



## Getting Started with Yoga

There are many styles of teaching yoga. Classes in Yoga generally fall into three categories: strengthening poses, breathing, and flexibility. It's important to pay attention to how each yoga pose affects the body and mind. When working with a yoga teacher, the most important quality of a good instructor is one who takes the time during class to give individual instruction on proper technique and form. An instructor who takes their time to make sure you're performing your exercises right, will make a key difference in getting you the results you seek in your practice. An instructor can help by adjusting your body when you practice each pose. With the right guidance, you will start learning what it feels like to be in proper alignment.

Once you begin taking a class, you can use this poster to help you remember the poses for your home practice. When practicing yoga, have patience. It can take years of daily practice to become proficient in some yoga poses. If you practice regularly, patiently, and diligently, you will begin to feel the true benefits of yoga. Remember not to force your body into any pose, or make any movements that cause you pain. If you have a lot of difficulty achieving a certain pose, you can use the block and straps provided in the Yoga Kit to help get you into position.

As you progress you will slowly become less dependent on the props, and perform your poses properly with more ease. Remember to always wear comfortable clothing while practicing yoga, you can take off your socks and shoes, and practice yoga in a quiet, warm place.

### Seated & Kneeling Poses

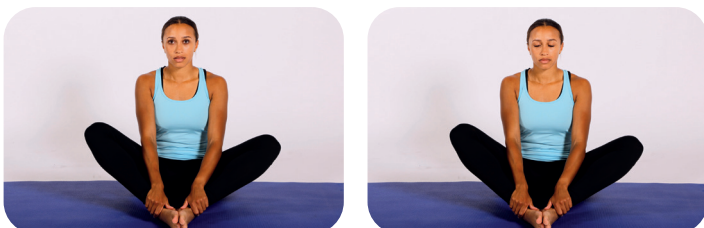
#### Easy Pose (Sukhasana)

**Benefits:** Easy pose is a comfortable seated position for meditation. This pose opens the hips, lengthens the spine and promotes groundedness and inner calm.

- Come into a seated position with the buttocks on the floor, then cross the legs, placing the feet directly below the knees. Rest the hands on the knees or the lap with the palms facing up or down.
- Press the hip bones down into the floor and reach the crown of the head up to lengthen the spine. Drop the shoulders down and back, and press the chest towards the front of the room.
- Relax the face, jaw, and belly. Let the tongue rest on the roof of the mouth, just behind the front teeth.
- Breathe deeply through the nose down into the belly. Hold as long as comfortable.



#### Bound Angle (Baddha Konasana)



**Benefits:** Bound angle opens the hips and chest, lengthens the spine and stimulates the reproductive, nervous and respiratory systems.

- From a seated position, bring the bottoms of the feet together with the knees bent out to the sides, and interlace the fingers around the toes.
- Inhale and press the hips down and reach the crown of the head up towards the ceiling. Drop the shoulders down and back and press the chest towards the front. Press the knees down towards the floor to open the hips.
- Keeping the back flat and the chest open, exhale and gently pull your torso forward. Close the eyes and stare up at the third eye / sixth chakra.
- Breathe and hold for 3-8 breaths.

#### Seated Head to Knee (Janu Sirsasana)

**Benefits:** Seated head to knee stretches the back and deeply stretches the back of the legs. This posture calms the mind and emotions, stimulates the nervous, reproductive, endocrine and urinary systems.

- Seated in Bound Angle or Easy pose, extend the right leg straight out in front of you, place the bottom of the left foot against the right thigh. Pull the right leg in to square the hips to the front wall.
- Inhale the arms up and reach out of the waist lengthening the spine.
- Keep the length as you exhale forward, bending the right knee enough to interlace the fingers around the foot and to place the head against the knee.
- Work the posture by pressing the head down into the knee, sliding the right heel away from you, lengthening the right leg.
- Keep the head pressed to the knee while straightening the leg as much as you can. For a deeper stretch in the leg, press the heel away and pull the toes towards your head.
- Relax the shoulders, neck and face. Make sure the shoulders are parallel to the floor. Use the arms only enough to keep the head in contact with the knee.
- Breathe and hold for 3-6 breaths.
- To release: inhale the arms up over your head, exhale them to the floor. Repeat on the other side.



#### Half Circle (Ardha Mandalasana)

**Benefits:** Half Circle pose opens and stretches the whole side of the body from foot to fingers. Half circle also opens the chest and the hips and stimulates the respiratory and nervous systems.

