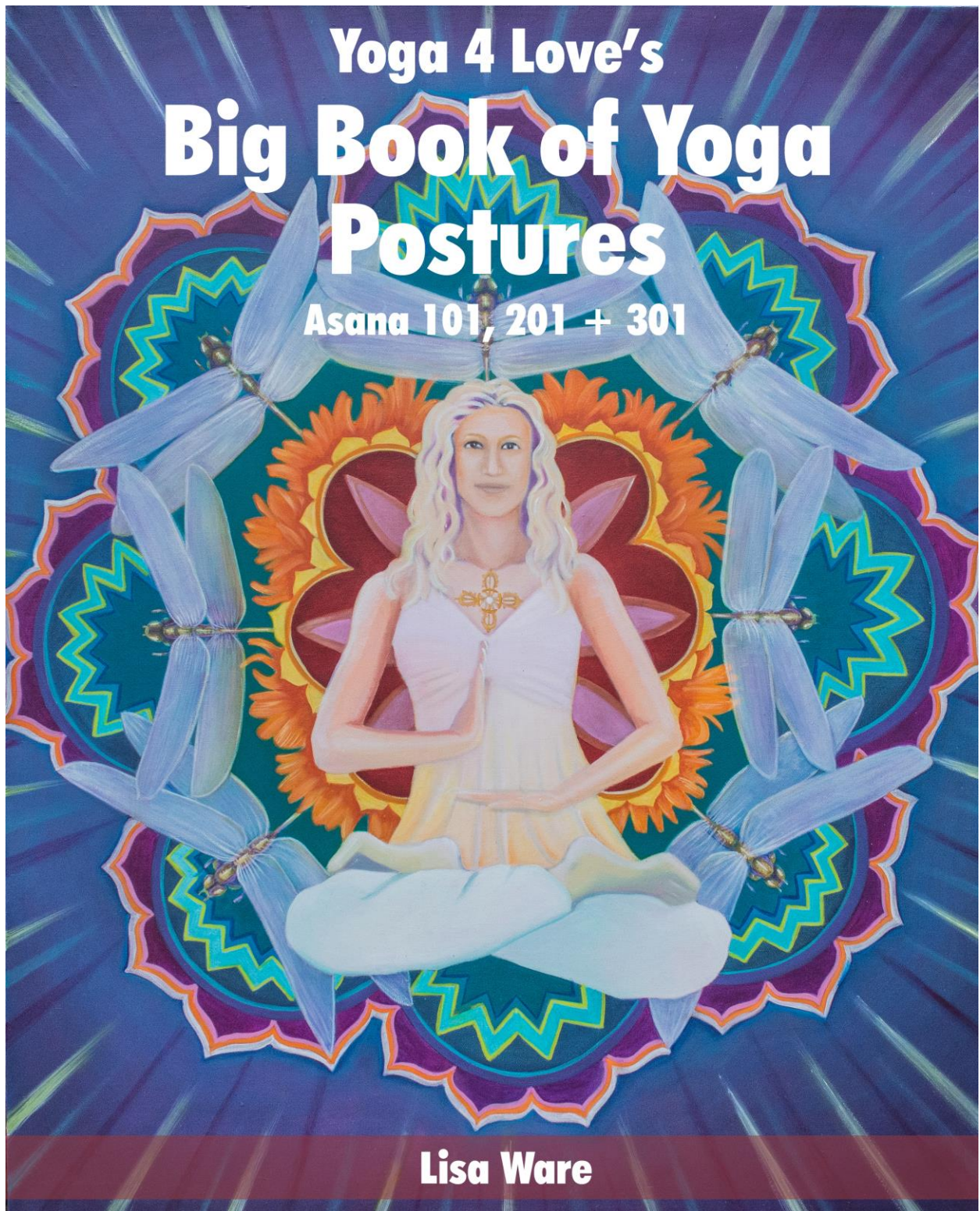


# Yoga 4 Love's **Big Book of Yoga Postures**

Asana 101, 201 + 301



by Lisa Ware, E-RYT 500

## About the Author



**Meet Lisa Ware:** Lisa is an author, life, business & health coach, Shamanic Practitioner and Reiki Master Teacher. Lisa is Executive Director of Yoga 4 Love Advanced Training Programs Online 200 & 300 Hour Certifications. She has taught over 8,000 hours of hatha and vinyasa yoga.

In 2008 she founded Yoga4Love.com in honor of her mom's positivity and inspiration. Lisa specializes in the teachings of Krishnamacharya. Intuitive Vinyasa Flow, which was named her teaching style, was downloaded directly from Spirit. She is a seasoned yoga conference presenter, lecturer and offers yoga retreats in Texas and Hawaii.

Lisa's "why", her passion and purpose, is to influence people who desire to expand their horizons and inspire positive change so that together we can live a lifestyle of joy, adventure and magic with true freedom of time and finances.

Lisa is an ocean lover and a nature girl at heart. She is originally from Colorado and is a true tree hugger who cares about bringing a higher vibration to our planet. Lisa is greatly motivated by the role model of her mother's positivity through breast cancer. She loves facilitating a space for healing, transformation and connection to Divine Source through her personal daily practices.

Lisa is a mom of two. Her son is active duty NAVY working in Nuclear Engineering; her daughter is a fun-loving athlete. She is a happily married wife to Richard since 1992. Richard also teaches vinyasa yoga, acro and tree yoga. Lisa's life work is to leave a legacy for her family, to impact the globe with wellness and yoga and bring forth tools to help positively transform and ultimately empower the lives of others.

Lisa loves reading Angel Cards, streaming live video classes for her YouTube channel 'Lisa Ware Yoga 4 Love', and writing. Check out her first book, *Yoga 4 Love, Tools for Mind, Body, and Spirit: For a Holistic Lifestyle* (2018).

Connect with Lisa on Instagram, SnapChat, Tumblr, Pintrest or at [www.yoga4love.com](http://www.yoga4love.com)  
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## Hatha and Vinyasa | Asana 101

### Asana 101 Standing Asanas



**Samastitihi**

# Mountain | Tadasana



(tah-DAHS-anna)

tada = mountain

## Benefits:

- Improves posture
- Strengthens thighs, knees, and ankles
- Firms abdomen and buttocks
- Relieves sciatica
- Reduces flat feet

## Contraindications and Cautions:

- Headache
- Insomnia
- Low blood pressure

Variations: You can alter the position of your arms in a variety of ways. For example:

- Stretching the arms upward, perpendicular to the floor and parallel with each other, with the palms facing inward;
- Interlace the fingers, extend the arms straight in front of your torso, turn the palms away, then stretch the arms upward, perpendicular to the floor, so the palms face the ceiling;
- Cross the arms behind your back, holding each elbow with the opposite-side hand (be sure to reverse the cross of the forearms and repeat for an equal length of time).

## Preparatory Poses:

- Adho Mukha Svanasana • Uttanasana

## Forward Fold | Uttanasana



Uttanasana (OOH-ta-da-SA-nah)

### Benefits:

- Calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild depression
- Stimulates the liver and kidneys
- Stretches the hamstrings, calves, and hips
- Strengthens the thighs and knees
- Improves digestion
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause
- Reduces fatigue and anxiety
- Relieves headache and insomnia
- Therapeutic for asthma, high blood pressure, infertility, osteoporosis, and sinusitis

**Contraindications and Cautions:** Back injury: Do this pose with bent knees, or perform Ardha Uttanasana (pronounced ARE-dah, ardha= half), with your hands on the wall, legs perpendicular to your torso, and arms parallel to the floor. Create an L-Shape with hands on thighs.

### Preparatory Poses:

- Adho Mukha Svanasana •Janu Sirsasana
- Paschimottanasana •Supta Padangusthasana

# Pyramid | Parsvottanasana | Intense Side Stretch Pose



(parsh-voh-tahn-AHS-anna)

parsva = side, flank

ut = intense

tan = to stretch or extend (compare the Latin verb tendere, "to stretch or extend")

## Benefits:

- Calms the brain
- Stretches the spine, shoulders and wrists (in the full pose), hips, and hamstrings
- Strengthens the legs
- Stimulates the abdominal organs
- Improves posture and sense of balance
- Improves digestion

## Variations:

The full version of this pose is performed with the hands behind the back in Anjali Mudra, a hand position sometimes called Pristanjali Mudra (prish-TOHN-jolly; prishta = "the back, the rear of anything"), or sometimes Paschima Namaskar (posh-EE-mah nam-AHS-car; paschima = "west"; namaskar = "to greet or salute").

Stand in Tadasana with the hands in Anjali Mudra in front of the heart. Bend your knees slightly and round your back, hunching your shoulders. Exhale, inwardly rotate your arms and sweep them around behind your back. Press the palms together with the thumbs resting on your sacrum, so the fingers point toward the floor. First, turn the wrists so the fingers point toward the sacrum, then continue turning until the fingers point toward your head. Your pinkies will now press against your back torso. Slide your hands up your back, lifting and opening your chest as you do. If you can, position the hands between the scapulas, with the pinkies pressing firmly against the spine. Keep the palms spreading

together as much as possible. Roll the front shoulders up and back. Lengthen down from the back armpits through the elbows toward the floor.

### Preparatory Poses:

- Adho Mukha Svanasana •Anjali Mudra •Baddha Konasana
- Gomukhasana (especially the arm position) •Prasarita Padottanasana
- Supta Baddha Konasana •Uttanasana
- Utthita Parsvakonasana •Utthita Trikonasana •Vrksasana

# Standing Straddle Splits | Prasarita Padottanasana



(pra-sa-REE-tah pah-doh-tahn-AHS-anna)

prasarita = stretched out, expanded, spread, with outstretched limbs

pada = foot

ut = intense

tan = to stretch or extend (compare the Latin verb *tendere*, "to stretch or extend")

## Benefits:

- Strengthens and stretches the inner and back legs and the spine
- Tones the abdominal organs
- Calms the brain
- Relieves mild backache

## Contraindications and Cautions:

- Lower-back problems: Avoid the full forward bend

## Variations:

The pose as described above is technically known as Prasarita Padottanasana I (in the Iyengar and Ashtanga systems).

Prasarita Padottanasana II is a more challenging variation. Perform the main pose. Then bring your hands into Anjali Mudra (Salutation Seal), but behind your back, a hand position technically known as pristanjali mudra (prista, pronounced prish-ta, meaning "the back or rear of anything"). To do this lean your torso slightly forward and round your back. Then press your palms together behind your back with your thumbs resting on your sacrum, fingers pointing toward the floor. Exhale and turn the fingers, first toward your back, then upward, so they point toward the ceiling. Slip the pinky sides of your hands up your back as high as possible, ideally between your shoulder blades. Roll your shoulders back and lift your chest, pressing the pinkies deeply into your spine. Finally exhale into your forward bend and bring your head close to or onto the floor. If this hand position

isn't possible for you, simply cross your forearms behind your back and hold the elbows with the opposite hands.

### Modifications and Props:

Some beginners are unable to easily bring their hands to the floor and need a good deal of support in this forward bend to protect the lower back. Try raising your hands off the floor by resting each on the end of a block. If your back is still rounded, then use a folding chair to support your forearms. Always Remember in forward bends to emphasize the length of the front torso.

### Preparatory Poses:

Prasarita Padottanasana is usually sequenced near the end of a standing pose practice. Besides many of the standing poses, good preparations for this pose include:

•Adho Mukha Svanasana •Supta Baddha Konasana •Uttanasana

### Follow-Up Poses:

•Baddha Konasana •Bakasana •Paschimottanasana  
•Sirsasana • Utthita Parsvakonasana

### Deepen The Pose:

Advanced students can get a better sense of how to work the arms in this pose by using a block. Set a block on one of its sides, with its long axis parallel to the long edge of your sticky mat, on the floor in front of you. Lean forward into the pose and grip the block between your forearms, just below the elbows, and pick it up off the floor. Then complete the pose with your palms and crown on the floor. Now squeeze the block firmly between your forearms, pressing your inner hands actively into the floor. This action of the arms will also get you ready for poses like Headstand variations and Pincha Mayurasana (Peacock Pose).

# Garland Pose | Malasana

## Low Goddess



### Benefits:

- Stretches the ankles, groins and back torso
- Tones the belly

### Contraindications and Cautions:

Low back or knee injuries

### Preparatory Poses:

- Baddha Konasana • Upavistha Konasana • Virasana

### Follow-Up Poses:

- Uttanasana • Adho Mukha Svanasana • Bhujangasana

# Goddess Squat | Utkata Konasana

Moon Flow | Malasana Chandrasana  
Goddess Sun Flow | Malasana Suryasana



## **Benefits:**

- Energizes and warms the body
- Opens the chest and hips
- Empowering
- Builds self-discipline
- Awakens Kundalini

## **Practice: Perform Goddess to Five-pointed Star Pose**

1. Turn your right foot to the right at an angle of 45 degrees and the left foot to the left making an angle of 45 degrees.
2. Bend your knees and lower your tailbone down to the earth. Ensure that your knees remain behind the toes.
3. Tilt your pelvis under to lengthen the spine.
4. Bending the elbows, point your fingertips upward.
5. Turn your palms to face your body. Elbows should be directed downward and kept below shoulder level.
6. The crown of your head should point to the sky. Find a focal point straight ahead.
7. Remain in this pose from 30 seconds to a minute.
8. Inhale up to five-pointed star pose.

# Warrior I | Virabhadrasana Eka



(veer-ah-bah-DRAHS-anna)

Virabhadra = the name of a fierce warrior, an incarnation of Shiva, described as having a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, and a thousand feet, wielding a thousand clubs, and wearing a tiger's skin.

Virabhadra's Pose is also known as the Warrior Pose. There are three variations of Warrior, of which this is customarily numbered one. It may seem strange to name a yoga pose after a warrior; after all, aren't yogis known for their non-violent ways? But remember that one of the most revered of all the yoga texts, the *Bhagavad Gita*, is the dialog between two famous and feared warriors, Krishna and Arjuna, set on a battlefield between two great armies spoiling for a fight. What's really being commemorated in this pose's name, and held up as an ideal for all practitioners, is the "spiritual warrior," who bravely does battle with the universal enemy, self-ignorance (avidya), the ultimate source of all suffering.

## Benefits:

- Stretches the chest and lungs, shoulders and neck, belly, groins (psoas)
- Strengthens the shoulders and arms, and the muscles of the back
- Strengthens and stretches the thighs, calves, and ankles

## Contraindications and Cautions:

- High blood pressure
- Heart problems
- Students with shoulder problems should keep their raised arms parallel (or slightly wider than parallel) to each other.
- Students with neck problems should keep their head in a neutral position and not look up at the hands.

## Variations:

This pose can be performed with the arms in various positions. For example, go into the pose, except with your hands resting on your hips. Then, once the forward knee is bent,

swing your arms around behind your torso and clasp your hands. Stretch your hands away from the back torso and lift your chest. It's acceptable to squeeze your scapulas together at first, but be sure, once the chest is lifted, to push them away from the spine. To leave the pose, reach back with your hands and, with an inhalation, "pull" yourself up, straightening the front knee.

## Reverse Warrior

### Peaceful Warrior | Humble Warrior



### Benefits:

- Strengthens and stretches the legs and ankles
- Stretches the groins, chest and lungs, shoulders
- Stimulates abdominal organs
- Increases stamina
- Opens the side body
- Opens the heart
- Helps in "letting go"
- Increases joy

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Diarrhea
- High blood pressure
- Neck problems: Don't turn your head to look up. Instead look down at the back foot to relax the neck into Peaceful Warrior, drop the head in Humble Warrior.

### Preparatory Poses:

- Warrior II

### Follow-Up Poses:

- Warrior II •Low Lunge •Trikonasana •Extended Side Angle

## Warrior II | Virabhadrasana Dwi



### Benefits:

- Strengthens and stretches the legs and ankles
- Stretches the groins, shoulders, chest and lungs
- Stimulates abdominal organs
- Increases stamina
- Relieves back aches, especially through second trimester of pregnancy
- Therapeutic for carpal tunnel syndrome, flat feet, infertility, osteoporosis, and sciatica

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Diarrhea
- High blood pressure
- Neck problems: Don't turn your head to look over the front hand. Instead, continue to look straight ahead with both sides of the neck lengthened evenly.

### Preparatory Poses:

•Baddha Konasana •Supta Padangusthasana •Utthita Trikonasana •Vrksasana

### Follow-Up Poses:

•Bakasana •Utthita Trikonasana •Vrksasana

## Warrior III | Virabhadrasana Tri



### Benefits:

- Strengthens the ankles and legs
- Strengthens the shoulders and muscles of the back
- Tones the abdomen
- Improves balance and posture

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- High blood pressure

### Variations:

In Virabhadrasana III you can vary the position of your arms. Try stretching the arms out to the sides, like the wings of an airplane, or reaching them back, palms facing up, along the sides of your torso.

### Preparatory Poses:

- Ardha Chandrasana •Prasarita Padottanasana •Supta Padangusthasana
- Supta Virasana •Urdhva Prasarita Padasana •Utkatasana
- Uttanasana •Virabhadrasana I, II •Virasana •Vrksasana

## Side Angle | Utthita Parsvakonasana



(oo-TEE-tah parsh-vah-cone-AHS-anna)

utthita = extended

parsva = side, flank

kona = angle

### Benefits:

- Strengthens and stretches the legs, knees, and ankles
- Stretches the groins, spine, waist, shoulders, chest and lungs
- Stimulates abdominal organs
- Increases stamina

### Therapeutic Applications:

- Constipation
- Infertility
- Low backache
- Osteoporosis
- Sciatica
- Menstrual discomfort

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Headache
- High or low blood pressure
- Insomnia
- Neck Problems: do not turn your head to look at the top arm; instead look straight ahead with the sides of the neck lengthened evenly, or look down at the floor.

### Variations:

You can also perform this pose with the lower arm in front of the bent-knee thigh. This will help create more stretch in the front groin. As you lower your torso to the side, bring the back of your right shoulder against the inner knee, and press your fingertips to the floor. Push the shoulder firmly into the knee and lean your torso back against the inner thigh. Lengthen your side ribs along the inner top thigh.

