

# I ball surfed on TikTok and got recruited to perform in Dubai. Here's the story.

This is the story about how rolling across 10 exercise balls kind of changed my life. It's totally bonkers, so hang tight.

## **It all started with a bet.**

Naturally, I was thinking about TikTok during the middle of practice, and I asked someone how long it would take me to go from 18.9K followers to 20K. I warned I was going to use her answer as a challenge. She said, *by Friday*. Hah. Natalie, you're funny.

The only way to gain over 1,000 followers in 4 days was to go viral. To go viral, I thought I'd pull out an old trick I've been doing since elementary school - ball surfing. I'd never done it across more than 5 balls before, but I'd been waiting for an excuse to give it a go.

## **#Workout Fun**

I herded 10 green exercise balls out of the storage closet like sheep, and I spent 10 minutes meticulously lining them up on the vault runway. I summoned videographers. My teammates raised their eyebrows.

My heart bounced with excitement as I ran full speed toward the balls. It took me two tries to get a seamless run all the way across - complete hollers from my teammates. I did one more run for good measure and called it a day. I told my friends, "watch this be at 100K by tomorrow."

Long story short - my expectations were shattered.

[https://www.tiktok.com/@leahclapper/video/7020528528244428037?is\\_from\\_webapp=1&sender\\_device=pc&web\\_id7067556793576949253](https://www.tiktok.com/@leahclapper/video/7020528528244428037?is_from_webapp=1&sender_device=pc&web_id7067556793576949253)

Two hours later, the video was up. I scooped roasted sweet potatoes into my mouth as I refreshed my feed between bites. I watched the view count jump *up up up* by THOUSANDS. Every 10 seconds. Whattttttt.

My heart rate also started rising. This virality thing made my brain go to scribbles. I was excited and restless and flabbergasted.

## **Cue Insanity.**

I woke up the next morning with over a million views. I had already won the bet and surpassed 20K followers. The number of messages I started receiving was absolutely ridiculous.

I walked out of the gym that day with Instagram DMs from ESPN, NBC Sports, House of Highlights, and at least 10 other popular media outlets asking to repost my video with credit. I was astonished. I was going to be on ESPN's page for *rolling across exercise balls*. Hey, I'm not complaining!

My favorite repost came from Jennifer Garner (yes, the famous actress). She even responded to my DM thanking her, which is now my claim to fame.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CV6oFsYJlf5/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CV6oFsYJlf5/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

### SCREENSHOT OF MESSAGE

Then, the licensing deals started rolling in. I didn't even understand how the video licensing process worked, but I figured it would be a good chance to learn something!

After doing some research and running the contracts by an attorney, I ended up signing three non-exclusive licensing deals and forgetting about the rest. Surprisingly, I have actually made about \$500 from this (so far).

I've completely lost track of all the reposts, but hundreds of millions of people have seen me roll across exercise balls. What really blows my mind? The cumulative watch time for the OG ball surfing video is over 30,000 hours just on my personal TikTok. That equals 3.4 YEARS.

I don't fully understand what everyone loves so much about the balls, but here's **why I think the videos went viral...**

1. **It's hard not to watch the whole thing** - Staying to the end is satisfying. Who doesn't want to find out if I make it all the way across? Higher watch time = better performance in the algorithm
2. **It looks fun** - The trick is unique and semi-impressive, but normal people feel like they could do it (or not). Either way, the video is just asking for comments and shares.

### SCREENSHOTS OF COMMENTS...

I thought I'd take advantage of this wacky opportunity and have some fun along the way, so I started making more videos with exercise balls. Unsurprisingly, they too went viral. I especially enjoyed replying to comments with new videos - a surefire way to please my audience and keep the momentum going!

[https://www.tiktok.com/@leahclapper/video/7038310935081258286?is\\_from\\_webapp=1&sender\\_device=pc&web\\_id7067556793576949253](https://www.tiktok.com/@leahclapper/video/7038310935081258286?is_from_webapp=1&sender_device=pc&web_id7067556793576949253)

## **Ball Surfing Benefit Recap**

Since the first video, I've gained over 50K followers on TikTok and several thousand on Instagram, allowing me to make more money and a larger positive impact through brand collaborations. It certainly helped out with launching my gymnastics board game too :)

I've been featured on social media by ESPN, NBC Sports, Jennifer Garner, House of Highlights, and more. Those are just the tip of the iceberg. The video even made an appearance on CBS's #AtHome Videos television program.

The mind-blowing effects haven't stopped. In mid-February, I even got an invite to perform the ball surfing act in Dubai! Travel expenses covered. That one really took it to a whole new level.

## **Just WOW**

I'm the ball gymnastics girl now, and I don't mind one bit. I guess all that practicing in my basement at age 8 paid off!

I'm happy to have made a *lot* of people smile through these videos. Plus, I've gained a larger platform to share a message of playfulness in sport along the way.

I'm here to confirm that one TikTok can change your life, and it might not be the one you expect!