


Balance Beam

Areas of perception that are addressed by these exercises:

1. Auditory Memory
2. Visual Memory
3. Sensory Motor Integration
4. Motor
5. Locomotion
6. Directionality
7. Laterality
8. Contact
9. Sensory Perception

DIY Balance Beam

Create your own balance beam using tape or a 2x4 piece of wood.

- Lay painter's tape (blue masking tape) on the floor – 3 or 4 inches wide.
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- Get a 2x4 and sand it so it is smooth. Make sure to use each 2x4 horizontally (with the 4" width being parallel to the ground) to maximize the stability of the balance beam and to get closest to the 4" width. (A true 2x4 is actually only 3.5" wide). Sand the edges of the beam and follow up with a coat of polyurethane to decrease the risk of splinters.
 - If you use a 2x4 board for your balance beam, as proficiency is gained, you can gradually raise it by placing it on two tires or cinder blocks laying flat on the ground. The board can be raised even higher when the children are developmentally ready.

Activities Level 1

- Warm up your body. Lead your child in a few stretches to limber up their muscles.
- When children are first learning new Balance Beam activities, they look at their feet while walking. As they master a skill, they become able to look straight ahead.
- An early objective for walking the Balance Beam is that the child can walk the entire length forward and backward without stepping off. (You may need to start with crawling forward and backward on the beam.)
- Encourage children to walk the beam with both arms outstretched – horizontal and to the side to maintain balance.
- Walk forward, backward, sideways, step-to-step (take one step, bring feet together; take another step, bring feet together), and crossing over and crossing behind (grapevine step).
- Pacing: Some of you may need to do this on the ground first. Then, when you are comfortable, try it on the beam. (It's ok if you can't do it on the beam. Just do these activities on the floor and then try activity 2 on the beam. Some of you may need to stick with activity 1 for a longer period of time. When mastery is achieved, move on to Level 2.)

Activities Level 2

- Warm up your body. Lead your child in a few stretches to limber up their muscles.
- Walk on the beam with arms at waist, elbows out from your body. Walk forward, backwards, sideways – step, together; step, together going from left to right and then right to left.
- Then walk with arms outstretched in front – doing the same activities.
- Next, try with your arms straight up – along and above your head – doing the same activities.