

Asana 101

naadayoga

500 hr Teacher Training



Asana 101

Foundations of Asana

OVERVIEW

This manual examines, from both a historical and modern viewpoint, some of the foundational principles of asana (alignment, breath, movement) that are considered to be the most efficient and effective ways of experiencing the benefits of each asana. This information not only offers you the tools to deepen your own yoga practice as an individual, but will also lead you to eventually clearly instructing this information to others. This manual provides basic asanas that comprise a beginner level Naada Yoga sequence which become the framework for more complex teaching sequences. These poses, and their variations, are suitable for the majority of yoga participants and provide the foundation to explore the yoga asanas more deeply. Once you have gained a confident understanding and an inner experience of each pose, you are ready to pass this information on to others.

Objectives

When you have completed this module, you should be able to

1. Understand the definition of Hatha Yoga and Asana
2. Define the classification(s) of each asana
3. List all basic body parts
4. Define and utilize basic alignment to deepen the pose
5. Define and utilize imagery to deepen the pose
6. Define the primary and secondary principles of each asana
7. Define and utilize Tristana to deepen the pose
8. Define and utilize the action of grounding the femurs
9. Define and utilize the action of the shoulder loop
10. Define each asana in Sanskrit and English
11. Understand the benefits of each asana
12. Define common obstacles for each asana
13. Define variations for each asana
14. Define contraindications for each asana
15. Define counter-poses for each asana
16. Describe how to come in and out of each pose clearly

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HATHA YOGA OVERVIEW

Although Hatha Yoga itself is part of a larger universe of practice, it is important to always return to the basics, the asana, which embody the core of any complete Hatha Yoga practice and remind us that, as we move through our practice - and through our life - alignment, breath and movement are our foundation.

To understand and study asana you must first be familiar with how Hatha Yoga as a particular form of yoga is situated within the overall scheme of the various approaches to yoga. Within the realm of Hinduism, eight major forms of yoga have gained prominence: Raja Yoga (royal yoga), Hatha Yoga (physical yoga), Jnana Yoga (yoga of knowledge), Bhakti Yoga (devotional yoga, which includes the use of mantra), Karma Yoga (yoga of service), Kriya Yoga (purification yoga), Mantra Yoga (chanting yoga), Samnyasa Yoga (renunciate yoga).

Although there are different forms of yoga practice that focus on asana, they all fall under the category of Hatha Yoga if they include a physical component. Hatha yoga is one of the two branches of yoga that focuses on the physical body, the other one being Raja (or Classical) Yoga. Both of these are commonly referred to as sadanga yoga (i.e., yoga of six parts - 'sad' meaning six and 'anga' meaning limbs).

Hatha and Raja Yoga focus primarily on using the body and physical poses (asanas) to direct energy. Raja Yoga has an additional focus on the deeper meditation practices, hence it was considered a “Royal” yoga for more accomplished practitioners who had adequately prepared their bodies and minds for these higher meditative practices. In short, Raja was considered a “higher” practice, while Hatha was a preparatory one.

The word Hatha itself is derived from the word "ha", referring to the sun and the word "tha", meaning moon. Together, they evoke a union of two primordial forces. Hatha Yoga is thus said to join the sun (masculine, active) energy and the moon (feminine, receptive) energy together. This is believed to create balance and increase one's overall energy, which can then be directed towards a higher purpose.

The six limbs of Hatha Yoga:

1. *Asana*: Dynamic internal dances in the form of postures. These help to keep the body strong, flexible, and relaxed. Their practice strengthens the nervous system and refines our process of inner perception.
2. *Pranayama*: Roughly defined as breathing practices, and more specifically defined as practices that help us to develop constancy in the movement of Prana, or life force.
3. *Pratyahara*: A deep inner focusing, drawing of one's attention toward silence rather than toward things.

4. *Dharana*: Focusing attention and cultivating inner perceptual awareness.
5. *Dhyana*: Sustaining awareness under all conditions.
6. *Samadhi*: The return of the mind into original silence or its original nature of non-separation.

HATHA YOGA IN THE EIGHT-LIMBED SYSTEM

Raja Yoga is frequently confused with the Ashtanga (eight-limbed: 'anga' meaning eight and 'anga' meaning limbs) Yoga system of Patanjali, the compiler of the *Yoga Sutras*. However, nowhere in *Yoga Sutras* is the term Raja Yoga used. Patanjali's eight-limbed system (see below) basically offers another view of a Hatha Yoga practice.

Eight-limbed system of Patanjali:

1. *Yamas*: How we are in the world, with our friends, family and community.
2. *Niyama*: How we are with ourselves.
3. *Asana*: Dynamic internal dances in the form of postures. These help to keep the body strong, flexible, and relaxed. Their practice strengthens the nervous system and refines our process of inner perception.
4. *Pranayama*: Roughly defined as breathing practices, and more specifically defined as practices that help us to develop constancy in the movement of Prana, or life force.
5. *Pratyahara*: A deep inner focusing, drawing of one's attention toward silence rather than toward things.
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8. *Samadhi*: The return of the mind into original silence or its original nature of non-separation.

ASANA: BRIEF OVERVIEW

The Sanskrit word *asana* derives from the verbal root meaning “to sit” or “be present” and is the most widely practiced and understood component of yoga in today’s modern world. Although its current popularity might be its most attractive feature, you can trace back its history thousands of years. In fact, images of figures seated in lotus pose can be seen in carvings from 3000 BC.

A key notion in the meaning of asana is that one’s “seat” or posture be stable, steady and comfortable (*sthirah sukhasanam asanam: Yoga Sutra Ch.2: 46*). This is important to remember when practicing and teaching. Traditionally, the practice of asana was used to prepare the body for meditation by encouraging flexibility of body and focus of mind, so steadiness, stability and calmness were encouraged throughout.

The practice of asana is designed to stimulate, stretch, and tone the musculoskeletal system, connective tissue, and the internal organs which comprise all the body's main systems. By stimulating organs, tissues and nerves, the nervous system pathways (*nadis*) are nourished, cleared and supported to allow one’s energy to move more efficiently through the body. Yoga asana can therefore help release physical and emotional tension, which contributes to an active or agitated mind and body, and allow the body and mind to settle more easily. Once tension is released one’s energy becomes more focused so that the techniques of inward focusing and concentration can be applied to meditation.

ASANA CLASSIFICATION

To compile a list of all yoga asana would easily rise into the hundreds. In order then not to confuse and overwhelm ourselves with the abundance of poses, the easiest solution is to organize asana under a system of classification. Here are nine basic classifications that all yoga asana can be grouped. Note that some poses can fall under several categories.

Reclined Positions: These poses tend to be more restorative and meditative in nature. The majority of them encourage the letting go of muscular effort to achieve deep relaxation. Other poses emphasize alignment principles so the student can better understand basic anatomy. These poses are generally refined with the support of props and longer holding times.

Forward Bends: Emphasize deep flexion in the hips. When the torso and thighs move together you are in a forward bend. In general, they are calming and cooling for the body, particularly if the chin is moving towards the chest.

Seated Poses: The majority of these poses open tight lower backs and hips. Emphasis is generally placed on the legs as the main foundational connection and a means to developing

length in the lumbar spine. The strength and alignment are extremely important in these poses, but even more so is a non-constricted and full breath.

Standing Poses: Emphasize the importance of the legs and an understanding of stability and steadiness, both physically, mentally, emotionally and energetically. The legs play a major role throughout all asana and are the main foundation for most poses with beginners. Standing poses are useful to relay this information.

Balancing Poses: Create extreme focus and concentration. They are an excellent introduction to the left and right sides of the body, and also are helpful in building endurance in the legs. They further develop the experience of the standing poses in terms of connecting with one's inner stability at all levels.

Arm balances: Help develop the strength and support in the upper body and serve to build confidence and steadiness. They can be a great introduction to the mechanics of the upper body. They are also very helpful to develop better breathing techniques. Along with backbends, they are some of the most energizing and demanding poses.

Backbends: Open up the chest and shoulders and provide support for the lungs to expand. Shallow backbends can be a great way to warm up the spine but deeper backbends should always follow a string of standing poses and be practiced in a progressive manner. Backbends open the heart-center and often provide deep emotional as well as physical release when done without force or aggression. Backbends energize the body and stimulate all body systems.

Twists: Release muscle tension in the torso, hips and shoulders. They provide mobility in the spinal column and relief after backbends. Commonly used to detoxify the kidneys and other major organs, twists are about release from the inside, out.

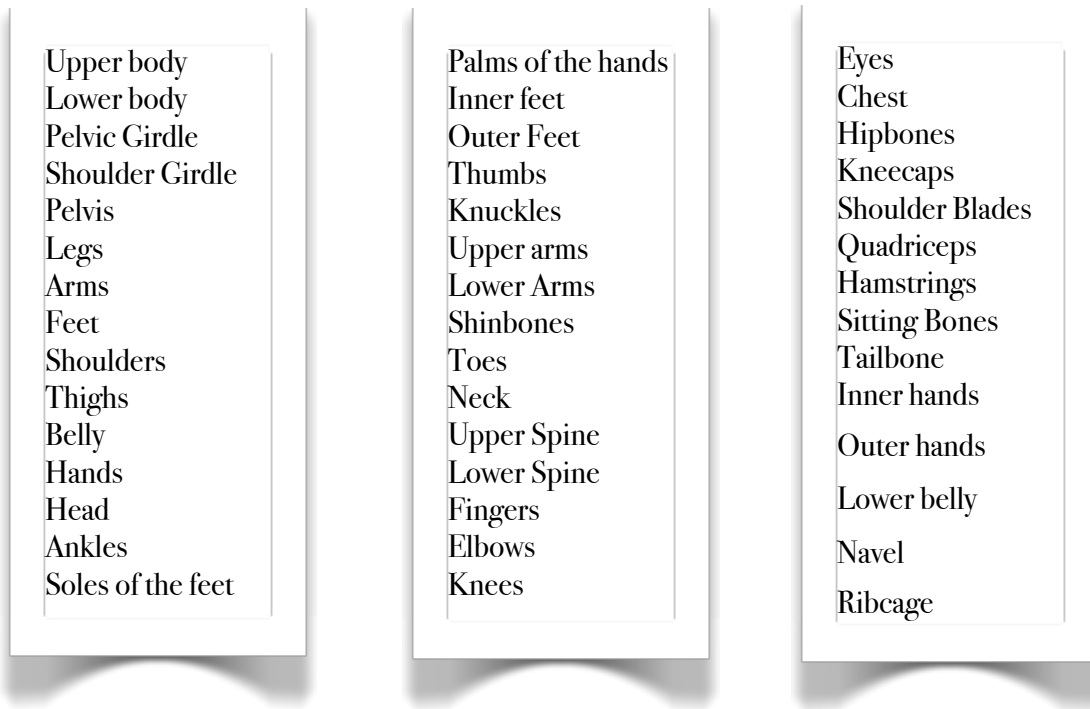
Inversions: Rebalance the body's systems at all levels. Anytime you see the head lower than the heart, it is an inversion. These poses are therapeutic in nature and are generally considered to be more advanced poses because of the demands that they put on the breath. It is recommended that these poses initially be practiced in the presence of a qualified teacher.

BASIC BODY PARTS & ANATOMICAL MOVEMENTS

Remember what it was like to take your first yoga class. There were so many things happening it was easy to become confused. If your descriptions and experience of the asana are not clear to you, it will be a challenge for you to convey this experience accurately when you teach. In this module, we will stick to basic anatomy and learn to direct body cues in a progressive and anatomical manner.

When explaining a pose, first limit your use of Sanskrit and complex anatomy. Make sure that you understand what you are explaining, as if you were hearing the information as a beginner. Vocabulary that is simple and basic will produce clearer results. It is important to begin with simple vocabulary and gradually become more advanced as you

see students developing. Here is a list of basic body parts and all the anatomical movements that your body can make. Every yoga posture is simply one possible combination of these basic movements. When you are ready to teach, take the time to explain these principles to your students. Strengthen the concept with specific poses and exercises and/or visual imagery (see “Imagery for Alignment” in Postural Analysis section) so your students will walk away with a deeper experience.



Flexion: Flexion is bending which increases the angle between the bones. All your joints are flexed when you are in the fetal position (Balasana, child’s pose).

Extension: An extension straightens the joints, which decreases the angle between bones. This movement is opposite of flexion. Lifting up to standing from a forward bend is extension.

Hyperextension: When a joint moves past the point of being straight, it is hyper-extended. (Hyper means over or past a normal point.) Going into a deep backbend like Urdhva Mukha Svanasana (upward facing dog) is a hyperextension of the spine.

Lateral flexion: This movement occurs when the spine is flexing sideways, instead of forward. (eg. Uttitha Trikonasana)

Rotation: A twisting or turning movement is rotation. The thigh rotates at the hip joint and the arm at the shoulder joint. The spine can also rotate, as can the knees, to a small degree. Twisting poses are a form of rotation.

Abduction: This is a movement away from the centerline of the body, as when lifting a limb away from the side of the body. When you lift the arms into Urdhva Hastasana (arms stretched up) this is an example of abduction.

Adduction: This is the movement toward the midline of the body, as in bringing the limb back from the sideways position. When you bring your arms down into Samstithi (equal standing) this is an example of adduction.

Inversion: A movement that turns the sole of the foot inward.

Eversion: A movement that turns the sole of the foot outward.

Plantar flexion: This movement flexes the foot toward the floor. Sometimes referred to as pointed. This occurs during Purvottanasana (intense east stretch).

Dorsi Flexion: This is an upward movement of the foot towards the nose. Sometimes referred to as being flexed. The feet are in dorsi flexion in Paschimottanasana (intense west stretch).

Supination: This movement occurs in three ways: when you turn the palm of your hand toward the ceiling, when you roll outside of your feet while standing (the same as inversion, but with the weight on the feet), and when you lie on your back in supine position. Think of supination for the hand as holding a bowl of soup. This occurs during samastithi (equal standing) when the palms gently turn forward to open the chest and in Savasana when you lay on your back.

Pronation: This movement occurs when you turn your palm down or roll in on the inside of your feet while standing (the same movement as eversion, but with weight on the feet). When you lie on your abdomen, you are lying in a prone position. Your palms are in pronation in Setu Bandasana (bridge) and you are in pronation in Bhujangasana (cobra).

POSTURAL ANALYSIS

Postural Alignment refers to the standing position of the skeletal structure in relation to the central axis. When weight balances on either side of the fulcrum (centre point), muscle work is not needed to maintain balance. Instead, the weight of one side, plus the weight superimposed on the other side, is centered at the joint, which serves as its fulcrum.

For example, the chin (mandible) weighs approximately the same as the back of the head (occipital). As both are equal weight, they counterbalance each other. Thus, little muscular work is required to hold up the head. Likewise, the ribs weigh about the same as the thoracic vertebrae they attach to, thus another counterbalance is formed.

The vertebrae in the lower back (lumbar spine) are bigger and heavier, as they have to carry all the weight of the spine, thorax, and head. Although there are no bones in the abdomen, the weight of the abdominal organs counterbalances the weight of the lumbar spine.

If a person is overweight or pregnant, the extra weight in the abdomen tends to tip the top of the pelvis forward making the lumbar spine hyperextend (arch or sway back). This may cause lower-back problems because the counterbalance is lost and the back muscles shorten and sometimes go into spasms.

Good alignment is important because the basic movement habits developed in a standing position influence all other body movements. Skeletal alignment is the foundation for movement. When you look at a skeleton in profile, the central axis should drop through the neck, in front of the thorax (mid-back), through the lower back, in front of the sacrum (last piece of bone before the tail bone), through the side of the hip, the side of the knee, and the ankle (or slightly in front of it).

Static and Dynamic Balance

Static means still. Static balance means that a structure can stand on its own without using energy, like a building or a pyramid. A static structure always has a fairly wide base of support and low center of gravity. Restorative Yoga is a static practice because the body is completely supported and can therefore release all muscular effort. When you lie down, your muscles do not have to work against gravity and your body can rest, conserving energy.

Dynamic means active. Dynamic balance means that the structure is being held up against gravity by active force. In the human skeleton, muscles supply this force. When standing, walking, or doing a yoga pose, you are always in a state of dynamic balance. To make yourself more stable while standing, you can widen your stance and bend your knees, which makes your base of support larger and lowers your center of gravity.

