SEESAW

For this exercise you will need a small stick, pen or pencil and space around you, as with all balance exercises. You will be using the seesaw method to place the stick or pen on the floor and then pick it up.

Technical points:

Begin by aligning the body – feet hips width apart, outside of the feet pointing forwards, toes slightly inwards, knees soft, tail bone slightly tucked in, ears aligned with the shoulders aligned with the hips aligned with the ankles - elongating the spine and relaxing your shoulders, arms and hands.

Transfer your bodyweight on the right foot. Lift your left foot off the ground. You should now be in The Crane position.

Bend your support leg slightly and ensure the tripod is rooted into the ground. Activate your abdominal muscles and tense the right buttock so the right side of the hip doesn't push out to the side, going out of alignment, and both sides of the hip are levelled. Keep elongating the body and looking forwards while the nose, solar plexus and belly button are connected by a straight line, stacked on top of each other (i.e. do not lean back, forward or to the side).

For this example hold the stick/pen/pencil in your right hand. Keeping the back straight, and chest proud, gently, through a slow, continuous movement, lower your upper body and lift the left leg behind you to counterbalance. When you're as far down as you can, place the stick on the ground as far as you can without losing form or balance. Don't stretch too far out, just place the stick as far as you can.

Leave the stick on the ground and lift your upper body up, while lowering the leg. Come back to The Crane position.

Throughout the movement try to keep your back as straight as possible and both sides of the hips on the same line (do not lift one side of the hip).

Fig 73: Seesaw shows the full movement from the start position The Crane, placing the stick on the ground and returning to The Crane.

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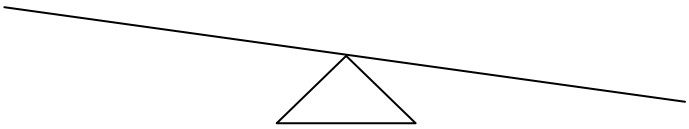
[Fig 73: Seesaw]

Try to keep a straight line at the hip where the trunk meets the thigh (around the hip flexor area), like a seesaw (see Fig 74 and 74a) one side goes down, the other side goes up.



[Fig 74: Seesaw]

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[Fig 74a: Seesaw]

After you return to the start position The Crane, you can change legs or balance on the same leg and, following the same steps and seesaw method, pick up the stick.

Breathe normally throughout the exercise, and relax your shoulders arms and hands when not in use. Remember keep your back straight while activating the abdominal muscles.

Get creative with the hand grips and where you place the stick on the ground. Here are some ideas of what changes to make each time you place the stick on the ground and/or each time you pick it up:

- change hands
- change legs
- face forward but change the angle where you place the stick around you (45 degrees, 70 degrees, 90 degrees, anywhere in between)
- place it down with one hand and pick it up with the other, without changing legs, then changing legs
- place it down with your right/left hand to your right/left side and pick it up with your left/right hand, without changing legs, then changing legs

Come up with your own combinations. Have a look at *Fig 75: Seesaw* to get a visual representations of a couple of variations.

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[Fig 75: Seesaw]

Benefits:

Strengthening feet, ankles, knees and hip stability muscles.

Strengthening quads, adductors and abductors, glutes which in turn stabilise knees and hip.

Improving balance, posture and postural awareness and focus.

Strengthening core muscles and spine stability muscles.

Reducing the risk of injuries such as ankle sprains or knee pain by strengthening and mobilising.

Speeding up recovery from injuries.

Understanding balance and counterbalance which can be useful in situations, such as on slippery surfaces. With practice this becomes a reflex and, when required, the body should react out of instinct and counterbalance.

Common errors and/or weaknesses to be aware of:

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- Hunching upper and lower back before it's needed at the end of the movement when placing the stick on the floor. Straighten the back, tense core muscles and/or lifting the chest proud. See *Fig 76: Seesaw*

- Placing the stick too far awaY and then needing to alter the technique, shift weight on the toes and lose balance to pick it up.

- Back leg not coming up together with the trunk going down. There should be a straight line at the hip, or as close as possible. See *Fig 76: Seesaw*

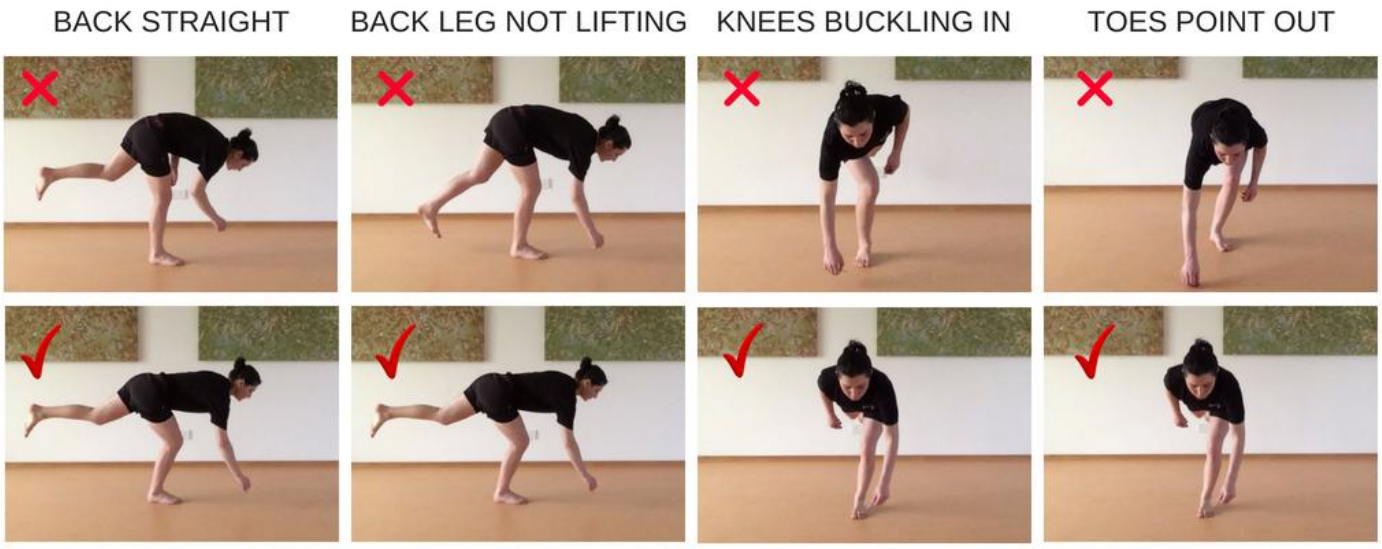
- Transferring body weight on the balls of the feet, tripod not firmly rooted.

- Leaning back, forward or to the side when reaching out with the leg.

- Hip goes out of alignment, pushing towards the outside. In this case the nose–solar plexus–belly button are not on top of each other anymore. Tuck in or tense the buttock on the corresponding side to bring everything back in alignment.

- Support knee buckling in. Knee should track the toes. See *Fig 76: Seesaw*

- Toes on the support foot turn and point outside. This can lead to overpronation of the foot and the knee buckling in, followed by the hip. The outside of the foot should point forward and the toes slightly to the inside. See *Fig 76: Seesaw*



[Fig 76: Seesaw]

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