

Asana 102

naadayoga

500 hr Teacher Training



Asana 102

Moving from Awareness

OVERVIEW



"In theory there is no difference between theory and practice. In practice there is." - Yogi Berra

Overview

In this manual you will find 20 asanas. These poses, and their variations, are suitable for intermediate and advanced participants, and are used to support your current knowledge of Yoga Asana and bring it to a higher level. In this manual you will see more complex asana, which should only be introduced when the individual is ready. With a confident asana practice, these poses provide a definitive experience of the body's capabilities and of how awareness can arise within these poses. They are challenging yet extremely beneficial when executed with precision and care. You will be ready to pass this information on to others when you yourself have had the experience of the pose.

Objectives

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

1. Define each asana in Sanskrit and English
2. Define the classification(s) of each asana
3. Learn complementary grouping of asana
4. Define the benefits of each asana
5. Define and observe the primary and secondary principles of each asana
6. Define common obstacles for each asana
7. Define variations for each asana
8. Define support poses for each asana
9. Define contraindications for each asana
10. Define counter-poses for each asana
11. Describe how to come in and out of each pose clearly and safely

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MALASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Malasana	Garland Pose	Standing Pose
	Mala - Garland	

Benefits:

1. Develops flexibility in the hips, knees, ankles and spine.
2. Increases blood circulation to the hips, knees and ankles.
3. Improves digestion.
4. Tones the kidneys.
5. Relieves breathlessness.
6. Helps prevent sciatic pain.

Primary Principles:

1. *Foundation:* Press firmly into the feet and drop the weight of the pelvis down and back in the heels. Shoulder loop activates and widen the shoulder blades.
2. *Primary Movement:* Flexion in the hips, knees, ankles and spine.

3. *Breath:* Inhale to bend the knees and squat. Exhale to move into the pose. Inhale to lift the spine out of the pose. Exhale to extend the legs.

Secondary Principles:

1. Place the feet flat onto the floor. Place a support under the heels if they do not reach the floor.
2. Place the big toes together and the heels slightly apart. Turn the feet out or separate if needed.
3. Lengthen the ischial bones and the coccyx to the floor behind the heels.
4. Place the majority of your weight in your heels, not in the front of the feet.
5. Lengthen the spine from the hips and stretch the waist and chest forward.
6. Reach the top of your head from your tailbone and reach it between your big toes.
7. Bind your hands behind your back with your shoulders looped around the front of your shins. Place the hands onto the floor if the arms do not comfortably bind.
8. Pull your shoulders down your spine and the armpits away from the spine.
9. Equally stretch both sides of the torso from your hips.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the shoulders when bound. Caused from a rolling forward of the shoulder in the joint. Activate the shoulder loop pulling the shoulder blades towards the spine, then down. Also draw the armpits in to activate the serratus muscles.
2. Pain in the knees or ankles. Caused from strain in the joint. Sit on a block or two and place elbows onto knees. If they pain persists work in Utkatasana (chair pose).

Variations:

1. Place a block under the pelvis and try to lengthen the spine vertically.
2. Place the back along the wall to feel the weight drop into the coccyx.
1. Reach the arms overhead to help extend the spine. Option: place a block between the hands.

Support Poses:

1. Deep flexion in the hips and knees (eg Balasana, child's pose)
2. Shoulder openers (eg Parshvottanasana, extended chest stretch)

Contraindications:

1. Do not practice this asana if you have stress-related headache, migraine, any knee injury, rheumatoid fever, varicose veins, low blood pressure, diarrhea, or low-back pain or injury.

Counter Poses:

1. Back bends (eg Bhujangasana, cobra)
2. Forward bend (eg. Uttanasana, standing forward bend or Adho Mukha Svanasana, downward facing dog)

Practice Script:

From Samastithi, exhale: bend your knees and descend your pelvis into a squat. If possible, keep your feet together or separate them slightly but try to drop your heels towards the floor. Keeping your weight back in your heels, exhale: let the weight of your head drop between your thighs. Take your shoulders in front of your knees and shins and try to grab your fingers or one wrist behind your back. If that is not possible either spread your hands on your back or let your hands rest heavy onto the floor in front of you. Inhale: pull the breath between your shoulders. Exhale: curve deep in the spine. Feel your head and tailbone move towards one another to deepen the stretch in the spine. Pull gently in and back with the shoulder muscles and feel your outer hips move away from your head. Inhale: lengthen into your neck. Exhale: release your arms and lengthen your legs. Inhale up to standing with straight legs and reach your arms overhead. Exhale: release your arms back down by your sides, Samastithi.

Reminders

1. Try to feel the length of your spine so that you can feel the top and the bottom together.
2. Continue to feel weight on either end of the spine to deepen the spinal curve.
3. Feel the fetal position of your body. Imagine yourself easing back into that shape.

PARIVRTTA TRIKONASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Parivrtta Trikonasana	Revolved Triangle Pose	Standing Pose
	Parivrtta - Revolved	
	Tri - Triangle	
	Kona - Angle	

Benefits:

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

Primary Principles:

Foundation: Firmly press your two feet and hand into the floor. Tighten your kneecaps and quadriceps and pull them up. Extend your arms away from the midline of your body and pull the heads of the shoulders slightly back.

Primary Movement: Push the feet and hand firmly down in order for the spine to lengthen and twist.

Breath: Inhalation to prepare standing. Exhalation to fold forward. Inhale to extend the spine. Exhale to twist.

Secondary Principles:

1. Find internal rotation with the upper thighs and release the groins back.
2. Keep the pelvis squared forward.
3. Rest weight on the centers of the arches of the feet, not on the heels or toes.
4. Rest weight on the center of the palm of the hand, not on the heel or the fingers.
5. Release the backs of the knees.
6. Stretch out your toes and keep them relaxed.
7. Reach into the back heel for added stability.
8. Keep both sides of the waist long.
9. Twist from the waist, not the hips.
10. Keep your ankles and knees in line with the rotation in the hips.
11. Keep the head and spine in a straight line.
12. Rest the eyes on the palm.
13. Stretch your neck without tensing the muscles.
14. Release your lower abdomen in towards the spine and up towards the sternum.
15. Release the tailbone down towards the heels and then draw it into the body.
16. Lift your sternum and broaden your chest.
17. Keep the shoulders rolling down the back.
18. Press your heels and the mounds of your toes into the floor.
19. Distribute your weight equally through all areas of your foundation.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the back ankle or shin. This is generally caused by either tight arches or misalignment of the ankle, knee and hip. Make sure the rotation is stemming from the hip. If needed, have students adjust the placement of their foot so that the toes point to the side of the mat. Have the student either place their foot against the wall or place your foot against theirs to create enough resistance for them to push against.
2. Tightness on the hamstrings and lower back. Have the student place the bottom hand on a support to lift the spine higher from the ground.
3. Tension in the neck, head and shoulders. Have students place the top hand onto the pelvis. Relax the eyes down the length of the nose.

Variations:

1. Place a chair under the bottom hand to create increased lift in the spine.
2. With the wall. Chest is away from the wall. Lay the spine back towards the wall while twisting.

Support Poses:

Any standing poses (eg. Utthita Trikonasana, extended triangle)
 Standing twists (eg. Parvritta Parshvakonasana, revolved side angle)

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 wide apart.

Counter Poses:

Standing forward bend (eg. Uttansana)

Reminders:

1. Relax the eyes back and remember to breathe into the chest.
2. Twist without straining the breath.
3. Let the corners of your mouth lift as a way to feel contentment in the pose.
4. Try to keep the pelvis stable so the twist starts deep in the spine.

Practice Script:

Stand at the foot of your mat. Step one foot back comfortably while keeping your pelvis square. Inhale and lift the opposite arm to the leg in front stretching the spine. Exhale, fold in the hips, drawing your hand to the the inside of your front foot. Place your hand down firmly. Inhale, lift the chest forward from the legs. Exhale, twist towards the front leg extending your back arm up towards the ceiling. Stay for five breaths. Exhale and release your top arm down to the floor. Inhale, reach the opposite arm out and forward and let it pull you up to standing. Exhale, release your arm and step your feet together.

