



Do you find it challenging to balance in your yoga practice? Do you dread balancing on one leg? Would you prefer give balancing poses a miss when you practice yoga?

But there are so many benefits to balancing

Balancing poses are great for improving physical, mental & emotional well-being. They increase our ability to concentrate & focus; help relieve stress & tension; strengthen the feet & the legs, realign imbalances through the body & improve coordination. They help us feel better about ourselves.

Our ability to balance is a reflection of how balanced we are, in both body & mind, at any given time. Conversely, if you learn to balance well, physical, mental & emotional processes become more balanced & stable, & you feel more self assured & able to deal with difficult situations.

The act of balancing is definitely more challenging if you're feeling stressed or the mind is busy. But, when the body is well aligned & the mind and emotions are calm, balancing begins to feel easier.

With practice balancing poses become more straightforward. And you will benefit physically from improvements in strength & stability; mentally & emotionally from increased senses of calm, awareness, & steadiness.

To increase your confidence & competence when balancing, here are some **pointers & tips** which will help you to reap the many rewards that balances bring.

Good preparation is key. A building with a solid foundation stands stable, balanced & strong. And the same goes for us; balancing begins at the feet – our foundation.

Before coming to standing for balancing pose practice, prepare the feet & ankles, mobilising & freeing up the tissues, making space & generally increasing awareness, eg ankle flexion, extension & rotation, toe stretching & scrunching.

Standing on 2 feet in Good Standing/Mountain Pose helps to prepare for balancing on one leg. Explore how the feet connect to the ground. Notice how they feel. Root down through 4 corners of each foot – 2 across the ball & 2 across the heel. Shift your weight around these 4 corners until it feels evenly distributed & the foot feels strong, balanced & stable.

Adjust your posture so that bones are well stacked & aligned (legs, hips, pelvis, torso, arms, neck & head, through to crown) & body is lifted & spacious.

Be aware of any tension in your feet. If the toes are gripping/going white, they are tense & the ball of the foot will be slightly lifted/disconnected from the ground, which brings instability. Relax, release & spread the toes, and re-establish a grounded connection through the ball of the foot.

Move slowly & carefully. Quick movements give rise to over-compensatory movements & instability.

When stable on 2 feet, then gently ease the weight of the body into your supporting leg & come onto the toes of the other; pause here to re-establish stability, grounding, alignment & lift through the body.... & then prepare to take your balancing pose ... Vrksasana (Tree) is a simple classic pose to get you going.

Fix your gaze on a still point in front of you & keep the breath smooth & even. If your balance goes & you wobble, come out of the pose, re-prepare & try again ... & again & again

Key pointers:

- Feet - rooted & grounded
- Posture - lifted & spacious
- Movement – slow & steady
- Breath – smooth & even
- Gaze – focussed & still
- Mind calm & relaxed

Enjoy!