



RYOKO DONALD

HOW TO TRANSFORM YOUR BASIC FITNESS ROUTINE INTO A FUN AND CHALLENGING CORE WORKOUT



Why is it important to work with your core?

Nowadays it is becoming more common to experience back, knee, and shoulder pain due to a more sedentary lifestyle. We are all guilty of sitting at a desk for too long, or spending extended periods commuting in a vehicle. This inactive lifestyle can lead directly to weak back and core muscles.

Studies show that balance exercises can improve core and back strength. They help you increase stability and strengthen your joints, which can go a long way to relieving pain and improving overall posture.

REMEMBER

1. **Manipulate your contact points** to create a balance challenge. This is where your hands and feet meet the surface they are on and stabilize your body.
2. **Slow down the speed of repetition.** Slowing down the speed of exercise repetition really activates your muscles, allowing you to have a greater mind-body connection and kinetic awareness.

Equipment: A hand weight or full water bottle.

Alignment Tip: Ensure your feet are grounded and leg muscles engaged.

Before you start your exercise: Activate your glutes by slightly tucking your pelvis under, pulling in your navel, lengthening your spine, and retracting your shoulder blade, or scapula.

Repetition: Inhale while you lift your weight or water bottle while counting to 4 and feel the muscle contraction. Exhale and count to 4 as you return to the starting position. Repeat 4 times on each side.

Here are some ideas for how you can create an exciting balance challenge for yourself by using just the floor and few things around your house or hotel room.

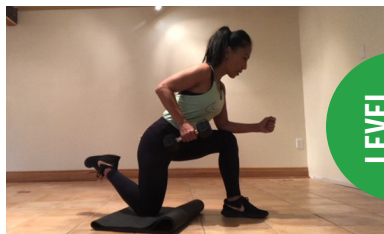
Be creative and have fun, and you will be amazed with the great results you can achieve with these balance exercises!

EXERCISE #1



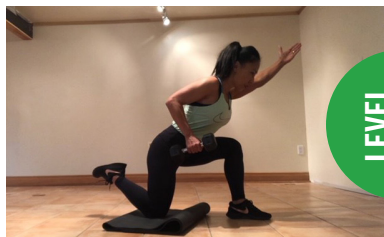
LEVEL 1

Kneel on one knee. Hold a weight or water bottle in one hand, and perform an arm exercise of your choosing – it could be a single arm row, or any upper body exercise like triceps kickback, reverse fly or front raise. Add a soft cushion underneath your knee to create more of a balance challenge.



LEVEL 2

Balance Challenge: Lift your back toe off the floor to manipulate this contact point and add a balance challenge to your supporting leg and glutes. You can also lift your supporting arm and extend it into the air. This will push your lower body and core to have to work harder to stabilize your body.



LEVEL 3

Progress Your Challenge: For an additional challenge, lift your front heel off the ground.

A FUN AND CHALLENGING CORE WORKOUT CONTINUED.

NOTE: THIS IS NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL ADVICE.

EXERCISE #2



LEVEL 1

Stand in a squat position on an athletic step and place one elbow on your thigh for stability. Holding a hand weight or water bottle, lift your opposite arm in a reverse fly.



LEVEL 2

Balance Challenge: Lift your front heel for an additional stability challenge!



LEVEL 3

Progress Your Challenge: Extend your back leg toward the back wall. This will cause a greater contraction of your supporting glute and leg muscles.

EXERCISE #3



LEVEL 1

Holding a hand weight or water bottle, balance on one leg and lean forward using a bench or chair for support. Engage your supporting leg muscles and make sure your foot is grounded. Extend your lifted leg to the back. Squeeze your thigh & glute muscles. Make sure to square your hips and engage your core. Lift your arm in a reverse fly.



LEVEL 2

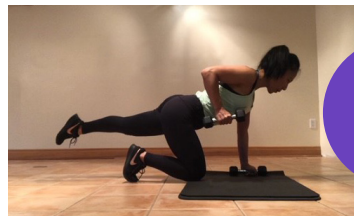
Balance Challenge: Place the chair behind you. Engage your supporting leg muscles and make sure your foot is grounded. Extend your lifted leg to the back and rest your toes on the chair for support. Extend one arm out in front of you. Lift your opposite arm in a reverse fly.

EXERCISE #4



LEVEL 1

Start in a kneeling position on the floor on a mat. Square your hips, and engage your core. Have your elbow tight against the side of your body, and fully extend your arm in a tricep kickback.



LEVEL 2

Balance Challenge: Extend one of your legs toward the back. For a greater challenge, lift the toes of your supporting leg off the floor.



LEVEL 3

Progress Your Challenge: Bring both legs back into a plank position, with your supporting arm straight. Be sure to engage your core and keep your elbow unlocked. For an even greater challenge, this plank can be done lifting one leg off the floor!

Ryoko Donald is an author, motivational speaker, and registered with BCRPA in Group Fitness, Yoga Fitness, Personal Training, Weight Training, and Older Adult. As a Bosu® Ambassador, she specializes in stability, balance, and core exercise. Ryoko is passionate about helping people become fit, healthy, and happy.