Logically thinking, if the center axis does not line up correctly the whole structure should fall over. This does not happen in the body because it is “strung” together by ligaments and muscles, but poor alignment puts stress on these areas. The muscles have to pull harder against gravity to keep the structure from falling over. Good alignment allows your muscles to do the least amount of work to maintain an upright standing position.

Images for alignment

Imagery is one of the most effective tools for correcting posture and alignment and for teaching yoga, as it directly activates the appropriate muscles for your movement goal. As the central nervous system activates numerous different muscles to carry out one movement, a total movement picture is needed.

Here are some suggestions of images to improve body alignment:

- I. Imagine your pelvis, trunk, and head as three spools of thread with the holes lined up so that you could drop a hollow tube or straw, which is your central axis, through all three spools. As you breathe, watch your air flow up and down that tube or straw. On the

- inhalation, watch it flow into the ground; the exhalation is out the top of your head. This follows the natural movement of the respiratory diaphragm.
2. Imagine that your body is a glass figurine, with the central axis tube. Watch your breath flow up and down that tube. In this and the previous image, you can picture the air as a particular color.
 3. A variation of the above images; imagine your central axis as a stream of colored water instead of air.
 4. Imagine your body as a mountain, wide at the bottom and pointed at the top (this is opposite of how your skeleton is built). Watch your central axis tube run from the base of the pyramid out the top of the point. Because mountains are very stable, this image helps you to balance and center your body.

ASANA: THREE PRIMARY PRINCIPLES

After one has gone through the basic principles of alignment, muscular actions and other details in a given asana, then one has more stability in the pose to then find stillness. The numerous details of alignment in each pose cannot all be remembered or focused on at once, so using some key points to bring a student back to the experience of the pose is very important. Below are what are referred to as the *three primary principles* which are a simple guide to help students move into (and out of) poses.

As a student becomes more familiar with the poses, there are personal adjustments that happen more naturally since the body has a capacity to remember vs only the intellect remembering the pose. At that point, the breath will naturally settle, and deeper refinements and adjustments can be made. Remember that the purpose of these principles is to create ease of body and freedom of breath.

Foundation: Is an essential component of a balanced asana. It provides the spine with correct alignment, while enabling a student to remain calm and present for an extended period of time. When a student finds their foundation in a pose, breath flows naturally and all further actions happen naturally. Sometimes referred to as the “anchor point”, foundation also describes the action(s) in which a pose becomes secure. The foundation creates a connection with gravity so that a movement may be achieved.

Primary Movement: Refers to the central movement that is happening in a particular area of the body. It is a direct result of Vinyasa (movement with breath), the coming into the pose, and the remaining within a pose to keep the pose stable.

Breath: This describes the breath action coming in and out of every pose. It is intimately linked with the Foundation and the Primary Movement.

TRISTANA: BREATH, MOVEMENT, GAZE

Tristana is the union of breath, movement, and gaze (*drishti*), which is, in essence the practice of Hatha Yoga and its purpose of greater awareness.

Tristana consists of:

1. Correct breathing: traditionally, specific forms of breathing were applied, although for our purposes, simply bringing awareness to the breath and allowing that to guide and support the movement, will be sufficient for beginners.
2. Movement: asanas (yoga postures), which includes the use of bandhas (seals or locks that support the movement of energy in the body).
3. Precise gazing (*drishti*): another method of balancing inner and outer awareness.

Tristana is thus both a method and a state, enabling practitioners to develop control of the senses, a deep awareness of themselves and their inner sensations, and the movements of both body and mind. It can therefore be seen as a bridge, to carry the essence of your practice from the yoga mat into your daily life.

Breath

Breath is the essential tool for moving towards a balanced mind and body. It offers a reflection of the mind and its intricate relationship with the body. Understanding breath and its individual states, gives you tools to deepen your experience of each asana.

It is important to take the time in each pose to breathe consciously as it helps to ease tension and bring a sense of freedom back into the body. By using the breath, discomfort can be lessened, poses can be held for longer and one can enter more deeply into the experience of each asana without the risk of injury. It is important to remain aware of when one is no longer in touch with the movement of the breath. This is very often indicative of when to come out of the pose since the tendency is to force muscularly, putting undue strain on joints in order to “hold” a pose.

Note: unblocking tense areas can sometimes cause stored emotions to be released.

1. Breathe through the nose when practicing asana. This helps stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for the body’s relaxation response.
2. Let the breath be natural so there is no feeling of forcing.
3. Let it be fluid, which will calm the mind and create a parallel effect on the movement.
4. Find an equal rhythm between inhalation and exhalation.

“The natural breath is healthy, free, and uninhibited. With perfect relaxation, the belly distends on the inhalation and gently retracts on the exhalation. Pauses in the breath occur naturally at the top of each inhalation and at the bottom of each exhalation. During periods of deep relaxation, e.g. before going to sleep at night, the exhalation becomes dominant. Inhalation becomes dominant during periods of arousal, e.g. waking up in the morning. Generally, the exhalation and inhalation are balanced during the middle of the day. This is the natural rhythm of the breath. Awareness of natural breathing is simply observing the free flow of breath without any conscious manipulation.”

- John Friend

Bandhas

Bandhas are translated as “locks” or “seals”. In a broad sense, they can serve to support a posture by more efficiently directing breath/energy. They are the result of slight movements in the muscles in order to align the body so that the energy can move throughout the body in a focused way. Bandhas can help to create lightness in the lower body and are especially helpful during balancing or inverted postures. While the notion of bandhas is an advanced principle for beginning students and would not be introduced in a beginner class, in your own practice and exploration, you can work with the principles of bandhas in order to “anchor” or stabilize the internal effects of the asana.

Mula Bandha: Root lock.

1. Apply by first contracting the anal sphincter. Draw it in and up drawing in the pelvic organs. Last, pull the navel towards the spine.
2. Can be done either drawing the breath in or out.
3. Try practicing it on an exhale to begin then hold the breath.
4. Once done correctly, Prana (1st 3 chakras) and Apana (last 3 chakras) are united in the center of the Sushumna Nadi (pathway of the chakras).

Uddiyana Bandha: Diaphragm lock

1. Works with the solar plexus and heart chakra.
2. Easier to apply releasing the breath out.
3. Applied by drawing the abdomen towards the spine and releasing the diaphragm high up into the thorax, creating a cavity and giving a gentle massage to the heart muscles.
4. The chest will expand and the spine will straighten.
5. Helps to move and transform pranic energy up to the neck region.
6. Stimulates the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis in the brain (i.e. unites mind and heart) and develops a sense of compassion.
7. Normally applied during exhalation only.
8. Also used during chanting.

NOTE: Do not apply Uddiyana Bandha if you are pregnant. Do not engage Uddiyana or Mula Bandha during the first 3 days of menstruation because it goes against the natural downward flow of energy.

Jalandhara Bandha: Neck lock or chin lock

1. Used during all chanting and meditations and Pranayams (breathing exercises).
2. Apply by lifting the chest and sternum upwards and stretch the back of the neck by pulling the chin towards the neck.
3. It straightens the cervical spine and allows the flow of prana to the brain.
4. Puts pressure on the thyroid and parathyroid to enable secretions and then to activate the pituitary gland.
5. Without this lock Pranayama can cause discomfort in the eyes, ears and heart.
6. It will prevent dizziness caused by rapid changes in blood pressure or the release of facial tension when nadis are unblocked.
7. It opens the connection between the head and heart.

Mahabandha: Application of all locks at once.

When all locks are applied, the nerves and glands are rejuvenated, the central axis is supported, and the movement of the life-force can occur in a natural way.

Drishti:

The Sanskrit term drishti is loosely defined as "gaze", but the root of the word is "drashtu" or "witness", so it can be considered an experience of witnessing. It is a practice in and of itself and develops concentration while teaching you to see the world as it really is and be present for what arises (in a pose, in your mind, your body, your life). In yoga, drishti is a point of focus where the gaze rests during a posture. Not limited to yoga practice, drishti can also refer to outward vision and inward awareness in other areas of life.

An important point to note is that the gaze should remain soft, since this reflects the quality of the core of your body (this is the central axis running from the perineum to the brain) and the nature of your mind. If the gaze is hard or staring, this will create a hardening in the body and mind, and create more tension at all levels. This hardening can enhance our sense of separateness and disconnection, leading to stress and anxiety. So in addition to gazing in the right locality, take a moment to check that the eyeballs are soft within the sockets and that you are not squinting or narrowing the eyes, or tensing your facial muscles or shoulders.

Often students report that looking to the tip of the nose creates double vision or makes them feel dizzy. This can be a sign that you are trying too hard and thus staring at the nose, instead look just beyond the tip, allow the eyes to relax so that the external vision merely softly blurs.

There are traditionally nine drishti points which are found in yoga and in each asana your gaze should always be directed at one of them. They are as follows with some examples of their application:

Nasagrai: Tip of the nose - Standing forward bend (Uttanasana)

Nabi Chakra: Navel - Downward facing dog (Adho Mukha Svanasana)

Hastagrai: Hand - Triangle (Trikonasana)

Padayoragrai: Toes - Seated forward bend (Paschimottanasana)

Angusta ma Dyai: Thumbs - Standing with arms overhead (Urdhva Hastasana)

Urdhva / Antara Drishti: Up to the sky - Warrior A (Virabhadrasana)

Parsva Drishti: Far to the right- seated twist to the right (Marichyasana)

Parsva Drishti: Far to the left- seated twist to the left (Marichyasana)

Ajna Chakra / Broomadhya: Third eye / between the eyebrows- tortoise (Kurmasana)

GROUNDING THE FEMURS & SHOULDER LOOP

When practicing asana one can deepen the pose by creating certain actions that mimic the body's natural mechanics. These sensations range from very subtle to more dramatic results. By understanding these basic mechanics and how to set forth these actions during an asana, one can experience their body/mind patterns more clearly and aim, if necessary, to achieve more positive results. For simplicity and efficiency, we have narrowed it down to two basic actions: grounding the femurs and the shoulder loop. Here are directions as to how to achieve these results.

Grounding the Femurs

1. Inwardly rotate the upper thighs to open the backs of the thighs and knees. This helps to widen the sacrum and release any tension in the sacroiliac (SI) joints.
2. Rolling your thighs slightly inward ensures that the front center line of each thigh is facing directly forward. This involves internally rotating your legs so that you are taking your inner thighs back more than your outer thighs. Note that rolling your front thighs inward and rolling your rear upper hamstrings outward are part of the same action.
3. Even though you're rolling your thighs inward, take your inner calves toward each other but allow your inner calf muscles to go back more. Move your inner heel skin toward your outer heel skin and turn the back of each calf to follow that movement.
4. Move the upper thighbones away from each other to create more space in the hips and help relax the buttocks. This creates more space in the pelvis, thus widening and lifting the pubic symphysis and lower abdomen.
5. Draw the thighbones back (if seated, this would be down towards the mat) towards the hamstrings to release the groins and create a slight lift in the upper chest.
6. Especially move your inner thighs back, pulling your groins back a little but having the feeling of softening or "hollowing" them. Do not harden your groins.
7. Refine this action by taking your outer femur bones back. At the same time, internally rotate your thighs inward.
8. Firm the muscles of your legs into your bones on all sides, both in your lower legs and in your thighs. Have the feeling of "hugging" your bones with your muscles strongly.

9. As you draw your muscles inward, also feel as though you are drawing them upward into your pelvis, particularly on all side of your thighs.
10. Lift your hamstrings toward your buttocks.
11. Lift your inner thighs toward your inner groins (the place where your legs meet your pelvis).
12. Lift the front of your thighs toward your front groins and draw them back into your femurs.
13. Lift your outer thighs toward your hips.
14. As much as you press your legs downward, you are raising your spine and torso upward.
15. As much as you press your outer femurs down toward the floor, you open your floating ribs out to the sides and also lift them upwards away from the floor.
16. Instead of the "four corners" of the feet, we also sometimes use the analogy of a tripod, taking our weight evenly to each of the three places:
 - (1) the mound of the big toe (head of first metatarsal)
 - (2) the mound of the little toe (the head of fifth metatarsal)
 - (3) and the center of the heel (or the inner heel)

SHOULDER LOOP

1. the front of the chest should be moving upward while the shoulder itself is moving backward and the back skin of the shoulder is moving downward in a circle to lift and expand the chest.
2. Make this action strong, but don't "pop" your front ribs forward or arch your lower back.
3. Open the backs of your armpits to the front. The edge of your front armpits and the edge of your back armpits should be level with each other.
4. This action also incorporates taking the shoulder blades forward into chest.
5. Draw the shoulder blades down the back and the tips inwards towards the body, by taking the head of the humerus (upper arm bone) back.
6. Let the top of the shoulder blades widen away from the spine.
7. Press your shoulder blades into your body from back to front to open your chest and draw the tops of your shoulders back and downward.
8. Broaden the collarbones from the center of the sternum.
9. Lift the top of the sternum towards the head while releasing the bottom of the sternum to the navel.
10. Lift the heart and the top of the diaphragm away from the pelvis.
11. Draw the head of the humerus to the posterior body and then down, stabilizing the rotator cuff and protecting the shoulder girdle.
12. Do not make the common mistake of squeezing your shoulder blades toward each other to open your chest. You must broaden your upper back as much as you broaden your chest and collar bones.
13. Draw your floating ribs in the middle of your back downward toward your rear pelvis. Do not allow these actions to compromise the uplifting of your torso.

ASANAS

BALASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Balāsana	Child's Pose Bal - Child	Seated Pose/Forward Bend

Benefits:

1. Develops joint and muscle flexibility in the hips, knees and spine.
2. Reduces lower backache.
3. Improves digestion.
4. Increases blood circulation.
5. Helps to alleviate nervous tension, migraine, insomnia, and chronic fatigue syndrome.
6. Relaxes the body and eases breathing.

Primary Principles:

1. *Foundation:* Let the weight of the legs and pelvis descend back and down to the floor. Let the forehead release down so the neck muscles relax.
2. *Primary Movement:* Flexion in both of the hips and spine.
3. *Breath:* Inhale to prepare the spine. Exhale to move into the pose. Inhale slowly to come out of the pose.

Secondary Principles:

1. Spread the toes and soles of the feet.
2. Keep the ankles in line with the shins.
3. Place the big toes together.
4. Relax and spread your sitting bones back behind your toes.
5. Hollow your groins back.
6. Relax your spine to the floor.
7. Relax the shoulders and widen the shoulder blades from the spine.
8. Draw your outer armpits away from the spine and down towards the floor.
9. Spread your fingers and let them drop into the floor.
10. Let your forearms and elbows relax down.
11. Soften your forehead in the direction of your nose. If you are more flexible, try reaching the chin to the ground.
12. Relax the eyes back and look down the length of the nose.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the neck. Due to hyper-extension in the cervical spine. Place a rolled blanket behind the knees and a block under the forehead.
2. Pain the knees. Caused from strain on the ligaments or arthritis in the joint. Place a rolled blanket or bolster behind the knees.
3. Pain in the ankles. Caused from tightness in the ankle joint. Place two rolled blankets under the ankles. Make sure the roll is not too high or it will cause more pain.

Variations:

1. Arms extended overhead with the hands or fingertips on the floor. For a shoulder opener place two blocks under the hands.
2. Place a bolster under the chest. For a higher support, place two blocks under the bolster. Make sure the belly is supported. If it does not reach to the bolster, place a blanket under the belly.
3. Wide-legged. This will increase hip and groin opening. Make sure knees are well-supported by a mat or blankets.
4. Spread the thighs perpendicular with the torso. (Adho Mukha Virasana, downward facing hero)
5. Lie on the back and grab the feet (Ananda Balasana, happy baby pose). This is a great variation for people who experience too much knee pain the other way.

Support Poses:

1. Hip openers. (eg. Uttanasana, standing forward bend)
2. Knee joint openers. (eg. Janu Sirsasana, head on knee pose)

Contraindications:

1. Avoid this pose for long periods of time if you have recently broken or sprained an ankle.
2. If you have arthritis in the knee, practice this pose on the back.

Counter Poses:

1. Backbends (eg. Setu Bandasana, supported bridge)

Practice Script:

From Adho Mukha Svanasana (downward facing dog), exhale and place your knees onto the floor. Point the toes back and place your big toes together and your knees slightly apart. Walk your hands forward, exhale: lay your belly between your thighs and rest your forehead onto the floor. Let your elbows relax into the ground and soften your eyes into the back of your head. Inhale: allow your shoulder blades to spread away from your spine. Exhale: drop the weight of your pelvis completely to the floor. Breathe into the back of your lungs and continue to release the weight of your full spine in the direction of the floor. Inhale deep. Exhale: slowly walk your hands back towards your knees to lift your spine and come up.

