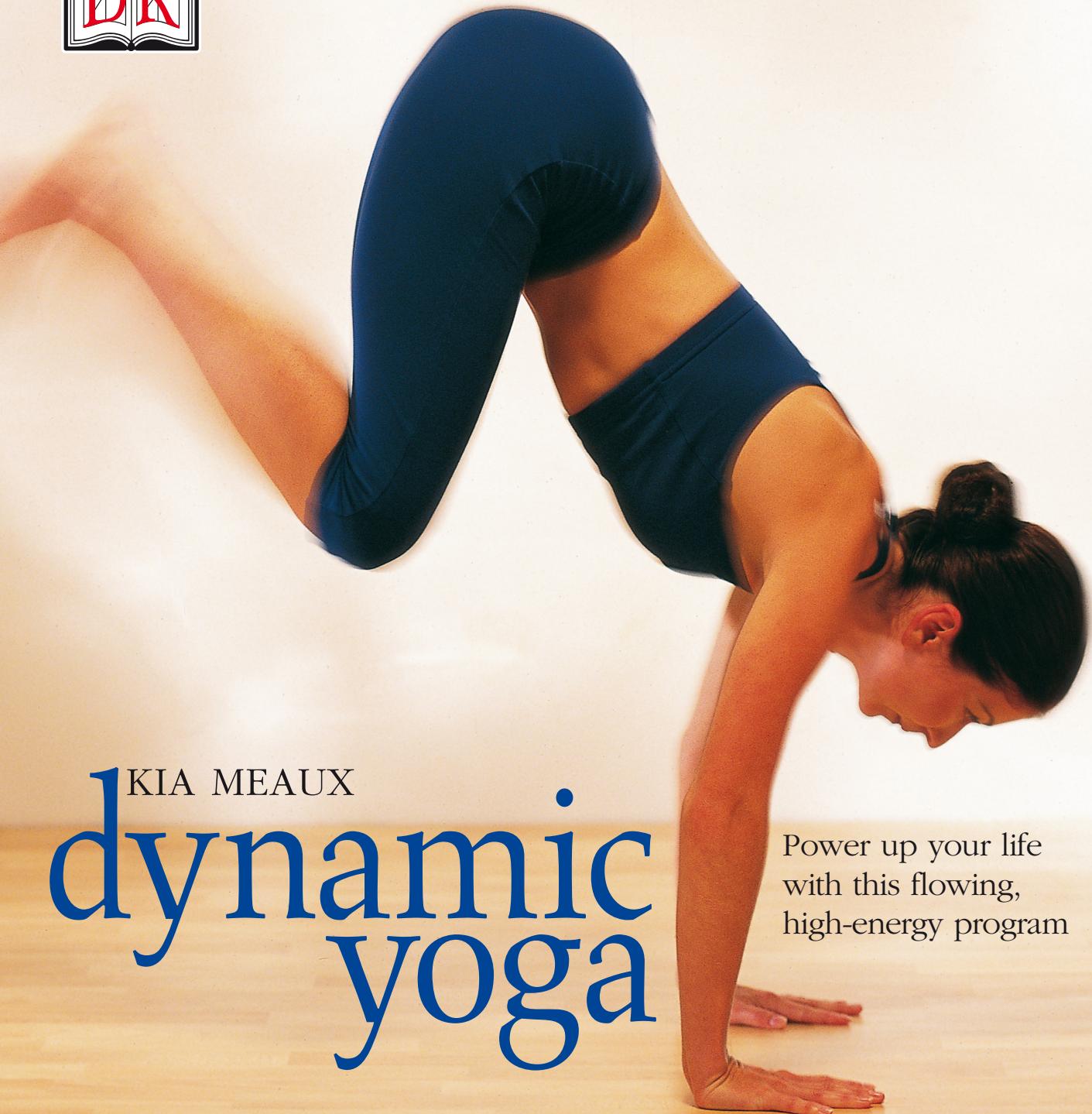




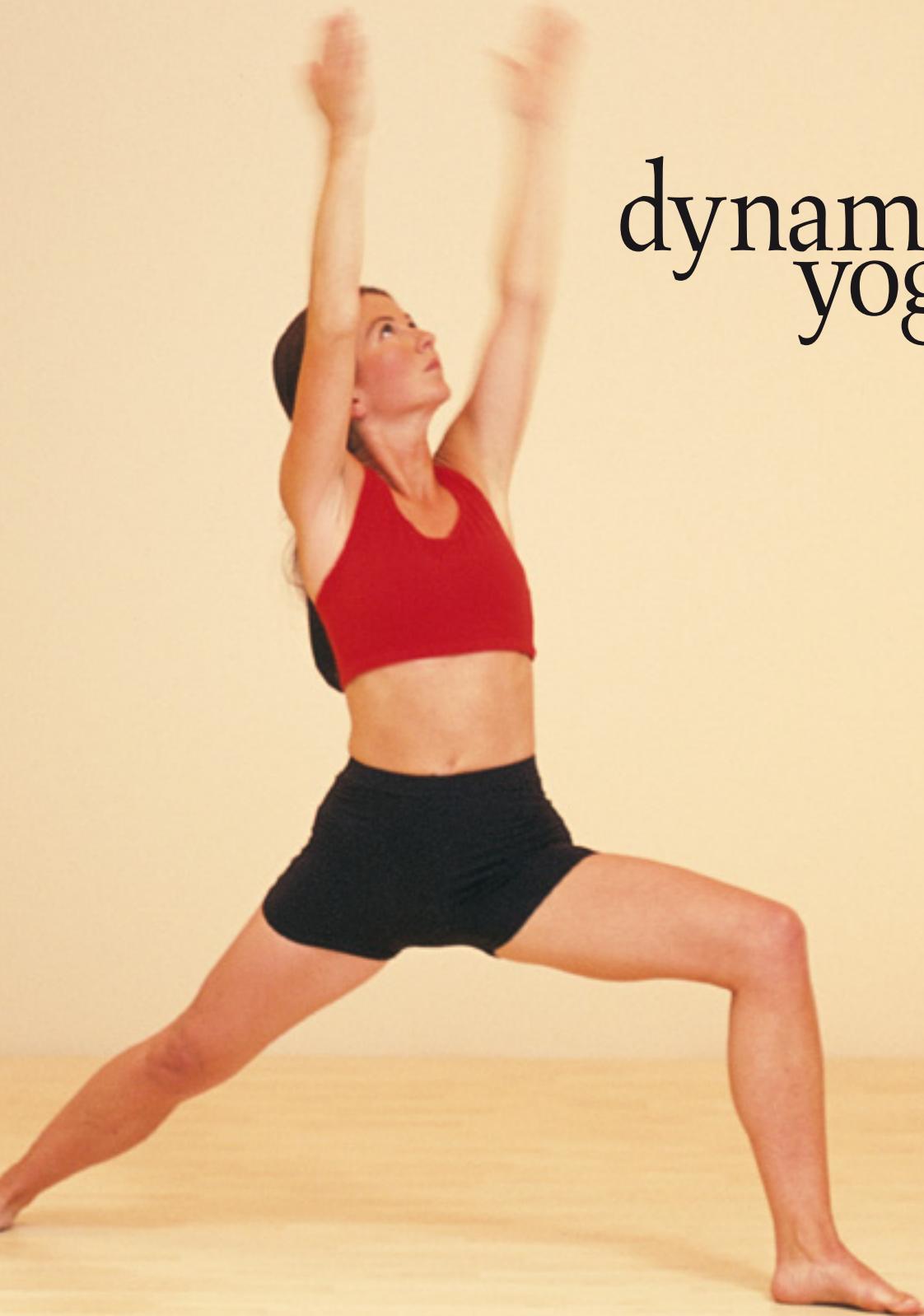
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A Dorling Kindersley Book



LONDON, NEW YORK, MUNICH,
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INTRODUCTION



THE DEVELOPMENT OF DYNAMIC YOGA

Dynamic yoga is a creative style of Hatha yoga, blending the principles of Ashtanga and Iyengar. Dynamic yoga is not only meditative but also physically challenging. Central to the technique of dynamic yoga is the sequencing of postures with interlinking transitional movements and a synchronized breathing pattern. These create a flowing connection of yoga postures that gives you a balanced workout and mental clarity.

Yoga is a Sanskrit word that means the union of body, mind, and spirit. Yoga is an exploration of the potential of the body, working in harmony with the mind in order to recognize the higher self. It can be translated as a spiritual union of your soul with God or the eternal truth. This truth is experiential, and the practice of yoga becomes a process of self-discovery that is available to everyone.

Traditionally there are five branches of yoga. They are: Karma yoga – the path of action; Gyana yoga – the path of wisdom; Bhakti yoga – the path of devotion; Hatha yoga – the physical path; and Raja yoga – the path of meditation. The dynamic yoga program in this book is a form of Hatha yoga, which focuses on the physical postures, or *asanas*.

THE BENEFITS OF HATHA YOGA

The practice of yoga involves patience, perseverance, and a keen observation of the self. The consistent practice of yoga postures cultivates the ability to observe what is in the present moment. By focusing your attention on the subtle and broad movements of both mind and body, you are able to gain pure insight into the nature of things as they truly are. This is known as mindfulness, from which follows happiness, freedom, and peace.

The yoga postures demonstrated in this book have been developed from an understanding of the connections between patterns of thought, body posture, and the breath. These connections are

evident when you consider the body's habitual response to certain external stimuli. For example, when you are afraid, your heartbeat increases, your breath stops momentarily, and certain muscles tense; when you are nervous, your stomach turns, your breath shortens, and your palms sweat.

Yoga sages have observed these and some more subtle connections between mind and body for thousands of years. Their knowledge is embedded in the dynamic yoga postures. By practicing them, you, too, will reach a deeper understanding of the connections. In time, you will find that you are practicing yoga not only during the movement of postures, but also through the entire day as you go about your regular activities. By bringing the body and mind more in harmony through yoga postures, you will find that your whole approach to life changes. Then, instead of simply reacting to everyday events and situations, you will respond to them mindfully.

This pose is taken from the Sun Salutation A sequence (pp.20–29). The Sun Salutations create the flowing rhythm of the practice.



THE HISTORY OF YOGA

Most of the Hatha yoga forms taught today throughout the Western world are influenced by the great yogi Tirumalai Krishnamacharya, who was born in 1888. He is considered the father of modern yoga and is responsible for pioneering the refinement of postures, specifically sequencing them and giving therapeutic value to each one. He is also responsible for combining the postures with breath control to create a form of moving meditation.

Sri K. Pattabhi Jois, who developed the *Ashtanga Vinyasa* method of Hatha yoga, studied with Krishnamacharya from the age of 12 and continues to teach yoga, inspired by his great teacher, in Mysore, India. B.K.S. Iyengar also studied with Krishnamacharya, albeit for a brief time.



Lord of learning and remover of obstacles, the Hindu god Ganesh provides inspiration to yoga students, who should cultivate the attitude that obstacles are there to be overcome.

He has spent his life perfecting the *asanas* that his first guru taught him and is the founder of the Iyengar style of yoga. He has a yoga center in Pune, India. T. Desikachar, the son of Krishnamacharya, developed the *Viniyoga* approach to Hatha yoga and currently has a yoga center in Chennai, India. He also teaches throughout the world.

THE EIGHT LIMBS

One of the founding principles of Hatha yoga to which dynamic yoga adheres is that of the eight limbs, which is the literal translation of the Sanskrit word *ashtanga*. Devised by the famous sage Patanjali in about 200B.C., the eight limbs are described by him in the historical yoga text, the *Yoga Sutras*. The eight limbs can be likened to the form and nature of a tree. For, as a tree stands strong against every adversity and continues to grow, producing fruits from its labor, so do yoga students, through consistent practice and dedication, begin to reap the benefits of their labor and nourish the fruits of their love.

The first five limbs are concerned with the body and the brain. They constitute the outer phase of yoga. The final three limbs are concerned with the reconditioning of the mind and constitute the inner phase of yoga.

The first limb of yoga is called *Yama*. Its purpose is to promote moral and ethical principles within the individual. Yama has five principles or social disciplines: *ahimsa* (non-violence), *satya* (truth), *asteya* (non-stealing), *brahmacharya* (purity), and *aparigraha* (non-attachment).

The second limb is called *Niyama*. Its purpose is to create an inner integrity and it also has five principles: *saucha* (cleanliness, purity), *santosha* (contentment), *tapas* (austerity), *svadhyaya* (self-study), and *isvarapranidhana* (surrender to God).

The third limb is called *Asana*. These are the yoga postures, which are practiced to calm the mind, enabling a deep state of meditation to occur. This is based on the principle that if the body is restless, the mind will also become restless, inhibiting the true realization of the self.

The fourth limb is *Pranayama*, or extension of the breath. *Prana* is the life-force energy, and *ayama* is the voluntary



The Hindu deity, Shiva, represents supreme consciousness. He is also known as the Lord of the Dance, symbolizing the eternal movement of the universe.

effort to control and direct this energy. *Pranayama* helps contemplation and eliminates distractions of the mind, so it becomes easier to concentrate and meditate.

The fifth limb is *Pratyahara*, which means mastery of the senses. Through the practice of *asana* and *pranayama* your mind's attention is turned within; through *pratyahara* this internal focus is maintained.

The sixth limb is *Dharana*, or concentration. It is the ability to focus your full attention on one point to the exclusion of everything else. It is essential to realizing the true self.

The seventh limb is *Dhyana*, or meditation, which is the effortless flow of awareness toward the object of concentration. The difference between concentration and

meditation is that in concentration there is a peripheral distraction or awareness of your immediate surroundings, whereas in meditation the attention is not disturbed at all; you are completely absorbed.

The eighth limb is *Samadhi*, which means the absorption of object with the mind. In this enlightened state there is no duality of consciousness. It is one step beyond being completely absorbed in the meditative state. When you have achieved *samadhi*, the "I" becomes nonexistent. You become one with God or one with all. This is the fruit of the tree or the fruits of your labor.

PRACTICING DYNAMIC YOGA

This form of dynamic yoga focuses on the third and fourth limbs of yoga – the *asanas*, or postures, and *pranayama*, or extension of the breath. This book provides a sequence of yoga postures and transition moves that exercises your body and draws your attention to the way the breath can work with the body, helping you to extend it. The transition moves allow you to move your body naturally from one posture to another in a continuous flow, helping you to maintain your concentration and work toward the fifth limb of yoga – *pratyahara*.

The series of dynamic postures and transition moves presented in this book is just one of many possible sequences that can be developed using the interconnecting movements of the Sun Salutations. The entire series will take you at least 90 minutes to complete and offers a very thorough workout of all muscle groups. At the back of the book I have also suggested two shorter programs – one of 60 minutes and one of 30 minutes – that you might like to try if your time is limited. If on any particular day you are very short of time, simply practice the Sun Salutations – both A and B – several times. Remember, five minutes spent practicing dynamic yoga twice a day is more effective than two hours practiced once a week.

Whichever length of program you choose, with regular practice, you will find that not only will your physical body improve, but also your ability to focus and your level of awareness will be enhanced.

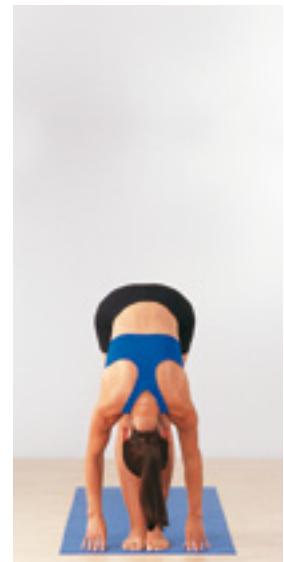
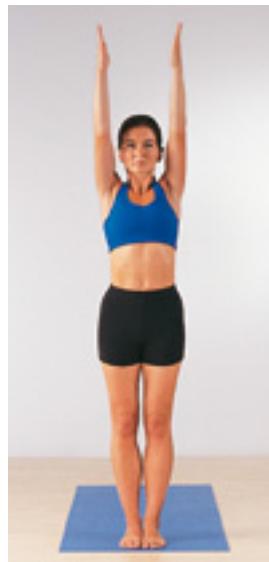
BEFORE YOU START

The fundamentals of your dynamic yoga practice are covered here. Correct breath control is essential to creating a seamless flow of postures. Dynamic yoga also draws on the bandhas (inner energy locks) to help extend the breath. This form of yoga is very safe as long as you listen to your body. This in itself may take some practice. Learn to know when your body is out of balance or when you are pushing it too far – and always modify your postures whenever necessary.

BREATH CONTROL

An intrinsic part of the practice of dynamic yoga is the synchronization of the movement of your body with the rhythm of your breathing to energize your body, focus the mind, and avoid muscle strain. Let the sound of your own breath be the music to your dance. Never move unless you are breathing, and synchronize the beginning and end of each breath with the beginning and end of a specific movement. The rhythm of your breath should remain steady and smooth throughout the steps of each posture, which means that you must concentrate on the flow of your breath and take conscious control of your inhalations and exhalations. This is known as *Pranayama*, or breath control. The quality of your breath is an indication of the quality of your practice. If you are holding your breath or it is shallow and strained, you may have gone beyond your limit and should draw back.

In order to stretch your body in the practice of the asanas, you must learn how to stretch, or lengthen, your inhalations and exhalations. *Ujjayi pranayama* is a unique breathing technique that enables you to increase the airflow. It means “victorious extended breath.” It involves slightly constricting the glottis (the opening through the vocal chords) as you would if whispering. The friction of the air passing through the constricted glottis has the effect of creating a sound similar to wind moving through a tunnel. The easiest way to begin to cultivate this sound is to lie on your back with the knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Close your eyes, soften your face, and slightly constrict the glottis, keeping your lips together in a hint of



When you are moving the torso or limbs in an upward direction, always inhale.

When you are moving the torso or limbs downward, always exhale.



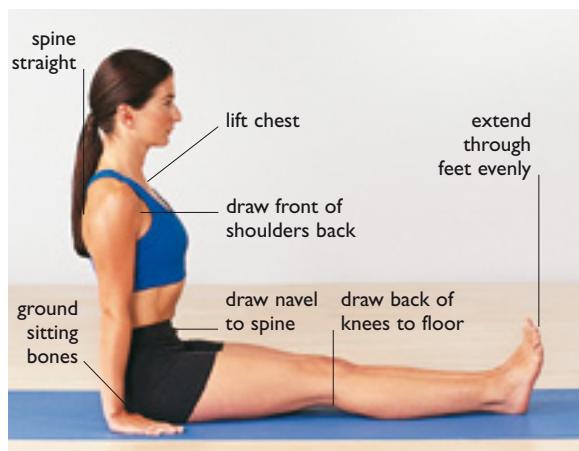
When practicing *Ujjayi pranayama*, rest your thumbs on top of your navel and your fingertips on your lower abdomen. The area beneath your fingertips should not ascend or descend.

a smile. Take deep, long extended breaths without raising and lowering the lower abdomen. Concentrate on moving the breath up, expanding your entire rib cage and the area supporting the kidneys. You should feel your entire back expanding on the floor as you inhale.

The sound can be created by imagining you are saying “aaaaaaa” on the exhale and “aaaaaa” on the inhale but keeping the lips together. This sound becomes a tool you can use during your *asana* practice for concentrating your attention. Think of it as your *mantra*. When your mind begins to wander, bring your attention back to the sound and rhythm of your breath.

ALIGNMENT

Correct alignment of the body is crucial when practicing the dynamic yoga postures. The weight of your body must be distributed evenly and grounded in the floor. Checks and balances must be applied, so that the whole body is held in balance for each posture. It is important to sit and stand up straight at the beginning of each posture. By extending the spine, you create more space between the vertebrae, allowing freedom of movement. To support the spine fully, you must engage all the muscles in your body, which you must teach to work in harmony with each other.

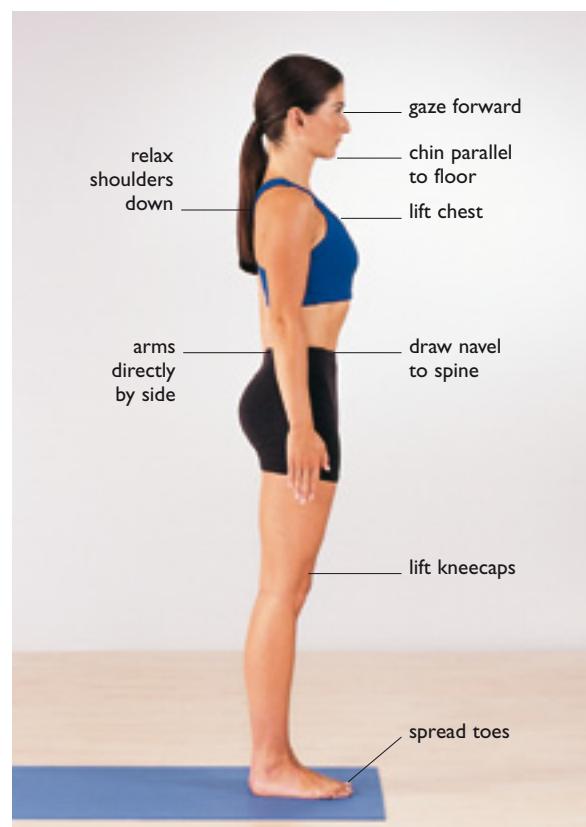


Dandasana is the starting position for most of the seated poses. Align your shoulders with your wrists and ears, and extend your legs out straight in front of you.

BANDHAS

Bandha is a Sanskrit word that means “lock.” By engaging a bandha during an *asana*, you are able to regulate the flow of *prana*, the life-force energy that moves through the body. I have focused on developing two of the three *bandhas* in this dynamic series of poses: *mula bandha* and *uddiyana bandha*.

Mula means “root” in Sanskrit, and you engage *mula bandha* by contracting the perineum, which is located in front of the anus and behind the genitals. The contraction is established toward the end of an exhalation and should be maintained throughout the inhale. To start with, you may notice that you are engaging the entire area, including the anus, but with practice you will be able to refine the action and lift only the perineum.



Tadasana is the starting position for most of the standing poses. Bring your head back, so that your ears, shoulders, and hips are all aligned. Look straight ahead.

The second bandha is called *uddiyana*, which means “flying upward.” This lock is engaged by drawing in the abdominal wall (just a few inches below the navel and above the pubic bone). It is a very subtle drawing of the back of the navel to the spine, which allows your lower abdomen to remain soft and still. This lift is connected with the drawing up of the perineum and will also be most apparent at the end of an exhalation. You can practice both of these energy locks in the Downward Dog (*Adho mukha svanasana*) position in the Sun Salutation sequences. Notice that both *mula bandha* and *uddiyana bandha* connect with the breath. Have patience: the engagement of the *bandhas* takes years to master fully and you will learn to engage them only with practice.

HOW TO PRACTICE

Do not practice dynamic yoga on a full stomach. It is best to wait two to three hours after eating before beginning a program. Choose a time in the day when you will not be interrupted or distracted: you need to be able to give your full attention to practicing the *asanas*. It is important to be comfortable, and the clothing you wear when doing dynamic yoga must be flexible and able to breath. The fabrics that work best are cotton blend.

Practice in a quiet, clean, warm environment. A wooden floor is ideal, and the perfect floor is one that allows you



If you have tight hips and hamstrings and it is difficult for you to straighten the spine, the best option is to bend the knees, allowing the spine to lengthen.

to practice without a “sticky mat.” However, if the surface of your floor is slippery, you must use a mat.

Avoid vigorous practice while menstruating, as this can disrupt the flow of menses. Instead, I suggest practicing *Uttitha trikonasana* (pp.48–49), *Baddha konasana* (pp.128–129), and *Balasana* (p.135), all of which are soothing and can help relieve cramping. It is very important at this time to avoid all inverted poses (upside-down poses). Ideally, you should ask a dynamic yoga teacher to advise on the specific practice you can do while menstruating.

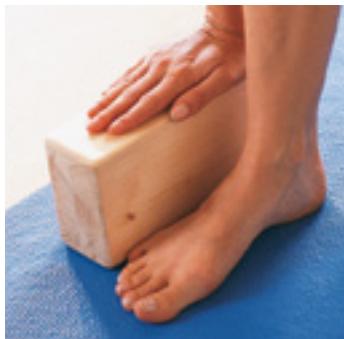
MODIFICATIONS

It is important not to push your body beyond its limits when practicing dynamic yoga. If you find that a particular posture creates strain or tension in a part of your body, withdraw from it. A pose done with force can be very injurious, and usually results in undue pressure being applied to another area of the body to compensate.

In many cases in this book, a specific, less strenuous, alternative is shown. For example, if you cannot reach the floor with your left arm in *Parivrtta parsvakonasana* (pp.60–61), then bend your arms into prayer position as shown in the alternative. If no alternative is shown, there are two modifications of body position that between them can be applied to most postures. The first is simply to bend



If you find that you cannot reach your toes when you fold forward while sitting, then rather than allowing your spine to curve forward, reach less far forward with your arms.



Place a block next to your foot and rest your hand on it if you cannot reach the floor without straining.



A rolled-up towel placed beneath your sitting bones will allow you to fold your body farther forward.



Wrapping a strap around your feet will allow you to deepen a forward bend without applying force.

your legs where the full pose calls for straight legs. The second is to keep your legs straight but to reach less far forward with your arms. You can gradually move your body toward the full pose as you practice.

In addition to modifying the position of your body to avoid straining, you can also use equipment to help you in positions that cause difficulty. For example, blocks can be very useful in helping you to balance in the standing poses if you cannot reach the floor with your hand. Equally, if your hips are tight and restrict you as you fold forward, a rolled towel or blanket placed under the sitting bones will help, and will also mean that you do not harm the lower back. If you cannot reach your toes with your hands, try using a strap to enable you to deepen the stretch.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

If you have a specific injury or known weakness, then you must be very careful not to place any strain on that area of the body when practicing yoga. For example, if you have a neck injury, avoid postures that require you to roll onto it, such as *Sarvangasana* (pp.136–137), without the guidance of a qualified teacher. It is equally important to be careful if you have a back injury or strain. It is best to practice with a teacher until you understand the appropriate alternatives for your particular injury. Something as common as tight hips can be helped by using a towel or modifying your position. For tight hamstrings, bend the legs when you

cannot straighten them, and pay particular attention to the symmetry and alignment of your legs in each posture.

If you are pregnant, it is best not to practice dynamic yoga. There are yoga classes tailored especially for pregnant women; try one of these for this period. You can come back to dynamic yoga after the birth and when your doctor gives you clearance.

RESTING

It is very important to rest when necessary and not to push yourself to a state of exhaustion. If you need to rest between postures, rest in *Balasana* (p.135). At the end of each program rest in *Savasana* (p.144), using this pose to further your ability to meditate.



Balasana, or Child's pose, is particularly good for releasing tension in the shoulders and neck, making it an ideal posture to go into after *Sirsasana*. Use it whenever you need to rest.

WARMING UP

It is best to spend a few minutes gently stretching before performing the sun salutations.

Most of us tend to spend hours just sitting, creating tightness in the hips and often putting a strain on the spine. Doing two of the four warm-up exercises presented here before beginning a dynamic yoga program helps release any stiffness in the back and shoulders. This prepares the body for the relative intensity of the Sun Salutation sequences.

Happy Pose

1 Sit on the floor with your legs out straight in front of you and your arms straight by your sides. Inhaling, cross the right leg over the left. Move your hands back slightly and bend your arms, pressing down with your fingertips to straighten the spine. Gaze forward.

2 Exhaling, fold the body forward, reaching out with your arms. Hold for two to five minutes, breathing slowly. With each inhale lengthen the spine and with each exhale deepen the fold in the hips. Repeat with the left leg crossed over the right.

straighten spine

keep sitting bones grounded

relax back of neck

relax arms

Wide Butterfly



1 Sit in the same position as for Happy Pose. Inhaling, bring the heels of your feet together, bending your legs slightly. Let your knees fall out to the sides. Move your hands back slightly and press down with your fingertips.

2 Exhaling, fold the body forward from the hips, grounding the sitting bones and reaching out with your arms. Let your whole body relax over the legs. Hold for two to five minutes.



Spinal Roll

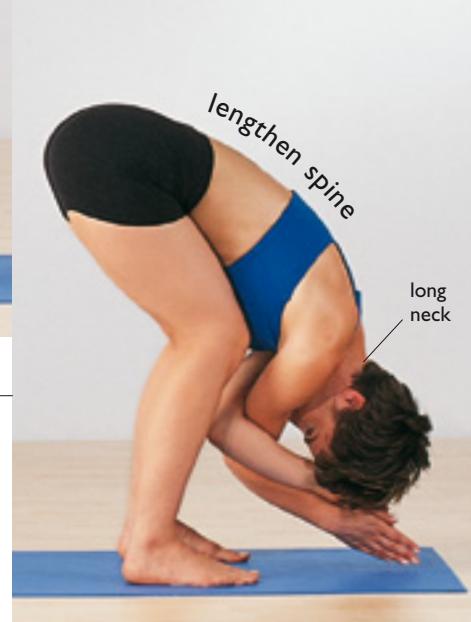


1 Stand up straight with your arms by your sides, feet hip-width apart, and toes spread. Exhaling, bend at the knees and fold your body forward slowly, letting the weight of the upper body take the torso forward. Allow the spine to curve and the arms to hang down.

2 Continue exhaling until the hands are touching the floor and the entire torso is flopping forward. Relax the back of the neck and let the weight of the head pull the neck long. Hold the pose for 10 breaths. Then, inhaling, roll the body up to standing.