### Preparatory Poses:

- Adho Mukha Svanasana •Supta Baddha Konasana •Prasarita Padottanasana
- Siddhasana • Supta Virasana •Supta Padangusthasana
- Upavistha Konasana •Utthita Trikonasana •Virabhadrasana II •Virasana

### Follow-Up Poses:

Utthita Parsvakonasana is an excellent standing pose to perform at or near the beginning of your standing pose sequence. It's also a good preparation for wide-open groin poses, like Baddha Konasana, Malasana, and Bakasana. Binding in this pose is the prep for Bird of Paradise.

# Triangle | Trikonasana



(trik-cone-AHS-anna)

trikona = three angle or triangle

## Benefits:

- Stretches and strengthens the thighs, knees, and ankles
- Stretches the hips, groins, hamstrings, calves, shoulders, chest, and spine
- Stimulates the abdominal organs
- Helps relieve stress
- Improves digestion
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause
- Relieves backache, especially through second trimester of pregnancy
- Therapeutic for anxiety, flat feet, infertility, neck pain, osteoporosis, and sciatica

## Contraindications and Cautions:

- Diarrhea
- Headache
- Low blood pressure
- Heart Condition: Practice against a wall. Keep the top arm on the hip.
- High blood pressure: Turn the head to gaze downward in the final pose.
- Neck problems: Don't turn your head to look upward. Instead, continue looking straight ahead and keep both sides of the neck evenly long.



### Variations:

- Instead of stretching the top arm toward the ceiling, stretch it over the back of the top ear, parallel to the floor.
- Bind opposite hand to hip or full bind.

### Preparatory Poses:

- Tadasana •Vrksasana

### Follow-Up Poses:

- Standing poses •Seated Forward Bends •Twists

### Deepen The Pose:

For more experienced students, align the front heel with the back-foot arch.

## Low Lunge | Crescent Lunge | Anjaneyasana



### Benefits:

- Stretches the groins
- Strengthens the legs and arms

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Any serious knee injuries
- Heart problems
- Neck problems (look down at the floor instead of straight ahead)

Variations: There are various modifications including lowering the back knee and different arm variations.



## Basic Arm Balances



# Downward Facing Dog | Adho Mukha Svanasana



(AH-doh MOO-kah shvah-NAHS-anna)

adho = downward

mukha = face

svana = dog

## Benefits:

- Calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild depression
- Energizes the body
- Stretches the shoulders, hamstrings, calves, arches, and hands
- Strengthens the arms and legs
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause
- Relieves menstrual discomfort when done with head supported
- Helps prevent osteoporosis
- Improves digestion
- Relieves headache, insomnia, back pain, and fatigue
- Therapeutic for high blood pressure, asthma, flat feet, sciatica, sinusitis

## Contraindications and Cautions:

- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Pregnancy: Do not practice this pose late-term.
- High blood pressure or headache: Support your head on a bolster or block, ears level between the arms.

## Preparatory Poses:

- Plank Pose
- Uttanasana

## Follow-Up Poses:

- Standing poses
- Uttanasana
- Headstand

## Side Plank | Vasisthasana

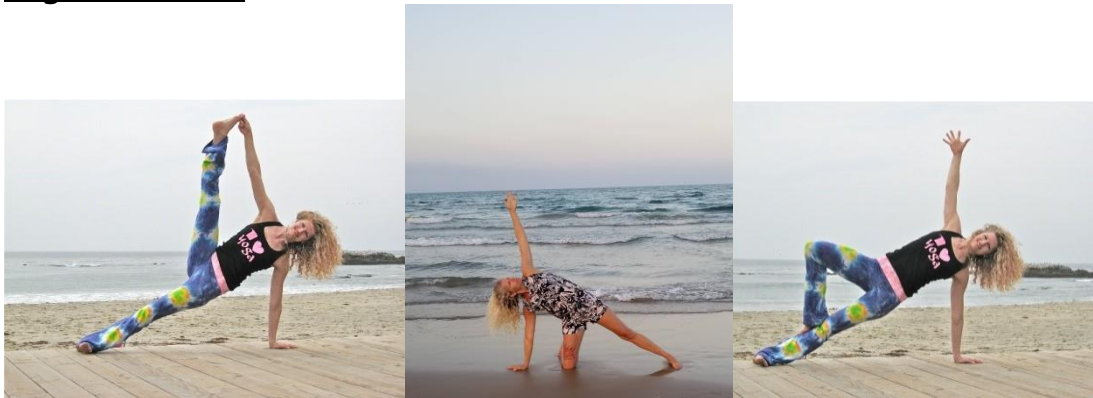


(vah-sish-TAHS-anna) Vasistha = literally means "most excellent, best, richest."

### Benefits:

- Strengthens the arms, belly, and legs
- Stretches and strengthens the wrists
- Stretches the backs of the legs (in the full version described below)
- Improves sense of balance

### Leg Variations:



### Contraindications and Cautions:

Students with serious wrist, elbow, or shoulder injuries should avoid this pose.

### Preparatory Poses:

- Adho Mukha Svanasana •Ardha Chandrasana •Plank Pose
- Prasarita Padottanasana •Supta Padangusthasana (for the full version) •Supta Virasana

### Follow-Up Poses:

- Adho Mukha Vrksasana •Adho Mukha Svanasana •Chaturanga Dandasana
- Pincha Mayurasana •Plank Pose •Salamba Sirsasana •Virabhadrasana II

## Back Bending | Heart Opening



## Incline Plank | Purvottanasana



### Benefits:

- Strengthens the arms, wrists and legs
- Stretches the shoulders, chest, and front ankles

### Beginner's Tip:

Practice with a chair support: Sit near the front edge of the seat and wrap your hands around the back edge. Inhale to lift your pelvis, then extend each leg with an inhale.

### Preparatory Poses:

•Gomukhasana (arms only) •Supta Virasana •Setu Bandha Sarvangasana •Dhanurasana

### Follow-Up Poses:

•Paschimottanasana •Adho Mukha Svanasana

# Chakravakasana Flow

Cat | Marjaryasana

Cow | Bitilasana



## Benefits:

- Stretches the front torso and neck
- Provides a gentle massage to the spine and belly organs

## Contraindications and Cautions:

With a neck injury, keep the head in line with the torso.

## Beginner's Tip:

This movement on the hands and knees opens the chest on the inhales and opens the back of the body on the exhales. Protect your neck by broadening across your shoulder blades and drawing your shoulders down, away from your ears.

## Teacher Tip:

If students have difficulty rounding the very top of the upper back, lay a hand just above and between the shoulder blades to help you activate this area, or touch two fingers on either side of the ribs and lift gently on exhale.

## Preparatory Poses:

•Viparita Karani •Balasana •Garudasana

## Upward Facing Dog | Urdhva Mukha Svanasana



(OORD-vah MOO-kah shvon-AHS-anna)

urdhva mukha = face upward (urdhva = upward; mukha = face)

svana = dog

### Benefits:

- Improves posture
- Strengthens the spine, arms, wrists
- Stretches chest and lungs, shoulders, and abdomen
- Firms the buttocks
- Stimulates abdominal organs
- Helps relieve mild depression, fatigue, and sciatica
- Therapeutic for asthma

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Back injury
- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Headache
- Pregnancy

### Beginner's Tip:

There's a tendency in this pose to "hang" on the shoulders, which lifts them up toward the ears and "turtles" the neck. Actively draw the shoulders away from the ears by

lengthening down along the back armpits, pulling the shoulder blades toward the tailbone, and puffing the side ribs forward. If you need help learning this, lift each hand on a block.

### Modifications and Props:

Often, it's difficult to keep the legs strongly suspended above the floor. Before you move into the pose, position a thick blanket roll below your top thighs. When you are in the pose, lightly rest your thighs on this roll as you press the tailbone closer to the roll.

### Preparatory Poses:

•Bhujangasana •Setu Bandha Sarvangasana

### Follow-Up Poses:

•Backbends •Adho Mukha Svanasana

•Urdhva Mukha Svanasana will help you learn to lift the chest in poses like Tadasana and Virasana

### Deepen The Pose:

To increase the strength and lightness of this pose, push from the backs of your knees along the calves and out through the heels. The tops of your feet will press more firmly against the floor; as they do, lift the top sternum up and forward.

## Heart Center Opener | Anahatasana



Anahatasana, or Melting Heart Pose, is a heart opening posture that does wonderful things for the chest, shoulders and upper back. Anahat means "unstruck" in Sanskrit, and as the English implies, the heart melts to create a lovely stretch that over time will lengthen the muscles and connective tissues of the chest and create new opening in the shoulder girdle and upper back. It is also a gentle back bend that causes a stretch through the spine. Also called Extended Puppy Pose.

### Benefits:

- Stretches the spine and shoulders

Anahatasana works to open through the chest and shoulders and creates a back bend in the middle and upper back. This posture can help to compensate for a tendency to hunch forward and so over time can help to bring your posture into a more neutral alignment. This posture can also help to ease symptoms of stress in the shoulders and upper back.

Adding in Anahatasana to your practice can be an immediate gauge of the openness of your upper body. At first you may not be able to go very deeply into the posture, yet have patience! The more you practice this posture, the more your upper body will open and the easier it will be to hold your shoulders back and down, resulting in more ease in your overall posture and carriage. Not to mention the work done to your subtle body as you open your heart more and more!

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Shoulder injury
- Knee injury: If you suffer from knee or shoulder injuries then refrain from this posture until the injuries have healed. Full Anahatasana could aggravate injuries that have not fully resolved. Be aware of your neck and if it feels pinched at all then avoid bringing the

chin to the floor and just let the forehead rest on the mat or let the head hang heavy, releasing the muscles of the neck.

### Modifications:

This pose can be held for several breaths or several minutes. There are several ways to modify this posture. Use a blanket under the knees to make it more comfortable, and perhaps place a bolster or rolled blanket under the chest to allow the body to relax into this posture. This pose can be done with one arm forward and the head resting on the other arm. Be sure to switch arms to even out the stretch to each shoulder.

### Preparatory Poses:

•Adho Mukha Svanasana •Virasana

### Follow-Up Poses:

•Balasana

## Bridge | Setu Bandha Sarvangasana



(SET-too BAHN-dah)

setu = dam, dike, or bridge

bandha = lock

Sarvangasana= Shoulder

### Benefits:

- Stretches the chest, neck, and spine
- Calms the brain and helps alleviate stress and mild depression
- Stimulates abdominal organs, lungs, and thyroid
- Rejuvenates tired legs
- Improves digestion
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause
- Reduces anxiety, fatigue, backache, headache, and insomnia
- Therapeutic for asthma, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, and sinusitis
- Supported bridge relieves menstrual discomfort

### Contraindications and Cautions:

Neck injury: avoid leading a student into this pose unless you are an experienced teacher.

### Variations:

- Eka Pada Setu Bandha Sarvangasana (pronounced ACHE-ah PAH-dah, eka = one, pada = foot or leg)
- On an exhalation, lift the right knee into your torso, then inhale and extend the leg perpendicular to the floor. Hold for 30 seconds, then release the foot to the floor again with an exhalation. Secure the foot again and repeat with the left leg for the same length of time.

### Modifications and Props:

If you have difficulty supporting the lift of the pelvis in this pose after taking it away from the floor, slide a block or bolster under your sacrum and rest the pelvis on this support.

### Preparatory Poses:

•Bhujangasana •Urdhva Mukha Svanasana •Virasana

### Follow-Up Poses:

•Bhujangasana •Salamba Sarvangasana •Urdhva Mukha Svanasana •Urdhva Dhanurasana

### Deepen The Pose:

Once in the pose, lift your heels off the floor and push your tailbone up a little closer to the pubis. Then from the lift of the tail, stretch the heels back to the floor again.

## Camel | Ustrasana



(oosh-TRAHS-anna)

ustra = camel

### Benefits:

- Stretches the entire front of the body, the ankles, thighs and groins,
- Abdomen and chest, and throat
- Stretches the deep hip flexors (psoas)
- Strengthens back muscles
- Improves posture
- Stimulates the organs of the abdomen and neck

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- High or low blood pressure
- Migraine
- Insomnia
- Serious low back or neck injury

### Beginner's Tip:

Very often, beginners are unable to touch their hands to their feet without straining their back or neck. Turn the toes under and elevate the heels. Reach hands on blocks; position the blocks just outside each heel, and stand them at their highest height (usually about 9 inches).

### Modifications:

- Ardha Ustrasana, or Half camel: reach one arm forward using it as a counterbalance. The other hand reaches to the sacrum. Stay in throat lock, or let the head drop. Flow with half camel alternating arms and holding 3 to 5 breaths.

- Use a chair: Kneel for the pose with the back to the chair, with calves and feet below the seat and the front edge of the seat touching the buttocks. Then lean back and bring hands to the sides of the seat or high up on the front chair legs.

### Preparatory Poses:

- Bhujangasana •Dhanurasana •Salabhasana •Setu Bandha
- Supta Virasana •Urdhva Mukha Svanasana •Virasana

### Follow-Up Poses:

- Dandasana •Stand on Knees •Dhanurasana •Sarvangasana
- Setu Bandha •Sirsasana •Urdhva Dhanurasana •Virasana

### Deepen The Pose:

You can increase the challenge of Ustrasana by performing the pose with your thighs, calves, and inner feet touching. Place palm onto sole of foot. Drop Head, open throat.

## Chair | Utkatasana



(OOT-kah-TAHS-anna)

utkata = powerful, fierce

### Benefits:

- Strengthens the ankles, thighs, calves, and spine
- Stretches shoulders and chest
- Stimulates the abdominal organs, diaphragm, and heart
- Reduces flat feet

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Headache
- Insomnia
- Low blood pressure

### Variations:

As you bend your knees, lift onto the balls of your feet and sit your buttocks down on your raised heels. Extend your arms forward, parallel to each other and the floor, palms down or facing inward.

### Preparatory Poses:

•Virasana •Bhujangasana •Adho Mukha Svanasana

## Prone



## Locust | Salabhasana



(sha-la-BAHS-anna)

salabha = grasshopper, locust

### Benefits:

- Strengthens the muscles of the spine, buttocks, and backs of the arms and legs
- Stretches the shoulders, chest, belly, and thighs
- Improves posture
- Stimulates abdominal organs
- Rinses the adrenals
- Helps relieve stress

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Headache
- Serious back injury
- Students with neck injuries should keep their head in a neutral position by looking down at the floor; they might also support the forehead on a thickly folded blanket.

### Preparatory Poses:

- Bhujangasana •Gomukhasana •Setu Bandha Sarvangasana •Supta Virasana
- Urdhva Mukha Svanasana •Virabhadrasana I •Virasana

### Follow-Up Poses:

- Salabhasana is a good preparation for back bends, including Dhanurasana and Ustrasana.
- Other possible follow-ups include:
- Bharadvajasana •Salamba Sarvangasana •Setu Bandha Sarvangasana

**Beginner's Tip:** Beginners sometimes have difficulty sustaining the lift of the torso and legs in this pose. Begin the pose with your hands resting on the floor, a little bit back from the shoulders, closer to waist. Inhale and gently push hands against the floor to help lift the upper torso. Keep hands in place, or after a few breaths, when lift of the chest is established, swing them back into the original position. Supporting your back, place hands on mat by hips.

**Variations:**

- A challenging variation of Salabhasana is to place your hands under your thighs palms down and work the forearms under your bony pronators of the hip girdle. This is a deltoid stretch and a huge core strengthening asana. Have a partner hold you up by grasping your deltoids; hold for a few minutes. Let the legs relax.
- Another variation is with the legs lifted alternately off the floor. Lock hands around back, clasp hands together and open the chest.

## Bow | Dhanurasana



(don-your-AHS-anna)

dhanu = bow

The bow referred to is a bow as in "bow and arrow." This asana is so named because the body mimics the shape of a bow with its string stretched back ready to shoot an arrow.

### Benefits:

- Stretches the entire front of the body, ankles, thighs, groins, abdomen, chest, throat, and deep hip flexors (psoas)
- Strengthens the back muscles
- Improves posture
- Stimulates the organs of the abdomen and neck

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- High or low blood pressure
- Migraine
- Insomnia
- Serious lower-back or neck injury

### Modifications and Props:

If it isn't possible for you to hold your ankles directly, wrap a strap around the fronts of your ankles and hold the free ends of the strap, keeping your arms fully extended.

Use a strap to deepen the pose by hooking it over both ankles in a loop that is big enough for both of your feet. Then bring the strap overhead, bending the elbows and grasp the strap overhead, choke up on the strap, fist over fist until you get as close to your ankles as possible, while continuing to squeeze elbows in.

### Preparatory Poses:

- Bhujangasana •Salabhasana •Setu Bandha Sarvangasana
- Supta Virasana •Urdhva Mukha Svanasana

### Follow-Up Poses:

- Matsyasana •Setu Bandha Sarvangasana •Urdhva Dhanurasana
- Urdhva Mukha Svanasana •Ustrasana

### Deepen The Pose:

Increase the challenge of Dhanurasana by performing the pose with your thighs, calves, and inner feet touching.

## Cobra | Bhujangasana, Cobra Wave



(boo-jang-GAHS-anna)

bhujanga = serpent, snake

### Benefits:

- Strengthens the spine
- Stretches chest and lungs, shoulders, and abdomen
- Firms the buttocks
- Stimulates abdominal organs
- Helps relieve stress and fatigue
- Opens the heart and lungs
- Soothes sciatica
- Therapeutic for asthma
- Traditional texts say that Bhujangasana increases body heat, destroys disease, and awakens kundalini.

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Back injury
- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Headache
- Pregnancy

### Beginner's Tip:

Don't overdo the backbend. To find the height at which you can work comfortably and avoid straining your back, take your hands off the floor for a moment, so that the height you find will be through extension. Lift comes from pushing down with the pubis and legs.

Root down to rise, lift with heart then open the throat. Rise up, add side to side serpentine flow. Lower, resting the third eye on the ground.

