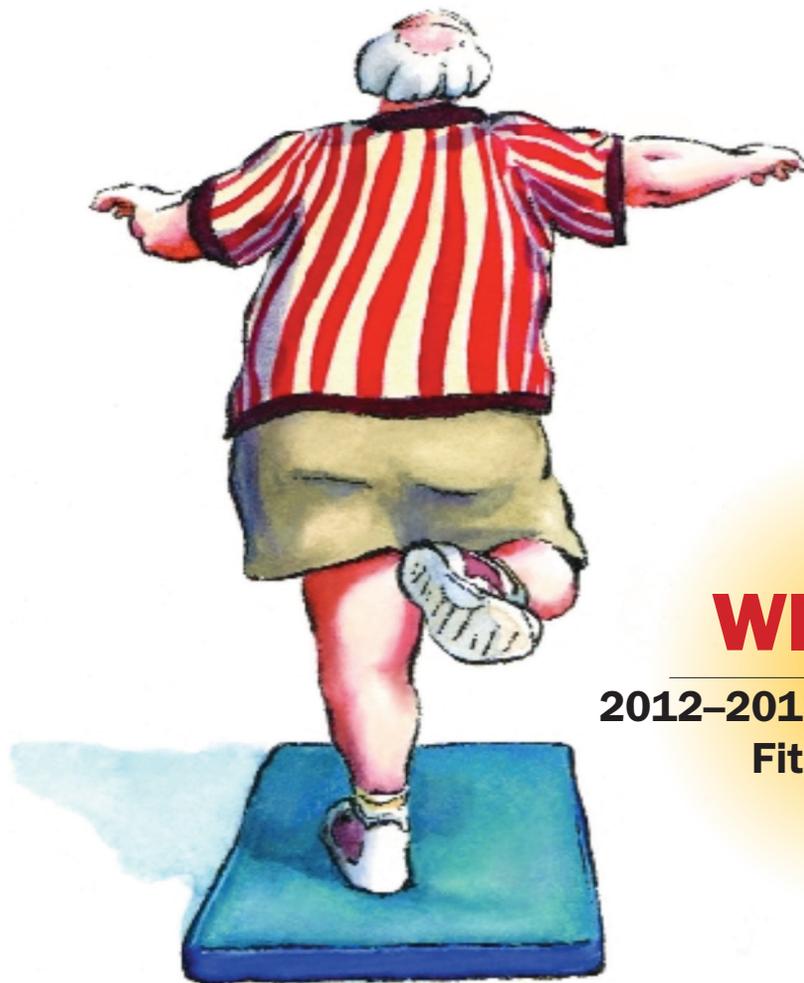


U-ExCEL

Balancing Act Manual

ABRIDGED – First Edition – LARGE PRINT



WINNER!

**2012–2013 Maine Governor's
Fitness Award**

Authors

Marilyn R. Gugliucci, Ph.D.

Anne M. Cowles, B.S., M.P.H.



**UNIVERSITY OF
NEW ENGLAND**

College of Osteopathic Medicine
Department of Geriatric Medicine

Preface

This abridged 1st Edition includes only exercises written in large print. The full U-ExCEL Balancing Act Manual can be purchased directly from the University of New England:

Phone: 207-602-2134

Address: *Dept. of Geriatric Medicine, U-ExCEL
University of New England College of
Osteopathic Medicine
11 Hills Beach Road
Biddeford, ME 04005*

Email: *aesquivel@une.edu*
[please type "U-ExCEL Balancing Act Manual"
in the subject line]

Acknowledgements

The U-ExCEL program is indebted to the older adults who assisted us with advancing the U-ExCEL Balancing Act program. We sincerely hope this manual is used by many older adults in a variety of settings.

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Participant Instructions

- **Balance exercises should be done in front of a stable surface you can hold on to if needed (i.e. hand rail, counter, heavy chair or table)**
- **Start with the beginner exercises**
- **Review the hand positions, and start with Hand Position #1. Reduce contact to Hand Position #3 as you feel more confident**
- **Hold each exercise for 5 seconds and build up to 30 seconds.**
- **It is normal for your body to move (sway, or shake) when doing balance exercises – this is your body learning how to balance**
 - **If you aren't comfortable with this movement bring hands to the stable surface to regain balance**

NOTE: Know your own limitations!

If at any time you feel dizzy or short of breath, stop exercising and contact your physician.