Arms Wrapped Forward Bend

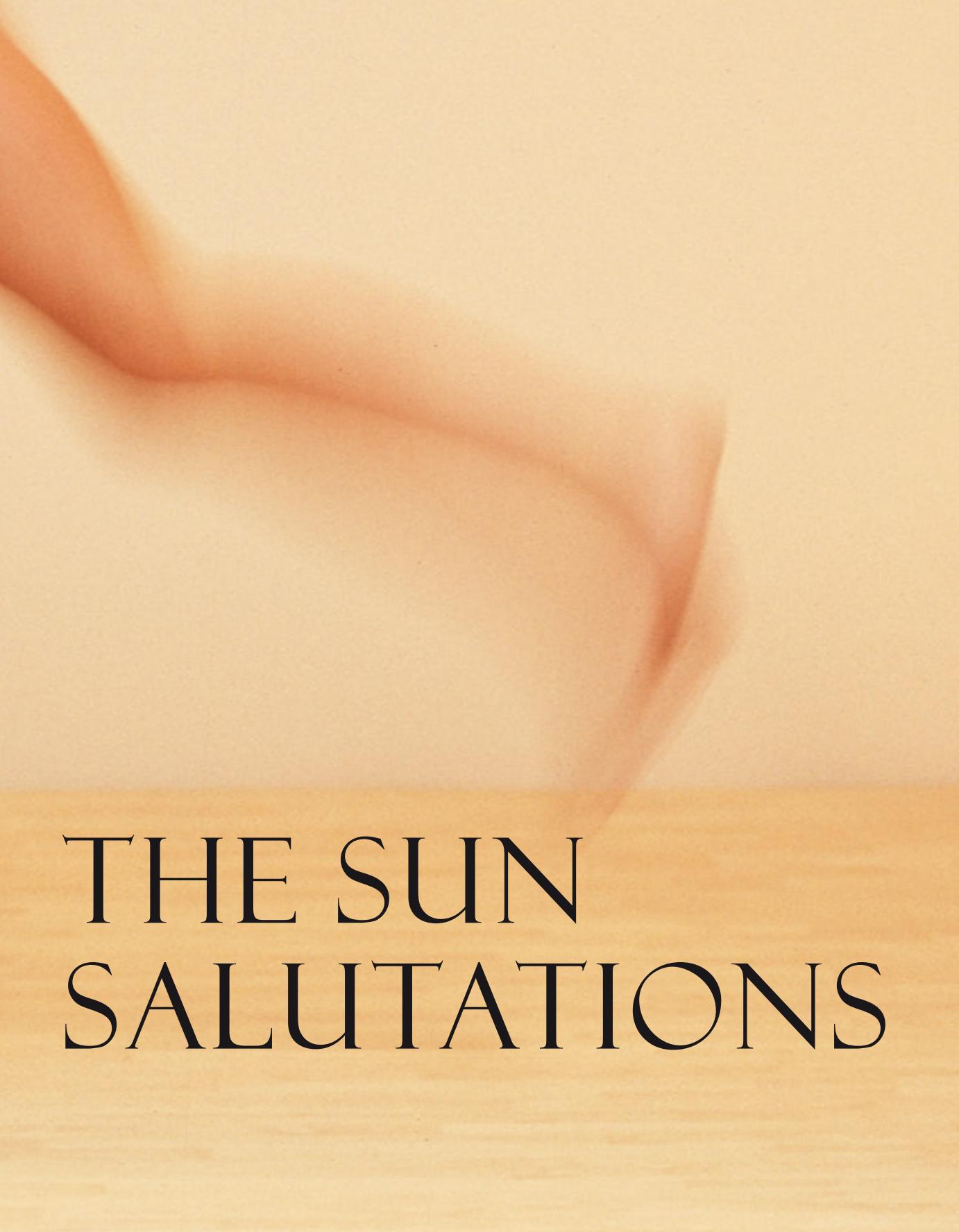


1 Stand up straight with your arms by your sides and feet hip-width apart. Inhaling, swing the left arm under the right, bending the elbows. Bring the palms of each hand together. Lift the elbows up and gaze forward.

2 Exhaling, bend the knees and fold the body forward slowly. Let the spine curve one vertebrae at a time. Keep the chin tucked and the elbows lifted. Close your eyes.

3 Continue exhaling until the body is folded forward completely. Hold for 10 breaths, then slowly uncurl to standing. Repeat with the right arm crossed under the left.





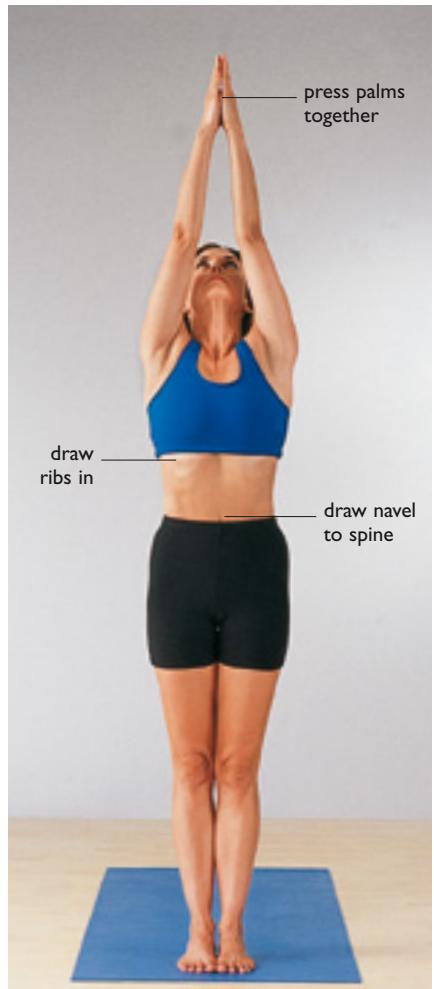
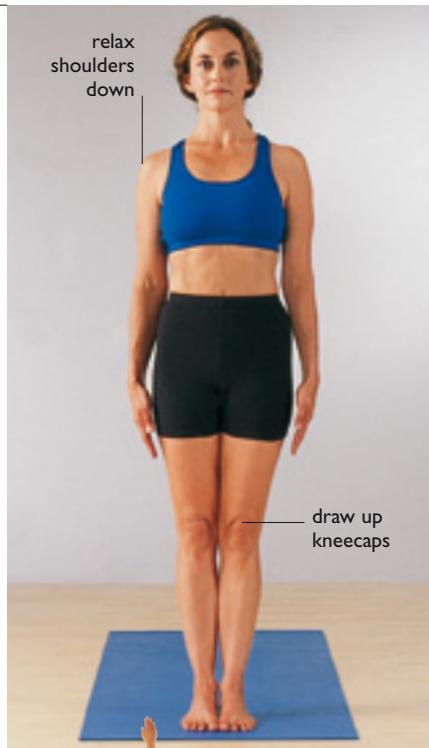
THE SUN SALUTATIONS

SURYA NAMASKARA A

Sun Salutation A

The Sun Salutation sequences warm up the body and draw the attention to the rhythm of the breath. Each movement is synchronized to an inhalation or exhalation. Sun Salutation A builds up muscular strength and is particularly important for strengthening the cardiovascular and respiratory systems. It can also alleviate depression and anxiety.

1 Tadasana Stand tall, your feet together, arms by your sides. Distribute your weight equally across the soles of your feet and spread the toes evenly. Exhaling, draw the lower belly in and up, and raise the center of the perineum as you lift the core of your body, bringing awareness to *mula bandha*. Gaze straight ahead.



2 Raised Tadasana Inhaling, sweep your arms out to the sides of the body and raise them high above your head. Press your palms together at the end of the breath. Look up at your thumbs.

**whole sequence
at a glance**



Exhaling.....Inhaling.....Exhaling.....Inhaling.....Exhaling.....



3 **Uttanasana** Exhaling, pull back the pubic bone and fold your body forward. Place your hands flat on the floor either side of, and parallel to, your feet. At the end of the exhale, gaze at your navel.

ALTERNATIVE

If you cannot place the palms of your hands flat on the floor by your feet with straight legs, bend your knees as much as you need until your palms are completely flat on the floor.



4 **Ardha Uttanasana** Inhaling, look up, lifting the torso halfway up. Straighten the spine and pull back the pubic bone. Straighten your arms and place your fingertips on the floor. Gaze slightly forward.





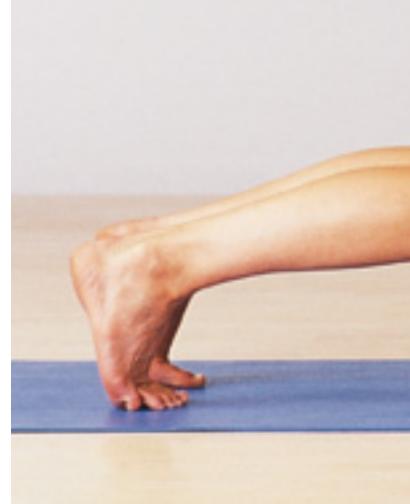
5 Transition Begin exhaling as you bend your knees to crouch. Place your hands flat on the floor in front of your toes. Shift your weight forward evenly into your hands, as though about to do a handstand.

6 Transition Hop backward as you continue exhaling. Use your core body strength to lift your feet off the ground and propel your legs backward. Keep your legs straight and strong, landing on your toes with your feet hip-width apart.



ALTERNATIVE

If jumping back is difficult, try stepping back into the push-up position. Keep your hands flat on the floor and arms straight. Step the right and then the left foot back, placing the feet hip-width apart.

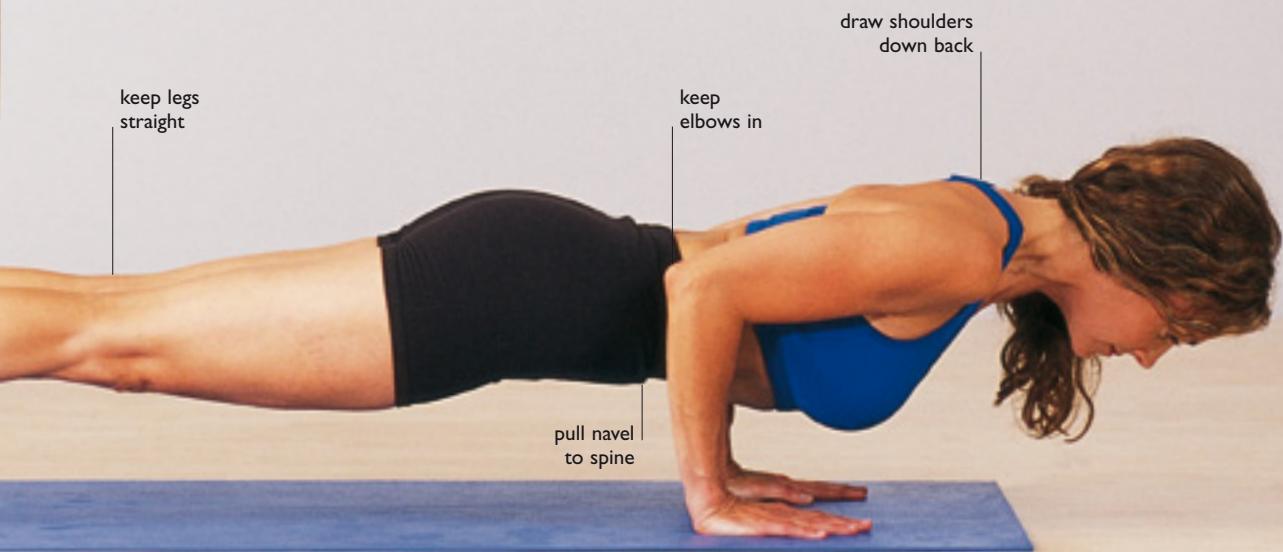


7 Chaturanga Dandasana

Exhaling, fully engage your muscles and lower your body evenly until it is 4–6in (10–15cm) above, and parallel to, the floor in the push-up position. Keep your bent elbows in very close to your sides and directly above your wrists. Gaze down.

ALTERNATIVE

If you are unable to perform *Chaturanga* without strain, place your knees on the ground and then lower the rest of your body toward the floor. Keep your elbows close in to your torso and directly above your wrists. Gaze down. Practice this to build up your arm strength.

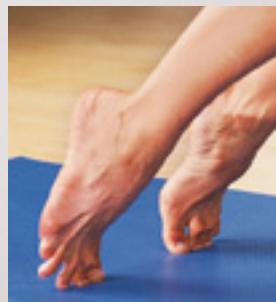


ALTERNATIVE

If you are unable to push your whole body off the floor, lift only the chest and rib cage, keeping the belly and pubic bone on the floor. Keep your arms bent, but make sure your fingertips align with the tops of the shoulders and your elbows are held close to your body.



Roll your feet over the tips of your toes until the tops of your feet rest on the floor.

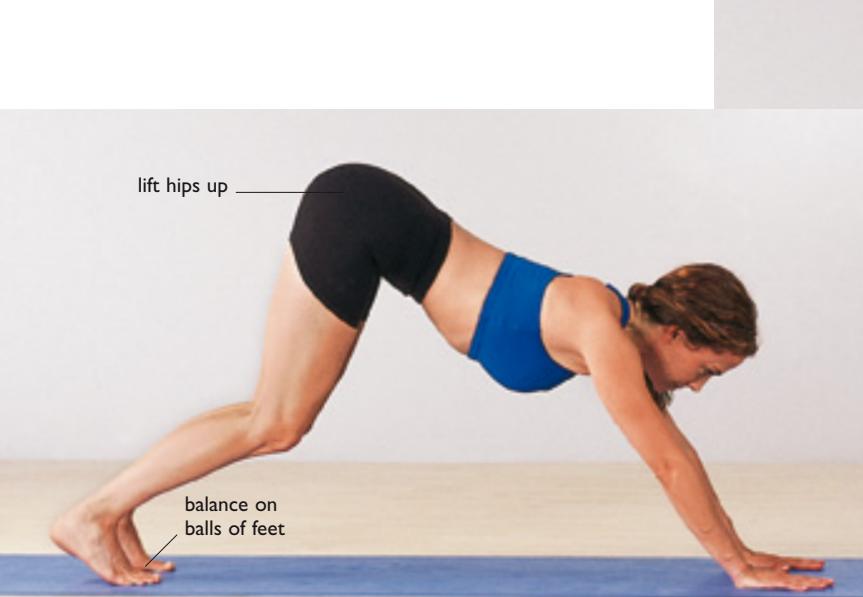


8 Urdhva Mukha Svanasana Inhaling, push off the balls of your feet, rolling your feet forward over the tips of your toes. Straighten your arms and pull your hips forward. Lift your chest up so that your whole body is raised completely off the floor. Point your toes and gaze straight ahead.





9 **Adho Mukha Svanasana** Exhaling, push your hips up, rolling back over your toes and lowering the heels onto the floor. If you cannot set your feet flat on the floor, bend the knees slightly and let the heels lift off as much as you need. Spread out your fingers and lift the sitting bones up toward the ceiling. Stretch out your arms, lift the kneecaps, and firm the muscles at the front of your thighs. Gaze at the navel.



10 Transition Prepare to hop forward. Begin exhaling as you bend your knees and look forward between the hands. Move all of your weight into the hands as though you were going to do a handstand. Lift the hips up high, ready to push off on the balls of your feet.



ALTERNATIVE

If you find it difficult keeping your legs straight when hopping forward, hop forward with your legs bent. As you push off your feet, the weight of your body shifts to the hands, rooting the fingers to the floor. Keep your hips high and look down between your hands.





11 Transition Continue exhaling as you hop forward. Push off the feet and straighten the legs, keeping the hips high in the air. Engage both *uddiyana* and *mula bandha* to lift the torso. Keep your arms straight and shoulder-width apart. Gaze down between the hands.

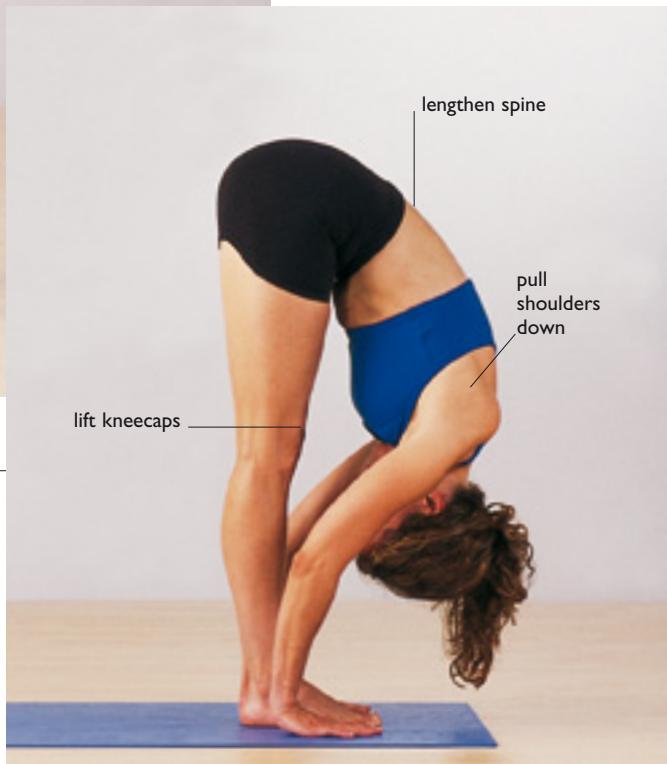


12 Transition At the end of the exhale, land in a crouch with your feet together and between your hands. Keep your palms flat on the floor throughout the move. Gaze down.





13 Ardha Uttanasana
Inhaling, lift your torso halfway up. Look slightly forward and straighten the spine. Touch the floor with your fingertips, just in front of your toes.

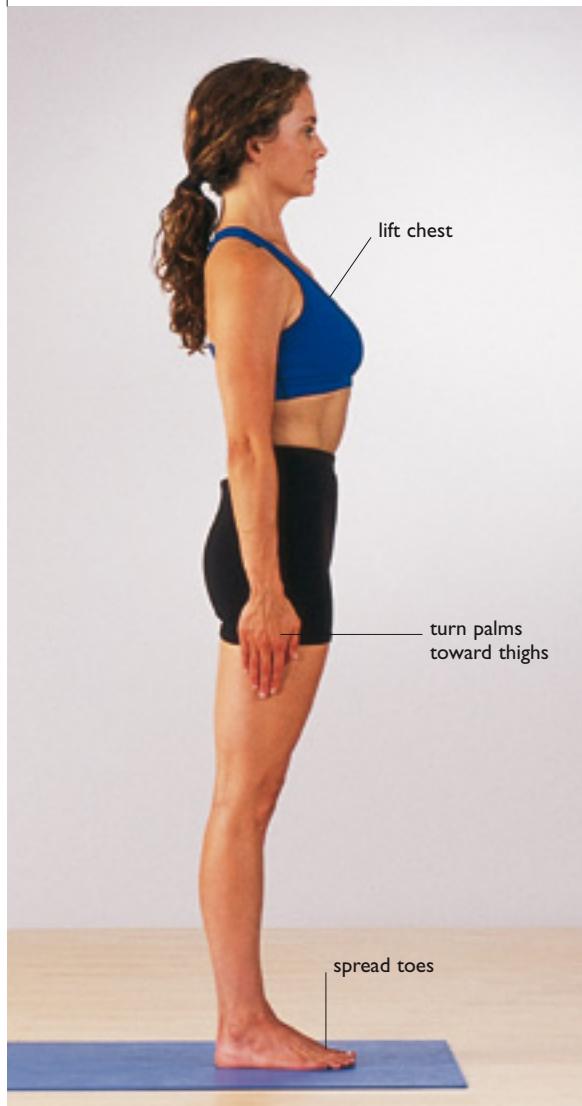


14 Uttanasana Exhaling, fold your body in half, drawing the navel to the spine to engage *uddiyana bandha*. Keep your legs firm and straight by lifting the kneecaps. Extend the crown of the head toward the floor. Bring the palms of your hands down to the floor beside your feet. Gaze at your navel.

15 Raised Tadasana Inhaling, sweep your arms out to the side and up, bringing the palms together above your head. Gaze up toward the thumbs. Lengthen the waist without hunching the shoulders.



16 Tadasana Exhaling, sweep your arms back out to the sides and down straight close to the body, palms inward. Standing tall, extend through the crown of the head. Face forward.

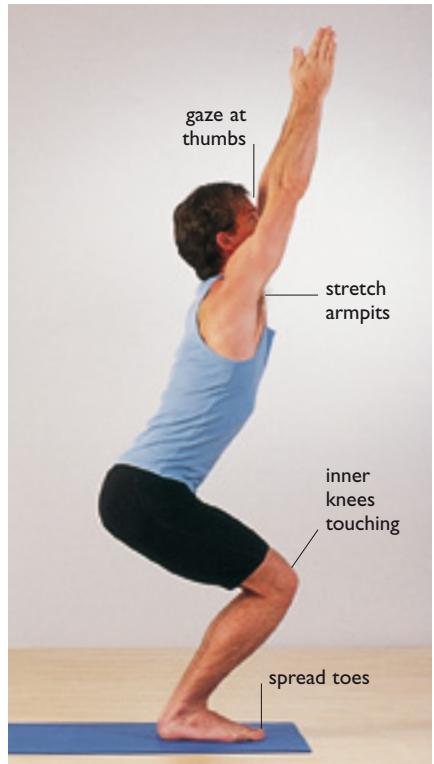
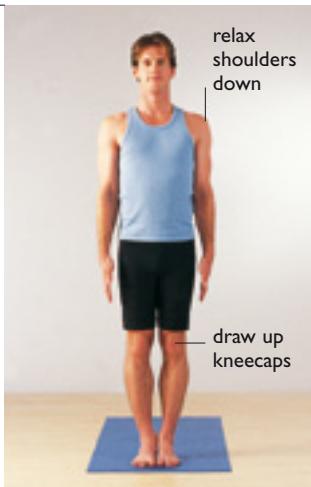


SURYA NAMASKARA B

Sun Salutation B

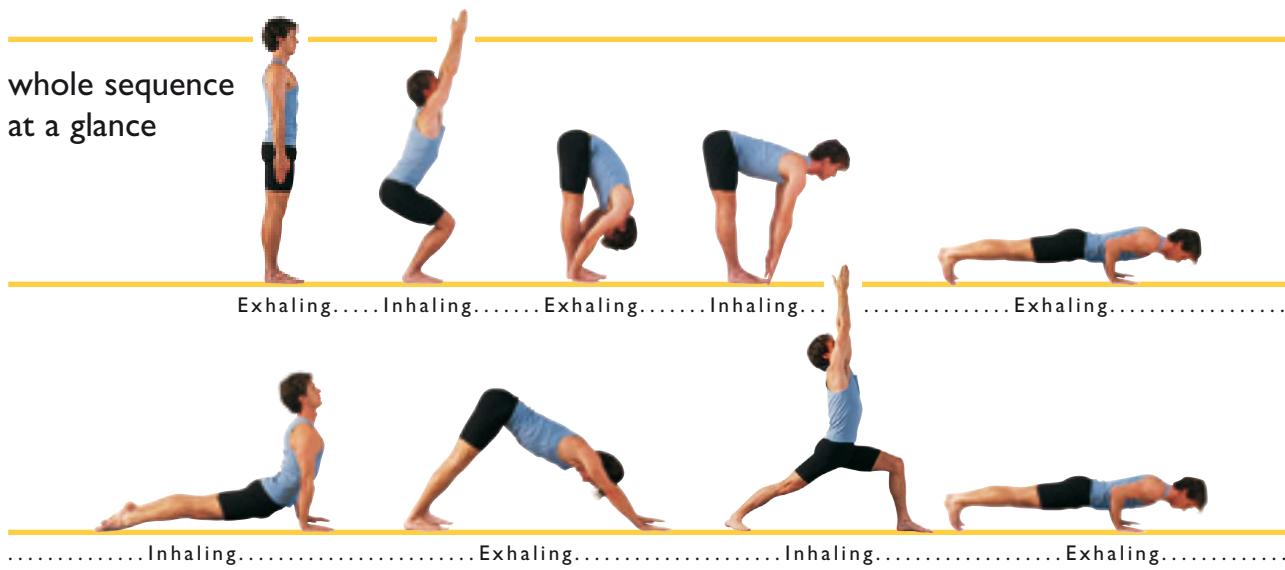
A longer sequence of movements than Sun Salutation A, Sun Salutation B farther strengthens the cardiovascular and respiratory systems, stretching the breath and building up heat within your body. The transitional moves between the new postures are particularly demanding. When you have completed the sequence, repeat, leading with the other leg.

1 Tadasana Stand tall, your feet together, arms by your sides. Distribute your weight equally across the soles of your feet and spread the toes evenly. Exhaling, draw the lower belly in and up, while raising the center of the perineum, bringing awareness to *mula bandha*. Gaze straight ahead.

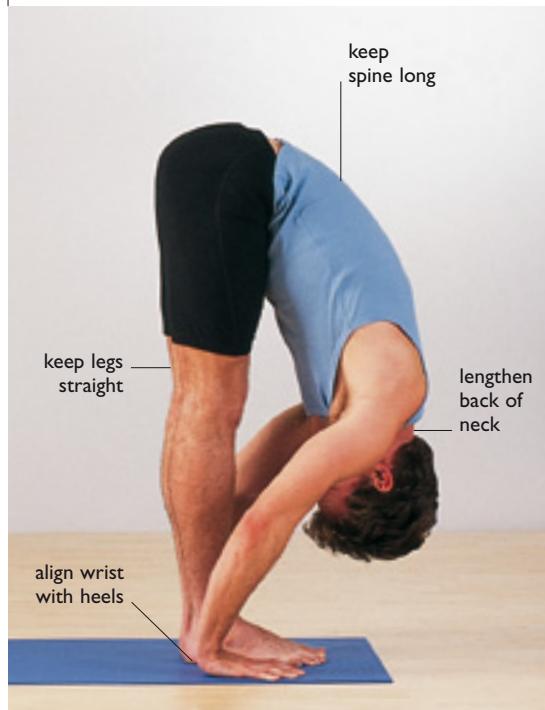


2 Utkatasana Inhaling, reach up with your arms and press your palms together. Bend your knees and draw back the lower belly and sitting bones into a standing squat.

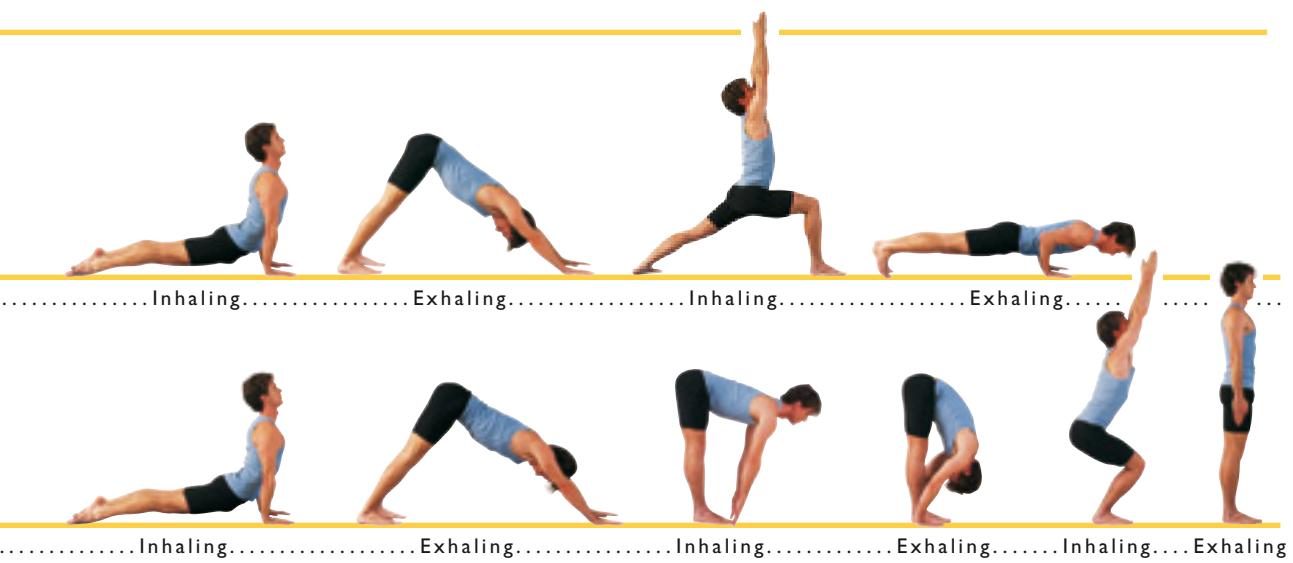
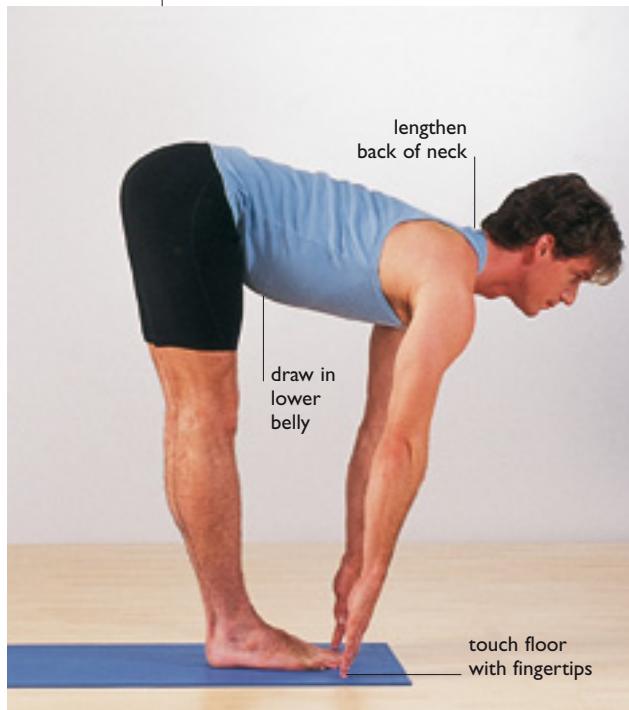
whole sequence
at a glance



3 Uttanasana Exhaling, fold your body forward, drawing back the pubic bone and bending at the hips. Bring your arms down and place your palms on the floor beside your feet. Let your head hang down, and gaze at your navel or between your legs.



4 Ardha Uttanasana Inhaling, lift your torso, keeping your spine straight and your leg muscles engaged. Straighten your arms, touching the floor in front of your toes with your fingertips. Look at the floor slightly in front.