Reminders

1. Let your forehead relax and feel the skin descend towards the tip of your nose.
2. Relax your neck muscles and feel the natural curve that the spine makes and the support that the floor offers your spine.
3. Remember to breathe smoothly and feel the breath as it enters the back in and around the spine.

SAMASTITHI / TADASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Samastithi	Equal Standing Pose Sama - Equal Stith - Standing	Standing Pose
Tadasana	Mountain Pose Tada - Mountain	Standing Pose

Benefits:

1. Corrects back posture by straightening the spine.
2. Improves the alignment of your body.
3. Tones the buttock muscles.
4. Strengthens the knee joints.
5. Revitalizes the feet and supports flat feet.
6. Reduces sciatic pain.
7. Tones and lifts the pelvis and abdomen.

Primary Principles:

1. *Foundation:* Firmly press your feet onto the floor. Tighten your kneecaps and quadriceps and pull them up. Extend your arms along the sides of your body and pull the heads of the shoulders slightly back.
2. *Primary Movement:* Push the feet firmly down in order for the spine to lengthen upwards.
3. *Breath:* Inhalation to pull the shoulders back, lift the chest and engage in the fronts of the legs. Exhalation to firm the feet, lengthen the tailbone and engage the pelvis and buttocks.

Secondary Principles:

1. Find internal rotation with the upper thighs and release the groins back.
2. Place the feet together, big toes touching, heels slightly separated.
3. Rest weight on the centers of the arches of the feet, not on the heels or toes.
4. Release the backs of the knees.
5. Stretch out your toes and keep them relaxed.
6. Keep both your ankles in line with each other.
7. Align your legs together and perpendicular to the floor.
8. Fingers point down to the floor.
9. Keep the head and spine in a straight line.
10. Stretch your neck without tensing the muscles.
11. Release your lower abdomen in towards the spine and up towards the sternum.
12. Release the tailbone down towards the heels and then draw it into the body.
13. Lift your sternum and broaden your chest.
14. Press your heels and the mounds of your toes into the floor.
15. Distribute your weight equally through all areas of your feet.

Common Obstacles:

1. Students may experience dizziness in the posture if it is held for too long. This can be avoided by closing the eyes or by placing the forehead on a wall.
2. Hyper-extended knees. Can be avoided by lifting the kneecaps and micro-bending the backs of the knees.

Variations:

1. Place the back on the wall to help bring the spine into proper alignment.
2. Stand with the feet hip-width apart and place a block between the thighs. Squeeze the thighs towards the block in order to stabilize the pelvis and spine.
3. With a partner, have one person stand in Samastithi while the other person places one hand on their partner's sternum and the other hand between their shoulder blades. Notice where the person has more breath and perhaps weight. Have them equalize their breath front to back so that their weight becomes more evenly distributed on their feet.
4. Do the same partner exercise but with the hands under the shoulder blades around the lower ribs to get them to breath more evenly back to front.

Support Poses:

Any standing poses (eg. Utthita Trikonasana, extended triangle)

Contraindications:

1. Do not practice this pose if you have stress-related headaches, migraine, eye strain, low blood pressure, or osteoarthritis of the knees.
2. If you have had a problem with balance or dizziness, practice this asana with your feet apart.

Practice Script:

Stand at the foot of your mat with your feet together, big toes touching and your heels slightly separate. Lift your chest up and back slightly until you feel your shoulders release down the spine. Press your feet firmly into the floor and feel your thigh muscles and kneecaps lift towards your pelvis. Inhale deeply into your chest while reaching your fingertips towards your ankles. Exhale: feel your spine lengthen towards your head.

Reminders:

1. Relax the eyes back and remember to breathe into the back of your body.
2. Imagine your self as a mountain, steady and vast.
3. Let the corners of your mouth lift as a way to feel contentment in the pose.
4. Relax your jaw and neck by slightly parting the teeth on the exhalation.

ARDHA UTTANASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Ardha Uttanasana	Half Extended Forward Stretch Pose Adha - Half Ut - Deliberate or Intense Tana - Stretch	Standing Pose

Benefits:

1. Reduces depression, boosts confidence.
2. Energizes the heart and lungs.
3. Relieves stomachache.
4. When supported, reduces abdominal and back pain during menstruation.

Primary Principles:

1. *Foundation:* Lift the inner thigh muscles towards the pelvis. Hollow the groins back to support the pelvis to lift. Relax the feet firmly into the floor and lift the inner and outer arches of the feet to engage the muscles in the lower legs. Extend out from the hips with the spine. Loop the shoulders back to open the chest forward. Firm the hands into the floor on either side of the feet
2. *Primary movement:* Flexion in both the hips. Extension in the spine.
3. *Breath:* Inhalation to lengthen the spine from the legs. Exhalation to release.

Secondary Principles:

1. Keep the spine supported by drawing the abdominal muscles towards the spine so that you can draw air deep into the lungs.
2. Keep the eyes relaxed and the gaze towards the tip of the nose.
3. Micro-bend the knees as a way to avoid hyper-extension in the legs.
4. Lift the top of the sternum away from the navel.
5. Open the backs of the knees to spread the hamstrings muscles.
6. Push the knuckles of the hands and the pads of the fingers down but lift the centre of the palms.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the upper back. Usually caused by straining in the hips and/or shoulders. Bend the knees slightly or slide hands up the legs.
2. Pain in the lower back. Usually caused by strain in the back muscles. Bend the knees to try to release the lower back and focus on the breath in the back of the body.
3. Pain in the back of the legs or knees. Generally caused by hyper-extension of the knees or a collapsing in the arches of the feet. Micro-bend the knees and lift the arches from the floor.

Variations:

1. Place hands onto blocks or even a chair to support the shoulders and arms.
2. Use the wall. Extend the arms overhead and place the hands shoulder-width apart on the wall. Step back from the wall until the arms are straight, meanwhile placing the feet hip-width apart. Pull back with the hips to extend the spine.

Support Poses:

Standing poses (eg. Parshvakonasana, extended side angle pose)

Contraindications:

1. Those prone to acidity or dizziness should practice this asana with the feet slightly apart.
2. If you have low blood pressure, come out of this posture gradually to avoid dizziness.
3. Do not compress your neck while practicing this asana.

Counter Poses:

Spinal flexion (eg. Uttanasana, standing forward bend)

Practice Script:

From Uttanasana, place your hands next to your feet. Keeping your thighs fully engaged. Inhale: stretch your torso forward from your legs and press the balls of your feet down towards the floor. Exhale: fold at the hips drawing the forehead to the shins for Uttanasana.

Reminders:

1. Lengthen into the sides of your waist while pulling back with your hips. Feeling a sense of opposition in your body.
2. Think of this pose as a preparation to lengthen the spine while forward bending.

UTTANASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Uttanasana	Intense Forward Pose Ut - Deliberate or Intense Tana - Stretch	Standing Pose

Benefits:

1. Relieves mental and physical stress.
2. Slows down the heartbeat and regulates blood pressure.
3. Tones the liver, spleen, and kidneys.
4. Relieves stomachache by neutralizing acidity.
5. Reduces abdominal and back pain during menstruation.

6. Reduces depression if practiced regularly.
7. Helps alleviate insomnia.
8. Increases blood flow to the brain, stimulating the sympathetic nervous system.
9. Relieves migraines and stress-related headaches.
10. Tones the abdominal organs.
11. Strengthens and stretches the hamstring muscles.
12. Increases the flexibility in the hip joint.
13. Strengthens the knee joint and its surrounding tissue and muscles.

Primary Principles:

1. *Foundation:* Lift the inner thigh muscles towards the pelvis. Hollow the groins back to support the pelvis to lift. Relax the feet firmly into the floor and lift the inner and outer arches of the feet to engage the muscles in the lower legs.
2. *Primary movement:* Flexion in both the hips.
3. *Breath:* Inhalation to lengthen the spine. Exhalation to flex in the hips.

Secondary principles:

1. Keep the spine relaxed so that the neck and shoulders can hang from the spine.
2. Draw the head in towards the shins and touch the forehead to the legs.
3. Keep the eyes relaxed and the gaze towards the tip of the nose.
4. Micro-bend the knees as a way to avoid hyper-extension in the legs.
5. Pull the shoulders towards the hips to initiate the shoulder loop.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the upper back. Usually caused by straining in the shoulders, neck and head. Bend knees to create less tension in the spinal muscles. Release neck muscles and relax shoulders/upper trapezius.
2. Pain in the lower back. Usually caused by strain in the back muscles. Bend the knees to try to release the groins, psoas, and lower back.
3. Pain in the back of the legs or knees. Students with tight hamstrings or lower backs will find it difficult to release the lower back. Bend the knees to try to release the strain in the hamstrings.
4. Hyper-extended knees. Press the hands against the back of each knee to provide some resistance; keep knees gently bent and practice straightening legs by extending sit bones up and drawing tailbone in.

Variations:

1. Place two blocks under the hands if the hands do not reach the floor.
2. Place two blocks under the head to help release neck and shoulder tension.
3. Grab the back of legs with the hands to deepen the stretch. If flexible enough, you can take hold of the elbows.
4. Step onto the palms of the hands (Padahasthasana).
5. Step on the backs of the hands.
6. Grab the inside of the big toes with the first two fingers (Padangusthasana)

Support Poses:

1. Forward bends that stretch the hamstrings and open the hips. (eg. Konasana, wide angle)

Contraindications:

1. Those prone to dizziness or acidity should practice this asana with the legs slightly apart.
2. Students with injured hamstrings or sacroiliac joint injuries should keep the knees gently bent or place a support under the thighs.
3. Students with back injury should practice this pose with bent knees or with hands on the wall, legs perpendicular to your torso, and arms parallel to floor, or leaning into a chair.

Counter Poses:

Backbends and poses with hip extensions. (eg. Setu Bandasana, supported bridge)

Practice Script:

Stand on your feet with your big toes touching and your heels slightly separated. Inhale: reach your arms up and overhead to extend your spine. Exhale: hinge forward at your hip crease and pull your thighs back. Inhale: look forward and stretch your chest away from your knees. Exhale: move your forehead towards your shins. Inhale: push your feet firmly into the floor. Exhale: hollow your groins towards your hip sockets causing your pelvis to lift from your feet. Inhale: lift your spine all the way to standing with your arms overhead. Exhale: release your arms down by your side.

Reminders:

1. Ensure that your shoulders are not strained in this pose.
2. Breathe evenly front to back.
3. Ensure that your spine is concave throughout the pose.
4. If your feet are hip width apart place one fist between the big toes to ensure correct alignment.
5. Remember to let the weight of the head release, keeping the neck long, so that the forehead can comfortably move towards the legs.
6. Lift all ten toes if you are having difficulty engaging the leg muscles.

PRASARITA PADOTTANASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Prasarita Padottanasana	Intense Expanded Leg Stretch Prasarita-stretched out or expanded Pada - leg or foot	Standing Pose / Forward Bend

Benefits:

1. Reduces depression, boosts confidence.
2. Soothes the brain and the sympathetic nervous system.
3. Energizes the heart and lungs.
4. Reduces blood pressure.
5. Relieves stress-related headaches, migraine, and fatigue.
6. Tones the abdominal organs.
7. Relieves stomachache by neutralizing acidity.
8. Relieves lower backache.
9. Strengthens the knee joint and makes the hip joint supple.
10. Supported version helps regulate menstrual flow.

Primary Principles:

1. *Foundation:* Lift the inside of the legs and activate the leg muscles by drawing them towards the bones. Loop the shoulders back and widen the front of the chest.
2. *Primary Movement:* Flexion in both of the hips, ankles and wrists.
3. *Breath:* Inhale to extend and prepare the spine. Exhale to flex in both the hips. Inhale to extend the arms and spine. Exhale to place the hands onto the hips. Inhale to lift up and out of the pose back to standing.

Secondary Principles:

- I. Spread the soles of your feet and toes.
2. Make sure the feet point forward with the feet parallel to the sides of the mat.
3. Press the outer edges of the feet to the floor.
4. Lift both the kneecaps and engage the quadriceps.
5. Try to bring your torso towards the floor.
6. Make sure your back is concave.
7. Place your hands flat.
8. Release the crown of the head towards the floor.
9. Ensure the chin is moving towards the chest to avoid cervical compression.
10. Push your sternum forward and draw in the abdomen.
11. Move the thighbones and groins back to reduce the pressure on your head.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the outer knees or ankles. Usually due to collapsed arches. Have them lift the toes off the floor and lift the arches with them.
2. Pain in the backs of the legs. Usually caused by tight hamstrings or hyper extended knees. Micro-bend the knees while continually drawing the quadriceps upwards.

Variations:

1. Place the head on a bolster or block.
2. Place both the hands on two blocks and extend in the spine forward.
3. Version with the hands on the waist (Prasarita Padottanasana B).
4. Version with the hands clasped behind the back (Prasarita Padottanasana C).
5. Version grabbing the big toes (Prasarita Padottanasana D).

Support Poses:

1. Standing forward bends (eg. Uttanasana, standing forward bend, or Adho Mukha Svanasana, downward facing dog)
2. Seated forward bends (eg. Konasana, wide angle pose)
3. Hip openers (eg. Supta Baddha Konasana, reclined bound angle pose)

Contraindications:

1. If you have low blood pressure come out of this pose slowly to avoid dizziness.
2. Do not tilt your head or compress your neck while practicing this pose.
3. If you suffer from lower-back problems avoid doing the full forward bend.

Counter Poses:

1. Baddha Konasana (bound angle)
2. Paschimottanasana (seated forward bend)
3. Uthita Parshvakonasana (extended side angle)

Practice Script:

From standing, with legs wide and toes pointing forward, place your hands on your waist, fingertips pointing forward. Inhale: push the outer edges of the feet to the floor and lift your chest from your pelvis. Exhale: pull the thighbones back, folding forward at the hips and release your hands to the floor under your shoulders. Inhale: extend your arms and open your chest forward. Exhale: bend your elbows and release the top of your head towards the floor. Inhale: lift your kneecaps to your hips. Exhale: pull your shoulder blades down your spine. Inhale: straighten the arms and look forward. Exhale: place both your hands to your hips. Inhale: push the thighs forward as you lift back up to standing. Exhale: release your arms down by your sides.

Reminders:

1. Keep your head and neck passive to feel a deep release in the skull.

DANDASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Dandasana	Staff Pose Danda = staff	Seated Pose

Benefits

1. Relieves breathlessness and throat and lung congestion.
2. Strengthens the muscles of the chest and the respiratory muscles.
3. Tones the abdominal organs and supports the abdominal wall.
4. Reduces heartburn and flatulence.
5. Tones the spinal and leg muscles.
6. Lengthens the ligaments of the legs.
7. Improves digestion.
8. Helps prevent sciatic pain.
9. Prevents tiredness in the feet by stretching the muscles of the feet.

Primary Principles:

1. *Foundation:* Spinal support is established through the legs and shoulder muscles. Activate the thigh muscles and hollow the groins to ground the femurs. Shoulder loop engages to pull down the shoulder blades and lift the sternum. Chin draws down towards the chest, curving the cervical spine and engaging Jalandhara Bhandha.
2. *Primary movement:* 90-degree flexion in both of the hips. Flexion of the cervical spine.
3. *Breath:* Inhalation lengthen the spine. Exhalation to draw the chin down.

Secondary principles:

1. Watch for alignment of the ankle, knee and hip joints.
2. Quadriceps should be lifted towards the groins and groins pulling back into the hip sockets.
3. Pelvis remains neutral even if the hips are flexed.
4. Engage the shoulder loop so the shoulders and the upper trapezius muscles do not rise towards the ears. Students with long arms will need to bend their elbows. Students with short arms may need to place the fingertips on the floor or use two blocks.
5. Widen the space between the shoulder blades so that the lower ribs do not move too far forwards.
6. Eyes remain soft with the gaze towards the centre of the sternum.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the neck or shoulders. Students may have difficulty knowing how to isolate the curvature in the cervical spine. Have them engage Jalandhara Bandha by relaxing the throat back, widening the back of the neck and gently lifting the sternum towards the chin.
2. Pain in the thoracic spine. Usually caused by too much extension in the thoracic spine. Let the lower ribs relax towards the navel to support the lower body.
3. Pain in the lower back. Usually caused by too much flexion in the thoracic spine. Let the top of the sternum lift towards the chin so the chest is not collapsing. Gently arch the lumbar spine.
4. Pain in the back of the legs or knees. Students with tight hamstrings or lower backs will find it difficult to extend the legs to arch the lumbar spine. Have them gently bend the knees or even place a bolster or rolled blanket under the thighs.

