

Handout 8

10 simple ways to work on balance skills

These activities aim to improve your child with visual impairment's balance, coordination, core stability and foot placement.

1. With your child, walk up and down **single steps or kerbs**. Each time you take a step, you are balancing on one foot, so make sure the step height is not too great for a small child. You can support him, if necessary, by holding hands. Establish secure movement on up and down steps before your child progresses to unsupported movement.
2. **Sit and ride toys**. Start your child on wider, solid-wheelbase toys. Move on to tricycles, which are reasonably stable, but pedalling and steering them requires considerable coordination. Watch out for oversteer! Then progress to a balance bike – a task that requires considerable postural control and balance.
3. **Ride a scooter**. Start your child on a three-wheeled scooter, as they are more stable (and therefore easier to ride) than two-wheeled ones.
4. With your child, **walk on uneven terrain**: grass, rocks or dirt. Wet, thick mud is very challenging, though. If sensory issues permit, encourage your child to walk barefoot on grass and wet and dry sand (wet sand creates the most resistance). Kick through the leaves in autumn.
5. Play a **game of football** together. This requires him to stand on one foot to kick the ball. Swinging his active leg provides further challenges to stability. To start with, choose a large, high-visibility or audible ball.
6. Play **'Find Me' or 'Follow the Leader'** together. Practise walking fast, slow, backwards and sideways, hopping on one leg and skipping. Alternate with 'Traffic Lights', 'Stop-Go', etc. Progress to 'Pirates' or 'Simon Says'.
7. **Walk the tightrope**. Get your child to walk heel to toe along any visible or tactile line. Or play 'Cross the Rickety Bridge' (this can be a low-level beam or even a rope). You can make the



game entertaining by having a 'crocodile' in the water! Progress to stepping stones. Use 'Three Billy Goats Gruff' as a variation.

8. Try **putting trousers or joggers on while standing**. It's a real challenge standing on one foot while putting the other leg into a pair of trousers!
9. Look for **gross motor activities at the park**, particularly those that encourage rocking and swaying.
10. Encourage your child to use **portable play equipment**: trampolines, wobble boards, Gymnic Rody horse, etc.