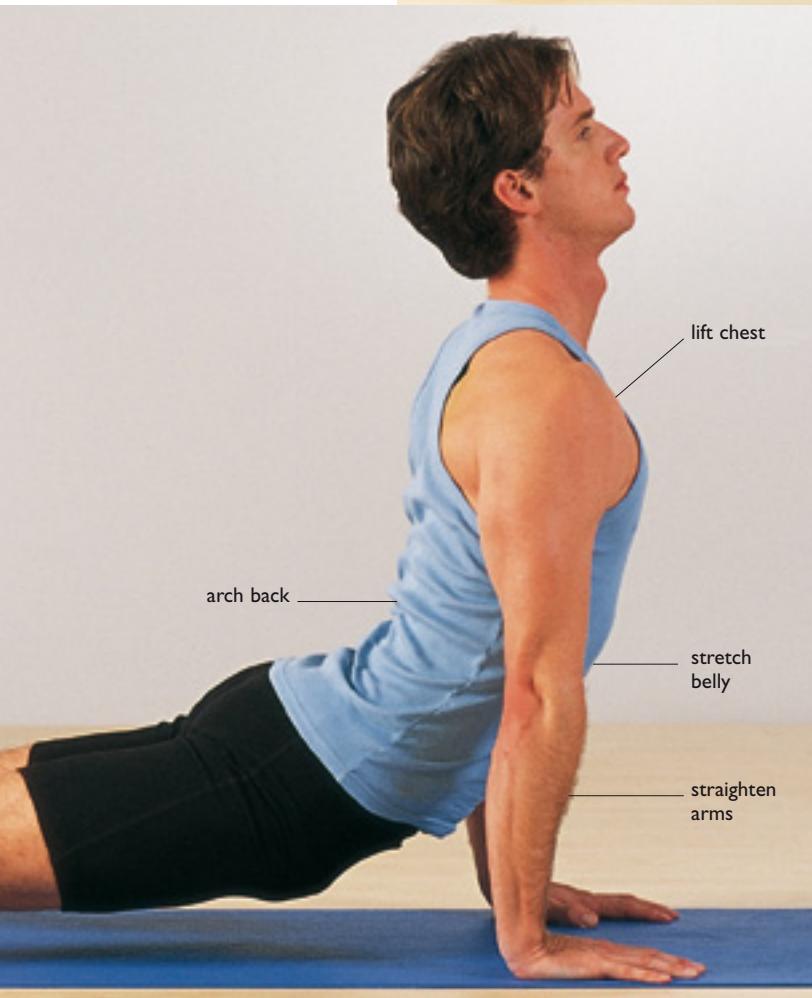
6 Chaturanga Dandasana Exhaling, lower your body 4–6in (10–15cm) above the floor and parallel to it in the push-up position. Keep your shoulders square and elbows close to the body. Gaze down at the floor.



7 Urdhva Mukha Svanasana Inhaling, roll forward over your toes, so the tops of your feet are resting on the floor (see p.24). Straighten your arms and pull your hips forward, arching your spine and stretching the belly. Gaze slightly upward.



5 Transition Exhaling, shift your weight forward onto the hands and bend your arms. Engaging *mula* and *uddiyana bandha*, raise your hips in the air and propel the legs backward. Land with your feet hip-width apart. Look down at the floor.



8 **Adho Mukha Svanasana** Exhaling, roll back over your toes and pull back the pubic bone as you lower your heels toward the floor. Do not change the position of your hands or feet. Push your hips up in the air, stretch the spine long, and press away from the floor with the base of your fingers. Tuck in your chin very slightly, and gaze at your navel.



9 Transition Begin inhaling as you step forward with your right foot. Make sure your right knee is also facing forward. Move forward onto the ball of your left foot. Gaze down between your hands.



10 Transition Continue inhaling as you place your right foot between your hands and parallel to them. Make sure the knee is directly over the ankle. Raise your head to gaze slightly forward.



11 Transition As you continue inhaling, turn your left heel in about 45° and place the left foot flat on the floor. Sweep your arms out to the sides, turning the palms up. Gaze ahead.

12 **Virabhadrasana A** At the end of the inhale, bring your palms together above your head, extend through the fingertips, and lengthen the torso. Keep

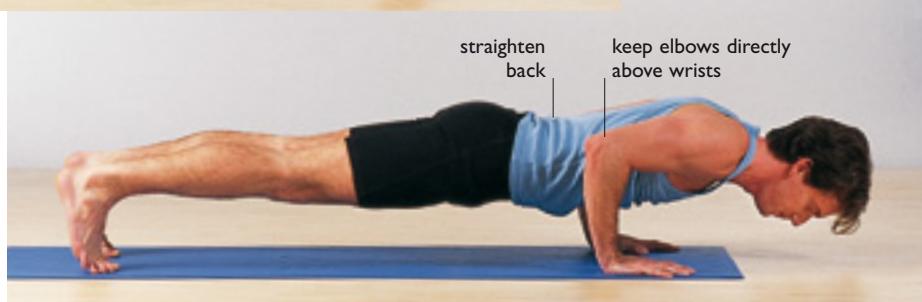
your right knee directly over the ankle. Draw in the ribs to prevent the lower back from arching. Lift the center of the perineum, engaging *mula bandha*. Gaze at the thumbs.



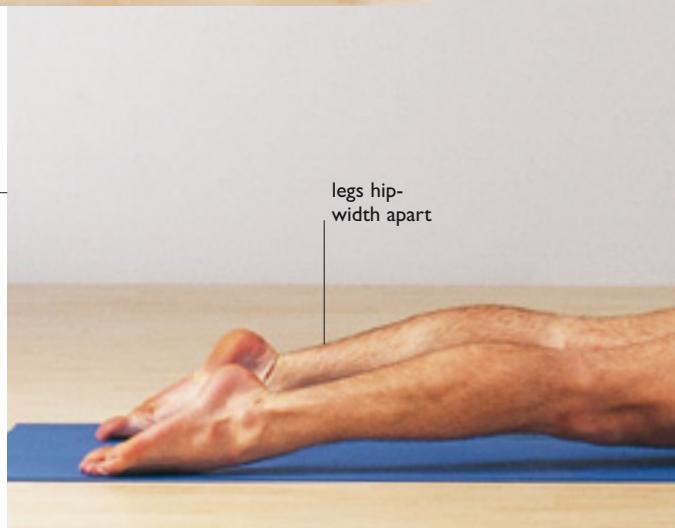
13 Transition Begin exhaling as you move your arms out and down toward the floor. Place your hands directly below your shoulders, palms flat on the floor. Lift the heel of your left foot and gaze down and slightly forward. Step back with your right foot so it is parallel with the left.



14 Chaturanga Dandasana Exhaling, lower your body 4–6in (10–15cm) above the floor and parallel to it. Keep your shoulders square and elbows close to the body. Gaze down at the floor.



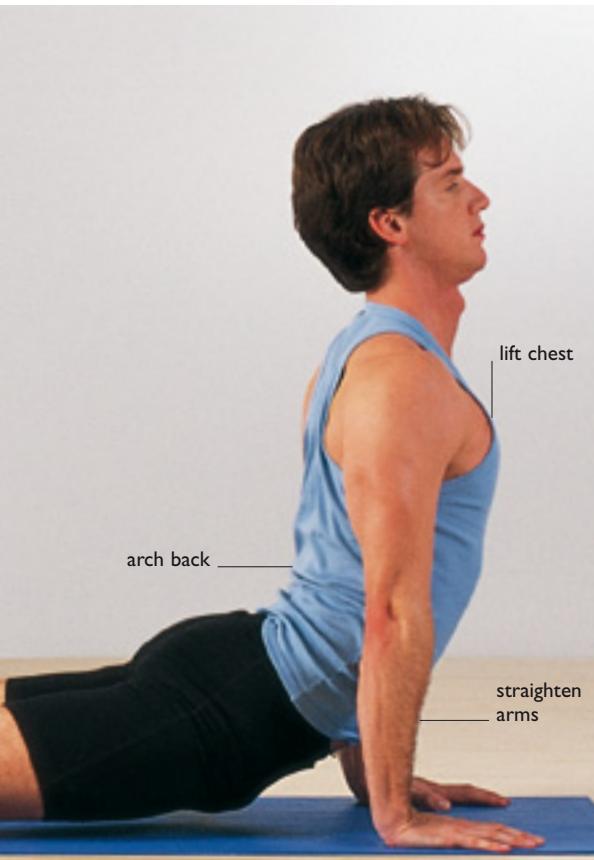
15 Urdhva Mukha Svanasana Inhaling, pull your hips forward and roll forward over your toes (see p.24). Arch your spine and stretch the belly. Gaze slightly upward.





16 Adho Mukha Svanasana

Exhaling, roll back over your toes and raise your hips as you lower your heels toward the floor. Press away from the floor with the roots of your fingers.



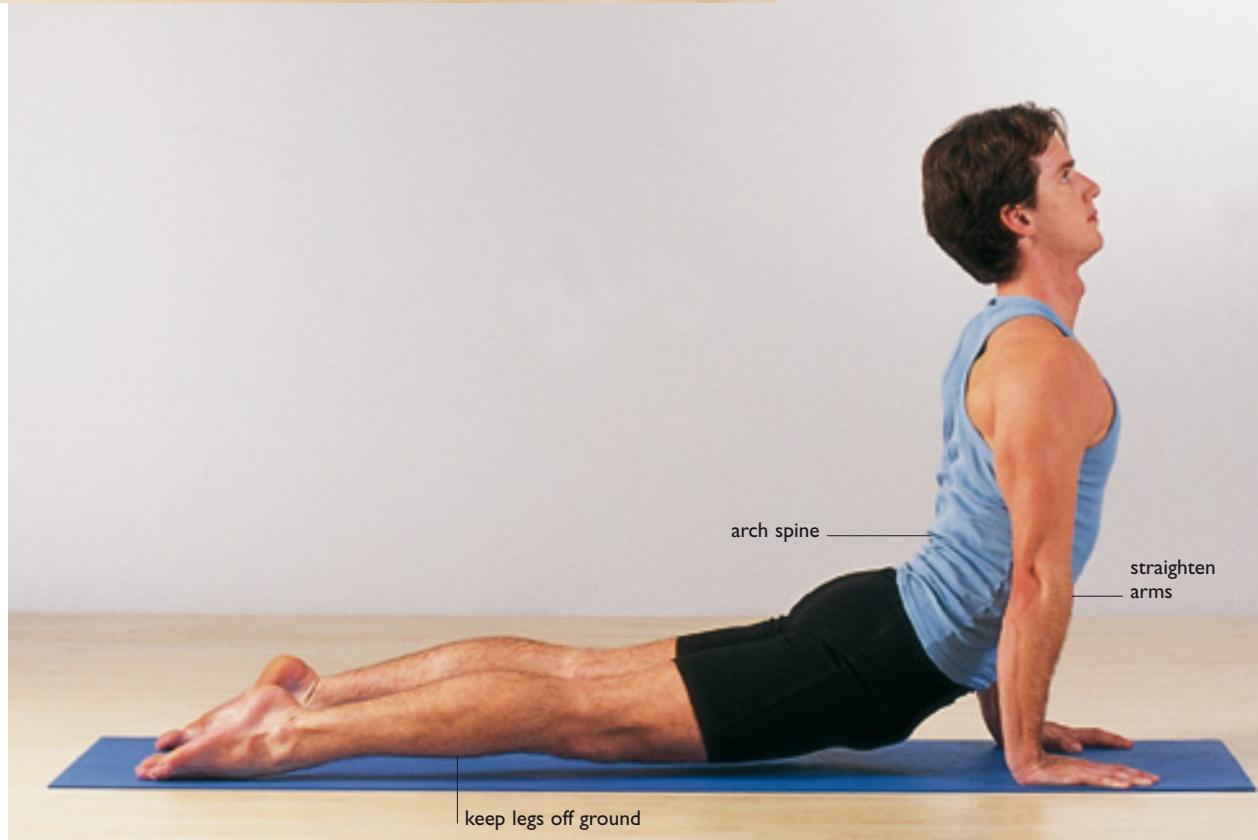
17 Virabhadrasana B

Inhaling, step the left foot forward and bend the left knee to make a 90° angle. Keep the right leg outstretched and both feet flat on the floor. Sweep up with your arms and press your palms together. Gaze up at your thumbs.

18 Chaturanga Dandasana Exhaling, sweep your arms out and down toward the floor. Place your hands directly below your shoulders. Step back with your left foot and lower your body so it is parallel to the floor, keeping your legs firm and straight. Draw your navel to the spine and gaze at the floor.



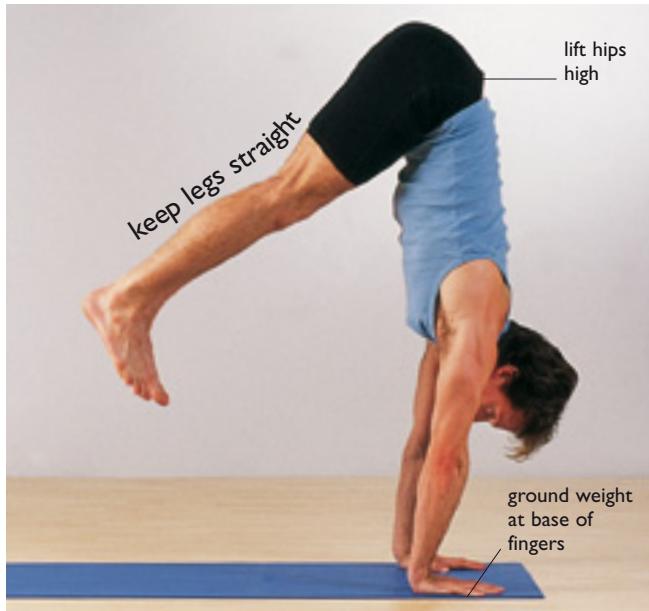
19 Urdhva Mukha Svanasana Inhaling, roll forward over your toes so the tops of your feet are resting on the floor (see p.24). Straighten your arms, lift your chest, and arch your spine. Gaze ahead and slightly upward.





20 Adho Mukha Svanasana

Exhaling, roll over your toes onto the soles of your feet, pressing the heels to the floor. Lift your hips high toward the ceiling and draw back the pubic bone. Extend your spine long. Gaze at your navel.

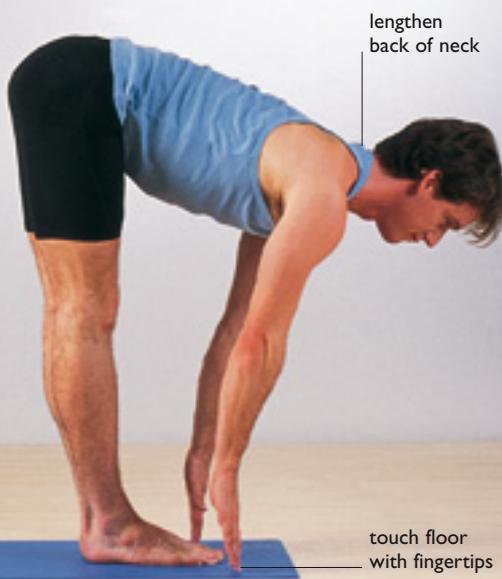


21 Transition

Exhaling, hop forward. Push off your feet with legs slightly bent and raise your hips high in the air, engaging both *mula* and *uddiyana bandha*. Straighten your legs in a pike and bring them in toward your body. Keep your arms straight. Gaze at the floor.

22 Transition At the end of the exhale, land with both feet together between your hands. Bend your knees slightly as you land in a crouch position. Distribute your weight equally throughout your hands and feet.





23 Ardha Uttanasana

Inhaling, lift your sternum and straighten your spine.

Straighten your arms, touching the floor in front of your toes with your fingertips. Keep your kneecaps lifted. Gaze at the floor ahead.



align wrists
with ankles

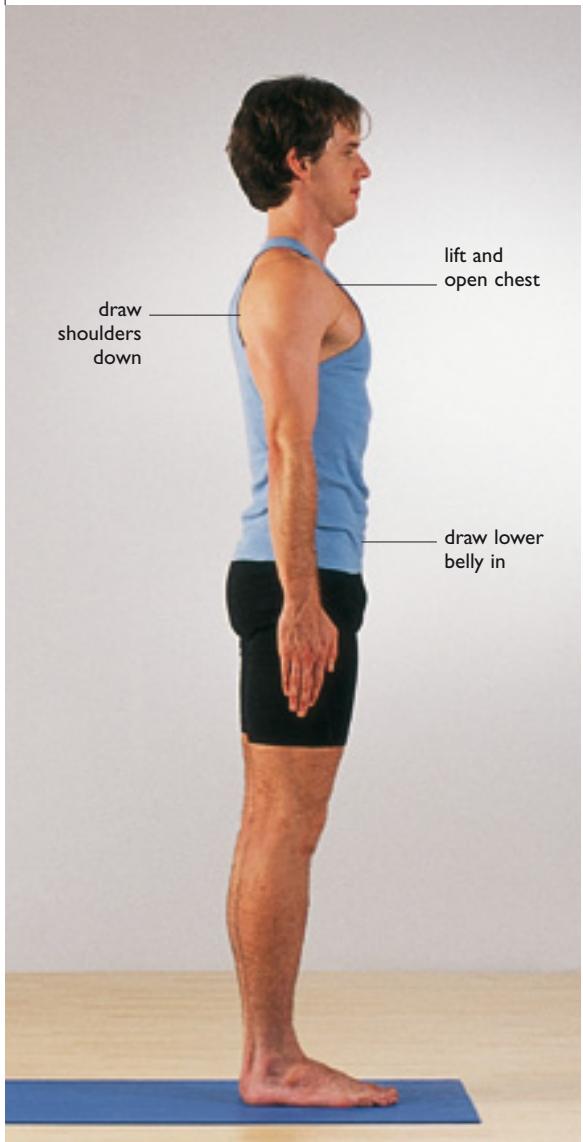
24 Uttanasana

Exhaling, fold the body forward from the hips, lengthening the spine all the way down. Reach for the floor with the crown of your head and place your palms flat on the floor beside, and parallel to, your feet. Gaze at your navel.

25 Utkatasana Inhaling, sweep your arms out to the sides and raise them above your head. Bend your knees and draw back the lower belly and sitting bones into a standing squat. Bring your palms together at the end of the breath.



26 Tadasana Exhaling, straighten your legs and lower your arms by your side, palms inward. Stand very tall and lengthen the entire body. Gaze forward.



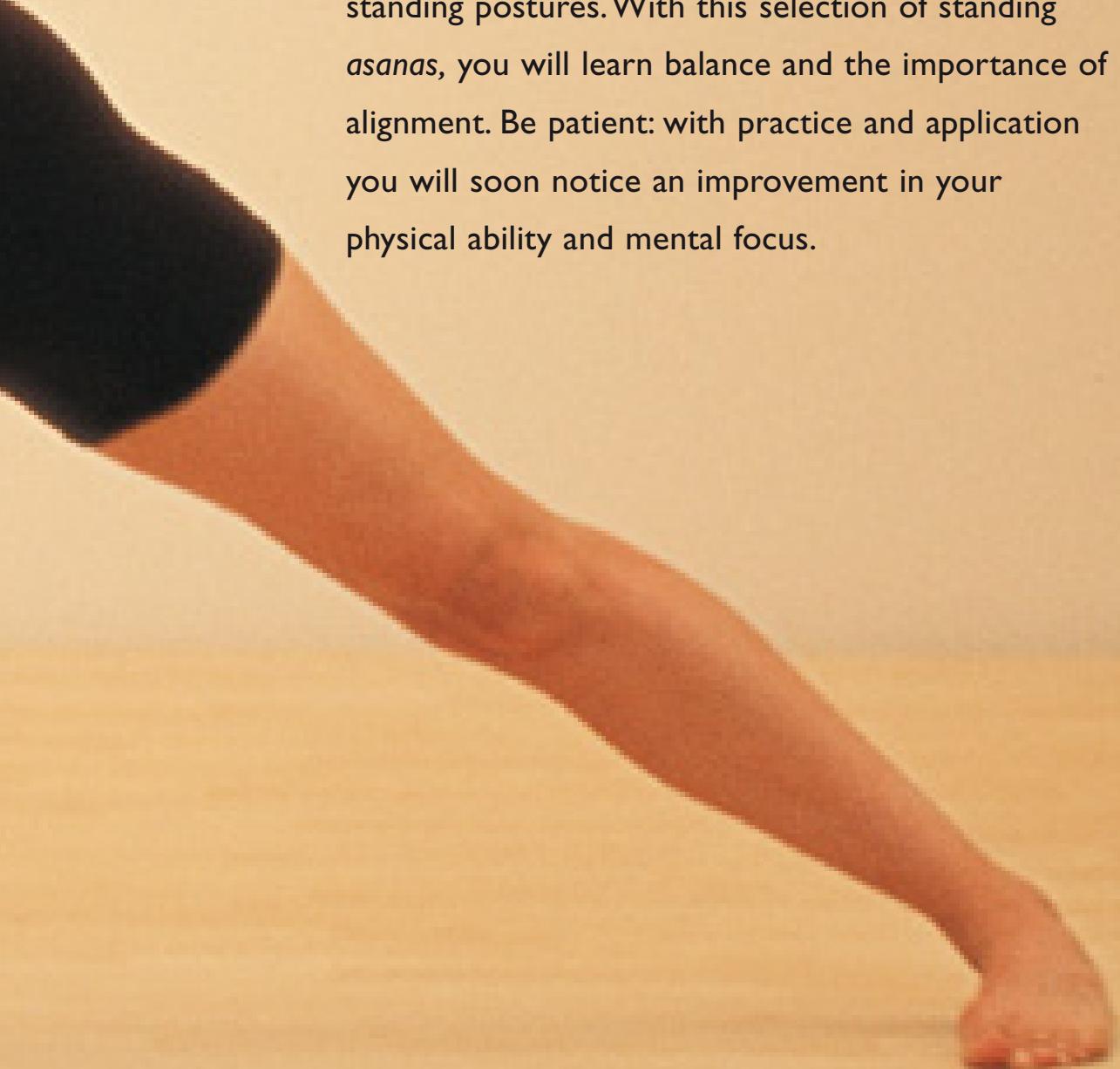




THE PRACTICE



STANDING POSES



Now that you have warmed up the body adequately and aligned your breath, it is time to begin the standing postures. With this selection of standing *asanas*, you will learn balance and the importance of alignment. Be patient: with practice and application you will soon notice an improvement in your physical ability and mental focus.

TRANSITION MOVE

Jumping Out to the Side

Jumping is a transitional movement you can use after completing the Sun Salutations and also, if you wish, between the standing poses shown on pages 48 to 67. It is an exhilarating move and excellent for developing stamina and coordination. Do not jump if you suffer from back or knee problems, or during menstruation. In these cases it is better simply to step out and back.

1 Stand at the front of the mat with your feet together. Bring your hands together in the prayer position in front of your chest. Exhaling, squat down and prepare to jump. Hold your weight slightly forward. Gaze ahead.



stretch out legs _____

2 Inhaling, jump, spreading your arms out wide. Lift both feet off the floor simultaneously, and turn your entire body 90° to the right.

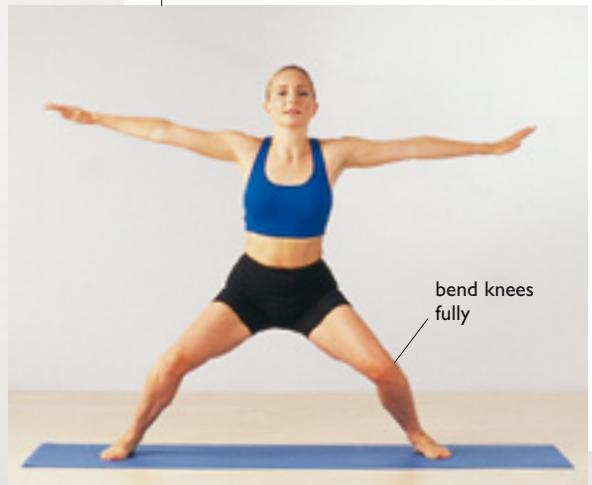


**ALTERNATIVE**

If you prefer not to jump, simply step to the side. Stretch out your arms and move your right leg out to the right and back. Place your foot 3ft (1m) away from the left foot.



3 At the end of the inhale, land with both feet at the same time and your knees bent. Your feet should be about 3ft (1m) apart along the length of the mat. Gaze forward.



4 Exhaling, straighten both legs, turning your feet slightly inward, so that the outer edge of each foot is parallel to the edges of the mat. You are now ready to move into the next pose.

UTTHITA TRIKONASANA

Extended Triangle

The extended triangle posture creates balance, poise, and sharp focus. In the Dynamic series, it is the beginning of the extended hip openers. As you practice, work with the *bandhas* to deepen the breath and improve your balance. Hold the full pose for five to eight breaths, then repeat on the left side.



1 Stand with your feet about 3ft (1m) apart, hands on your hips. Inhaling, extend your arms out to the sides, palms facing down. Turn your right foot out 90° so that the toes point toward the end of the mat. Point the right kneecap in the same direction as the right toes. Keep the front of the body facing forward.



2 Exhaling, tilt the pelvis to the right. Keeping the spine straight, reach through the fingertips of the right hand. Turn your left foot slightly to the right. Turn your head to gaze over the right middle finger.

**ALTERNATIVE**

If you cannot touch the floor with your fingertips while keeping your legs straight, then use a block. Position the block outside your right foot and place your right hand palm down flat on top of it. Align your wrist and ankle, and extend your left arm so it is directly above the right.

3 At the end of the exhale, bring the right arm down until the fingertips rest on the floor just outside the right foot. Reach up with the left arm, lengthening both sides of the torso and extending through the crown of the head. Keep both feet evenly

grounded, and spread the toes. Hold the full pose for five to eight breaths. Inhale to return to step 1 and repeat on the other side. Then jump back to the top of the mat and prepare to jump out to the side (pp.46–47) ready for the next pose.

VIRABHADRASANA B

Warrior B

This posture forms part of the sequence of Warrior poses (*see also pp.58–59 and 74–75*). These poses are named after Virabhadra, a legendary Hindu warrior. Practicing this particular variation helps to develop strength and endurance, alleviates stiffness in the neck and shoulders, and helps to improve flexibility in the knee and hip joints. Hold the pose for five to eight breaths, then repeat on the other side.

With your feet wide apart, place your hands on your hips. Inhaling, turn the right foot out 90° and turn the left foot slightly inward. Extend the arms out with the palms facing downward. Turn your head to gaze at the middle finger on your right hand.





2 Exhaling, bend your right knee so that it is over the right ankle and forms a 90° angle with your right thigh. Draw down the torso, while lifting the perineum to engage *mula bandha*. Press down the outer edge of your left foot and maintain a

healthy arch. Hold the full pose for five to eight breaths. Inhale to return to step 1, and repeat on the other side. Then, jump back to the top of the mat and prepare to jump out to the side (pp.46–47) ready to flow into the next pose in your program.

UTTHITA PARSAKONASANA

Extended Side Angle

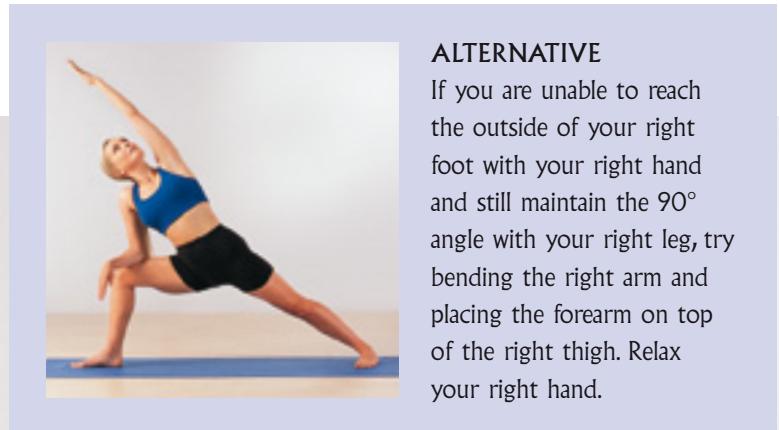
This is a good pose to practice both *mula* and *uddiyana bandha*: toward the end of the exhale, contract the perineum and draw your navel to the spine. *Utthita parsvakonasanana* also releases the neck and shoulders, and trims the waist. Hold the full pose for five to eight breaths, then repeat on the left side.



2 Exhaling, bend your right knee so it is directly over the right ankle and forms a 90° angle with the right thigh. Place your right hand, palm down, on the floor to the outside of your right foot. Rest your left hand on your hip. Gaze at the ceiling.

1 With the feet wide apart and the toes pointing forward, place your hands on your hips. Inhaling, turn the right foot out 90° and turn the left foot slightly inward. Extend the arms out to the sides and parallel to the floor with the palms facing downward. Gaze at your right middle finger.





3 Continue exhaling as you extend your left arm over the left ear into the full pose. Stretch out through your fingertips to elongate the arm and create a straight line from the outer edge of the left foot through to the fingers. Firm the buttocks to draw in the sacrum. Turn

your head toward your armpit and gaze at the center of your left palm. Hold the pose for five to eight breaths. Inhale to return to step 1, and repeat on the other side. Then jump back to the top of the mat and prepare to jump out to the side (pp.46–47) ready for the next pose.

ARDHA CHANDRASANA

Half Moon

The shape of the body in this pose resembles the outline of a half moon, and in Sanskrit *ardha* means “half” and *chandra* means “moon.” This *asana* is excellent for improving your balance and concentration, and it also tones the lower back muscles. If you find it difficult to balance, place your back against a wall for stability. Hold the pose for five to eight breaths on the right side of the body, then repeat on the left.



1 With feet wide apart and toes pointing forward, place your hands on your hips. Inhaling, turn the right foot out 90° and the left slightly inward. Extend arms, palms facing downward. Gaze at your right middle finger.



2 Exhaling, bend your right knee and place the right fingertips on the floor in front and a little to the outside of the right foot. Shift more weight onto the right foot and rest the left arm on the torso. Gaze down at your right hand.

3 Continue exhaling as you shift all the weight onto the right foot and lift the left leg until it is parallel to the floor. Raise the left arm and point toward the ceiling. Extend the spine and the back of the neck. Hold for five to eight breaths. Inhale to return to step 1, and repeat on the other side. Jump out to the side (pp.46–47) ready for the next pose.



PARSVOTTANASANA

Forward Bend to Side

In Sanskrit *parṣva* means “to the side,” while *uttana* means “intense stretch.”

The pressure of your hands on the back while they are in the reverse prayer position helps straighten the spine. The pose also releases tension in the shoulders and opens up the chest, allowing you to stretch deeply over the forward leg. This, in turn, stretches the hamstring of the forward leg. Hold the pose for five to eight breaths, then repeat on the left side of the body.

2 Exhaling, place the hands together in the inverted prayer position, resting the little fingers on the spine. Keep the shoulders drawn down the back.

1 With feet wide apart and toes pointing forward, place your hands on your hips. Inhaling, turn the right foot and the pelvis to face the end of the mat. The left foot will turn in to accommodate the pelvic rotation.



ALTERNATIVE
If you find it difficult to bring the palms of your hands together behind your back, place the backs of your hands on your lower back.





3 Inhaling, lift up the sternum, stretch both sides of your body, and slightly arch the lower back. Gaze toward the ceiling. Do not overarch the back.

4 Exhaling, fold forward over your right leg into the full pose. Gaze toward the big toe. Hold for five to eight breaths. Inhale to return to step 1, and repeat on the other side. Then jump back to the top of the mat and out to the side (pp.46–47) for the next pose.