- From a kneeling position, with the knees hip width apart, step the right leg straight out to the side with the foot flat on the floor, toes facing forward.
- Carefully lower the left hand to the floor, directly under the shoulder. Inhale the right arm up and over the head with the palm facing the floor.
- Press the hips forward, arch the spine back, and let the head drop back.
- Press the left foot into the floor and reach out through the left fingers, making a half circle shape with the left side of your body.
- Breathe and hold for 3-8 breaths.
- To release: inhale the arms up parallel to the floor, then exhale the hands to the hips and step the foot back into a kneeling position.
- Repeat on the other side.



#### Cat (Marjariasana)

**Benefits:** Cat pose flattens the stomach. Massages the muscles of the back, improving spinal flexibility and relieving lower back tension.

- Come onto your fours. Form a table such that your back forms the table top and your hands and feet form the legs of the table.
- Keep your arms perpendicular to the floor, with the hands directly under the shoulders and flat on the ground; your knees are hip-width apart.
- Look straight ahead.
- As you inhale, raise your chin and tilt your head back, push your navel downwards and raise your tailbone. Compress your buttocks. Do you feel a slight tingle here?
- Hold the Cat pose and take long, deep breaths.
- Follow this by a countermovement: As you exhale, drop your chin to your chest and arch your back up as much as you can; relax the buttocks.
- Hold this pose for a few seconds before you return to the initial table-like stage.
- Continue five or six rounds before you come out of this yoga posture.



#### Downward Facing Dog (Adho Mukha Svanasana)

**Benefits:** Downward facing dog deeply stretches the back, opens the chest, and builds upper body strength. This posture stimulates the brain and nervous system, improving memory, concentration, hearing and eyesight.

- From Table position, tuck the toes under, press into the hands and begin to lift the hips up towards the ceiling.
- Spread the fingers wide apart with the middle finger facing forward, and the palms shoulder width apart. Press the out through the fingers and edges of the hands.
- Using straight (but not locked) arms, press the hips up and back reaching the chest towards the thighs. Lift up through the tailbone to keep the spine straight and long.
- Have the feet are hip's width apart with the toes facing forward.
- Press the heels into the floor feeling a stretch in the back of the legs. The legs are straight, or you can have a small bend at the knees to keep the back flat.



- Let the head and neck hang freely from the shoulders or look up at the belly button.
- Breathe and hold for 4-8 breaths.
- To release: bend the knees and lower the hips back to Table position, or come all the way down to child pose.

### Standing Poses

#### Mountain (Tadasana)

**Benefits:** Mountain pose is the foundation for all of the standing postures and improves posture, groundedness, stability and confidence.

- From a standing position, bring the feet together or hip width apart, parallel. Lift up the toes, spread them wide and place them back on the floor. Feel your weight evenly balanced through the bottom of each foot, not leaning forward or back.
- Pull up the knee caps, squeeze the thighs and tuck the tailbone slightly under. Feel the hips aligned directly over the ankles. The legs are straight, but the knees are not locked back.
- Inhale and lift out of the waist, pressing the crown of the head up towards the ceiling, feeling the spine long and straight.
- Exhale and drop the shoulders down and back as you reach the fingertips towards the floor. Gently press the chest / sternum towards the front of the room.
- Continuing to reach out through the fingers, inhale the arms up, turning the palms shoulder height, bringing the arms into a H position.
- Exhale relax the shoulders down from the ears while still reaching the crown and fingers up.
- Breathe and hold for 4-8 breaths.

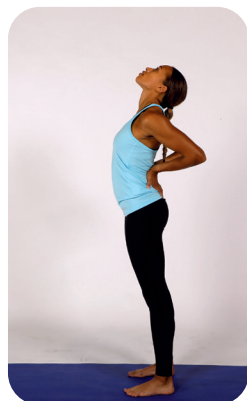


To release: exhale the arms down to your sides or bring the palms together in front of your chest.

#### Standing Backbend (Anuvittasana)

**Benefits:** Standing Backbend opens the front of the body, and strengthens the respiratory, cardiovascular and endocrine systems.

- From Mountain pose, place the palms on the low back/sacrum with the fingers pointed down. Press into the feet, pull up the knee caps, and squeeze the thighs and buttocks.
- Press the hips forward and begin to arch the torso backwards. Keep the head looking forward, or if it feels safe let it drop all the way back. Use the arms to support your weight and keep the legs and buttocks engaged and strong.
- Breathe and hold 3-7 breaths.
- To release: keep the legs, buttocks and arms strong as you slowly inhale back up, letting the head and neck be the last to come vertical.



#### Five-Pointed Star

**Benefits:** Five pointed star lengthens, opens and energizes the whole body. This posture also realigns the spinal column and opens the chest, improving circulation and respiration.