Variations:

1. Place the back against a wall. Have students try to move the back of the pelvis and thoracic spine towards the wall. Have them spread the shoulder blades and breathe into the back of the body.
2. Have students with tight hamstrings sit on a blanket and place two blocks under the hands.

3. Have students lie on their backs with the legs on the wall (Vipariti Karani). Flex the feet and engage the thigh muscles. Bend the elbows 90-degrees and point the fingers to the ceiling. Lift the head and move the chin towards the sternum to better understand Jalandhara Bandha.
4. Utthita Dandasana (extended staff pose). Arms extend overhead so students can feel a more extended spine.
5. With a partner one person sits in staff pose and clasps their elbows overhead. Meanwhile their partner takes the elbows and gently pulls them up towards the ceiling. The other can then release their weight of the pelvis towards the floor in order to open up the upper sternum and lower back without losing their foundation.
6. Place a block between the thighs to help engage the internal hip flexors and a strap around the upper arms to engage the serratus muscles. Also could be done in the opposite with a block between the hands and a strap around the upper thighs.

Support Poses:

1. Forward bends that stretch the hamstrings and open the hips. (eg. Uttanasana, standing forward bend)
2. Shoulder openers. (eg. Purvottanasana, upward plank pose)

Contraindications:

1. Students with neck injury, like whiplash, should keep the neck straight and the eyes soft with the drishti to the tip of the nose.
2. Students with injured hamstrings should keep the knees gently bent or place a support under the thighs.
3. If you have asthma, bronchitis, breathlessness, ulcers, bulimia, or any digestive disturbances, or are experiencing premenstrual stress, practice this asana with your back supported by a wall.

Counter Poses:

Hip and/or neck extension. Lunges are good extension in the hips. Virabhadrasana II (warrior 2) is an example of neck extension.

Practice Script:

Sit on the floor with your legs extended out in front. Place both of your hands next to your pelvis. Flex your feet firmly and engage your leg muscles by drawing your thighbones towards the floor. Inhale: lift your lower back and chest away from the floor, bending the knees if necessary. Exhale: keep your chest lifted and draw your chin down. Inhale: widen the back of your neck. Exhale: relax your thighbones down without collapsing in your neck. Inhale: press your thighbones down to draw the lower ribs back. Exhale: breathe into your upper spine. Inhale: lift the chin off the chest. Exhale: release from the pose.

Reminders:

1. Be aware of tension in your jaw or throat. Let the corners of your mouth gently draw to the lobes of either ear.
2. Be attentive of your breath in front and in back to avoid misaligning the spine.
3. Remember to keep the body supple so that the breath can move freely.
4. Let the eyes remain soft so that tension does not build in the neck and head.
5. Remain patient and try to feel the breath move towards the head.
4. Keep the space between the shoulder blades broad. Do not let the elbows splay out to the sides: hold them in by the sides of the torso and push them back toward the heels.
5. Press the bases of the index fingers firmly into the floor.
6. Lift the top of the sternum and your head to look slightly forward.

NAVASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Navasana	Boat Pose Nava - boat	Seated Pose

Benefits:

1. Stimulates the thyroid gland, increasing the whole metabolic rate.
2. Improves blood circulation in the abdomen.
3. Tones the abdominal muscles and organs.
4. Relieves indigestion and flatulence.
5. Tones the kidneys.
6. Reduces lower backache by strengthening the spinal muscles.
7. Tones the leg muscles.
8. Relieves stiffness in the leg and hips.
9. Tones the lower back muscles.
10. Supports proper lung function.

Primary Principles:

1. *Foundation:* Spinal support is established through the legs, chest, back and shoulder muscles. Activate the inner thigh muscles and hollow the groins back to lift the femurs. Engage the triceps and the shoulder loop in order to avoid the upper body from collapsing. Lift the chin off the chest and keep the eyes focused softly on the big toes.
2. *Primary movement:* Flexion in both the hips. Arms extend parallel to the floor.
3. *Breath:* Inhalation to lengthen the spine. Exhalation to extend the legs and arms.

Secondary principles:

1. Keep the big toes together and heels slightly separated. Push the balls of the feet forward while pulling and spreading the toes back.
2. Rest back onto the sitting bones and bottom of the tailbone.
3. Pull the outer shoulders back to avoid hunching the shoulders forwards and collapsing in the chest.
4. Keep the abdomen soft so the lower back does not harden.
5. Keep the facial muscles soft.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the neck or shoulders. Usually caused by a weakness in the upper spinal muscles and tightness in the shoulders. Students can place their hands on the floor or a strap around the feet to develop the strength in the upper back and shoulder muscles.
2. Pain in the lower back. Usually caused by weakness in the back muscles. Let the top of the sternum lift towards the chin so the chest is not collapsing. Gently arch the lumbar spine.
3. Pain in the back of the legs or knees. Students with tight hamstrings or lower backs will find it difficult to extend the legs to arch the lumbar spine.
4. Difficulty staying on the sitting bones. Generally caused by weak abdominal muscles. Students can either take hold of the back of the legs as support or place the feet onto a wall or chair and their hands behind the pelvis on the floor.

Variations:

1. Using a strap around the feet and under the arms. Hands or fingertips to the floor or two blocks.
2. Place a block between the thighs. Also place a block between the hands.
3. Two chairs with blankets across the edges. One behind to support the back the other to support the legs. Hands can rest on the thighs.

Support Poses:

1. Forward bends that stretch the hamstrings and open the hips (eg. Pashimottanasa, seated forward bend)
2. Shoulder openers (eg. Parshvottanasana, extended chest)
3. Abdominal strengtheners (eg. Purvottanasana, upward plank)

Contraindications:

1. Do not practice this asana if you have a cardiac condition or low blood pressure.
2. Avoid if you have breathlessness, asthma, bronchitis, a cold with congestion, migraine, chronic fatigue syndrome, or insomnia, cervical spondylosis, severe backache, diarrhea, or menstrual disorders.
3. Students with pulled hamstrings should keep the knees gently bent or place a support under the thighs.

Counter Poses:

Hip extension or backbends. Lunges are good examples of hip extension. Urdhva Mukha Svanasana (upward facing dog) is a backbend and as well a hip extender.

Practice Script:

Sit on the floor with your legs extended out in front. Inhale: draw your knees into your chest. Exhale: extend your arms parallel to the floor. Inhale: lift your chest in order to arch your lower back. Exhale: lift both your shins to the ceiling, extending both your legs. Push the backs of your arms towards the floor as to avoid collapsing in your chest. Inhale: draw your lower back and thighs together. Exhale: pull your sitting bones into the floor. Inhale: breathe deeply into your upper body. Exhale: release from the pose.

Reminders:

1. Ensure that your neck and head are not strained in this pose.
2. Breathe evenly front to back.
3. Remember to keep the spine quiet so that the breath fluidly.
4. Remember to keep the gaze soft.
5. Imagine yourself floating on water as a way to create a sensation of buoyancy.

CHATURANGA DANDASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Chaturanga Dandasana	Four Limbed Staff Pose Chaturanga: four limbed Danda = staff	Arm Balance

Benefits

1. Tones the abdominal organs and supports abdominal wall.
2. Tones the spinal and leg muscles.
3. Strengthens the muscles of the chest.
4. Strengthens the muscles of the arms.
5. Tones the heart and lungs.

Primary Principles

1. *Foundation:* Push the balls of the feet and the hands firmly into the floor. Engage the quadriceps by lifting the kneecaps to the pelvis. Pull the upper arm bones back towards the feet and engage the shoulder loop.
2. *Primary Movement:* 90-degree flexion in the elbows.
3. *Breathe:* Inhale to extend the arms and legs. Exhale to bend in the elbows.

Secondary Principles:

1. Flatten the backs of the knees.
2. Reach back with the heels away from the head.
3. Lift the shinbones so the ankle joints don't collapse.
4. Pull the navel back to support the lower spine.

5. Widen the space between the shoulder blades by drawing the shoulder blades away from the spine.
6. Keep the upper arms perpendicular to the floor and the forearms parallel.
7. Engage the triceps, pulling the elbows back to the heels so the shoulders do not hunch forwards to the floor.
8. Keep the chest open, broadening across mid-sternum.
9. Keep your neck long and soften the muscles.
10. Keep the eyes rested on the floor slightly in front of the hands.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the lower back. Caused by a collapse in the lower abdomen and back. Lift the navel to the spine and lengthen the tailbone to the heels. Engage the leg muscles fully.
2. Pain in the upper body (neck, shoulders, elbows, wrists). Caused by letting the shoulder blades and elbows fall away from the body. Draw the outer armpits down to the floor, which will lift the shoulder blades onto the back and support the elbows to extend.

Variations:

1. With a partner, have one person in plank pose while the other lifts their legs off the floor one foot. This teaches the support of the abdominals and pelvis.
2. Work with a chair or blocks under the hands until the understanding of the upper body and leg strength develops.
3. Lie with the abdomen on floor, feet pressing into wall. Set arms and hands in Chaturanga position. Engaging quadriceps, press feet firmly into wall and try to lift body into the full pose, keeping spine and torso straight. Note: tendency will be to lift pelvis, which can compress lower back.
4. Lay a thickly rolled blanket or bolster on the floor below your plank pose, parallel to your spine. Lower yourself lightly onto this support.

Support Poses:

1. Arm Balances (eg. Plank Pose, or Dolphin Pose: downward dog on the forearms)
2. Abdominal strengtheners (eg. Bhujangasana, cobra)
3. Leg and arm strengtheners (eg. Adho Mukha Svanasana, downward facing dog)

Contraindications:

1. Avoid this pose if you suffer from carpal tunnel syndrome.
2. Avoid this pose if you have any shoulder injuries.
3. Do not practice this pose if you are pregnant.

Counter Poses:

Supta Baddha Konasana (reclined bound angle pose)

Practice Script:

From Adho Mukha Svanasana, downward facing dog, exhale and lower you're your torso and legs until your body is parallel to the floor. Inhale: reach to the top of your head all the way to your heels. Exhale slowly lower your torso and legs to a few inches above the floor. Inhale: stay and roll your shoulders from the floor. Exhale: release your belly to the ground and push the pelvis back into Balasana, child's pose.

Reminders:

1. Keep the tailbone firmly in place and the legs very active and turned slightly inward. Draw the pubis toward the navel.
2. Keep the space between the shoulder blades broad. Do not let the elbows splay out to the sides: hold them in by the sides of the torso and push them back toward the heels.
3. Press the bases of the index fingers firmly into the floor.
4. Lift the top of the sternum and your head to look slightly forward.

ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Ardo Mukha Svanasana	Downward Facing Dog Adho - Downward Mukha - Facing Svan - Dog	Standing Pose / Forward Bend

Benefits:

1. Tones and relaxes the nervous system, helping relieve depression and anxiety.
2. Helps with breathlessness, palpitation, extreme fatigue and sunstroke.
3. Stabilizes blood pressure and heart rate.
4. Helps relieve chronic constipation, indigestion, and excess bile formation.
5. Relieves arthritis in the shoulders, wrists and fingers.
6. Reduces lower back pain.
7. Increases flexibility in hip, knee and ankle joints, and strengthens the ligaments and tendons of the legs.

8. Counters the damage to the cartilage of the knee or hamstring muscles, caused by jogging, walking, or other sports.
9. Strengthens the arches of the feet and prevents calcaneal spurs.
10. When supported can help with heavy menstrual flow.
11. When supported can stabilize endocrine system and help with hot flashes during menopause.

Primary Principles:

1. *Foundation:* Stretch into both legs lifting and toning the muscles. Push the feet into the floor and spread the toes evenly. Stretch into both arms toning all the muscles. Pull the shoulder blades away from the spine and firm the hands into the floor.
2. *Primary Movement:* Flexion in both of the hips and ankles. Extension of both the arms.
3. *Breath:* Exhale to push back into the pose. Exhale to release from the pose.

Secondary Principles:

1. Place approximately 4ft between your feet and hands. Make sure the distance is the same between your hands and feet.
2. Stretch your fingers and toes.
3. Pull up your kneecaps and engage your quadriceps.
4. Stretch the arches of your feet and ground your heels into the floor.
5. Pull your inner arms up from the elbows to the shoulders.
6. Move your torso towards your legs.
7. Stretch the base of your neck and lengthen the crown of your head to the floor.
8. Move the deltoids deep into the shoulder joints and lift your shoulder blades.
9. Draw ischial bones up.
10. Keep the feet flat onto the floor with your toes pointing forward.
11. Stretch each leg from the heel to the buttock and from the front of the ankle to the top of the thigh.
12. Lengthen from the sternum to the navel.
13. Keep your throat soft and elongated.
14. Relax your eyes.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the backs of the legs or knees. Generally caused by not enough muscular support in the legs or tight hamstrings. Lift the toes to feel more effort in the muscle. Micro-bend the backs of the knees if there is still pain.
2. Pain in the shoulders. Usually due to disruption in the shoulder joint. Ensure that the shoulder loop is engaged. One option would be to place a strap above the elbows and push into it. If it's still painful, lay in child's pose.
3. Pain in the neck. Could be caused by shoulder joint tension. Place a block or two under the head.

Variations:

1. Place the hands onto two blocks to develop the support in the upper body. Place another block under the head.
2. Place a block between the thighs to help strengthen the legs.
3. Place a strap above the elbows to open the shoulder joints.
4. Place the forearms onto the ground, same distance as the shoulders. Place a block between the thumb and index fingers and another block between the thighs.
5. Place the fingers onto the wall and a block under the head.
6. Place a bolster under the head.
7. With the palms of the hands on the wall, walk the feet back until arms are fully extended. Reach back with the heels but forward into the wall with the hands.
8. With a partner, have one person stay in downward dog while the other places a strap around the partner's upper thighs and pulls back.
9. Same partner exercise but instead wrap a strap across the back of the pelvis and through the inside of the thighs to teach internal rotation.
10. Same partner exercise, except loop one strap around the shoulders and the other across the other strap between the shoulder blades so that the two straps act like a harness. This exercise is meant to teach the shoulder loop.
11. With a partner have one person in downward dog while the other does a 90-degree handstand with their feet on their partner's pelvis and their hands a foot in front of their partner's.

Support Poses:

1. Forward bends (eg. Uttanasana, standing forward bend)
2. Shoulder openers (eg. Purvottanasana, upward plank pose)

Contraindications:

1. Do not practice this asana if you have diarrhea or varicose veins.
2. Students with rheumatoid arthritis who have a fever should avoid this pose.
3. If you have a stiff spine or high blood pressure, or are prone to recurrent headaches, always practice with your head supported by a block.
4. If you are prone to dislocation of the shoulders, ensure that your arms do not turn out.
5. Do not practice this asana in an advanced stage of pregnancy.

Counter Poses:

Back bends (eg. Urdhva Mukha Svanasana, upward facing dog)

Practice Script:

From Urdhva Uttanasana, exhale: bending your knees, step your feet back, one foot at a time, approximately 4ft from your hands. Place your feet hip-width apart with your toes pointing forward. Your hands the same distance with the fingers stretching from your palms. Tighten the muscles at the top of your thighs and pull in your kneecaps, pushing your pelvis upwards. Straighten your arms and draw both the shoulder blades away from your spine. Exhale: move your torso towards your legs. Inhale: reach your chest towards your hands. Exhale: bend your knees and walk your feet forward towards your palms, hip-width apart.

Reminders:

1. Feel a long stretch back and up with the pelvis and legs. Feel then a long stretch forward and down into the torso and arms. Breath deep as you learn to relax into a stretch of opposition.
2. Widen your pelvis and shoulder girdles horizontally.
3. Let your neck muscles relax and focus your eyes on the upper thighs or on your navel.