Hand Positions

Hand Position #1: Both hands hold onto a stable surface. Provides the most stability with the greatest point of contact with the stable surface.

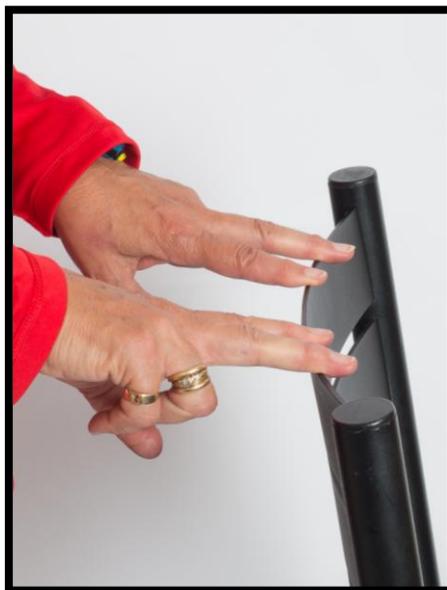
Hand Position #2: Finger tips of both hands rest on a stable surface. Provides some stability and has some point of contact with the stable surface.

Hand Position #3: Both hands hover a few inches above a stable surface. Provides no point of contact from hands, so the body works to stay balanced. This hand position still makes it easy to grab onto a stable surface if needed.

#1



#2



#3



U-ExCEL Balancing Act: Beginner Exercises

Start Position for all exercises:

- Stand facing the stable object
- Hands holding on – or ready to hold on
- Stand with back straight, in line with shoulders, knees relaxed
- Feet at comfortable stance
- Weight even on both feet



Instructions for all exercises:

- Hold each position for 5 seconds, building up to 30 seconds
- Progress through hand positions (see page 2) with a goal of not holding on – Hand Position #3
- Do exercises #1-#5 and then repeat these two more times
- Too Easy? Perform with eyes closed (only if you feel comfortable)
- It is okay to rest

Hand Positions reminder:

- #1. Holding on with both hands
- #2. Fingers resting on stable surface
- #3. Hands hovering above stable surface

1. Feet Shoulder Width

- **Stand in Start Position**
- **Bring feet shoulder width apart, about 12 inches**
- **Weight even on both feet**
- **Hold position**



Too Easy?

- **Don't hold on**
- **Close your eyes**

2. Feet Hip Width

- **Stand in Start Position**
- **Bring feet hip width apart, about 6 inches**
- **Weight even on both feet**
- **Hold position**



Too Easy?

- **Don't hold on**
- **Close your eyes**

3. Feet Together

- Stand in Start Position
- Bring feet close together
- Weight even on both feet
- Hold position



Too Easy?

- Don't hold on
- Close your eyes

4. Foot Forward (feet flat)

- **Stand in Start Position**
- **Step forward with right foot, keeping feet flat**
- **Weight even on both feet**
- **Hold position**
- **Switch and repeat with left foot**

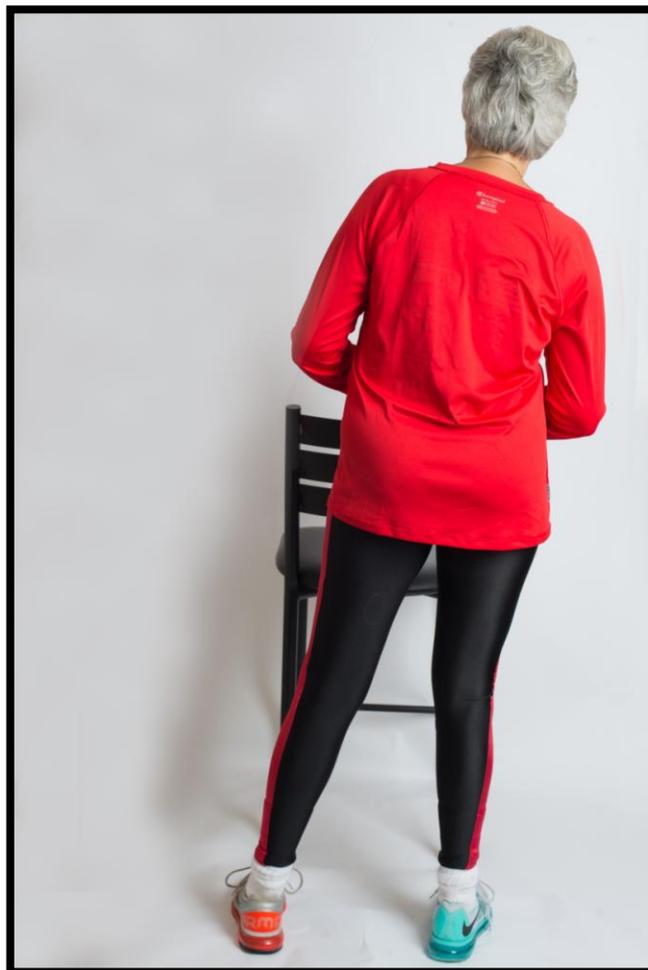


Too Easy?

