

No. 62013

# Stepping Stones Balance Cards



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Develop healthy exercise routines with Stepping Stones Balance Cards! Each card represents a fun pose or movement that helps develop a child's gross motor and balance skills. Exercise is fun with Stepping Stones!

The cards are separated into three color-coded categories. The cards with the green borders are relatively easy. Cards with a yellow border portray movements at an intermediary level. Finally, the cards with the red border are the most challenging. The cards are printed on both sides with a pose in the same category. Once children learn the poses, create exercise routines and interchange the movements to add interest.

The printed stepping stones are made from a plastic sheet that has a special scratch resistant coating that makes them easy to clean. If you are concerned about slipping, you can tape the stones to the floor.

Our primary goal with Stepping Stone Cards is to give children an exercise that they can do in the classroom for twenty minutes a day. Along with the photographic pose, there are two other cartoon poses that you can use to add complexity to your routines!

Begin your exercise routines with some stretching and breathing exercises. Here are some tips inspired by yoga.

Exercise Tips:

1. Breathing is essential to exercise! Always start classroom workouts with a few breathing exercises:

- As a warm-up breathing exercise, ask students to stand while placing one hand on their chest and one hand on their abdomen (stomach). Ask them to inhale deeply through the nose while feeling the chest and abdomen rise. Exhale through the mouth but keep the mouth, cheeks and tongue relaxed while breathing out. Ask children to relax while breathing and not to raise their shoulders while breathing in.

- As an intermediate exercise, ask children to stand while placing one hand on their abdomen and one hand on their chest. This time, ask them to start by filling their belly with air first, then filling the bottom of their chest and finally filling the top of their chest. It will require a deep breath and concentration, but they will develop a sense of self-discipline through breathing!

- For a challenging breathing exercise, ask children to take three short breathes through the nose before exhaling through the mouth while moving their arms. Start by standing with arms to the sides. On the first inhale, lift arms out in front. On the first exhale, lift arms straight to shoulder level in front. On the second inhale, move arms out to either side. On the third inhale, lift arms straight out above head. On the exhale, slowly breathe out through the mouth while arcing the arms down to

rest at either side of the body.

2. Begin and end your session with a few warm up/cool down stretches. Young children may not need to warm-up before exercise, but it is a wonderful habit to develop. Note: Stretching is a great way to build discipline in your routines, especially if the poses change from day to day. Once a warm-up routine is firmly established, ask different students to lead the stretches. Try these simple stretches:

- Ask students to stand beside their desks with their back straight and their feet planted shoulder-width apart. Spread arms out and hold them perpendicular to the floor and count to twelve. Relax arms and tilt head back for a count of twelve. Bend head forward and hold in place for a count of twelve. Return head to an upright position and stand on tippy toes for a count of twelve. Repeat as desired.

- For intermediate stretching, perform the previous stretches and add some new ones. Clasp hands over head. Bend the back and shoulders, but not the waist to the right. Count to twelve. Return to an upright position and then bend to the left and count to twelve.

- Hold right arm at shoulder level pointing to the left. Place the left hand above the right elbow and slowly pull the arm forward. This stretches the upper arm and shoulder. Hold for a count of twelve and repeat with the left arm.

- For more challenging stretches, perform the previous stretches and add a leg stretch. Hold the edge of the desk and squat down while the heels lift off the floor. Use the desk to help balance while stretching.

Tip: Practice Stepping Stones Balance poses on an empty stomach or wait half an hour before engaging in these movements. You will feel much better!

Activities:

1. Student Personal Trainer: Once students are familiar with some or all of the poses, ask a student to lead the exercise. Encourage the student to sort through the cards and pick poses that make up a routine. When it is exercise time, ask the student to lead the class through the poses.

2. Appeal to the Ear: Add music and sound to your exercise routines. Choose classical or contemporary songs. Ensure the music matches the mood of your routines. Find recordings of natural sounds like the ocean or forest and play them while posing.

