

Balance & Coordination Workbook

Step-by-Step Exercises and Assessments for Improved Stability and Movement Control

Introduction

This comprehensive workbook provides structured exercises, assessments, and progress tracking tools to systematically improve your balance and coordination using Stephen Jepson's Never Leave the Playground methodology. Each exercise includes detailed instructions, progressions, and troubleshooting tips to ensure safe and effective practice.

Section 1: Initial Assessment and Baseline Testing

Balance Assessment Battery

Before beginning your training program, complete these assessments to establish your baseline abilities. Record your results in the tracking sheets provided at the end of this workbook.

Test 1: Single-Leg Stand (Eyes Open) - Stand on your right leg with hands on hips - Lift left leg to 90-degree hip and knee flexion - Time how long you can maintain position (maximum 60 seconds) - Repeat with left leg standing - Record best time for each leg

Scoring: - Excellent: 45+ seconds - Good: 30-44 seconds - Fair: 15-29 seconds - Poor: <15 seconds

Test 2: Single-Leg Stand (Eyes Closed) - Same position as Test 1, but close your eyes - Time how long you can maintain position (maximum 30 seconds) - Record best time for each leg

Scoring: - Excellent: 20+ seconds - Good: 15-19 seconds - Fair: 8-14 seconds - Poor: <8 seconds

Test 3: Tandem Walk - Walk heel-to-toe in a straight line for 20 steps - Count the number of steps completed without stepping off the line - Allow up to 3 attempts

Scoring: - Excellent: 20 steps - Good: 15-19 steps - Fair: 10-14 steps - Poor: <10 steps

Test 4: Dynamic Reach Test - Stand on right leg, reach forward with left arm as far as possible - Measure reach distance from starting position - Repeat on opposite side - Record best distance for each side

Scoring (as percentage of height): - Excellent: >40% - Good: 30-40% - Fair: 20-29% - Poor: <20%

Coordination Assessment Battery

Test 5: Finger-to-Nose (Eyes Closed) - Extend arm fully to side, then touch nose with index finger - Perform 10 repetitions with each arm, eyes closed - Count successful nose touches

Scoring: - Excellent: 10/10 - Good: 8-9/10 - Fair: 6-7/10 - Poor: <6/10

Test 6: Rapid Alternating Movements - Sit with hands on thighs - Rapidly alternate between palm-up and palm-down positions - Count complete cycles in 15 seconds - Test each hand separately

Scoring: - Excellent: 25+ cycles - Good: 20-24 cycles - Fair: 15-19 cycles - Poor: <15 cycles

Test 7: Two-Ball Juggling - Start with one ball in each hand - Throw right ball in arc to left hand - When ball peaks, throw left ball to right hand - Catch both balls - Count successful two-ball exchanges

Scoring: - Excellent: 10+ exchanges - Good: 5-9 exchanges - Fair: 2-4 exchanges - Poor: 0-1 exchanges

Section 2: Foundation Exercises (Weeks 1-4)

Week 1: Static Balance Fundamentals

Exercise 1.1: Two-Foot Balance Progression

Level 1: Stable Surface - Stand with feet hip-width apart on firm ground - Hold for 30 seconds with eyes open - Progress to eyes closed for 15 seconds

Level 2: Unstable Surface - Stand on foam pad or pillow - Hold for 30 seconds with eyes open - Progress to eyes closed for 10 seconds

Teaching Points: - Maintain neutral spine - Engage core gently - Breathe normally - Use arms for balance as needed

Common Errors: - Holding breath - Excessive muscle tension - Looking down at feet

Exercise 1.2: Single-Leg Stand Progression

Level 1: Wall Support - Stand next to wall with fingertip contact - Lift one leg to 90-degree position - Hold for 15 seconds each leg - Gradually reduce wall contact

Level 2: Free Standing - Stand without support - Hold for 20 seconds each leg - Focus on fixed point ahead

Level 3: Eyes Closed - Close eyes for 5-10 seconds - Gradually increase duration

Progression Schedule: - Day 1-2: Wall support, 15 seconds - Day 3-4: Reduced wall contact, 20 seconds - Day 5-6: Free standing, 25 seconds - Day 7: Eyes closed, 10 seconds