VIRABHADRASANA A

Warrior A

In this part of the Warrior sequence, the arms are held straight up, like a warrior's sword, in the prayer position. Take on the spirit of the warrior and make your body so strong that no one can push you over. This posture helps to loosen any stiffness in the neck and reduces fat around the hips. Hold the pose for five to eight breaths, then repeat on the left.

- 1** With feet very wide apart and toes pointing forward, place your hands on your hips. Inhaling, turn the entire body 90° to the right. Turn the left foot inward to allow the left hip to move forward and the right hip to move back.



- 2** Continue inhaling as you reach out with your arms to the sides and then up to the ceiling. Place the palms of your hands together above your head in the prayer position. Gaze forward.



3 Exhaling, bend your right knee 90° so that it is positioned above the center of your right ankle. Draw down the back of your body while lifting the perineum to engage *mula bandha*. Push the outside of the left heel and the base of the big right toe into

the mat. Gaze up at your thumbs. Hold the full pose for five to eight breaths. Inhale to return to step 1, and repeat on the other side. Then jump back to the top of the mat and prepare to jump out to the side (pp.46–47) ready to flow into the next pose.



PARIVRTTA PARSVAKONASANA

Revolving Side Angle

This pose is the counterpose to the Extended Side Angle (*see pp. 52–53*). In this posture the spine is rotated and the abdominal muscles massaged, which aids digestion and rejuvenates the internal organs. Hold the pose for five to eight breaths, then repeat on the other side of your body.

- 1 With feet wide apart and toes pointing forward, place your hands on your hips. Inhaling, turn the entire body 90° to the right. Turn the left foot inward slightly to allow the left hip to move forward and the right hip to move back. Gaze forward.



- 2 Continue inhaling as you bend your right knee to 90° so that it is positioned above the center of your right ankle. Keep the right thigh parallel to the floor. Reach up with your left arm and extend the spine, preparing to twist to the right. Gaze forward.

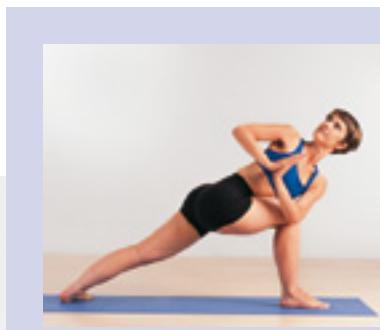
3 Exhaling, twist your torso to the right, placing the back of your left arm against the outside of your right knee. Press the outside edge of your left foot into the mat.

4 At the end of the exhale, place your left palm on the mat at the outside of the right foot. Extend the right arm over the right ear into the full pose. Gaze slightly upward. Hold for five to eight breaths. Inhale to return to step 1, and repeat on the other side. Then jump back to the top of the mat and out to the side (pp.46–47) for the next pose.



ALTERNATIVE

If your hand cannot reach the ground, place your left arm on top of the right thigh and put the hands together in the prayer position. Keep reaching up with your right elbow.



PARIVRTTA TRIKONASANA

Revolving Triangle

This *asana* is the counterpose to the Extended Triangle (pp.48–49). In addition to toning the thighs and calf muscles, this pose can relieve back tension because, as with all revolving poses, the abdominal organs are rejuvenated and the hip muscles stretched. Remember to engage *mula bandha* to help you balance, and use a block if you need to. Hold the full pose for five to eight breaths, then repeat on the left side of the body.

- 1 With feet wide apart and toes pointing forward, place your hands on your hips. Inhaling, turn your entire body 90° to the right. Turn your left foot slightly inward.



- 2 Continue inhaling and reach up with your left arm and extend the spine. Pull the right hip back and move the left hip forward.



3 Exhaling, bend your torso sideways to the left and place your left palm to the outside of your right foot. Keep the shoulder blades pushed down the back.

4 At the end of the exhale, reach straight up with the fingertips of your right hand. Revolve your torso out from your hips. Inhale to return to step 1, and repeat on the other side. Jump back to the top of the mat and out to the side (pp.46–47) for the next pose.



ALTERNATIVE

If you cannot reach the floor with your left hand without bending your right leg, place your left hand, palm down, on a block positioned just to the outside of your right foot. Align your wrist with your ankle.



PRASARITA PADOTTANASANA A

Foot Spreading A

This pose is particularly useful for those unable to do headstands. Do not worry if you cannot reach the floor with the crown of your head: this will come with practice. This posture expands and stretches the legs, develops the hamstrings and adductor muscles, as well as improving digestion. Hold the full pose for five to eight breaths.

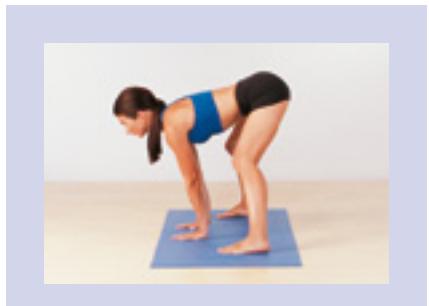


- 1** With your feet wide apart and your toes pointing forward, place your hands on your hips. Exhaling, fold your body forward. Keep your shoulders wide and pulled toward the hips. Gaze back between your legs.



- 2** Inhaling, place your hands on the floor shoulder-width apart between your feet. Lift the torso. Lengthen the spine and the back of your neck. Gaze forward and slightly upward.

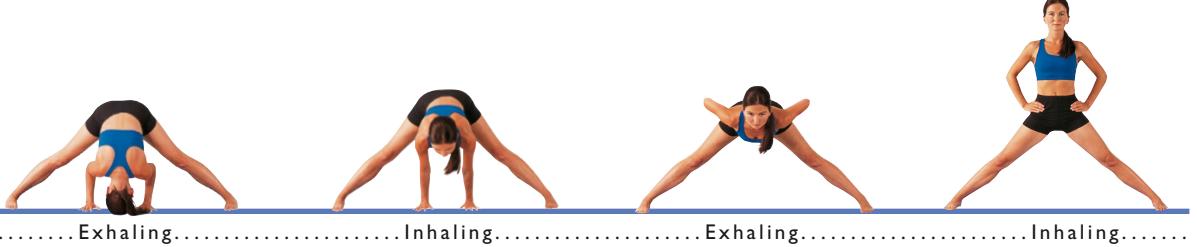
whole sequence at a glance



ALTERNATIVE

If you cannot reach the floor with your hands while keeping your legs straight, bend your knees until your hands are flat on the floor. Gaze forward.

3 Exhaling, bend the elbows to lower the crown of your head to the floor between your hands. Do not force your head to the floor as this will curve the spine. Extend your spine and lower your head as far as you can. Lift your shoulders away from the floor. Gaze back between the legs. Hold the full pose for five to eight breaths.





4 Inhaling, straighten your arms, while keeping your hands flat on the floor. Lift up the torso to straighten the spine, taking care not to overarch the back. Gaze forward and slightly upward.



5 Exhaling, place your hands on your hips with the thumbs pointing toward the buttocks. Keeping the spine long and straight, lift the sternum, preparing to stand. Gaze forward.

6 Inhaling, bring your body up to standing keeping your hands on your hips. Next, jump back to the top of the mat and out to the side (pp.46–47) ready to flow into the next pose.



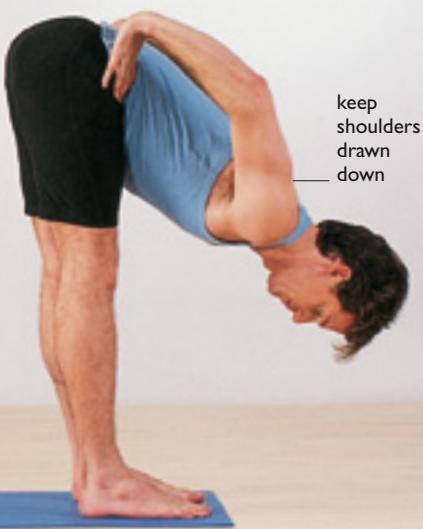
PADANGUSTHASANA & PADAHASTASANA

Big Toe, & Hand & Foot Forward Bend

These postures are standing forward bends that improve the functioning and control of the perineal muscles used when engaging *mula bandha*. If you suffer from lower back tension, it is important to bend the knees and keep the spine stable. Hold both the full poses for five to eight breaths.

2 Still exhaling, grab hold of both big toes. Reach toward the floor with the crown of your head. Gaze back between your legs and engage *mula bandha*. Hold *Padangusthasana* for five to eight breaths.

- 1** Stand with your feet hip-width apart and your hands on your hips. Exhaling, fold your body forward, keeping the spine straight.



Grab the big toes with the thumb and index and middle fingers.



**whole sequence
at a glance**



Inhaling.....Begin exhaling.....Finish exhaling.....Begin inhaling.....



ALTERNATIVE

If you cannot reach your toes with straight legs, bend at the knees until you can grasp your toes firmly while still keeping your arms straight. Keep your wrists straight, and distribute your weight evenly over both feet. Gaze slightly forward.

3 Inhaling, lift up the torso, while holding the toes firmly and straightening the arms. Gaze slightly forward.

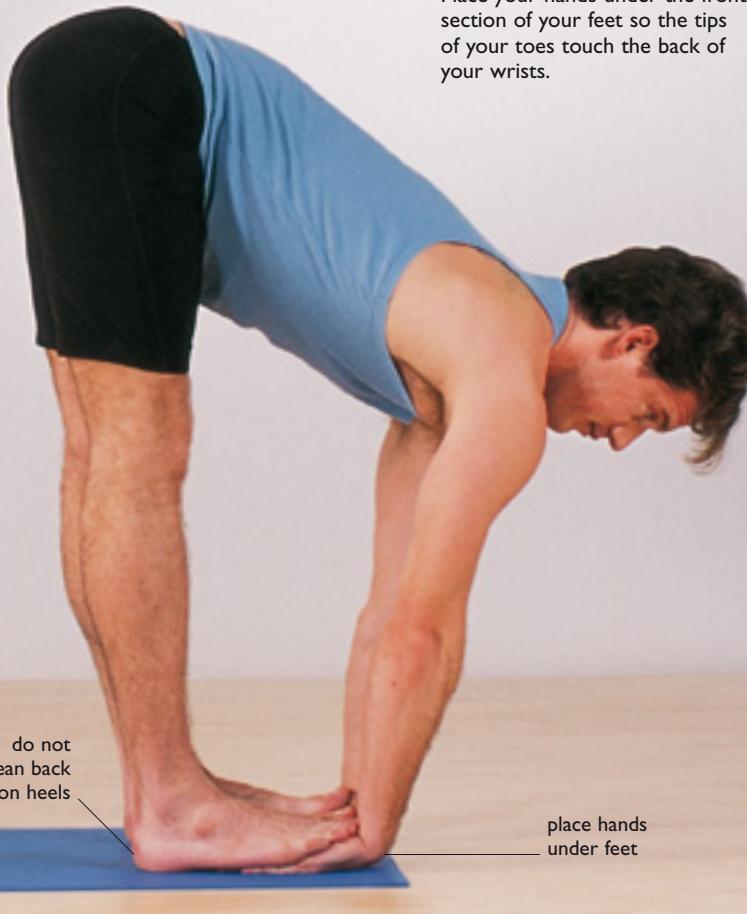


.....Finish inhaling.....Begin exhaling.....Finish exhaling.....Inhaling.....Exhaling

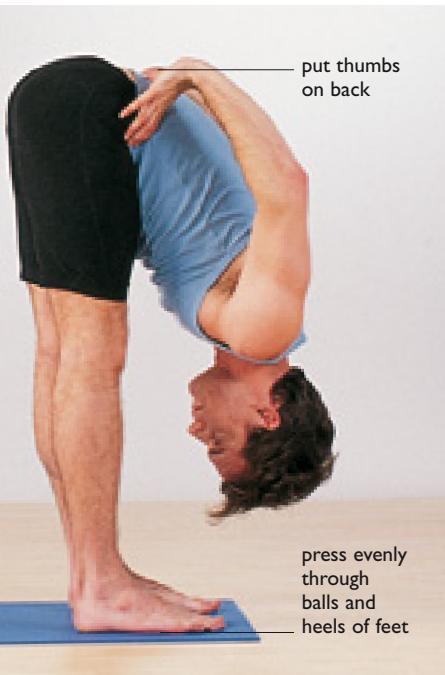
4 Still inhaling, keep the torso half-way up and spread your toes. Place your hands under your feet, so that the undersides of your toes rest on the palms of your hands and the tops of your hands are on the floor. Gaze slightly forward.



Place your hands under the front section of your feet so the tips of your toes touch the back of your wrists.



5 Exhaling, fold forward again, extending the crown of the head toward the floor. Bend your arms slightly, so that your elbows point out to the sides. Draw the shoulders down the back and gaze at the navel. Engage *mula bandha*. Hold *Padahastasana* for five to eight breaths.



6 Exhaling, bring your arms up to place your hands on your hips. Keep your weight forward in the feet and press down with the heels.



7 Inhaling, lift the torso back to standing, while keeping your hands on your hips. Keep your legs straight and gaze straight ahead.



8 Exhaling, stand straight and tall with your arms down by the sides of your torso. Gaze forward. Stay in this position for the next pose.

VRKSASANA

Tree

In Sanskrit *vrksa* means “tree,” and this posture creates a strong, rooted stance, just as a tree’s roots grow deeper into the earth and its branches reach up to the sky stabilizing the tree. The pose strengthens the leg muscles and develops balance. Lift the perineum throughout to improve balance. Hold the pose for five to eight breaths on the left leg, then repeat on the right. If you are combining this pose with Warrior C (see pp.74–75), complete both poses on the left before switching to the right.



3 Inhaling, extend the arms up and press the palms together while straightening the arms. Reach for the ceiling with your fingertips and root your left heel to the floor to lengthen the spine. Keep your right foot pressed firmly into the groin to prevent it from sliding. Gaze upward at your thumbs. Hold the full pose for five to eight breaths. If you are also practicing Warrior C, remain in the full pose. If not, exhale to return to step 1, and repeat on the left side. Then stand with your feet together and arms by your sides ready to flow into the next pose.

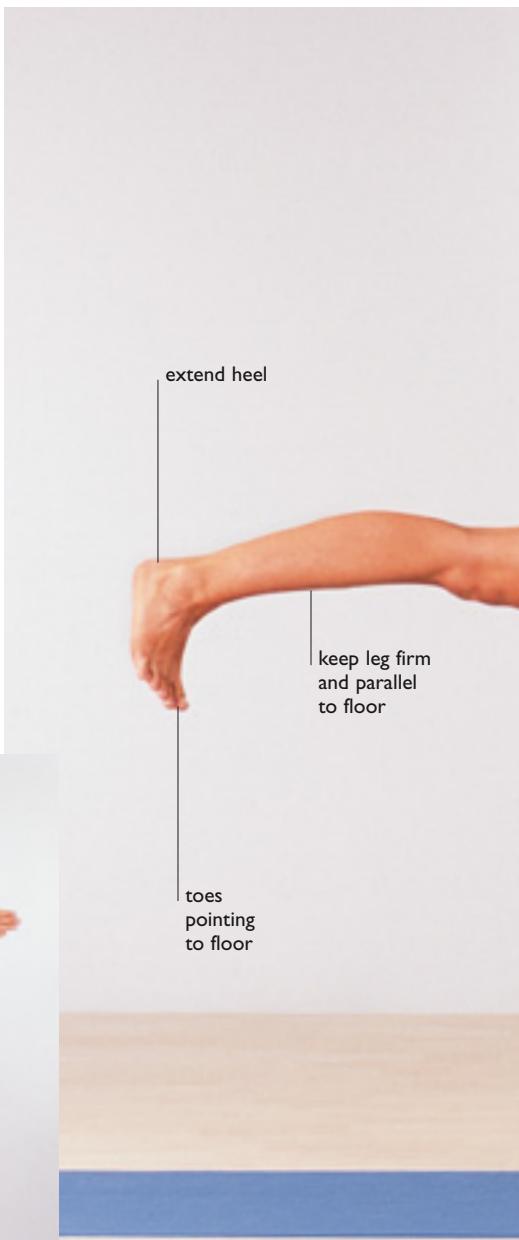


VIRABHADRASANA C

Warrior C

Like the Tree pose on pages 72–73, Warrior C strengthens the leg muscles and improves your sense of balance, encouraging a graceful stance. To help you maintain your balance in the full pose, engage *uddiyana bandha* by drawing your navel to the spine. Hold the full pose for five to eight breaths, then return to step 1 of *Vrksasana* (pp.72–73) and repeat on the other side.

- 1 Starting from the Tree pose (p.73), exhale and start to stretch your right leg back and the torso forward. Keep your left leg straight and the arms stretched out in front, the palms together, as you prepare to extend the body until it is parallel to the floor. Gaze down slightly, and hold your gaze soft and steady to help keep your balance.

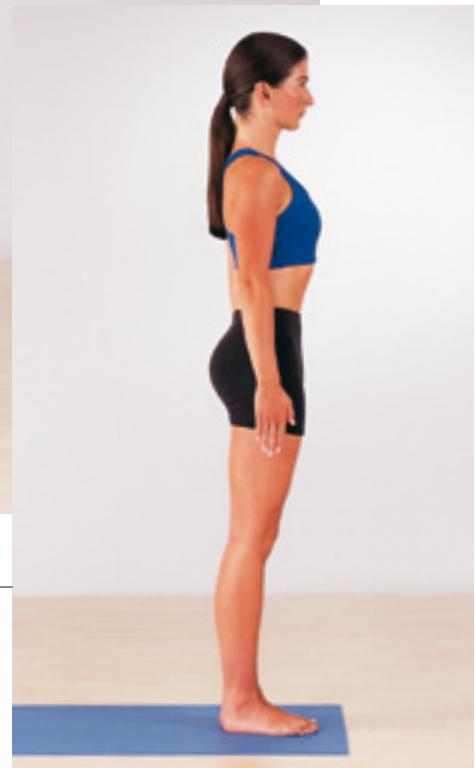
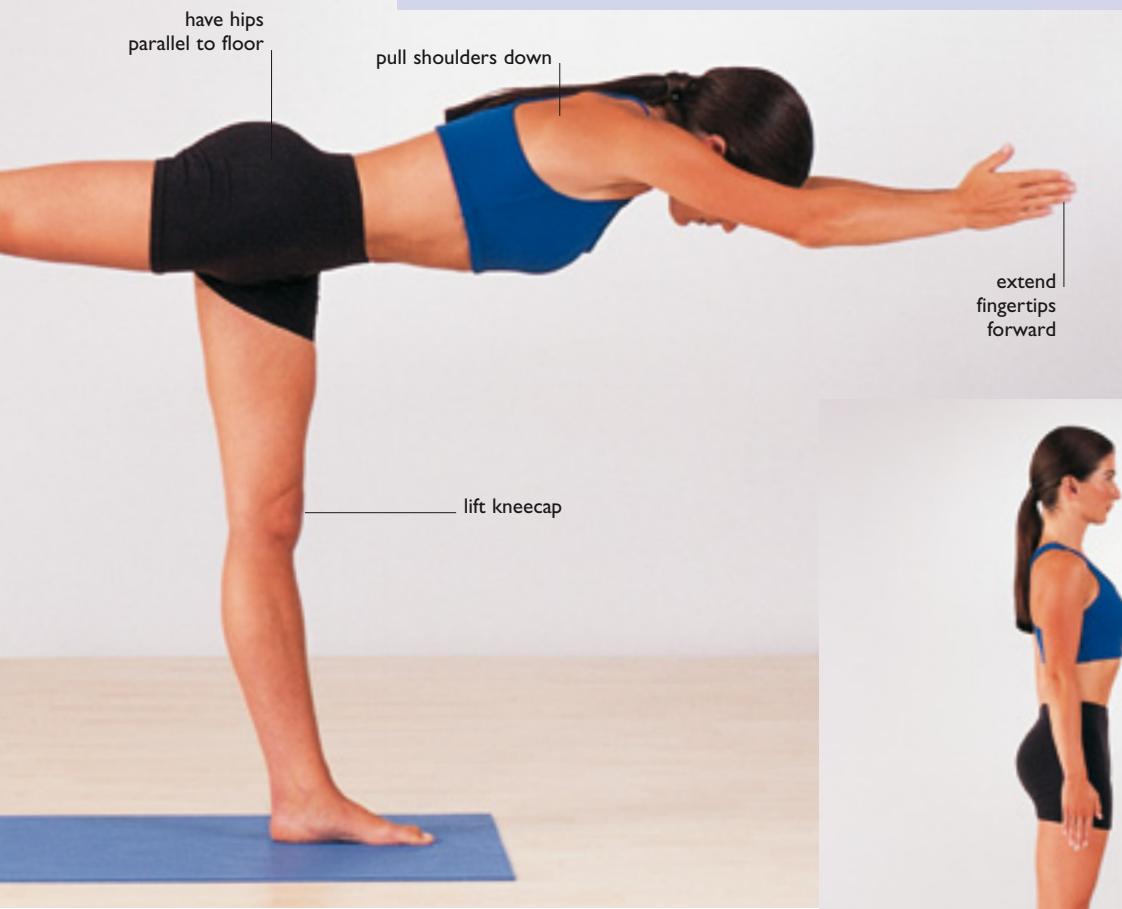


- 2 At the end of the exhale, extend your right leg fully. Turn the right kneecap and toes to face down. Gaze at the floor between your arms. Hold the full pose for five to eight breaths.



ALTERNATIVE

If you find it difficult to keep your balance, extend your arms out to the sides, palms facing downward. Keep your arms and the back of your shoulders in a straight line parallel to the floor.

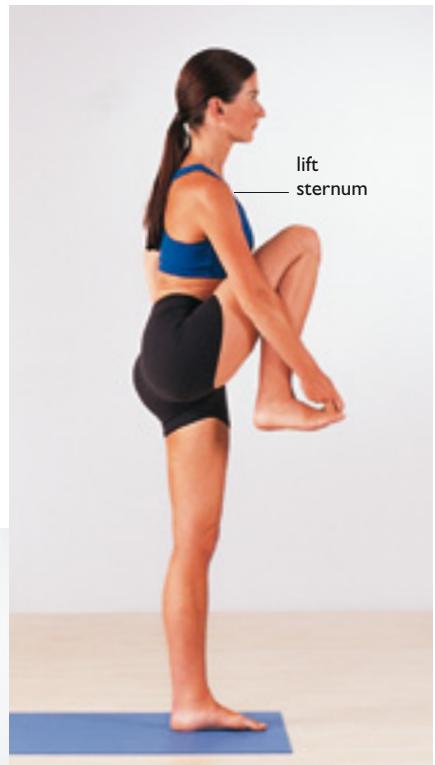


3 Inhaling, lower your right leg and place your feet together. Stand up straight with your arms by your sides. Gaze forward. Now return to step 1 of Tree pose (p.72), and repeat on the other side. Then stay in this position ready to flow into the next pose.

UTTHITA HASTA PADANGUSTHASANA

Extended Hand & Big Toe

You need to engage both *mula bandha* and *uddiyana bandha* throughout to maintain the balance and form of this posture, which benefits the kidneys, perineum, and the abdominal and leg muscles. There are two key stages to this pose: hold each for five to eight breaths. Repeat on the left side of the body.



1 Stand tall with your feet together and arms by your sides. Exhaling, lift your right knee up and reach down the outside of the leg with your right hand to grab the right big toe with the thumb and index and middle fingers.

2 Inhaling, stand up straight, pulling your knee to the chest. Keep your left leg very straight and firm. Gaze straight ahead.

whole sequence at a glance



Inhaling..... Exhaling..... Inhaling..... Exhaling, then inhaling.....

3 Exhaling, extend your right leg as straight as possible into the first of the full-pose stages. Extend your right heel and the base of the big toe while standing up straight. Use a strap if necessary. Hold for five to eight breaths.



ALTERNATIVE

If you cannot extend your leg out straight in front of you, keep the leg bent and hold the front of the knee with your hand. Pull the knee close to the chest, standing very tall.



Exhaling.....Inhaling.....Exhaling, then inhaling.....Exhaling.....



4 Exhaling, pull your right leg out to the side into the second full-pose stage. Keep both legs and spine as straight as possible. Lengthen your waist and stand tall. Gaze over your left shoulder and hold for five to eight breaths. If you find maintaining your balance difficult, stand adjacent to a wall and place your left hand or your extended foot on it.



5 Inhaling, pull your right leg back to the center, keeping the leg as high as possible. Gaze forward.



6 Exhaling, release your right foot and rest your hands on your waist. Let the leg float. Keep your chest open and lifted. Relax the face. Gaze forward. Hold this pose for one complete inhalation.



7 Exhaling, lower your right leg to the floor and place your feet together. Put your arms down by your sides and stand in mountain pose. Gaze forward. Inhaling, return to step 1, and repeat on the other side. Then stay in this position ready for the next pose.



BACKWARD BENDS

Now we move into the backward bending postures, which are more dynamic than the standing *asanas*.

Backward bends can be very exhilarating, but are also challenging. Do not push your body beyond what it can comfortably achieve. Rather, bring awareness to your body's limitations, and with repeated practice gradually move deeper into each pose.



TRANSITION MOVE

Standing to Lying on Belly

The essence of dynamic yoga is the transition from one pose to another using some of the graceful steps of the Sun Salutations. This sequence takes you from your last standing position to lying on your belly in preparation for the first backward bend posture. Follow the breathing pattern closely.



1 Standing tall with your feet together and arms by your sides, inhale and stretch your arms out and upward, bringing the palms together above your head. Extend through your fingertips, pushing your heels into the mat. Gaze up at your thumbs.



2 Exhaling, fold the body forward, drawing back the pubic bone and lifting up the sitting bones. Place your hands flat on the floor at the outside of your feet and parallel to them. Keep your legs straight. Relax your neck and gaze toward the front of your legs.



3 Inhaling, lift your torso halfway up, opening the chest. Straighten the arms, keeping your fingertips on the floor. Lift your kneecaps to engage the thigh muscles. Gaze forward.

4 Begin exhaling and bend your knees in a crouching position. Place your palms on the floor. Keep your arms straight. Still exhaling, step back with your right foot and then the left foot. Place hip-width apart in the pre-plank position.



5 Inhaling, keep the arms straight and look down. Draw the navel to the spine, and fully engage both the front and back of the body, preparing to flow into the next pose.

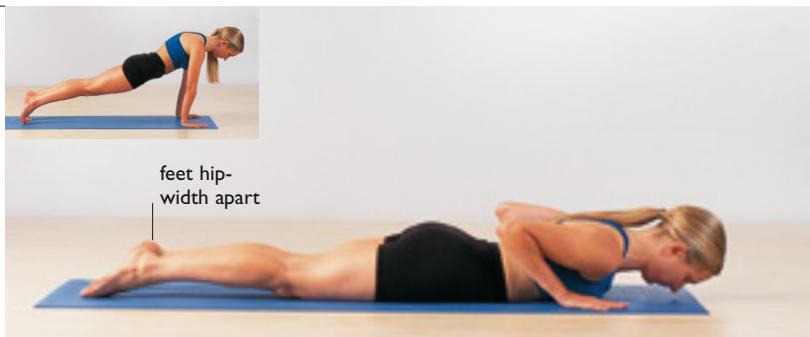


SALABHASANA

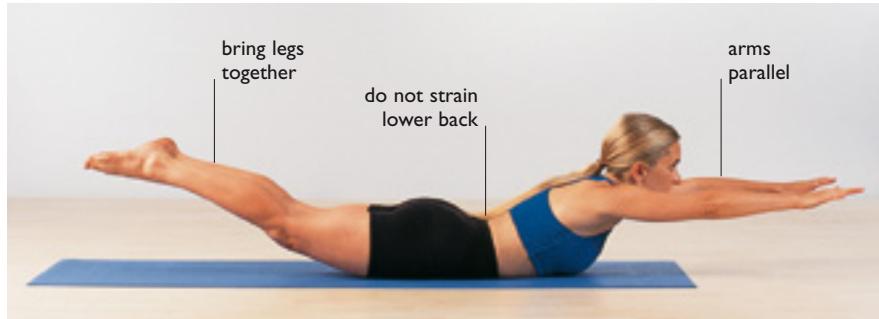
Locust

In Sanskrit *salabha* means “locust,” and this posture resembles a locust resting on the ground. There are two key stages in this pose, both of which help to increase the flexibility of the spine and improve digestion. Hold the first stage for three to five breaths, then rest for a moment with the arms and legs on the floor. Then hold the second stage for three to five breaths. Be careful not to strain your back.

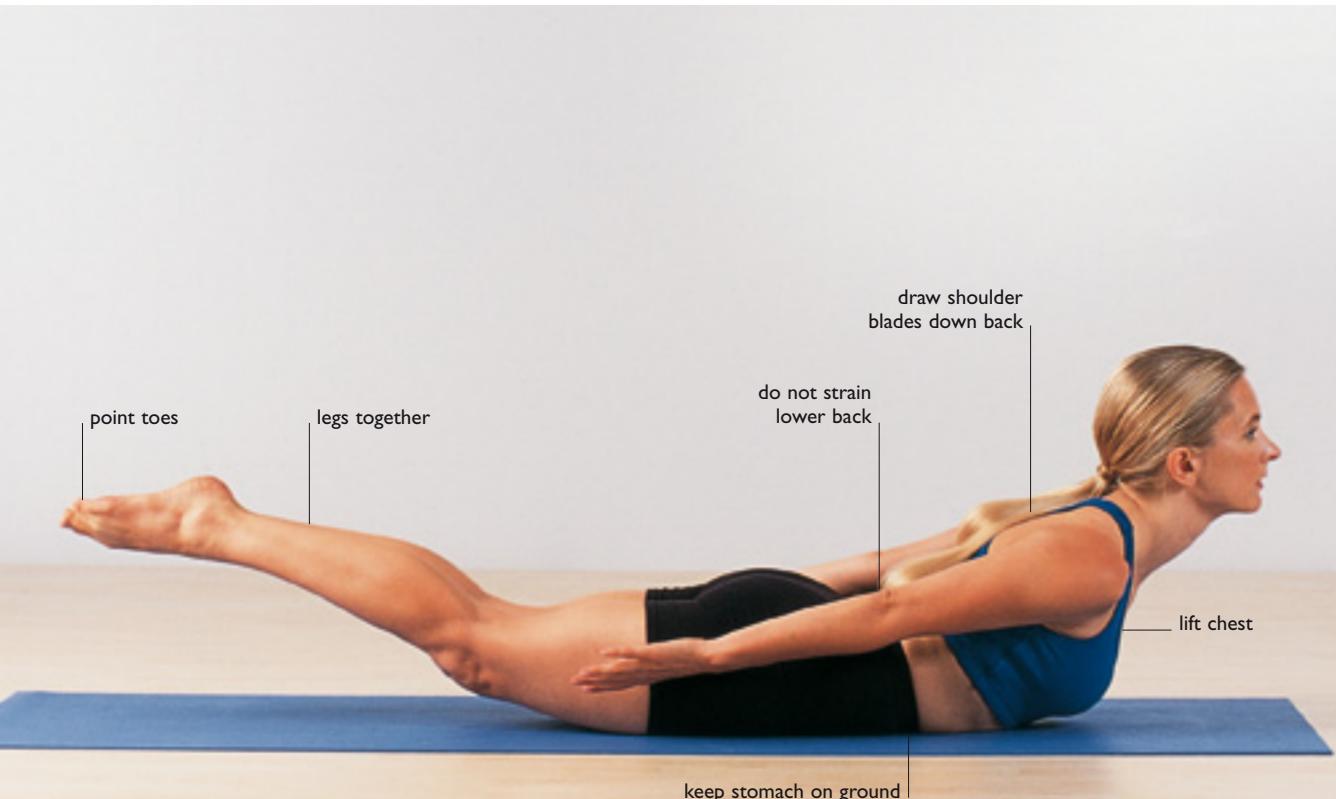
- 1 Exhaling, from the pre-plank position (p.83), fully engage the body and lower it evenly until it rests on the floor. Keep your elbows in very close to the sides of your torso and gaze down at the floor.