3. Invent Your Own Poses: Once you have mastered all of our poses, make up some of your own. Pick a theme such as weather, underwater life, outer space travel or prehistoric times. Students can work in groups to create and illustrate poses based on the themes. Once complete, ask each group to lead the class in performing their routines.

4. Use the Stepping Stones in games: Lay a trail of stones on the classroom floor and ask students to walk or jump from stone to stone.



Green Cards/Beginner Level

**Statue:**

Stand with heels together and toes pointing out. Put hands on hips. Stay in this position for the count of six.

Challenge 1: Raise arms to shoulder height and across the chest. Cross feet. Hold for the count of six.

Challenge 2: Raise arms above head and cross at wrist. With feet side by side, bend into a squatting position. Hold for the count of six.



**Leg Up:**

Clench hands into fists. Place fists on sides above the waist. Raise one leg out to the side of the body with knee straight. Hold pose for the count of six. Repeat with other leg.

Challenge 1: Raise knee and hold pose for the count of six. Repeat with other leg.

Challenge 2: Bend knee slightly and rotate leg. Make 6 rotations. Repeat with other leg.



**The Bird:**

Raise arms to shoulder height out to the side of the body. Point fingers and hands up to the ceiling. Stand on one foot while bending the other leg at the knee with the foot facing back.

Challenge 1: Raise leg in front of body bending at the hip. Raise arms and touch finger tips over the head. Hold for the count of six. Repeat with other leg.

Challenge 2: Move arms straight in front of the body with hands pointing up. Raise leg, bending at the hip, with knee straight in front of the body. Hold for the count of six. Repeat with other leg.



**Jump Up:**

Stand with both feet on the stone. Bend at knees and jump up while extending arms as high as they will go. Repeat six times.

Challenge 1: Squat on the stone with feet together and arms wrapped around knees. Hold for the count of six.

Challenge 2: Stand while bending at knees and waist. Place hands on opposite knees. Hold for the count of six. If you want to add movement, shuffle hands from knee to knee while spread knees in and out.



Yellow Cards/Intermediate Level

**Waist Bend**

Place both feet on the stone, bend at waist and touch toes. Tip: Bend knees slightly. Hold for the count of six.

Challenge 1: Bend knees and waist slightly. Raise and spread arms out just above shoulder height. Point thumbs up and hands out. Hold for the count of six.

Challenge 2: With knees and waist slightly bent bring arms together in front of body. Point fingers. Hold for the count of six.



**Tight Rope Walker:**

Stand on stone with toes pointing out. Keep body straight and raise the arms straight out from the body at shoulder height with fingers pointing out. Raise one leg bending at the waist and keeping knee locked. Hold for the count of six.

Challenge 1: Stand with both feet on the stone, heels together and toes pointing out. Bend knees and squat with back straight. Clench fist and raise above head bending arms at the elbow. Hold for a count of six.

Challenge 2: Stand with both feet on the stone, heels together and toes pointing out. Keep legs and back straight. Clench fists and on abdomen above waist. Hold for the count of six.



**Yoga Master:**

Stand with one foot on the center of the stone. Raise one leg, bending at the knee. Place foot on the other leg's knee. Position one hand on bended knee and the other hand on hip. Hold for the count of six. Repeat with other leg.

Challenge 1: Stand on the stone with one foot. Raise arms to shoulder height on the side of the body. Raise one leg with knee straight and toes point up. Hold for the count of six. Repeat with other leg.

Challenge 2: Place both feet on the stone with heels together and toes pointing out. Raise arms to shoulder height and bend at elbow. Cover ears with hands. Hold for the count of six.



**Hand Clapper:**

Place one foot on stone. Raise leg and clap hands under knee. Hold for the count of six. Repeat with other leg.

Challenge 1: Place both feet on stone. Bend at knees and waist. Lean forward and stretch out arms at shoulder height bending at the elbow. Hold for the count of six.

Challenge 2: Assume the same position, spread arms very wide and clap hands under knee.



## The Slap Dancer:

Stand with one foot on the stone. Bend the other leg at the knee. Grab the sole of the foot and raise opposite arms up slightly above the shoulder with hand pointing skyward. Hold for a count of six. Repeat with other leg.

