

# Building balance

Follow this six week plan to develop your building balance.



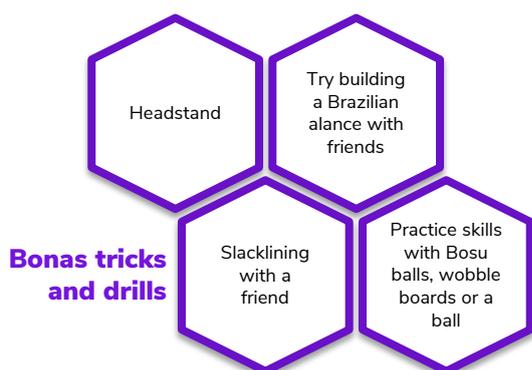
This table provides examples of activities to help you achieve your Skills Challenge Award. These suggestions are based on the Building balance taster session and are just one of the many ways you can achieve the award. This specific plan is useful for anyone in need of some guidance (perhaps you're brand new to this activity) and anyone who'd rather not come up with their own development timetable.

Week	Challenge	Signed off (leader/parent/carer)
1	<p><b>Standing tree pose</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stand with your feet together, inner ankles and inner knees touching. Bring your hands together at the centre of your chest.</li> <li>• Shift your weight onto your right foot. Bend your left knee, and move it up towards your chest. Keeping your back as straight as possible, reach down and grasp your left ankle. Place the sole of your left foot on the inside of your right thigh.</li> <li>• Lengthen your tailbone toward the floor to stand tall, and focus your gaze on a spot directly in front of you to help you balance.</li> <li>• Keep pressing your left and your right thigh together to help keep a straight posture.</li> <li>• Keep your hips facing forwards, keeping your left knee facing out to the left. Try and get it in line with your hips if this feels comfortable.</li> <li>• Firm your right thigh by tensing your quadricep muscle (at the front of the thigh). Tense your stomach, lift your chest and relax your shoulder blades down.</li> <li>• Take 5–10 deep breaths, stretching a little on each inhale and relaxing slightly with each exhale.</li> <li>• Exhale, then release the left leg back to a neutral stance.</li> <li>• Repeat these on the other leg.</li> </ul> <p><b>Single leg balance with movement</b> Balance on one leg while performing any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arm reach</li> <li>• Torso twist</li> <li>• Ball toss</li> <li>• Leg swing</li> </ul>	
2	<p><b>Side plank</b> Start by lying on your side on the floor (or a mat for comfort). Push yourself up, and hold your body with your side facing down and your body facing forward. Support yourself on one</p>	