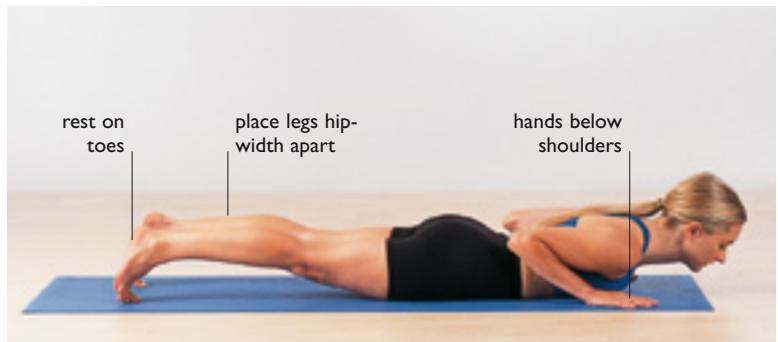
- 2 Continue exhaling as you extend your arms straight out above your head. Place the palms of your hands and your forehead on the floor.



- 3 Inhaling, lift your arms and legs off the floor as far as you can. Keep the pubic bone and stomach on the floor. Gaze ahead. Hold this key stage of the pose for three to five breaths.



4 Exhaling, lower your legs and arms to the floor. Bring your arms by the side of your body, palms facing upward. Inhaling, go into the second key stage of this pose. Lift your arms and legs off the floor again as far as you can without straining the lower back. Keep your shoulders pulled down the back and your chest open. Hold for three to five breaths. Gaze forward.



5 Exhaling, lower your legs to the floor, resting on your toes. Place your hands on the floor near your chest and elbows close to the body. Hold your head up slightly, so your chin is just above the mat. You are now ready to flow into the next pose.

TRANSITION MOVE

Locust to Bow

From the Locust you can if you wish go into a transitional series of poses that continues the flowing rhythm of the dynamic series.

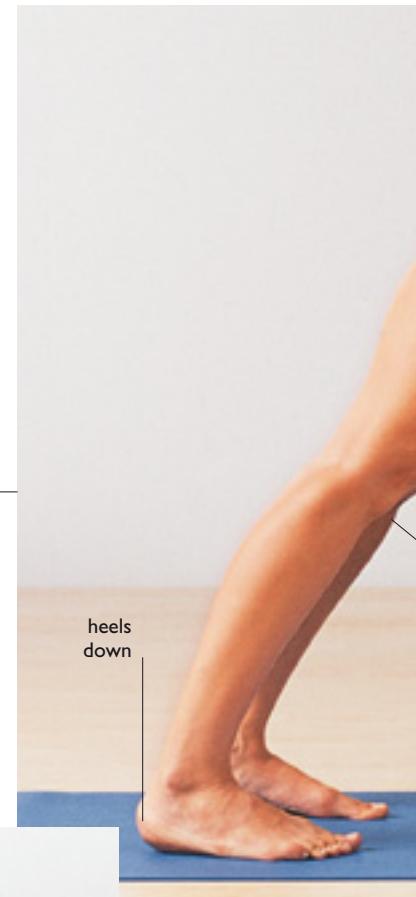
These postures are very helpful in stretching the front of the body. They also release the lower back just in case any unnecessary tension has been created during the previous back-bending postures.

Make sure that you follow the specific breathing patterns described.

1 Lying on your front, with your hands just below the shoulders and feet hip-width apart, inhale and roll forward onto the tops of your feet into *Urdhva mukha svanasana* (p.24). Lift up the chest and keep the legs firm and lifted. Gaze up.

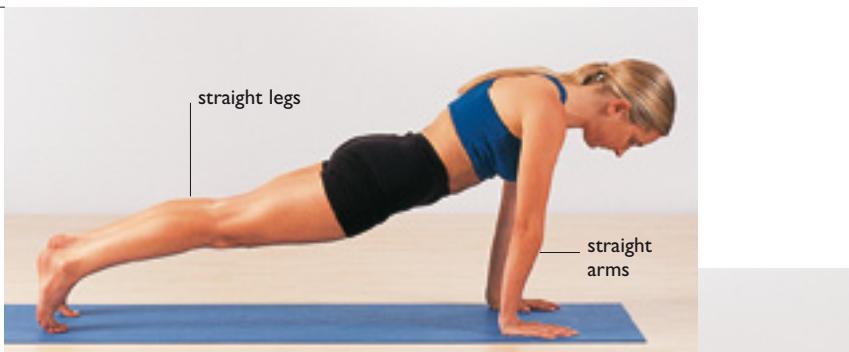


2 Exhaling, lift your hips up and back, rolling back over your toes into *Adho mukha svanasana* (p.25). Press your heels to the floor and push through the base of your fingers to stretch the arms. Gaze back.





3 Inhaling, shift the torso forward, bringing your legs down toward the floor. Keep the spine and legs in a straight line. Pull the navel to the spine to engage *uddiyana bandha*, and engage the buttocks. Gaze down.



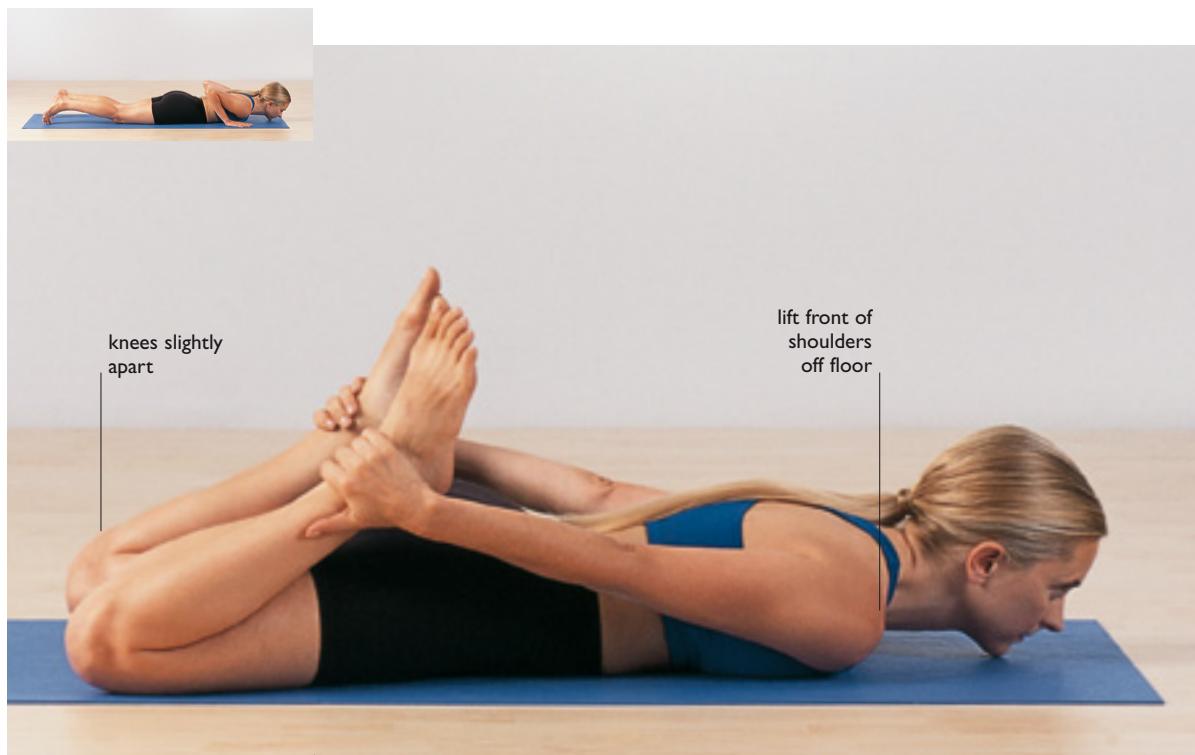
4 Exhaling, lower your body to the floor, keeping your hands just below the shoulders, and elbows close to the torso. Rest your chin on the mat. Remain where you are for the next pose.



DHANURASANA

Bow

In Sanskrit *dhanu* means “bow,” and in this pose, the arms are the bow-string and the trunk and legs are arched like the bow. This posture increases the elasticity of the spine and tones the abdominal organs. It is important not to create tension in your lower back or strain the knees trying to reach the ankles. If you cannot reach your ankles, lift your legs and extend your hands back toward the feet. Hold the full pose for five breaths. Repeat the sequence twice.

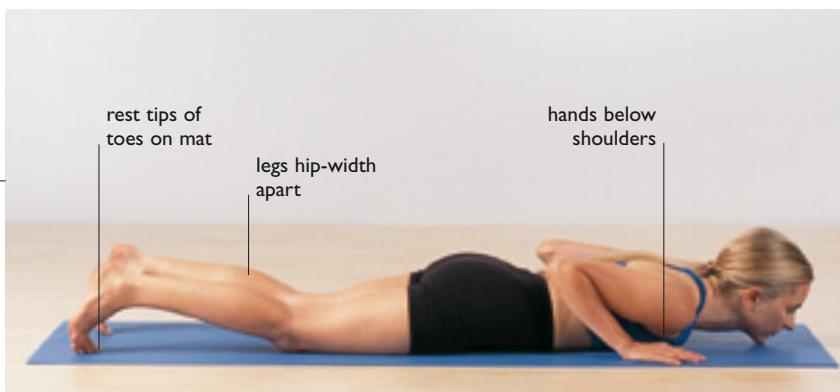


1 Lying on your front, with your hands just below the shoulders, inhale and bend the legs back. Keep the pubic bone pressed to the mat. Stretch the arms back and grab hold of the ankles firmly with both hands. Exhale completely.



2 Inhaling, lift your legs and chest off the mat into the full pose. Pull the shins away from your hands, allowing the arms to stretch and the back to arch. Hold for five breaths.

3 Exhaling, release your ankles and lower your legs and chest. Place your hands flat on the floor and your chin on the mat. Return to step 1, and repeat the sequence. Stay in this position for the next pose.



TRANSITION MOVE

Bow to Sitting

This sequence shows the transition moves from lying on your stomach to sitting. Jumping to a sitting position is excellent for strengthening the abdominal muscles and learning how to lift the body effortlessly. Follow the breath pattern to learn how to synchronize the movement and breath.

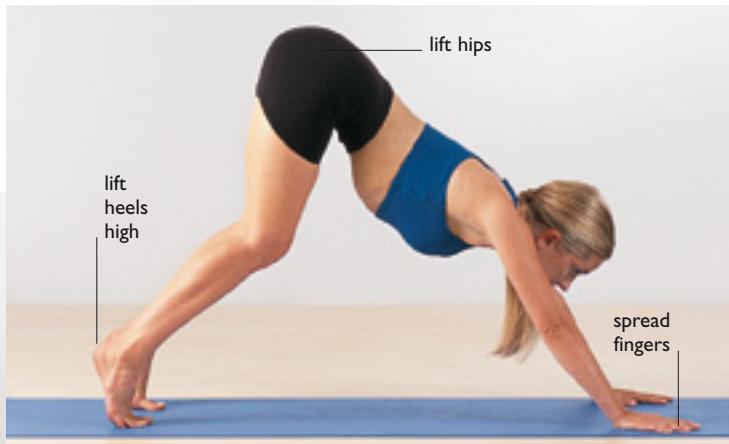
- 2** Exhaling, lift your hips up and back, pushing the sitting bones toward the ceiling into *Adho mukha svanasana* (p.25). Look back. Inhale completely.

1 Lying on your front, with the tips of your toes touching the floor, inhale and push your torso forward and lift your chest to move into *Urdhva mukha svanasana* (p.24). Balance on the tops of your feet, keeping the legs lifted off the mat. Stretch the front of the body, from the pubic bone to the sternum. Gaze up.



whole sequence at a glance

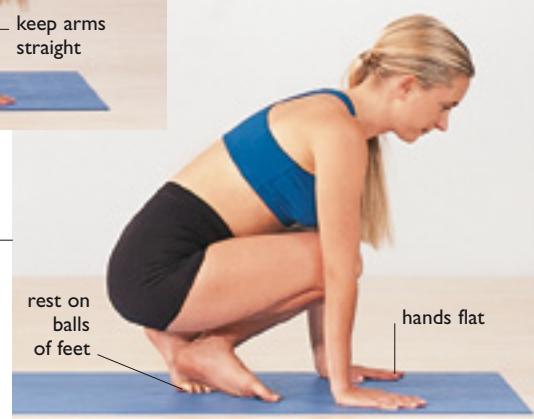




3 Begin exhaling, bend your knees, and lift your heels off the mat so you are balancing on the balls of your feet. Gaze slightly forward between your hands.



4 Continue exhaling and, shifting your weight onto your hands, push off the feet and cross the legs in mid-air, compacting the torso. Gaze between hands.



5 At the end of the exhale, land with your feet crossed as close to your hands as possible. Remain in a squatting position.



.....Finish exhaling.....Begin inhaling.....Finish inhaling.....Exhaling.....Inhaling



6 Inhaling, place your right hand behind the right hip with the palm flat on the floor and facing forward. Lean back on the right hand, so it supports the weight of your body. Keep your left heel on the floor.

7 Continue inhaling and place your left hand behind your left hip. Lean back on both hands, keeping the buttocks off the floor by engaging the lower abdominal muscles.



8 Begin exhaling as you extend and straighten both legs at the same time. Engage *mula bandha* and keep the buttocks off the mat until the heels touch the mat. Let your hands support your weight. Gaze forward at your big toes.



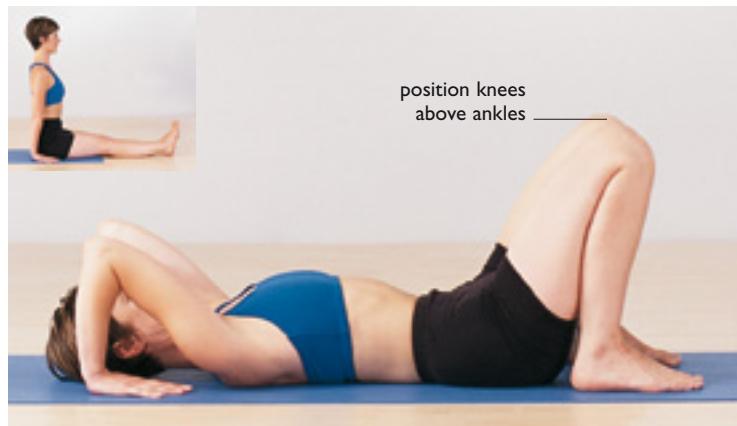
9 At the end of the exhale, rest the buttocks on the floor and sit up straight with your hands next to your hips in the seated staff pose, *Dandasana*. Press through the heels. Gaze forward. Inhale completely. You are now ready to flow into the next pose.

URDHVA DHANURASANA

Upward Bow

In Sanskrit *urdhva* means “upward” and *dhanu* means “bow.”

In this posture the body is arched like a bow, which is wonderful for releasing the entire front of the body, opening the chest, and improving the depth of the breath. If you have any back injuries, consult a physician before attempting the pose or do the alternative. Hold the full pose for five breaths and repeat two to three times.



1 Begin in *Dandasana*, your legs stretched out in front of you and your palms on the floor at your sides. Exhaling, lie down, bend your knees, and place your feet flat on the floor and slightly wider apart than the hips. Keep the feet pointing straight throughout the posture. Place your hands above your shoulders, palms flat, with your fingertips facing the same way as your feet.



2 Inhaling, lift up your hips and place the crown of your head on the floor. Push evenly through your feet and hands. Your weight should be distributed between your hands and feet. Gaze forward.

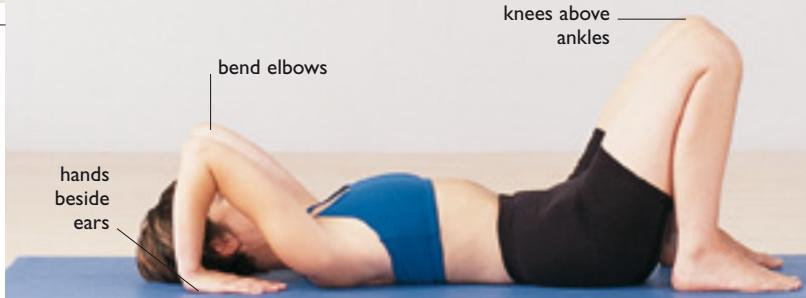
3 Exhale to establish *mula bandha*. Inhaling, press through your feet and hands, lifting the hips high and straightening the arms. Lift and widen the armpits. Engage the buttocks and thighs. Gaze forward. Hold for five breaths.

**ALTERNATIVE**

Press evenly through your feet and engage the thigh muscles to lift the hips as high as possible while keeping your shoulders on the floor. Gaze forward.



4 Exhaling, lower your hips to the floor, while bending your arms and legs so that you return to the starting position. Rest for several breaths. Repeat the pose one or two times before moving on to the next pose.



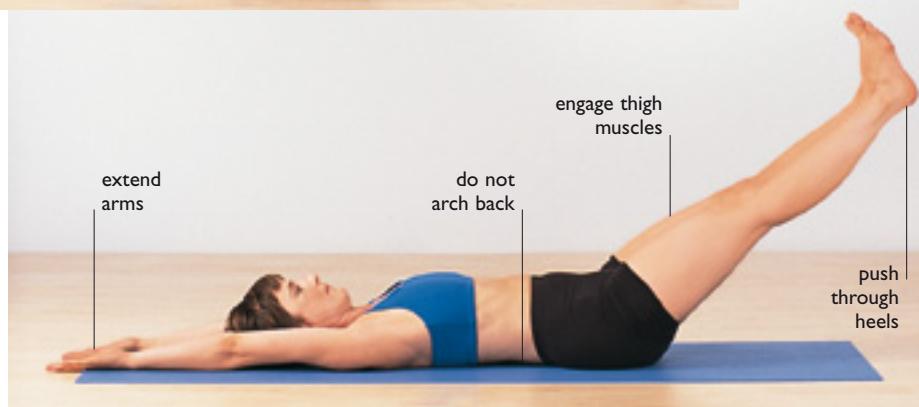
URDHVA PRASARITA PADASANA

Upward Extended Foot

This posture strengthens the lower back, tones the abdominal muscles, and is excellent for reducing the waistline. Notice that all movement takes place with the exhale; none with the inhale. There are two key stages to this pose: hold each one for one complete inhalation. Repeat the sequence two to three times.

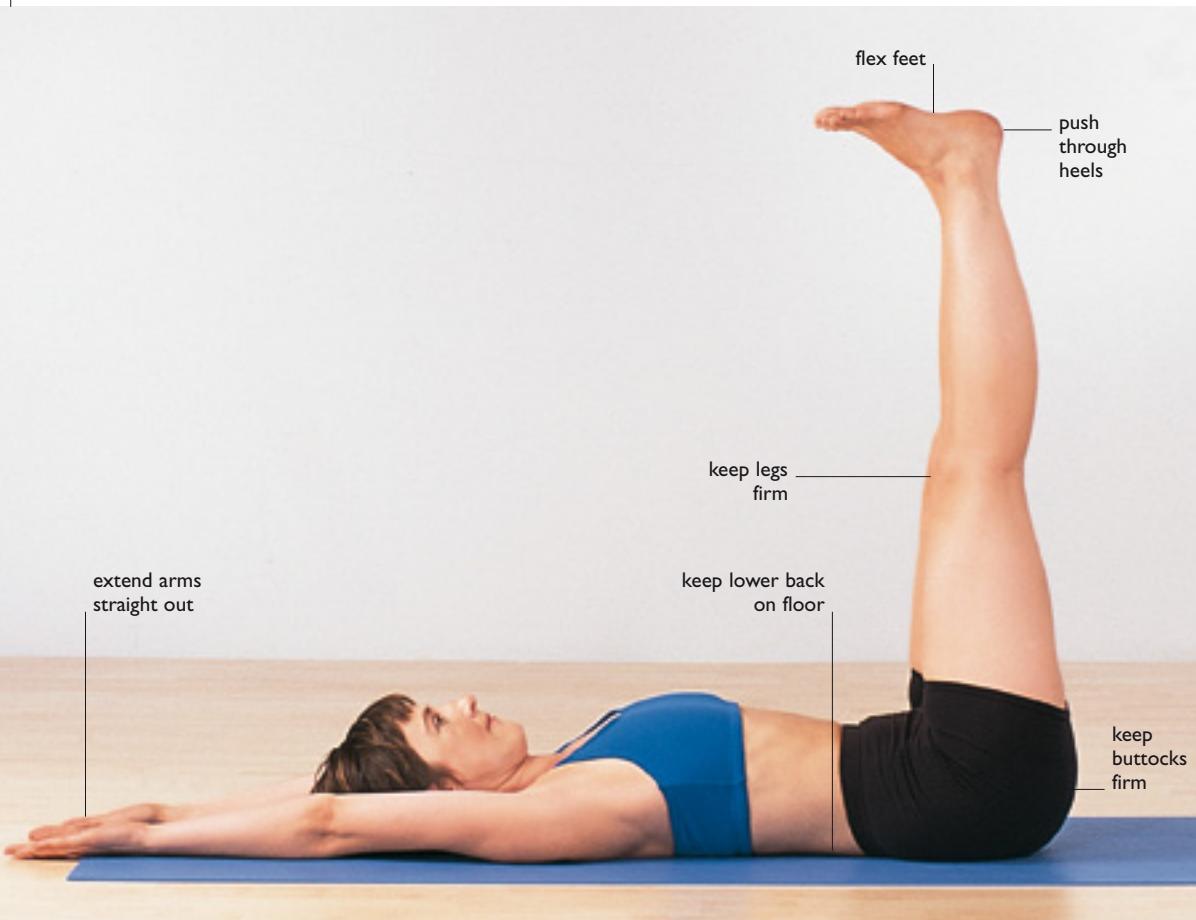


1 Lying down with your legs bent and your feet flat on the floor, inhale as you reach overhead with your arms, extending the body. Straighten your legs and bring them together. Press through the heels to flex the feet. Gaze forward.



2 Exhaling, lift your legs halfway up to make a 45° angle and extend the lower back away from the waist and toward the floor. Extend the backs of the legs toward the heels. Hold your legs in this position and take a complete inhalation. Gaze upward.

3 Exhaling, continue to lift your legs to 90°, keeping them firm and together. The soles of the feet should be facing the ceiling. Hold this pose for one complete inhalation. Gaze toward the ceiling.



4 Exhaling, lower both legs together all the way to the floor. Stretch your arms and legs away from each other. Repeat the sequence one or two times more before moving into the next pose.



JATHARA PARIVARTANASANA

Turning Around the Stomach

This pose allows you to twist the spine and back muscles gently, softening them. It serves as a counterpose to the backward bend poses, preparing the body for the sitting poses.

Jathara parivartanasana is particularly good if you are feeling tired or stressed as it relaxes you completely. Notice that movement takes place only with the exhale. When you have lowered your legs to both the right and left sides, repeat the entire sequence two more times.



3 Exhaling, bring your legs down together to the floor on the right side of your body, placing your feet as close to your right hand as possible. Rotate your head to the left. Hold for one complete inhale. Then, exhaling, lift your legs to 90° again, and lower to the left side, rotating your head to the right. Then return to step 1 and repeat two more times.



ALTERNATIVE

If you cannot lower both legs together straight, bend them and then lower them to the floor. Place your knees as close to your right arm as possible, while gazing to the left.



TRANSITION MOVE

Lying on Back to Sitting

This transitional move is excellent for learning how to use your body weight and momentum to rock forward to a sitting position. When done correctly, the move uses very little energy and helps to tone the abdominal muscles without straining the lower back muscles.



- 1 Lying on your back with your legs stretched out straight and your arms at right angles to the torso, inhale and bend your knees. Place your feet flat on the floor near the buttocks.

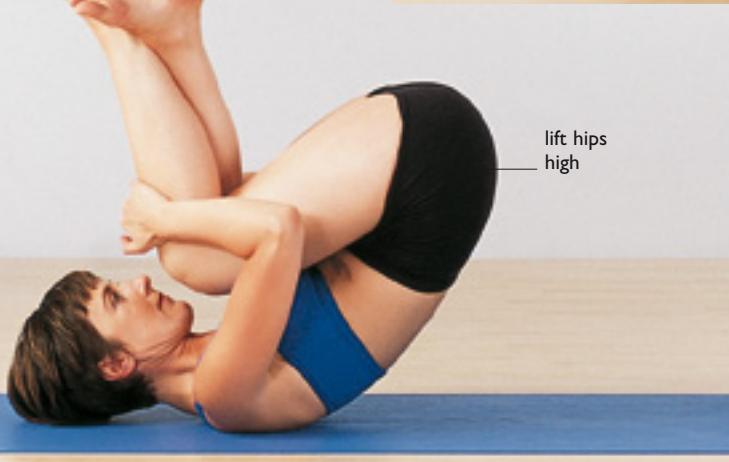


- 2 Exhaling, cross your shins. Hold your legs below the knees and pull them in toward your chest.

5 Exhaling, sit up straight, extending the spine and lifting the chest. Rest the outer edge of your feet on the floor and your hands just below the knees. Gaze forward. You are now ready to flow into the next pose.

4 Continue inhaling and use the momentum of the rocking motion to roll up onto your sitting bones.

3 Inhaling, rock back and lift your middle and lower back off the floor. Pull your legs closer to your chest to form a very tight ball with the body.



ARDHA NAVASANA

Half Boat

In Sanskrit *ardha* means “half” and *nava* “boat,” and in this pose the position of the body resembles a boat. It is important not to strain when attempting to do the pose with straight legs. With practice, you will find that your back will strengthen and you will be able to move in and out of the posture gracefully. Hold the pose for five breaths and repeat three times.

1 You are sitting on the floor with your knees up, feet crossed, and hands resting on your knees. Inhale, uncross your feet, and place them flat on the floor. Interlace your fingers and cup the back of the head, keeping the elbows forward. Gaze ahead.





2 Exhaling, recline the torso and simultaneously lift and straighten your legs. Rest on your sitting bones, not on the coccyx. Engage the abdominal muscles and keep your head in line with your toes. Hold the full pose for five breaths.

3 Inhaling, bend your knees and lower the feet to the floor. Place your palms on the floor by the hips, with the fingertips pointing toward the feet. Repeat the sequence twice more, then flow into the next pose.



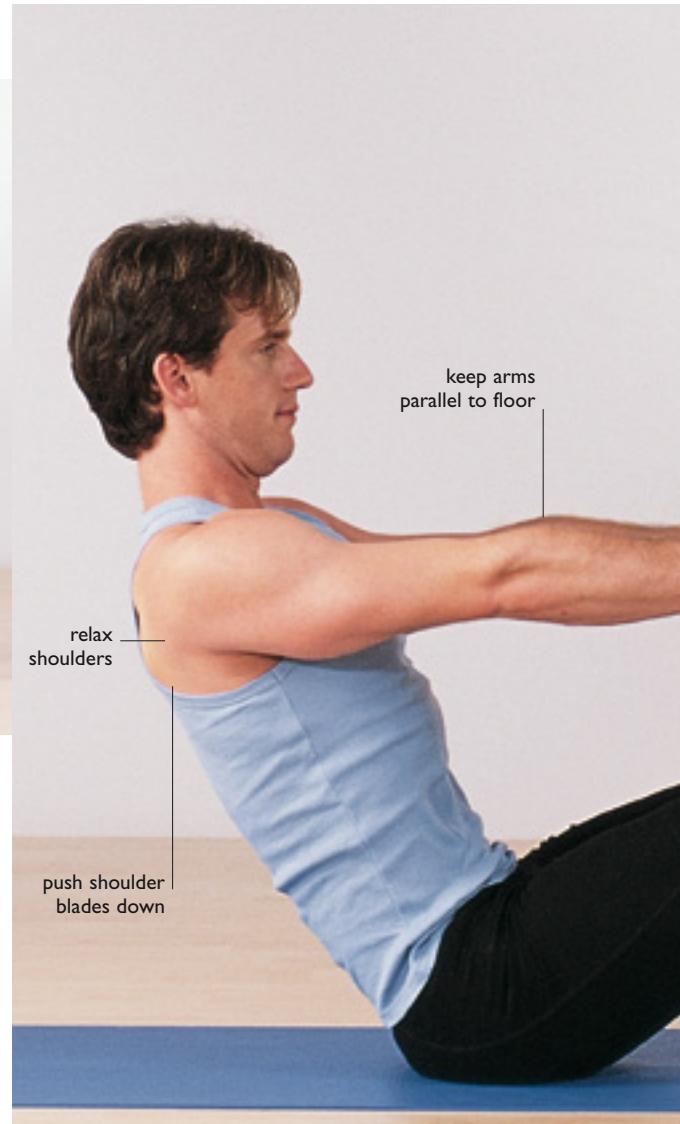
PARIPURNA NAVASANA

Complete Boat

In Sanskrit *paripurna* means “complete” and *nava* “boat.” This posture resembles a boat with its oars in the water, hence “complete boat.” It is excellent for reducing fat around the waistline and for toning the kidneys. Hold the full pose for five breaths and repeat three times.



1 Sitting on the floor with your knees up and your arms straight down at your sides, exhale and lean back. Balance on your sitting bones, not the coccyx, and lift your feet off the floor. Extend your arms out in front of you so they are parallel to the floor. Inhale completely.