Week 2: Dynamic Balance Introduction

Exercise 2.1: Heel-to-Toe Walking

Level 1: Ground Line - Use tape line or imaginary line on ground - Walk 10 steps forward, heel touching toe - Turn around and walk back - Keep arms out for balance

Level 2: Raised Line - Use 2x4 lumber flat on ground - Walk 8 steps forward and back - Focus on smooth, controlled movement

Teaching Points: - Look ahead, not down - Place heel directly in front of toe - Move slowly and deliberately - Pause if balance is lost, then continue

Exercise 2.2: Side-Step Balance

Setup: - Stand at one end of balance line - Face perpendicular to line

Execution: - Step sideways along line with right foot - Bring left foot to meet right foot - Continue for 8 steps, then reverse direction

Progression: - Week 2: 8 steps each direction - Week 3: 10 steps each direction - Week 4: 12 steps with arm movements

Week 3: Coordination Integration

Exercise 3.1: Balance with Object Manipulation

Level 1: Ball Toss - Stand on one leg - Toss ball from hand to hand - Start with large, soft ball - 10 tosses per leg

Level 2: Two-Ball Pattern - Hold one ball in each hand - Toss right ball to left hand - Catch and hold both balls - Repeat 5 times per leg

Teaching Points: - Master balance first, then add ball - Use larger balls initially - Keep tosses low and controlled

Exercise 3.2: Cognitive Challenge Balance

Level 1: Counting - Stand on one leg - Count backward from 20 by 2s - Maintain balance throughout counting

Level 2: Word Games - Stand on one leg - Name animals starting with each letter of alphabet - Switch legs halfway through

Week 4: Skill Consolidation

Exercise 4.1: Balance Beam Walking

Equipment: - 2x4 lumber, 8 feet long - Place flat side up initially

Progression: - Forward walking: 8 steps - Backward walking: 6 steps - Sideways walking: 5 steps each direction - Forward with head turns: 6 steps

Safety Notes: - Keep beam low (on ground) - Have spotter if needed - Practice stepping off safely

Exercise 4.2: Combination Movements

Sequence 1: 1. Single-leg stand (15 seconds) 2. Heel-to-toe walk (8 steps) 3. Side-step balance (6 steps) 4. Single-leg stand opposite leg (15 seconds)

Sequence 2: 1. Balance beam walk forward (6 steps) 2. Turn around on beam 3. Balance beam walk backward (6 steps) 4. Step off and single-leg stand (10 seconds)

Section 3: Intermediate Exercises (Weeks 5-8)

Week 5: Advanced Static Balance

Exercise 5.1: Narrow Base Balance

Level 1: Feet Together - Stand with feet completely together - Hold for 45 seconds eyes open - Progress to 20 seconds eyes closed

Level 2: Tandem Stance - Place one foot directly in front of other - Hold for 30 seconds each foot forward - Progress to eyes closed

Level 3: Single Point Balance - Stand on one foot on small target (6-inch circle) - Hold for 30 seconds each leg - Add head movements

Exercise 5.2: Perturbation Training

Setup: - Stand on one leg - Have partner provide gentle, random pushes

Execution: - Maintain balance despite perturbations - Use stepping strategy if needed - Practice in all directions

Progression: - Week 5: Light touches - Week 6: Gentle pushes - Week 7: Stronger perturbations - Week 8: Multi-directional challenges

Week 6: Dynamic Balance Challenges

Exercise 6.1: Beam Walking Variations

Variation 1: Speed Changes - Walk beam at normal speed (4 steps) - Walk very slowly (4 steps) - Walk quickly but controlled (4 steps)

Variation 2: Arm Positions - Arms at sides (6 steps) - Arms overhead (6 steps) - Arms crossed on chest (6 steps)

Variation 3: Head Movements - Look left and right while walking - Look up and down while walking - Close eyes for 2-3 steps

Exercise 6.2: Directional Changes

Pattern 1: Figure-8 - Set up two cones 6 feet apart - Walk figure-8 pattern around cones - Focus on smooth direction changes

Pattern 2: Star Pattern - Start in center position - Walk to 5 different points in star pattern - Return to center between each point

Week 7: Coordination Complexity

Exercise 7.1: Three-Ball Juggling Progression

Step 1: One Ball Height - Throw one ball from right hand to left - Catch at eye level - Practice until consistent