Preparatory Poses:

•Setu Bandha Sarvangasana •Urdhva Mukha Svanasana

Follow-Up Poses:

•Balasana •Flow Down Dog •Crocodile/Prone Resting Position

## Supine



# Fish | Matsyasana



(mot-see-AHS-anna) matsya = fish

## Benefits:

- Traditional texts describe Matsyasana as the "destroyer of all diseases."
- Stretches the deep hip flexors (psoas) and the muscles (intercostals) between the ribs
- Stretches and stimulates the muscles of the belly and front of the neck
- Stretches and stimulates the organs of the belly and throat
- Strengthens the muscles of the upper back and back of the neck
- Improves posture

## Contraindications and Cautions:

- High or low blood pressure
- Migraine
- Insomnia
- Serious lower-back or neck injury

## Preparatory Poses:

- While Sarvangasana isn't exactly a preparatory pose, Matsyasana is often sequenced as a counter-pose after Shoulder stand.
- Other preparations for this pose might include:
  - Baddha Konasana • Bhujangasana • Dhanurasana • Salabhasana
  - Setu Bandha Sarvangasana • Supta Virasana • Urdhva Mukha Svanasana • Virasana

## Forward Bending



sandy foster  
yoga bliss photo

## Staff | Dandasana



### Benefits:

- Strengthens the back muscles
- Stretches the shoulders and chest
- Improves posture
- Seated meditation posture, pranayama
- Two lines of Prana

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Any wrist or lower back injury

### Preparatory Poses:

- Adho Mukha Svanasana • Uttanasana

### Follow-Up Poses:

- Purvottanasana • Bharadvajasana I

## Knees to Chest | Apanasana



Apanasana is a yoga pose that stretches your lower back, and provides relief to your body which may be tired after a set of backbends. Apana refers to the downward flow of prana, or energy. It also refers to the flow of your digestive tract that aids in purification and the elimination of toxins. Yoga theory holds that the seat of the mind is in the digestion, and as such this pose lends clarity to the mind.

### Benefits:

- Eliminates painful lower back
- Removes the gastro-intestinal pain, and the physical pain associated with menstruation
- Relieves constipation
- Reduces tension in the lower back and aids in removing the sciatic nerve pain
- Helps resolve Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Injury in knee
- Pregnancy: do not practice in the third trimester
- Tightness in hips
- Discomfort in buttocks

**Beginner's Tip:** For students new to yoga, Apanasana is a great yoga pose to treat problems related to digestion and bowel movements. Many beginners are advised to master

this yoga pose for enhancing the bowel movement. You can make the pose easier by adding a thick blanket beneath your head if you have trouble while rocking or pulling in your legs, especially helpful for people with a broad, built chest. Elimination and healthy digestion are essential to a healthy body and mind, and these benefits are emphasized in hatha, or "physical" yoga philosophy.

Advanced yogis or athletes find Knee to Chest Pose beneficial for removing tension in their backs. They may bring the legs one by one instead of bringing them together if they have more tension in one of their legs. The pose can be deepened by making the rocking movement slow and gradual. To experience the full stretch, you should lay down on your back, one vertebra at a time.

#### Follow-Up Poses:

•Ananda Balasana •Navasana •Supine Twist •Viparita Karani •Supine Hand to Big Toe

# Forward Fold | Uttanasana

## Options for Chest Expansion



(OOT-tan-AHS-ahna)

ut = intense

tan = to stretch or extend

### Benefits:

- Calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild depression
- Stimulates the liver and kidneys
- Stretches the hamstrings, calves, and hips
- Strengthens the thighs and knees
- Improves digestion
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause
- Reduces fatigue and anxiety
- Relieves headache and insomnia
- Therapeutic for asthma, high blood pressure, infertility, osteoporosis, and sinusitis

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Back injury: Do this pose with bent knees
- Perform Ardha Uttanasana (pronounced ARE-dah, ardha= half), with your hands on the wall, legs perpendicular to your torso, and arms parallel to the floor.

### Preparatory Poses:

- Adho Mukha Svanasana • Janu Sirsasana • Paschimottanasana • Supta Padangusthasana
- Reverse Swan Dive to Tadasana

## Seated Forward Bend | Paschimottanasana



(POSH-ee-moh-tan-AHS-anna)

paschimottana = intense stretch of the west

(pashima = west

uttana = intense stretch)

### Benefits:

- Calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild depression
- Stretches the spine, shoulders, hamstrings
- Stimulates the liver, kidneys, ovaries, and uterus
- Improves digestion
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause and menstrual discomfort
- Soothes headache and anxiety and reduces fatigue
- Therapeutic for high blood pressure, infertility, insomnia, and sinusitis
- Traditional texts say that this is one of the most important poses in practice; increases appetite, reduces obesity, and cures diseases.

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Asthma
- Back injury: Only allow students to perform this pose if you are an experienced teacher

**Modifications and Props:** Most students should sit up on a folded blanket in this pose, and most beginners need to hold a strap around the feet. Extremely stiff students can place a rolled-up blanket under their knees, use a strap around ball of the foot. Grab back of calves with both hands bending elbows, pull elbows back keeping heart open, draw heart center toward the big toes, then let head relax. For therapeutic yoga, pile up bolsters, blankets and enough props to rest head and chest 3-5 minutes, up to 10 minutes.

**Preparatory Poses:**

•Balasana •Janu Sirsasana •Uttanasana

# Half Lord of the Fishes Pose | Ardha Matsyendrasana

(ARE-dah MOT-see-en-DRAHS-anna)

Ardha = half

Matsyendra = king of the fish

(matsya = fish indra = ruler), a legendary teacher of yoga

## Benefits:

- Stimulates the liver and kidneys
- Stretches the shoulders, hips, and neck
- Energizes the spine
- Stimulates the digestive fire (agni) in the belly
- Relieves menstrual discomfort, fatigue, sciatica, and backache
- Therapeutic for asthma and infertility
- Traditional texts say that Ardha Matsyendrasana increases appetite, destroys most deadly diseases, and awakens kundalini

## Contraindications and Cautions:

- Back or spine injury: Only perform this pose with the assistance of an experienced teacher

## Beginner's Tip:

In this version of the pose, the opposite-side arm is wrapped around the outside of the raised-leg upper thigh. Be sure to sit up well on a blanket for support. You can just wrap your arm around the raised leg and hug the thigh to your torso, or the arm can be straight and pressing the forearm into the outside leg.

## Seated Twist Variations:

Step Across Straight Leg Bent Elbow on opposite knee

Wrap Elbow Same Side and Half Bind

Flow from Staff into the twist 3x then hold

## Preparatory Poses:

•Baddha Konasana •Bharadvajasana •Janu Sirsasana •Supta Padangusthasana •Virasana

## Follow-Up Poses:

•Paschimottanasana •Janu Sirsasana

## Deepen The Pose:

For those with more flexibility in the hips and spine bring the upper left arm to the outside of the upper right thigh. With the legs in place, exhale and turn to the right keeping the big toe engaged into the earth. Lean slightly back, away from the upper thigh, and bend the left elbow, inhale lifting the ribs and exhale pressing the elbow against the

outside of the upper right thigh. Then snuggle the torso in against the thigh, working the left upper arm further onto the outer leg until the back of the shoulder presses against the knee. Keep the elbow bent and the hand raised towards the ceiling, fingers dynamic as a salute to your higher self. Lean into a slight upper-back backbend, firming the shoulder blades against the back, and lift the front torso through the top sternum. Use your eyeballs to gaze to the farthest back corner of the room, squeezing out on the exhale. On the inhale lengthen the side body. Continue for 3 to 5 breaths.

## Hatha and Vinyasa | Asana 101b

### Balancing Poses



## Tree | Vrksasana



(vrik-SHAHS-anna) vrksa = tree

### Benefits:

- Strengthens thighs, calves, ankles, and spine
- Stretches the groins and inner thighs, chest and shoulders
- Improves sense of balance
- Relieves sciatica and reduces flat feet

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Headache
- Insomnia
- Low blood pressure/ High blood pressure: Don't raise arms overhead

### Preparatory Poses:

•Baddha Konasana •Utthita Trikonasana •Virabhadrasana II

### Deepen The Pose:

As with Tadasana, you can challenge your balance by practicing this pose with your eyes closed. Learn to balance without any reference to the outer environment.

## Half Moon | Ardha Chandrasana



(are-dah chan-DRAHS-anna) ardha = half  
candra = glittering, shining, having the brilliancy or hue of light (said of the gods);  
usually translated as "moon"

### Benefits:

- Strengthens the abdomen, ankles, thighs, buttocks, and spine
- Stretches the groins, hamstrings and calves, shoulders, chest, and spine
- Improves coordination and sense of balance
- Helps relieve stress
- Improves digestion

### Contraindications and Cautions:

If you have any neck problems, don't turn your head to look upward. Instead, continue looking straight ahead and keep both sides of the neck evenly long.

- Headache or migraine
- Low blood pressure
- Insomnia

### Modifications and Props:

Balance is always tricky in this pose for beginners. A wall is a useful prop, which can be used in one of two ways. Stand with your back to the wall, one leg length away from the wall. Exhale and bend forward into a standing forward bend, then inhale and raise the left leg parallel to the floor and press the left sole against the wall. Start with the toes turned toward the floor. Exhale again and rotate your torso to the left; at the same time, turn the left leg and foot until the inner foot is parallel to the floor. Rest the left hand on the left hip. The pressure of the raised heel against the wall will help maintain balance. Also, students can perform the pose with their back to, and leaning against, the wall to help open hips and shoulders.

### Preparatory Poses:

- Baddha Konasana •Prasarita Padottanasana •Supta Virasana
- Supta Baddha Konasana •Supta Padangusthasana •Uttanasana

•Utthita Parsvottanasana •Utthita Parsvakonasana •Utthita Trikonasana  
•Virasana •Vrksasana

#### Follow-Up Poses:

Ardha Chandrasana is usually sequenced somewhere in the middle of a standing pose series, usually after Utthita Trikonasana. There are no hard-and-fast rules about what should follow this pose, but you might try:

•Parsvottanasana •Prasarita Padottanasana •Parivrtta Trikonasana

#### Deepen The Pose:

Advanced students can raise the top arm, with an inhalation, perpendicular to the floor. Firm the top scapula against the back. Imagine there's a wall in front of you, and press the top hand actively into this pretend wall. Then, if your balance is steady, try slowly rotating the head to gaze up at the raised hand. To increase the challenge of this pose, reach back and grab the ankle and hold. Another option is to raise the lower hand away from the floor and hold or rest it on the standing thigh. Balance solely on the standing leg for 15 to 30 seconds.

## Boat | Paripurna Navasana



(par-ee-POOR-nah nah-VAHS-anna)

paripurna = full, entire, complete

nava = boat

### Benefits:

- Strengthens the abdomen, hip flexors, and spine
- Stimulates the kidneys, thyroid and prostate glands, and intestines
- Helps relieve stress
- Improves digestion

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Asthma
- Headache
- Heart Problems
- Insomnia
- Low blood pressure
- Menstruation
- Pregnancy
- Neck injury: Sit with your back near a wall to perform this pose. As you tilt your torso back rest the back of your head on the wall.

### Variations:

Ardha Navasana (ARE-dah; ardha = half)

### Modified Boat Pose:

Touch fingertips on the back of the thighs, grasping lightly. Lift heart. Exhale, lower the shins slightly. At the same time round the back, and lift your heart so that you are now resting on the sacrum (though the low back is still off the floor). Bring the tips of big toes level with the horizon.

### Preparatory Poses:

•Adho Mukha Svanasana •Uttanasana

### Follow-Up Poses:

•Adho Mukha Svanasana •Baddha Konasana •Halasana •Salamba Sirsasana •Utkatasana

### Deepen The Pose:

Full Boat is often presented as an abdominal strengthener, which it is to a certain extent. But more importantly this pose strengthens the deep hip flexors that attach the inner thigh bones to the front of the spine. Learn to anchor the heads of the thigh bones deep in the pelvis and lift from that anchor through the front spine. Remember that the lower front belly should never get hard.

# Spinal Balance

## Core Options:

Flow | Crossing midline of body

Grab opposite foot | Tiger/Tigress

Sunbird | Foot Pulse to Sky

Tiger/ Tigress Grab | Opposite Ankle and Open Heart, Opposite Knee to Elbow Flow

## Benefits:

Builds abdominal and lower back strength. This posture helps to stretch the back, improves balance and body strength. It warms the body and brings flexibility to the spine, shoulders, and hips, while gently stretching the torso. Because of the balancing challenge, this pose also helps to improve focus, coordination, and overall physical equilibrium. When you coordinate your movement with your breath, the pose also helps to relieve stress, fatigue, and tension.

## Practice:

Start by standing on all fours, keeping the arms at shoulder length and legs hip width apart, both arms and legs perpendicular to the floor. Breathe in and lift the left leg and the right arm up, keeping the lifted arm and leg straight and parallel to the floor. Hold the position for about 30 seconds breathing normally. Lower the arm and leg down and switch sides.

## Contraindications and Cautions:

Do not practice this pose if you have a recent or chronic injury to the knees, back, arms, wrists, or shoulders. Always work within your own range of limits and abilities. If you have any medical concerns, talk with your doctor before practicing yoga.

# Dancer | Natarajasana | Lord of the Dance



(not-ah-raj-AHS-anna)

nata = actor, dancer, mime

raja = king

## Benefits:

- Stretches the shoulders and chest
- Stretches the thighs, groins, and abdomen
- Strengthens the legs and ankles
- Improves balance

## Contraindications and Cautions:

- Low blood pressure

## Modification:

Balance can be difficult in basic posture. Try bracing the standing leg and hand against a wall to help you stay stable.

## Practice:

For the full pose, perform the first step as described above. Then turn your left arm actively outward (so the palm faces away from the side of the torso), bend the elbow, and grip the outside of the left foot. (You can also grab the big toe with the first two fingers and the thumb.) The fingers will cross the top of the foot, the thumb will press against the sole. Inhale, lift the left leg up, and bring the thigh parallel to the floor. As you do this, rotate the left shoulder in such a way that the bent elbow swings around and up, so that it points toward the ceiling. It requires extreme flexibility to externally rotate and flex the shoulder joint in this way. Reach the right arm straight forward, in front of the torso and parallel to the floor. Hold for 20 to 30 seconds, release, and repeat on the second side for the same length of time.

## Deepen The Pose:

You can move even further into this pose by grasping the raised foot with the off-side hand. Complete the pose as described above in the Full Pose section. Then inhale and swing

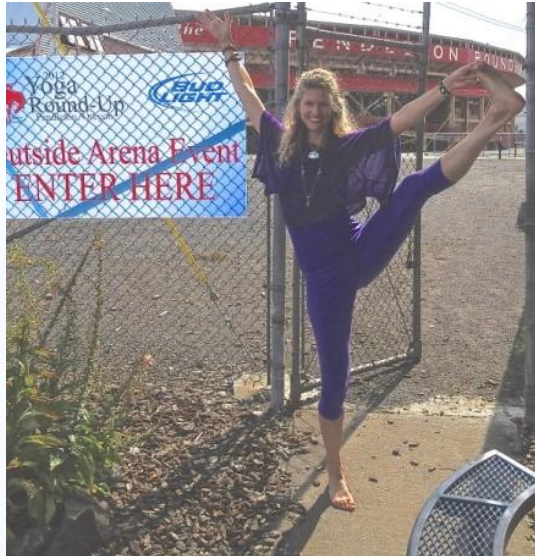
the free hand first up toward the ceiling, then bend the elbow and reach for the inside of the raised foot.

Preparatory Poses:

- Adho Mukha Vrksasana •Dhanurasana •Eka Pada Rajakapotasana •Gomukhasana
- Hanumanasana •Supta Virasana •Supta Padangusthasana •Urdhva Dhanurasana
- Ustrasana •Uttanasana •Virabhadrasana III •Virabhadrasana I •Virasana

# Hand to Big Toe | Padangusthasana

Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana | Standing  
Supta Padangusthasana | Reclined  
Variations ~ Monkey or Gorilla



(soup-TAH pod-ang-goosh-TAHS-anna)

supta = lying down, reclining

pada = foot

angusta = big toe

## Benefits:

- Calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild anxiety
- Stimulates the liver and kidneys
- Stretches the hamstrings and calves
- Strengthens the thighs
- Improves digestion
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause
- Helps relieve headache and insomnia

### Supine Benefits:

- Stretches hips, thighs, hamstrings, groins, and calves
- Strengthens the knees
- Stimulates the prostate gland
- Improves digestion
- Relieves backache, sciatica, and menstrual discomfort
- Therapeutic for high blood pressure, flat feet, and infertility

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Avoid this pose with lower back or neck injuries.
- Supine Contraindication: Headache, High blood pressure: Raise your head and neck on a folded blanket.

### Preparatory Poses:

- Supta Padangusthasana • Adho Mukha Svanasana
- Uttanasana • Paschimottanasana

### Beginner's Tip: Supine

If you are tight or stiff, do this pose with the bottom-leg heel pressed against a wall. It's also useful to position a block just outside the raised-leg hip. Then when you swing the leg to the side, rest it on the block. The support under the thigh will help you soften the inner groin.

### Variations:

In addition to swinging the raised or extended leg to the side, you can also cross it in front of your torso. If the left leg is raised, hold the strap in the right hand, and on an exhalation, cross the raised leg to the right side. Hold for 5-15 breaths. Inhale to bring the leg back to center and repeat on the other side.

## Hip Openers



sandy foster  
yoga bliss photo

## Easy Seated | Sukasana



Sukhasana is really any comfortable, cross-legged, seated position. It is a good pose for meditation or pranayama practice.

### Benefits:

- Calms the brain
- Strengthens the back
- Stretches the knees and ankles

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Knee injury

### Beginner's Tip:

Sit with your back to a wall, slightly closer than the length of a yoga block, and wedge the ends of the block between the wall and your lower shoulder blades.

