

Basics for Balance Beam

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Posture Awareness

- The feet are turned out, with the weight distributed on the balls of the feet, all the toes are atop the beam to prevent rolling of the ankles.
- The backs of the knees are stretched, with the kneecaps angled in the same direction as the feet.
- The hips are square, lower back extended (flat), weight is lifted up and out of the pelvis to avoid tucking of the hips or swaying of the lower back.
- The abdominals are pulled up and back, the belly button is pulled backward into the pelvic cavity.
- The chest is lifted up, the sternum pulled down and the ribcage pulled together.
- The arms are held in a relaxed manner with control of placement (not limp or stiff).
- The shoulders are pressed down and stretched wide to the side.
- The head is lifted up and out of the torso, neck long, eyes focused on the end of the beam.

Alignment: Head above the beam always

Front side

1. Tip of nose
2. Chin
3. Shoulders/Chest
4. Pelvic Bones
5. Balls of feet

Back side

1. Back of the neck
2. Upper back
3. Tail bone
4. Backs of knees
5. Heels

Ankle/Feet Strength and Control

- Foot isolation
- Balance holds and toe raises: eyes open/eyes closed
- Hops and jumps: with/without arms
- Weight transfers: forward, sideward, backward

Leg/Hip Strength and Control

- Dips, Waltz Steps - Forward and backward
- Arabesques and Scales
- Weight shifts with leg lifts
- Leg swings and leg kicks
- Lever walks
- Jumps: Straight, Changement, Stretched
- Chassés and hops

* **Movement Reaction** - Lunges R and L; Arabesques R and L; 5th position Relevé and Demi-plié, with flat feet and/or high forced arches - Gentle pushing, in varying directions, of knees, hips, shoulders or head while the gymnast corrects alignment and maintains balance.

Turns

From 1st (side), 4th and 5th (cross) position stands:

- Weight transfers from side to side or front to back.

From 4th and 5th (cross) position stands with head leading shoulders (spotting drill):

- Pivot turns 1/4 and 1/2: From flat to relevé and turning or repetitive turns in relevé, alternating direction (fast and slow)

From a stand on one leg:

- Relevés and relevé hold without balance error
- Relevé hold, alternating leg position from front to back
- Turns 1/2 or 1/1, followed by repetitive toe raises
- Repetitive 1/2 and 1/1 turns without balance error (varying directions, leg positions and arm positions)
- Step turns 1/2 and 1/1 with varying entries (lunge, pique)

Leaps and Jumps

Emphasis on timing and coordination of arms and legs together for all take-offs and landings for:

- Repetitive straight jumps in cross and side without balance errors on landings
- Repetitive straight jumps with 1/4 and 1/2 turns without balance errors on landings
- Repetitive split jumps, pike jumps and straddle jumps
- Forward leg swings from a stand and from the knee
- Backward leg swings from a stand and from a lunge
- Forward and Backward leg swings with hops
- Leap from the knee and a lunge
- Step leap, step leap
- Long runs in and out of leaps
- One step, switch leap
- Sissone, switch leap

Handstand Strength

- Press drill in side, straddle "L" and cross positions
- Repetitive lever drills: slow and fast (R/L)
- Handstands: under-balanced, over-balanced, balanced

* **Movement Reaction:** counter balance through shoulders with spot

- Walking in handstands : Sideways R/L, cross forwards
- Handstand holds: Side and cross, varying positions, switching positions during hold
- Jump press handstands and clear press handstands

Arms and Body Waves

- Arms should always be relaxed but placed and controlled
- Forward, backward and sideward (vertebrae progression)

Training Aids

- "The Line"-skills performed exactly as they will be performed on the beam (hands and feet with movement reaction)
- Low Beams wider than normal
- Numbers, numbers, numbers!
- Spotting
- Mats at the height of the beam

Fear and Overcoming the Fear

- Acknowledge that *FEAR* exists in everyone at some time or another
- Beam Basics-a continuing program of training throughout a gymnast's career to give them a feeling of control which in turn gives them confidence to perform
- Mental Training
 1. Beam Attitude-As a coach or a gymnast, be unemotional, calm and aggressive.
 2. The Fall is bigger than life if you think you'll get injured or if coaches and/or parents put the emphasis on staying on instead of "what to do...to stay on"
 3. No Distractions-Establish what the distractions might be in gym training or performance situations. Teach your gymnast to focus on the immediate task and succeeding tasks in order of importance.
 4. Detailed Skill Knowledge-Educate the gymnast on the details of the performance of all skills expected to perform. (A, B, C's). Perform skills in competition when you achieve a consistency rate of 90%.
 5. Visualization-Start visual training early. Be aware of vivid imaginations. A more intelligent gymnast might anticipate the problems that can occur in performing a skill incorrectly (may visualize herself failing before succeeding).

A gymnast will perform successfully on beam when she is confident in the skill she is performing and focused on the details from "A to Z".

NO DISTRACTIONS!

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For those of you who speak Spanish or who are Spanish language students, this article has been translated for [Técnica](#).