	<p>arm and the side of one foot. To make this easier to start off with, try resting on your bottom knee rather than the foot.</p> <p><b>Walk the line</b> Practise walking one foot in front of the other as you would on a balance beam, perhaps following a straight feature such as a seam between paving slabs or a painted line or your school playground (not on a road). Try using a low bench or similar to add some elevation to your task. To increase difficulty, see what it feels like to walk with one eye shut. How does this impact your balance?</p>	
3	<p><b>Candlestick</b> With your core engaged (your stomach tensed), your toes pointed, and your legs vertical, lift your hips off the floor as you roll on your shoulders (a shoulder stand). Support your back with your hands, resting your upper arms on the floor. Try doing a cycling motion in the air once you're steady.</p> <p><b>Crow</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin by standing at the top of your mat with your arms at your sides. Spread your feet apart to about the width of your mat.</li> <li>• Bend your knees and lower your hips, coming into a squat. Separate your thighs, so they're slightly further apart than your torso is wide, but keep your feet as close together as possible. If your heels lift off of the ground, support them with a folded mat or blanket.</li> <li>• Lean your torso forwards slightly and bring your upper arms to the inside of your knees. Press your elbows along the inside of your knees, and bring your palms together as though you're praying.</li> <li>• Place your palms onto the mat, keeping them about shoulder-distance apart. Spread your fingers and press evenly across both palms and through your knuckles.</li> <li>• Press your shins against the back of your upper arms. Draw your knees in as close to your underarms as possible.</li> <li>• Rise onto the balls of your feet as you lean forward. Round your back and draw your stomach muscles in tightly. Keep your tailbone tucked in towards your heels.</li> <li>• Look at the floor between your hands, or further forwards if possible.</li> <li>• As you continue to lean forward, lift your feet off of the floor and pull your heels toward your bottom. If it's difficult to lift both feet at the same time, try lifting one foot and then the other. Balance your torso and legs on the back of your upper arms.</li> <li>• Keep pressing evenly across your palms and fingers, then begin to straighten your elbows. Keep your knees and shins hugged in tightly toward your armpits, and your forearms drawn firmly toward the centre of your body.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Touch your big toes together. Tighten your stomach and breathe steadily.</li> </ul>	
4	<p><b>Cone balance drill: arm reach</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mark a standing point on the ground.</li> <li>• Place four cones, or substitutes like water bottles, about 40cm north, south, east and west of the central point (it doesn't matter if these aren't actually facing the four compass points). This should look like a cross-shape on the ground.</li> <li>• Lean down with your left arm and touch the top of each cone one by one without moving your feet. If you're struggling to reach, try moving your cones closer to you.</li> <li>• Do the same with the other arm.</li> </ul> <p><b>Cone balance drill: toe tap</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the same cone layout as above.</li> <li>• Standing on one leg, toe tap each cone with the elevated foot of your free leg.</li> <li>• Swap legs and do the same.</li> </ul> <p><i>Increase either challenge by placing the cones further away.</i></p> <p><b>Sideways crow</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin standing with your legs a little closer than shoulder-width apart.</li> <li>• Inhale and lift the top of your head high. As you exhale, deeply bend your knees and sink your hips back and down, as if to sit on the backs of your ankles. Keep your legs together and your knees pointing forwards.</li> <li>• Inhale and, as you exhale, move your left elbow to the outside of your bent right knee.</li> <li>• Sink your hips deeply, then plant your palms down onto the floor beside you — you might need to come up onto the balls of the feet to do so. Make sure that your hands are shoulder-distance apart, and your fingers are spread wide. Both your hands should be on your right-hand side.</li> <li>• Keep your eyes on your fingertips, and bend your elbows backwards to a 90-degree angle. Try and keep your shoulders lifted in line with your elbows.</li> <li>• Shift your hips slightly toward the right — this should naturally start to shift the weight from your feet to your hands. Slowly start to raise both feet off of the floor, and pull your heels in towards your bottom.</li> <li>• Keep your knees stacked directly on top of one another, and lift your shins so that they're parallel to the floor. Remember to press down evenly through your palms.</li> <li>• As you practise this pose, try to get your arms straighter each time.</li> <li>• Remain in your pose for up to five full breaths, then gently lower your feet to the ground on an exhale. Repeat on the other side when you're ready.</li> </ul>	
5	<b>One-legged squat</b>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin with your arms extended out in front of your body.</li> <li>• Balance on one leg and extend the other as far out in front of you as possible.</li> <li>• Squat down as far as you can, with your outstretched leg still out in front of you and not touching the ground.</li> </ul> <p><b>Headstand</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Position your exercise mat (if you're a complete beginner consider placing your mat by a wall).</li> <li>• Kneel down on your mat with your hands down in front of you in line with your shoulders. Keep your back as straight and flat as possible.</li> <li>• Bend your elbows down to rest on the mat.</li> <li>• Clasp your hands together and lace your fingers.</li> <li>• Your elbows and hands should form a triangle.</li> <li>• Rest the back of your head on your palms.</li> <li>• Lift your knees up from the mat and balance on your toes.</li> <li>• Walk up the mat, keeping your head resting on your palms.</li> <li>• Bring your knees close to your armpits.</li> <li>• On tiptoes, tense your stomach and push your lower body up and off the mat.</li> <li>• Bend your knees in towards your chest.</li> <li>• Raise your legs up and out of the tuck, straight into the air.</li> <li>• Hold the headstand for as long as you comfortably can, trying to keep your body as straight and still as possible. Use a wall to help balance if you're new to headstands.</li> <li>• When you're ready to come down, reverse the process by transitioning from a tuck back down to the mat.</li> </ul>	
6	<p><b>Use this final week to really up the challenge and put your balance skills to the test. Try one of the following:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perform some acroyoga or partner-gymnastic moves with a friend.</li> <li>• Visit a local gymnastics club for an open session or beginner's class.</li> <li>• Visit a nearby high ropes centre and test those balancing skills at height.</li> <li>• Why not accept a photo challenge and take snapshots of you doing your favourite drills or positions in memorable places or at local landmarks?</li> <li>• Try your hand at tai chi by visiting a local academy or gym for an introductory session.</li> </ul>	



*\*For all of the activities above we recommend watching some video tutorials demonstrated by fitness professionals online for examples of best practice.*

*\*\*If there's any stress, strain or increasing discomfort during any of these exercises, drills or tricks make sure you put down the rope, consider why this may be and contact a healthcare professional if needed.*