

Month 2: Trunk Control Toddler Activities

Tall Kneeling Balance

Children will often play in tall kneel at a surface where they can use their upper extremities for support. Your goal is to help your child maintain tall kneel position without this support. Your infant will probably move from a crawling to a low kneel position (bottom resting on lower legs). Try to blow bubbles or hold a ball or balloon up just beyond their reach, encouraging them to come up into a tall kneel position. Can they hold this position and play here for a few seconds?



Front Lean

1. Hold your child against you facing a mirror. Place one hand on her knees and the other on her hips.
2. Let your child lean forward with straight back toward the mirror, keeping balance and control, but not touching the mirror. The mirror allows you to check your hand support and watch how your child reacts. Play with her by talking, imitating facial expressions, etc.
3. Vary where you stand, turn slight so your child has to lean forward and to the side in order to see her reflection in the mirror. Don't forget to do this on both sides.

Airplane

Lay your child on her stomach. Show her how to lift and stretch her head, arms and legs off the floor. Encourage her to imitate an airplane by moving her body and making brum-m-m sounds.

Helicopter

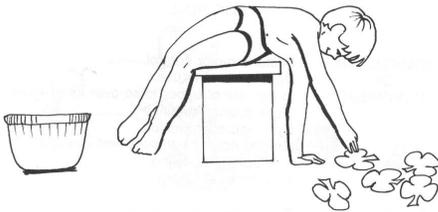
Lay your child on her stomach. Show your child how to lift and stretch her head, arms and legs off the floor. Encourage her to imitate a helicopter's propeller action by moving her hands and kicking her feet.

Rock the Boat

Have your child lie on the floor. Lift your head, arms and legs off the floor. Rock like a boat, forward and backward and side to side. Sing row, row, row your boat while rocking.

Twist and Sort

Have your child sitting on a small stool facing one direction. In the direction they are facing place a few buckets. Behind the child place different objects for her to sort, i.e. red things, blue things, etc. Each bucket will be labelled with a colour to correspond to the objects. Have the child reach back to the objects keeping as much of her bum on the stool and then return to sitting to place it in the appropriate bucket.



Kicking

Just having the toddlers practice their kicking helps improve their balance. While they are walking around the room, place balloons or lightweight balls in their path causing them to “kick” them accidentally. They will eventually kick the items intentionally, and this encourages them to stand on one foot for short periods of time.

Frozen Zoo

Before you begin this game go through all the different ways you can walk like an animal (see attached handout). The children can then pick their favourite animal to be. Start the music and have the children walk around the room as their chosen animal. When the music stops they must ‘Freeze’ and try and hold as long as they can.

Yoga Poses for Trunk Stability * 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.*

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.*

Mountain

- Stand with feet and ankles together.
- Press down into the floor through while foot and let top of head rise toward the ceiling.
- Eyes rest on one point at eye level. Lengthen back of neck.
- Chin draws down and in slightly as chest lifts and shoulders widen.
- Arms and hands reach down gently touching sides of body.
- Head, shoulders, ribcage and hips should all be aligned.
- Hold for 3-6 breaths.

*Head, shoulders,
Hips and feet
All aligned
with my heartbeat
Rooted down yet rising tall
I'm a mountain,
big or small.*

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.*

Bridge

- Lie on your back with arms resting at your sides. Place soles of feet on the floor hip distance apart about 6" from buttocks.
- Press hips and back off the floor as high as you can by pressing into feet. Shoulders remain on the floor.
- Roll shoulders back and tuck them under you. Wiggle arms close together underneath you and interlace fingers.
- Press into arms as well as feet for a deeper back bend.
- Relax neck and face and keep head in the centre facing ceiling.
- Hold pose for 3-8 breaths and then lower slowly.

*From on my back
Knees bent, feet down
I press my hips
Up from the ground.
My hands meet underneath of me
So I arch even higher – see!*

Table

- From a seated position, place hands on floor about 6" behind you.
- Place soles of feet directly in front of hips about 8-12" in front of you.
- On an exhale, press into hands and feet and lift torso parallel to floor.
- Hands should be under shoulders and ankles should be under knees.
- Eyes can look at feet, the ceiling or back behind you depending upon what feels comfortable for your neck.
- Hold pose and breathe in and out 3-6 times before gently lowering yourself back to sitting.

*With soles and palms upon the floor
My calves and arms are legs
Off of the ground I press my seat
So you can place a vase.*

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.*

Big Ball Activities *(adapted from My Big Ball Book by Shirley Sutton)*

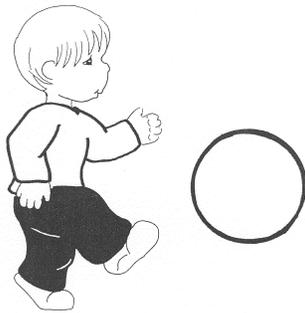
The following activities are used using a large ball, either a therapy ball or a large beach ball that you could find at your local store.

Knees on Ball



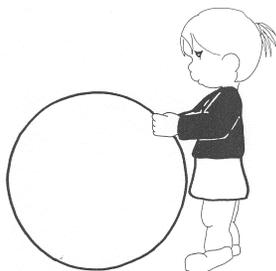
Place child on the top of the ball in a kneeling position. Hold the child with support around their chest. As the child (and you) becomes more comfortable decrease the amount of support you give them.

Kick Big Ball



Have the child kick the ball around outside. Up and down a hill. Make it a race and see who can make it across the yard first.

Push Big Ball



Have the child push the ball around outside. Up and down a hill. Make it a race and see who can make it across the yard first.

Sit on Ball

Have the child sit on the ball. If at first he needs support, provide support at his pelvis close to the ball so that his core is really working. Sing songs while seated on the ball. When the child gets comfortable and stable on the ball, remove your support and start challenging them to reach for toys, or complete action songs with swaying of arms or stomping of feet, i.e. If You're Happy and You know It.



Lie on Tummy and Throw Ball



Have the child lie on his tummy. Using a slightly smaller ball then with the above activities play catch by rolling the ball back and forth. Or set up a target on the wall so he has to roll to hit it.

Songs for Trunk Stability

Shake your body (have the children seated to complete this song)

Shake your foot

Shake, shake, shake, shake your foot

Now, shake your leg

Shake, shake, shake, shake your leg

Now shake your hand

Shake, shake, shake, shake your hand

Now shake your arm

Shake, shake, shake your arm

Now shake your head

Shake, shake, shake, shake your head

Now shake your body

Shake, shake, shake, shake your body

Action: as each body part is mentioned shake it.

Hello My Name is Joe

Hello my name is Joe, and I work in a button factory

One day my boss came to me and said "Hey Joe are you busy?"

And I said "No"

He said "Press this button with your...."

Actions: Press the button with your 1. arm, 2. arm, 3. leg, 4. leg, etc.

Invest in Kids Foundation. (2001). What a child will be depends on you and me: A resource kit for a child's first five years. Toronto (ON): Invest in Kids Foundation

SPARC: Sports and Recreation New Zealand (2008). Balance: swinging, spinning and rocking. Active Movement.

Stern, L., Steidle, K. (1994) Pediatric Strengthening Program Reproducible Exercises. San Antonio (TX): Therapy Skill Builders