# Pigeon | Eka Pada Rajakapotasana

King Pigeon | Raja Kapotasana | Full Posture



(aa-KAH pah-DAH rah-JAH-cop-poh-TAHS-anna)

eka = one

pada = foot or leg

raja = king

kapota = pigeon or dove

## Benefits:

- Stretches the entire front of the body, the ankles, thighs and groin, abdomen and chest, and throat
- Stretches the deep hip flexors (psoas)
- Strengthens back muscles
- Improves posture
- Stimulates the organs of the abdomen and neck
- Increases external range of motion of femur in hip socket
- Lengthens hip flexors
- Prepares body for backbends
- Prepares body for seated postures such as Padmasana (Lotus Pose)

## Practice:

Begin on all fours, knees directly below hips, and hands slightly ahead of shoulders. Slide the right knee forward to the back of right wrist; at the same time angle the right

shin under the torso and bring the right foot to the front of left knee. The outside of the right shin will now rest on the floor.

Slowly slide the left leg back, straightening the knee and descending the front of the thigh to the floor. Lower the outside of right buttock to the floor. Position the right heel just in front of the left hip. The right knee can angle slightly to the right, outside the line of the hip. Look back at your left leg. It should extend straight out of the hip (and not be angled off to the left), and rotated slightly inwardly, so its midline presses against the floor.

Exhale and lay the torso down on the inner right thigh for a few breaths. Stretch arms forward. Then slide hands back toward the front shin and push the fingertips firmly to the floor. Lift your torso away from the thigh. Lengthen the lower back by pressing the tailbone down and forward. At the same time lift your pubis toward the navel. Roll the left hip point toward the right heel and lengthen the left front groin. Maintain the upright position of your pelvis without the support of the hands on the floor, bring the hands to the top rim of the pelvis. Push heavily down. Against this pressure, lift the lower rim of the rib cage. The back ribs should lift a little faster than the front. Without shortening the back of the neck, drop head back. To lift chest, push the top of the sternum straight up toward the ceiling. Stay in this position for a minute. Then, placing the hands back on the floor, carefully slide the left knee forward. Then exhale and lift up and back into Down Dog. Take a few breaths. On another exhalation, drop the knees to all-fours and repeat with the legs reversed for the same length of time.

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- High or low blood pressure
- Migraine
- Insomnia
- Serious low back or neck injury

### Beginner's Tip:

You can approximate this pose by kneeling with your back to a wall, big toes or soles touching the wall. Clasp your hands at the back of your head, lean back, and rest your crown on the wall as you press your forearms against the wall.

### Variations:

## **Supported Pigeon | Salamba Kapotasana**

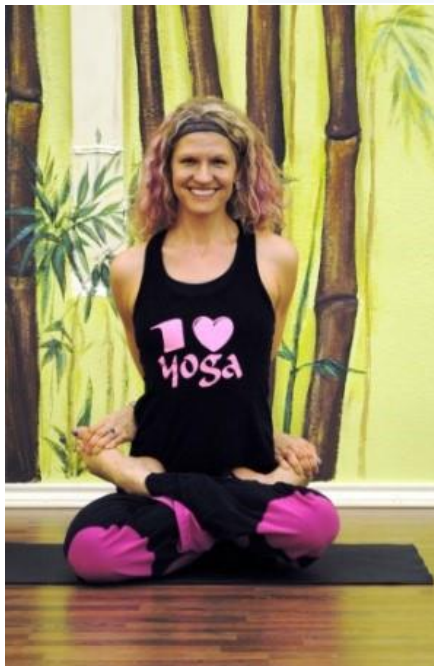


## **Cradle the Baby / Reverse Pigeon | Urdhva Kapotasana:**



**Lotus | Padmasana**

**Half Lotus | Ardha Padmasana**



(pod-MAHS-anna)

padma = lotus

### Benefits:

- Calms the brain
- Stimulates the pelvis, spine, abdomen, and bladder
- Stretches the ankles and knees
- Eases menstrual discomfort and sciatica
- Consistent practice of this pose until late into pregnancy is said to help ease childbirth.
- Traditional texts say that Padmasana destroys all disease and awakens kundalini.

This pose is a yoga classic and is one of the most recognized poses, even outside the yoga community. It is an advanced pose, however, and should be approached with caution by novices. Although this pose is often used for meditation, it may not be comfortable for beginners, so if necessary, use an alternative such as half lotus (Ardha Padmasana), hero's pose (Virasana), easy seated pose (Sukhasana), staff pose (Dandasana), or butterfly pose (Baddha Konasana).

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Ankle injury
- Knee injury
- Padmasana is an intermediate to advanced pose. Do not perform this pose without sufficient prior experience or unless you have the supervision of an experienced teacher.

### Beginner's Tip:

During the cradle warm-up, the outer ankle is often overstretched. Push through the inner edge of the foot against the upper arm to equalize the two ankles. Then when you bring the foot across into the opposite groin, see that you maintain this even stretch of the inner and outer ankles. Avoid sickling of the ankle; bring ankle bone all the way onto the femur.

### Variations:

- Ardha Padmasana or Half Lotus
- Full Lotus: After holding the feet, Fold Forward.
- Full Matsyasana (pronounced mot-see-AHS-anna, matsya = fish), or Fish pose, is dedicated to one of the 10 main incarnations of the god Vishnu, the fish. Perform Padmasana, then hold your feet with the opposite-side hands, lift your chest, and extend your neck and head. Slowly lean back with an exhalation until the crown of your head touches the floor. Cross the forearms, clasp the elbows with the opposite hands, and swing the forearms overhead, onto the floor. Take a few breaths. Finally, release the torso fully onto the floor and stretch the arms out on the floor, parallel to each other. Hold for 30 seconds to a minute. Inhale to come up, leading with the sternum and keeping the head back relaxed. Repeat with the other leg on top for the same length of time.
- You can alternatively come into the pose from Fish.

### Modifications and Props:

A preliminary step on the way to full Padmasana is Ardha Padmasana (pronounced ARE-dah, ardha = half). After bringing the first leg into position, as described above, simply slip the lower leg under the upper and the foot to the outside of the opposite hip. If the upper leg knee doesn't rest comfortably on the floor, support it with a thickly folded blanket. As with its companion, be sure to work with both leg crosses for the same length of time during each practice session.

### Deepen The Pose:

When using Padmasana as a seat for meditation or pranayama, there's a tendency for students to cross their legs in the same way day after day. Eventually this can lead to distortions in the hips. If you are regularly using this pose as a platform for meditation or formal breathing, be sure to alternate the cross of the legs daily. One simple method to help you remember to do this is to bring the right leg in first on even-numbered days, the left leg first on odd-numbered days.

# Butterfly | Baddha Konasana

## Bound Angle, Cobblers Pose

(BAH-dah cone-AHS-anna)

baddha = bound

kona = angle

Reclined Bound Angle | Supta Pada Baddha Konasana

### Benefits:

- Stimulates abdominal organs, ovaries and prostate gland, bladder, and kidneys
- Stimulates the heart and improves general circulation
- Stretches the inner thighs, groins, and knees
- Helps relieve mild depression, anxiety, and fatigue
- Soothes menstrual discomfort and sciatica
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause
- Therapeutic for flat feet, high blood pressure, infertility, and asthma
- Consistent practice of this pose until late into pregnancy is said to help ease childbirth.
- Traditional texts say that Baddha Konasana destroys disease and gets rid of fatigue.

### Practice:

This sitting pose is a great hip opener. You can see why it is called bound angle because you are holding your feet as you pull yourself into the pose. Another name for the pose is Butterfly pose. Notice the symmetry in the way the body appears like a butterfly. In yin style yoga (where you hold a pose for a long time to let muscles close to the bone stretch), this pose is held for five minutes or longer. For most practice, however, a good six to eight breaths will work well. As you relax into it you can fold over, maintaining an open chest and shoulders. Try to keep your back straight.

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Groin or knee injury: Only perform this pose with blanket support under the outer thighs.

### Modifications and Props:

To understand the release of the heads of the thigh bones, fold two blankets and put one under each outer thigh, supporting the thighs an inch or so above their maximum stretch. Then lay a 10-pound sand bag on each inner groin, parallel to the crease between the thigh and pelvis. Release the thigh heads away from the weight, and let them sink into the blankets. Do not use the bags unless the thighs are supported.

# Wide-Angle Seated Forward Bend | Upavistha Konasana

## Seated Straddle Splits

(oo-pah-VEESH-tah cone-AHS-anna)

upavistha = seated, sitting

kona = angle

### Benefits:

- Stretches the insides and backs of the legs
- Stimulates the abdominal organs
- Strengthens the spine
- Calms the brain
- Releases groins

### Contraindications and Cautions:

Lower-back injury: Sit up high on a folded blanket and keep your torso relatively upright.

### Beginner's Tip:

Upavistha Konasana is a difficult forward bend for many beginners. If you have trouble bending even a little bit forward, it's acceptable to bend your knees slightly. You might even support your knees on thinly rolled blankets; but remember, as you move into the forward bend, it's still important keep the knee caps pointing toward the ceiling.

### Modifications and Props:

Beginners might not be able to bring the torso forward toward the floor. Take a bolster or a thickly rolled blanket and lay it on the floor in front of you, its long axis perpendicular to your pelvis. Exhale into the forward bend and lay your torso down on this support.

### Variations:

Turtle (see the first photo). The goal is not to get flat on the floor, but to relax into it; use as many props as needed.

## Happy Baby | Ananda Balasana

### Benefits:

- Gently stretches the inner groins and the back spine
- Calms the brain and helps relieve stress and fatigue

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Pregnancy
- Knee injury
- Neck injury, support head on a thickly folded blanket

## Core Heat | Prana Building Poses



## Plank | Plankasana | Kumbhakasana



### Benefits:

- Strengthens the arms, wrists, and spine
- Tones the abdomen

### Contraindications and Cautions:

Carpal tunnel syndrome

### Beginner's Tip:

To help strengthen the arms in this pose, loop and secure a strap around your upper arms, just above the elbows. Push the inner arms out against this strap. Release the outer arms from the shoulders to the floor, and lift the inner arms from the bases of the index fingers to the shoulders. Move back and forth between Down Dog and Plank making sure the distance between your hands and feet does not change.

### Modifications and Props:

Practice Adho Mukha Svanasana with your index fingers and thumbs pressed against a wall. Inhale the torso forward, as above, and press the crown of your head against the wall. Use the pressure of the head on the wall to learn about the release of the shoulder blades down the back.

### Modification:

- Kneeling Plank
- Bring belly button to spine, tip forward looking over the top edge of your mat. Lower to the mat with chin, chest, then belly.

## 4 Limbed Staff | Chaturangua Dandasana

### Low Plank



(chaht-tour-ANG-ah don-DAHS-anna)

chaturanga = four limbs (chatur = four  
anga = limb)

danda = staff (refers to the spine, the central "staff" or support of the body)

#### Benefits:

- Strengthens the arms and wrists
- Tones the abdomen

#### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Pregnancy

#### Variations:

If possible, slowly roll over the balls of your feet onto the tops of your feet and shift the torso slightly forward. This will bring the hands back beside your waist and increase the challenge of the position.

#### Preparatory and Follow Up Poses:

•Plank Pose •Bhujangasana •Urdhva Mukha Svanasana

## Hatha and Vinyasa | Asana 101c

### Inversions





## Legs Up Wall | Viparita Karani



(vip-par-ee-tah car-AHN-ee)

viparita = turned around, reversed, inverted

karani = doing, making, action

### Benefits:

- Relieves tired or cramped legs and feet
- Gently stretches the back legs, front torso, and the back of the neck
- Relieves mild backache
- Calms the mind

### Contraindications and Cautions:

Many teachers maintain that Viparita Karani is an inversion, and as such should be avoided during menstruation. Others though recommend the pose even during the lunar cycle.

Check with your teacher before performing this pose during menstruation. As with any inversion Viparita Karani should be avoided if you have serious eye problems, such as glaucoma. With serious neck or back problems only perform this pose with the supervision of an experienced teacher. If your feet begin to tingle during this pose, bend your knees, touch your soles together, and slide the outer edges of your feet down the wall, bringing your heels close to your pelvis.

### Variations:

If you have enough wall space, you can slide your legs apart into a wide "V" to stretch your inner thighs and groins. You also can bend your knees, touch the soles of your feet together, and slide the outer edges of your feet down the wall, bringing your heels toward

the pelvis. Then you can push your hands against the top inner thighs to stretch the groins. Remember, however, never push on your knees to open the groins.

## Shoulder Stand | Salamba Sarvangasana



(sah-LOM-bah sar-van-GAHS-anna)

salamba = with support (sa = with

alamba = support)

sarva = all

anga = limb.

There are variations of Shoulder Stand that are "unsupported" = niralamba, pronounced near-ah-LOM-bah)

### Benefits:

- Calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild depression
- Stimulates the thyroid and prostate glands and abdominal organs
- Stretches the shoulders and neck
- Tones the legs and buttocks
- Improves digestion
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause
- Reduces fatigue and alleviates insomnia
- Therapeutic for asthma, infertility, and sinusitis

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Diarrhea
- Headache
- High blood pressure
- Menstruation
- Neck injury

- Pregnancy: If you are experienced with this pose, you can continue to practice it late into pregnancy. However, don't take up the practice of Sarvangasana after you become pregnant.
- Salamba Sarvangasana is considered to be an intermediate to advanced pose. Do not perform this pose without sufficient prior experience or unless you have the supervision of an experienced instructor. Some schools of yoga recommend doing Salamba Sirsasana before Salamba Sarvangasana, others vice versa. The instruction here assumes the former order.

### Variations:

One of the simplest Sarvangasana variations is Eka Pada Sarvangasana (pronounced ACH-ah PAH-dah, eka = one, pada = foot or leg). Come into the pose. Stabilize your left leg perpendicular to the floor, then exhale and lower your right leg parallel to the floor without disturbing the position of the left. The outer hip of the down leg (in this case, the right) tends to sink toward the floor. To correct this, turn the right leg outwardly, moving its sitting bone toward the left. Hold the two sitting bones close and rotate (from the hip joint only) the right leg back to neutral. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds, inhale the right leg back to perpendicular, and repeat on the left for the same length of time.

### Modifications and Props:

Rolling up into Sarvangasana from the floor might be difficult at first. You can use a wall to help you get into the pose. Set your blankets up a foot or so from the wall (the exact distance depends on your height: Taller students will be farther from the wall, shorter students closer). Sit sideways on your support (with one side toward the wall) and, on an exhalation, swing your shoulders down onto the edge of the blanket and your legs up onto the wall. Bend your knees to right angles, push your feet against the wall and lift your pelvis off the support. When your torso and thighs are perpendicular to the floor, lift your feet away from the wall and complete the pose. To come down, exhale your feet back to the wall and roll down.

To deepen the pose and come into correct alignment, use the wall, as above. Come into legs up the wall with hips about 12" from the wall. Lift right leg up to the sky, bend left leg at knee and press the ball of the left foot into the wall. Lift into full shoulder stand. Hold. Bend both knees and place feet on the wall, switch sides. Press the left foot into the wall using the ball of the foot and lift into the fullest posture you can perform.

Try fun variations like helicopter legs.

## Plow | Halasana



(hah-LAHS-anna)

hala = plow

From Salamba Sarvangasana, exhale and bend from the hip joints to slowly lower your toes to the floor above and beyond your head. As much as possible, keep your torso perpendicular to the floor and your legs fully extended. With your toes on the floor, lift your top thighs and tailbone toward the ceiling and draw your inner groins deep into the pelvis. Imagine that your torso is hanging from the height of your groins. Continue to draw your chin away from your sternum and soften your throat. You can continue to press your hands against the back torso, pushing the back up toward the ceiling as you press the backs of the upper arms down, onto your support. Or you can release your hands away from your back and stretch the arms out behind you on the floor, opposite the legs. Clasp the hands and press the arms actively down on the support as you lift the thighs toward the ceiling. Hold for 1-5 minutes. To exit the pose, bring your hands onto your back again, lift back into Sarvangasana with an exhalation, then roll down onto your back, or simply roll out of the pose on an exhalation.

### Benefits:

- Calms the brain
- Stimulates the abdominal organs and the thyroid gland
- Stretches the shoulders and spine
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause
- Reduces stress and fatigue
- Therapeutic for backache, headache, infertility, insomnia, sinusitis

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Diarrhea
- Menstruation
- Neck injury

- Asthma & high blood pressure: Practice Halasana with the legs supported on props.
- Pregnancy: If you are experienced with this pose, you can continue to practice it late into pregnancy. However, don't take up the practice of Halasana after you become pregnant.

With the feet on the floor, this pose is considered intermediate to advanced. It is not advisable to perform the pose in this way without sufficient prior experience or unless you have the supervision of an experienced instructor.

#### Beginner's Tip:

In this pose (and its companion, Salamba Sarvangasana) there's a tendency to overstretch the neck by pulling the shoulders too far away from the ears. While the tops of the shoulders should push down into the support, they should be lifted slightly toward the ears to keep the back of the neck and throat soft. Open the sternum by firming the shoulder blades against the back. Keep the space of half of an apple between the cervical spine and the floor.

#### Partnering:

An experienced partner can help you learn about the lift of the front thighs in this pose. Perform Halasana, either with your feet on the floor or a chair. Then have your partner straddle your legs, facing your torso. Loop a strap around your top thighs in the creases of the groins. Your partner can pull straight up on the strap, perpendicular to the line of your legs, and lift your top thighs toward the ceiling. Extend strongly through the heels and move your scapulas firmly into your back.

- Maintain a cervical curve the space of half an apple.
- Enter and exit through shoulder stand
- Exit with Happy Baby

## Dolphin | Forearm Balance Prep



### Benefits:

- Calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild depression
- Stretches the shoulders, hamstrings, calves, and arches
- Strengthens the arms and legs
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause
- Relieves menstrual discomfort when done with head supported
- Helps prevent osteoporosis
- Improves digestion
- Relieves headache, insomnia, back pain, and fatigue
- Therapeutic for high blood pressure, asthma, flat feet, sciatica

### Contraindications and Cautions:

Shoulder or neck injuries: keep knees bent

### Beginner's Tip:

Open your shoulders by lifting your elbows on a rolled-up sticky mat and pressing your inner wrists firmly to the floor. Measure the shoulder width by doing "I Dream of Jeannie"  
Arms: wrap the middle fingers around opposite elbows and use this as your "measurement", not allowing elbows to get any wider than this at any time during this practice. Squeeze your elbows slightly in, push wrists slightly out, hands can be wrapped or clasped together. Your gaze should be between the big toes with the head relaxed and off the mat.

