

“Core & Balance”

Begin by aligning the **body**:

- Take a comfortable seat. Your hips are not lower than your knees. Raise your seat height if necessary (e.g. sit on a folded blanket).
- Rest your hands on your thighs.
- Place your ankles directly below your knees. Your toes point ahead.
- Rock side-to-side and forward-and-back on your two sitting bones. Feel them. Notice them. Sit evenly on both sitting bones.
- Sit up straight and tall.
- Roll the shoulders up-and-back-and-down. Let them stay back-and-down-and-loose. Gently shake them out.

Continue by aligning the **mind**:

- Soften your gaze or close your eyes.
- Use the breath as a *calming focus*. It is nasal, quiet, deep, smooth.
- Scan the body. How does it feel to sit up straight and tall? Where are you holding tension? Let it go. What else do you notice and feel? No judgement. Just notice. Feel the breath in the nostrils.

**Breathing: A strong core begins with the breath. You can play with your hands for feedback. Place one palm over your belly and another over your chest. The belly softens / expands as you inhale and braces / draws in as you exhale (e.g. like zipping a tight pair of pants). Continue to breathe in-and-down and out-and-up.



Warming Up:

With eyes open (soft gaze) or closed, repeat each of the following exercises for the duration of about 5-10 relaxed breaths each:

- Shoulder Circles (back)
- Shoulder Shrugs (*follow your breath* and inhale as you shrug the shoulders up towards the ears, exhale and let it all go – in other words, *tense and release*)
- Shoulder Blade Squeezes (*follow your breath* and inhale as you pull the shoulders back, squeezing the shoulder blades together, exhale and let it all go – in other words, *tense and release*)

- Arm Raises (Frontal Plane)
–Starting with the arms at your sides, palms out, raise the arms to the side and overhead as you inhale, then turn the palms out, exhale and return them to your side. *Follow your breath.* It's like making a "snow angel."
Repeat for 5-10 relaxed breaths or for as many as you wish to do.



- Arm Raises (Sagittal Plane)
–Starting with the arms at your sides, palms in, raise the arms to the front and overhead as you inhale, gently extending the upper back (thoracic spine) backwards, then exhale and return them to your side. *Follow your breath.* Repeat for 5-10 relaxed breaths or for as many as you wish to do.



- Arm Turns (Transverse Plane)
–Starting with your arms to the front, parallel to the floor, and the palms facing one another, exhale as you turn to one side and inhale as you return to the front. Repeat from side-to-side. *Follow your breath.* Focus on moving through the upper back (thoracic spine). Repeat for 5-10 relaxed breaths or for as many as you wish to do.



Broadening the Warm-Up:

Now broaden the warm-up by involving the legs. While seated and maintaining an upright and tall posture, begin to march your feet and legs. *Own the motion.* Maintain a tall and upright posture. Breathe and brace your core as you march. Your core is an anchor around which your arms and legs move. To change the hip action while you march, play around with different stances as you march. Some suggestions are listed below:

- Normal stance (feet hip width, even with one another, straight ahead)
- Toes-pointed-in stance
- Toes-pointed-out stance
- Wide stance (feet wider than hips)
- One-foot-forward-one-foot-back stance

****Need to get moving but can't? Looking for an aerobic workout but don't have a place to walk or any equipment? No problem. March in place but for more extended periods of time. Multiple efforts have a cumulative effect. Start from where you are. Do what you can. Keep moving!**

Seated Drills (see below): Complete 5-10 repetitions per side of the body.

Happy Cactus with a Twist

- Start from the “happy cactus” position (shoulders and elbows are 90 degrees)
- Exhale and rotate, bringing an elbow towards the opposite knee.
- Inhale to starting position.



Straight Leg Pulsing

- Sit up straight and tall, breathe into the belly and brace. Place your hands on the chair for more support.
- Pulse one leg up and down.



Straight Leg Circles

- Same – but point toe and circle the leg.

Deadbug

- Sit up straight and tall with arms at your sides.
- Exhale, brace, and raise an arm and its opposite leg (contralateral arm / leg).
- Inhale to starting position.
- Do not let the arm / leg move you. *Proximal stability for distal mobility.*



Back Stretch

- Start by sitting up straight and tall.
- Exhale and turn to one side, beginning from the belly.
- Look to the side or over your shoulder if you can.
- Breathe 5-10 breaths: *Nasal. Quiet. Deep. Smooth.*
- Exhale and return to starting position by turning head and neck first.
- Repeat to the other side.