SUPTA PADAGUSTHASTHASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Supta Padagusthasana	Reclined big toe hold Supta - Lying down Pada - Foot Angustha - Big toe	Reclined Position

Benefits:

1. Removes stiffness in the lower back, and relieves backache by helping align the pelvis.
2. Helps ease osteoarthritis of the hip and knees by stretching the hamstrings and calf muscles, and strengthening the knees.
3. Strengthens the hip joints and tones the lower spine.
4. Relieves sciatic pain.
5. Helps relieve menstrual discomfort such as cramps, heavy bleeding or pain during menstruation.
6. Removes stiffness in the legs, hips and feet.
7. Increases flexibility in the pelvis.
8. Improves circulation in the legs.

Primary Principles:

1. *Foundation:* Spine support is established through the legs and shoulders muscles. Activate the thigh muscles to ground the femurs. Shoulder loop engages to pull down the shoulder blades and keeps the upper body stabilized.
2. *Primary movement:* Flexion in the hip of the extended leg. External rotation in the flexed hip, knee and ankle when the leg moves away from the torso. Internal rotation in the flexed hip, knee and ankle when the leg crosses the torso.
3. *Breath:* Inhalation to flex the hip. Exhalation to move the leg. Inhalation to come back to centre. Exhalation to release the leg.

Secondary Principles:

1. Watch for alignment of the ankle, knee and hip joints.
2. Gently arch the lower back to maintain the lumbar spine curve and to keep the pelvis stabilized.
3. Quadriceps should be lifted towards the groins and groins pulling back into the hip sockets.
4. Pelvis remains neutral even if the hip is flexed.
5. Shoulders should be on the floor not straining to reach for the foot.
6. Triceps and serratus muscles engage to prevent the shoulders from lifting.
7. Lower ribs relax towards the navel.
8. Eyes remain soft yet focused with the forehead relaxed.
9. Neck is long with the chin perpendicular with the floor.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the back of the leg or knee. It means the hamstrings are tight and just requires patience and slow supported hamstring stretches. Soften the back of the knee joint and reach from the heel to sitting bone. Can also bend the supporting leg, placing the foot flat on the floor. Use a strap for support on the extended leg.
2. Hip pain in the flexed hip. Most of the time the femur is not grounded which means it is not sitting properly in the hip socket. Draw the head of the femur bone towards the hip socket and pull down along the outer hip away from the torso.
3. Hyper-extended knees. Students should never hyper-extend the knees. Have them activate their quadriceps and micro-bend in the back of the knee joint.
4. Pain in the lower back. Mostly caused by too much arch in the lower back (lordosis). Have them engage the lower abdominal muscles and feel the navel move towards the spine. Use a strap for support on the extended leg.
5. Neck or shoulder pain. Chances are the upper body is lifting away from the floor. Have them either use a strap across the foot or hold the back of the knee or thigh. It is best if the upper body remains relaxed so the breath can move freely.

Variations:

1. Use a strap across the sole of the foot to push into and help activate the legs.
2. Place the foot on a block to support the leg in external rotation.
3. Place the foot of bottom leg on the wall and use the wall to help activate the legs.
4. Use two straps. One across the bottom foot and opposite thigh. The second strap across the foot of the extended leg.
5. Use a strap across one foot and around the back of the skull to help release the upper body.
6. Use a bolster to support the thigh as it moves away from the torso.
7. Place a bolster under the lower back to achieve a stretch across the front of the hip and thigh.
8. Lift the head towards the knee to develop the shoulder loop awareness.
9. Have a partner, loop a strap across the extended leg of their partner and pull away with their ankle. Meanwhile, their partner holds onto a strap across their own foot.

Poses that facilitate:

1. Supported forward bends that stretch the hamstrings. (eg. Uttanasana, standing forward bend: with the wall)
2. Hip openers that release hip tension. (eg. Baddha Konasana, bound angle pose)

Contraindications:

Do not practice this asana if you are recovering from a cardiac condition, or if you have blocked arteries, asthma, bronchitis, migraine, stress-related headaches, or eye strain. If you have high blood pressure place a folded blanket under you head and neck. Advise students with hamstring, hip, or knee injuries to keep the knee micro-bent.

Counter Poses:

Any poses with hip extension. Lunges are an excellent way to stretch the front of the hips.

Practice Script:

From lying on the floor (Savasana), inhale: bend your knees and place both feet directly under the knees hip width apart. Direct the toes forward, aligning the feet, knees and hips. Inhale: draw your right knee into the chest taking both the hands around the shinbone. Exhale: relax your shoulders into the floor. Inhale: extend your right leg towards your head taking both of your hands to the foot or use a strap. Exhale: extend your bottom leg. Flex both the feet firmly drawing the toes towards the head. Activate the quadriceps and lift them in the direction of the hip sockets. Inhale deeply into your chest, allowing the shoulders to widen. Exhale: feel the release of your leg towards your head. On your next exhalation slowly release your leg onto the floor and relax back into Savasana.

Reminders:

1. Use the awareness of the floor as a tool to develop lung strength by breathing towards the floor.
2. Remember to rotate from the hip joint so that the legs stay in alignment.
3. Follow the line of the toes as you bring the leg out to the side so that you are stretching the hip as well as the leg.
4. Remind yourself of the moment by assessing your present intentions.

VRKSASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Vrksasana	Tree Pose Vrks - Tree	Balancing / Standing Pose

Benefits:

1. Develops the strength and flexibility in the legs and hips.
2. Improves concentration and focus.
3. Improves digestion.
4. Improves flexibility in the spine.
5. Alleviates backache.
6. Strengthens the ankles.
7. Reduces discomfort during menstruation.
8. Tones the abdominal and pelvic organs.

Primary Principles:

1. *Foundation:* Press firmly into both feet. Press into floor with the standing foot, lifting the kneecaps and activating the quadriceps towards the hip.
2. *Primary Movement:* Balance on one leg. Extension in the standing leg and arms.
3. *Breath:* Inhale to balance on one foot. Exhale to extend the arms overhead. Exhale to release form the pose.

Secondary Principles:

1. Feel the weight equal front to back on the bottom foot.
2. Spread your toes.
3. Lift the arches into the ankle.
4. Lift the shinbones towards the hips.
5. Hollow the groins back into the hip sockets.
6. Push your top foot into the thigh, your thigh back into your foot.
7. Squeeze the shin and the thigh together of your top leg and pull the heel towards the groin.
8. Lengthen your tailbone towards your bottom heel and push the inner heel down into the floor.
9. Reach into the back of your skull and lengthen the top of the head parallel with the floor.
10. Let your shoulders lift from the armpits and stretch the armpits long and wide.
11. Reach your elbows, wrists and fingers with your shoulders.
12. Bring your fingers together.
13. Stretch your armpits from your spine.

Common Obstacles:

1. Difficulty to place the foot into the inner thigh. Place the foot below the knee on the shin.
2. Difficulty to find balance. Either place the foot behind the shin and draw the knees together or turn to a wall or chair and support with just the fingertips.

Variations:

1. Use a wall and place the back onto the wall to develop awareness in the spine.
2. Eyes closed to help discover the centre of the standing foot.
3. Hands in Namaste (prayer), or reach the fingertips to the floor.

Support Poses:

1. Standing poses (eg. Uttitha Trikonasana, extended triangle pose)
2. Quadriceps strengthening poses (eg Utkatasana, chair pose)

Contraindications:

1. Do not practice this pose if you have stress-related headaches, migraine, eye strain, low blood pressure, or osteoarthritis of the knees.
2. If you have a problem with balance, practice this asana with your hands on a chair.
3. If you suffer from high blood pressure, do not raise the arms overhead.

Counter Poses:

1. Forward bend (eg. Paschimottanasana, seated forward bend or Uttanasana, standing forward bend)

Practice Script:

From Samastithi, inhale: place one foot high into the opposite inner thigh. Push into both feet firmly and lift the quadriceps and kneecaps up towards the hips. Place the palms of your hands together with the fingertips pointing towards the head. Exhale: extend your arms fully overhead feeling your shoulders stretch up with the elbows and wrists. Inhale: push your standing foot firm down into the floor and feel the arches lift with the top of your head. Inhale: widen your back as you feel length in your spine. Exhale: release your hands down and your foot onto the floor.

Reminders

1. Feel the standing leg stable like the trunk of a tree. Feel fluidity in the upper body like the branches and leaves of a tree.
2. Find a quiet spine, yet stable legs.
3. Let your eyes be soft even test trying to close them to find not only outer stability but inner stability as well.

URDHVA HASTASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Urdhva Hastasana	Arms Stretched Up Pose	Standing Pose
	Urdhva - Upwards	
	Hasta - Hands	

Benefits:

1. Tones and stimulates the abdomen, pelvis, torso and back.
2. Relieves arthritis.
3. Reduces sciatic pain.
4. Strengthens the knee joints.
5. Stretches the hamstring muscles.
6. Supports flat feet.

Primary Principles:

1. *Foundation:* Extend your wrists, palms and fingers towards the ceiling. Tighten your kneecaps and lift your quadriceps towards the hips. Push your feet firmly into the floor.
2. *Primary Movement:* Extend the arms overhead while firming the legs to support a long spine. Gently lift the eyes to look to the thumbs and place the palms of the hands together.
3. *Breath:* Inhale and raise the arms overhead, looking to the thumbs. Exhale to release the arms down by your side.

Secondary Principles:

1. Extend your arms perpendicular to the floor.
2. Lift your gaze without hyper-extending in the neck.
3. Stretch your arms and fingers.
4. Stretch your arms further up from your shoulders, keeping them parallel to one another.
5. Keep your fingers together to align the wrists, elbows and shoulders.
6. Feel the stretch along both sides of your body.
7. Pull your lower abdomen in.
8. Lower the arms with your palms facing slightly front.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the shoulders. Usually occurs when the arms lift above 90-degrees because of the movement in the shoulder joint. Keep arms at 90-degrees or place a buckled strap, shoulder width apart, above elbows.
2. Pain in the neck. Caused by hyper-extension in the cervical spine. Lift the base of the head away from the back and try to relax the eyes back into the sockets.

Variations:

1. Buckle a strap shoulder width apart and place it above the elbows. Push into the strap to create an opening in the shoulder joints.
2. Place a block between the hands and push into the block. Also bend the elbows 90-degrees back and keep pushing into the block. This develops the strength in the shoulders and pulls the shoulder blades away from the spine.

Support Poses:

Standing poses and shoulder openers (eg. Parshvottanasana, intense chest stretch)

Contraindications:

1. Do not practice this pose if you have stress-related headaches, migraine, eye strain, low blood pressure, osteoarthritis of the knees, or insomnia.
2. If you have high blood pressure do not practice this asana with the arms overhead.
3. If you have a back injury keep your feet apart.

Counter Poses:

Forward bends (eg. Uttanasana, standing forward bend)

Practice Script:

From Samastithi, with your big toes together and your heels slightly apart, inhale: turn the palms forward and open the chest. Exhale: press firmly down into all four corners of your feet. Inhale: raise the arms slowly overhead touching your palms together while gently gazing to your thumbs. Exhale: release your arms back down by your sides, Samastithi.

Reminders:

1. Let your movement stem from your breathing.
2. Keep the muscles of your neck soft to keep your throat relaxed.
3. Soften your eyes into their sockets to avoid building unnecessary tension.

PURVOTTANASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Purvottanasana	Upward Plank Pose /Intense Stretch Towards the East Purva - East (symbolically this represents a movement towards the top or face) Uttana - Intense Stretch	Seated Position /Backbend

Benefits:

1. Develops flexibility in the shoulders and chest.
2. Improves digestion.
3. Tones the thyroid and throat.
4. Relieves breathlessness.
5. Helps to support menstrual cycle.
6. Tones the leg muscles.
7. Supports pelvic floor.

Primary Principles:

1. *Foundation:* Press firmly into the feet and root all knuckles of all toes. Shoulder loop activates and the chest from the floor.
2. *Primary Movement:* Extension in the legs and arms.
3. *Breath:* Inhale to move into the pose. Exhale to release from the pose.

Secondary Principles:

1. Place the big toes together and the heels slightly apart.
2. Reach your big toes and inner heels to the ground.
3. Lengthen the sitting bones and the tailbone to the heels.
4. Activate the kneecaps and quadriceps toward the hips.
5. Hollow the groins back to widen the lower back.
6. Pull the navel to the spine to activate the lower abdominals to lift in and up.
7. Stretch the waist equally along both sides.
8. Draw your shoulder blades down and in.
9. Lift the ribs and chest far from the hips.
10. Let your chin lift from the chest.
11. Lengthen into the neck.
12. Relax the neck muscles and try to open the throat.
13. Push your hands firmly into the floor.
14. Engage the triceps by pulling the arms back in the direction of the feet.
15. Spread the collarbones and release the throat.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the shoulders or neck. Due to a collapsing in the chest and shoulder joints. Bend the knees and place the feet on the floor.

Variations:

1. Knees bent and feet on the floor.
2. With the knees bent inhale and lift into the pose. Exhale: draw the pelvis back and try to extend the legs fully with the pelvis off the floor. Repeat several times.
3. Hands on blocks to support the lift the chest.

Support Poses:

1. Arm strengtheners (eg Chaturanga Dandasana, four limbed staff pose)
2. Supported backbends (eg Supta Virasana, reclined hero)
3. Shoulder opener (eg. Purvottanasana, upward plank pose)

Contraindications:

1. Do not practice this asana if you have stress-related headache, migraine, rheumatoid fever, low blood pressure, or diarrhea.
2. Do not practice if you have wrist injury.
3. Do not practice the full pose if you have a neck injury. Support the head on a wall or chair seat.

Counter Poses:

1. Forward bends (eg Paschimottanasana, seated forward bend or Adho Mukha Svanasana, downward facing dog)
2. Twists (eg. Marichyasana, seated spinal twist)

Practice Script:

From seated, exhale: walk your hands back one and a half feet behind your pelvis and place your hands firmly onto the floor. Stretch both of your legs out and place your big toes together and your heels slightly apart. Exhale: bend your elbows back and lengthen into the back of your pelvis. Inhale: push your hands and feet firmly into the floor lifting your pelvis and legs off the floor. Open your chest directly upwards towards the ceiling by pushing your shoulder blades down in the direction of your pelvis. Inhale: slowly lay your head back without cutting off breath in your throat. Exhale: put more pressure down into your big toes. Inhale: pull your chest from your legs. Exhale: release your pelvis back onto the floor.

Reminders

1. Let your eyes and jaw remain soft so that you do not create any tension in the head.
2. Continue to pull your arms towards your feet to avoid rolling the shoulders forward that puts pressure on the neck and head.

BHUJANGASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Bhujangasana	Cobra Pose	Backbend
	Bhujang - Cobra	

Benefits:

1. Improves breathing capacity by expanding the chest.
2. Helps in the treatment of a prolapsed or slipped disc.
3. Relieves lower backache.

Primary Principles:

1. *Foundation:* Activate the muscles of the legs pulling the quadriceps towards the hips. Hollow the groins into the hips and lengthen the tailbone towards the heels. Loop the shoulders down the spine pulling the navel to the spine.
2. *Primary Movement:* Extension in the spine. Hyper extension in the lower back.
3. *Breath:* Inhale to extend the spine. Exhale to release.

Secondary Principles:

1. Reach into the feet and lengthen the ankles.
2. Lift the shinbones, knees and thighbones away from the floor.
3. Pull the kneecaps up and engage the quadriceps.
4. Pull the lower ribs to the spine to widen and tone the kidneys.
5. Pull the elbows in and back towards the heels.
6. Keep the neck long and muscles soft.
7. Rest the eyes along the length of the nose.

Variations:

1. Use two blocks under the hands to understand how to support the shoulders.
2. Place the feet on the wall to help push effort into the legs and reduce compression in the lumbar spine.
3. With a partner, have one person in the pose while the other person supports their partner with their hands around the partner's shoulders, gently pulling back.

Support Poses:

Standing or seated poses that help develop the stability in the lower body and the strength in the abdominals and the lower back. (eg. Navasana, boat or Utthita Trikonasana, extended triangle).

Contraindications:

1. Do not practice this pose if you are suffering from migraines, severe headaches or hypertension.

Counter Poses:

Forward bends and twists (eg. Balasana, child's pose)

Practice Script:

Laying the belly onto the floor, reach back with your toes and lengthen the front of your ankles. Firmly plant the palms of your hands next to your floating ribs. Inhale: pull the tops of the shoulders back to your heels while reaching the front of your chest forward. Keep the elbows slightly bent while reaching them back towards the heels. Inhale: reach your chest forward and lengthen long into the neck. Exhale: turning your head, release onto the floor.