PARIVRTTA PARSVAKONASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Parivrtta Parsvakonasana	Revolved Side Angle Pose	Standing Pose
	Parivrtta - Revolved	
	Parsva - Side	
	Kona - Angle	

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:

Foundation: Firmly press your feet and hand into the floor. Tighten your kneecaps and quadriceps and pull them up. Extend your arms away from the midline of your body and pull the heads of the shoulders slightly back.

Primary Movement: Twist in the spine. Flexion in front hip and extension in the back hip and spine.

Breath: Inhale to prepare. Exhale to twist. Inhale and extend the spine and prepare the arms. Exhale to move into pose.

Secondary Principles:

1. Spread the toes and soles of the feet.
2. Find internal rotation with the upper thighs and release the groins back.
3. Rest weight on the centers of the arches of the feet, not on the heels or toes.
4. Rest weight on the center of the palm of the hand, not on the heel or the fingers.
5. Stretch out your toes and keep them relaxed.
6. Reach into the back heel for added stability.
7. Keep both sides of the waist long.
8. Twist from the waist, not the hips.
9. Keep your ankles and knees in line with the rotation in the hips.
10. Keep the head and spine in a straight line.
11. Rest the eyes on the palm.
12. Stretch your neck without tensing the muscles.
13. Release your lower abdomen in towards the spine and up towards the sternum.
14. Release the tailbone down towards the heels and then draw it into the body.
15. Lift your sternum and broaden your chest.
16. Keep the shoulders rolling down the back.
17. Press your heels and the mounds of your toes into the floor.
18. Distribute your weight equally through all areas of your foundation.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the back ankle or shin. This is generally caused by either tight arches or misalignment of the ankle, knee and hip. Make sure the rotation is stemming from the hip. If needed, have students adjust the placement of their foot so that the toes point to the side of the mat or lift the heel entirely from the

floor. Have the student either place their foot against the wall or place your foot against theirs to create enough resistance for them to push against.

2. Tightness on the hamstrings, hips or lower back. Have the student place their hands in namaste (prayer) position and/or lift the back heel off the floor.
3. Tension in the neck, head and shoulders. Have them place the top hand onto the pelvis. Relax the eyes down the length of the nose.

Variations:

1. Keep the back knee on the floor. Twist and place the hands into namaste (prayer) position.
2. Lunge with one leg forward one leg back. Open the opposite arm to leg in front towards the ceiling.
3. Kapotasana (pigeon). Twist away from the bent leg in front. Try to place the opposite shoulder inside the sole of the foot. Hands into namaste (prayer).

Support Poses:

1. Hip openers and squats. (eg. Balasana, child's pose)
2. Standing Poses. (eg. Utthita Parsvakonasana)
3. Standing Twists. (eg. Parvritta Trikonasana)

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 wide apart.

Counter Poses:

1. Forward bends. (eg. Uttanasana)

Reminders

1. Move the shoulders back and widen the shoulder blades from the spine.
2. Draw your outer armpits away from the spine.
3. Soften your forehead in the direction of your nose.
4. Relax the eyes back and look softly at the palm.

Practice Script:

Stand at the foot of your mat. Inhale, step one leg back into a lunge and place your fingertips onto the floor. Place your back knee down. Inhale, raise the opposite arm to the leg in front. Exhale, twist your shoulder to the outside of your front leg. Inhale, either place your bottom hand down or your hands into namaste. Exhale, twist fully into the pose. If your bottom hand is down extend your top arm overhead. Stay for five calm breaths. Exhale, release your arms down. Inhale, raise the bottom arm up and forward, pulling yourself to standing. Exhale, step your feet together.

VIRABHADRASANA III



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Virabhadrasana III	Warrior III Pose	Standing Pose
	Vira – Warrior/Hero	
	Bhadra – Goddess of the Hunt	

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:

Foundation: Push the feet firmly into the floor. Lift the inner thigh muscles towards the pelvis. Hollow the groins back to support the pelvis to lift. Draw the heads of the shoulders back and in.

Primary movement: Flexion in the support hip. Extension in the extended hip and spine.

Breath: Exhale to prepare. Inhale to move into the pose.

Secondary principles:

1. Spread the toes and soles of the feet.
2. Find internal rotation with the upper thighs and release the groins back.
3. Rest weight on the center of the arch of the foot, not on the heels or toes.
4. Stretch out your toes and keep them relaxed.
5. Reach down into the standing foot for added stability.
6. Keep both sides of the waist long.
7. Keep your pelvis square forward.
8. Keep the head and spine in a straight line.
9. Rest the eyes on the floor down the length of the nose.
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. Keep the shoulders rolling down the back.
15. Pull the shoulders towards the hips to initiate the shoulder loop.

Common Obstacles:

1. Difficulty to find balance. Use two supports under the hands.
2. Tightness in the hamstrings. Difficulty to extend the legs. Place the back foot onto a chair or wall. Push against the support to find strength in the legs.
3. Collapsing in the shoulders. Either arms behind the back or hands onto blocks.

Variations:

1. Clasp elbows behind the back.
2. Make two fists behind the back.
3. Reverse Namaste (prayer).
4. Interlace the fingers behind the back.
5. Arms overhead.
6. Place two blocks under the hands if the hands do not reach the floor.
7. Place the back foot onto the wall with the hands on two blocks.
8. On knees and hands. Extend one arm and opposite leg away from the torso.
9. Flying swan. Dive the chest towards the standing leg.
10. Standing split. Take the back of the leg with both of the hands.

Support Poses:

1. Balance poses. (eg. Vrksasana, tree pose)
2. Standing poses. (eg. UtthitaTrikonasana)

Contraindications:

1. Do not practice this pose if you have stress-related headaches, migraine, eye strain, low blood pressure, osteoarthritis of the knees, or hamstring injuries.
2. If you have a problem with balance, practice this asana with supports.
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)

Reminders:

1. Ensure that your shoulders are not strained in this pose.
2. Breathe evenly front to back.
3. Feel the standing leg stable like the trunk of a tree.
4. Find a quiet spine, yet stable legs.

Practice Script:

Stand at the foot of your mat. Inhale the arms overhead. Exhale, interlace your fingers behind your back. Inhale pull both sides of your chest towards your head. Exhale, reach one leg back as you lean your chest forward. Inhale, reach firmly into both your legs. Exhale, draw your shoulders away from your head. Firm down your feet as you draw your quadriceps back towards your hips. Inhale, reach out through the top of your head. Exhale, feel your shoulders drawing down to your legs. Take a deep breath in. Exhale, return your feet together pulling your chest to standing.

ARDHA CHANDRASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Ardha Chandrasana	Half Moon Pose	Standing Pose
	Ardha - Half	
	Chandra - Moon	

Benefits

1. Strengthens the muscles of the chest and the respiratory muscles.
2. Tones the abdominal organs and supports the abdominal wall.
3. Improves digestion.
4. Tones the kidneys.
5. Develops the strength and flexibility in the legs and hips.
6. Improves concentration and focus.
7. Improves flexibility in the spine.
8. Alleviates backache.
9. Strengthens the ankles.
10. Reduces discomfort during menstruation.
11. Tones the abdominal and pelvic organs.

Primary Principles:

Foundation: Push the feet firmly into the floor. Lift the inner thigh muscles towards the pelvis. Hollow the groins back to support the pelvis to lift. Draw the heads of the shoulders back and in.

Primary movement: Flexion in the support hip. Extension in the extended hip and spine. Slight twist in the neck.

Breath: Exhale to prepare. Inhale to move into the pose.