Standing Proprioceptive Exercise: Complete each for 10-30 seconds.

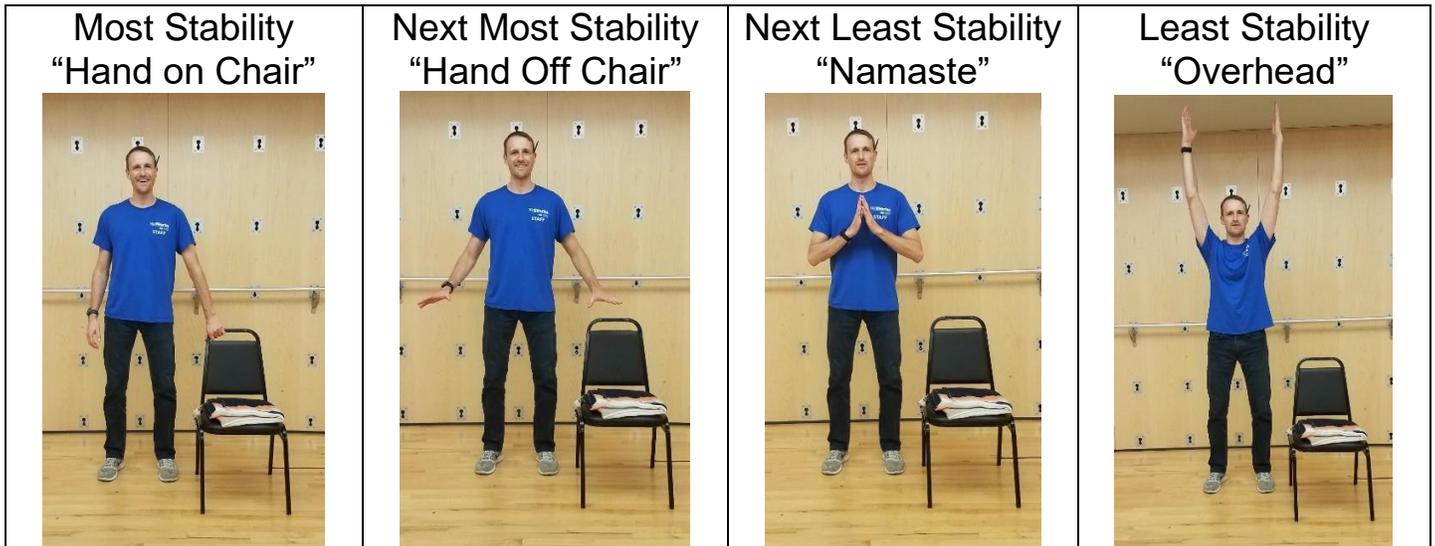
For each exercise, stand near a chair, wall, or other point of stability. Place a hand on the chair, wall, or other point of stability if you need it. Never hesitate to use an extra point of stability. Falling is not good practice. Practice from *where you are* (e.g. from your level of ability on any given day). From *where you are* is good practice.

For each exercise, eyes may be open or closed. Both are good practice. Closing the eyes will intensify the perceptions of body movement.

- Mountain Pose: Stand with feet flat on the floor, hip width apart, and toes straight ahead. Stand straight and tall. The shoulders are back and down over the hips. For an advanced progression stand with the feet closer together.
- Pendulum: It is important to stand with feet at least hip width apart. With “soft” knees, rock the body weight from left foot to right foot (e.g. like a pendulum). Progress to rocking left-to-right until one foot comes off the ground.
- Rocking Horse: With “soft” knees, rock the body weight forward and back on the feet (e.g. like a rocking horse).
- Rolling Circle: It is important to stand with feet at least hip width apart. With “soft” knees, rock the body weight around in a circle as though you had a hula hoop at your ankles. Repeat to the other direction.

Hand Progressions –

For the exercises / drills on the following pages, select an appropriate “hand progression” from the list below. The progressions demonstrate different levels of stability. Choose a progression that is safe for your abilities *today*.