Reminders:

1. Maintain the integrity in your lower body in order to deepen the backbend in the spine.
2. Stay low to the ground in order to enliven the back muscles along the spine.
3. Feel your back muscles contracting but remember to maintain enough suppleness to feel the breath pass through.

URDHVA MUKHA SVANASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Urdhva Mukha Svanasana	Upward Facing Dog Urdhva - Upwards Mukha - Facing Svan - Dog	Backbend

Benefits:

1. Tones the spine.
2. Supports and strengthens the abdominal and pelvic organs.
3. Helps to prevent excess menstrual flow and eases menstrual cramps.
4. Tones the leg muscles.
5. Helps alleviate sciatica.

Primary Principles:

1. *Foundation:* Activate the legs muscles by pressing the tops of the feet firmly into the ground and hug the muscles close to the bones. Press the hands firmly into the floor and roll the upper arm bones back towards the heels.
2. *Primary Movement:* Extension in both of the hips and plantar flexion in both of the ankles. Extension in the upper back and hyper-extension in the lower back.
3. *Breath:* Inhale to move into the pose. Exhale to come out of the pose.

Secondary Principles:

- I. Spread the soles of the feet.
2. Place your hands next to your floating ribs and push the hands firmly down.
3. Straighten your arms lifting the legs fully off the floor.
4. Push the shoulders down.
5. Pull the pelvis forward from the feet.
6. Draw the tailbone into the body.
7. Stretch the abdomen and chest away from the hips.
8. Lengthen both sides of the torso.
9. Lift the sternum up and forward and from the back of the heart.
10. Keep the eyes relaxed and focused down the nose.
11. Keep the neck long and the muscles soft.
12. Press the shoulder blades back and in to help lift the chest.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the lower back. Caused generally by lordosis. Pull the navel back to their spine and try to lengthen the tailbone then draw the tailbone deep into the body. If there is still pain, place knees on the ground or support the pelvis with a bolster.
2. Pain in the neck or shoulders. Usually caused by a rolling forward if the shoulders. Place hands on two blocks to give more support in the upper body. Focus on drawing the upper arm bones back to ensure shoulder girdle is well supported.

Variations:

1. Place both hands on two blocks to develop awareness of the upper body.
2. Do the pose along the wall to understand the movement.
3. Do the pose with the toes tucked to learn how to support in the abdominals and pelvis.
4. Support pelvis on bolster.

Support Poses:

Backbends (eg. Bhujangasana, cobra or Setu Bandasana, bridge)

Standing poses (eg. Utthita Trikonasana, extended triangle)

Contraindications:

1. Do not practice this posture if your blood pressure is too high or too low.
2. Avoid this pose if you have severe intestinal problems.
3. Do not practice during a severe headache or migraine.
4. If you have a cardiac condition, practice Bhujangasana (cobra) instead.

Counter Poses:

Forward bends. (eg. Adho Mukha Svanasana, downward facing dog)

Practice Script:

While lying on your belly, point your toes back and stretch your ankles from your knees. Walk your hands back next to your floating ribs placing your hands firmly onto the floor. Squeeze the elbows back to your heels. Inhale: slowly begin to straighten your arms lifting your thighs and knees from the floor. Actively push the tops of your feet into the floor as you pull your pelvis and chest forward. Look softly down your nose and lay your upper spine back to your hips. Inhale deeply: let the tops of your shoulders roll down your back. Exhale: release your chest and pelvis back down to the floor.

Reminders:

1. Stay strong and active in your legs. This action will stabilize your lower body, protect your lower back and take you deeper into your backbend action without compression.
2. Once the upper body is stable, you can lay the head back but without collapsing forward in the neck and shoulders.
3. Lift the heart up and forward and feel how it supports the lungs.

UTKATASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Utkatasana	Intense chair pose Ut - Intense or Deliberate Kat - chair	Standing Pose

Benefits:

1. Strengthens the knee and hip joints.
2. Tones the abdominal organs.
3. Improves digestion.
4. Alleviates lower back pain.
5. Relieves menstrual pain.

Primary Principles:

1. *Foundation:* Press the feet firmly into the floor. Lift the kneecaps and quadriceps towards the groins, hollowing the groins back. Stretch the arms towards the ceiling.
2. *Primary movement:* Flexion in both of the hips, knees and ankles. Extension in the arms.
3. *Breath:* Exhale to bend the knees. Inhale to lift the arms overhead. Exhale to release from the pose.

Secondary Principles:

1. Place your feet together with your big toes touching and your heel slightly separated.
2. Lift the arches of your feet in the direction of your knees.
3. Take your weight back into the heels off the front of the feet.
4. Push your shinbones forward and pull your thighbones back.
5. Spread your sitting bones and reach them down behind your heels.
6. Extend your waist equally on both sides.
7. Stretch your shoulders from your armpits and your shoulder blades into your armpits.
8. Stretch your elbows, wrists and fingers to the ceiling.
9. Place the fingers together and gently press the palms together.
10. Look up to your thumbs and relax your eyes back into the sockets.
11. Lengthen the back of your neck and relax your throat and jaw.
12. Stretch your chest and ribs from your hips.

Common Obstacles:

1. Groin pain. Caused from pushing the groins forward and clenching in the muscle. Relax the groins back and put more weight into the heels.
2. Neck pain. Generally caused from a hyperextension in the neck. Look forward and lengthen the back of the neck. Lift from the back of the heart.

Variations:

1. Place the sitting bones on the wall. Try to move the pelvis slowly away from the wall to feel more of a stretch into the upper body. Again reach back with the sitting bones and place the back on the wall.
2. From a squat. Learn to drop the weight of the pelvis down and reach the upper body in opposition.

Support Poses:

1. Backbend/Quad strengthener (eg. Setu Bandasana, bridge or Bhujangasana, cobra)
2. Virasana (hero pose)
3. Adho Mukha Svanasana (downward facing dog)

Contraindications:

1. Do not practice this asana if you have stress-related headache, migraine, osteoarthritis of the knees, rheumatoid fever, varicose veins, low blood pressure, or chronic fatigue syndrome.
2. Avoid this posture during menstruation, or if you have heavy or irregular periods, or premenstrual stress.
3. If you have cervical spondylosis, look up briefly in the final posture.

Counter Poses:

1. Leg extension in the hips (eg. Urdhva Mukha Svanasana, upward facing dog)
2. Forward bending in the upper spine (eg Paschimottanasa, seated forward bend)
3. Tadasana (mountain pose)

Practice Script:

From standing, step your feet together with your big toes touching and a slight separation of your heels. Firm your quadriceps towards your hips. Exhale: bend your knees and draw your weight back into your heels. Inhale: lengthen your tailbone to the floor and reach, from your waist, your shoulders, elbows and wrists overhead. Gently look to your thumbs as you relax the eyes back into the head. Inhale: feel the stretch into your chest to your fingertips. Exhale: release the sitting bones back behind your heel. Inhale: lengthen both sides of your waist equally. Exhale back to standing and extend your arms and legs.

Reminders:

1. Let the weight move into the back of your heels so that you can continue drawing up the muscles of the front of the legs.
2. As you lift your ankles from the floor, pull that sensation all the way into the back of the arms.

VIRABHADRASANA I



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Virabhadrasana I	Warrior Pose A or I Virabhadrasana - I Legendary Warrior	Standing Pose

Benefits:

1. Stretches the chest, lungs, shoulders, neck, belly, and groins.
2. Strengthens the shoulders, arms, and the muscles of the back.
3. Strengthens and stretches the thighs, calves, and ankles.
4. Relieves backache and sciatica.
5. Tones the abdominal muscles.
6. Supports abdominal and pelvic organs.
7. Relieves menstrual pain.

Primary Principles:

1. *Foundation:* Press the feet firmly into the floor and lift the kneecaps. Push your shoulder blades inwards and then allow them to lift.
2. *Primary Movement:* Flexion in the front hip and knee. Extension into the back hip and leg. Extension in the spine and arms.
3. *Breath:* Inhale to lift into the pose. Exhale to release out of the pose.

Secondary Principles:

1. Raise your arms until they are perpendicular with the floor and parallel to each other.
2. Stretch from your elbows to your fingertips.
3. Turn the back toes in slightly to rotate safely in the back hip.
4. Stretch the back leg from the heel to the back of the thigh.
5. Keep your front knee directly on top of the front ankle while trying to lower the front thigh parallel to the floor.
6. Let your back hip rotate in slightly to minimize pressure on the back of the sacroiliac joint.
7. Extend your elbows to support your shoulder girdle.
8. Widen your upper chest.
9. Do not harden your shoulders but rather keep moving them in and up.
10. Stretch your back long.
11. Push your shoulder joints into the armpits.
12. Turn your kneecap of the front leg out towards the little toe of your front foot.
13. Your weight should rest on the inner edge of your back buttock and on the outer heel of the left foot.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the back ankle or knee. This usually is from collapsed arches. Lift the toes to activate the leg muscles. If it is still painful turn the back foot 90-degrees.
2. Pain in the sacroiliac joint. Generally caused from a displacement in the joint. Drop the hipbone in and down and instead try to lift the inside of the thigh without pushing the hipbone back.

Variations:

1. Place a strap above the elbows to understand better the movement of the shoulders.
2. Place a block between hands. Bend the elbows 90-degrees while continuing to push the hands to the block and squeezing the elbows in.
3. With a partner, have one person push gently onto the shin. Have the other partner push into their touch then pull the back hip away as they push forward.

Support Poses:

1. Urdhva Hastasana (upward arm stretch)
2. Dandasana (staff pose)

Contraindications:

1. Do not practice this posture if you have high blood pressure or a cardiac condition.
2. If you suffer from shoulder problems, keep the raised arms parallel (or slightly wider than parallel) to each other.
3. If you suffer from neck problems, keep the head in a neutral position and do not look up at the hands.

Counter Poses:

Forward bends (eg Paschimottanasana, seated forward bend or Uttanasana, standing forward bend)

Practice Script:

From Adho Mukha Svanasana, downward facing dog, inhale: step your right foot between your hands while you pivot the back heel on a 15-degree angle. Push the feet firmly into the floor and inhale: straighten your arms overhead, palms touching as you look gently towards your thumbs. As you exhale drop both your hips to the floor and spread your feet evenly on the floor. Inhale: reach your fingers, wrists and elbows away from your hips dropping. Exhale: release your arms down and step your feet together.

Reminders:

1. Keep the muscles of your front thigh relaxed.
2. Extend your spine from your tailbone.
3. Relax the muscles of your face.

UTTHITA TRIKONASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Utthita Trikonasana	Extended Triangle Pose Utthita - Extended Tri - Three Kona - Angle	Standing Pose / Twist

Benefits:

1. Relieves gastritis, indigestion, acidity, and flatulence.
2. Improves flexibility in the spine.
3. Alleviates backache.
4. Corrects alignment of the shoulders.
5. Massages and tones the pelvic and abdominal organs.

Primary Principles:

1. *Foundation:* Press the feet firmly into the floor drawing the kneecaps straight up and activating the quadriceps towards the hips. Loop the shoulders down the back to stabilize the upper body allowing then for the head to turn.
2. *Primary Movement:* Flexion in the front hip. Extension in the back hip and arms.
3. *Breath:* Inhale to lengthen the spine, legs and arms. Exhale to move into the pose. Inhale to lift out of the pose. Exhale to release the arms and legs.

Secondary Principles:

1. Distribute your weight evenly on both legs.
2. Turn your back foot in on a 10 to 15-degree angle (unless there is pain in the ankle or in the sacroiliac joint). Turn your front foot and toes straight forward.
3. Rest on the center of your arches not on the heels or toes.
4. Spread the toes along the floor.
5. Lift your arms shoulder height and keep them level with one another.
6. Stretch your arms from the back of the elbows.
7. Lift your chest.
8. Feel external rotation in your front thigh and internal rotation in your back thigh.
9. Make sure your kneecaps lift straight up and do not turn out too much.
10. Stretch your shoulders from your torso.
11. Stretch the top arm from the armpit and keep it steady so it doesn't fall back.
12. Keep the back of your head aligned with your spine, and keep your shoulder blades in line with one another.
13. Keep your bottom shoulder straight.
14. Press the inner edge of your front heel into the floor.
15. Bring your front buttock forward with the bottom floating ribs.
16. Adjust your weight so it rests on your front heel not on the front palm.
17. Keep your neck passive and fix your eyes on the top thumb.
18. Revolve the torso slightly up and back.
19. Relax your throat.
20. Align the tailbone and the back of the head.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the back ankle or knee. Caused by a misalignment on the leg and hip. Make sure the foot, knee and hip of the back leg are aligned with a slight internal rotation in the full leg. Check the kneecap and make sure it is lifting straight up, not off to one side.
2. Pain in the sacroiliac joint of the pelvis. Caused by too much external rotation in the top hip. Make sure the top hipbone is pointing slightly down to the floor with the kneecap lifted straight up.
3. Pain in the neck or shoulders. Caused by shoulder joint or cervical spine dysfunction. Drop the eyes down and turn the head forward. Lengthen the back of the head from the tailbone and lift the quadriceps more firmly.

Variations:

1. Use a block under the bottom hand if the hamstrings are tight.
2. Use a wall behind the back to create better spinal alignment.
3. Turn the front of the chest and pelvis towards the wall to let the weight move off the balls of the feet.
4. The top arm extends overhead to create a lateral bend.
5. Lift the hand off the floor to develop the strength in the quadriceps and calf muscles.
6. Lift the ball of the front foot off the floor to develop the lifting sensation in the front of the legs.
7. With a partner, have one person in the pose and the other with their hands on their partner's top of the head and sacrum. Person in the pose pushes into their partner's hands to feel more spinal extension.

Support Poses:

1. Standing poses that strengthen the legs. (eg Urdhva Uttanasana, standing forward bend)
2. Backbends that open the chest. (eg Urdhva Mukha Svanasana, upward facing dog)

Contraindications:

1. Do not practice this asana if you have stress-related headaches, migraine, eye strain, diarrhea, low blood pressure, psoriasis, varicose veins, or if you are depressed or extremely fatigued.
2. Students with rheumatoid arthritis who have fever should avoid this pose.
3. Do not practice during menstruation.
4. If you have high blood pressure, do not look up at the raised arm.
5. If you have cervical spondylosis do not look up for too long.
6. If you are prone to dizzy spells, vertigo, or high blood pressure look down in this pose.
7. Do not turn your head up if you have a cardiac condition, practice against a wall. Do not raise your arm but rest it on your hip.

Counter Poses:

Flexion in the chest and hips. (eg Baddha Konasana, bound angle pose)

Practice Script:

Step your feet out one leg length-and-a-half apart. Turn your front foot open 90-degrees and your back foot in 10 to 15-degrees. Lift your arms parallel to the floor and firm your quadriceps towards your hips. Inhale: lifting your chest, extend your front hand onto the floor or block. Exhale: rotate back from your torso and extend your top arm towards the ceiling. Let your eyes relax back into your head and gently rotate your head away from your bottom leg and eventually look towards your thumb. Inhale: hug the muscles of your legs towards the bones. Exhale: relax your shoulders down from your ears. Spread your shoulder blades wide and extend your shoulders into your elbows and wrists. With an exhalation, look down to the floor. Inhale: drop your pelvis and rise back up to standing. Exhale: release your arms back down by your sides.

Reminders:

1. Keep extending the sides of the waist to give length to the spine.
2. Feel the extension into your extremities yet remember to hug the muscles towards the bones.
3. Continue to acknowledge the floor. Pull its support up and through your legs.

VIRABHADRASANA II



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Virabhadrasana II	Warrior B or 2 Virabhadra - A legendary warrior	Standing Pose

Benefits:

1. Improves breathing capacity by expanding the chest.
2. Helps in the treatment of a prolapsed or slipped disc.
3. Relieves lower backache.

Primary Principles:

1. *Foundation:* Press the feet firmly into the floor and activate the leg muscles to hug into the bones. Stretch and push down on the arms parallel to the floor.
2. *Primary Movement:* Flexion in the front hip and knee. Extension in the back leg and arms.
3. *Breath:* Inhale to lift the arms and extend the legs. Exhale to bend the front knee and come into the pose.

