

## New Ballard Score

| Item                  | Options                            | Points |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|--------|
| Posture               | Extended: Arms and legs straight   | 0      |
|                       | Slight leg flexion: Arms extended  | 1      |
|                       | More leg flexion: Arms extended    | 2      |
|                       | Frog-leg: Hips flexed, abducted    | 3      |
|                       | Fully flexed: Arms and legs flexed | 4      |
| Square window (wrist) | Over 90°: Wrist barely bends       | -1     |
|                       | 90°: Palm at a right angle         | 0      |
|                       | 60°: Moderate wrist flexion        | 1      |
|                       | 45°: Good wrist flexion            | 2      |
|                       | 30°: Marked wrist flexion          | 3      |
|                       | 0°: Palm flat on the forearm       | 4      |
| Arm recoil            | 180°: No recoil, arm stays out     | 0      |
|                       | 140-180°: Minimal recoil           | 1      |
|                       | 110-140°: Slight recoil            | 2      |
|                       | 90-110°: Moderate recoil           | 3      |
|                       | Under 90°: Brisk, fist to face     | 4      |
| Popliteal angle       | 180°: Leg extends fully            | -1     |
|                       | 160°: Very little resistance       | 0      |
|                       | 140°: Slight resistance            | 1      |
|                       | 120°: Moderate resistance          | 2      |
|                       | 100°: Good resistance              | 3      |
|                       | 90°: Right angle at the knee       | 4      |
|                       | Under 90°: Knee stays tight        | 5      |
| Scarf sign            | Full scarf: Arm wraps the neck     | -1     |
|                       | Opposite axillary line             | 0      |
|                       | Opposite nipple line               | 1      |
|                       | Xiphoid: Elbow at midline          | 2      |
|                       | Same-side nipple line              | 3      |
|                       | Same-side axillary line            | 4      |
| Heel to ear           | Ear: Heel reaches the ear          | -1     |
|                       | Nose: Resistance near the nose     | 0      |
|                       | Chin: Resistance at chin level     | 1      |
|                       | Nipple line: Resistance there      | 2      |
|                       | Umbilicus: Resistance there        | 3      |
|                       | Femoral crease: Stops early        | 4      |
| Skin                  | Sticky: Friable, transparent       | -1     |

| Item                             | Options                                 | Points |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------|
|                                  | Gelatinous: Red, translucent            | 0      |
|                                  | Smooth pink: Visible veins              | 1      |
|                                  | Superficial peeling: Or rash, few veins | 2      |
|                                  | Cracking: Pale areas, rare veins        | 3      |
|                                  | Parchment: Deep cracking, no vessels    | 4      |
|                                  | Leathery: Cracked, wrinkled             | 5      |
| <b>Lanugo</b>                    | None: No lanugo yet                     | -1     |
|                                  | Sparse: Scattered fine hair             | 0      |
|                                  | Abundant: Covers the back               | 1      |
|                                  | Thinning: Less dense                    | 2      |
|                                  | Bald areas: Patches with none           | 3      |
|                                  | Mostly bald: Little remains             | 4      |
| <b>Plantar surface</b>           | Heel-toe under 40 mm                    | -2     |
|                                  | Heel-toe 40-50 mm                       | -1     |
|                                  | Over 50 mm: no crease                   | 0      |
|                                  | Faint red marks                         | 1      |
|                                  | Anterior crease: transverse only        | 2      |
|                                  | Creases: front two-thirds               | 3      |
|                                  | Creases: over entire sole               | 4      |
| <b>Breast</b>                    | Imperceptible: Nothing seen             | -1     |
|                                  | Barely perceptible                      | 0      |
|                                  | Flat areola: No bud                     | 1      |
|                                  | Stippled areola: 1-2 mm bud             | 2      |
|                                  | Raised areola: 3-4 mm bud               | 3      |
|                                  | Full areola: 5-10 mm bud                | 4      |
| <b>Eye / Ear</b>                 | Lids fused tightly                      | -2     |
|                                  | Lids fused loosely                      | -1     |
|                                  | Lids open: Flat pinna, stays folded     | 0      |
|                                  | Slightly curved: Soft, slow recoil      | 1      |
|                                  | Well curved: Soft, ready recoil         | 2      |
|                                  | Formed, firm: Instant recoil            | 3      |
|                                  | Thick cartilage: Ear stiff              | 4      |
| <b>Genitals (male or female)</b> | Male, flat scrotum: smooth              | -1     |
|                                  | Male, empty scrotum: faint rugae        | 0      |
|                                  | Male, testes in upper canal: rare rugae | 1      |
|                                  | Male, testes descending: few rugae      | 2      |
|                                  | Male, testes down: good rugae           | 3      |

| Item | Options                                        | Points |
|------|------------------------------------------------|--------|
|      | Male, testes pendulous: deep rugae             | 4      |
|      | Female, prominent clitoris: labia flat         | -1     |
|      | Female, prominent clitoris: small labia minora | 0      |
|      | Female, prominent clitoris: enlarging minora   | 1      |
|      | Female, majora = minora: equally prominent     | 2      |
|      | Female, majora large: minora small             | 3      |
|      | Female, majora cover: clitoris and minora      | 4      |

## Interpretation

|                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>-12 to 9</b> | <b>Extremely preterm (under 28 wk).</b> Score -10 to 9 matches about 20 to 27 weeks; scores below -10 fall under the table (20 weeks or less). The baby needs NICU-level care; compare with obstetric dating and report to the neonatal provider. |
| <b>10-19</b>    | <b>Very preterm (28-31 wk).</b> Score 10-19 matches about 28 to 31 weeks. Expect NICU care; plot growth on a preterm chart and follow unit protocols for thermoregulation and feeding.                                                            |
| <b>20-32</b>    | <b>Moderate to late preterm (32-36 wk).</b> Score 20-32 matches about 32 to 36 weeks. Watch closely for temperature instability, hypoglycemia, feeding problems and jaundice per protocol.                                                        |
| <b>33-44</b>    | <b>Term (37-41 wk).</b> Score 33-44 matches about 37 to 41 weeks. Provide routine newborn care and still plot weight to screen for small or large for gestational age.                                                                            |
| <b>45-50</b>    | <b>Post-term (42 wk or more).</b> Score 45-50 matches 42 to 44 weeks. Watch for dry peeling skin, meconium exposure, hypoglycemia and poor growth, and report to the provider.                                                                    |

Total score: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Assessed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Jeanne L. Ballard and colleagues, 1991 (original Ballard score, 1979). Sources: The New Ballard Score - official score sheet (ballardscore.com); Ballard Score FAQ: calculation, timing, missing items; Ballard JL et al. New Ballard Score, expanded to include extremely premature infants. J Pediatr 1991; WHO: Preterm birth fact sheet (preterm categories); ACOG Committee Opinion 579: Definition of Term Pregnancy.

Free calculator and full guide: [nursingscales.com/ballard-score/](https://nursingscales.com/ballard-score/) · Educational material; does not replace clinical judgment or facility protocols.