Secondary principles:

1. Spread the toes and soles of the feet.
2. Quadriceps should be lifted.
3. Find external rotation with the upper thighs at the same time releasing the groins back.
4. Rest weight on the center of the arch of the foot, not on the heel or toe.
5. Rest weight on the center of the palm of the hand, not the heel or the fingers.
6. Stretch out your toes and keep them relaxed.
7. Reach down into the standing foot and palm for added stability.
8. Keep both sides of the waist long.
9. Keep the head and spine in a straight line.
10. Rest the eyes softly on the palm.
11. Stretch your neck without tensing the muscles.
12. Release your lower abdomen in towards the spine and up towards the sternum.
13. Release the tailbone down towards the heels and then draw it into the body.
14. Lift your sternum and broaden your chest.
15. Keep the shoulders rolling down the back.
16. Pull the shoulders towards the hips to initiate the shoulder loop.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the neck, head or shoulders. Relax the eyes down the length of the nose and look straight forward as opposed to the top hand.
2. Difficulty to find balance. Use a support under the bottom hand. Look forward as opposed to the top hand.
3. Tightness in the hamstrings. Difficulty to extend the legs. Place the back foot onto a chair or wall.

Variations:

1. Place the back against a wall. Have students try to move the back of the pelvis and spine towards the wall. Have them spread the shoulder blades and breathe into the back of the body.
2. Use the wall. One hand rests on a block. The back foot rests on the wall. Have students push into the support to create length in the body and strength in the pose.

Support Poses:

1. Forward bends that stretch the hamstrings and open the hips. (eg. Uttanasana, standing forward bend)
2. Shoulder openers. (eg. Danurasana, wheel 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.
3. Do not practice this pose if you have stress-related headaches, migraine, eye strain, low blood pressure, or osteoarthritis of the knees.
4. If you have a problem with balance, practice this asana with supports.

Counter Poses:

Forward bends. (Prasarita Padottanasana, intense expanded leg stretch)

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. Keep the space between the shoulder blades broad by reaching your arms towards your hands.
6. Lift the top of the sternum and your chin slightly to look comfortably at the hand.

Practice Script:

Stand at the foot of your mat. Inhale, lunge one leg back placing your hands to the floor in front of you. Exhale, reach your front hand two feet forward while lifting your back leg parallel to the floor. Use a block if you need. Inhale, reach back through your extended leg and straighten your bottom arm. Exhale, extend the opposite arm to the ceiling as you rotate your head to look softly at the palm. Push firmly into your standing leg and lift your chest between your arms. Stay for five calm breaths. Exhale, look down to the floor. Inhale, step your feet together as you lift your chest to standing.

MARICHYASANA I



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Marichyasana I	Marichi's Pose	Seated Pose / Forward Bend
	Marichi - A legendary sage	

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. Relieves chronic headaches, migraine, or eye strain.
8. Reduces angina pain.
9. Reduces stress-related appetite loss.
10. Vitalizes the adrenal gland and relaxes the thyroid gland.
11. Improves bladder control.
12. Supports pelvic health.

Primary Principles:

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.

Primary Movement: Flexion in both of the hips.

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 extended thigh flat on the floor.
3. Sit on your inner buttocks and equally distribute the weight.
4. Stretch from the seat of your buttocks and feel lightness there.
5. Stretch your arms from your shoulders.
6. Keep your spine concave.
7. Place your forehead firmly on your knee, eventually to the shin.
8. Widen and lift your shoulders back.
9. Keep your diaphragm soft.
10. Let your diaphragm lift to your chest.
11. Stretch both sides of your chest evenly.
12. Extend the skin of your back towards the head.
13. Let your spine descend completely.
14. Keep your hips parallel to one another.

15. Keep your neck muscles passive.
16. 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. Sit onto a support and/or micro-bend the extended leg. Use a strap across the sole of the front feet.
2. Inability to bind the arms back. The shoulders need to be able to move in front of the bent knee in order to bind comfortably. Use a strap to hold onto the front foot with one hand while the other is behind the back helping to push the chest forward.
3. 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 extended knee with a rolled up blanket.
4. Support the head and arms with a bolster or blocks.
5. Sit on a block or bolster with students with tight hamstrings.
6. Place the heel of the extended leg on a block for students with more open hamstrings.
7. Marichyasana II. This is the same pose except that the extended leg is in half Padmasana (lotus).

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 extended thigh 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 or SI joint injury, only practice this pose under the supervision of an experienced teacher.

Counter Poses:

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

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.

Practice Script:

Sit onto your pelvis and outstretch your legs in front of you. Bend one knee back and place your foot close to your pelvis in line with your sitting bone. Inhale, with the same arm as the bent leg reach up towards the ceiling. Exhale, reach the arm forward along the inside of your leg. When your shoulder comes in front of your shin bind the arms back or reach forward to try to grab the foot of the opposite leg. Inhale, stretch your chest towards the front foot. Exhale, lower your forehead towards your shin or knee. Stay for five long breaths. Inhale to release your arms and sit up. Exhale to extend your leg and switch to the other side.

MARICHYASANA III



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Marichyasana III	Marichi's Pose III	Seated Pose / Twist
	Marichi - A legendary sage	

Benefits:

1. Improves energy levels.
2. Tones and massages the abdominal organs.
3. Alleviates backache.
4. Supports pelvic health.

Primary Principles:

Foundation: Leg bones draw into the floor. Muscles of the front of the legs activate towards the hips. Shoulder loop activates down the back.

Primary Movement: Twist in spine. Flexion in hips.

Breath: Inhale to prepare the spine. Exhale twist. Inhale to extend the spine. Exhale into full pose.

Secondary Principles:

1. Keep your spine lengthening.
2. Sit on your sitting bones.
3. Push your feet down into the floor.
4. Lift the kneecaps up and hollow the groins back.
5. Extend both sides of your torso equally.
6. Lift and twist from the waist.
7. Keep your neck long.
8. Allow your shoulders to draw down the back.
9. Pull the upper arms bones back and in towards their joints.
10. Keep your eyes soft looking down the length of the nose.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the lower back. Caused by compression in the lower back and tightness in the hamstrings. Sit on a blanket or a block.
2. Strain in the neck, shoulders or head. Lower the gaze and try to relax the shoulders down the back.
3. Tight hamstrings or lower back. Sit on a blanket or a block.

Variations:

1. Reclined twist.
2. With the wall. Sit next to the wall with the leg of your bent knee facing the wall. Place the hands on the wall and twist away from the legs.

3. On a chair. Sit with both your feet planted evenly on the floor. Grab the back of the chair with your hands and twist away from the legs.
4. Marichyasana IV. Same pose except that the extended leg is in half Padmasana (lotus).
5. Pasasana (noose pose). This version both feet are on the floor in a squat. Twist to one side either placing the hands in namaste (prayer) or binding the arms.

Support Poses:

1. Marichyasana I (forward bend)
2. Bharadvajasana (spinal twist)

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 extended thigh 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 or SI joint injury, only practice this pose under the supervision of an experienced teacher.

Counter Poses:

1. Parvritta Trikonasana (standing twist).
2. Parvritta Parshvakonasana (standing twist).

Reminders

1. Keep your back lengthening and imagine your breath traveling up and down your spine.
2. Move your chest close to your bent knee and try to rotate the entire waist.

Practice Script:

From a seated position draw one foot towards the sitting bone and place it firmly onto the floor. Lift the opposite arm on an inhale, stretching the spine. Exhale, draw the shoulder to the outside of the bent knee. Inhale, bind or bend at the elbow. Exhale, push the arm against the thigh and twist the head away from the legs. Stay for five deep breaths. Exhale, release the arms and straighten your leg for the other side.

VIRASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Virasana	Hero Pose	Seated Pose
	Vira - Hero	

Benefits:

1. Eases stiffness in the hip joints, knees and groins.
2. Corrects back posture by straightening the spine.
3. Improves the alignment of your body.
4. Relieves backache.
5. Energizes nervous system.
6. Improves circulation in the feet.

Primary Principles:

Foundation: Thighbones draw back towards the hips and push the legs and pelvis down into the floor. Shoulders loop back and keep the chest from collapsing.

Primary Movement: Flexion in both hips and knees.

Breath: Inhale to prepare. Exhale to move into the pose.