Secondary Principles:

4.
 1. Step your feet one leg-and-a-half length apart.
 2. Stretch from your elbows to your fingertips.
 3. Turn the back toes in on a 10 to 15-degree angle (less if there is pain in the ankle) to rotate internally with the back leg.
 4. Push the little toes of both the feet firmly down.
 5. Pull the inner sides of your legs towards the waist.
 6. Pull the muscles of your front leg up.
 7. Stretch the arches and toes of both feet.
 8. Push the flesh and skin of your front buttock towards the knee.
 9. Make sure your back armpit and hip are in line.
 10. Stretch the back leg from the heel to the back of the thigh.
 11. Keep your front knee directly on top of the front ankle while trying to lower the front thigh parallel to the floor.
 12. Let your back hip rotate in slightly to minimize pressure on the back of the sacroiliac joint.
 13. Extend your elbows.
 14. Widen your upper chest.
 15. Do not harden your shoulders but rather keep moving them down and in.
 16. Stretch your back long.
 17. Turn your kneecap of the front leg out towards the little toe of your front foot.
 18. Your weight should rest on the inner edge of your back buttock and on the outer heel of the left foot.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the back ankle or knee. This is usually from collapsed arches. Lift the toes to activate the leg muscles. If it is still painful turn the back foot 90-degrees.
2. Pain in the sacroiliac joint. Generally caused from a displacement in the joint. Drop the hipbone in and down, and instead try to lift the inside of the thigh without pushing the hipbone back.

Variations:

1. Place the back foot onto the wall to develop the support and length of the backside of the body.
2. With a partner, have them push on the front shin while you push forward with the front shin while simultaneously pulling back with the thigh.

Support Poses:

1. Urdhva Hastasana (arms stretched up)
2. Dandasana (staff pose)

Contraindications:

1. Do not practice this pose if you have a cardiac condition, high blood pressure, heartburn, or diarrhea.
2. Avoid if menstrual bleeding is heavy.
3. If you suffer from neck problems, do not turn your head to look over the front hand; continue to look straight ahead with both sides of the neck lengthened evenly.

Counter Poses:

Forward bends (eg Uttanasana, standing forward bend)

Practice Script:

Step your feet apart one leg and half-length apart. Turn from your heel the front foot open 90-degrees and your back foot in 10 to 15-degrees. Inhale: stretch your arms straight, parallel to the floor. Exhale: bend your front knee directly on top of your ankle. Inhale: push your arms down and feel your chest lift up. Exhale: lengthen your tailbone away from your head. Inhale: stretch your shoulders from your armpits and lengthen the elbows and wrists. Exhale: soften your gaze on your front middle finger. Inhale: extend your front leg. Exhale: release your arms and legs.

Reminders

1. Tuck in your back shoulder blade and stretch down into the back leg.
2. Feel the body strong and proud like a warrior, yet calm and concentrated and ready to respond.
3. Your back buttock should be slightly lower than your front knee.

UTTHITA PARSHVAKONASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Utthita Parshvakonasana	Extended Side Angle Pose Utthita - Stretch Parsva - Side or Flank Kona - Angle	Standing Pose / Twist

Benefits:

1. Enhances lung capacity.
2. Tones the muscles of the heart.
3. Relieves sciatic and arthritic pain.
4. Improves digestion and elimination.

Primary Principles:

1. *Foundation:* Press the feet firmly into the floor and lift the kneecaps to the hips. Push your top shoulder blade inwards and then allow it to lift. Pull your bottom shoulder down and in. Shoulder loop action helps to rotate the upper chest to the ceiling.
2. *Primary Movement:* Flexion in the front hip and knee. Extension into the back hip and leg. Extension in the arms. Slight rotation in the upper spine.
3. *Breath:* Inhale to bend the front knee and lift the arms. Exhale to move into the pose. Exhale to look down before coming up. Inhale to lift to standing and extend the legs. Exhale to release the arms and legs.

Secondary Principles:

1. Place one leg and a half-length between your feet.
2. Turn from the heels the front foot and toes 90-degrees and the back foot and toes 10 to 15-degrees.
3. Bend the front knee 90-degrees so that the shin is perpendicular with the floor and the thigh parallel.
4. Let the back buttock be slightly lower than the front knee.
5. Push the little toes of both the feet firmly down.
6. Pull the inner sides of your legs towards the waist.
7. Pull the muscles of your front leg up.
8. Stretch the arches and toes of both feet.
9. Push the flesh and skin of your front buttock towards the knee.
10. Stretch the back leg from the heel to the back of the thigh.
11. Let your back hip rotate in slightly to minimize pressure on the back of the sacroiliac joint.
12. Extend your elbows.
13. Widen your upper chest and rotate the upper spine towards the ceiling.
14. Do not harden your shoulders.
15. Keep your top shoulder moving in and up and the bottom shoulder in and down.
16. Stretch your back long.
17. Turn your kneecap of the front leg out towards the little toe of your front foot.
18. Widen your shoulder blades and reach the shoulders from the armpits.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the back ankle or knee. This usually is from collapsed arches. Lift the toes to activate the leg muscles. If it is still painful turn the back foot 90-degrees.
2. Pain in the sacroiliac joint. Generally caused from a displacement in the joint. Drop the hipbone in and down and instead try to lift the inside of the thigh without pushing the hipbone back.
3. Pain in the top shoulder. Generally caused by shoulder displacement. Extend the arm to the ceiling. If it is still painful lower the arm down onto the side body.

Variations:

1. Bottom elbow could be placed on the knee with the palm facing up or place the bottom hand flat on a block if the hamstrings are too tight.
2. Both arms reach and extend away from the hips (more extreme).
3. Bind the hands under the front thigh (more extreme).
4. Place the back heel against the wall to create more stability in the back leg.
5. Place the back against a wall to align the legs, torso and arms.
6. Place the front knee parallel with the wall and a block between the shin and wall to teach the opposing action in the thighs and shins. You will have to reach the top arm to the ceiling or place the palm flat on the wall.

Support Poses:

1. Standing poses (eg. Utthita Trikonasana, extended triangle pose)
2. Shoulder openers (eg. Setu Bandasana, supported bridge pose)

Contraindications:

1. Do not practice this asana if you have stress-related headache, migraine, osteoarthritis of the knees, rheumatoid fever, varicose veins, low blood pressure, chronic fatigue syndrome, diarrhea, or insomnia.
2. Avoid this posture during menstruation, or if you have heavy or irregular periods, or premenstrual stress.
3. If you have cervical spondylosis look up briefly in the final posture.

Counter Poses:

1. Seated forward bend (eg. Janu Sirsasana , head to knee pose)
2. Adho Mukha Svanasana (downward facing dog)

Practice Script:

Step your feet apart one leg-and-a-half-length apart. Turn from your heel the front foot open ninety degrees and your back foot in 10 to 15-degrees. Inhale: stretch your arms straight, parallel to the floor. Exhale: bend your front knee directly on top of your ankle and reach the top arm above your head while rotating in the chest upwards. Inhale: ground your feet firmly into the floor. Exhale: lengthen your tailbone away from your head. Inhale: stretch your shoulders from your armpits and lengthen the elbows and wrists. Exhale: soften your gaze to the inside of your elbow or armpit. Inhale: pull your chest from your hips. Exhale: look down to the ground. Inhale: lift to standing and extend your front leg. Exhale: release your arms and legs.

Reminders

1. Find a natural rotation in the torso by drawing the bottom ribcage forward and drawing the top ribcage back.
2. Do not rest your weight on your palm but rather support the weight on your front foot.
3. Reach with your fingertips with the palm facing down but pull your top armpit back.

PARSHVOTTANASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Parsvottanasana	Intense Chest Stretch Uttana - Intense Parsva -side or flank	Standing Pose/Twist

Benefits:

1. Cools the brain and soothes the nerves.
2. Relieves the arthritis of the neck, shoulders, elbows and wrists.
3. Strengthens the abdominal organs.
4. Improves digestion.
5. Tones the liver and the spleen.
6. Reduces menstrual pain.

Primary Principles:

1. *Foundation:* Press the soles of the feet firmly into the floor. Pull the thighbones back while lifting the kneecaps and quadriceps to the hips. Shoulder loop activates and pulls the elbows to the tailbone.
2. *Primary Movement:* Flexion in both hips.
3. *Breath:* Inhale to prepare the spine and take the hands back. Exhale to fold in the hips and move into the full pose. Inhale to lift back to standing. Exhale to release the arms and legs.

Secondary Principles:

1. Move the joined palms to the middle of your back.
2. Press your wrists together.
3. Touch the little fingers together.
4. Press your elbows and palms in.
5. Lift your elbows from the floor.
6. Push your shoulders back and expand the front of the chest.
7. Turn the front foot 90-degrees and the back foot 75 to 80-degrees.
8. Face your torso forward and keep your hips square.
9. Rest weight on the back heel as you push into the ball of the front foot.
10. Do not bend your front knee.
11. Stretch the waist, ribs and chest forward.
12. Rest your forehead, nose or chin onto the front knee or shin.
13. Move your belly slightly to the right to help keep square.
14. Let your spine relax down to the front leg.
15. Pull up your back inner ankle and push down with the outside of the heel.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the shoulders. If the shoulder flexibility is limited release arms to the floor or take hold of elbows.
2. Pain in the back of the knees. Micro-bend the back of the knees while actively lifting the kneecaps.

Variations:

1. Arms stretched overhead and hands placed onto the floor or two blocks.
2. Reach both the arms back behind the pelvis to develop the shoulder loop.

Support Poses:

1. Standing forward bends (eg. Prasarita Padottanasana, wide legged standing forward bend)
2. Shoulder openers (eg. Purvottanasana, extended east stretch)

Contraindications:

1. If you have high blood pressure, a cardiac condition, dysentery, or a abdominal hernia, practice this pose standing with your arms in reverse prayer.
2. Do not practice this pose during the first days of menstruation.

Counter Poses:

1. Backbends (eg Bhujangasana, cobra)

Practice Script:

Step a leg length between your feet, squaring off your pelvis forward. Turn your back foot in on a 75 to 80-degree angle with your front toes pointing straight forward. Inhale: lift your hands behind your back, bringing your palms together and your fingertips towards your head. Press your palms and elbows together and inhale, lifting your gaze, open your chest. Exhale: extend your chest forward taking your forehead, nose or chin onto your knee. Inhale: push your feet down and lift your kneecaps and quadriceps firmly towards your pelvis. Exhale: lift your hips while pulling your shoulders down to your pelvis. Keeping your legs straight inhale and push your thighs forward to lift the chest and come up. Exhale: release your arms and step your feet together.

Reminders

1. Keep your neck long and the muscles soft.
2. Try to stretch evenly along both sides of the torso.
3. Evenly distribute your weight on both feet so that not all of it rests in only the front foot.

SETU BANDASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Setu Bandasana	Supported Bridge Pose Setu - Bridge Bandha - Lock, Seal, or Supported	Backbend

Benefits:

1. Supports proper spinal alignment.
2. Increases lung capacity.
3. Helps regulate blood pressure.
4. Tones the muscles of the back and spine.
5. Removes stiffness in the shoulders and back.
6. Relieves menstrual and menopausal discomfort when supported.
7. Stretches the chest, neck, and spine.
8. Helps alleviate stress.
9. Stimulates abdominal organs, lungs, and thyroid.
10. Reduces anxiety, fatigue, and insomnia.

Primary Principles:

1. *Foundation:* Press your feet and your upper arm bones firmly into the floor. Activate the shoulder loop to open the chest.
2. *Primary Movement:* Hyper-extension in the lower back. Extension in both of the hips.
3. *Breath:* Inhale to move into the pose. Exhale to release form the pose.

Secondary Principles:

1. Spread the toes and flatten the feet.
2. Lift the arches of the feet towards the knees.
3. Lift the ankles from the floor.
4. Push the shinbones forward to activate the hamstrings.
5. Draw the quadriceps towards the groins.
6. Hollow the groins back to the hip sockets.
7. Lift the sacrum in and to the navel.
8. Pull the front of the hipbones towards the lower belly.
9. Draw the tailbone deep into the body and navel to the spine to protect the lower back.
Arch the lower back and feel the spine move into the front of the navel.
10. Extend both sides of the waist evenly.
11. Lift the ribs and chest away from the pelvis.
12. Push both shoulders equally down to the floor.
13. Gently draw the shoulder blades and armpits in towards the spine.
14. Bend in the elbows and pull the elbows down.
15. Point and reach the fingertips up and bring the fingers together.
16. Keep your eyes relaxed and the gaze in the direction of the nose.
17. Lift your chin perpendicular to the floor.
18. Stretch long into the back of the neck.
19. Soften the neck and facial muscles.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the lower back. Lift the heels away from the floor and pull the navel back and tailbone in to support the lumbar spine.

Variations:

1. Place a bolster under the chest and pelvis. Make sure the shoulders are planted onto the floor or blanket.
2. Place a block or two under the sacrum. If shoulders do not touch the floor, place a blanket under the shoulders. You could lift one leg at a time to help find the foundation.
3. With a partner, have one person in the pose with their arms stretched out to the sides. Have them externally rotate in the arms and try to place their hands onto the floor. The other person places their toes onto their partner's shoulders and a strap under their chest. On an inhale, the one person lifts into the pose while the other pushes down on their shoulders and pulls the strap to help them lift further in their chest.

Support Poses:

1. Leg strengtheners (eg. Utkatasana, chair pose or Utthita Trikonasana, extended triangle)
2. Shoulder openers (eg Purvottanasana, upward plank pose)

Contraindications:

1. Avoid this pose if you have a neck injury, unless you are supervised by an experienced teacher.
2. Do not practice this asana if you have severe constipation, diarrhea, headaches, migraine or hypertension.
3. If you are recovering from a heart condition practice this pose supported.

Counter Poses:

1. Forward bends (eg Paschimottanasana, seated forward bend)
2. Twists (eg. Marichyasana, seated spinal twist)

Practice Script:

From lying on your back, inhale: place both your feet firmly onto the floor hip-width apart. Bend your elbows 90-degrees and press your shoulders into the floor until you feel your chest open. Inhale: send your knees forward lifting your pelvis high from the floor. Exhale: press down through your inner heels and feel your pelvis lift higher. Inhale: stretch your ribs and chest further from your hips. Exhale: lift from under your spine so you can feel your spine move toward the front of your body. Stretch across your belly and again into your chest. Exhale: release your pelvis down and let go of your arms.

Reminders

1. Imagine yourself as a bridge. The support is on the bottom so that the top can arch and spread open.
2. Move the back of your spine into the front of your spine.
3. Work your upper shoulders down into the floor and lift your chin perpendicular so there is no tension in the throat or jaw.

KONASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Konasana	Wide Angle Pose Kona - Angle	Seated Pose / Forward Bend

Benefits:

1. Releases groins.
2. Stretches the insides and backs of the legs.
3. Stimulates the abdominal organs.
4. Calms the brain.
5. Relieves sciatic pain.
6. Supports pelvic and abdominal organs.
7. Supports the organs of the reproductive system.

Primary Principles:

1. *Foundation:* Leg bones draw into the floor. Muscles of the front of the legs activate towards the hips. Shoulder loop activates down the back.
2. *Primary Movement:* Flexion in both the hips.
3. *Breath:* Inhale to prepare the spine. Exhale to lengthen and fold forward. Inhale to rise back to seated. Exhale to release.

Secondary Principles:

1. Keep your back straight.
2. Sit on your sitting bones.
3. Spread your legs apart as far as possible.
4. Flex your feet and push forward with your inner heels.
5. Spread your toes and try to flatten the feet.
6. Lift the kneecaps up and hollow the groins back.
7. Extend both sides of your torso equally.
8. Lift the waist.
9. Stretch from each heel to thigh.
10. Keep your neck long.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the lower back. Caused by compression in the lower back and tighten in the hamstrings. Sit on a blanket or a block.
2. Pain in the back of the knees. Due to hyper-extension of the knees. Have them micro-bend the backs of the knees.
3. Tight hamstrings or lower back. Loop a strap around each foot and hold onto that, or lie with the back on the floor and the legs supported on a wall.
4. Difficulty bringing the torso to the floor. Place a bolster, block, or tightly rolled blanket on the floor in front. If more stiff or injured lean onto a chair, seated on a support.