**Challenge 1:** Stand with one foot on the stone. Raise one leg to the side with knee straight. One arm points down. The other arm is bent at the elbow with hand clenched in a fist resting on the waist. Hold for a count of six. Repeat with other leg.

**Challenge 2:** Stand with both feet on the stone. Raise arms to shoulder height. Clench hands into fists. Raise one fist up and the other fist down. Hold for a count of six. Switch arm positions and repeat.



## Side Press:

Start with one foot on the stepping stone. Bend other leg forward at the knee. Hold out arms at shoulder height. Point fingers up to the sky. Hold for a count of six. Repeat with other leg.

**Challenge 1:** With one foot on the stone, bring other leg forward with knee straight. Reach with both hands and arms forward towards the toes. Hold for a count of six. Repeat with other leg.

**Challenge 2:** With one foot on the stone, raise other leg behind bending at the knee. Stretch arms up to sky. Hold for a count of six. Repeat with other leg.



## Super Star

Stand with one foot on the stone. Keep other leg straight, raise the leg backwards and point the toes down to the ground. Raise arms to the sides of the body with hands pointing up. Hold for a count of six. Repeat with other leg.

**Challenge 1:** With both feet on the stone, squat on the ground. Bring elbows towards waist and hands to mouth. Hold for a count of six.

**Challenge 2:** With one foot on the stone, raise other leg forward. Raise arms up to shoulder height and out to sides. Hold for a count of six. Repeat with other leg.



**Topsy Turvy:** With one foot on the stone, raise other leg straight out to the side. Raise hands above head and clap together. Hold for a count of six. Repeat with other leg.

**Challenge 1:** With one foot on the stone, raise other leg straight out to the side. Raise arms to shoulder height and bend down at elbows. Hold for a count of six. Repeat with other leg.

**Challenge 2:** With both feet on the stone, Raise arms to shoulder height. Bend arms up at elbows and bend hands out at wrists. Hold for a count of six.



Red Cards/Challenge Level

## The Candle:

Stand with one foot on the stone. Bend one leg at the knee and rest the foot on opposite knee. Raise arms and clap hands above head. Hold for a count of six. Repeat with other leg.

**Challenge 1:** With one foot on the stone, bend leg at knee and rest the foot on opposite knee. Clench hands into fists and rest on waist. Hold for a count of six. Repeat with other leg.

**Challenge 2:** With one foot rest on opposite knee, cover eyes with hands. Hold for a count of six. Repeat with other leg.



## The Crane:

With one foot on the stone, raise other leg up and bend at the knee. Point toes down. Lift arms straight above head. Point hands down. Hold for a count of six. Repeat with other leg.

**Challenge 1:** With one foot on the stone and one leg raised, raise foot to point towards ceiling. Lower arms while raising hands. Hold for a count of six. Repeat with other leg.

**Challenge 2:** With one foot on the stone, raise other leg up and bend at the knee. Point toes down. Lift arms straight above head while bending at the elbows. Point hands sideways. Hold for a count of six. Repeat with other leg.



## The Leg Pull:

With one foot on the stone, bend other knee and hold foot behind the back. Stretch opposite arm straight ahead and clench hand into a fist. Hold for a count of six. Repeat with the other leg.

**Challenge 1:** With one foot on the stone, bend the other leg forward at the knee. Touch your nose and hold for a count of six. Repeat with other leg.

**Challenge 2:** With one foot on the stone, extend the other leg straight forward. Clench your hands into fist while extending the thumb. Place thumbs in ears. Hold for a count of six. Repeat with other leg.



## The Glider:

With one foot on the stone, raise other leg straight back while bending at the waist. Extend arms out to the side and point hands upwards. Hold for a count of six. Repeat with other leg.

**Challenge 1:** With one foot on the stone and the other extended straight back, bend leg upwards at the knee. Extend arms straight forward. Hold for a count of six. Repeat with other leg.

**Challenge 2:** With both feet on the stone, lean forward with back straight and arms extended down. Hold for a count of six.