Secondary Principles:

1. Separate your calf muscles lengthwise to sit your pelvis easily between your legs.
2. Firmly press your leg bones into the floor.
3. Feel both sitting bones descending towards the floor.
4. Push back your shoulders to keep your chest from collapsing.
5. Keep the waist long.
6. Relax the shoulders down the back towards the hips.
7. Keep your eyes relaxed towards the floor in front of you.

Common Obstacles:

1. Muscle tension or knee injury can cause knee pain. Place support(s) under the sitting bones to relieve the pressure on the knee joint.
2. Muscle tension or ankle injury can cause ankle pain. Roll up a blanket and place it under the ankles.

Variations:

1. To create a dynamic understanding of the pose have students sit on a block and tuck the toes under. Have them push the balls of their feet down into the floor. Have them interlace their fingers and reach the palms towards the ceiling.
2. Supta Virasana. This is a reclined version to stretch out tight quadriceps. Have them lay back. Use supports if needed.

Support Poses:

Quadricep openers and backbends (eg. Eka Pada Rajakapotasana)

Contraindications:

1. Do not practice this pose if you have a cardiac condition.
2. If the ligaments of the knee are injured use a support or sit on the heels.

Counter Poses:

1. Backbends (eg. Setu Bandasana, bridge)
2. Hip extension (eg. Uttan Pristasana, lizard)

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.

Practice Script:

Sit at the front of your mat. Take your hands onto the floor in front of your legs. Open your feet slightly wider than your hips. With your thumbs, press down the center of your calf muscles and as you exhale sit your pelvis down between your shins. Pull your quadriceps back and hollow your groins in. Feel your sitting bones spread and firmly plant them towards the ground. Let your hands relax onto your thighs as you draw your lower back forward and lift your chest from your legs. Inhale deeply and stay for five breaths. On an exhalation slowly take the hands forward and extend the legs into Adho Mukha Svanasana.

GOMUKHASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Gomukhasana	Cow Face Pose	Seated Pose
	Go - Cow	
	Mukha - Face	

Benefits:

1. Reduces depression.
2. Relieves cervical spondylosis.
3. Increases the flexibility of the upper body, arms, elbows and wrists.
4. Improves breathing by opening the chest.
5. Reduces sciatic pain.
6. Reduces stiffness in the hip, knee and ankle joints.

Primary Principles:

Foundation: Thighbones draw back towards the hips and push the legs and pelvis down into the floor. Shoulders loop back and keep the chest from collapsing.

Primary Movement: Flexion in both hips. Extension in top arm. Flexion in the elbows.

Breath: Inhale to extend the top arm. Exhale to bind the hands. Exhale to release from the pose.

Secondary Principles:

1. Reach your top elbow towards the ceiling and let that shoulder blade move from the spine.
2. Let the opposite shoulder blade draw in towards the spine and then forwards towards the chest.
3. Lift your chin slightly from your chest.
4. Lift both sides of your chest away from your hips.
5. Pull your lower abdomen in.
6. Push gently down into the floor with the lower body to help keep the back slightly arched.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the shoulders. Usually occurs with the top arm because the lift is above 90-degrees. Release the bind and take hold of the top elbow with the opposite hand. If it is the bottom shoulder make sure the humerus bone is pulling back.
2. Pain in the neck. Caused by tension or injury in the shoulders or 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. Use a strap between the hands.

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 knee or back injury use a support under the pelvis.

Counter Poses:

Forward bends (eg. Uttanasana, standing forward bend)

Reminders:

1. Let the extension and rotation of your arms stem from deep 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.

Practice Script:

From Virasana, inhale, lift one arm above your head, bend the elbow and take it with the opposite hand. Push the elbow down towards the pelvis so that the hand slides between the shoulder blades comfortably. Extend the opposite arm to the side, inwardly rotate the arm, bend at the elbow and clasp the hands together behind the back. If it is impossible to clasp hands use a strap to bind the hands. Inhale, lift the chest away from the legs and push the head gently into the top arm. Let the eyes rest down the nose and stay for several deep breaths. On an exhale release the arms for the other side.

TRIANG MUKHAIKAPADA PASCHIMOTTANASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Triang Mukhaikapada Paschimottanasana	Folded Leg Forward Pose Triang - Three limbs Mukha - Face Eka - One Pada - Leg Paschima - West Uttana - Intense	Seated Pose

Benefits:

1. Tones and stimulates the abdominal organs.
2. Assists digestion.
3. Reduces flatulence and constipation.
4. Creates flexibility in the knee joint.
5. Creates flexibility in hips and hamstrings.

Primary Principles:

Foundation: Lift the inner thigh muscles towards the pelvis. Hollow the groins back to support the pelvis to lift. 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.

Primary movement: Flexion in both the hips. Extension in the spine.

Breath: Inhalation to lengthen the spine from the legs. Exhalation to move into the pose. Inhale to lift out of the pose. Exhale to straighten the legs.

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. Stretch the back of your extended leg from the thigh down to the heel.
3. Push down with your bent knee.
4. Reach your torso from the legs and stretch the arms straight forward.
5. Keep the eyes relaxed.
6. Open the backs of the knees to spread the hamstrings muscles.
7. Micro-bend the extended leg knee as a way to avoid hyper-extension.
8. Lift the top of the sternum away from the navel.
9. Lift the elbows from the floor and reach lengthen the wrists from the arms.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the upper back. Usually caused by straining in the hips and/or shoulders. Place the fingertips behind the pelvis to help lengthen the spine from the hips.
2. Pain in the lower back. Usually caused by strain in the back muscles. Place the sitting bone of the extended leg on a support. Make sure that the torso does not tilt to one side.
3. Pain in the back of the extended leg or knee. Generally caused by hyper-extension of the knees or a collapsing in the arches of the foot. Micro-bend the extended knee and lift the arches towards the knee.
4. Pain in the bent knee. Generally caused by the internal rotation of the leg. Try pulling the kneecap towards the hip. If the pain persists put a support under the hip. If the knee is injured place the foot along the inside of the thigh in external rotation.

Variations:

1. Arms extended overhead.
2. Use a strap if the hands do not reach the foot.

Support Poses:

1. Forward Bends (eg. Pachimottanasana, intense forward bend)
2. Internal Rotation (eg. Virasana, hero pose)

Contraindications:

Do not twist your torso towards the outer side of the extended leg, as this could strain your spine or abdominal organs.

Counter Poses:

Backbends (eg. Urdhva Danurasana, upward wheel)

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.

Practice Script:

From a seated position at the foot of your mat. Inhale, draw back one foot placing it alongside the outer hip. Ensure that the toes are pointing straight back. Use a support under the hip if the torso is leaning towards one side. Inhale, reach the arms overhead stretching the torso from the legs. Exhale, fold forward and take the foot with both the hands. Use a strap if the shoulders are straining. Inhale, pull back the groins towards the hips and lift the arches of the extended foot. Exhale, reach the forehead towards the shin. Stay for five breaths. Inhale, lift the spine to come out of the pose. Exhale, extend the bent knee.

USTRASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Ustrasana	Camel Pose	Backbend
	Ustra - Camel	

Benefits:

1. Helps to correct posture.
2. Energizes the nervous system.
3. Improves blood circulation to all the organs of the body.
4. Tones the muscles of the back of the spine.
5. Removes stiffness in the shoulders, back, and ankles.
6. Relieves abdominal cramps.
7. Regulates menstrual flow.
8. Energizes the heart and lungs.

Primary Principles:

Foundation: Lift the inside of the legs and activate the leg muscles by drawing them towards the bones. Pull the groins back and the tailbone forward. Loop the shoulders back, draw the shoulder blades in and forward and widen the front of the chest.

Primary Movement: Extension in the hips, arms and spine. Hyper-extension in the cervical spine. Flexion in both the knees.

Breath: Inhale to extend and prepare the spine. Exhale to place the hands onto the feet. Inhale, chin to chest and to lift out of the pose. Exhale to place the hands together and flex in the hips.