Variations:

1. Upavista Konasana (seated upright). You can practice the version grabbing the big toes with the first two fingers or grab around the outer feet with the legs off the floor and balancing on the back of the sitting bones like Navasana (boat pose).
2. Arms extended overhead.
3. Fingertips behind the pelvis.
4. Folding forward, reaching the arms overhead.
5. Folding forward, keeping the fingertips behind the pelvis.
6. Folding forward, grabbing the outer feet or big toes.
7. With a partner, have one person in the pose while the other places their feet on the insides of their partner's thighs. Pull them forward towards your hips while you push their thighs back. Note: this should not be done to anyone who is too stiff or injured.
8. With a partner, lie back to back. One folds forward while the other arches back. Switch directions.

Support Poses:

1. Standing forward bends (eg. Prasarita Padottanasana, wide legged standing forward bend or Virhabhadrasana II, warrior)

Contraindications:

1. Lower-back injury. Sit up high on a folded blanket and keep your torso relatively upright.
2. Asthmatics should practice seated onto a blanket.
3. During menstruation, practice with head supported on a chair.

Counter Poses:

1. Supported backbends (eg Setu Bandasana, bridge)
2. Twists (eg. Bharadvajasana, torso stretch)

Practice Script:

From a seated position, open your legs as wide as you comfortably can. Flex your feet firmly and spread the soles of your feet. Activate your quadriceps and pull them in the direction of your hips. Place your fingertips behind your pelvis and lift your waist, ribs and chest from the floor. Inhale deeply: lengthen your spine from your hips. Exhale: press your thighbones down into the floor. Inhale: extend towards the top of the head. Exhale: let your shoulders drop down your back. Last deep breath in and exhale: releasing your arms and drawing your legs in.

Reminders

1. Keep your back straight and imagine your breath traveling up and down your spine.

PASCHIMOTTANASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Paschimottanasana	<p>Intense stretch towards the west pose or intense stretch towards the origin.</p> <p>Paschi = west (symbolically this represents a movement towards the root or origin)</p> <p>Ut - Intense or Deliberate</p> <p>Tan - Stretch</p>	Seated Pose / Forward Bend

Benefits:

1. Rests and massages the heart.
2. Soothes the adrenal glands.
3. Tones the kidneys, bladder and pancreas.
4. Activates a sluggish liver and improves the digestive system.
5. Supports the pelvic organs and the entire reproductive system in men and women.
6. Sharpens memory.
7. Soothes the sympathetic nervous system.
8. Reduces angina pain.
9. Relieves chronic headaches, migraines and eye strain.

10. Reduces stress in the facial muscles.
11. Alleviates stress-related compression or a feeling of tightness in the throat and diaphragm.
12. Strengthens the vertebral joints and stretches the ligaments of the spine.

Primary Principles:

1. *Foundation:* Flatten the feet to firm the leg muscles and lift the kneecaps and quadriceps towards the hips. Send the thighbones into the floor to lift the spine forward from the hips. Activate the shoulder loop to open the chest forward from the legs.
2. *Primary Movement:* Flexion in both of the hips.
3. *Breath:* Inhale to lengthen the spine. Exhale to move into the forward bend. Inhale to come out of the pose back to a seated position.

Secondary Principles:

1. Put more pressure in your thighs than in calves.
2. Keep your thighs flat on the floor.
3. Sit on your inner buttocks and equally distribute the weight.
4. How your wrist with your hand. Otherwise grab hold of your big toes with your first two fingers.
5. Stretch from the seat of your buttocks and feel lightness there.
6. Stretch your arms from your shoulders.
7. Keep your spine concave.
8. Place your forehead firmly on your knees, eventually to the shins.
9. Widen and lift your elbows and do not let them rest on the floor.
10. Keep your diaphragm soft.
11. Let your diaphragm lift to your chest.
12. Stretch both sides of your chest evenly.
13. Press your forehead into your legs.
14. Extend the skin of your back towards the head.
15. Let your spine descend completely.
16. Keep your hips parallel to one another.
17. Keep your neck muscles passive.
18. Raise the insides of your upper arms.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the back of the knees or lower back. Caused because of tight hamstrings. Micro-bend knees. Use a strap across the soles of feet.
2. Pain in the shoulders. Generally caused by shoulder joint instability. Reach fingertips back behind buttocks.

Variations:

1. Sit on a folded blanket to allow the femurs to properly release.
2. Use a strap across the soles of the feet.
3. Support the back of the knees with a bolster or rolled up blanket.
4. Support the head and arms with a bolster or two or blocks.
5. Sit on a block or bolster with students with tight hamstrings.
6. Place the heels on a block for students with more open hamstrings.
7. Sit on a chair with a bolster under the head and arms.
8. With a partner, have one person lay into Paschimottanasana while the other lays their back into their partner's back. They can drop their hips and reach to take the soles of their partner's feet.

Support Poses:

1. Adho Mukha Svanasana (downward facing dog)
2. Uttanasana (standing forward bend)

Contraindications:

1. Do not practice this asana if you have asthma, bronchitis, or diarrhea.
2. Do not practice this pose if you have cervical spondylosis.
3. Do not let your thighs lift off the floor or support as the lifting might risk injury in the muscles of the backs of the knees.
4. If you suffer from a back injury only practice this pose under the supervision of an experienced teacher.

Counter Poses:

1. Backbends (eg. Setu Bandasana, bridge)
2. Supported twists (eg. Ardha Matsyendrasana, half-seated spinal twist)

Practice Script:

Sit onto your pelvis and outstretch your legs in front of you. Flex your feet firmly and spread your toes evenly. Firm your kneecaps and quadriceps towards your hips and pull your hips back and away from your thighs. Inhale: reach both your arms overhead stretching the shoulders, elbows and wrists. Exhale: reach your hands to your feet and either grab your big toes or one wrist with the opposite hand. Inhale: keep pulling back with your hips. Exhale: lay your forehead onto your knees or shins. Ground your thighbones heavily into the floor and spread the backs of the knees while reaching into your heels. Lift the elbows from the floor and pull the shoulder blades into the armpits. Inhale: lift your spine and arms to vertical. Exhale: release your arms down by your sides.

Reminders

1. Let your forehead relax to feel the calming effects of this pose.
2. Continually stretch into the legs and arms to allow for more blood to flow and circulate to your joints.
3. Sense your feet articulating, bringing a new sense of vitality to tired feet.

JANU SIRASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Janu Sirsasana	Head to Knee Pose	Seated Pose / Forward Bend
	Janu =Knee	
	Sirsa - Head	

Benefits:

1. Eases the effects of stress on the heart and on the mind.
2. Stabilizes blood pressure.
3. Gradually corrects curvature of the spine and rounded shoulders.
4. Eases stiffness in the shoulder, hip, elbow, wrist, and finger joints.
5. Tones the abdominal organs.
6. Relieves stiffness in the legs and strengthens their muscles.
7. Increase blood flow to the brain.
8. Relieves chronic headaches, migraine, or eye strain.
9. Reduces angina pain.
10. Reduces stress-related appetite loss.
11. Vitalizes the adrenal gland and relaxes the thyroid gland.
12. Improves bladder control.
13. Supports pelvic health.
14. Reduces menstrual cramps.

Primary Principles:

1. *Foundation:* Thighbones draw back towards the hips and push the legs and pelvis down into the floor. Shoulders extend from the arms and extend the spine from the hips.
2. *Primary Movement:* Flexion in both hips. Extension in the spine forward.
3. *Breath:* Inhale to lengthen the spine. Exhale to move into the pose. Inhale to lift the spine back to vertical. Exhale to release the arms and legs.

Secondary Principles:

1. Pull your bent foot towards the perineum until the big toes touches the inside of your thigh.
2. Firmly press your extended knee down into the floor.
3. Push back with the back knee until the angle is 90-degrees.
4. Stretch into your extended leg and spread the sole of that foot.
5. Keep the toes of your extended foot pointing up.
6. Stretch your torso from your hips and continue with your shoulders and arms.
7. Relax the back of the knee into the floor.
8. Push the bent knee into the floor.
9. Push your torso towards your waist to relax the spinal muscles.
10. Always press down onto the thigh of the extended leg not the calf.
11. Try to extend your hands beyond your front foot so you can try to clasp the wrist with one hand. If not hold the foot, shin or knee.
12. Bring your forehead to your knee.
13. Rest your sternum and abdomen on your thigh.
14. Try to equalize the stretch on both sides of the torso.
15. Widen your elbows and keep them stretching to your foot.
16. Try to flatten the lower back.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the back of the knee. Generally caused by a hyper-extended knee. Push thigh into the floor, not the calf.
2. Pain in the lower back. Due to tight hamstrings. Use a strap across the sole of the foot and relax the back of the knee down.

Variations:

1. Fingertips behind the pelvis which helps to create a long lower back.
2. Arms reach overhead to create a long spine. Also you can hinge at the hips while keeping their arms overhead.
3. Push the extended foot onto a wall. Reach your fingertips or palms to the wall.
4. With a partner, place your extended feet together. Clasp wrists or use two straps and pull one person forward while the other reaches back. Switch roles.

Support Poses:

1. Paschimottanasana (seated forward bend)
2. Uthita Trikonasana (extended triangle)

Contraindications:

1. Do not practice this asana if you have bronchitis, or asthma.
2. Avoid if you have diarrhea.
3. If your knees are stiff, or if you have osteoarthritis in the knees, practice with a block under the bent knee.
4. If you have a stress-related headache or migraine practice with a crepe bandage over your eyes.

Counter Poses:

1. Back bends (eg Setu Bandasana, bridge)
2. Hip extension (eg Virabhadrasana I, warrior pose)

Practice Script:

From seated with both legs extended forward, bend one knee and place the sole of your foot inside the opposite inner thigh. Extend the toes of your front foot straight up and press firmly through the thighs down into the floor. Inhale: reach from your shoulders the arms, elbows and wrists overhead. Exhale: fold in your hips and reach your hands beyond your foot clasping one wrist. Inhale: reach your torso and chest forward from your hips. Exhale: lower your forehead to your knee. Inhale: evenly stretch both sides of waist forward. Exhale: reach back with your pelvis, lengthening your tailbone down to the ground. Inhale: reach the spine to lift back up to seated. Exhale: release your arms and legs for the other side.

Reminders:

1. With your extended leg, stretch from the thigh down to the heel.
2. Lengthen and flatten your lower spine and extend your arms out from the shoulder blades.
3. Try to rest the nose on the knee, then to your lips, and finally rest your chin.
4. Try not to allow the backside of your hip or back to lift up.

BADDHA KONASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Baddha Konasana	Bound Angle Pose Baddha - Bound Or Caught Kona - Angle	Seated Pose

Benefits:

1. Encourages healthy kidney function.
2. Helps to support urinary function.
3. Reduces sciatic pain.
4. Supports pelvis region and groins, and can help prevent hernia.
5. Helps support menstrual cycle.
6. Helps to support healthy function of sexual/genital organs (ovaries, testes, prostate, etc.)

Primary Principles:

1. *Foundation:* Femurs and ischial bones drop into the floor. Shoulder loop activates and lifts the chest from the thighs.
2. *Primary Movement:* Flexion in both hips and knees.
3. *Breath:* Inhale to draw the feet together. Exhale to lengthen the spine and/or move forward.

Secondary Principles:

- I. 1. Try to move both heels towards the groins. Continue to push the heels towards the groins.
2. Relax your groins back .
3. Hold your feet firmly with both hands.
4. Widen your thighs and push your knees towards the floor.
5. Stretch and lift both sides of your chest.
6. Stretch your knees away from your torso.
7. Push your ankles and shins down into the floor and gently push the soles of your feet together.
8. Pull the kidneys into towards the body.
9. Keep your back straight.
10. Press your thigh and calf together.
- II. 1. Keep your head straight and your neck long.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the ankles. Sit on a block or blanket to take the pressure off the ankle joints.
2. Pain in the lower back. Generally caused by pressure on the sacrum or lumbar vertebrae. Sit on a blanket and arch and lift the lower back towards the front of the body.

Variations:

1. Support back at wall. Sit on a block if necessary and push the inner thighs down with the hands.
2. Use the fingertips behind the back.
3. Stretch the arms overhead.
4. Fold the spine forward keeping the back straight.
5. Fold the spine forward and curve the spine.
6. With a partner place the backs together. Have one person fold forward the other arch back. Switch.
7. With a partner twist in one direction reaching the take their thigh. Twist to the other direction.
8. Supta Baddha Konasana (reclined bound angle).

Support Poses:

1. Hip openers (eg Konasana, wide angle pose)

Contraindications:

1. Do not practice this asana if you have a displaced or prolapsed uterus.
2. Do not practice this asana if you have had a recent sacroiliac joint or hip injury.

Counter Poses:

Back bends (eg Bhujangasana, cobra)

Practice Script:

From a seated position bend both of your knees and place the soles of your feet together. Inhale: reach your fingertips behind your pelvis and lift your chest from your hips. Exhale: squeeze your calf and thigh muscles together and press your knees down into the floor. Inhale: pull your heels in towards your hips and try to release your groins back to open your hip sockets. Inhale: lengthen the crown of your head up and away from your feet. Exhale: release your hands and draw your knees together.

Reminders

1. Try to keep both sides of your torso parallel with one another.
2. Keep the eyes soft and the gaze down the tip of the nose.
3. If you are folding forward with a straight spine and the forehead easily comes to the floor try to reach then your nose and lastly the chin.

SAVASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Savasana	Corpse Pose	Reclined Pose
	Sava - Corpse	

Benefits:

1. Helps to alleviate nervous tension, migraine, insomnia, and chronic fatigue syndrome.
2. Relaxes the body and eases breathing.
3. Soothes the nervous system and brings peace of mind.
4. Enhances systematic and emotional recovery from stressful conditions.

Principles:

1. Keep your eyes closed.
2. Release the weight of the bones into the floor, especially the thighbones, spine and shoulders.
3. Soften all muscle letting the thighbones roll out and the arms and palms face the ceiling.
4. Keep the spine flat on the floor.
5. Feel that both sides of the torso are the same length.
6. Lengthen the neck and soften the throat back.
7. Part the teeth slightly and let the tongue move to the roof of the month.
8. Let your diaphragm be free of tension.
9. Let your chin be perpendicular with the floor.
10. Keep your abdomen soft.
11. Relax your facial muscles and your jaw.
12. Let your eyes relax back into the skull.
13. Let your breath be natural and free of tension. Do not impose any breath patterns.

Common Obstacles:

1. Hip or lower back tension. Place a bolster under the thighs.
2. Neck or shoulder discomfort. Place a blanket under the head.

Variations:

1. Place a bolster behind the back and a blanket under the head. This is good for lower back pain.
2. Place a chair under the shins and open the knees so the chair supports around the ankles. Again this is excellent for lower back pain.
3. With a block and bolster, place the bolster above the head and the block on the bolster and your forehead. This is helpful for cervical neck tension or headaches.
4. With a partner, have one person lay in Savasana while the other places a bolster on their partner's thighs. Then they lay over the bolster with the torso and rest the forehead on two blocks.

Support Poses:

1. Any reclined poses (eg Supta Baddha Konasana, reclined bound angle or Supta Virasana, reclined hero)
2. Meditation. This is an introductory asana for meditation and when the upper body is supported for Pranayama (breathing) practice.

Contraindications:

1. If you are pregnant, have a respiratory ailment, or experience anxiety, practice this pose with a bolster under your chest and head.
2. In later stages of pregnancy, the upper body should always be raised, so either lay with a bolster under the thighs and a blanket under the head or lie on the side with a bolster between the thighs.
3. Practice this pose only at the end of your practice.

Practice Script:

Lay on your back slowly trying to place each vertebrae on the floor one after the other. Once the head touches the floor, release your thighs and arms away from your torso. Take a slow and smooth inhale: exhale opening your mouth to release the breath out like a sigh. Follow that sensation of letting go, relaxing the weight of your bones and softening all your muscles. Let your eyes relax back into your head as your eyelids soften and close. Release your jaw completely and feel your throat letting go. Watch your breath: smooth, steady and calm. Notice, as you rest in this pose, the movement of your breath is a reflection of the thoughts that are moving in your mind.

Reminders

1. Practice equanimity. Notice all things happening in the moment as an arising and falling of thoughts, emotions, sensation -without being “carried away” by any of them.
2. Remind yourself to keep your breathing natural. Let go of excess tension without forcing in any way.
3. Keep your mind attentive and focused on breath and sensation: this is not about falling asleep. We practice wakeful awareness.