the beam with one foot in front of the other, back toe touching front heel, and keep hands on hips. How long can they hold this position? What about with eyes closed? Can they hold this position while catching and tossing a ball to you?
- Walk backwards along the beam with hands on hips.
- Walk forwards and backwards along the beam with hands on hips and while staying up on tip toes.
- Place an obstacle on the beam that your child has to step over each time they come to it.
- Have your child stand on one foot on the balance beam with hands on hips. How long can they hold this position? What about with eyes closed? How do they do while standing on the other foot?
- Get as creative as you like with balance beam work and have fun!

#### **Bean Bag Balance Activities**

You will need: 1 bean bag per child, and a balance beam.

- *Round 1: Balance while walking on the Balance Beam* – Tell the children to walk with their feet only on the taped line.
- *Round 2: Walk and Step Over Bean Bags* – Place a bean bag in the middle of the balance beam. Tell the children to walk on the beam again and this time, when they come to the bean bag, they must step over the bean bag.

- *Round 3: Squat and Pick-Up a Bean Bag* – Tell the child to walk on the balance beam. This time when they come to the bean bag they must squat down (while still keeping their feet only on the beam), pick up the bean bag and walk the rest of the way on the balance beam carrying their bean bag.
- *Round 4: Carrying the Bean Bags in Different Ways* – Tell the children to walk on the balance beam and carry their bean bag, but this time they must carry their bean bags on their shoulders, head, foot, etc.

### **Body Part Challenge**

Explain to the children that balance is just holding yourself up and not falling over.

You will need: 2 hula hoops or 2 jump ropes made into a circle or 2 mats

You then need to call out directions one at a time and allow children the time to complete each task. Use the directions below and add your own.

1. Stand up with one foot in each hoop.
2. Balance with one foot in one hoop and one hand in the other hoop. (only those body parts can be inside of the hoop. The other body parts can be either off of the floor or on the floor outside of the hoops).
3. Put two hands in one hoop and two feet in the other hoop.
4. Put only one hand in one hoop and two feet in the other hoop.
5. Put only your bottom in one hoop and one hand in the other hoop. (Feet must be held off of the floor or outside of the hoops).
6. Put one hand and one foot in one hoop and one foot in the other hoop. (The other hand must be off of the floor or placed outside of the hoops).
7. Put one knee in one hoop and one knee in the other hoop.
8. Put one knee in one hoop and two hands in the other hoop.
9. Put one knee in one hoop and one hand in the other hoop. (All other body parts must be held off of the floor or outside of the hoops).
10. Put two knees in one hoop and two elbows in the other hoop.
11. Put two elbows in one hoop and one knee in the other hoop.
12. Put your bottom in one hoop and one elbow in the other hoop.
13. Put two heels in one hoop and two hands in the other hoop. (Preschoolers will probably have to have their tummies facing the ceiling for this one and it may be challenging for preschoolers to decide how to do this task).
14. Put one hand and one knee in one hoop and one hand and one knee in the other hoop.
15. Put one elbow and one knee in one hoop and one elbow and one knee in the other hoop.

## **Body Pretzels**

You will need:

Body part flash cards ([www.esl.kids.com/flashcards/bodyparts.html](http://www.esl.kids.com/flashcards/bodyparts.html) ), or you can make your own by drawing simple pictures of body parts on pieces of paper.

1. Divide the flash cards into two piles: One pile for upper body parts (finger, hand, ear, neck, elbow, shoulder, etc.) and another pile for lower body parts (ankle, leg, knee, toe, etc.). Include the belly button and back in the lower body part pile and the tummy in the upper body part pile.
2. Shuffle the piles and turn them face down.
3. Choose a card from each pile.
4. Make a guess – The child is asked to make a guess as to whether they think they can touch the 2 body parts together.
5. Body Pretzel – Now the children try to touch the two body parts together.

## **Paper Plate Skating**

You will need two round paper plates for each child. Explain to the children that they are to put one paper plate under each foot and use them as skates. Their feet must stay on the plates in order to move the plates around on the floor.

Have the children try skating with the paper plate skates on different floor surfaces to see which works best for them.

Paper Plate Skating Variations:

1. Add music: play music while the children skate.
2. Four plates: Give four plates to each child and let them skate on all fours: hands and feet or hands and knees.
3. One Plate Sitting Down: Have the child sit down and try only one paper plate under their bottom and scoot around using their hands and legs.

## **Limbo**

You will need: A jumping rope or pole to use as a limbo pole.

1. Appoint two children/ or parents to hold the limbo "pole". Have each child hold onto an end and stand adjacent to one another, pulling the jumping rope taut to create the limbo pole.
2. Time to limbo! Have the kids form a line and take turns seeing how low they can go. Start out the "limbo pole" holding it at arm's length. Continue to lower the limbo "pole" a notch after each kid has had a chance to try and shimmy underneath.

## Yoga for Stretching and Balance

\* Adapted From *Yoga Kit for Kids by Imaginazium*

### Cat



- Start from hands and knees. Hands should be directly under shoulders, knees under hips.
- Spread fingers wide and point them straight ahead.
- Keeping arms straight, press down through hands into floor and exhale as you round back as much as possible and look at your bellybutton.
- On the inhale, arch your back, look up and reach one leg behind you. Imagine you are a cat stretching all the way through your tail.
- Repeat with the other leg stretching back.
- Do as many times as feels good.

*From all fours  
I round my spine  
So I can see my tummy  
Then with a stretch  
I arch myself  
It makes my back  
feel yummy.*

### Dog



- Start from hands and knees.
- Hands should be directly under shoulders, knees under hips.
- Spread fingers wide and point them straight ahead. Curl toes under.
- Press down through hands and feet into floor and push hips as high up as possible.
- Let your head hang down so you can look at your legs.
- Lengthen your back and straighten your arms and legs.
- Reach heels toward the floor as you pull back and yawn just like a dog!
- Hold pose for 3-6 breaths and then lower back to hands and knees.

