

Assessing Your Balance

(Aerin Alexander, Ron Jones, & Cara Tubbs, CSU, Northridge)



“Balance underlies all movements”

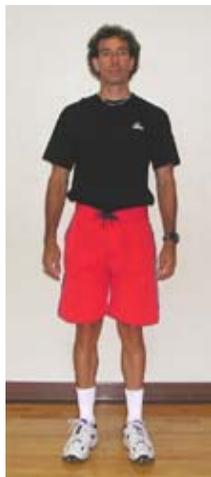
--Vern Gambetta

Here are some assessments to check your balance. If you don't have good balance on these tests—then you don't have functional control of your core (midsection) and movements. **Remember—ALL movement starts in your core including movements to maintain balance, so core training is important!**

Caution! Each test must be mastered before moving to the next. If you feel these are too challenging, try them next to the wall while someone is with you for assistance in case you need help maintaining balance. When you can master one level, move to the next assessment.

1. Test #1: Stand still with both feet on the ground shoulder width apart.

- The goal for “independent balance” is to stand on your own with control while motionless without any other supports like canes or walkers.



2. Test #2: Lean forward 12-15 inches without moving your feet.

- You'll be leaning out "on your toes" a little bit as you displace your center of gravity. Flexion should come from ankles, hips, and low back. Stabilize for a few seconds, then return.
- If you can't lean forward 12-15 inches (use tape marks on wall next to hands if desired to mark start and finish lines) without taking a step to prevent yourself from stumbling, you don't have functional balance and are more likely to fall.



3. Test #3: Pick one foot up off the ground and stand with control and stillness.

- Maintain control for 10 seconds. Switch foot and repeat. As long as the foot is off the ground, $\frac{1}{2}$ of your base of support is removed. The lifted foot can come straight up, against the other knee—or wherever comfortable.



- ✓ If you cannot do all three tests successfully, you have probably restricted many of the functional movements needed to be fully mobile and independent. You might have enough balance to control your “current” movements—but you are compensating for poor balance by restricting activities. Fear not! This just means it’s time to start a functional training program so **YOU CAN IMPROVE** your balance and regain higher levels of functional movement, independence, and mobility!



- ✓ ***Safety Warning: Always master each balance exercise before progressing to the next level of balance challenge and more complex movements.***

For complete list of Balance Project References, please see:
www.ronjones.org/CSUN/KIN645/BalanceProject/index.html

****These exercises are intended for normal healthy individuals. If you have an injury, or abnormal pain is present, see a physician or a certified physical therapist before continuing your exercises.***

* www.ronjones.org “High-Performance Health” (11-11-02)