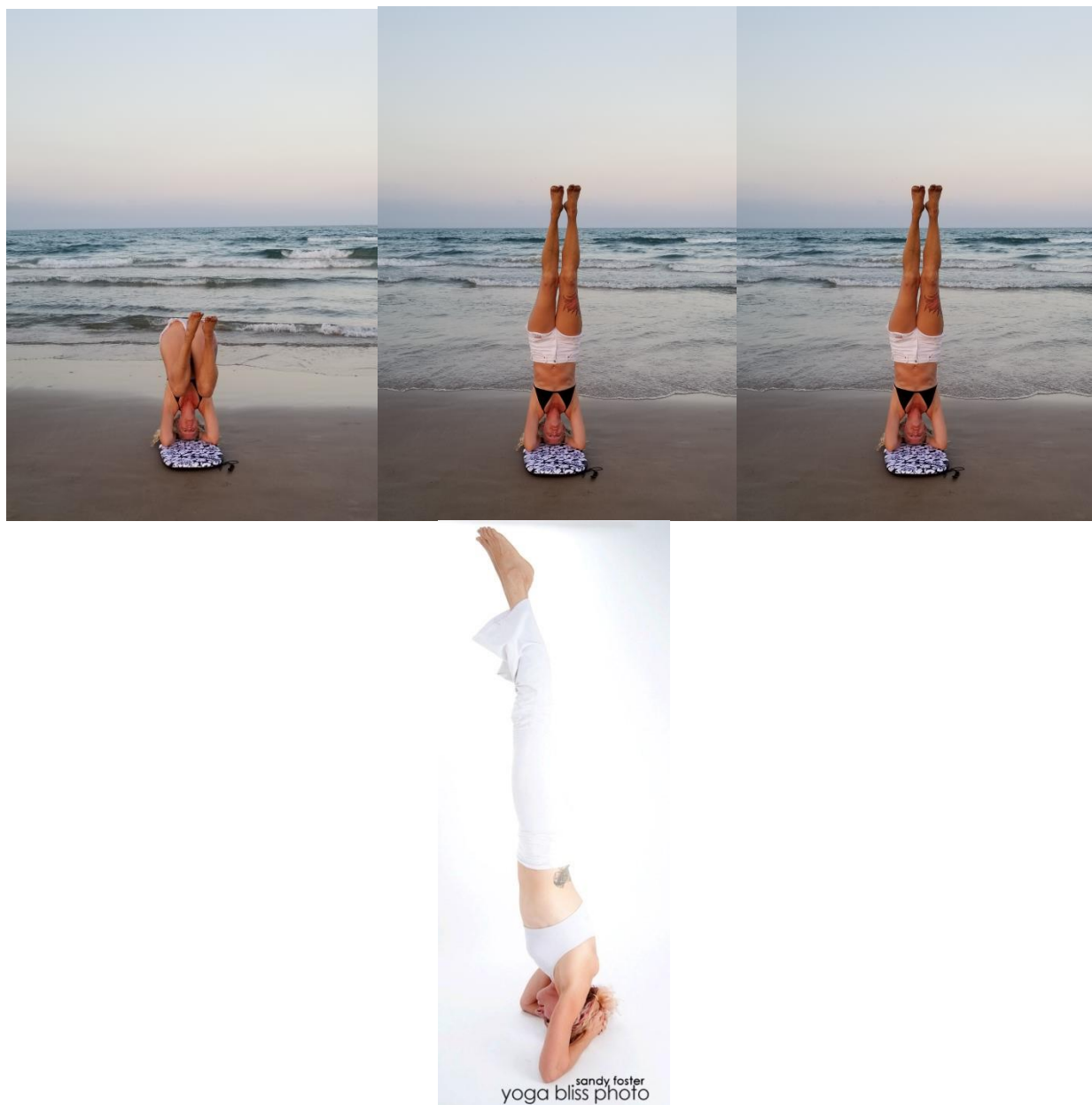
### Preparatory Poses:

•Uttanasana •Gomukhasana (arms only) •Plankasana

### Variations:

- Core flow, lower knees to hover then back to dolphin.
- Leg lifts alternating with inhales
- Tip toe as close to the elbows as possible and lift the tailbone as high as you can; then place the head on ground for supported headstand prep.

## Supported Headstand | Salamba Sirsasana



(sah-LOM-bah shear-SHAHS-anna)

salamba = with support (sa = with alamba = support)

sirsa = head

Use a folded blanket or sticky mat to pad your head and forearms. Kneel on the floor. Lace your fingers together and set the forearms on the floor, elbows at shoulder width. Roll the upper arms slightly outward, but press the inner wrists firmly into the floor. Set the crown of your head on the floor. If you are just beginning to practice this

pose, press the bases of your palms together and snuggle the back of your head against the clasped hands. More experienced students can open their hands and place the back of the head into the open palms.

### Benefits:

- Calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild depression
- Stimulates the pituitary and pineal glands
- Strengthens the arms, legs, and spine
- Strengthens the lungs
- Tones the abdominal organs
- Improves digestion
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause
- Therapeutic for asthma, infertility, insomnia, and sinusitis

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Back injury
- Headache
- Heart condition
- High blood pressure
- Menstruation
- Neck injury
- Low blood pressure: Don't begin practice with this pose
- Pregnancy: If you are experienced with this pose, you can continue to practice it late into pregnancy. However, don't take up the practice of Sirsasana after you become pregnant.
- Sirsasana is an intermediate to advanced pose. Do not perform this pose without sufficient prior experience or unless you have the supervision of an experienced teacher. Some schools of yoga recommend doing Sirsasana before Sarvangasana, others vice versa. The instruction here assumes the former order.

### Variations:

One of the simplest Sirsasana variations is called Eka Pada Sirsasana (pronounced ACHÉ-ah PAH-dah, eka = one, pada = foot or leg). Come into the pose. Stabilize your left leg perpendicular to the floor. Exhale and lower your right leg parallel to the floor without disturbing the position of the left. The outer hip of the down leg (in this case, the right) tends to sink toward the floor. To correct this, turn the right leg outward, moving its sitting bone toward the left. Hold the two sitting bones close and rotate (from the hip joint only) the right leg back to neutral. Hold for 5 to 15 breaths, inhale the right leg back to perpendicular, and repeat on the left for the same length of time.

### Beginner's Tip:

Beginners tend to take too much weight onto the neck and head when coming into and exiting this pose, a potentially harmful situation. Prepare to do this pose as described above against a wall. To come up, set your arms in place and lift your head slightly off the floor, squeeze elbows in and activate shoulder girdle, lats and pectorals. Move into the

wall-supported position with the head off the floor, then lower it lightly onto the floor. Support 90 to 95 percent of your weight on your shoulders and arms, even if it means staying for only a few seconds. Gradually, over time, take more and more weight onto your head, but proceed slowly. Similarly, when you exit this pose, first lift your head off the floor, then bring your knees to chest, then bring feet down back into dolphin. Eventually you will be able to keep your head on the floor when going up and coming down.

#### Preparatory Poses:

•Adho Mukha Svanasana •Salamba Sarvangasana •Uttanasana •Virasana •Dolphin

#### Deepen The Pose:

Check the position of the inner wrists in the pose. They tend to fall outward, shifting the weight onto the outer forearms. Turn the pinkies away from the back of your head, and bring the inner wrists perpendicular to the floor. As you firm the outer upper arms inward, press the wrists actively into the floor.

## Tripod Headstand | Sirsasana



Sirsasana, meaning headstand, is considered one of the most important yoga poses. Sirsasana is known as "the queen of poses", and the reason relates to the effect it has on the brain and mind. The inversion of this pose causes increased and unrestricted blood flow to the brain. This brings increased oxygen, nutrients and vitality providing energy to the mind, clarity of thought and ease of concentration.

The increased blood flow to the head stimulates the pituitary gland, considered to be the "master gland", controlling the function of the endocrine system including the thyroid, adrenal gland, ovaries and testes among others. These glands in turn regulate metabolism, growth, blood pressure, sexuality and other fundamental body functions. An imbalance of the secretion of the various hormones produced by the pituitary gland can lead to many serious disorders of the endocrine system.

In yogic terms, the increased blood flow to the head helps to awaken the Sahasrara (crown) Chakra (energy center). Sahasrara is considered the most important Chakra intimately connected to, and influencing, all other Chakras and controlling consciousness. It is when the Kundalini energy unites with the Sahasrara Chakra that the yogi achieves Samadhi, becoming enlightened and united with the universe and God.



### Benefits:

The increased blood flow to the brain stimulates the pituitary gland which revitalizes the mind and central nervous system. The pose is considered to have a profound effect on anxiety and other nervous disorders which can lead to other illnesses, and is therefore used in the yogic treatment of many conditions.

The final position requires muscles in the neck, shoulders, arms, back and abdomen to be active, which strengthens and revitalizes the entire body. The inversion changes the effect of gravity on the body, which has an important effect on blood circulation to the legs and head; increases pressure on the diaphragm which aids deep exhalation to expel waste gases and bacteria from the lungs and can relieve the daily effects of gravity on the spine.

### Contraindications and Cautions:

With a little preparation, (including strengthening the arms shoulders and neck as well as some practice balancing) Sirsasana can be performed by almost anyone. However, there are contraindications and those exhibiting these conditions should not practice Sirsasana.

- The inversion of Sirsasana increases the pressure of blood flow to the brain and eyes. It is therefore important that Sirsasana should not be practiced by those with high blood pressure, headaches, hemorrhaging or other brain or blood disorders.
- Sirsasana should not be practiced by those with eye conditions such as weak eye capillaries, cataracts, or conjunctivitis.
- Sirsasana should not be practice by pregnant or menstruating women.

## Twists



## Twisted Chair | Parivrtta Utkatasana



(OOT-kah-TAHS-anna)  
utkata = powerful, fierce

### Benefits:

- Strengthens the ankles, thighs, calves, and spine
- Stretches shoulders and chest
- Stimulates the abdominal organs, diaphragm, and heart
- Reduces flat feet

### Twisted Chair into the Twisted Lunge:

- From Uttanasana Forward Fold. Keep your hands on the floor and lower your hips, bending your knees, hips, and ankles, as if you're bending to sit in a child's chair. Lift your torso and stretch your arms to the ceiling, keeping your hips as low as possible.
- From this pose, bring the hands to the heart center. Pull in at the waist and rotate the rib cage to draw the left elbow to the outside of the right thigh.
- Hold for 5 breaths, twisting deeper, and then another 5 to 7 breaths without changing position. Lower the left hand to the floor, may use a block, and step straight back with the left leg in one fell swoop.
- Stretch the right arm to the sky, deepen the rotation at the waist, and hold for 10 breaths. Step the left foot back to the right. Start from Forward Fold and repeat on the other side.

## Twisted Prayer Lunge | Parivrtta Parsvakonasana



Turn your navel and coil the right rib cage towards your inner left thigh. Feel the spiral of the spine as you twist. Keep the right hip from riding up into the waist by drawing back through the right heel. Turn your gaze towards the earth to release any tension in your neck. As you wind more deeply into the twist, relax your eyes, the base of your tongue, and both sides of your jaw. Feel the compression of your organs as you turn your belly towards your inner thigh. Lengthen the ribs. Coax your inhalations into the spaces between your ribs and collarbones, feeling the length of your spine. As you exhale, release the navel more deeply towards the spine, softening your ribcage. Turn your head in the direction of the twist (towards the sky) as long as the neck does not feel strained.

## Crescent Lunge to Parivrtta Anjaneyasana



Begin in Crescent Lunge. Draw your hands to your heart. Twist toward your bent leg keeping the shoulders stacked directly above the pelvis. Do not lean forward out of habit. Inhale and twist, opening your arm level with the horizon. Looking past your thumb behind you, continue to lift from the ribs as you sink down into the front thigh. Bring the front hand from heart center to the front of the mat level with the horizon. Inhale and twist deeper. Exhale and release any tension. From here you can stay for several breaths looking as far toward your back shoulder as possible. Also, you can windmill your back hand to the earth, just outside the foot, and the top hand will reach toward the sky. Unwind, coming back to Crescent Lunge facing front. Inhale and push off the ball of the back foot. Exhale to Mountain pose. Rest.

# Standing Hand to Big Toe Twist | Parivrtta Hasta Padangusthasana

Hasta-pada-angusta-asana

The Hand-Foot-Big Toe Pose

Parivrtta Hasta Padangusthasana

## Benefits:

- Strengthens the legs and ankles
- Stretches the backs of the legs
- Improves sense of balance

## Contraindications and Cautions:

If you suffer from a lower back, knee or ankle injury, avoid performing the Revolved Hand to Big Toe pose unless you've consulted with an experienced yoga instructor.

## Seated Twists

### Ardha Matsyendrasana | Half Lord of the Fishes Pose

ARE-dah MOT-see-en-DRAHS-anna)

ardha = half

Matsyendra = king of the fish (matsya = fish

indra = ruler), a legendary teacher of yoga

#### Benefits:

- Stimulates the liver and kidneys
- Stretches the shoulders, hips, and neck
- Energizes the spine
- Stimulates the digestive fire, Agni, in the belly
- Relieves menstrual discomfort, fatigue, sciatica, and backache
- Therapeutic for asthma and infertility
- Traditional texts say that Ardha Matsyendrasana increases appetite, destroys most deadly diseases, and awakens kundalini.

#### Modifications and Props:

It's often difficult at first to get the torso snug against the inner thigh. Position yourself a foot or so away from a wall, with your back to the wall; the exact distance will depend on the length of your arms. Exhale into the twist and reach back for the wall. Your arm should be almost but not quite extended (make sure you aren't sitting too close to the wall, which will jam the shoulder). Push the wall away and move the front torso against the thigh.

## Marichi's Pose | Marichyasana III

(mar-ee-chee-AHS-anna)

"Marichi" literally means a ray of light (of the sun or moon). Marichi is the son of Brahma and chief of the Maruts ("shining ones"), the war-like storm gods. He's one of the seven (sometimes 10 or 12) seers (rishis) or lords of creation (prajapatis), who intuitively "see" and declare the divine law of the universe (dharma). Marichi is the great-grandfather of Manu ("man, thinking, intelligent"), the Vedic Adam and the "father" of humanity.

### Benefits:

- Massages abdominal organs, including the liver and kidneys
- Stretches the shoulders
- Stimulates the brain
- Relieves mild backache and hip pain
- Strengthens and stretches the spine

### Contraindications and Cautions:

Serious back or spine injury: Perform this pose only with the supervision of an experienced teacher. Also avoid this pose if you have:

- High or low blood pressure
- Migraine
- Diarrhea
- Headache
- Insomnia

### Beginner's Tip:

It's often difficult for beginners to sit upright after bending the knee as described in the first step. The pelvis tends to sink backward, which rounds the back and could cause back pain. To offset this problem and keep the pelvis in a neutral position, sit on a thickly folded blanket or bolster.

## Supine Spinal Twist | Jathara Parivartanasana



### **Variations with Strap, Straight Leg or Bent Knee**

#### **Benefits:**

Stretches the glutes. Stretches and relaxes the spine. Can help relieve back pain, though should be approached with caution by those with degenerative disk disease.

#### **Variations:**

Before twisting, take your legs into the air and wrap your right leg around your left, coming into Eagle legs. Then twist, bringing the right knee over to the left side of the body. Remember to repeat on the other side.

Bring the leg straight in the air with a strap buckled around the mid part of the foot. Hold the strap with same side hand and bring the strap under the shoulder girdle and around to the opposite shoulder and grab with the opposite hand, bending at the elbow. Don't let the strap cut into the neck or the kidneys. Using the body weight and holding onto the strap like a pulley, allow the leg to drop open to the same side. Keep both top points of the pelvic girdle even and relax the belly. You may use a block or blanket as a prop.

To twist take the leg back up in the air and remove the strap from under the body. Pass it to across the body and hold with the opposite hand, twist the leg across the body, resting the elbow on the ground. Release and switch the strap to other foot.

## Restorative



# Pose Dedicated to the Sage Marichi, Variation 1 |

## Marichyasana I

### Benefits:

- Calms the brain
- Stretches the spine and shoulders
- Stimulates abdominal organs like the liver and kidneys
- Improves digestion

### Beginner's Tip:

Because of tightness in the groins, beginners often have difficulty keeping the bent-knee thigh close to the side of the torso. This makes it more difficult to notch the shin into the armpit and wrap the arm around the leg. As you bring the arm forward in preparation for the pose, grip the bent-knee shin with the opposite-side hand and pull the thigh in against the side torso.

### Variations:

You can perform Marichyasana I with a slightly different leg position. From Dandasana, bend both knees and place your feet on the floor, heels about a foot away from the sitting bones. Slide your right heel under the left leg to the outside of the left hip and lay the outer leg down on the floor. Then place the left heel just in front of the right ankle. Now perform the pose as described above. This is an excellent preparation for Malasana (Garland Pose) and Bakasana (Crane Pose).