Secondary Principles:

1. Spread the soles of your feet and toes.
2. Press the tops of the feet to the floor.
3. Lift both the kneecaps and engage the quadriceps.
4. Try to bring your thighs perpendicular to the floor.
5. Release the crown of the head towards the floor.
6. Relax the eyes and throat to avoid cervical compression.
7. Push your sternum forward and widen the collarbones
8. Soften the abdomen and draw it in towards the spine.
9. Move the thighbones and groins back to reduce the pressure on the lower back.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the knees or ankles. Usually due to collapsed arches. Have students tuck the toes under and push into the floor to activate the arches.
2. Pain in the lower back. Due to excessive compression on the lumbar vertebrae. Have them either tuck the toes under for more lift or use blocks under the hands. Or, support sacrum with palms of hands, pushing in and slightly up. Or, place hands on back of legs or on calves instead of reaching for ankles or heels.
3. Pain the neck, shoulders or head. Due to compression in the cervical vertebrae. Have them look towards the sternum and gently tuck the chin in.
4. Reaching arms backwards one at a time, creating asymmetry and compression on one side or the other. Encourage students to reach both arms back at the same time, keeping back of sternum well-lifted. Movement comes from upper body vs. “hinging” at hips.

Variations:

1. Place the hands on blocks.
2. Face the wall and push the pelvis towards the wall.
3. Use a strap around the thighs to create width in the pelvis.
4. Use a block between the thighs to create internal rotation.
5. With a partner face the wall in the pose. Have the partner support the spine with their feet.
6. Use a chair. Backbend over the edge of the chair. Bend the knees in and grab the outer feet with the hands.
7. With a partner, one person lays on their back with their feet in the air. The other lays their pelvis onto the feet of their partner. They are lifted into the air into Ustrasana at which point they can grab their ankles.

Support Poses:

1. Backbends. (eg. Urdhva Danurasana, upward wheel or danurasana, wheel)
2. Standing poses (eg. Utthita Trikonasana, extended triangle)

Contraindications:

1. Do not practice this pose if you have severe headaches, migraine, or hypertension.
2. Do not practice during the first days of the menstrual cycle.
3. If you are recovering from a heart attack practice this pose with props.

Counter Poses:

1. Forward Bends. (eg. Pachimottanasana, seated forward bend)
2. Twists. (Bharadvajasana, seated spinal twist)

Reminders:

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

Practice Script:

From seated onto your shins at the foot of your mat, rest with your knees hip width apart. Inhale, lift both sides of your chest away from your legs. Exhale, lay the spine back reaching to grab your heels with your hands. Inhale deeply and pull your torso from your hips. Exhale, send your tailbone in and forward as you draw both of your groins back. Let the eyes rest back and try to relax your throat into your neck. Breathe deeply into your chest and spread the sternum to either shoulder. Roll the shoulders back away from the ears and draw the heads of the upper arms back into the joints. With an inhale pull the chin in towards the chest and lift the spine back to vertical. Exhale, place the palms together and bend the knees resting the pelvis back onto the feet.

DHANURASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Dhanurasana	Bow Pose	Backbend
	Dhanura - Bow	

Benefits:

1. Increases lung capacity.
2. Improves blood circulation to all the organs of the body.
3. Tones the muscles of the back and spine.
4. Removes stiffness in the shoulders, back, and ankles.
5. Regulates menstrual flow.

Primary Principles:

Foundation: Press the ankles firmly into the hands. Lift the quadriceps towards the groins, hollowing the groins back. Draw the tailbone in and forward. Pull the upper arms towards the shoulder joints and expand the sternum forward.

Primary movement: Extension in both of the hips, knees and ankles. Extension in the arms. Extension in the spine. Hyper-extension in the cervical spine.

Breath: Exhale to prepare. Inhale to lift into the pose. Exhale to release from the pose.

Secondary Principles:

1. Do not take your head too far back.
2. Keep your eyes relaxed and down the tip of the nose.
3. Widen the collarbones.
4. Pull the inner thighs together and towards the pelvis.
5. Spread the toes and lengthen them from the ankles.
6. Draw the abdomen towards the spine and up into the chest.
7. Do not draw the shoulder blades together but rather resist the shoulders forward away from the legs.
8. Keep your feet from separating wider than your hips.
9. Push through the inner arches of the feet back.
10. Lift both sides of your chest toward your head.

Common Obstacles:

1. Lower back pain. Caused from pushing the groins forward and clenching in the abdominal, buttock and back muscles. Move the groins back and bear more weight into the feet. Make sure the tailbone is drawing forward and countering the groins.
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.
3. Shoulder pain. Generally caused from the head of the humerus being pulled from its socket. Let the shoulders roll forward and push the legs and the shoulders away from each other.

Variations:

1. Place a bolster under the front of the hip bones.

2. Place your shins up the wall. Do the pose and see which foot touches the wall first. Try again this time emphasizing the other leg to the wall first.
3. With a partner, have one person in the pose while the other person pushes the front of their shoulders. Have the student doing the pose resist back with the fronts of their shoulders to stabilize the upper body.
4. With a partner, have one person in the pose while the other pushes their sacrum down on a diagonal towards the ground.
5. With 2 partners, one person spotting, have one person lay on their back with their legs in the air. Other person lays the fronts of their hips on their partners feet in a forward bending motion. The support person spots their partners shoulders with their hands while their partner pulls back into Dhanurasana.

Support Poses:

1. Backbends (eg. Setu Bandasana, bridge or Urdhva Dhanurasana, upward wheel)
2. Virasana (hero pose)
3. Adho Mukha Svanasana (downward facing dog)

Contraindications:

1. Do not practice this posture if your blood pressure is too high or too low.
2. Avoid this pose when you are feeling too tired.
3. Do not practice during an attack of migraine or severe headache.
4. If you have a cardiac condition practice supported backbends.

Counter Poses:

1. Twists. (Bharadvajasana, spinal twist)
2. Forward bends. (eg Paschimottanasa, seated forward bend)

Reminders:

Let the weight move into the strength of the legs so that you can widen the sternum across the front of the chest.

Practice Script:

Lay onto your belly. Exhale, reach back and grab your ankles. Inhale, push your shins back and send both sides of your chest away from your legs. Exhale, draw back your groins and feel your tailbone drawing in. Inhale, pull your shoulders slightly forward from your legs. Exhale, lay your head back keeping your eyes soft and down the nose. Inhale, breath deeply into your sternum. Exhale, release yourself from the pose.

BHARADVAJASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Bharadvajasana	Bharadvaja's Pose	Seated Pose/Twist
	Bharadvaja - A legendary sage	

Benefits:

1. Relieves pain in the neck, shoulders and back.
2. Helps to keep the spine and shoulders supple.
3. Reduces discomfort in the dorsal spine area.
4. Increases the flexibility of the back and hips.

Primary Principles:

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.

Primary movement: Flexion in both the hips. Arms extend parallel to the floor.

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. Strain in the neck, head and shoulders. Keep the eyes down. Lengthen the sides of the neck. Relax the shoulders away from the ears.

Variations:

1. Place the hands on the wall and use the wall to press against to deepen the twist.
2. One foot in half Padmasana. Reach behind the back to grab the big toe. The opposite hand comes under the knee of the leg in Padmasana and the palm presses into the floor.

Support Poses:

1. Reclined or passive twists
2. Dandasana (staff pose)

Contraindications:

1. Do not practice this pose if you have high blood pressure, eye strain, a stress-related headache or migraine.
2. Avoid during menstruation.

Counter Poses:

Forward bends (eg Paschimottanasana (seated forward bend))

Reminders

1. Remember to expand your chest while keeping both sides level.
2. Relax the muscles of your neck.
3. Draw in the shoulder blades especially the one in which the twist is directed towards.

Practice Script:

Sit at the foot of your mat on you knees. Place the pelvis off to one side and rest on the outside of your hip with your feet together. Inhale, lengthen your spine. Exhale, twist away from your knees and support the pose with your hands while pressing down into your hands and legs. Let your head follow the twist. Rest your eyes comfortably down and breathe five times. On an exhalation release from the pose.

HANUMANASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Hanumanasana	Monkey Pose Hanuman – Monkey God	Seated Pose

Benefits:

1. Supports the adrenal glands.
2. Tones the kidneys, bladder, and pancreas.
3. Activates a sluggish liver and improves the digestive system.
4. Relieves leg, ankle and hip stiffness.

Primary Principles:

Foundation: Draw the hips square forward, pulling the quadriceps and the groins towards the hips. Draw the tailbone in and forward. Shoulder loop activates and widens the chest forward.

Primary Movement: Flexion in front hip. Extension in the back hip.

Breath: Inhale to lift one leg back. Exhale to swing the leg forward into the split. Inhale to lift the torso from the legs. Exhale to move into the forward bend. Exhale to come out of the pose.

Secondary Principles:

1. Widen the sitting bones.
2. Reach the ankles and toes long.
3. Widen the toes.

4. Draw the abdomen into the spine and lift it towards the chest.
5. Lengthen both sides of the waist from the hips.
6. Draw both sides of the chest away from the hips.
7. Reach the lower back forward towards the belly.
8. Keep the eyes soft and towards the front big toe.
9. Lengthen the back of the neck and keep the neck muscles soft.

Common Obstacles:

1. Strain in the back of the front knee. Generally caused from hyper-extension in the knee. Micro-bend the front knee and place a support under the front thigh.
2. Pain in the back ankle. Make sure the toes are pointed straight back. Place a rolled blanket under the ankle.
3. Pain the front hip or hamstring. Generally caused from too much rotation in the pelvis. Try to even out the hips forward. Place a support under the front thigh. Or, support pelvis with block, and/or use blocks under hands.

Variations:

1. Standing split. Head is moving to the shin while one leg is extending towards the ceiling. Hands can either be on the ground or grabbing the back of the supporting leg.
2. Kapotasana (pigeon pose). Offered if the hamstrings are too tight to do Hanumanasana comfortably.
3. Anjaneyasana (crescent moon pose). This is when the front foot stays on the floor but the legs are still splitting. Traditionally arms reach overhead in this pose.
4. Back bend. Instead of forward bending. Lift the arms overhead into a backbend.
5. Eka Pada Raja Kapotasana. This version the front leg is straight, the back knee is bent while the arms reach overhead and back to take the back foot.

Support Poses:

1. Hamstring openers. (eg Adho Mukha Svanasana, downward facing dog)
2. Forward Bends. (eg. Paschimottanasana, seated forward bend)

Contraindications:

1. Do not practice this asana if you have just had an asthmatic attack.
2. Do not hyper-extend in the front knee as you could rupture the muscles at the backs of your knees.
3. Avoid this pose if you have any knee, hamstring, or SI joint injury.

Counter Poses:

1. Backbends (eg. Bhujangasana, cobra)
2. Wide-legged hip stretch (eg. Konasana, angle pose)

Reminders

1. Keep your weight evenly distributed so that the torso does not fall to one side.
2. Maintain a strong reach into your spine so that you do not end up tensing your lower back.

Practice Script:

From Adho Mukha Svanasana, exhale, step your feet together. Inhale, raise the right leg towards the ceiling and raise the opposite heel from the floor. Exhale, swing the leg forward and through the arms, releasing the pelvis between the legs into Hanumanasana. Inhale, square off the hips forward using a support if you need under the front thigh. Exhale, fold the torso forward. Inhale the chest forward as you pull the shoulders back to stabilize the hips. Exhale, allow your forehead to release in the direction of your front shin. Stay five deep breaths. With an inhale place both of your hands firmly onto the floor as you tuck the back toes under. Exhale, lift the hips and step your feet back into Adho Mukha Svanasana.

URDHVA DHANURASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Urdhva Dhanurasana	Upward Bow Pose	Backbend
	Urdhva - Upward	
	Danuara - Bow	

Benefits:

1. Increases lung capacity and improves breathlessness.
2. Improves blood circulation to all the organs of the body.
3. Tones the muscles of the legs, back and spine.
4. Removes stiffness in the shoulders, back, and ankles.

Primary Principles:

1. *Foundation:* Press firmly into the feet and hands to lift the weight of the pelvis and spine up. Shoulder loop activates to lift the chest. Femurs ground to protect the lumbar spine.
2. *Primary Movement:* Extension in the hips, spine, legs and arms.
3. *Breath:* Inhale to lift into the pose. Exhale to release out of the pose.

Secondary Principles:

4. Widen the collarbones.
5. Pull the inner thighs together and towards the pelvis.
6. Spread the toes and lengthen them from the ankles.
7. Draw the abdomen towards the spine and up into the chest.
8. Keep your feet from separating wider than your hips.
9. Point all the toes forward.
10. Avoid allowing the knees to fall out wider than the hips.
11. Push through the inner arches of the feet back.
12. Lift both sides of your chest toward your head.
13. Lengthen the spine from the hips and stretch the waist and chest forward.
14. Equally stretch both sides of the torso from your hips.

Common Obstacles:

1. Lower back pain. Caused from pushing the groins forward and clenching in the abdominal, buttock and back muscles. Move the groins back and bear more weight into the feet. Make sure the tailbone is drawing forward and countering the groins.
2. Neck pain. Generally caused from a hyperextension in the neck. Relax the head down and lengthen the back of the neck. Lift from the back of the heart.
3. Shoulder pain. Generally caused from shoulder stiffness and the head of the humerus being pulled from its socket. Let the shoulders roll slightly forward and push the legs and the shoulders away from each other.

Variations:

1. Place two blocks, shoulder width apart, and rest them on a diagonal against the wall. Place both hands onto the blocks with the head rested in between.
2. Place two blocks, perpendicular, up against the wall. Rest both feet flat onto the blocks.
3. Place the feet onto the edge of a chair with the back of the chair supported against a wall.
4. Use the wall to walk the hands up and down the wall to practice drop backs.
5. Place a bolster, perpendicular, over the seat of a chair. Lay the back over the bolster. Hands come to the floor overhead. Feet stay firmly planted into the floor.

Support Poses:

1. Other backbends (eg. Setu Bandasana, Dhanurasana, Ustrasana)
2. Supta Virasana (reclined hero pose)
3. Shoulder openers (eg. Gomukasana)

Contraindications:

1. Do not practice this posture if your blood pressure is too high or too low.
2. Avoid this pose when you are feeling too tired.

3. Do not practice during an attack of migraine or severe headache.
4. If you have a cardiac condition practice supported backbends.

Counter Poses:

1. Twists. (Bharadvajasana, spinal twist)
2. Forward bends. (eg Paschimottanasa, seated forward bend)

Practice Script:

Lay on your back. Place your feet, hip width apart, directly under your knees. Place your hands next to your ears with your palms facing down and your fingers pointing towards your shoulders. Exhale, relax the hands and feet into the floor. Inhale, push down into the floor and extend the legs and the arms. Exhale, release the back of the neck and free any tension in the face. Inhale, draw the back of your head towards your tailbone to deepen the lift in the chest. Push firmly down on the top of the thighs to ground the legs and spine. Inhale, reach firmly into your hands. Exhale, draw your chin towards your chest and slowly release from the pose.

Reminders

1. Place most of the strength in the legs to take the pressure off the spine.
2. Draw the shoulderblades towards the inner body and the chest away from the hips.
3. Always ensure that the breathing remains calm.

SIRSASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Sirsasana	Headstand Pose	Inversion
	Sirsa - Head	

Benefits:

1. Builds stamina.
2. Alleviates insomnia.
3. Stabilizes nervous system.
4. Strengthens the lungs.

5. Supports endocrine function.
6. Supports immune function.
7. Brings relief from digestive and eliminatory problems, when practiced in conjunction with supported Salamba Sarvangasana (shoulderstand).