Eye Progressions –

What you do with your eyes / vision also impacts your ability to balance. For the exercises / drills on the following pages, select an appropriate “eye progression” from the list below. Choose a progression that is safe for your abilities *today*. We practice primarily with the first three progressions.* Remember to keep a chair, wall, or other point of stability near for your safety.

- Eyes fixed on non-moving point on floor.*
- Eyes fixed on non-moving point in room.*
- Eyes looking around the room.*
- Head turning and eyes looking around the room.
- Eyes closed.

Standing Drills (see below):

Stand-on-One-Leg

- Raise one foot off the floor as you stand on one leg.
- Stand up straight and tall.
- Squeeze the sitting muscle of the stance leg (to maintain a straight, strong stance leg e.g. to maintain hip extension + posture)
- Hold for up to 30 seconds.
- Repeat on other side.



Overhead Side Stretch

- Stand with feet at least hip width apart and raise arms overhead.
- Gently grab one wrist and side bend. Hold for 5-10 breaths.
- Return to start position.
- Repeat on other side.



Toe Raises

- Start with feet hip width apart and flat on the floor.
- Rise up onto your toes. Pause.
- Slowly lower your full foot back to the floor.
- Complete 5-10 repetitions.
- See “Toe Raise Progressions” (listed next) to vary this drill.



Toe Raise Progressions

- Progression #1: While on tippy toes, raise one arm overhead (as if reaching for something on a high shelf).
- Progression #2: While on tippy toes with one arm raised overhead, turn the head to look over one shoulder.

3 Dot Drill

- Touch each dot 5-10 times.
- Stand straight and tall. Imagine there are 3 dots on the floor (in front, to the side, and behind you). Touch each dot with the outside foot (moving from front dot to back dot).
- Repeat on other side.
- Progressions: Touch the toes to the floor for added stability. For less stability, hover for a moment over each dot (do not touch the toes to the floor).



Clock Drill

- Start in a *tandem stance* (e.g. the heel of one foot is directly in front of the toes of the other foot).
- Stand straight and tall. Your weight is distributed evenly between both feet.
- Move the outside arm slowly to point 1) In front of you, 2) To the side of you, 3) Overhead.
- Return to the start position, step-by-step with the arm.
- Repeat 5-10 times.
- Repeat with the other arm, placing the other foot forward and the other foot back.
- Progression: To progress this drill (e.g. increase the intensity), hold a light hand-weight.



Tandem Progressions

- Progression #1:
Tandem Stance – Stand in place with the heel of one foot directly in front of the toes of the other foot. Use the “hand” and “eye” progressions described in the previous pages to increase the intensity of the *tandem stance*.
- Progression #2:
Tandem Walk in a line – From the tandem stance, move forward heel-to-toe in a line.
- Progression #3:
Tandem Walk in a circle – From the tandem stance, move forward heel-to-toe in a circle (e.g. around a chair).



Split-Stance

- Begin in a *split-stance*. This is not a tandem stance. Split-stance is one foot forward and one foot back (as if you stopped in place after taking one step).
- Stand up straight and tall.

Split-Stance Drills

- Drill #1: Turn the head to look side-to-side and up-and-down (e.g. change the line of sight).
- Drill #2: While in a split-stance, rise up onto the toes. Slowly lower both feet back to the floor. Repeat 5-10 times.



Cable Core Press

- Secure a resistance band perpendicular to you and at about low- or mid-chest height. Hold the resistance band handle with both hands.
- Stand up straight and tall. Feet are hip width and the knees are “soft.”
- Slowly straighten the arms in front of you. Pause. Return to the starting position.
- Complete 5-12 repetitions facing both directions.
- *Don't let the band turn you.*
- Progression #1: To increase the intensity, pause for a longer moment when arms are straight.
- Progression #2: Move further from the wall (or use a heavier resistance band).
- Progression #3: Stand with a split-stance (outside foot forward, inside foot back).



Lumbar Stabilization

- Using the same setup as the “cable core press” (previous), begin by holding the resistance band in front of the inside hip.
- Breathe into the belly, brace, and drag the resistance band across the abdomen (e.g. towards the front of the outside hip).
- Slowly return to start position.





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