2 Exhaling, straighten your legs by pressing the inner edges of your feet forward. Keep your spine straight and the chest lifted. Gaze at your big toes. Hold *Paripurna navasana* for five breaths.



ALTERNATIVE

If you find that your back and abdominal muscles are not strong enough to keep the spine straight in the full pose, bend your knees. Make sure you still keep your legs together.

point toes _____

keep legs together

3 Exhaling, lower your feet to the floor and bend your knees. Move your arms to your sides, palms down, and press your hands into the mat. Repeat the sequence twice more, then move to the next pose.

lift chest



BAKASANA

Crane

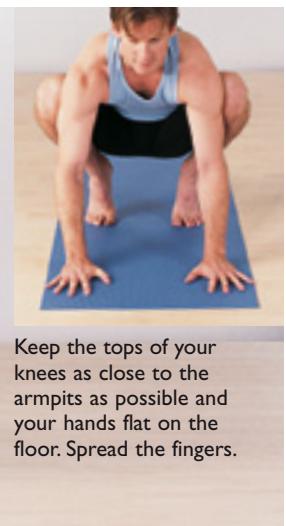
In Sanskrit *baka* means “crane.” Once the legs are lifted, this posture resembles a crane standing still. The pose is excellent for building strength in the arms and abdomen. It also develops courage, because to do the pose you have to overcome fear and believe that you can balance and not fall forward. Hold the pose for five breaths and repeat twice.

2 Exhaling, pull the feet close to the buttocks. Rock the body forward, lifting the buttocks off the floor and shifting the weight forward on the feet. Keep just the tips of your fingers touching the floor. Gaze slightly downward.

1 Sitting on the floor with your knees up and your palms on the floor, inhale and lean slightly forward. Bend your arms and lift your hands, so that only your fingertips are touching the floor.



3 Inhaling, bring your arms forward and place your hands flat on the floor in front of you, fingers spread and pointing forward. Press the knees into the back of your arms near the armpits. Bend the arms to create a stable support for the legs.



4 Exhaling, raise the heels high off the floor, shifting the weight forward onto your hands. Balance the shins on your bent arms as close to the armpits as possible. Gaze at the floor.

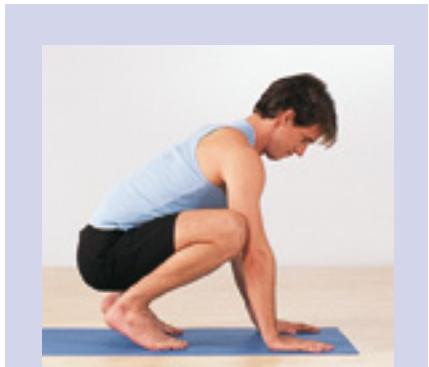
5 Continue exhaling and engage *mula bandha*. Swing your body forward and pull the feet toward the buttocks. Straighten your arms and balance the entire weight of your body on your hands. Hold the pose for five breaths. Repeat the sequence once more, then move straight into the next pose.



TRANSITION MOVE

Crane to Sitting

Here is another transition from one pose to another integrating several movements from the Sun Salutations, which should by now be quite familiar. Be patient when doing this transition: it takes a lot of practice to develop the ability to move your body while balancing on just your hands.



1 Starting from the Crane position (p.107), exhale as you push off your arms, propelling the feet back and extending your legs parallel to the floor in mid-air. Land on the balls of your feet in the push-up position. Gaze downward.

ALTERNATIVE

If you cannot jump your feet back and extend your legs in mid-air, then lower both feet to the floor in a squat, and step back one leg at a time into the push-up position.



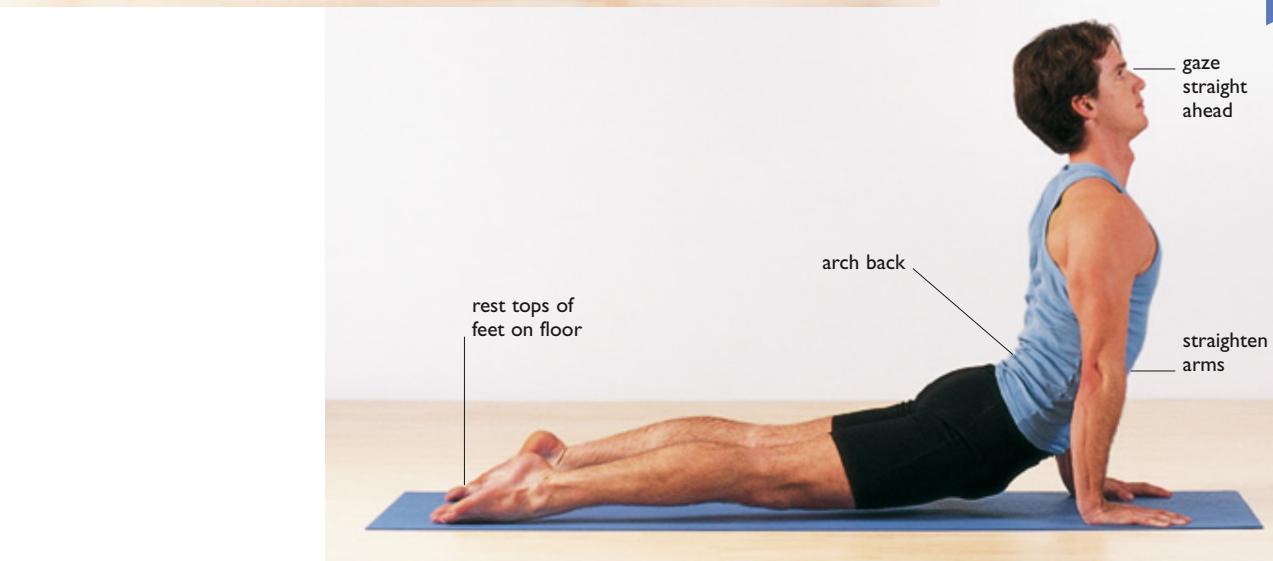
whole sequence at a glance



2 Continue exhaling as you lower your body evenly until it is 4–6in (10–15cm) above, and parallel to, the floor in *Chaturanga dandasana* (p.32). Keep your arms bent with the elbows in very close to the sides of your torso. Gaze at the floor.



3 Inhaling, roll forward onto the tops of your feet into *Urdhva mukha svanasana* (p.32). Straighten your arms, pull your hips forward, and lift up the chest so your whole body is lifted off the floor. Keep the legs firm.



4 Exhaling, lift your hips up and back, pushing the sitting bones toward the ceiling into *Adho mukha svanasana* (p.33). Push through the roots of your fingers to straighten the arms, and push back with your legs so the soles of your feet are flat on the floor. Spread your weight evenly on your hands and feet. Keep your head in line with the torso. Gaze back. Inhale completely.





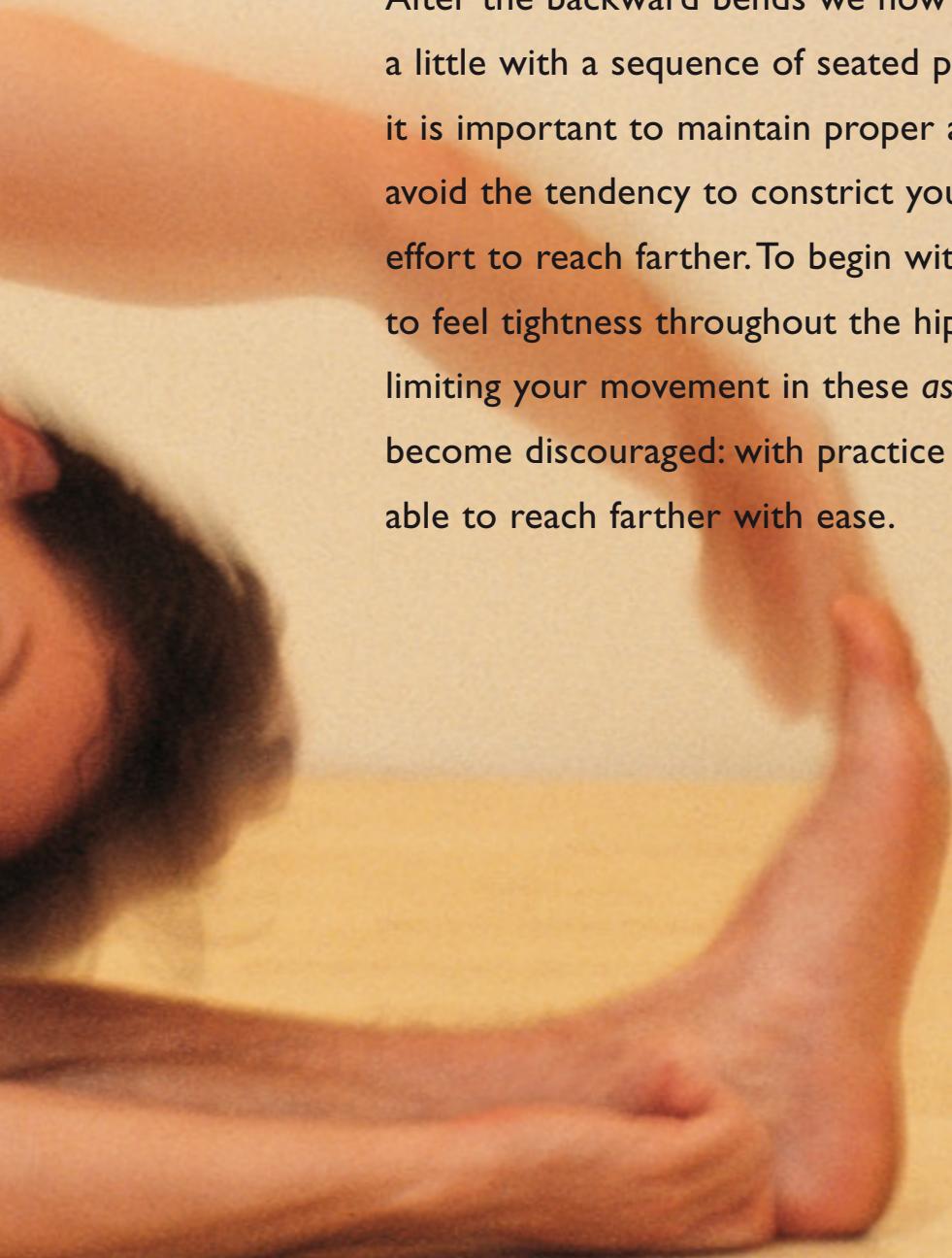
5 Exhaling, bend your knees and push off the floor with your feet, crossing your legs in mid-air and compacting the torso into a crouching position. Keep the feet off the floor as the legs are propelled through the arms and then straightened. The legs and the buttocks will land on the floor in front of the torso at the same time. If you cannot swing through to sitting in one movement, do the move in two stages: let your crossed feet rest on the mat as they come between your arms (see p.91), and then move them forward in front of your torso and straighten.



6 Take an inhalation in the final position. The legs are extended forward and the arms straight at your sides. The hands point forward and toes upward. Gaze straight ahead. You are now ready to move into the next pose.



SEATED POSES



After the backward bends we now slow the rhythm a little with a sequence of seated poses. With these it is important to maintain proper alignment and to avoid the tendency to constrict your chest in an effort to reach farther. To begin with, it is common to feel tightness throughout the hips and hamstrings, limiting your movement in these *asanas*. Do not become discouraged: with practice you will be able to reach farther with ease.

JANU SIRSASANA

Knee to Head

This pose is excellent for the digestive system and also helps tone the kidneys. After holding the pose on the right side for five to eight breaths, it is best to keep the right leg bent and carry straight on to the next pose, *Parivrtta janu sirsasana* (pp.116–117), before changing to the left side of the body. Then repeat both poses in sequence on the left side.



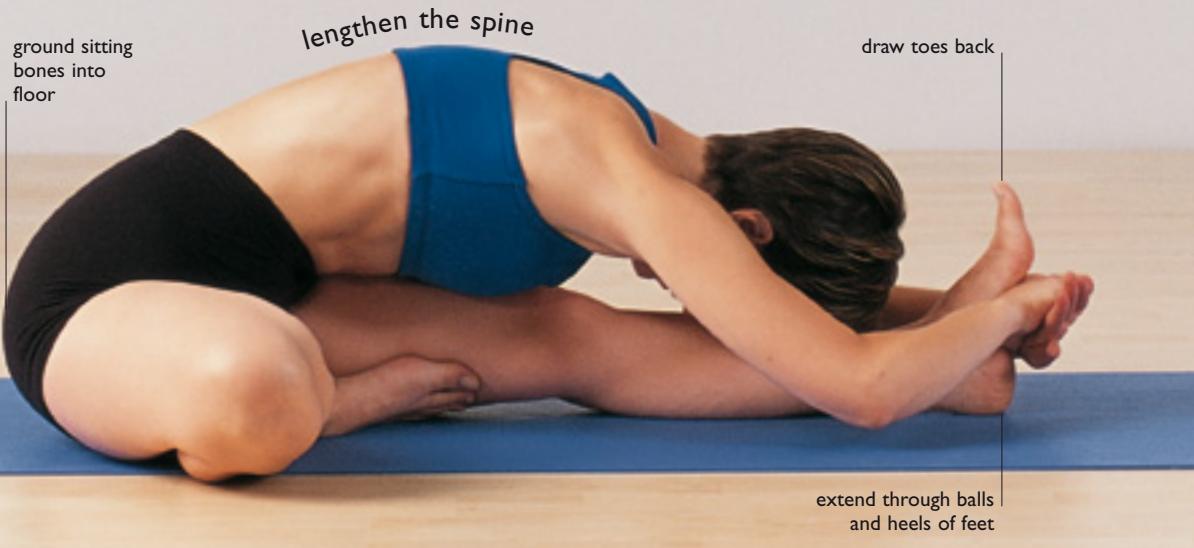
1 Sitting on the floor with your legs out straight in front and your arms down by your sides, inhale and bend your right knee to the side to make a 90° angle. Position the heel as close as possible to the perineum. Push up with your hands so that only the fingertips are resting on the floor:

2 Exhaling, lean forward, and grasp the wrist of your right hand with your left hand behind the extended foot. Inhaling, fold your body forward, bending your elbows, so that your chest rests on your left leg and your forehead on your shin. Keep the sitting bones rooted to the floor. Gaze forward. Hold for five to eight breaths, then inhale and sit upright in the step 1 position ready to move into *Parivrtta janu sirsasana* (pp.116–117).



ALTERNATIVE

If you cannot reach far enough forward without bending your extended leg, place a strap underneath the ball of your foot. Pull on the strap, working your hands closer to the foot. Keep your sitting bones grounded and your spine lengthened.



PARIVRTTA JANU SIRSASANA

Revolving Knee to Head

This pose is similar to the previous one, but here the torso revolves as the head moves toward the knee. It is a very invigorating pose, which stimulates the circulation. Hold the full pose for five to eight breaths, then go back to step 1 of *Janu sirsasana* (pp.114–115), and repeat the entire sequence on the left side of the body.

- 1** Sitting on the floor, your right knee bent, heel tucked into the perineum, inhale and turn the torso and hips to the right. Extend your right knee back while keeping your right foot near the groin. Move your arms to the front.



- 2** Exhaling, extend the torso over the left leg while stretching your right side and rotating the right rib cage upward. Keep the right heel close to the pubic bone. Grab hold of the arch of your left foot with your left hand. Gaze up.

3 Inhaling, extend your right hand up and over to grab hold of the outside of your left foot. Press the sitting bones into the mat and lift the waist. Gaze up. Hold the pose for five to eight breaths. Exhale and return to step 1 of *Janu sirsasana* (p.114) to repeat both poses on the other side.

ALTERNATIVE

If you cannot reach your extended foot with both hands, place your left hand on the floor by the extended foot and the right hand on the back of the neck. It is more important to lengthen the waist and spine than to grab the foot.



Rest your right hand on your back at the base of the neck. Point the elbow upward.



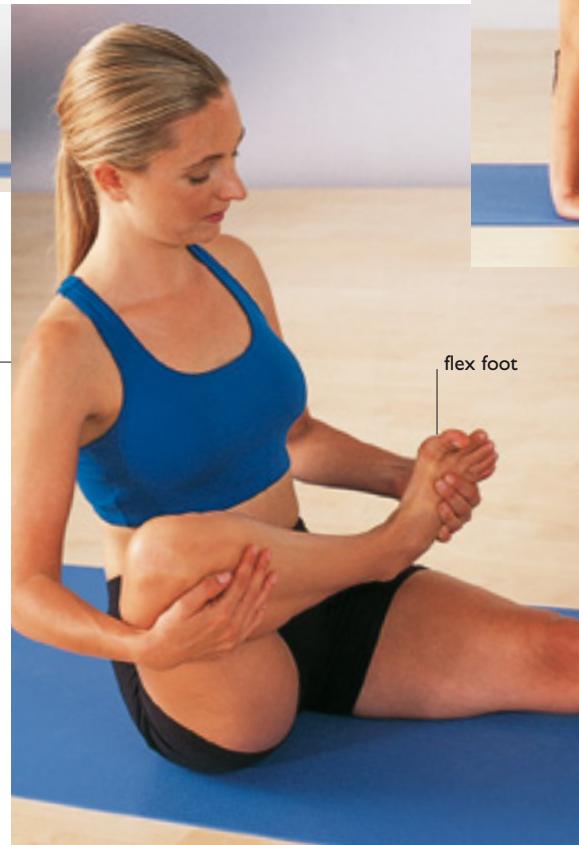
ARDHA BADDHA PADMA PASCHIMATTANASANA

Half Bound Lotus Forward Bend

Paschimattanasana is a posterior stretch. This pose, which should not be forced, is good for rounded or drooping shoulders. Make sure you open your hips before resting the foot near the groin; otherwise, you can damage the knee. Hold this pose for five to eight breaths on the right side of the body, then go straight on to the following pose, *Ardha matsyendrasana* (pp.120–121), and do that on the same side before repeating both poses on the left side of the body.



1 Sit on the floor with your legs out straight in front and your arms down at your sides. Place your palms on the floor, fingers pointing forward. Inhaling, grab the outside of your right knee and the right foot. Place the foot on top of the left thigh close to the groin. Turn the pelvis so the right knee faces forward.



2 Continue inhaling. Sit up very straight with your hands flat on the floor and close to your hips. Press the inner edge of your left foot forward. Gaze at your left big toe.

3 Exhaling, reach around your back with your right arm to grasp your right foot. Begin to fold forward, creating a twisting action in the hips. Grasp your left foot with the left hand, and gaze downward. Hold for five to eight breaths. Inhale to return to step 2 ready to flow into *Ardha matsyendrasana* (pp.120–121).



ALTERNATIVE

If your hips are very tight and you are unable to lean far enough forward, place your right foot just above your left knee and reach for your left foot with both hands.



Reach around your back with your right hand and grab hold of your right foot. Keep the foot flexed and do not allow the ankle to collapse inward.

keep foot flexed



keep chest open

draw down shoulders away from ears

rotate thigh bone inward



ARDHA MATSYENDRASANA

Half Lord of the Fish

In Sanskrit *ardha* means “half,” and Matsyendra was a fish transformed by Siva into a divine being who would spread the teaching of yoga. If you have a spinal injury, seek the guidance of an experienced teacher before doing any twist postures. This pose, held for five to eight breaths, is done in conjunction with the previous pose, *Ardha baddha padma paschimattanasana*.

2 Exhaling, wrap your left arm around your back and lean toward your extended leg. Grab hold of your inner right thigh with your left hand.

1 Sitting on the floor, your right knee bent, heel tucked close to the pubic bone, inhale and turn to your left, placing your right hand on the left shin. Sit up very straight, draw in the sacrum, and lengthen the spine. Keep the chest lifted. Gaze ahead.



3 Inhaling, grab the outer edge of your left foot with your right hand and lift and turn the torso to the left. Pull against your right foot to increase the twist. Gaze over your left shoulder. Hold the full pose for five to eight breaths. Then exhale and sit in *Dandasana* ready to begin the entire sequence again on the other side of the body (p.118).



ALTERNATIVE

If you cannot reach your inner thigh with your left hand, rest the back of your hand on the outside of your right buttock. Turn your body to the left while holding the left foot.



MARICHYASANA A

Marichi A

The following series of postures are named after Marichi, the mythical sage and son of Brahma, creator of the universe. They are excellent for the digestive system. Hold this posture on the right side for five to eight breaths, then do the next posture, *Marichyasana C*, on the same side. Once both poses are completed on the right side, do both on the left.

2 Exhaling, reach forward with your right arm, lowering and extending the torso toward your left leg. Place your right shoulder as low as possible in front of your right shin. Reaching with the right hand helps extend the torso and spine. Press through your right foot.

1 Sit in *Dandasana*, with your legs out straight in front, your arms at your sides. Inhaling, bend your right leg and place your right foot in front of your right sitting bone. Move your hands back behind you and sit up straight, extending through the left foot. Gaze forward.

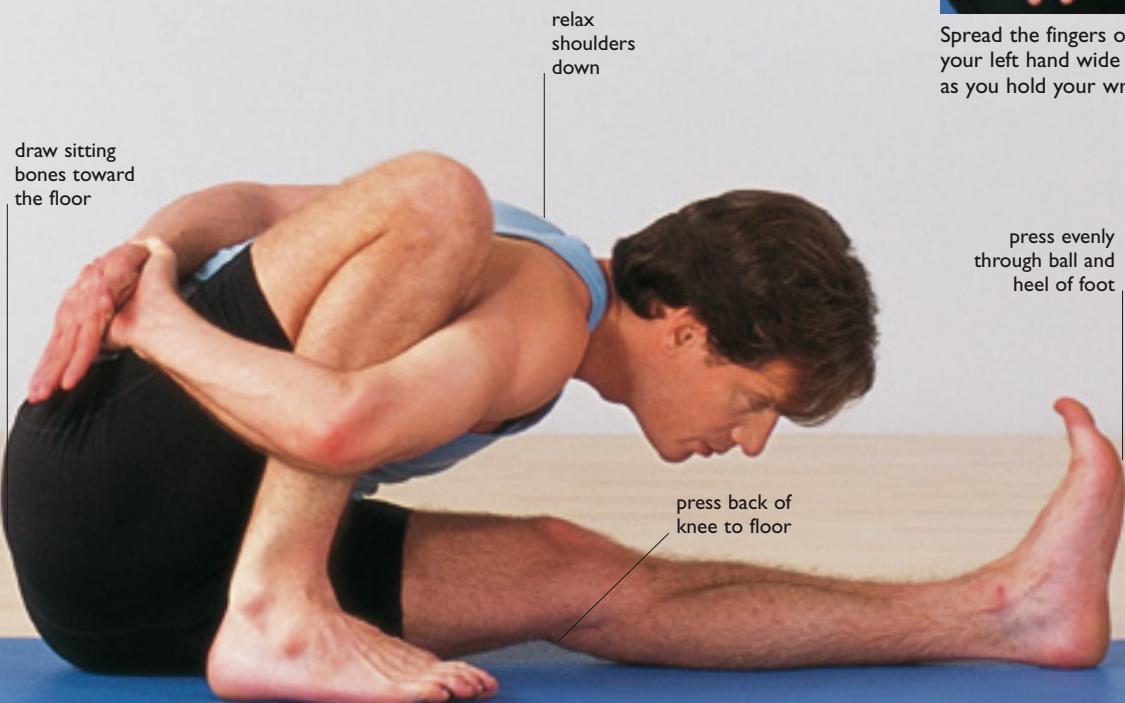


**ALTERNATIVE**

If you cannot reach the wrist or fingers of your left hand, hold a strap in both hands behind your back. Position your hands as close to each other as you can.



Spread the fingers of your left hand wide as you hold your wrist.



3 Continue exhaling and wrap your right arm around your back and grab your left wrist. Lower your chin toward the left shin, keeping the right foot grounded evenly on the floor. Spread the toes. Keep the right sitting bone as low to the floor as possible. Gaze down at the floor. Hold *Marichyasana A* for five to eight breaths. Then inhale and return to the pose in step 1, ready for *Marichyasana C* (pp.124–125).

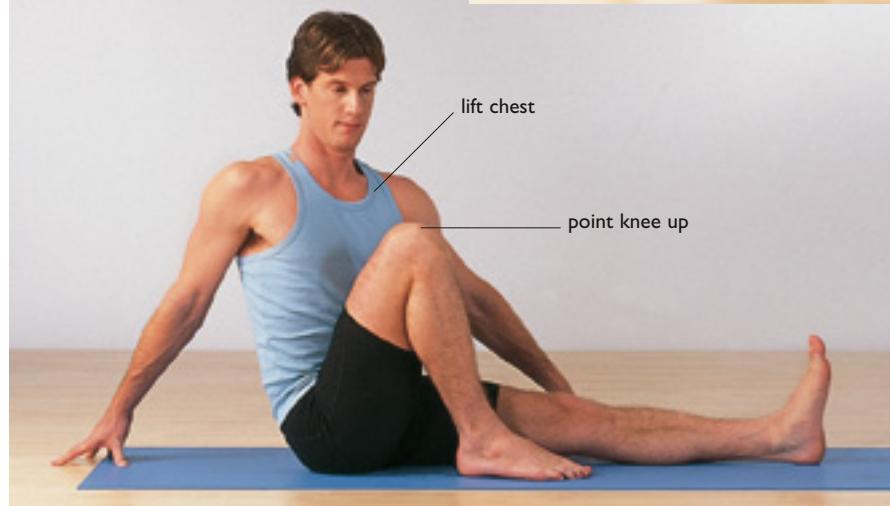
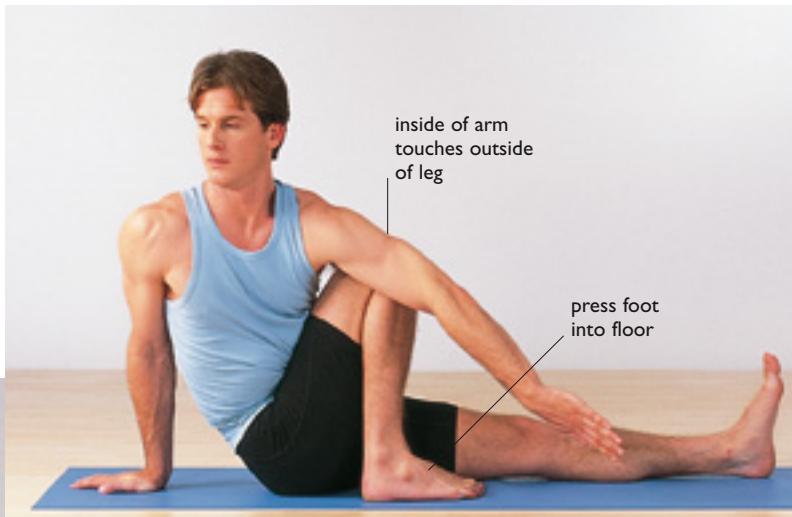
MARICHYASANA C

Marichi C

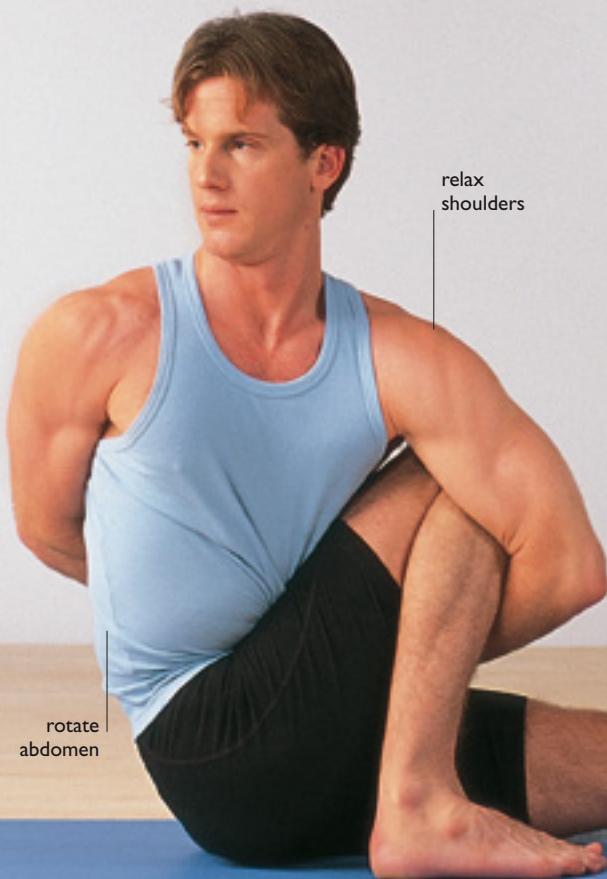
This pose and the previous pose, *Marichyasana A*, are both good for relieving menstrual cramps and strengthening the uterus, as well as helping with stomach and gastrointestinal problems.

Hold the pose for five to eight breaths on the right side, then return to *Marichyasana A* (pp.122–123), change legs, and repeat the entire sequence on the left side.

- 1 Sit on the floor with your left leg extended and the right foot in front of the sitting bones. Inhaling, rotate the torso to the right by pressing your left heel forward and pushing down evenly on your right foot.



- 2 Exhaling, bring your right arm closer to the torso and press your palm into the floor. Wrap your left arm around the outside of your right leg. Push both sitting bones into the floor. Rotate your left arm so the inside is touching the outside of your right leg.



ALTERNATIVE

If you cannot do the full pose, keep your right arm straight and bend your left arm, placing it on the outer right leg. Use it as leverage to increase the twist.

3 Inhaling, extend your right arm behind your back and grab hold of your left wrist. Relax your shoulders down and lift the chest. Gaze at a point on the horizon, and hold for five to eight breaths.

4 Exhaling, release your arms and straighten your right leg. Sit up tall in Dandasana in preparation for *Marichyasana A* (pp.122–123) on the left side. To finish, remain in this position ready for the next pose.



PASCHIMATTANASANA

Seated Forward Bend

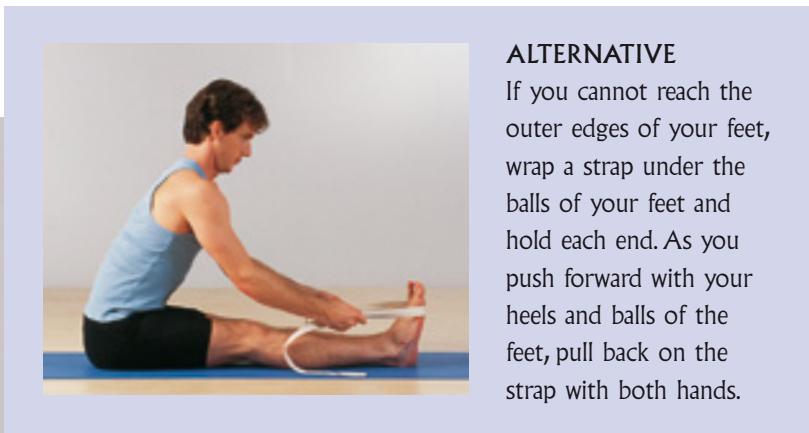
In Sanskrit *paschima* means “the west,” and in this pose the back of the body is referred to as the western aspect and the front as the eastern aspect. This asana, which stretches the western aspect, is calming and helps to deepen the breath and engage *mula bandha*. Hold the pose for five to eight breaths.