- From Mountain pose, step the feet wide apart, with the arms out to the side. The feet should be under the wrists, facing forward and parallel.
- Press your weight into the feet, pull up the knee caps and squeeze the thighs, tuck the tailbone, and feel the legs strong and solid, rooted into the floor.
- Reach out through the fingertips, trying to touch the side walls. Relax the shoulders down and back, gently opening the chest towards the front of the room.
- Inhale and press the crown of the head up towards the ceiling. Look straight ahead with the chin parallel to the floor.
- Inhale deeply into the belly and chest, exhale, press into the feet, fingers and crown, feeling your body expanding out in 5 directions.
- Keep breathing and hold for 4-8 breaths.
- To release, bend one knee and step back into Mountain pose.



#### Warrior II (Virabhadrasana)

**Benefits:** Warrior II strengthens the legs, opens the hips and chest. Warrior II develops concentration, balance and groundedness. This pose improves circulation and respiration and energizes the entire body.

- From Five Pointed Star, turn the right toes to the right wall and bend the right knee directly over the right ankle.
- Turn the hips and the shoulders towards the front and reach out through the finger tips, reaching towards the side walls. Turn and look at the right middle finger.
- Press into the feet, keeping the legs strong. Sink the hips down towards the floor, and reach the crown of the head up to lengthen the spine. Relax the shoulders down and back, pressing the chest forward.
- Breathe and hold for 3-6 breaths.
- To release: straighten the legs and turn the feet forward coming back into 5 pointed star.



#### Triangle (Trikonasana)

**Benefits:** Triangle pose engages every part of the body, strengthens the core, opens the hips and shoulders and stretches the legs.

- From a standing position with the legs 3 feet apart as in Five Pointed Star, turn the right toes to the right wall and the left toes slightly inwards. Inhale and press the left hips out to the left as you slide both arms to the right parallel to the floor.
- Exhale and rotate only the arms, raising the left arm up and resting the right hand against the right leg, with the palms facing forward.
- Press into the feet, pull up the knee caps, keeping the legs strong. Reach the finger tips away from each other, bringing the arms into one straight line with the shoulders stacked on top of each other. Press the left hip forward and the right hip back.
- Breathe and hold for 3-6 breaths.
- To release: inhale and reach the raised hand up towards the ceiling as you press down into the feet using the whole body to lift back into 5 pointed star.
- Repeat on the other side.



#### Standing Yoga Mudra (Dandayama Yoga Mudra)

**Benefits:** Standing Yoga Seal improves mental functions, harmonizes the connection between the heart and mind, opens the shoulders, stretches the upper back and legs.

- From Mountain pose, step the legs 3-4 feet apart into Five Pointed Star. Inhale the arms behind you and interlace the fingers together. Draw the shoulder blades towards each other and lift the chest and gaze up towards the ceiling.
- Exhale and hinge at the hips coming forward with the chest, reaching the arms up and forward. Let the head hang relaxed from the neck.
- Keep the arms and legs straight. If you feel the weight back in the heels try and shift your weight forward slightly.
- Breathe and hold for 4-8 breaths.
- To release: keep the shoulder blades squeezed together as you inhale back up, taking a deep breath into the belly and chest. Exhale release the arms.



#### High Lunge (Utthita Ashwa Sanchalanasana)

**Benefits:** High lunge opens the hips and chest, stretches the groin and legs, lengthens the spine and strengthens the lower body.

- On your hands and knees in Table pose, step the right foot forward between the two hands, with the knee directly over the ankle. Tuck the back toes under and straighten the back leg.
- Press the palms, fingers or fists into the floor to lift the crown of the head up towards the ceiling. Roll the shoulders down and back and press the chest forward. Look straight ahead with the chin parallel to the floor.
- Extend the back leg by pressing the heel towards the floor and by pressing the back of the knee up towards the ceiling. Relax the hips and let them sink down towards the floor.
- Breathe and hold for 2-6 breaths.
- To release: Lower the left knee down and slide the right knee back into Table, or step the right foot back into Downward Facing Dog.
- Repeat on the other side.



#### Rocket Ship (Supta Baddha Konasana)

**Benefits:** Rocket ship stimulates abdominal organs and the heart, and improves general circulation. It also stretches the inner thighs, groins, and knee, and helps relieve the symptoms of stress.

- Gently opens the hips and shoulders.
- Start by lying on your back.
- With your knees bent to the sides slowly bring the bottom of your feet together. Inhale.
- Slide your arms along the surface to a position above your head.
- Bring the palms of your hands together interlinking your thumbs.
- Inhale and hold for 5-10 seconds, then exhale.
- Exhale then gently relax your arms and legs.