- **Don't hold on**
- **Close your eyes**

5. Weight Shift

- **Stand in Start Position**
- **Bring feet shoulder width apart, about 12 inches**
- **Shift weight to right side, keep both feet flat**
- **Keep shoulders and hips in line**
- **Hold position**
- **Switch and repeat on the left side**



Too Easy?

- **Don't hold on**
- **Close your eyes**

Stop!

Before moving on to the next level of balancing exercises, be sure you can answer yes to the following statements for all of the exercises in the beginner level:

- I can confidently perform these exercises**

- I can perform these exercises for 30 seconds**

- I can perform these exercises without holding on**

U-ExCEL Balancing Act: Intermediate Exercises

Start Position for all exercises:

- Stand facing the stable object
- Hands holding on – or ready to hold on
- Stand with back straight, in line with shoulders, knees relaxed
- Feet at comfortable stance
- Weight even on both feet



Instructions for all exercises:

- Hold each position for 5 seconds, building up to 30 seconds
- Progress through hand positions (see page 2) with a goal of not holding on – Hand Position #3
- Do exercises #6-#10 and then repeat these two more times
- Too Easy? Perform with eyes closed (only if you feel comfortable)
- It is okay to rest

Hand Positions reminder:

- #1. Holding on with both hands
- #2. Fingers resting on stable surface
- #3. Hands hovering above stable surface

6. Feet Together

- Stand in Start Position
- Bring feet close together
- Weight even on both feet
- Hold position



Too Easy?

- Don't hold on
- Close your eyes

7. Heel Forward

- **Stand in Start Position**
- **Step forward with right foot, heel on the ground and toes up**
- **Left foot remains flat**
- **Weight even on both feet**
- **Hold position**
- **Switch and repeat stepping forward with left foot**



Too Easy?

- **Don't hold on**
- **Close your eyes**

8. Toe Back

- **Stand in Start Position**
- **Step back with right foot, toes on the ground and heel up**
- **Left foot remains flat**
- **Weight even on both feet**
- **Hold position**
- **Switch and repeat stepping back with left foot**



Too Easy?

- **Don't hold on**
- **Close your eyes**

9. Heel to Toe (broad stance)

- Stand in Start Position
- Step forward with right foot, placing foot in front of left with 5 inches between heel and toe
- Weight even on both feet
- Hold position
- Switch and repeat with left foot in front

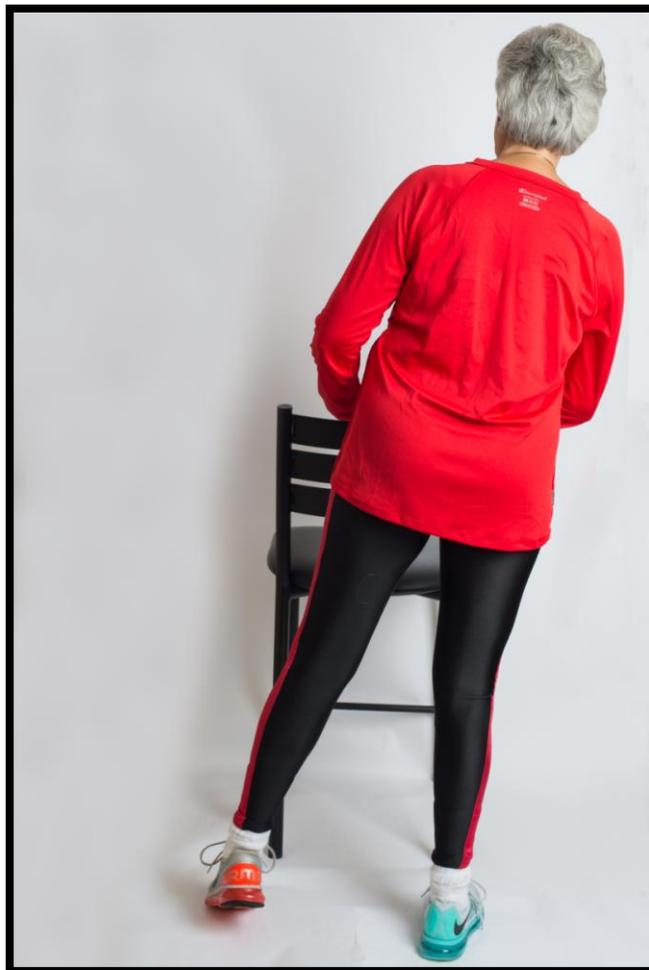


Too Easy?