Primary Principles:

Foundation: Push the forearms firmly into the floor so the weight is evenly distributed between the elbows, head and hands. Hug the muscles of the legs towards the bones so the lower body balances directly over the support of the upper body.

Primary Movement: Extension in the shoulders and legs. Flexion in the elbows.

Breath: Inhale to prepare the base. Exhale to take the weight onto the head. Inhale into the pose. Exhale to release from the pose.

Secondary Principles:

1. Ensure that the wrists are not collapsing in or out but rather stay inline with the elbow joints.
2. Press the thumbs against the back of the head to help keep the arms inline.
3. Draw the humerus bones towards the shoulder joints and let them rotate externally without it affecting the stability in the forearms.
4. Keep the shoulders parallel to each other.
5. Widen the scapulae from the spine and draw them in towards the chest.
6. Widen across the top of the collarbones as the outer armpits draw towards the sternum.
7. Keep the navel, with the lower ribcage, drawing in towards the spine as the tailbone lengthens away from the head.
8. Keep the abdomen soft yet draw it into the spine.
9. Keep your thighs, knees and big toes together.
10. Stretch the backs of your knees and thighs.

Common Obstacles:

1. Inability to bear all the weight onto the head while keeping the cervical spine long and the hips lifted. Generally caused because the hamstrings are tight and/or groins are not open enough. Have students set up the pose and lift one leg into the air. Support from under the lifted thigh and have them bear weight down onto you so that they can easily lift the second leg up. They can also enter the pose with bent knees. Never allow them to jump into the pose, since this can potentially cause injury to the cervical spine and/or shoulder girdle. Instead, work on creating a stable base in the shoulders, work shoulder-opening and groin-opening.
2. Pain in the neck, shoulders or head. Generally caused either by cervical spine injury or excessive compression on the cervical vertebrae. Have students push into the floor with the forearms until the head lifts slightly away from the floor so that the arms bear more of the weight than the head.
3. Weight waivers unevenly. Check how the weight is distributed between the elbows, head and hands. Make sure the student is reaching in the thoracic area of the torso.

Variations:

1. Use the wall for support.
2. Rest the tops of the shoulders onto two chairs.
3. Place a bolster vertical against the wall and practice Sirsasana with the back against the bolster.
4. Adho Mukha with arms in headstand position. Have students walk feet towards arms. This encourages shoulder-opening, and understanding of leg and groin work.

Support Poses:

1. Tadasana (eg. mountain pose)
2. Salamba Sarvangasana (eg. supported shoulderstand)

Contraindications:

1. Do not practice this pose if you have high blood pressure, cervical spondylosis, a cardiac condition, a backache, headache, or migraine.
2. Do not practice during menstruation.

Counter Poses:

1. Forward bend (eg. child's pose)

Reminders

1. Find a quiet spine, yet stable legs.
2. Let your eyes be soft and focus on finding the breath in order to stabilize the pose.

Practice Script:

From your knees place your forearms down onto the mat. Grab around the elbows with your hands so that your elbows line up under your shoulders. Interlace your fingers and draw the last finger under so the surface of your hands is flat. Inhale, place your head between your hands and walk your feet towards your hands. Exhale, place all your weight onto your head and arms so that your pelvis lifts on top of the head. Inhale push through your legs and feet and extend the legs. Exhale, engage the quadriceps towards the hips and extend out through the back of the knees. Inhale, extend the chest towards the elbows. Exhale, lower your legs slowly until the toes touch the floor. Walk the feet back and move into child's pose.

SALAMBA SARVANGASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Salamba Sarvangasana	Supported Shoulderstand	Inversion
	Salamba - Supported	
	Sarvanga - Shoulder	

Benefits:

1. Alleviates hypertension.
2. Calms the nervous system.
3. Improves the function of the thyroid and parathyroid glands.

4. Alleviates asthma, bronchitis, and throat ailments.
5. Supports the immune system.
6. Reduces menstrual cramps and helps to regulate menstrual flow.

Primary Principles:

Foundation: Shoulder loop engages which causes the humerus bones to pull back and the chest to lift. That force from the upper body permits the lower body to shoot up.

Primary Movement: Flexion in elbows. Extension in the shoulders, and lower body.

Breath: Inhale to lift into the pose. Exhale to release from the pose.

Secondary Principles:

- I. Lift the sternum.
2. Widen across the collarbones.
3. Relax the muscles of the face.
4. Pull the shoulder blades in towards the chest.
5. Push the full length of the humerus bones into the floor. Emphasize the pressure in the shoulder joint if the chest looks like it is collapsing.
6. Press your fingers into your back.
7. Keep your palms close to your shoulder blades.
8. Rest your elbows onto the blanket.
9. Keep the knees, ankles, heels and toes together.
10. Tighten your buttocks.
11. Stretch and open the soles of the feet.
12. Lengthen from the front of your groins to your toes.
13. Pull up the front of the pelvis away from the back.
14. Keep your eyes on your chest.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the neck, head or shoulders. Caused by cervical spine injury or excessive compression. Ensure that the shoulder loop is engaged. One option would be to place a strap above the elbows and push into it. Also to place the feet onto the wall so that more weight can be lifted off the upper body.

Variations:

1. Using props. Blanket(s) under the shoulders. Strap above the elbows. Feet onto the wall. Even a block between the thighs.
2. On a chair. Laying back with a blanket over the edge of the chair to cushion the back. Shoulders rest onto bolster(s). Legs rest along the top bar of the chair. Strap the thighs and or ankles together so the legs stay together and active. Hands reach under the seat and take hold of the legs of the chair.

Support Poses:

1. Setu Bandasana (eg. supported bridge pose)
2. Sirsasana (eg. headstand)

Contraindications:

1. Do not practice this asana during menstruation.
2. Students with high blood pressure should only attempt this after holding Halasana (plow pose) for at least 3 minutes.

Counter Poses:

Matsyasana (fish pose)

Reminders:

1. Keep lifting the front of the pelvis.
2. Tighten the buttocks, yet lengthen the fronts of the thighs.
3. Let your eyes relax back while lifting the cervical spine from the floor.

Practice Script:

From Tadahastasana (stiff corps pose), inhale, lift the legs overhead and try to place the toes to the floor. Interlace your fingers behind your back and draw each shoulder towards the spine. Place the hands along the back. Pull the elbows down to try to reach the palms as close to the shoulder blades as possible. Inhale, press down through the arms to lift the legs high. Exhale, pull the inner thighs towards one another as you draw the tailbone forward. Bear down through the arms to ensure the chest is not collapsing. Try to widen the collarbones as you look softly at your chest breathing. Inhale, feel your shoulder blades lifting. Exhale, slowly let your legs draw down and overhead. Inhale, place the palms down onto the floor behind the back. Exhale, lower the legs completely to the floor.

HALASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Halasana	Plow Pose	Inversion
	Hala - Plow	

Benefits:

1. Relieves fatigue and boosts energy levels.
2. Controls hypertension.
3. Rejuvenates the abdominal organs and improves digestion.
4. Lengthens the spine and improves its alignment.
5. Relieves pain or cramps in the fingers, hands, wrists, elbows and shoulders.

Primary Principles:

Foundation: Shoulder loop engages which causes the humerus bones to pull back and the chest to lift. That force from the upper body permits the lower body to lengthen out and the femurs to lift from the floor.

Primary Movement: Flexion in the hips. Extension in the shoulders, elbows, wrists, knees, ankles and toes.

Breath: Inhale to lift the legs. Exhale to move into the full pose. Exhale to release from the pose.

