

“Balance Beam”

Ages 4 and Up

- ✓ Balance
- ✓ Concentration
- ✓ Gross Motor Skills

Aim:

- To strengthen balance by walking on a beam that is close to the ground.
- To demonstrate concentration when focusing on staying on the broad edge of a balance beam.
- To strengthen gross motor skills through balance beam exercises.

Benefits to Child:

Balance is a skill that develops over time but is so necessary for most physical activity. This activity promotes that development specifically, while also developing a child’s gross motor skills. Concentration is required for learning and problem- solving, and this activity is a unique way to help develop that skill in a non- “book-based” activity.

Music:

- No music needed, but simple background music can be used if desired.

Materials:

- Wooden balance beam and low supports for it. If you don’t have a balance beam, a long 4’ by 6’ beam will work as long as you have something solid to use as support for it.
- An empty paper-towel tube or another cardboard tube to use as a balancing aid is also helpful.

Activity Description:

This activity requires an open space with room for children to wait their turn for going on the balance beam. Gather the children in a large group on the floor and ask if anyone has ever used a balance beam before. Allow for some discussion and then tell children they will need to be patient for this activity because only one child at a time can be on the balance beam. **Children should be barefoot or wear sturdy shoes. Do not do this with socks on, as slipping is a hazard.**

Arrange the children so that they can all see the balance beam and will be able to watch as each person gets a turn. Follow the process below for the activity:

1. Each child will walk on the broad side of the balance beam from the starting end to the other end and then jump off.
2. As a child is walking on the beam, hold your arm up and ready for the child to steady him/herself if needed, but leave those with self-confidence the freedom to do it unassisted.
3. Older children can try this in a heel-to-toe fashion to make it more challenging.
4. Another challenge is to do a step-step-dip and then turn around and go back. Because this is harder, this is a good time to hold up a cardboard tube for balance assistance if needed.

Repeat these as many times as your schedule will allow.



Variation(s):

Allow children to suggest other moves they can try on the balance beam, as time allows, and as long as they would not risk injury.