### Lying Down Poses (Supine & Prone)

#### Half Wind Relieving (Ardha Pavana Muktasana)

**Benefits:** Half Wind Relieving pose improves digestion and elimination as well as stretching the low back and lengthening the spine.

- Lying on your back, inhale and bring the right knee towards the chest. Interlace the fingers and inch or two below the kneecap.
- Tuck the chin into the chest with the head on the floor. Gently pull the knee into the chest using the arms, avoiding the ribcage.
- Press the shoulders and the back of the neck down into the floor, keep the elbows close to the sides of the body. Relax the legs, feet and hips.
- Breathe and hold for 4-8 breaths, breathing deeply into the belly, actively pressing it against the thighs on the inhalation.
- To release: exhale and release the arms and leg to the floor.
- Repeat on the other side.



#### Knee Down Twist (Supta Matsyendrasana)

**Benefits:** Knee down twist stretches the back muscles, realigns and lengthens the spine, and hydrates the spinal disks.

- Lying on your back, bring your arms out to the sides with the palms facing down in a T position. Bend the right knee and place the right foot on the left knee.
- Exhale drop the right knee over to the left side of your body, twisting the spine and low back. Look at the right finger tips.
- Keep the shoulders flat to the floor, close the eyes, and relax into the posture. Let gravity pull the knee down, so you do not have to use any effort in this posture.
- Breathe and hold for 6-10 breaths.
- To release: inhale and roll the hips back to the floor, and exhale the leg back down to the floor.
- Repeat on the other side.



#### Hand to Toe (Hasta Padangusthasana)

**Benefits:** Hand to toe stretches the hamstrings and calves, the groin, inner thighs and lower spine, as well as the abdominals and adductors as you bring the leg back to centre.

- Lie on your back, legs extended, feet flexed pressing out through the heels.
- On an exhalation draw the right knee into your chest, loop a strap around the arch of the right foot, or hook your first two fingers around your big toe.
- Extend the right leg up to the ceiling. Straighten your arms but keep both your shoulders on the mat.
- Keep your left leg engaged and press the top of your left thigh down with your hand. Extend through the right heel creating a comfortable stretch in your hamstrings.
- Stay for 5 breaths, then open your right leg out bringing it towards the floor on your right side. Keep the left hip grounded.
- Stay for 5 more breaths.
- Bring your leg back to centre and then lower it back to the mat.
- Repeat on the other side.



#### Forearm Plank (Phalakasana)

**Benefits:** Forearm plank strengthens the whole body, while toning the abs, shoulders, arms, chest and legs. It focuses the mind, and is a great "wrist-free" alternative to the plank pose.

- Begin in Plank pose and lower onto your forearms, one arm at a time. Place your palms down or clasp your hands.
- Firm your shoulder blades into your back and push your heels back.
- Draw in your lower belly and engage your thighs
- Keep the neck in line with the spine looking to the floor slightly ahead of you.
- Stay in this pose anywhere from 30 seconds to a couple of minutes.
- To come out, rest your knees on the floor.



#### Balancing Table (Dandayama bharmanasana)

**Benefits:** Balancing Table pose improves balance, memory, focus and coordination. This posture builds core body strength and lengthens the spine.

- On your hands and knees in Table pose, inhale the right leg up parallel to the floor, reaching the toes towards the back wall.
- Starring at a point between the palms, slowly inhale the left arm up parallel to the floor, reaching the fingers towards the front wall.
- Breathe and hold for 3-6 breaths.
- To release: slowly exhale the left arm down, and then lower the knee down, back into table position.
- Repeat on the other side.



#### Relaxation Posture/Corpse Pose (Savasana)

**Benefits:** Corpse pose is essential to practice at the end of every yoga practice. This posture rejuvenates the body, mind and spirit while reducing stress and tension.

- Lying on your back, let the arms and legs drop open, with the arms about 45 degrees from the side of your body. Make sure you are warm and comfortable, if you need to place blankets under or over your body.
- Close the eyes, and take slow deep breaths through the nose.
- Allow your whole body to become soft and heavy, letting it relax into the floor. As the body relaxes, feel the whole body rising and falling with each breath.
- Scan the body from the toes to the fingers to the crown of the head, looking for tension, tightness and contracted muscles. Consciously release and relax any areas that you find. If you need to, rock or wiggle parts of your body from side to side to encourage further release.
- Release all control of the breath, the mind, and the body. Let your body move deeper and deeper into a state of total relaxation.
- Stay in Shavasana for 5 to 15 minutes.
- To release: slowly deepen the breath, wiggle the fingers and toes, reach the arms over your head and stretch the whole body, exhale, bend the knees into the chest and roll over to one side coming into a fetal position. When you are ready, slowly inhale up to a seated position.