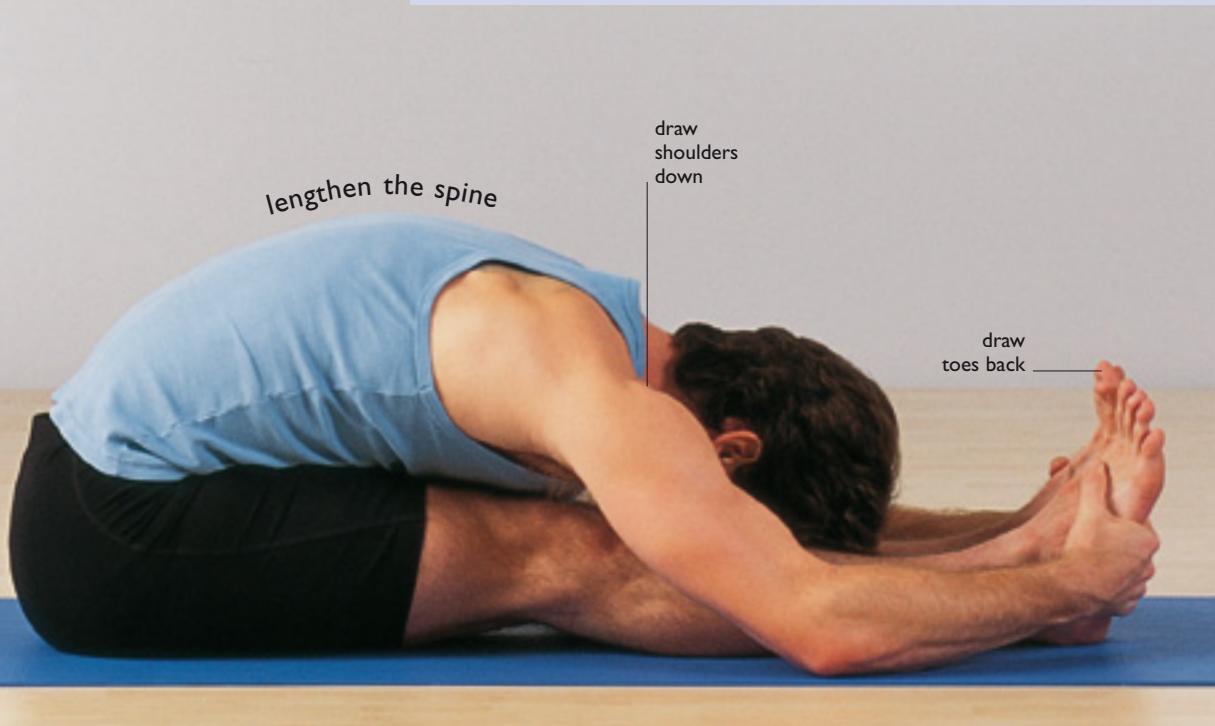
1 Sitting on the floor with your legs out straight in front of you and your arms at your sides, exhale and fold your body forward at the hips to grab the outer edges of your feet. Keep your legs straight and extend through the four corners of your feet, pressing the back of your knees to the floor. Gaze at your big toes.

2 Inhaling, lift the torso, pulling back on your feet while pushing the balls and heels evenly forward. Straighten the spine and lift the chest.



**ALTERNATIVE**

If you cannot reach the outer edges of your feet, wrap a strap under the balls of your feet and hold each end. As you push forward with your heels and balls of the feet, pull back on the strap with both hands.



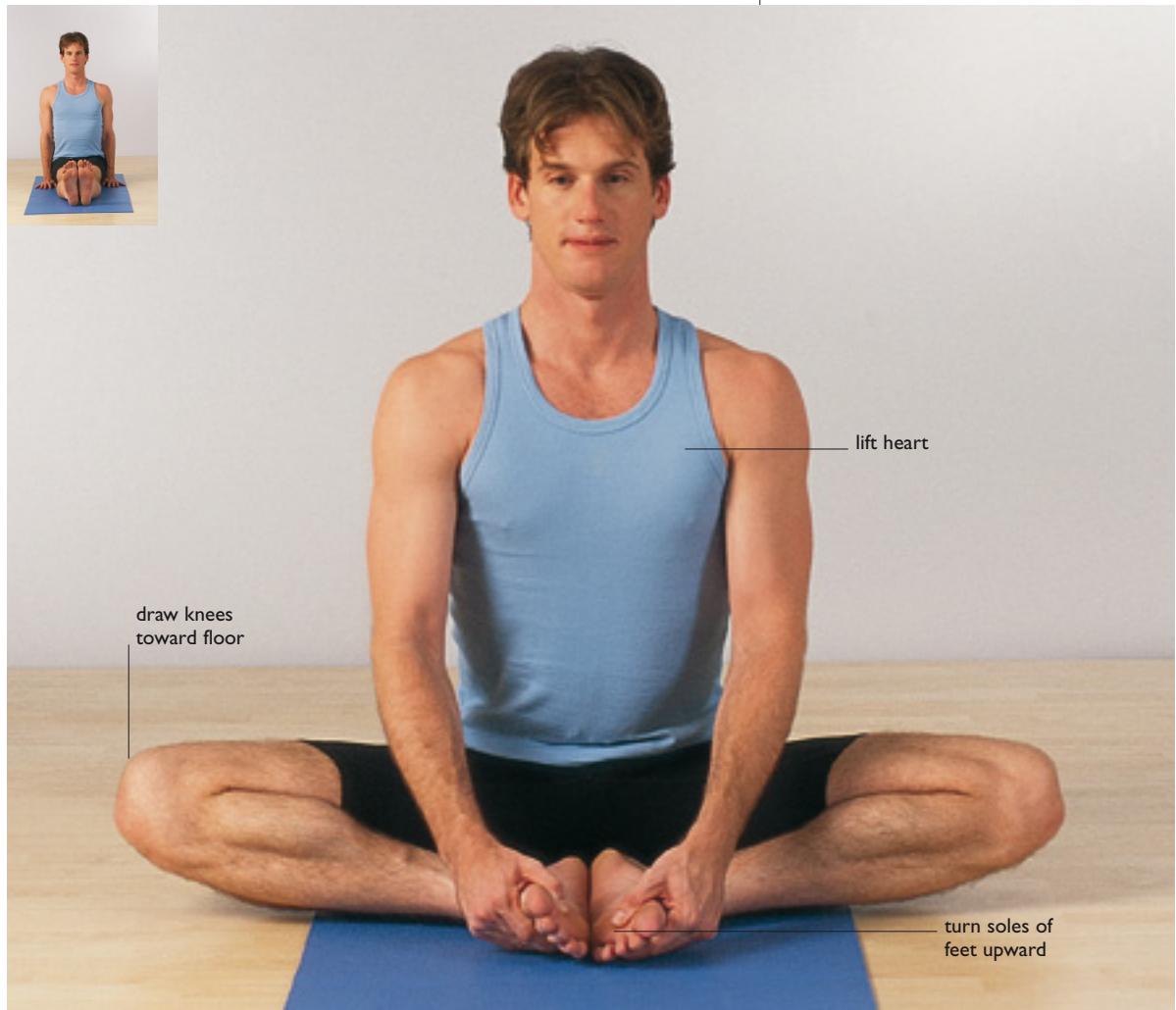
3 Exhaling, fold all the way forward, extending the front of your body over your legs and holding the outside edge of both feet. Lengthen the waist and push the sitting bones into the floor. Rotate your thighs slightly inward, keeping your legs straight and firm. Hold the full pose for five to eight breaths. Then inhale and return to *Dandasana*, ready for the next pose.

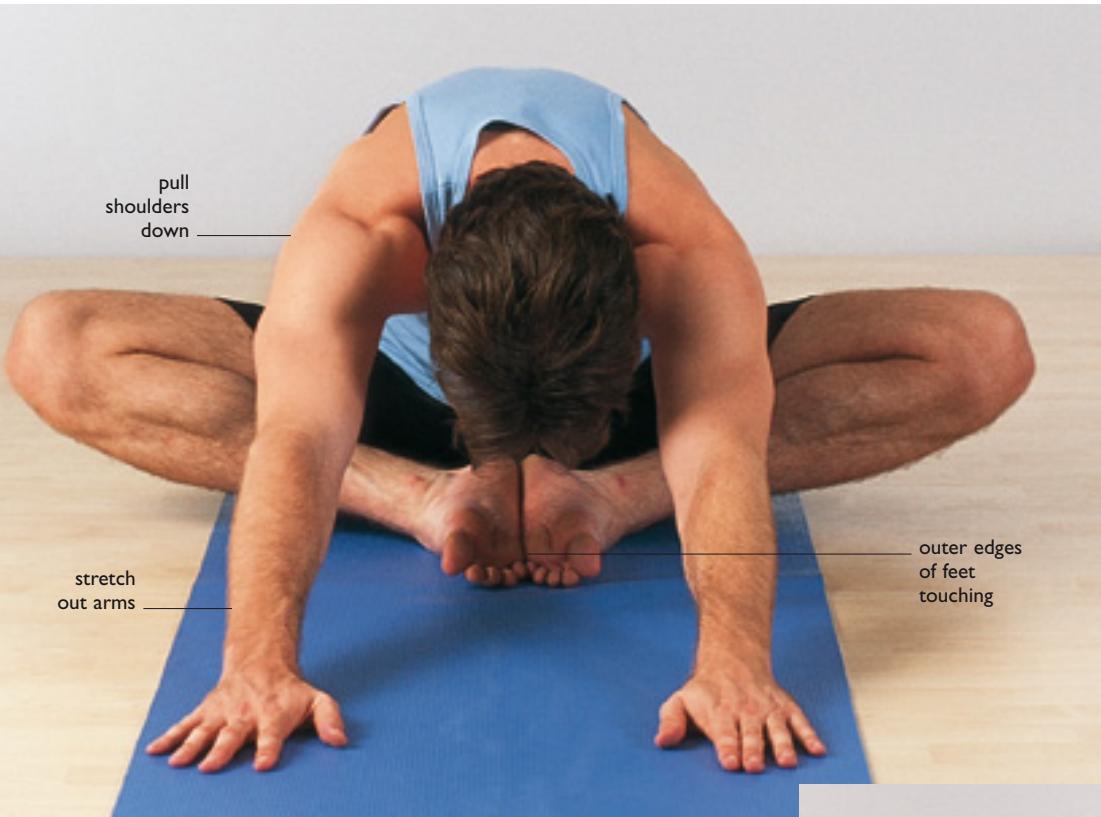
BADDHA KONASANA

Bound Angle

This posture is wonderful for relieving menstrual cramps and an excellent prenatal pose. It also helps with urinary disorders and can alleviate symptoms of sciatica. Do not force the knees down to the floor, and let the groin open naturally. If you suffer from knee pain, place folded blankets under each leg for support. Hold for five to eight breaths.

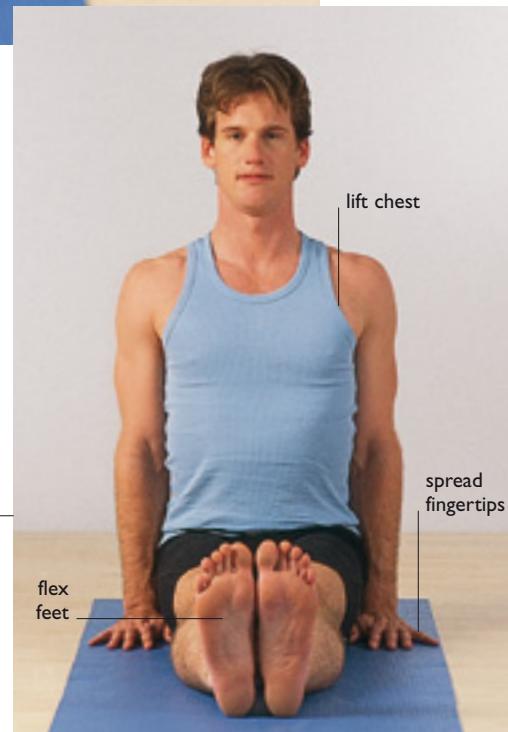
1 Sit on the floor with your legs out straight in front of you and your arms at your sides. Inhaling, fold your legs in, and use your hands to bring the heels together next to the groin. Roll the pelvis so the sitting bones are pressing straight down. Engage *mula* and *uddiyana bandha*. Gaze forward.





2 Exhaling, fold the body forward from the hips into *Baddha konasana*. Keep the sitting bones pressed to the floor. Release the feet and reach forward with your arms, stretching out the fingertips. Lengthen the spine, creating space between each vertebrae. Keep your heels and knees down. Gaze at the floor. Hold for five to eight breaths.

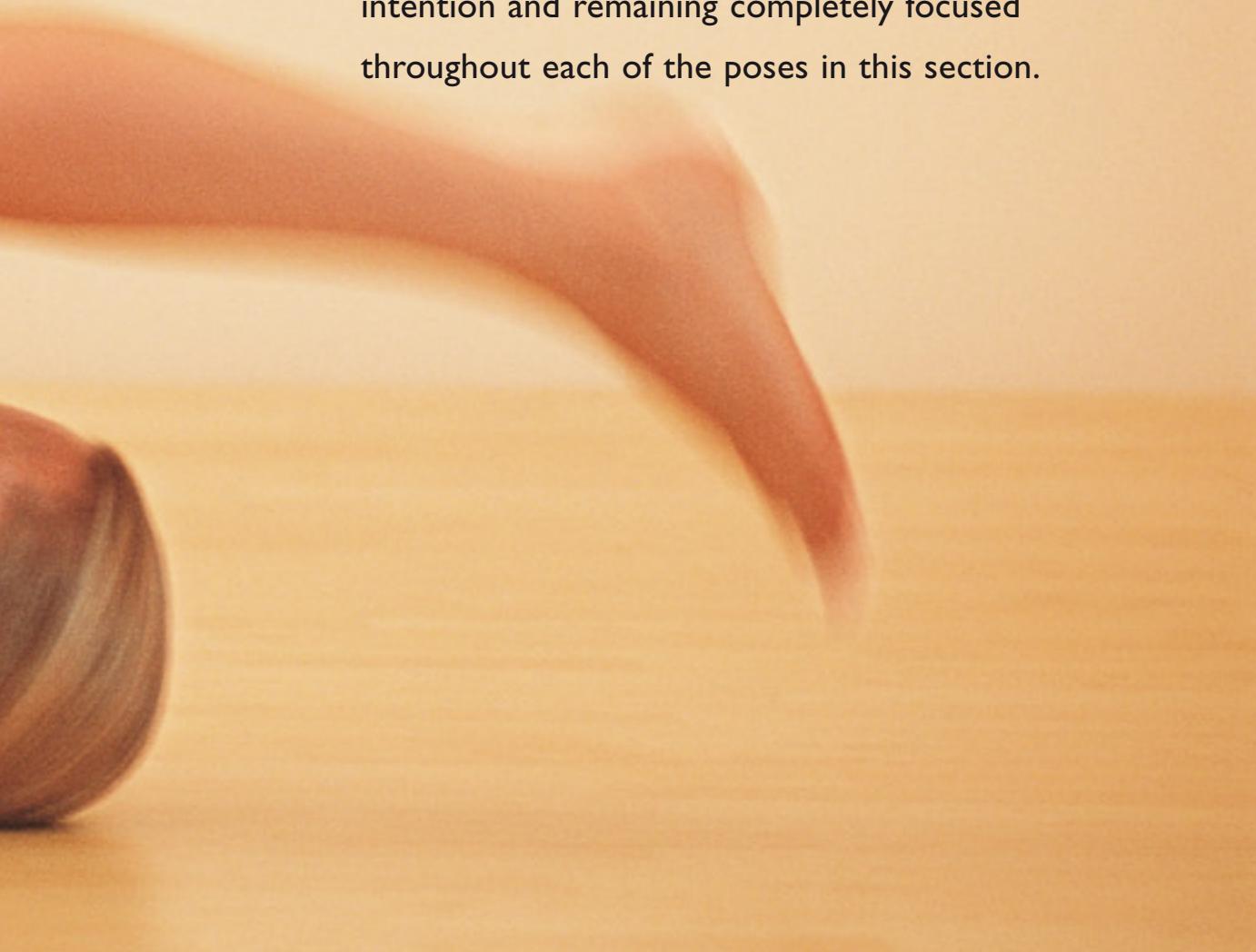
3 Inhaling, lift your torso up straight and extend your legs parallel in front of you. Place your hands on the floor beside your hips with fingertips facing forward. Flex your feet and gaze straight ahead, and get ready for the next pose.





INVERTED POSES

Apprehension is the greatest obstacle you will face in practicing this sequence of inverted postures. Their challenging nature demands that you push your body to the limit of its ability without causing injury. This is known as “playing your edge.” I cannot overemphasize the importance of moving with intention and remaining completely focused throughout each of the poses in this section.



SALAMBA SIRSASANA & BALASANA

Headstand & Child's Pose

The Headstand is considered the king of all poses. When you stand on your head, the blood flows to the brain and the mind becomes alert and clear. It is a wonderful antidote for insomnia and headaches. However, if you have high blood pressure or a cervical spine injury, it is best to consult a qualified teacher before trying this pose. Hold the pose for at least 25 breaths.

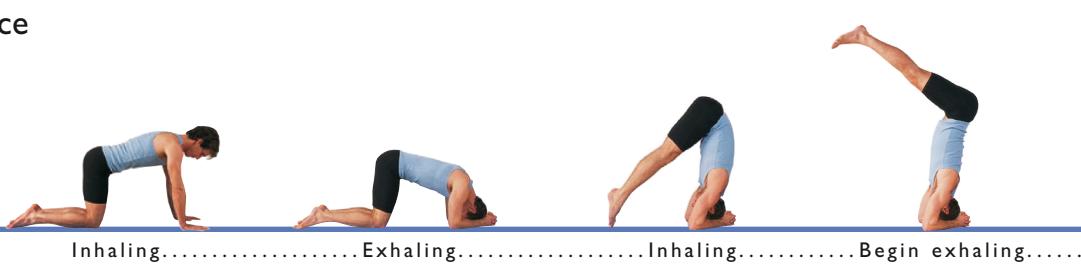
1 Get onto all fours with knees hip-width apart and hands shoulder-width apart. Exhaling, lower the crown of your head and your forearms to the floor. Interlace your fingers and place the outer edges of your hands on the floor. Draw in the elbows so they align with the shoulders.



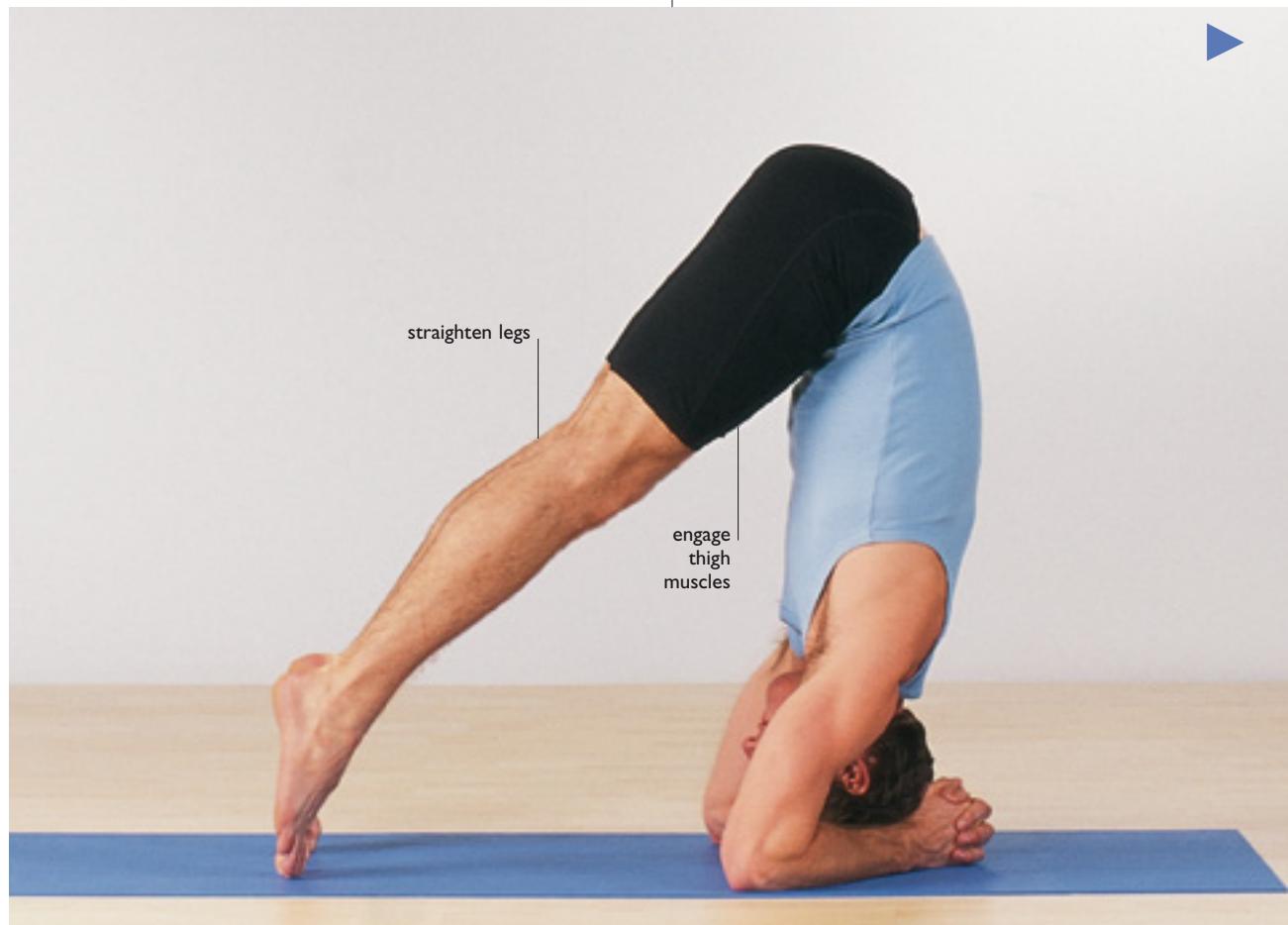
Interlaced fingers cup the top of the head with heels of the thumbs touching the back of the head.



whole sequence at a glance



2 Inhaling, distribute your body weight evenly onto the forearms. Engage both *mula* and *uddiyana bandhas*. Straighten your legs and slowly walk your feet toward your face, shifting the hips back. Gaze toward your feet.



.....Finish exhaling and inhale.....Exhaling.....Inhaling.....Exhaling

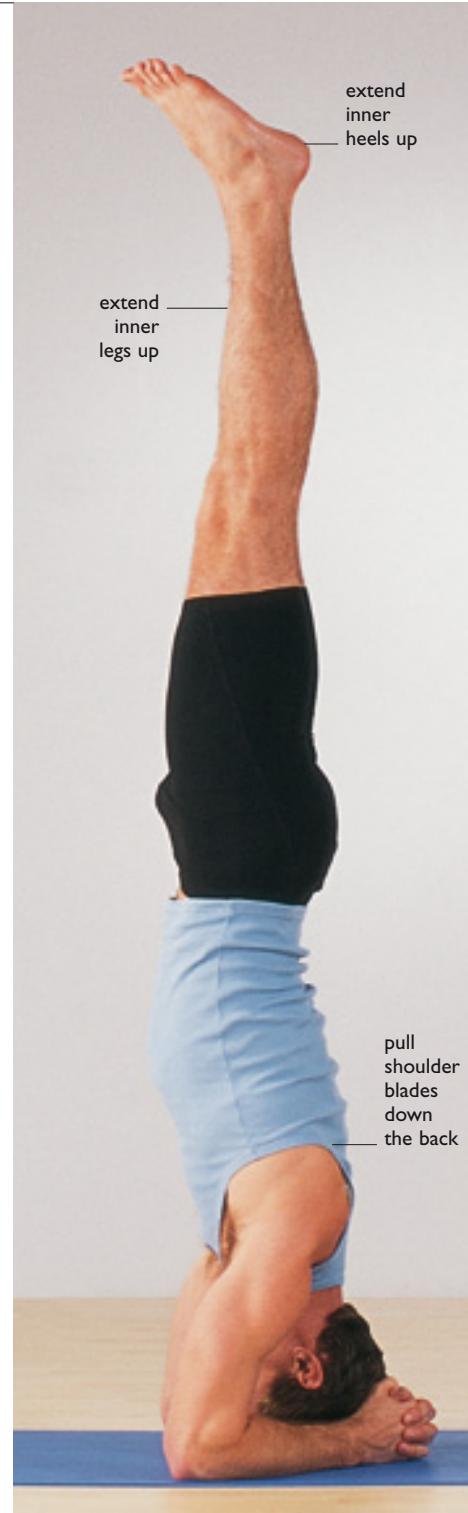
3 Exhaling, lift your legs into the air. Shift your hips back farther than your hands, so that your weight is resting on the forearms evenly. Gaze straight ahead.



ALTERNATIVE

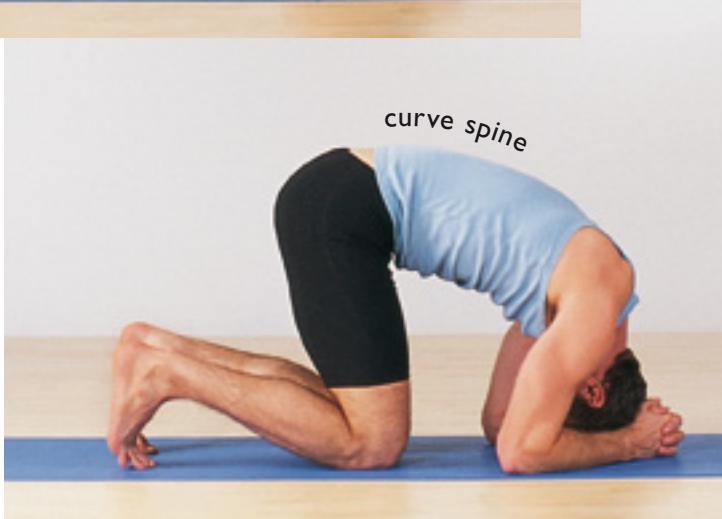
If you cannot balance with straight legs, then bend the knees and draw up the lower leg first. Alternatively, lift one leg at a time. You may find it helpful to begin by doing the headstand against a wall.

4 Continue exhaling and extend the inner edges of the feet to the ceiling, straightening your legs into the full pose. Pull the shoulder blades firmly down the back and lengthen the back of the neck. Continue to press down through the forearms and sides of the hands. Gaze upward. Hold the headstand for at least 25 breaths.



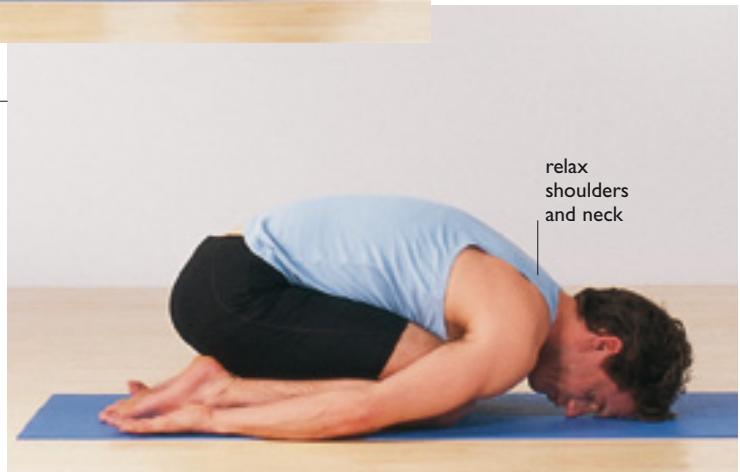


5 Exhaling, slowly lower your feet to the floor, shifting your hips forward. Keep your legs together and straight as you bring your toes to the floor. Gaze at your feet.



6 Inhale as the balls of your feet touch the floor. Bend your legs and lower the knees to the floor in a crouching position. Rest feet on curled-under toes.

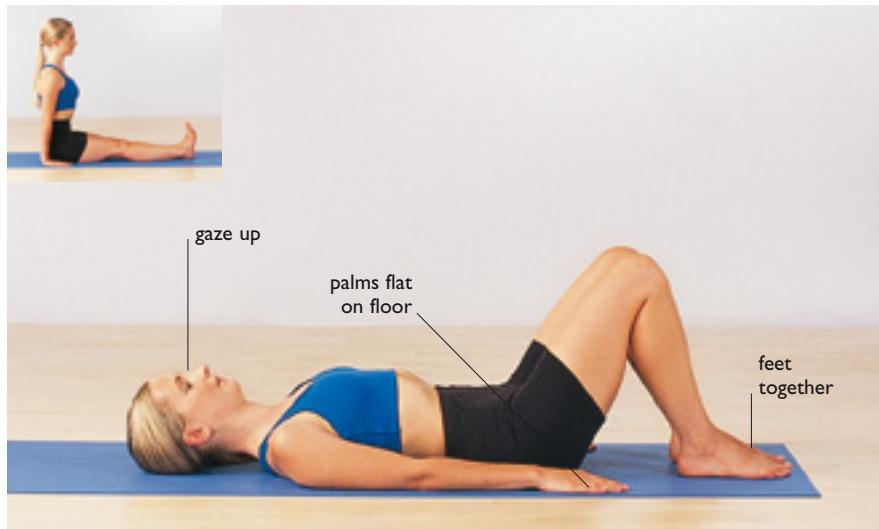
7 Exhaling, unlace your fingers and bring your arms to the sides of your legs with the palms facing upward. Lower your hips so your legs are folded. Place your forehead on the floor and rest in child's pose, *Balasana*, until all tension is released in the shoulders and neck. When you are ready, sit up straight, ready for the next pose.