### Modifications and Props:

- To move more deeply into the forward bend in this pose, it is helpful for beginning students to sit up high on a bolster or thickly folded blanket. Beginners can also use a strap between the hands if there is difficulty in clasping the hands behind the back.
- Marichyasana I is usually part of a long sequence of seated forward bends:

### Follow-up:

- Upavistha Konasana • Paschimottanasana.
- Bakasana • Bharadvajasana and Malasana

## Hero's Pose | Virasana

### Reclined Hero's Pose | Supta Virasana



(veer-AHS-anna) vira = man, hero, chief

(compare Latin vir, "man," the root of English words virile and virtue)

(soup-tah veer-AHS-anna) supta = lying down, reclining

#### Benefits:

- Stretches the abdomen, thighs and deep hip flexors (psoas), knees, and ankles
- Strengthens the arches
- Relieves tired legs
- Improves digestion and relieves gas
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menstrual pain and menopause
- Reduces swelling of the legs during pregnancy (through second trimester)
- Therapeutic for high blood pressure and asthma

#### Variations:

- Ardha Virasana: One leg in Hero's one leg in Staff; switch legs half way.
- Supta Ardha Virasana (are-dah = half). To sit in Ardha Virasana, draw just your right leg back into Virasana. You can keep your left knee bent with the foot on the floor or straighten your left leg by pushing out through the heel. Switch sides.
- Supta Virasana

#### Modifications and Props:

Use 1-2 blocks under sits bones for knee restrictions, keeping spine long. Do not sit on feet but between feet keeping knees pointing forward, spine long and head over heart. Another modification is moving into Stands on Knees instead of staying in Hero's Pose. Ground hands on thighs.

If you're not able to recline fully on the floor, set a bolster or one or more folded blankets behind yourself to fully support your spine and head. Use as much height as you need to make the position reasonably comfortable.

Remember this pose is not about comfort, however, it should not be painful.

### Beginner's Tip:

If your thighs insist on sliding apart in this pose, you might try one of two short-term solutions: bind your thighs together with a strap positioned around the mid-thighs; or squeeze a 2- to 3-inch thick book between your thighs. In either case be sure to draw your inner groins sharply up into your pelvis.

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Heart problems
- Headache: Practice this pose lying back on a bolster.
- Serious Back, Knee or ankle injury: Avoid this pose unless you have the assistance of an experienced instructor.

### Preparatory Poses:

•Balasana •Baddha Konasana

### Follow-Up Poses:

•Padmasana •Bakasana •Inversions •Back bends •Standing poses

## Low Goddess | Garland Pose | Squat Pose | Low Malasana



### Benefits:

This yoga pose is especially good for pregnant women as a regular practice of this posture alleviates labor pain before delivery. It helps you to open your hips and in the last days of pregnancy helps to make your baby feel the pull down - it can make the birth happen a bit earlier especially if the child is already post term.

Malasana is also beneficial for women who are not pregnant and men as well! It strengthens your calves, ankles, feet, and toes. It relaxes your lower back and the muscles simply feel the pull of gravity down towards the earth. The pose activates the second chakra which is related to sexuality but even more to our feelings.

Malasana, as its real name tells, helps against constipation and brings your bowels to the right rhythm so that the functions of your metabolism work properly.

At the base of this posture's name, there is a big misunderstanding and a confusion of Sanskrit words. The commonly known but unfortunately wrong English term is 'Garland Pose'.

The idea behind this translation is that 'Malasana' comes from the Sanskrit word Maalaa which would correctly be transcribed as 'Maalaa' and which indeed would be a garland. Where however in this pose do you see a necklace or garland? When being asked, some people say it is the pose of receiving a flower garland, a common form of honoring someone in India.

The truth however is that 'Malasana' comes from the Sanskrit word Mala which would be transcribed as 'Mala' and which would mean excrement or shit. Indeed, the traditional way of going to toilet in India is by squatting on the floor. Yoga describes that in this posture, the intestines are in the best position to release all waste that is left after digestion. It is thus in reality a "Shitting Pose".

Mala (Maalaa) = Garland, Necklace, Rosary

मल = Mala = Excrement, Shit ('Chit Happens!'~Nicolai Bachman)

By comparing the original writing, the Devanagari script, you can clearly see that the mistake happened in the transliteration where the English is lacking a proper writing for the long and short 'a'.

The conclusion is that in hundreds of modern English yoga books and popular yoga websites, "Malasana" is wrongly translated to "Garland Pose".

### Beginner Tips:

If you get tired in this yoga pose, bring your body weight to the back on the heels for a while before you shift it back to the front. It will feel like swinging your weight in between your toes and heels which will not only help you find comfort in the pose but also exercise your leg muscles.

### Contraindications and Cautions:

Low back or knee injuries

## Child's Pose | Balasana



(bah-LAHS-anna)  
bala = child/ baby

### Benefits:

- Gently stretches the hips, thighs, and ankles
- Calms the brain and helps relieve stress and fatigue
- Relieves back and neck pain when done with head and torso supported

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Diarrhea
- Pregnancy
- Knee injury: Avoid Balasana unless you have the supervision of an experienced teacher.

### Variations:

## Extended Child's Pose



To increase the length of the torso, stretch your arms forward. Bring elbows off the ground. Lift your buttocks just slightly away from your heels. Reach the arms longer while you draw the shoulder blades down the back. Press the tailbone toward the heels to lengthen the spine.

- Wide Knee Child's Pose

### Modifications and Props:

If you have difficulty sitting on your heels in this pose, place a thickly folded blanket between your back thighs and calves. Stack both fists under the forehead for support if the head is not at rest completely, or rest forehead on a yoga block or blanket.

Balasana is called the Pose of Wisdom- the head is below the heart in surrender, the third eye is placed on the Earth.

## Reclined Butterfly | Supta Pada Baddha Konasana

(SOOP-tah PAH-dah BAH-dah cone-AHS-anna)

supta= reclined | pada= foot | baddha = bound | kona = angle

### Benefits:

- Stimulates abdominal organs like the ovaries and prostate gland, bladder, and kidneys
- Stimulates the heart and improves general circulation
- Stretches the inner thighs, groins, and knees
- Helps relieve the symptoms of stress, mild depression, menstruation and menopause

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Groin or knee injury: Only perform this pose with blanket support under the outer thighs.

### Beginner's Tip:

Another way to deal with strain in the inner thighs and groins is to raise the feet slightly off the floor. Use a block padded with a sticky mat and lay the outside edges of your feet parallel to the long axis of the block's top face. If the lowest height of the block isn't sufficient to relieve the strain, turn the block to its middle height.

### Variations:

You can modify this pose and increase the stretch to the inner thighs and groins by elevating your pelvis off the floor. Bringing your heels to the floor in Supta Baddha Konasana, press through your feet to lift your pelvis slightly up. Position a block under your pelvis, lower your sacrum onto the block, and drop your knees out to the sides again, pressing your soles back together. The block has three heights: low, medium, and high. Start at the lowest height and gradually work your way up the ladder. Be careful with the block's highest height, it can be quite intense.

Use a strap. Start in Seated Cobblers Pose. Make a big loop with the D ring tightened at the end. Bring the loop over your torso and place the strap on the rim of the pelvic girdle below the kidneys on the bones of the pelvis. Hoop strap over the ankles and pull the tail end of the strap to tighten making a 'Yogi Seatbelt'.

### Modifications and Props:

If you feel any strain in the inner thighs and groins, support each of your thighs on a block or folded blanket slightly above the maximum stretch of the psoas. Make sure each support, whether a block or blanket, is the same height. Continue sinking the psoas into the pelvis.

# Corpse Pose | Savasana



(shah-VAHS-anna)

sava = corpse

This pose is also called Mrtasana (pronounced mrit-TAHS-anna, mrta = death)

## Benefits:

- Calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild depression
- Relaxes the body
- Reduces headache, fatigue, and insomnia
- Helps to lower blood pressure

## Contraindications and Cautions:

- Back injury or discomfort: Do this pose with your knees bent and your feet on the floor, hip-distance apart; either bind the thighs parallel to each other with a strap (taking care not to position the heels too close to the buttocks) or support the bent knees on a bolster.
- Pregnancy: Raise your head and chest on a bolster.

## Variations:

- Many special adjustments and Thai Bodywork can be done during Savasana.
- Adjusting: In Savasana, it's especially useful to check for physical alignment. One of the most difficult parts of the body to align is the head. Teachers can start at the top of the mat near the head and observe the head's position relative to the shoulders. It is common for students' heads to be tilted or turned to one side or the other. Gently cradle the head in your hands and draw the base of the skull away from the back of the neck, pressing the index and middle finger into the occipital bone for a release point. Lengthen the shorter side of the neck, so that both ears are equidistant from the shoulders. Then lay their head back down on the floor, making sure that the tip of their nose is pointing directly toward the ceiling. This is a great time for a scalp massage.
- Aromatherapy is a wonderful addition, offering the opportunity to choose to receive or not in a discreet way.
- Guided Meditation and Reiki are wonderful tools for Savasana.
- Teachers: Savasana should equal approximately 10% of your class time.

## Hatha and Vinyasa | Asana 201a

### Asana 201



sandy foster  
yoga bliss photo

## Arm Balances



## Side Plank | Vasisthasana to Wild Thing | Camatkarasana



**(vah-sish-TAHS-anna)**

*Vasistha* = literally means "most excellent, best, richest." Vasistha is the name of several well-known sages in the yoga tradition. There's a Vasistha numbered among the seven (sometimes 10 or 12) seers (rishis) or lords of creation (prajapatis), and a Vasistha who is the author of a number of Vedic hymns. He is also said to be the owner of the fabulous "cow of plenty," Nandini ("delight"), which grants his every wish and accounts for his infinite wealth.

### Benefits:

- Strengthens the arms, belly, and legs
- Stretches and strengthens the wrists
- Stretches the backs of the legs when lifting top leg, Iyengar style
- Improves sense of balance
- Strengthens the spine
- Good preparation for more challenging arm balances

### Variation:

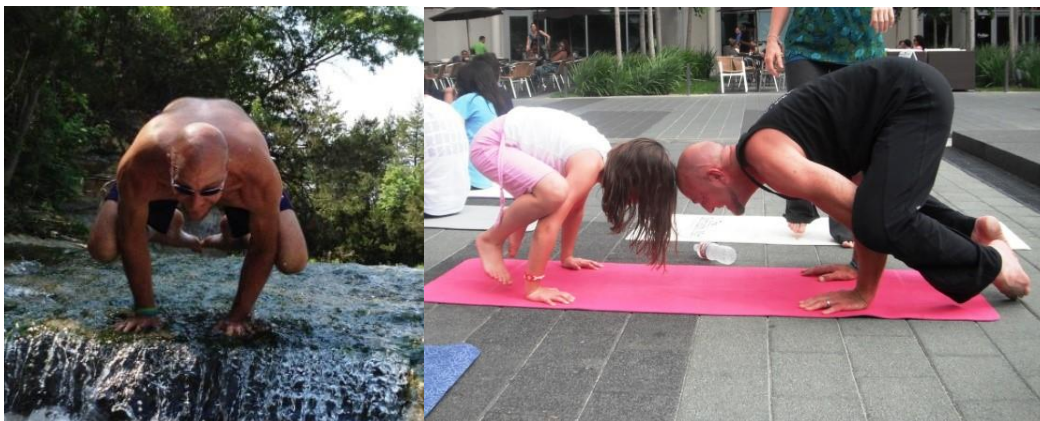
- Wild Thing | Camatkarasana
- From *Side Plank*: Step top foot behind hip. Flex calf and raise heel, lifting the hips into a backbend. Reach free hand up and drape gently over body, reaching back and up.

•*From Downward Facing Dog:* Lift the right leg, coming into three-legged dog. Open the right hip towards the ceiling and bend the right knee. Continue opening the hip and begin pivoting on the ball of the left foot to bring yourself into position for a backbend. As the hips come to face the ceiling, bring the right foot to the floor, this time on the outside of and parallel to the left foot. The right arm comes off the floor and stretches to the front of the mat. To come out, pivot on the ball of the left foot and drop the right arm to return to three-legged dog. Repeat on the other side.

### Camatkarasana Benefits:

- Improves spinal flexibility
- Strengthens the arms
- Advanced Backbend

## Crow | Crane | Bakasana



(bahk-AHS-anna)

baka = crane

Begin by bending the knees slightly, bring your palms flat on the floor about shoulder distance apart. Place the knees on the back of the upper arms. Start to come forward, lifting the head as you go. Take feet off the floor, one at a time, so you come to balance with both feet up.

Beginner's Tip: Try lifting one foot up at a time to get a feel for how far forward you need to bring yourself. Do not let your head drop. This will cause you to tip forward and lose balance. Put a blanket in front of you so you won't be afraid of hitting your head if you fall. Everyone falls when learning this pose.

Advanced: Once you come up into the pose, do not let your elbows splay out to either side. Work on straightening your arms. Tuck the heels, point the toes, and jump back to Chaturanga.

### Benefits:

- Strengthens arms, wrists, forearms and abdomen
- Stretches the upper back
- Strengthens the abdominal muscles
- Opens the groins
- Tones the abdominal organs
- Improves balance

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Pregnancy

## Shoulder Pressing Pose | Bhujapidasana

### Benefits:

- Strengthens the arms and wrists
- Tones the belly
- Improves balance

### Contraindications and Cautions:

Shoulder, elbow, wrist and low back injuries

### Preparatory Poses

- Garudasana (Eagle Pose) •Malasana (Garland Pose)
- Bakasana (Crane Pose) •Baddha Konasana (Bound Angle Pose)

## Handstand | Adho Mukha Vrksasana



(ah-doh moo-kah vriks-SHAHS-anna) adho mukha = face downward (adho = downward; mukha = face)

vrksa = tree

### Benefits:

- Strengthens the shoulders, arms, and wrists
- Stretches the belly
- Improves sense of balance
- Calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild depression

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Headache
- Heart condition
- High blood pressure
- Menstruation
- Back, shoulder, or neck injury
- Pregnancy: If you are experienced with this pose, you can continue to practice it late into pregnancy. Do not, however, take up the practice of Adho Mukha Vrksasana after you become pregnant.

### Preparatory Poses:

- Adho Mukha Svanasana •Bakasana •Pincha Mayurasana
- Plank Pose •Supta Virasana •Tadasana
- Uttanasana •Virasana

# Peacock | Forearm Balance

## Mayurasana | Pincha Mayurasana



Half Peacock

(pin-cha my-your-AHS-anna) piñca = feather  
mayura = peacock

### Benefits:

- Strengthens the shoulders, arms, and back
- Stretches the shoulders and neck, chest, and belly
- Improves sense of balance
- Calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild depression

Prep on wall to open shoulders

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Back, shoulder, or neck injury, headache
- Heart condition
- High blood pressure
- Menstruation

### Preparatory Poses:

- Adho Mukha Vrksasana • Gomukhasana • Supta Virasana
- Prasarita Padottanasana (with a block squeezed between the bent elbows)

## Upward Plank Pose | Purvottanasana | Incline Plank



### Benefits:

- Strengthens the arms, wrists and legs
- Stretches the shoulders, chest, and front ankles

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Wrist injury
- With a neck injury, support the head on a wall or chair seat

### Modifications:

- Table Top with knees bent, jalandhara bandha (throat lock)

## Visvamitra's Pose | Visvamitrasana

### Supta Visvamitrasana

It's a twist! It's a standing pose! It's an arm balance! Visvamitrasana is a super pose, all those things and more.

Visvamitrasana is something to save for the peak of your yoga practice. It's important that you thoroughly warm up your hamstrings, hips, shoulders, and side waist before going into the pose. Try a warm-up sequence that includes the following: Sun Salutations, Trikonasana (Triangle), Parsvakonasana (Side Angle Pose), Virabhadrasana II (Warrior Pose II), Malasana (Garland Pose), and Prasarita Padottanasana (Wide-Legged Standing Forward Bend). Prepare for the arm balance with Tolasana (Scale Pose) and Bhujapidasana (Shoulder-Pressing Pose).

## Running Man | Eka Pada Koundinyasana

### Benefits:

- Strengthens the arms and wrists
- Tones the belly and spine

## Extended Side Crow | Parsva Bakasana to Dwi Pada Koundinyasana



Side Crow is the precursor to Dwi Pada Koundinyasana so take your time to tackle this Challenge Pose.

### Benefits:

- Strengthens the arms and wrists
- Tones the belly and spine
- Improves sense of balance

**Beginner's Tip:** To secure your balance, lower your forehead onto a block or bolster as you lift your feet off the floor.

Try checking out this article by Katherine Budig:

<http://blogs.yogajournal.com/challengepose/2013/04/dwi-pada-koundinyasana.html>

## Pendant Pose | Lolasana

### Benefits:

- Strengthens wrists
- Tones arms
- Develops abdominal muscles
- Strengthens back muscles

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Wrist injuries
- Shoulder pain
- Neck problems

## Firefly | Titibhasana



### Benefits:

- Stretches the inner groins and back torso
- Strengthens the arms and wrists
- Tones the belly
- Improves sense of balance

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Shoulder, elbow, wrist and low back injuries

### Preparatory Poses:

- Garudasana (arms only) •Malasana
- Bakasana •Baddha Konasana

## Eight Angle | Astavakrasana



A challenging goal—learning Astavakrasana for example—can provide an excellent opportunity to practice blending seriousness and playfulness. Most students find the arm balances difficult and demanding.

Strength, flexibility, concentration, balance, perseverance—all are essential for performing these poses.

Begin in a comfortable, cross-legged position. Bend the right knee and bring the sole of the right foot to the floor close to the right buttock. Thread your right arm under your right knee. Lift the sole of the right foot off the floor, bringing your shin roughly parallel to the floor. Try to hook your right knee as high as possible on the right arm, maybe even bringing the knee over the right shoulder. Hook both ankles together. Squeeze the thighs into the shoulder. Twist slightly, plant both palms on the floor and straighten the legs to the sky. Press into your palms to lift your body from the floor. (One leg variation is elephant's trunk pose - eka hasta bhujaasana)

Bring your torso forward with chaturanga arms. Shift both legs over to the right side. Straighten both legs parallel to the earth. Lower down and repeat on the other side.

### Benefits:

- Strengthens the arms and abdominal muscles.
- Improves core strength and balance.

## Balance Poses



## Bird of Paradise



Begin in bound extended side angle pose. Turn your gaze to the floor and step the back foot forward so that the feet are parallel at the front of the mat. Keep the bind while you do this. Shift your weight onto your free leg (the unbound one). Slowly bring yourself up to standing, keeping the bind and therefore lifting the bound leg up with you. When you feel steady, extend the bound leg to a straight position. Bring the gaze over your opposite shoulder. To come out, slowly lower the bound leg to the floor. Step the free leg to the back of the mat, reversing the process you used to come into the pose. Repeat on the other side.