*I am dog  
And when I yawn  
I push into the ground  
My tail goes up  
My back gets long  
My arms stretch straight  
My head hangs down.*

## Cobra



- Lay on floor on tummy, legs straight.
- Place palms of hands on floor close to and on either side of chest.
- Looking straight ahead, lift chest as high as possible.
- Shoulders should be wide and down away from ears.
- Then, arch and lift chest even higher by pressing down into hands.
- Keep elbows pinned into sides of body and pull chest forward and up. Neck should be long and chin parallel to floor.

*I press my hands  
I lift my chest  
I send a slither up my back  
My shoulders wide  
In kingly stance  
Beware to all!  
I might attack.*

## Pretzel



- Sit cross-legged on the floor with back straight.
- Hold outside of left knee with right hand and twist torso and head to the left.
- Rest fingertips of left hand on floor behind you.
- Inhale and let your body grow tall.
- As you exhale, stay tall and twist further around by pushing right hand against left knee.
- Inhale and exhale 3-5 times, twisting a little deeper each time.
- Only go as far in the twist, or in any of the poses, as feels good. Then unwind slowly and twist to the other side.

*Sitting criss-cross applesauce  
My right hand to left knee  
I can twist my torso 'round  
And see what's behind me.*

## Turtle



- Sit with soles of feet pressed together so that legs form a diamond shape.
- Touch elbows together in front of chest.
- Then bending forward bring elbows down toward the floor between knees.
- Slide forearms under legs and rest hands on floor palms down.
- Round over and, if possible, rest forehead on feet.
- Pull head in and down when IN your shell and reach head out and up when peeking OUT of your shell.

*I hook my arms under my knees  
And rest them on the floor  
I round my back to form my shell  
And peek out of the door.*

## Peacock



- Sit tall with legs straight.
- Flex feet and spread legs as wide apart as is comfortable.
- Place hands on floor in front of you and press down to widen shoulders.
- If you want more stretch in legs and hips, walk hands away from body lowering torso toward floor.

*When I fan my tail out wide  
I spread my colours side to side  
I stretch my back and legs out, too  
So I can say  
Hello to you.*

## Frog



- Squat with feet wide enough apart that heels can touch or are close to the ground.
- Arms come inside of knees, hands rest on floor shoulder distance apart.
- Use arms to help spread knees wide.
- Let hips drop low while back lengthens up, chest lifts and shoulders are wide.

*I am frog  
I sit in squat  
I wait for flies  
That I can spot  
Then I flick my tongue so fast  
The fly is gone within a flash.*

## Bird



- From standing, raise arms diagonally out behind you like wings.
- Then, keeping eyes on one point in front of you, press up onto the balls of feet and balance.
- When balancing, imagine that you are rooting deeply into the earth while simultaneously growing longer and taller.
- Don't look away from your point. Keeping your eyes focused will help you balance.

*Perched on toes  
Away up high  
I like to spread my wings  
And fly.*

## Tree



- Stand with feet parallel and together or just a few inches apart.
- Imagine being a tree. Grow long roots out of the bottom of your feet and let your body extend very tall.
- Check to feel if your feet, hips, shoulders and head are all lined up like the trunk of a tree.
- Press the palms of your hands together in front of your chest and find something at eye level to focus on. Without moving your gaze, shift weight to one foot.
- Lift the other foot on top of the standing foot or to the knee or inner thigh of the standing leg.
- Press the sole of the foot into standing leg while pressing down through the standing leg into the floor to help you balance.
- Feel as though you continue to grow. If your balance is steady, lift your hands above your head and open them like the branches of a tree.
- Breathe and hold as long as is comfortable. Do the other side.

*When I send my roots down deep  
I let myself grow tall  
I focus on a single point  
I hold my center strong  
Then I can balance on one leg  
And stretch my limbs out long.*

## Hero



- Stand with feet wide apart. Turn the front foot out 90 degrees and the back foot in 45 degrees.
- Bend the front leg keeping the knee in line with the foot (aim the centre of the knee toward the second toe- the one next to the big toe). Press the back leg straight keeping the heel on the floor.
- Raise both arms wide and perpendicular to the body. Hold arms parallel to floor. Turn head toward the front arm and look at the tips of the fingers.
- Be as strong and straight as an arrow flying through the sky aimed directly at a bull's-eye.
- Breathe and hold as long as feels good. Do the other side.

*I am warrior  
Brave and true  
My legs stand wide apart  
With front knee bent  
And back leg straight  
My arms reach from my heart.*

## Shark



- Lay on floor on tummy, legs straight and together.
- Roll shoulders back and reach arms behind you. Clasp hands and interlace fingers behind back.
- Reach clasped hands up and back toward feet.
- Lift head and chest as much as possible. Lift legs as well keeping them straight.
- Breathe 3-5 times and then lower slowly.

*With my hands held tight  
Behind my sight  
I roll my shoulders back  
I lift my fin  
And then my chin  
To bit into a snack.*

## Flower



- Sit with soles of the feet touching, legs in a diamond shape.
- Touch elbows together and then bend forward moving arms down between legs. Hook forearms under knees.
- Sit back up bringing feet toward body until just toes are touching floor.
- Lean back, lift feet off floor, one foot at a time and balance on seat.
- Breathe and hold for as long as possible. Come out of pose gracefully.

*I slide my arms inside my legs  
I scoop my elbows under knees  
I lean way back and lift my feet  
So I can balance on my seat!*

## References:

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