- Don't hold on
- Close your eyes

10. Toe to Side

- **Stand in Start Position**
- **Bring feet shoulder width apart, about 12 inches**
- **Shift weight to right side, going onto left toe as more weight shifts to right side**
- **Keep shoulders and hips in line**
- **Hold position**
- **Switch and repeat on the left side**



Too Easy?

- **Don't hold on**
- **Close your eyes**

Stop!

Before moving on to the next level of balancing exercises, be sure you can answer yes to the following statements for all of the exercises in the intermediate level:

- I can confidently perform these exercises**

- I can perform these exercises for 30 seconds**

- I can perform these exercises without holding on**

U-ExCEL Balancing Act: Advanced Exercises

Start Position for all exercises:

- Stand facing the stable object
- Hands holding on – or ready to hold on
- Stand with back straight, in line with shoulders, knees relaxed
- Feet at comfortable stance
- Weight even on both feet



Instructions for all exercises:

- Hold each position for 5 seconds, building up to 30 seconds
- Progress through hand positions (see page 2) with a goal of not holding on – Hand Position #3
- Do exercises #11-#15 and then repeat these two more times
- Too Easy? Perform with eyes closed (only if you feel comfortable)
- It is okay to rest

Hand Positions reminder:

- #1. Holding on with both hands
- #2. Fingers resting on stable surface
- #3. Hands hovering above stable surface

11. Heel to Toe (touching)

- **Stand in Start Position**
- **Step forward with right foot, bringing the heel of right foot to the toes of left foot**
- **Toes of both feet pointing forward**
- **Weight even on both feet**
- **Hold position**
- **Switch and repeat with left foot in front**



Too Easy?

- **Don't hold on**
- **Close your eyes**

12. Weight Shift (foot up)

- **Stand in Start Position**
- **Bring feet shoulder width apart, about 12 inches**
- **Shift all weight to right side, allowing left foot to come off the ground**
- **Keep shoulder and hip in line**
- **Hold position**
- **Switch and repeat on the left side**



Too Easy?

- **Lift foot higher off the ground to the side**
- **Don't hold on**
- **Close your eyes**

13. Foot Forward

- Stand in Start Position
- Step forward with right foot, heel on the ground, toes up
- Left foot remains flat
- Shift weight back to left foot, lift right foot off the ground in front of you
- Hold position
- Switch and repeat stepping forward with left foot



Too Easy?

- Lift foot higher off the ground in front of you
- Don't hold on
- Close your eyes

14. Foot Back

- Stand in Start Position
- Step back with right foot, toes on the ground and heel up
- Left foot remains flat
- Shift weight forward to left foot, lift right foot off the ground behind you
- Hold position
- Switch and repeat stepping back with left foot



Too Easy?

- Lift foot higher off the ground behind you
- Don't hold on
- Close your eyes

15. Knee Up

- Stand in Start Position
- Slowly lift right knee up, as if going into a march
 - Goal is to lift knee up to hip height
(Keep knee lower to make easier)
- Hold position
- Switch and repeat bringing left knee up



Too Easy?

- Lift knee up higher
- Don't hold on
- Close your eyes

Stop!

Before moving on to the next level of balancing exercises, be sure you can answer yes to the following statements for all of the exercises in the advanced level:

- I can confidently perform these exercises**

- I can perform these exercises for 30 seconds**

- I can perform these exercises without holding on**

U-ExCEL Balancing Act: Action Exercises

Action exercises should only be performed once all advanced exercises can be completed with confidence, without holding on, for 30 seconds.