### Benefits:

Strengthens the legs, improves balance, opens the groins and hamstrings

Beginner's Tip: Stop whenever you find yourself needing to release the bind. You can use a strap instead of binding with your hands if you want to continue.

## Eagle | Garudasana



(gah-rue-DAHS-anna)

Garuda = the mythic "king of the birds," the vehicle of Vishnu. The word is usually rendered into English as "eagle," though according to one dictionary the name literally means "devourer," because Garuda was originally identified with the "all-consuming fire of the sun's rays."

### Benefits:

- Strengthens and stretches the ankles and calves
- Stretches the thighs, hips, shoulders, and upper back
- Improves concentration
- Improves sense of balance

### Variations:

Here's a challenging variation of *Garudasana*. From the pose as described above, exhale and lean your torso into a forward bend, pressing the forearms against the top-leg thigh. Hold for a few breaths, then come up with an inhalation. Repeat on the second side.

## Prone



## Side Bow | Parsva Dhanurasana

parsva = side

(don-your-AHS-anna)

dhanu = bow

### Benefits:

- Stretches the entire front of the body, ankles, thighs and groins, abdomen and chest, throat, and deep hip flexors (psoas)
- Strengthens the back muscles
- Stimulates the organs of the abdomen and neck
- Improves posture

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Serious lower-back or neck injury
- High or low blood pressure
- Migraine
- Insomnia

### Variations:

A variation of Dhanurasana is called Parsva (parsva = side, flank) Dhanurasana. Perform Dhanurasana then with an exhalation, dip your right shoulder toward the floor, strongly tug your left foot to the right, and roll over onto your right side. Stay on your right side for 20 to 30 seconds, then, as you exhale, roll across your belly and over to the left. Stay here the same length of time, and finally roll back onto your belly with an exhalation.

This pose is so called because it looks like an archer's bow, the torso and legs representing the body of the bow, and the arms the string.

# Crocodile | Makarasana

Pranam Dandasana



Makarasana is also known as the `crocodile pose`. It involves lying flat and free like a crocodile. This asana is a type of cultural asana. `Makara` means `Crocodile` and while doing this Asana the body resembles the shape of the `crocodile`, hence it is known as Makarasana. The general posture of this asana shows the body to be lying prone, the chest should touch the ground and both the legs should stretch out. The person holds the head with both the arms.

## Benefits:

The Crocodile Pose can offer the following benefits when practiced regularly:

- Relaxes the body and mind completely.
- Relieves the fatigue from the muscles after a complex yoga pose.
- Resolves breathing problems and genitourinary disorders.
- Beneficial for Asthma
- Improves respiratory arrhythmia.
- Massages abdominal muscles
- Reduces high blood pressure.
- Enhances the functioning of small intestines and stimulates the digestive process.
- Fights against scoliosis and flatulence.

## Practice:

Begin with lying flat on the ground with your chin, abdomen and chest touching the yoga mat. Your legs should be stretched out with your back facing upwards.

Rest the arms comfortably on both sides. Now space your legs a few feet apart from each other. The heels should be pointing towards each other with their edges reaching the ground.

Let your toes point outwards, with the feet perpendicular to the legs. Now slowly lift your head and trunk. Move both hands beneath your opposite shoulders so that they hold them gently. When done correctly, a double triangle will be formed in which your forearms will be crossing the opposite arm.

Relax your forehead on this newly formed triangle so that your face dips in the hollow space. Shut your eyes and gently relax. Stay in this position with nasal, abdominal breathing as long as you feel comfortable.

Sway the body gently back and forth as if flowing in the fresh or saltwater. Become as aware and alert to your surroundings like a crocodile, living his life on his belly, as your body relaxes in the Crocodile Pose. Exit by exhaling and lying on your back.

There can be variations while practicing Makarasana. The person can bring either hand on the shoulder from below the armpit, if it is difficult to place one elbow on the other, one can place both elbows slightly apart. Head should essentially remain inside elbow. If it is difficult to rest the head, one may keep chin between the elbows.

### Beginner's Tips:

For newcomers to yoga, this yoga pose is quite beneficial in giving quick relief after performing the complex and exhausting asanas. You may perform this pose every time you want to relax your body in the middle of a series of big poses.

The advanced users of yoga will find the Crocodile Pose helpful in fighting against diseases like asthma and other related breathing disorders. A good practice of this yoga pose can also ensure removal of sciatica and problems concerned with slipped discs.

### Variations:

- Koi Fish, Rock with Prayer Hands, arms straight ahead, third eye on the earth.
- **Pranam Dandasana:** Complete surrender to Source. Use this as a recovery pose from a difficult sequence. Utilize any mudra that feels good to you.

In the East this pose is used as a form or offering of prayer in pilgrimages. Prayer mudra is used with arms stretching straight out in front of the body, as you completely lie flat and surrender, third eye to the Earth.

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Pain in waist
- Back pain
- Pregnancy (second or third trimester)
- Those having heart problems, obesity, gas or high blood pressure should not practice Makarasana.

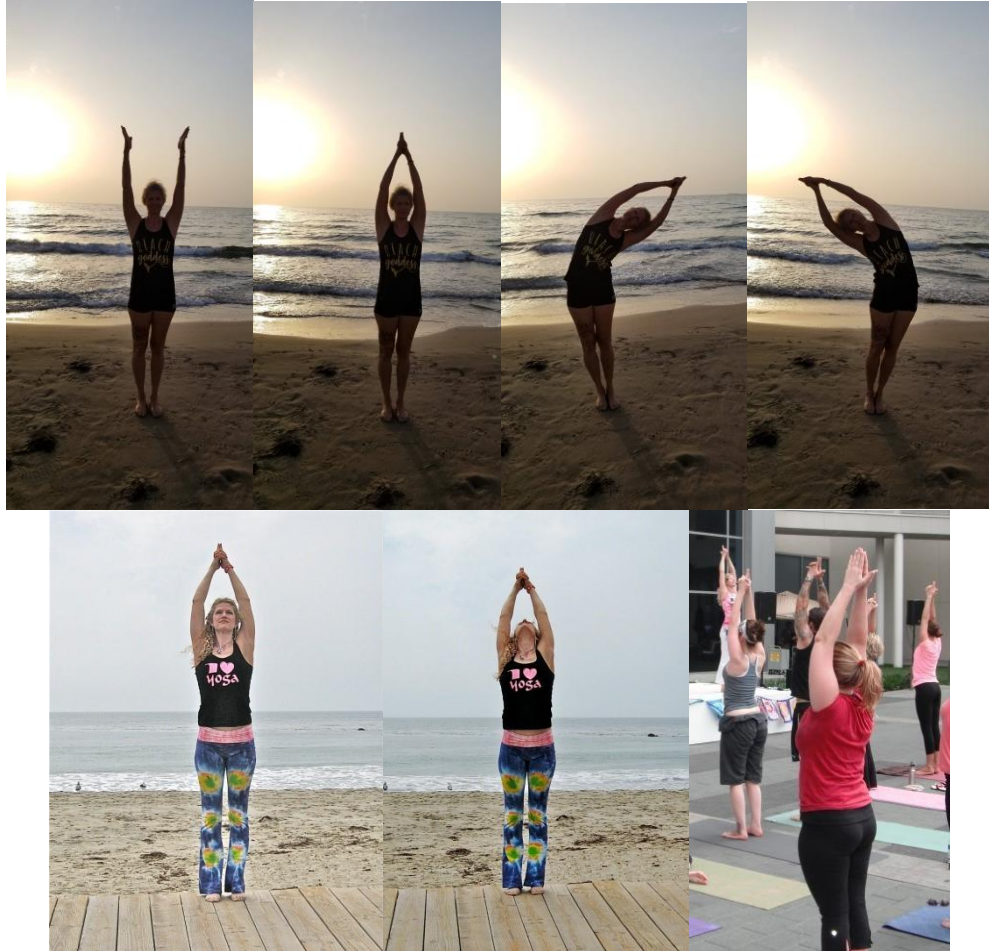
## Standing



## Upward Salute | Urdhva Hastasana

## Shoulder Opening | Crescent Stretch

Standing Anahatasana, Standing Camel, Standing Chest Expansion



Upward facing hands pose  
(oord-vah hahs-TAHS-anna)  
urdhva = raised (or upward)  
hasta = hand

### Benefits:

- Stretches the belly
- Improves digestion
- Stretches the shoulders and armpits
- Helps relieve mild anxiety

Variation: Lateral Flexion

Contraindications and Cautions:

Shoulder or neck injuries: Avoid the raised arms or modify with cactus arms.

### **Supine Shoulder Opening**

Practice: Arms interlocked under body, knees bent. Slowly roll over onto side body and open shoulder. Use foot as gas pedal to intensify or stabilize. Switch sides.

## Reverse Namaste



**Preparation:** Move arms up and down laterally (about 20 times) Rotate arms at the shoulders, clockwise and counterclockwise about 20 times.

**Practice:** First practice with one arm at a time, then both arms together. You may start out with just the tips of your fingers touching your lower back. From there you may find your flexibility increasing and slowly, the whole side of your hands can assume the reverse namaste position on the lower back. With further flexibility, you can slowly inch those hands up your back until they are past your mid-back. Continue practicing working on those tight shoulders.

## Hatha and Vinyasa | Asana 201b

### Forward Bending



## Extended Leg from Seated | Krounchasana

Vyasa, Patanjali's oldest extant commentator, mentions this pose, though he doesn't describe how to do it: "The curlew and other seats [asana] may be understood by actually seeing a curlew and the other animals seated" (*Yoga Sutra* 2.46).

Sit in Dandasana (Staff Pose). Bring your left leg into Ardha Virasana. Then bend your right knee and place the foot on the floor, just in front of the right sitting bone. Place your right arm against the inside of the right leg (so that your shoulder presses against the inner knee). Cross your hand in front of the right ankle and grasp the outside of the right foot. Finally grasp the inside of the right foot with your left hand. Lean back slightly, but keep the front torso long. Firm the shoulder blades against your back to help maintain the lift of the chest. Inhale and raise the leg diagonally to the floor, angled about 45 degrees, or with the foot as high as or slightly higher than your head. Hold this position for 30 seconds to a minute. Then exhale and release the raised leg. Carefully unbend and straighten the left leg (see the description of Virasana [Hero Pose] for the safe way to remove the leg from its position). Repeat with the legs reversed for the same length of time.

### Modifications and Props:

Many beginning students won't be able to completely straighten the raised leg or will lose the lift of the chest when attempting to straighten the leg. To counter this, place a strap around the sole of the foot before you try to straighten the leg. Hold the strap as close to the foot as possible, but don't sacrifice keeping the elbows fully extended and the chest lifted.

### Benefits and Contraindications:

Stretches the hamstrings and stimulates the abdominal organs and heart. If you have any serious knee or ankle problems, avoid Ardha Virasana.

## Standing Splits | Urdhva Prasarita Eka Pada



### Benefits:

- Calms the brain
- Stimulates the liver and kidneys
- Stretches the hamstrings, calves, and thighs
- Strengthens the thighs, knees, and ankles
- Stretches the back of the leg, the front thigh and groin

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Lower back injury
- Ankle or knee injury

### Preparatory Poses:

- Uttanasana • Padangusthasana • Prasarita Padottanasana
- Adho Mukha Svanasana • Janu Sirsasana
- Paschimottanasana • Supta Padangusthasana

## Head to Knee Forward Bend | Janu Sirsasana



(JAH-new shear-SHAHS-anna)

janu = knee

sirsa = head

### Benefits:

- Calms the brain and helps relieve mild depression
- Stretches the spine, shoulders, hamstrings, and groins
- Stimulates the liver and kidneys
- Improves digestion
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause
- Relieves anxiety, fatigue, headache, menstrual discomfort
- Therapeutic for high blood pressure, insomnia, and sinusitis
- Strengthens the back muscles during pregnancy (up to second trimester), done without coming forward, keeping your back-spine concave and front torso long.

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Asthma
- Diarrhea
- Knee injury: Don't flex the injured knee completely and support it on a folded blanket.

## Revolved Head to Knee Pose | Parivrtta Janu Sirsasana

parivrtta = revolved

janu = knee

sirsa = head

### Benefits:

- Stretches the spine, shoulders, and hamstrings
- Stimulates abdominal organs such as the liver and kidneys

- Improves digestion

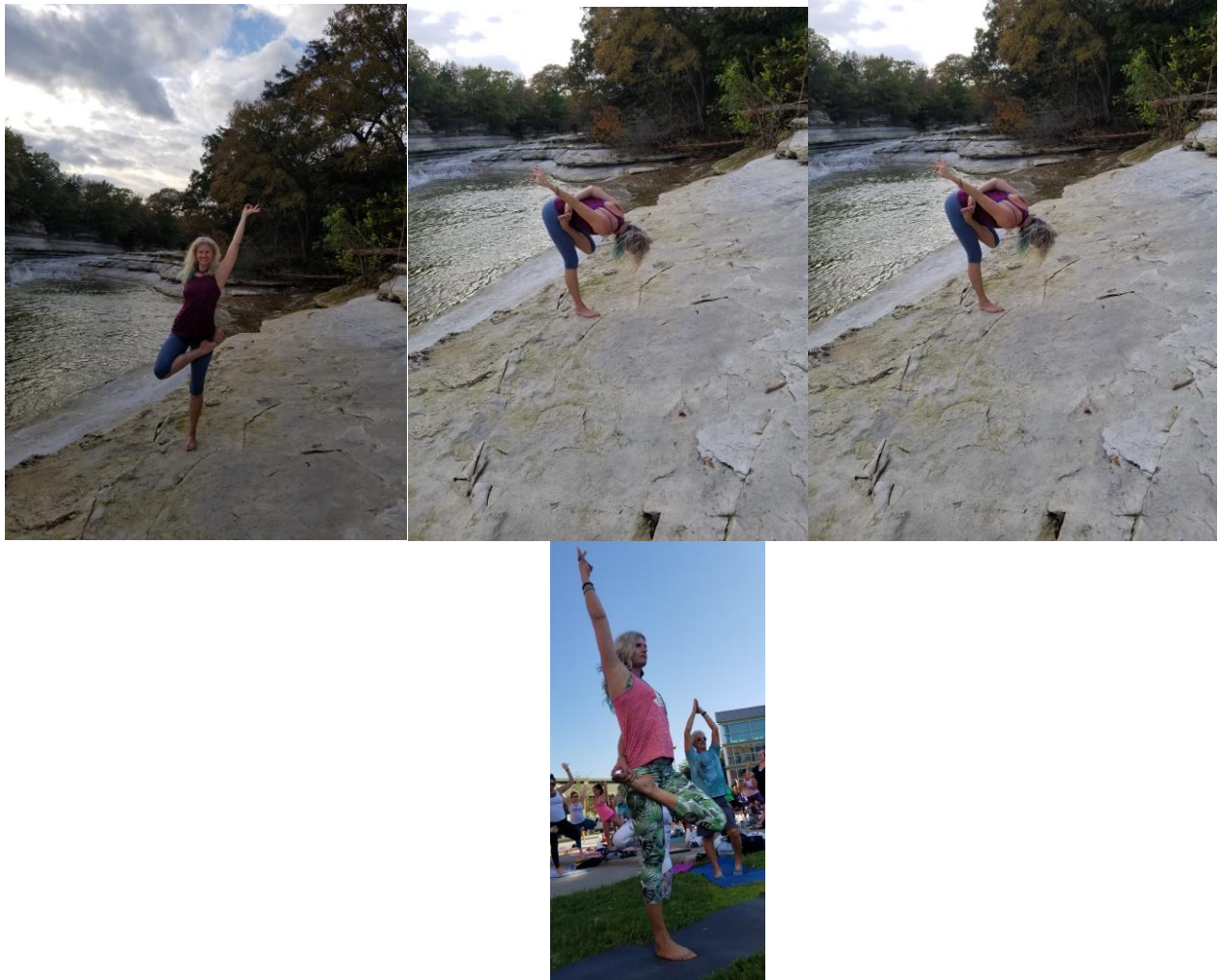
### Beginner's Tip:

It's better to keep the bottom shoulder in contact with the inner knee than to lose the contact in order to straighten the knee completely.

### Preparatory Poses

- Upavistha Konasana • Utthita Parsvakonasana • Adho Mukha Svanasana
- Baddha Konasana • Supta Padangusthasana • Uttanasana
- Vrksasana • Janu Sirsasana

## Half Bound Lotus Standing Forward Bend | Ardha Baddha Padmasana



Reference Article by Beryl Bender Birch <http://www.yogajournal.com/practice/1246>  
Nonviolence on the Mat

A good time to learn about maximizing reverence and minimizing violence is while struggling with a posture like Ardha Baddha Padmottanasana (Half Bound Lotus Standing Forward Bend)

## Ardha Baddha Paschimottanasana



## Wide Leg Forward Bend | Prasarita Padottanasana

(pra-sa-REE-tah pah-doh-tahn-AHS-anna)

prasarita = stretched out, expanded, spread, with outstretched limbs

pada = foot

ut = intense

tan = to stretch or extend (compare the Latin verb tendere, "to stretch or extend")

### Benefits:

- Strengthens and stretches the inner and back legs and the spine
- Tones the abdominal organs
- Calms the brain
- Relieves mild backache

Most beginning students are unable to easily touch the crown of their head to the floor in the last stage of this forward bend. Instead you can support your head on a padded block, a thickly folded blanket, or a bolster.

### Deepen The Pose:

Advanced students can get a better sense of how to work the arms in this pose by using a block. Set a block on one of its sides (with its long axis parallel to the long edge of your sticky mat) on the floor in front of you. Lean forward into the pose and grip the block between your forearms, just below the elbows, and pick it up off the floor. Then complete the pose with your palms and crown on the floor. Now squeeze the block firmly between your forearms, pressing your inner hands actively into the floor. This action of the arms will also get you ready for poses like Headstand variations and Pincha Mayurasana (Peacock Pose).