Secondary Principles:

1. Lift the sternum perpendicular to the floor.
2. Widen across the collarbones.
3. Relax the muscles of the face.
4. Pull the shoulder blades in towards the chest.
5. Push the full length of the humerus bones into the floor. Emphasize the pressure in the shoulder joint if the chest looks like it is collapsing.
6. Press your wrists into the floor.
7. Keep the knees, ankles, heels and toes together.
8. Roll the inner thighs together and feel the lift up from the hamstrings.
9. Stretch and open the soles of the feet.
10. Engage the quadriceps and pull the groins back.
11. Lengthen the legs all the way to the toes.
12. Pull up the front of the pelvis away from the back.
13. Keep your eyes on your chest.
14. Eyes remain soft yet focused on the chest
15. Neck is long with the chin perpendicular with the floor.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the neck, head or shoulders. Caused by cervical spine injury or excessive compression. Ensure that the shoulder loop is engaged. One option would be to place a strap above the elbows and push into it. Or, rest with legs overhead, feet pressing actively into wall. Or, place the legs on a chair so that the lower body can rest and emphasis can be placed on the upper body.

Variations:

1. Use a chair to support the legs.
2. Use two chairs and separate the legs for a wide version.
3. Karnapidasana. In this version the knees bend and hug the ears. This is an advanced variation
4. Urdhva Padmasana. In this version the legs come into the lotus and the hands push against the inner knees. This is an advanced variation.
5. Pindasana. In this version the arms wrap around the legs in lotus. This is an advanced variation.

Poses that facilitate:

1. Setu Bandasana (eg. supported bridge pose)
2. Sirsasana (eg. headstand)
3. Salamba Sarvangasana (eg. shoulderstand)

Contraindications:

1. Do not practice this asana if you have cervical spondylosis, or any neck or shoulder injury.
2. Avoid this pose during menstruation.
3. If you are prone to headaches, migraines, asthma, breathing difficulties, high blood pressure, physical and mental fatigue, or are overweight practice this pose supported with props and the eyes closed.

Counter Poses:

Matsyasana (fish pose)

Reminders:

1. Breathe with awareness and try to breathe slowly.
2. Stretch long through the legs to avoid a collapse in the chest.

Practice Script:

From Tadahastasana (stiff corps pose), inhale, lift the legs overhead and try to place the toes to the floor. Interlace your fingers behind your back and draw each shoulder towards the spine. Pull the elbows and wrists down so that the chest raises up. Inhale, reach through the legs and lengthen the ankles and toes. Exhale, pull the inner thighs towards one another as you lift the femurs from the floor. Bear down through the arms to ensure the chest is not collapsing. Try to widen the collarbones as you look softly at your chest breathing. Feel your shoulder blades lifting. Inhale, place the palms down onto the floor behind the back. Exhale, lower the legs completely to the floor.

MATSYASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Matsyasana	Fish Pose	Seated Pose
	Matsya - Fish	

Benefits:

1. Strengthens the muscles of the heart.
2. Tones the upper spine.
3. Stimulates the pineal, pituitary and thyroid glands.
4. Aids in digestion.
5. Tones the kidneys.

Primary Principles:

Foundation: Femurs and ischial bones drop into the floor. Shoulder loop activates and lifts the chest from the ground.

Primary Movement: Flexion in hips and knees. Extension in spine. Hyper extension in the cervical spine.

Breath: Inhale into the pose. Exhale to release from the pose.

Secondary Principles:

1. Try to flex the ankles and push your feet towards your groins.
2. Try to move both heels towards the groins. Continue to push the heels towards the groins.
3. Relax the groins back, widening the pelvis.
4. Hold your feet firmly with both hands.
5. Widen your thighs and push your knees towards the floor.
6. Bend at the elbows and pull them in the direction of the floor.
7. Feel the humerus bones externally rotate and pulling into the shoulder joints.
8. Sternum widens and collarbones extend from the chest.
9. Shoulder blades lift from the floor and help to open the chest.
10. Stretch and lift both sides of your chest.
11. Pull the kidneys towards the spine.
12. Lift the cervical spine away from the floor and let the throat open.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the ankles because of Padmasana (lotus). Extend the legs and sit the tops of the hands under the pelvis.
2. Pain in the neck or shoulders. Ensure that the arms are active and that the top of the head is supported lightly by the floor. Emphasize the lift in the chest yet the shoulders pulling down the back.

Variations:

1. Legs extended. Tops of the hands rest under the pelvis. Thumb and index fingers touch.
2. Ankles crossed instead of Padmasana (lotus).
3. Bolster under the upper back. Maybe a support under the head if the breathing is constricted.
4. Blocks under the sternum and head.

Support Poses:

1. Hip openers (eg, Padmasana, lotus)
2. Backbends (eg, Urdhva Danurasana, bridge)

Contraindications:

1. Do not practice this asana during an attack of migraine or severe headache.
2. If you have a cardiac condition practice this asana supported.
3. Avoid this pose if you have neck injuries.

Counter Poses:

Forward Bends (eg, Paschimottanasana, seated forward bend)

Reminders

1. Try to keep lengthening both sides of your torso parallel with one another.
2. Keep the eyes soft so that the throat can open.
3. Imagine a lift in your heart centre.

Practice Script:

From lying on the back either take the legs into Padmasana (lotus) or extend the legs, bringing them together. If the legs are extended sit the pelvis onto the tops of the hands and create a slight bend in the elbows. If in Padmasana, reach to grab the toes with the hands. Inhale, push down into the elbows, lifting the chest and ribcage from the floor. Exhale, rest the top of the head softly on the floor. Inhale, feel the back of the ribs move into the front of the chest. Exhale, firm back and down with the arms and thighs, creating a stronger connection with the floor. Inhale, lay the head back so that the throat can open wide. Exhale, try to lift the shoulder blades in the direction of the neck. Inhale, lift your chin towards your chest. Exhale, release your head to the floor, the arms and lastly the legs.

BADDHA PADMASANA



Sanskrit	English	Classification
Baddha Padmasana	Bound Lotus Pose	Seated Pose/Forward Bend
	Baddha - Bound	
	Padma - Lotus	

Benefits:

1. Relieves spinal tension.
2. Encourages healthy kidney function.
3. Reduces sciatic pain.
4. Supports pelvis region and groins, and can help prevent hernia.
5. Helps support menstrual cycle.
6. Supports the abdominal and pelvic organs.

Primary Principles:

Foundation: Femurs and ischial bones drop into the floor while the groins hollow back. Shoulder loop activates and lengthens the chest and spine forward.

Primary Movement: Flexion in both hips, knees and elbows.

Breath: Inhale to prepare. Exhale to move into the pose. Inhale to lift out of the pose. Exhale to release the legs and arms.

Secondary Principles:

1. Try to place both feet into the crease of the outer groins.
2. Try to move both heels towards the inner groins.
3. Relax your groins back.
4. Hold your feet or big toes firmly with both hands.
5. Widen your thighs and push your knees towards the floor.
6. Stretch and lift both sides of your chest from the groins.
7. Stretch your knees away from your torso.
8. Push your shins down into the floor.
9. Press your thigh and calf together.
10. Let the kidneys fall away from the spine.
11. Keep lengthening your spine.
12. Keep your neck long.

Common Obstacles:

1. Pain in the ankles in Padmasana (lotus). Simply cross the ankles or take half lotus with only one foot in.
2. Cannot bind the hands to the feet. Simply grab the elbows with the hands, or if in lotus use strap(s) to reach the hands closer to the feet.
3. Strain in the upper body. Use support(s) under the head. Either block(s) or if the head is too far from the floor place the forehead on the wall.

Support Poses:

Knee openers (eg. Virasana, hero pose)

Hip openers (eg. Eka Pada Sirsasana, leg behind the head 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:

Backbends (eg. Bhujangasana, cobra)

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, bound with a long spine and the forehead easily comes to the floor try to reach then your nose and lastly the chin.

Practice Script:

From seated at the foot of your mat, inhale and comfortably sit either crossed legged or in Padmasana (lotus). Exhale, take the elbows behind the back or bind to grab the toes with the hands. Inhale, push down with your thighs in order to lift both sides of your chest. Exhale, fold deep in the hips bringing your forehead to the floor or a support. Inhale, pull your elbows and upper arms back so you can breath deep into your chest. Exhale, push the thighs and knees firmly towards the ground. Stay for several long breaths. Inhale, lift the spine to seated. Exhale, release the arms and legs.