Instructions for Action Exercises:

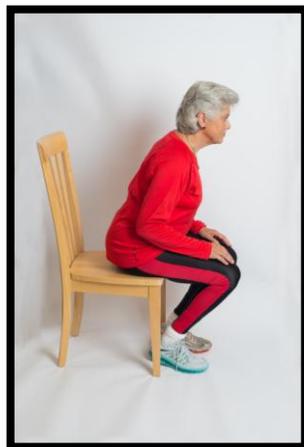
- **These are movement based and should be done only after you have mastered the Advanced Exercises.**
- **Be sure a stable surface is within reach (i.e. hand rail, wall, chair, etc)**
- **Do them slowly**
 - **The slower they are done, the more balance is challenged**
- **Progress through hand positions with a goal of not holding on – Hand Position #3**
- **Do each exercise #16-#20, and then repeat two more times**

Hand Positions reminder:

- #1. Holding on with one hand**
- #2. Fingers resting on stable surface**
- #3. Hand hovering above stable surface**

16. Sit to Stand

- **Sit in a firm chair**
- **Slide forward as far as possible**
- **Slide heels back so they are lined up with the front edge of the chair seat**
- **Keep back straight, feet shoulder width apart and flat on the ground**
- **Place hands on knees and lean upper body forward (think nose over toes)**
- **Use buttock and leg muscles to stand up**
 - **If needed, use arms to assist**
- **Stand all the way up and hold for 5 seconds**
- **Slowly lower back down to chair seat – no plopping**
- **Repeat 10 times**



17. Arm Swing with Opposite Leg Swing Movement

- Stand in Start Position
- Lift right leg and swing it in front of left leg, at the same time swing left arm behind torso
- Keeping the right foot elevated swing it behind left leg, and swing left arm in front of torso
- Repeat for 10-15 repetitions and then repeat with left leg and right arm



Too Hard?

- Make the arm and leg swing shorter
- Don't cross behind or in front as much

Too Easy?

- Lift leg higher off the ground
- Making swing longer and more exaggerated

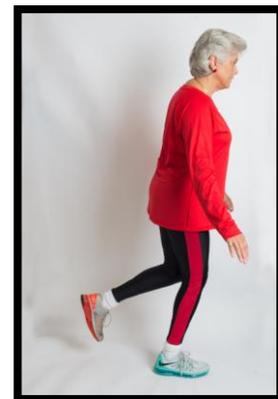
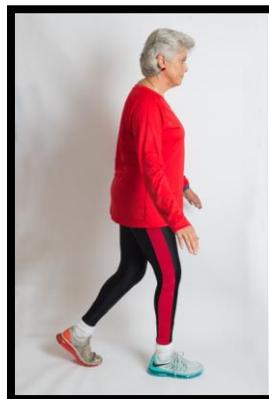
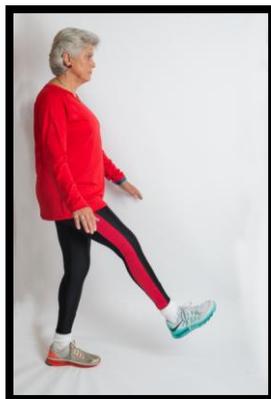
18. Heel to Toe Walk

- Stand with stable surface to right side, close enough to hold on if needed
- Stand tall, eyes focused in front of you (don't look at feet)
- Raise arms out to the side to aid balance
- Take small step with right foot and place it directly in front of left foot, so the right heel is touching the left toes
- Repeat with left foot
- Continue steps, turn around and return to starting place
- Repeat 3 times down and back



19. Exaggerated Walking Steps

- Stand with stable surface to right side, close enough to hold on if needed
- Stand tall, eyes focused in front of you (don't look at feet)
- Raise arms out to the side to aid balance
- Lift right foot off ground, slowly bring foot forward
- Touch right heel to ground, shift weight forward and step on right foot
- Lift left heel and repeat step with left foot
- Continue steps, turn around and return to starting place
- Repeat 3 times down and back



Too Easy?

- Exaggerate each step more by going slower and making the motions bigger – i.e. lift foot higher off the ground, strike with heel, push off with toe

20. Grapevine

- Stand facing stable surface, close enough to hold on if needed
- Stand tall, eyes focused in front of you (don't look at feet)
- Raise arms out to the side to aid balance
- Moving to the right first, step to side with right foot, and then cross left foot in front of right
- Take another step to side with right foot, and then cross left foot behind right
- Continue this pattern: cross in front, side step, cross behind, and then repeat to the left
- Continue steps, turn around and return to starting place
- Repeat 3 times down and back



Too Hard?

- Make steps smaller

Too Easy?

- Make bigger steps
- Make sure you're not holding on