

HEEL RAISES AND ROCKING ON A HALF-ROUND

A half-round is a foam column cut in half to create a flat and a round side. Generally these are about 3 feet (1 meter) long. When heel raises are done, the balls of the feet are on the half-round side and the flat side is down. These heel raises are more difficult because greater range of motion is available. When the flat side is up, heel-toe rocking motions are easier. Heel-toe rocking improves ankle flexibility and foot motions for gait. Using a half-round is fun for participants, partly I think, because it is something new. At first they will think, “There’s no way I can do that!” But then they do. This activity requires one-on-one supervision, especially at first.

Benefits »

- ⦿ Strengthens calves while incorporating elements of balance, gait, and flexibility.
- ⦿ Requires balancing on the balls of feet.
- ⦿ Adds something new to heel-toe raises and rocking.

Set It Up »

Eventually you’ll need enough half-rounds for all participants. (Three-foot [1-meter] half-rounds can be cut in half to make two half-rounds.) But to start, you need only the one because you’ll have to supervise participants closely. Class members can take turns.

How to Do It »

The Start

- ⦿ Demonstrate the movements for the class before having them try it.
- ⦿ Place the half-round on the floor, flat side down, beside a handrail or behind a sturdy chair. At least one hand should be in contact with balance support at all times.
- ⦿ Get on the half-round. Stand with legs shoulder-width apart, balls of the feet on the top portion of the half-round. Heels hang off the back.
- ⦿ Cue participants for good posture. Hips and shoulders should be aligned above the ankles (participants will tend to drop their hips backward; cue them to push the hips forward).

The Moves

Use the following cues.

- ⦿ Lift the heels so they’re level with the top of the half-round.
- ⦿ Lift the heels a little higher so they’re above the half-round.
- ⦿ Try to balance and hold the position a moment.
- ⦿ Slowly lower the heels below the level of the half-round so that the heels almost touch the ground and you feel your calves stretching.



- ⦿ Are your hips still aligned directly over your ankles? Or did you bend at the hip? Make the needed correction.
- ⦿ Lift and lower the heels for 6 repetitions and then build to doing 12 repetitions, as tolerated.

Take It Further »

- ⦿ Increase repetitions until 15 can be done successively.
- ⦿ Hold the up or the down position longer.

Give It More Balance »

Have participants do heel-toe rocking on the half-round.

- ⦿ Turn the half-round over so the flat side is up.
- ⦿ Carefully help participants get on the half-round.
- ⦿ Once they are on, cue them for tall posture. No bending at hips, please.
- ⦿ Commence heel-toe rocking. Drop the heels back and feel that stretch; press the toes forward and down for a heel raise.
- ⦿ Repeat 6 to 15 times, as tolerated.
- ⦿ Remind them to keep their hips over their ankles throughout.



Keep It Safe »

Do these only with your personal supervision at first. Let participants decide for themselves if they want to try this one. Always provide a handrail or the back of a sturdy chair for balance support. If your chair backs are too short for a good support, or if you have tall participants, you can stack two chairs together; just be sure the chairs remain stable.