

Stability Balls: FUNctional Dynamic Training!

(Ron Jones, MS, ACSM Health/Fitness Instructor, Corporate Wellcoach)



Why go BALListic? Stability Balls (SBs) are being safely used for many populations: children, unfit/deconditioned, competitive athletes, seniors, obese, and rehabilitation clients. The ball is dynamic—this means it moves! When the ball moves, it **removes** some of your stability. With decreased stability (at a safe level of course), your stabilizing muscles then activate more giving you a higher quality workout. Stability balls are great for working core muscles of the trunk, but they can also increase strength, flexibility, balance & proprioception, and can even provide a good cardiovascular workout...plus they're fun!

Important Terms

Abdominal Bracing: Technique where you squeeze and “brace” all of your core muscles.

Ball Positions: Seated (upright position with ball under gluteals), Supine (face up), Prone (face down), Lateral (on one side), Supine Floor (upper body lying on floor with legs on ball).

Ball Sizing: General recommendations are <5'8” (55 cm.) & >5'8” (65 cm.). When seated on ball, knees should be bent about 90°. *(Adjust ball size as needed to get the 90°)

Base of Support (BOS): A wide BOS gives you more stability and makes the movement easier. By narrowing the BOS, you increase the degree of difficulty or challenge.

Challenges: You can adjust degree of difficulty or intensity by adjusting the following:

- **Balance Challenge (BC):** Adjust BOS, lever length (arm/hand position), and firmness/air pressure to increase or decrease balance difficulty.
- **Dynamic Challenge (DC):** Performing more than one movement (unilateral to bilateral movement) on the ball at the same time.
- **Resistance Challenge (RC):** Reposition ball to increase or decrease the amount of resistance necessary to perform a movement.
- **Ultimate Challenge (UC):** Close eyes on any movement.

Drawing In: Technique of drawing the navel into the spine that activates the deep abdominal wall muscles like transverse abdominis & internal oblique.

Basic Positions	Intensity Variations (See “Challenges”)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seated• Supine Incline• Supine Bridge• Prone Supported• Lateral Supported• Supine Floor: (Lower Body + Ball)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Base of Support (BOS)• Arm/Hand Position• Lever Length• Uni-Bilateral Movement• Ball Type (Round vs. Physio/Peanut Shape)• Ball Firmness

SAFETY!

- Listen for instructor cues on difficulty levels—**NEVER EXCEED A SAFE LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY & CHALLENGE FOR YOURSELF!**
- Move slowly with control as you learn how to use the stability ball. Speed and faster movements on the ball come later after you have mastered and can control the basic movements.

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Basic Exercises & Sample Workout

- ✓ Seated (Intro to Posture & Warm Up)
 - **ROM Drills (In/Out, L/R, Circles)**
 - **Walking (In & Out)**
 - **Leg Extensions**
 - **Marching in Place**
- ✓ Supine Incline (Face Up-Ball under Low Back)
 - **Dynamic Walk Out**
 - **Curl Up**
 - **Oblique Curl Up**
- ✓ Supine Bridge (Face Up-Ball under Neck)
 - **Dynamic Walk Out**
 - **Static Bridge**
 - **Leg Extension**
 - **Hip Extension**
- ✓ Prone Supported (Face Down-Ball under ABS)
 - **Back Extension**
 - Back Flies
 - **Hip Extension**
 - **Scapular Retraction**
 - **Bird Dog Pointer**
- ✓ Lateral Supported (On One Side-Ball under Obliques)
 - **Leg Lift/Adductors**
 - **Sidelying Lateral Trunk Flexion**
- ✓ Supine Floor (Face Up-Lying on Floor with Lower Body on Ball)
 - **Dynamic Heel Curl**
 - **Supine Hip Extension/Static Bridge**
 - **Leg Extension**
 - Balance Ball on Shins
 - **Reverse ABS Curl Up**
 - **Reverse Leg Curl**

References

- Morris, M., & Morris, S. (2000). Resist-a-ball instructor training: total body strength and stability programming. Destin: Resist-A-Ball.
- Stanforth, D. (2001). Play ball! Stability ball basics. *ACSM Health/Fitness Summit 2001 Final Program: Personal Training & Fitness Assessment Presentation*.
- ✓*Note: These exercises are intended for normal healthy individuals. If you have an injury, or abnormal pain is present, see your physician or a certified physical therapist before continuing your exercises.
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