## Hip Opening



## Seated Wide Leg Forward Bend | Upavistha Konasana

### Benefits:

- Stretches the hamstrings and calves
- Elongates the spine

## Foot Behind Head Pose | Eka Pada Sirsasana

"Until one has practiced the posture, one does not realize the weight and pressure of the leg which rests on the neck." - BKS Iyengar on Eka Pada Sirsasana

Eka means one. Pada is the leg. This variation of Sirsasana is done by lowering one leg to the floor in front of the head, holding the other leg up vertically.

To begin start supine, by opening the hip in Ardha Ananda Balasana (half happy baby). Gently get the foot closer to behind the head. Lean up and place the foot behind head.

## Fire Log | Agnistambhasana



*agni* = fire | *stambha* = statue

### Benefits:

- Stretches the hip and groins

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Low back injury
- Knee injury

### Beginner's Tip:

- To help release the hip, grip your thigh at the hip crease and forcefully rotate it outward (or laterally) before you lean forward.

## Mermaid



"Set sail for Mermaid Pose, on a journey that will open your hips as it lengthens your back into a gorgeous arch. Imagine your foundation for this pose to be like the tail of a mermaid or merman—a powerful and supportive base that allows you an exhilarating sense of fluidity. Your upper body becomes buoyant and free as you discover the extension in your spine and the great opening of your heart.

By cultivating the strength and fluidity of a mermaid throughout this practice, you will increase your capacity to be strong, stable, lighthearted, and graceful, not just here, but in any pose and, indeed, in your whole life. With that in mind, prepare to playfully leave the comfort of the shore and embark on a great adventure." (Yoga Journal, NOAH MAZÉ JUL 6, 2011)

## Hanumanasana | Forward Splits



(hah-new-mahn-AHS-anna)

"It was the greatest leap ever taken. The speed of Hanuman's jump pulled blossoms and flowers into the air after him and they fell like little stars on the waving treetops. The animals on the beach had never seen such a thing; they cheered Hanuman, then the air burned from his passage, and red clouds flamed over the sky . . ." (Ramayana, retold by William Buck). This pose then, in which the legs are split forward and back, mimics Hanuman's famous leap from the southern tip of India to the island of Sri Lanka.

Practice this pose on a bare floor (without a sticky mat) with folded blankets under the back knee and front heel.

### Benefits:

- Stretches the thighs, hamstrings, groins and stimulates the abdominal organs

# Standing Head to Knee Pose | Dandayamana Janushirasana

The proximity of the heart to the floor, puts pressure on the muscle, exercising the heart through elevating the heart rate.

## Physical Benefits:

- Builds strength through the body
- Improves flexibility of sciatic nerve
- strengthens tendons
- Prevents wear and tear of knee cartilage through strengthening of soft tissues around the knee
- Helps clear and prevent problems with digestion, including flatulence
- Helps to develop balance
- Helps maintain sugar levels through compression of the pancreas
- Improves blood circulation throughout the body
- Tones abdominal muscles and thighs
- Improves your sex life through the massage of your reproductive organs
- helps to decrease varicose veins by exercising the long vein (great saphenous vein) running from the leg to the heart

## Energetic Benefits:

- Challenge of the posture helps to build patience and determination allowing light-heartedness
- The required concentration unifies the mind and body
- Working on balance between right and left side helps to balance yin and yang, male and female energies in the body
- The final expression of the pose involves both control and release, allowing you to let go of old patterns
- The pose helps to improve confidence and self-worth
- Helps to calm and clear the mind

## Back Bending | Heart Opening



# Wheel | Urdhva Dhanurasana

## Eka Pada Urdhva Dhanurasana | One Legged Wheel



(OORD-vah don-your-AHS-anna)

urdhva = upward

dhanu = bow

### Benefits:

- Stretches the chest and lungs
- Strengthens the arms, wrists, legs, buttocks, abdomen, and spine
- Stimulates the thyroid and pituitary
- Increases energy and counteracts depression
- Therapeutic for asthma, back pain, infertility, and osteoporosis

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Back injury
- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Diarrhea
- Headache
- Heart problems
- High or low blood pressure

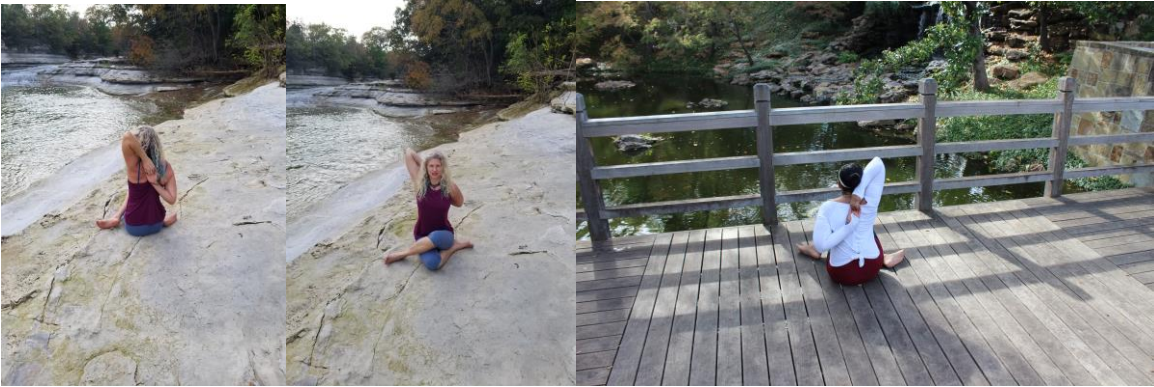
## Dwi Pada Viparita Dandasana | Two-Legged Inverted Staff Pose

Benefits: Stretches the entire front body and opens the chest

Modifications and Props:

Use a folding chair, place it a few feet from the wall facing out. Work your head through the opening between the back and seat, coming into a backbend with your head and forearms dropping off the front of the seat to the floor. Use the baseboard of the wall for leverage to increase and support your backbend.

## Cow Face Pose | Gomukhasana



(go-moo-KAHS-anna)

go = cow (Sanskrit go is a distant relative of the English word "cow")

mukha = face

### Benefits:

Stretches the ankles, hips and thighs, shoulders, armpits and triceps, and chest

### Beginner's Tip:

Use a folded blanket or bolster to lift the sitting bones off the floor and support them evenly.

## Inversions

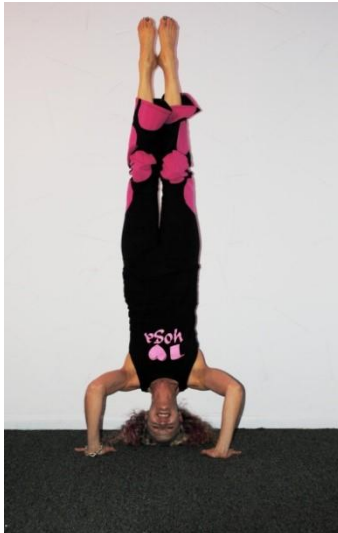


## Supported Headstand | Salamba Sirsasana



## Tripod Headstand | Sirsasana II

### | Mukta Hasta Sirsasana A



(sah-LOM-bah shear-SHAHS-anna)

salamba = with support (sa = with; alamba = support)

sirsa = head

Benefits:

- Calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild depression
- Stimulates the pituitary and pineal glands
- Strengthens the arms, legs, and spine
- Strengthens the lungs
- Tones the abdominal organs
- Improves digestion
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause
- Therapeutic for asthma, infertility, insomnia, and sinusitis

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- Back injury
- Headache
- Heart condition
- High blood pressure
- Menstruation
- Neck injury
- Low blood pressure: Don't start practice with this pose
- Pregnancy: If you are experienced with this pose, you can continue to practice it late into pregnancy. However, don't take up the practice of Sirsasana after you become pregnant.
- Sirsasana is considered an intermediate to advanced pose. Do not perform this pose without sufficient prior instruction from a master teacher. Some schools of yoga recommend doing Sirsasana before Sarvangasana, others vice versa.

### Beginner's Tip:

Beginners tend to take too much weight onto the neck and head when coming into and exiting this pose, a potentially harmful situation. Prepare to do this pose as described above against a wall. To come up, set your arms in place and lift your head slightly off the floor. Move into the wall-supported position with the head off the floor, then lower it lightly onto the floor. Support 90 to 95 percent of your weight on your shoulders and arms, even if it means staying for only a few seconds.

### Modifications and Props:

Balance in this pose is difficult at first. Perform Sirsasana against a wall. Bring the knuckles of the clasped hands to the wall. If possible, do the pose in the corner of a room, so that the right-angled walls touch your shoulders, hips, and outer heels.

Look at the major alignment "landmarks" along the side of the body: the outer ankle bone, the center of the hip, the center of the shoulder, and the ear hole. These points should all be in one line perpendicular to the floor.

## Scorpion | Vrschikasana



### Benefits:

Strengthens the shoulders, abdominals and back; improves balance

### Practice:

From Pincha Mayurasana, or forearm stand, bend the knees. Lift your head and bring your feet close to your head as you come in to a deep backbend. The knees will separate but keep the toes together.

### Beginner's Tip:

True beginners should not attempt this pose. If you are comfortable doing Forearm Stand at the wall, try moving yourself a little bit farther from the wall. Then walk your feet down the wall toward your head.

Advanced: Bring your feet to rest on your head.

## Handstand | Adho Mukha Vrksasana (see Asana 201a Arm Balances)

*(ah-doh moo-kah vriks-SHAHS-anna) adho mukha = face  
downward (adho = downward; mukha = face)  
vrksa = tree*

## Yoga Inversions During the Menstrual Period?

Depending on which school of yoga one follows, there are a range of opinions about whether one should do inverted poses such as Shoulder stand, Headstand, and Handstand while menstruating. On one end of the spectrum are people who say you do not need to change your yoga practice at all while menstruating. On the other end are people who say you should not do anything but the gentlest restorative yoga poses while on your period.

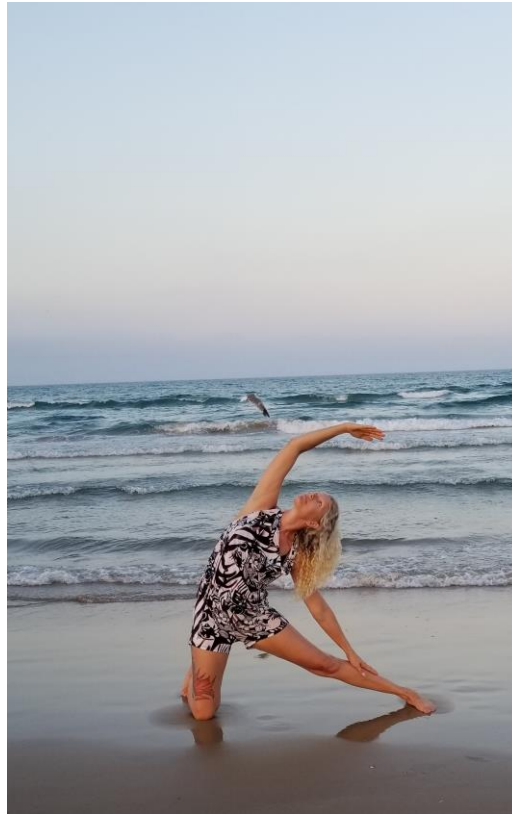
The most important thing is to listen to your body. Each woman has a different experience with her period, so no blanket rule will make sense to everyone. If doing a vigorous practice with no modifications makes you feel great when you are menstruating, then by all means do that. On the other hand, give yourself permission to take it easy when you have your period if that makes sense to your body.

If you don't want to call attention to yourself by calling out "I have my period!" when the teacher instructs the class to do an inversion, take Supta Baddha Konasana in which you lie on your back with the soles of your feet together and your knees falling out to either side. Or if you still want the benefits of the inversion, take Legs up the Wall, Viparita Karani, in which you lie on your back with your butt right at a wall and your legs going up the wall.

## Twists | Side Opening



## Gate Pose | Parighasana



(par-ee-GOSS-anna)

*parigha = an iron bar or beam used for locking or shutting a gate*

### Benefits:

- Stretches the sides of the torso and spine
- Stretches the hamstrings
- Opens the shoulders
- Stimulates abdominal organs and lungs

### Contraindications and Cautions:

- With any serious knee injury, kneeling might be difficult or impossible. In this case, perform the pose sitting on a chair. Arrange your legs either in front of your torso, with knees at right angles, or stretch one leg out to the side, modifying the full pose.
- *Assisting:* Stand facing their straight-leg side; right leg. Inhale, extend their right arm out to the side, parallel to the floor. Grasp their wrist and, at the same time, press the toes of your foot into their right groin. As you pull on the wrist also push on the groin. Lengthen them out to the side, stretching the underside ribs and reaching the arm away from the deepening groin. When they reach the maximum stretch let go. Then allow them to round over to the right side into the full pose.

## Twisted Chair | Parivrtta Utkatasana



## Utkatasana with Anjali Mudra Twist

### Benefits:

- Stretches the back, chest, and hips; strengthens the legs and core
- Grounding, strength, confidence
- Helps increase circulation by not only using every muscle in your body but also twisting, which wakes up your internal organs and aids in digestion.

Seated Hip and Shoulder Opening | Parivrtta Janu Sirsasana  
(see Asana 201 Forward Bending)

# Standing Forward Bend Twist | Parivrtta Uttanasana

## Practice:

(From Tadasana)

1. Lift the left forearm in front of the face.
2. Hold the left forearm just above the elbow with the right hand. With the right hand pull the left elbow to the right—bring the left shoulder underneath the chin.
3. Point the thumb forward and the outer edge of the hand back so the palm faces up.
4. Inhale fully. Exhale, fold the torso forward. Bend the left knee, keep the right leg straight.
5. Place the left elbow outside of the right shin.
6. Spin the hand toward the top of the foot and grab the outer edge of the right foot with the left fingertips. Press the thumb into the arch of the foot.
7. Press the left arm against the right shin.
8. With the right fingertips, grab the outer edge of the left foot—press the thumb into the arch of the foot.
9. Rotate the right elbow to the left until it is in line with the left leg.
10. Bring the right ear against the upper right arm, pull the head through the arms.
11. Keeping the hips square, twist the torso to the right and look forward.
12. Turn the abdomen to the right. Hold the pose and breathe.
13. To come out, release the hands and torso. Pause in Uttanasana Inhale, lift the torso to stand.

Repeat on the opposite side.

## Revolved Seated Forward Fold | Parivrtta Paschimottanasana

### Practice:

(From Dandasana)

1. Hold the right elbow in front of the face with the left hand.
2. With the left hand, pull the right elbow to the left—right shoulder under chin.
3. Point the palm up.
4. Inhale fully. Exhale and fold the torso over the legs.
5. Place the right elbow on the outside of the left shin.
6. Keep the palm facing up, spin the thumb down and hold the outer edge of the left foot with the right hand.
7. Press the right forearm into the left shin.
8. Inhale, lift the left arm to vertical. Exhale, hold the outer edge of the right foot with the left hand.
9. Twist the torso to the left and rotate the left shoulder over the right shoulder. Rotate the left elbow over the head. Reach the chest and head between the arms.
10. Look up. Hold the pose and breathe.
11. To come out, lower the left elbow and release the hands. Inhale, lift the torso to vertical. Place the hands next to the hips.

Repeat on the opposite side.

## Seated Half Hero's Pose | Parivrtta Krounchasana

### Practice:

(From Dandasana)

1. Bend the right knee and place the inner ankle against the right outer hip—shin and top of foot on floor. Point the foot back.
2. Lean to the left and pull the right glutes back with the right hand. Repeat on the other side.
3. Place the left foot on the floor in front of the left sit bone.
4. Flex the left foot—heel on the floor, toes lifted. Hold the foot with both hands.
5. Inhale, lengthen the spine. Exhale, lift and straighten the front leg.
6. Release the right hand and place the right upper arm on the outer shin. Hold the outer edge of the top foot with the right hand.
7. Clasp the inner edge of the right foot with the left hand.
8. Point the left elbow up and back. Inhale, draw the top leg and torso into each other. Exhale, twist the torso to the left. Push the back of the head into the top upper arm and bring the chin toward the armpit. Look back. Hold the pose and breathe.
9. To come out, inhale, look forward and turn the torso to face the top of the mat. Exhale, release the hands and lower the leg. Straighten both legs.

Repeat on the opposite side.



## Sources & Resources

Yoga 4 Love, Tools for Mind Body and Spirit for a Holistic Lifestyle by Lisa Ware

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Yoga Journal: [yogajournal.com](http://yogajournal.com)

[Bellaonline.com](http://Bellaonline.com)

[Lovemyyoga.com](http://Lovemyyoga.com)

Jaisiyaram: [Jaisiyaram.com](http://Jaisiyaram.com)

OhMyBikram: <http://ohmybikram.wordpress.com>

Yoga Journal, NOAH MAZÉ JUL 6, 2011



## Photo Credits & Asana Models

Chapter Covers: Lisa Ware; Yoga Bliss Photos by Sandy Foster

Asana Models (In Order of First Appearance)

- **Lisa Ware with professional photography by Sandy Foster**

- Amanda Leduc: Pyramid, Chakravakasana flow, Anahatasana, Apanasana, Viparita Karani, Dolphin, Vasisthasana to Camatkarasana
- Bevin Victory: Virabhadrasana III
- Crystal Mercer: Urdhva mukha Savasana, Matsyasana, & Gomukhasana. Photography by Lindsay E. Stone
- Rich Ware: Uttanasana, Sirsana II, Bakasana, Half Peacock, Acro Viparita Karani
- Desirée Graham: Vrksasana, Natarajasana & Bird of Paradise. Photography by Seth Phillips
- Aspen Ware: Natarajasana. Photography by Kim Caldwell photography; Vrksasana
- Rachel Maxwell: Supta Padangusthasana, Jathara Parivartanasana, Savasana, Ardha Baddha Paschimottanasana
- Katrina Burggraf: Padmasana, Mermaid, Lotus