

Simple Exercises to Keep Moving—Part 2

By John C. Griffin, MSc.

Functional mobility means being able to do the things we need to do in normal daily life efficiently and without undue fatigue or pain. Good functional mobility is part of a healthy, safe, and active life.

This is our second posting on functional mobility. In each posting, we offer you a screening test that helps you identify problems with functional mobility. Then we show you how to use your findings to design exercises for yourself that will improve your functional mobility. (See previous article Simple Exercises to Keep Moving—Part 1.)

In this test, we will focus on locomotor activities -- how you move, how well you can change directions, and what your balance is like while moving. This is important for things like:

- walking on narrow or uneven surfaces
- quick turning or changes in direction
- walking and looking around

Caution: If you have significant pain or increasing pain with any test or exercise, you should stop and get advice from a health care provider.

How to do the Pivot & Walk Test

1. Mark out a line 1 metre long on the floor with tape.
2. Stand on one end of the line with your back to the line.
3. Place one foot in front of the other.
4. Line up the heel of one foot touching the toe of the other. You can choose which foot to put in front.
5. Keep your arms down at your sides. Keep your head looking forward.
6. Lift your heels to stand on your toes.
7. In one smooth movement, turn halfway around to face the line, with your feet still in toe/heel position.



1–4



5 & 6



7



8

8. Lower your heels and walk heel to toe along the marked line to the end.

How did you do?

Score 2 if you were able to do **all** of these things:

- Turn smoothly.
- Keep your feet on the line after the turn.
- Walk the line staying very straight, with your feet on the line.
- Keep good balance.

Score 1 if you did **any** of these things:

- You had to pause on the turn.
- You were not on the line after you turned.
- You were not able to keep heel to toe (feet not on the line, or toes pointing off the line)
- You lost your balance a bit.

Score 0 if:

- You could not finish the test because you had too much trouble OR
- You had any pain while doing it.

“Fun Walks”:

An exercise to improve your mobility

Now let's focus on an exercise for the mobility needs that you may have if you scored 0 or 1 in the Pivot & Walk Test. This exercise will improve the strength, stability and balance needed for confident or more difficult walking.

How to do “Fun Walks”

- 1) Place a chair in the middle of the floor.
- 2) Walk around the chair on your toes. (You can touch the chair lightly if you need balance support.)
- 3) Next time around, walk on your heels.
- 4) Now change to the outside of your feet.
- 5) Change again and walk around on the inside of your feet.
- 6) Final time around, be a little creative or combine the various foot positions.

About the Author:

John C. Griffin, MSc., was a professor in the Fitness and Lifestyle Management Program at George Brown College in Toronto for 37 years. As a private consultant, speaker, coach, and writer for public and private sector organizations, John has authored more than 60 publications, numerous manuals, and a textbook published by Human Kinetics, Client-Centered Exercise Prescription. John is currently doing research on the functional mobility of adults 50-70 years of age.