Step 2: Two-Ball Exchange - Start with ball in each hand - Throw right ball when it peaks, throw left ball - Catch both balls

Step 3: Three-Ball Flash - Start with two balls in right hand, one in left - Throw right, left, right in quick succession - Let all balls drop (don't catch initially)

Step 4: Three-Ball Continuous - Same as flash, but catch and continue pattern - Start with 3 throws, build to continuous

Exercise 7.2: Dual-Task Balance

Task 1: Math and Balance - Stand on one leg - Solve simple math problems (7+8, 15-6, etc.) - Maintain balance throughout

Task 2: Memory and Movement - Memorize sequence of 5 movements - Perform sequence while balancing - Add new movements to sequence

Week 8: Integration and Assessment

Exercise 8.1: Complex Sequences

Sequence A: The Balance Flow 1. Single-leg stand (20 seconds) 2. Heel-to-toe walk (10 steps) 3. Beam walk forward (8 steps) 4. Turn on beam 5. Beam walk backward (8 steps) 6. Single-leg stand opposite leg (20 seconds)

Sequence B: The Coordination Challenge 1. Two-ball juggling while standing (10 exchanges) 2. Walk while juggling one ball (8 steps) 3. Balance on one leg while tossing ball (10 tosses) 4. Three-ball juggling attempt (5 throws minimum)

Exercise 8.2: Reassessment

Repeat all initial assessment tests and compare results to baseline measurements. Record improvements and identify areas for continued focus.

Section 4: Advanced Exercises (Weeks 9-12)

Week 9: Environmental Challenges

Exercise 9.1: Surface Variations

Surface 1: Grass - Perform basic balance exercises on uneven grass - Notice increased challenge from irregular surface

Surface 2: Sand - Practice balance and walking on sand - Experience unstable surface training

Surface 3: Inclined Surfaces - Find gentle slopes for balance practice - Practice uphill and downhill balance

Exercise 9.2: Weather Adaptations

Windy Conditions: - Practice balance in light wind - Learn to compensate for wind perturbations - Use wind as natural balance challenge

Different Lighting: - Practice in various lighting conditions - Try balance exercises at dusk - Experience visual challenge adaptations

Week 10: Reactive Balance Training

Exercise 10.1: Unexpected Perturbations

Setup: - Stand on one leg with eyes closed - Partner provides random, gentle pushes - React and recover balance

Progression: - Single direction pushes - Multi-directional pushes - Varying force levels - Unpredictable timing

Exercise 10.2: Catching While Balancing

Level 1: Predictable Throws - Stand on one leg - Partner throws ball directly to hands - Catch and return ball

Level 2: Variable Throws - Throws to different heights and sides - Require reaching and adjusting - Maintain balance throughout

Week 11: Creative Challenges

Exercise 11.1: Personal Challenge Creation

Guidelines: - Combine 3-4 different skills - Include balance, coordination, and cognitive elements - Make it challenging but achievable - Practice and refine your creation

Example Challenges: - Juggle while walking backward on beam - Solve math problems while navigating obstacle course - Balance sequence with eyes closed and music

Exercise 11.2: Partner Challenges

Mirror Movements: - Face partner and mirror their balance movements - Take turns leading and following - Increase complexity gradually

Cooperative Tasks: - Pass objects while both balancing - Coordinate movements together - Create group balance challenges

Week 12: Mastery and Teaching

Exercise 12.1: Skill Demonstration

Preparation: - Choose 5 skills you've mastered - Practice smooth demonstrations - Prepare teaching points for each skill

Demonstration Skills: - Single-leg balance with variations - Beam walking with challenges - Basic juggling patterns - Coordination combinations - Safety considerations

Exercise 12.2: Teaching Practice

Find a Beginner: - Teach someone the basic balance exercises - Practice giving clear instructions - Learn to spot and correct errors - Experience the joy of sharing skills

Section 5: Progress Tracking Sheets

Monthly Assessment Record

Month 1 Baseline: - Single-leg stand (eyes open): R **L** seconds - Single-leg stand (eyes closed): R **L** seconds - Tandem walk: **/20 steps - Dynamic reach: R% L% of height - Finger-to-nose: R/10 L/10 - Rapid alternating: R L**___ cycles - Two-ball juggling: ___ exchanges

Month 2 Progress: - Single-leg stand (eyes open): R **L** seconds - Single-leg stand (eyes closed): R **L** seconds - Tandem walk: **/20 steps - Dynamic reach: R% L% of height - Finger-to-nose: R/10 L/10 - Rapid alternating: R L**___ cycles - Two-ball juggling: ___ exchanges

Month 3 Final: - Single-leg stand (eyes open): R **L** seconds - Single-leg stand (eyes closed): R **L** seconds - Tandem walk: **/20 steps - Dynamic reach: R% L% of height - Finger-to-nose: R/10 L/10 - Rapid alternating: R L**___ cycles - Two-ball juggling: ___ exchanges

Weekly Practice Log

Week ___

Monday: - Exercises completed: ___ - Duration: _ **minutes** - **Difficulty level (1-10):** - **Notes:** _____

Tuesday: - Exercises completed: ___ - Duration: _ **minutes** - **Difficulty level (1-10):** - **Notes:** _____

Wednesday: - Exercises completed: ____ - Duration: _ **minutes** - **Difficulty level (1-10):** - **Notes:** ____

Thursday: - Exercises completed: ____ - Duration: _ **minutes** - **Difficulty level (1-10):** - **Notes:** ____

Friday: - Exercises completed: ____ - Duration: _ **minutes** - **Difficulty level (1-10):** - **Notes:** ____

Saturday: - Exercises completed: ____ - Duration: _ **minutes** - **Difficulty level (1-10):** - **Notes:** ____

Sunday: - Exercises completed: ____ - Duration: _ **minutes** - **Difficulty level (1-10):** - **Notes:** ____

Skill Progression Checklist

Balance Skills: - ☐ Two-foot stand (stable surface) - 60 seconds - ☐ Two-foot stand (unstable surface) - 30 seconds - ☐ Single-leg stand (eyes open) - 60 seconds each leg - ☐ Single-leg stand (eyes closed) - 30 seconds each leg - ☐ Tandem stance - 45 seconds each foot forward - ☐ Narrow base balance - 60 seconds - ☐ Balance with perturbations - 30 seconds - ☐ Dynamic balance on beam - 20 steps each direction

Coordination Skills: - ☐ One-ball juggling - consistent height and catch - ☐ Two-ball juggling - 20 consecutive exchanges - ☐ Three-ball juggling - 10 consecutive throws - ☐ Juggling while walking - 10 steps - ☐ Juggling while balancing - 10 exchanges on one leg - ☐ Finger-to-nose (eyes closed) - 10/10 each hand - ☐ Rapid alternating movements - 25+ cycles in 15 seconds

Integration Skills: - ☐ Balance with cognitive tasks - 30 seconds - ☐ Dual-task performance - maintain both tasks - ☐ Complex movement sequences - smooth execution - ☐ Environmental adaptations - various surfaces - ☐ Reactive balance - recover from perturbations - ☐ Creative challenges - design and complete - ☐ Teaching skills - instruct others safely

Goal Setting Worksheet

3-Month Goals:

Balance Goal: Current ability: ____ *Target improvement:* ____ *Specific measurable goal:* ____ *Target date:* _____

Coordination Goal: Current ability: ____ *Target improvement:* ____ *Specific measurable goal:* ____ *Target date:* _____

Integration Goal: Current ability: ____ *Target improvement:* ____ *Specific measurable goal:* ____ *Target date:* _____

Action Steps: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____

Potential Obstacles: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Solutions: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Reflection and Notes

What I've Learned:

Biggest Challenges:

Most Enjoyable Aspects:

Areas for Continued Focus:

Goals for Next Phase:

Conclusion

This workbook provides a structured approach to developing balance and coordination through Stephen Jepson's Never Leave the Playground methodology. Remember that progress is individual, and consistency is more important than

perfection. Use the tracking sheets to monitor your improvement and celebrate your achievements along the way.

The skills you develop through this program will enhance not only your physical abilities but also your cognitive function, confidence, and overall quality of life. Continue to challenge yourself, stay playful in your approach, and never stop learning and growing.

For additional resources and advanced training materials, visit neverleavetheplayground.com.

This workbook is part of the comprehensive Never Leave the Playground training system developed by Stephen Jepson.