

# Partner and Small Group Balances

Using partner and small group balances (pyramids) as part of a unit of gymnastics related skills, is fun and enjoyable for students. All students can participate, regardless of their skill. Providing instruction in the basic skills will allow students to create balances based on individual ability.

## **Building a small group balance (pyramid)**

- These activities are taught as part of a gymnastics related skill unit.
- Teamwork should be developed and will be the key to success. Small pyramids are not recommended for children below fourth grade level. Partner and small group balances are one of the fourth and fifth grade CA physical education standards.
- Prime consideration should be given to weight, bearing, and support. The “base” should be heavier and stronger than the top. Weight should be borne on the shoulders over the arms and hips over the knees – not the middle of the back.
- Pyramid building develops balance, strength, timing, precision of movement and teamwork.

## **Teaching the parts of the pyramid**

A group balance is much more than a group of students “stacked” on each other. It includes symmetrical end poses – made of 1-3 students and center poses made from 2 or more students. Begin with teaching individual upright and inverted balance poses. Move to partner balances (see attached sheet). Teach them how to perform and spot each of them – using small groups of 3-4. Then if ready, have students explore balances using 3 or more people – always keeping in mind that they must have proper spotting at all times. Have students explore a variety of poses so they can discover where they are strongest and can contribute to the group. Perhaps they are larger and are stronger making them a great foundation. Perhaps they balance well upside down and can perform head or handstands on the ground or on a partner. Or maybe they’re very flexible and can add to the aesthetic beauty of the group pose. Once the students have had basic instruction let them choose the poses they can perform the best. Then allow them time to create and practice their own unique pyramid. I like including a show unless time is limited. The least that can be done is to take a picture of their final product to have on display for others enjoyment.

## **How to build a pyramid:**

Students line up at the edge of the mat.

Pyramid is formed by count, given verbally, or use of other signal.

Count 1 - Take positions on mat ready to mount.

Count 2 - Bases assume positions.

Count 3 - Tops mount. Individuals move into stunt position.

Count 4 - Hold.

Count 5 - Tops dismount – break position.

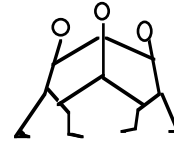
Count 6 - Line up at edge of the mat.

The count may be increased or decreased as needed.

## **Safety**

- Limit balances to two levels.
- Do not allow squash pyramids of any kind.
- Use larger students in bottom positions or spots requiring strength.
- Teach students how to correctly spot each other.
- Teach all parts of a balance before putting elements together.
- Never allow any horseplay or out of hand behavior.

# Group Balance Assignment Sheet



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Group Members names:

1. _____	2. _____	3. _____
4. _____	5. _____	6. _____
7. _____	8. _____	

## Assignment:

Using your own ideas or ideas from Mrs. Wilson's group balance sheets, design a 4 to 8 person balance pose. The pose must have at least 2 end balance poses and a center balance pose. Groups must be able to enter in and out of their pyramid poses safely and smoothly. The group must be able to hold their pose for at least 5 to 10 seconds. Work together as a team and Good Luck!

Here is a picture of our group balance: