

FAQ's for "Secrets for Better Balance: Discover the Keys to Effective Exercise Activities!"

*To be used in conjunction with 1) Keys to Better Balance: Instructor Resource, 2) Keys to Better Balance: Community Resource, and 3) Keys to Better Balance: Instructor and Community Resource

1) What is dual-tasking or dual-task training?

Dual-tasking means you are doing something with your brain and something balance-challenging with your body at the same time. This makes both better! An example is calling out the names of classmates while you are side stepping.

2) My class works on overall strength? Is that enough to say my class helps with balance?

Strength is GREAT, and ONE part of better balance! Also, the class should have activities that challenge your ability to control your posture in any position and those that challenge your balance in many positions! Examples:

Exercises that challenge your center of gravity while you are sitting or standing still and while you are moving, like reaching far and shifting your weight, walking sideways and stair-stepping, and walking around or over obstacles.

Dual-task training. This means you are doing something with your brain and something balance-challenging with your body at the same time. This makes both better! An example is calling out the name of classmates while you are side stepping.

3) How do I use this information...

...if I teach others?

Find the document "Keys to Better Balance: Instructor Resource" and "Criteria Checklist: Instructor and Community Resource" on the Safe Communities of Madison-Dane County website. <https://safercommunity.net/balance/>

These two documents list what is needed for an activity to be considered helpful to improve balance. The [YouTube channel](#) has video examples you can watch to demonstrate this. These were created to help you easily include movements into your classes or activities.



Notice that a person must have a total two (2) hours per week on average over a period of six months (or three [3] hours over four [4] months) to have a change in their balance. They also have to maintain this activity! That's where your class can help, helping to improve balance and reduce falls risk by including these simple but powerful elements!

...if I am looking for an activity or exercise/class?

If you are seeking to improve your balance and wonder how to know if a class or activity can help, find the document "Keys to Better Balance: Community Resource" and "Criteria Checklist: Instructor and Community Resource" on the Safe Communities of Madison-Dane County website. <https://safercommunity.net/balance/>

These two documents list the elements that are needed for an activity to be considered helpful to improve balance. The [YouTube channel](#) has video examples you can watch to demonstrate this. These were created to help you easily understand the kind of movements that are helpful and that work.

Notice that research shows that to have a change in your balance, you must have a total two (2) hours per week on average over a period of six months (or three [3] hours over four [4] months) to improve your balance. If you keep it up, your risk of falling is lower! You can do this!

4) Are the balance exercises in the videos the only ones that represent the criteria for improving balance?

There are many things you can do every day to improve your balance. You should spend two (2) hours per week on average over a period of six months (or three [3] hours over four [4] months) in activities that challenge your flexibility and balance. This can be broken down into small chunks of time and included as part of your daily activities. Try balancing on one foot while brushing your teeth (safely), reach longer distances while holding your balance as you do things in your home, like reaching farther and farther across the bed as you make it. Also, dual-tasking can simply mean adding a bit of a challenge as you walk or vacuum. As you walk recall the words to a song, carry on a conversation or think of the names of all the flowers you see.



5) But I walk every day!

Walking is great but walking alone has not been found to improve balance. Add some challenges to your walk such as singing a song, changing your pace or safely stepping up and down curbs. Studies have found that to improve balance you need to challenge your balance.

6) Is walking a balance exercise?

Walking alone is not a balance exercise unless you make it challenging. Challenges could include singing a song (not an easy one), changing your pace often or safely stepping up and down curbs. Walking sideways, backwards and other variations can be beneficial but be sure to do this in a hallway or other space where you could reach out to a wall if needed.

7) How many hours a week do I need to practice balance activities?

Studies show that you must exercise two (2) hours per week on average over a period of six months (or three [3] hours over four [4] months) to reduce your fall risk. This can be broken down to a one-hour class two (2) times per week or home exercises 30 minutes four (4) times per week or a little bit of both to reach a total of two (2) hours per week of balance exercises.

8) Will a class improve my balance?

A class may improve your balance if balance exercise is the main activity of the class. Your balance should be challenged when you are standing still, moving and dual-tasking.

9) What else can I do besides exercise?

In addition to performing balance and strengthening exercises to reduce your fall risk, participate in leisure activities that also challenge your balance such as dancing, Tai Chi, golf or pickleball. Activity that results in weight shifting, turning and spending brief periods of time on one leg will all help to improve and maintain balance.



10) Aren't strength exercises enough to improve my balance?

Strength exercises are beneficial to your overall health! Some exercises that strengthen may be included in a program for improving balance, but strength exercises alone often do not provide enough of a balance challenge while standing still, moving, and dual-tasking.

11) Will lifting weights improve my balance?

Lifting weights is a great way to improve strength and muscle conditioning and is beneficial to your overall health! However, lifting weights alone often does not provide the essential components (see "Keys to Better Balance: Community Resource" handout) necessary to improve balance.

12) How about swimming or warm water exercises?

Swimming is great exercise for cardiovascular health, provides light resistance for muscle conditioning, and is beneficial to your overall health! However, the support provided by the water does not challenge our balance enough to produce an improvement in balance.

13) I do yoga...does it count?

Recently, more scientific research has shown the benefits of yoga for balance and fall prevention. Yoga would count as a balance exercise if most of the class is done in standing. Standing still balance (like standing on one leg), and movement balance is challenged when going from one pose to the next. Yoga's attention to body awareness may also improve your ability to control your posture when standing still and when moving.

14) Where can I find this information?

This information can easily be found on the Safe Communities of Madison-Dane County website. <https://safercommunity.net/balance/>



15) Am I allowed to share this with others?

YES, these facts were created to be shared! We want these facts to be shared with older adults living in the community and with health and fitness professionals. Our hope is that this information will help our older adult population maintain their independence and continue a high quality of life by reducing falls-related injuries.