SALAMBA SARVANGASANA

Shoulder Stand

If the Headstand is considered the king of poses, the Shoulder Stand is considered the queen. In Sanskrit *sarvanga* means “entire body,” and the whole body does indeed benefit from the Shoulder Stand. This pose improves the circulation and breathing, and relieves constipation. Hold the pose for at least 25 breaths. Then move straight on to the Plow and the Ear Pressure Pose shown on the next two pages.



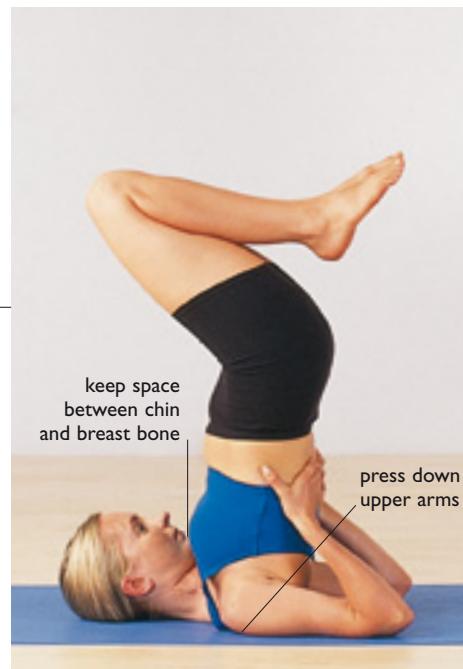
1 Sit on the floor with your legs out straight in front of you. Exhaling, lay down on your back. Bend the knees and draw your legs up, placing your feet flat on the floor and together. Rest your arms by the side of the body. Inhale.

2 Exhaling, press your hands into the floor and lift the bent legs and hips up in the air. Straighten the legs as your feet reach over your head.





3 Inhaling, extend your legs so the tips of your toes touch the floor. Keep the legs very straight and firm. Bring your hands together, interlacing your fingers. Keep your arms straight and firm. Walk the shoulders in and draw the elbows close to each other.



4 Exhaling, place the palms of your hands on the middle back without moving the elbows outward. Point your fingertips toward the ceiling. Bend the knees and lift them up, folding your legs in half. Inhale completely.



5 Exhaling, straighten the legs into *Sarvangasana*, drawing the entire spine into the body. Lift and firm the legs, extending through the balls of the feet. Gaze toward your toes. Hold for 25 breaths. Then move straight into *Halasana* (p.138), or come down into *Savasana* (p.144).

HALASANA & KARNAPIDASANA

Plow & Ear Pressure Pose

The shape made by the body in the first of these poses, *Halasana*, resembles a plow, hence its name. Both *Halasana* and *Karnapidasana* rejuvenate the abdominal organs and can help relieve backache. In Sanskrit *karna* means “ear” and *pida* means “pressure.” Hold each pose for five to eight breaths.



1 From the shoulder stand position move into *Halasana*. Exhaling, lower your feet over your head until your toes touch the floor. Extend through the heels, firming and straightening the legs. Hold the pose for five to eight breaths.

2 Now move into *Karnapidasana*.

Exhaling, bend your legs and place your knees next to your ears if you can. Rest the tops of your feet on the floor. Bring your arms out straight and place on the floor above you. Interlace your fingers. Gaze forward. Hold for five to eight breaths.



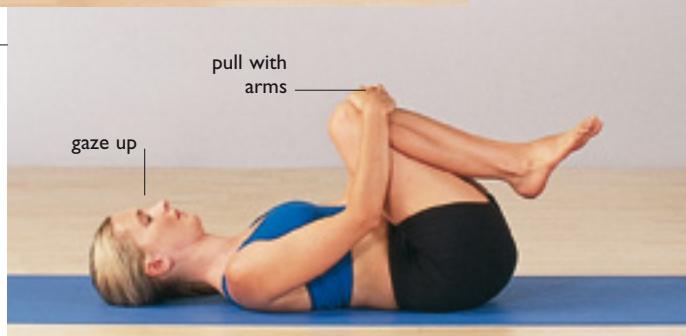


3 Exhaling, release the hands and press your palms firmly into the floor. Straighten your legs, lifting them off the floor. Gradually lower the hips to the floor, engaging the abdominal and thigh muscles.

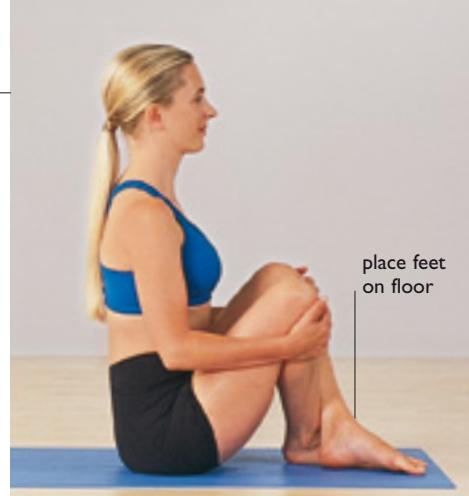


4 At the end of the exhale, bring your legs right down to the floor. Inhaling, relax the entire body as you lie flat on the floor for several breaths. Gaze upward.

5 Exhaling, raise your legs from the floor and clasp your knees with your hands. Pull your knees toward your chest. Make sure the lower region of the spine remains in contact with the floor and draw the shoulders down the back.



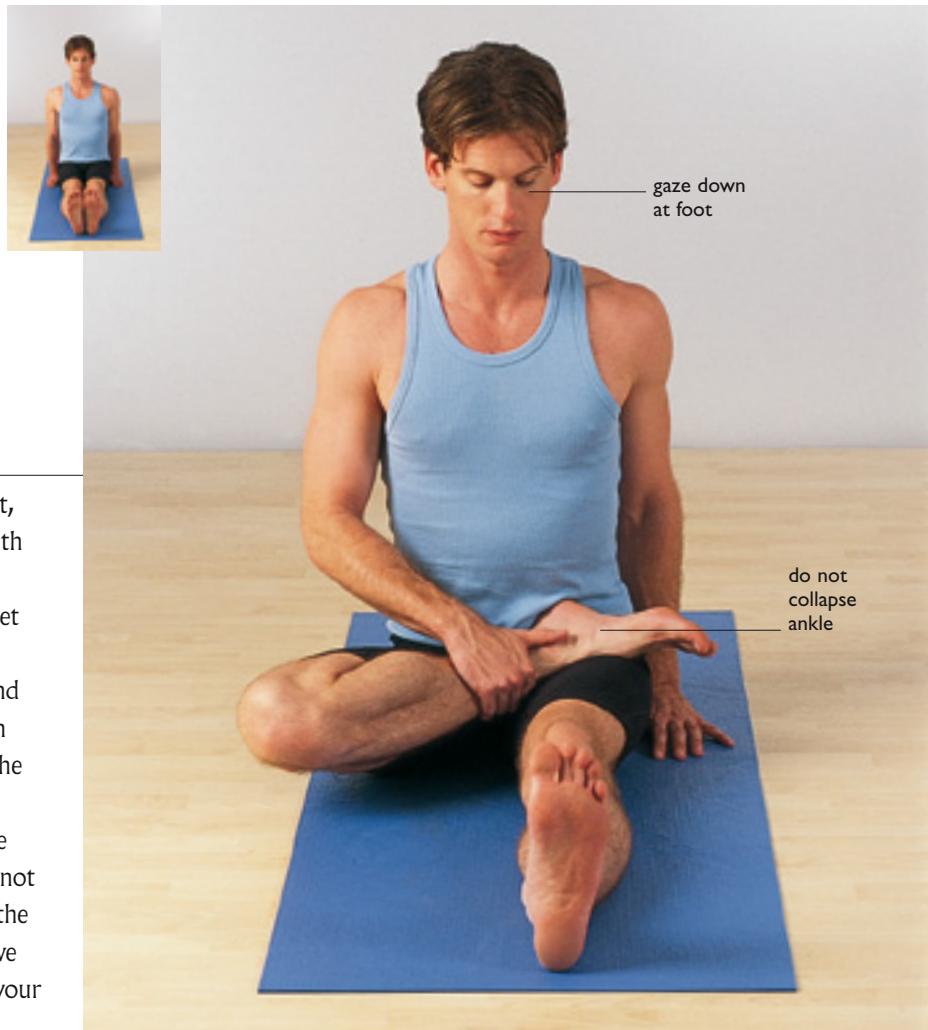
6 Inhaling, cross your legs at the shins and rock up to a sitting position, still holding your knees. Sit up straight with both feet flat on the floor. Lengthen the spine, extending through the crown of the head. Prepare to extend your legs for *Padmasana 1* (pp.140–141).



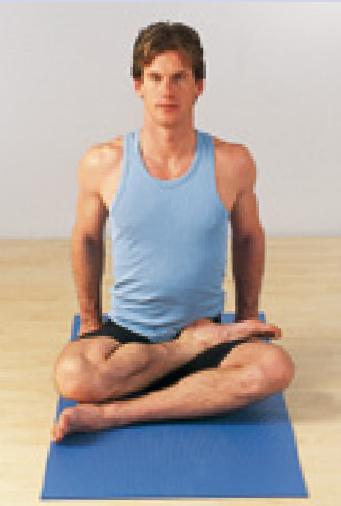
PADMASANA 1

Lotus 1

The Lotus is the posture of meditation and most commonly associated with yoga. It has several variants of varying degrees of difficulty. Start by doing only the version shown here. Then, when you are comfortable with it, move on to also do the more advanced version shown on pages 142–143. If you have very stiff hips or feel any pinching or discomfort in the knees, do the alternative to the full pose. Hold the full pose for 10 breaths.



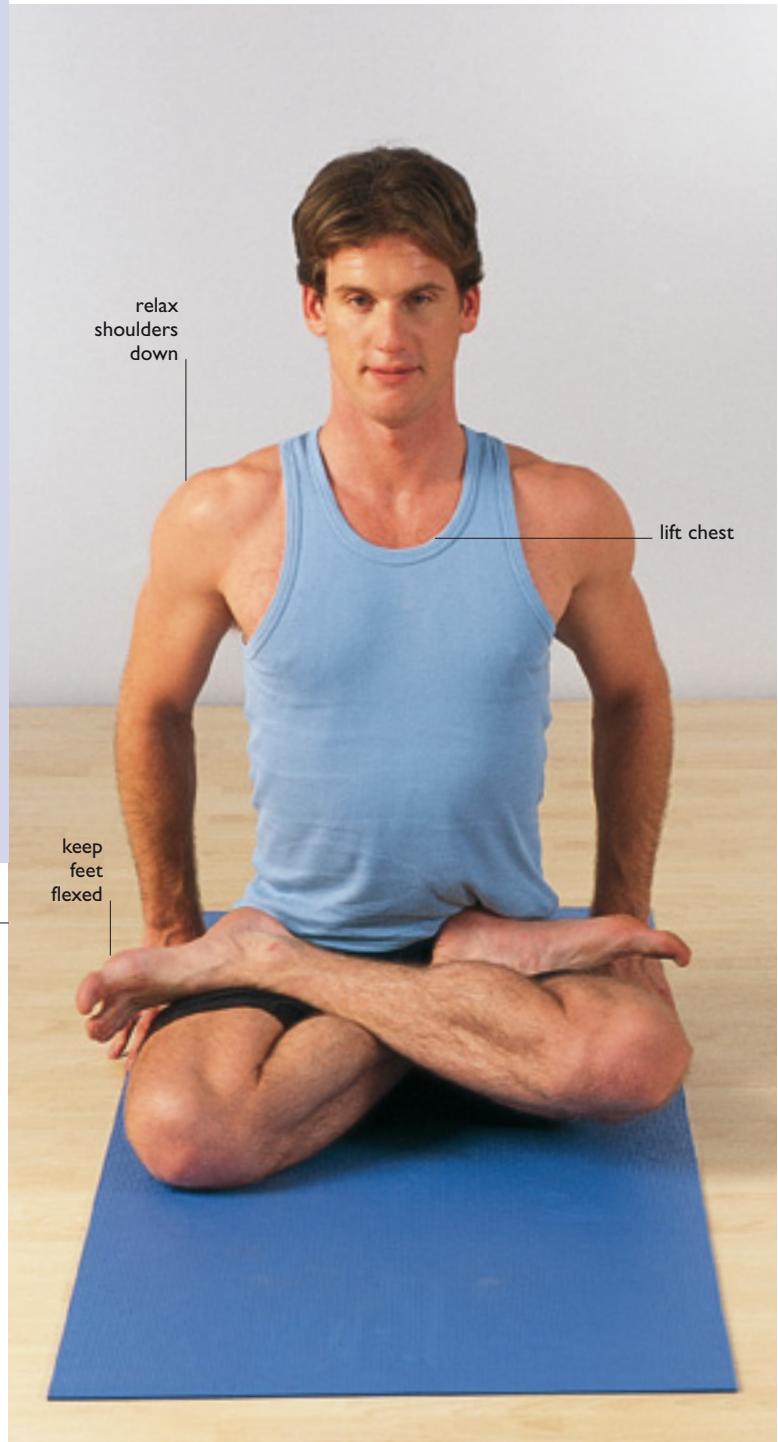
- 1 Inhaling, sit up straight, arms by your sides, with your legs out straight in front of you and your feet flexed. Grasp your right ankle with your right hand and fold your right leg in toward your belly. Place the right foot on top of the upper left thigh. Keep the right foot flexed and do not allow the inner ankle of the right leg to collapse. Move your right arm back by your side, palm on the floor.



ALTERNATIVE

If you are unable to place your left foot on top of the upper right thigh, then place the left foot in front of the right knee, resting it on the floor. Bring the left arm back to your side. With practice your hips will open, and it is important to be patient.

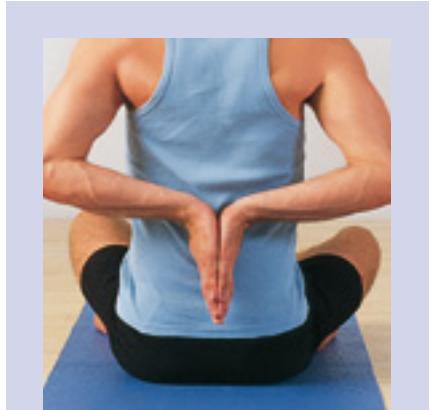
- 2** Exhaling, grasp your left ankle with your left hand and fold your left leg in toward your belly. Place the left foot on top of the upper right thigh, keeping the left foot flexed. Press the right knee down toward the floor, bringing the sitting bones forward if necessary. Do not force both knees to the floor. Bring your left arm back to your side and gaze forward. Hold *Padmasana 1* for 10 breaths before moving into *Padmasana 2* (pp.142–143), if you feel able, or *Savasana* (p.144).



PADMASANA 2

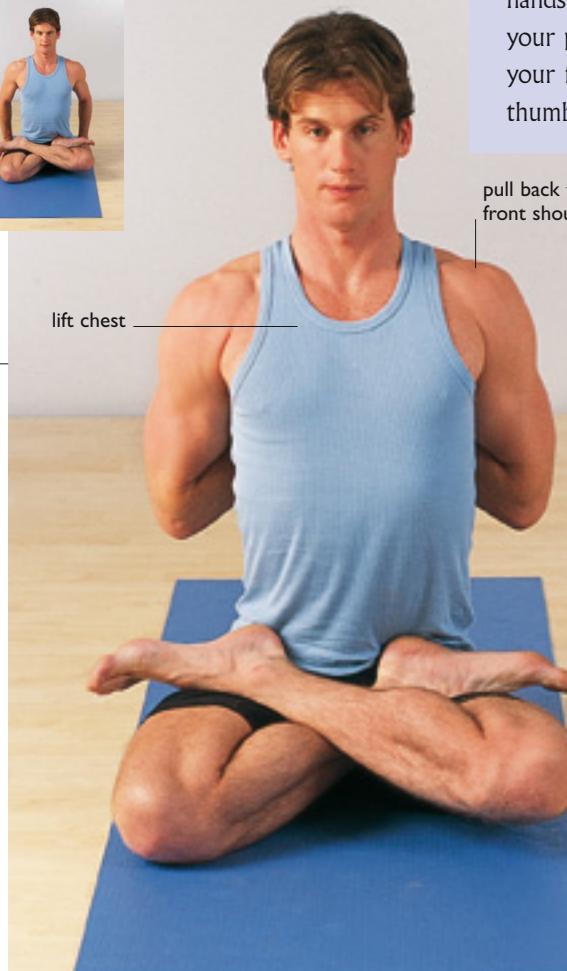
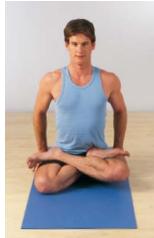
Lotus 2

Once you have mastered *Padmasana 1*, you are ready to extend the sequence by incorporating the second variation of the Lotus, which is shown here. This particular variant not only releases the hips, but also stretches the spine and exercises the shoulder muscles. Hold the full pose for 10 breaths.



ALTERNATIVE

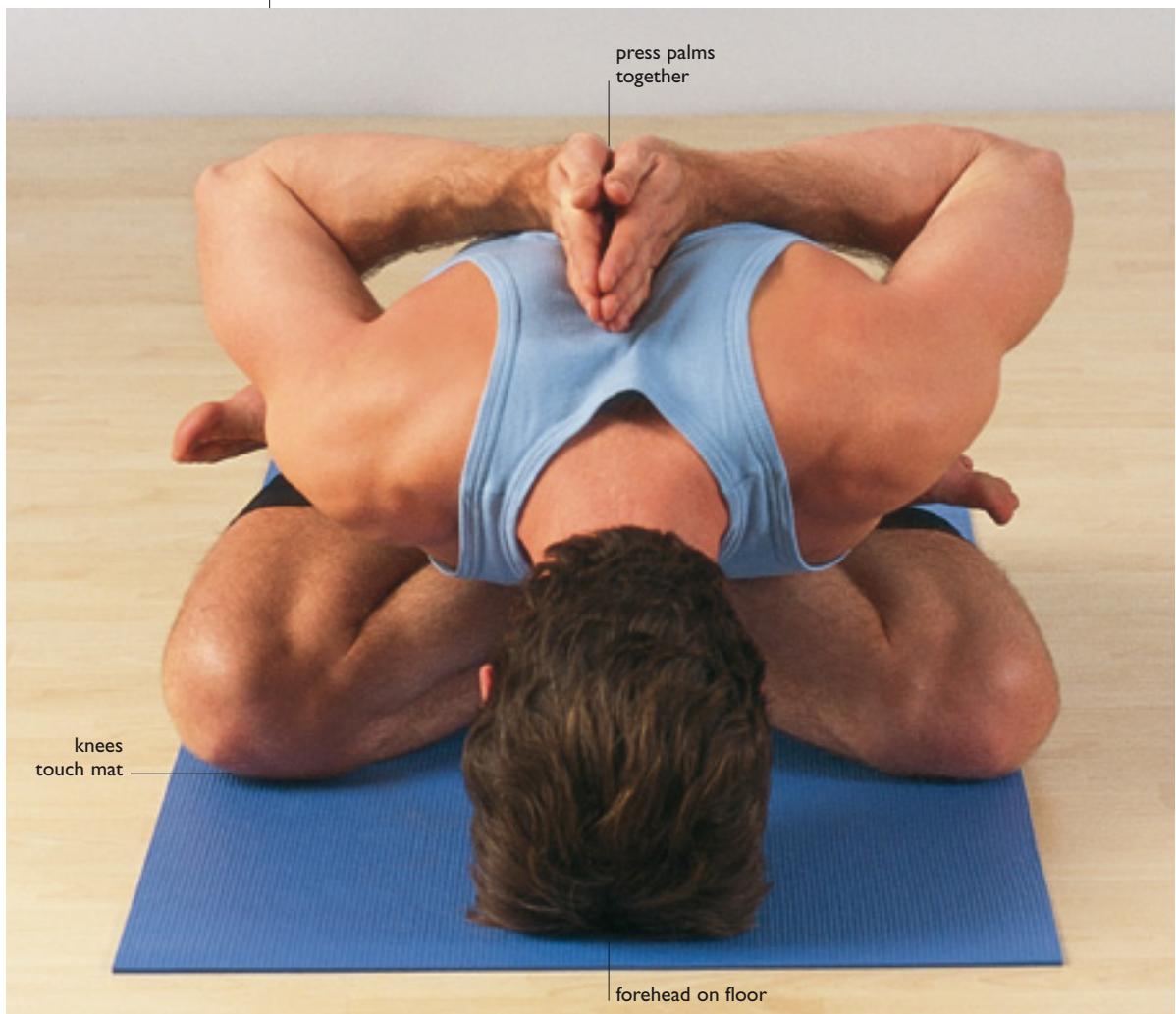
If you are unable to place your hands in prayer position, press your palms together and point your fingertips down, so your thumbs touch your spine.



Press your palms together and reach up with the fingers. Keep the shoulder blades down.

- Start from the Lotus 1 full pose (see p.141). Inhaling, bend your arms behind your back and bring the hands together in prayer form with fingertips pointing upward and your little fingers touching the spine. Press the palms together and gaze straight ahead.

2 Exhaling, fold your body forward, keeping your hands in prayer position behind your back. If possible, touch the floor with your forehead. Draw down the back of the body to move the sitting bones toward the floor. Gaze downward. Hold the full pose for 10 breaths, before releasing and sitting up straight, ready to lie on your back in *Savasana* (p.144).



SAVASANA

Corpse

The final pose in every program, *Savasana* allows you to enter a meditative state while resting your body. In Sanskrit *sava* means “corpse,” and this pose requires you to relax completely by lying perfectly still, and to focus the mind on internal sensation to achieve a meditative state. When your mind begins to wander, as it will do, note that it is wandering and bring your attention back to the present moment of pure sensation. Remain in this pose for 10 to 15 minutes.

Exhaling, lay down flat on your back with your arms and legs making a 30° angle to the body. Let your hands and feet fall out to the side, palms facing upward. Draw the shoulders down the back. Breathe naturally, close your eyes, and allow the weight of the body to melt into the floor.



THE PROGRAMS



30-MINUTE PROGRAM

The following program is designed to give you a complete yoga practice if you have only half an hour to spare. It is the least strenuous of the three programs detailed. Before beginning, you need to warm up your body. Choose one sitting and one standing warm-up exercise from the four shown on pages 14–17. After this, do the Sun Salutation A sequence twice (*pp.20–29*) and the Sun Salutation B twice (*pp.30–41*). Next, jump out to the side (*pp.46–47*) and begin the program. Practice the right side and then the left side in all bilateral postures, and refer to the main text for all the steps in the postures and transition moves until you know them well.



1 Utthita Trikonasana
(*pp.48–49*)



2 Utthita Parsvakonasana
(*pp.52–53*)



3 Parivrtta Trikonasana
(*pp.62–63*)



4 Parivrtta Parsvakonasana
(*pp.60–61*)



5 Prasarita Padottanasana A
(*pp.64–65*)



6 Padangusthasana & Padahastasana
(*pp.68–71*)



7 Vrksasana
(pp.72–73)

8 Standing to Lying on Belly
(pp.82–83)



9 Salabhasana
(pp.84–85)

TRANSITION MOVE

10 Bow to Sitting
(pp.90–93)



11 Navasana
(pp.104–105)



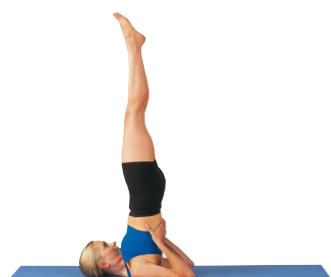
12 Janu Sirsasana
(pp.114–115)



13 Parivrtta Janu Sirsasana
(pp.116–117)



14 Paschimattanasana
(pp.126–127)



15 Salamba Sarvangasana
(pp.136–137)



16 Savasana
(pp.144)

60-MINUTE PROGRAM

This program will give you a complete yoga practice in one hour. Before beginning this 60-minute dynamic yoga program, warm up your body with one sitting and one standing warm-up exercise (*see pp.14–17*). Continue to warm up your body by doing Sun Salutation A three times (*pp.20–29*), and Sun Salutation B (*pp.30–41*) three times. Next, jump out to the side (*pp.46–47*) and begin the program. Practice the right side and then the left side in all bilateral postures, and refer to the main text for any steps in the postures and transition moves of which you are unsure.



1 Utthita Trikonasana
(*pp.48–49*)



2 Virabhadrasana B
(*pp.50–51*)



3 Utthita Parsvakonasana
(*pp.52–53*)



4 Virabhadrasana A
(*pp.58–59*)



5 Parivrtta Parsvakonasana
(*pp.60–61*)



6 Parivrtta Trikonasana
(*pp.62–63*)



7 Prasarita Padottanasana A
(pp.64–67)



8 Padangusthasana & Padahastasana
(pp.68–71)



9 Vrksasana
(pp.72–73)



10 Virabhadrasana C
(pp.74–75)



TRANSITION MOVE



11 Standing to Lying on Belly
(pp.82–83)

12 Salabhasana
(pp.84–85)



TRANSITION MOVE

13 Dhanurasana
(pp.88–89)



14 Bow to Sitting
(pp.90–91)



15 Urdhva Prasarita Padasana
(pp.96–97)



16 Navasana
(pp.104–105)



17 Bakasana
(pp.106–107)



TRANSITION MOVE



19 Janu Sirsasana
(pp.114–115)



20 Parivrtta Janu Sirsasana
(pp.116–117)



21 Marichyasana A
(pp.122–123)



22 Marichyasana C
(pp.124–125)



23 Paschimattanasana
(pp.126–127)



24 Buddha Konasana
(pp.128–129)



25 Salamba Sarvangasana
(pp.136–137)



26 Savasana
(pp.144)

90-MINUTE PROGRAM

The following program is designed to give you a complete yoga practice over 90 minutes. It includes all the *asanas* in the book and is the most strenuous of the three programs. Before beginning this program, warm up your body with both sitting and both standing warm-up exercises (see pp.14–17). Continue with five Sun Salutation A sequences (pp.20–29), and five Sun Salutation B (pp.30–41). Next, jump out to the side (pp.46–47) and begin the program. Practice the right side and then the left in all bilateral postures, and refer to the main text for any steps in the postures or transition moves of which you are uncertain.



1 Utthita Trikonasana
(pp.48–49)

2 Virabhadrasana B
(pp.50–51)

3 Utthita Parsvakonasana
(pp.52–53)



4 Ardha Chandrasana
(pp.54–55)

5 Parsvottanasana
(pp.56–57)

6 Virabhadrasana A
(pp.58–59)





7 Parivrtta Parsvakonasana
(pp.60–61)



8 Parivrtta Trikonasana
(pp.62–63)



9 Prasarita Padottanasana A
(pp.64–67)



10 Padangusthasana
(pp.68–71)



11 Padahastasana
(pp.68–71)



12 Vrksasana
(pp.72–73)



13 Virabhadrasana C
(pp.74–75)



14 Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana
(pp.76–79)



TRANSITION MOVE

15 Standing to Lying on Belly
(pp.82–83)



16 Salabhasana
(pp.84–85)



17 Dhanurasana
(pp.88–89)



TRANSITION MOVE

18 Bow to Sitting
(pp.90–93)



19 Urdhva Dhanurasana
(pp.94–95)



20 Urdhva Prasarita Padasana
(pp.96–97)



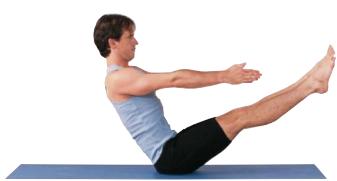
21 Jathara Parivartanasana
(pp.98–99)



TRANSITION MOVE



22 Lying on Back to Sitting
(pp.100–101)



23 Ardha Navasana
(pp.102–103)



24 Paripurna Navasana
(pp.104–105)



25 Bakasana
(pp. 106–107)



TRANSITION MOVE



27 Janu Sirsasana
(pp. 114–115)



28 Parivrtta Janu Sirsasana
(pp. 116–117)



29 Ardha Baddha Padma Paschimattanasana
(pp. 118–119)



30 Ardha Matsyendrasana
(pp. 120–121)



31 Marichyasana A
(pp. 122–123)



32 Marichyasana C
(pp. 124–125)



33 Paschimattanasana
(pp. 126–127)



34 Baddha Konasana
(pp. 128–129)



35 Salamba Sirsasana
(pp. 132–134)



36 Balasana
(pp. 135)



37 Salamba Sarvangasana
(pp. 136–137)



38 Halasana
(pp. 138–139)



39 Karnapidasana
(pp. 138–139)



40 Padmasana 1
(pp. 140–141)



41 Padmasana 2
(pp. 142–143)



42 Savasana
(p. 144)

FINDING A YOGA TEACHER

Dynamic is just one wonderful way of describing a style of yoga that uses the Sun Salutations to link several postures, while incorporating the breath and the *bandhas*. So a yoga teacher who adheres to its basic principles may also describe his or her class as: power flow, Ashtanga flow, Hatha flow, or Vinyasa flow. Each of these classes can be unique in its sequence of postures.

A good yoga teacher is someone who combines sensitivity, creativity, and inspiration with technical knowledge and experience. The following online yoga websites offer teacher directories for a wide range of yoga styles: www.yogasite.com; www.yogadirectory.com; www.yogafinder.com. If you would like to contact me directly, look me up online at www.dynamicyoga.net.



One-on-one tuition is incredibly helpful when fine-tuning body position. Here, I am adjusting the alignment of a student's shoulders and hips as she practices *Utthita trikonasana* (pp.48–49).

GLOSSARY OF SANSKRIT TERMS

<i>adho mukha</i>	face downward	<i>parivrtta</i>	revolved
<i>ahimsa</i>	non-violence	<i>parsva</i>	side
<i>angustha</i>	big toe	<i>paschimattana</i>	posterior stretch
<i>aparigraha</i>	non-attachment	<i>prana</i>	breath
<i>ardha</i>	half	<i>pranayama</i>	rhythmic control of breath
<i>asana</i>	posture	<i>prasarita</i>	expanded
<i>ashtanga</i>	eight limbs	<i>pratyahara</i>	merging of the senses
<i>asteya</i>	non-stealing	<i>purva</i>	east
<i>brahmacharya</i>	purity	<i>purvottana</i>	anterior stretch
<i>baddha</i>	bound	<i>raja-yoga</i>	path of meditation
<i>baka</i>	crane	<i>salabha</i>	locust
<i>bandha</i>	lock	<i>santosha</i>	contentment
<i>bhakti</i>	worship	<i>satya</i>	truth
<i>chandra</i>	moon	<i>sarvanga</i>	whole body
<i>chaturanga</i>	number four	<i>saucha</i>	purity
<i>danda</i>	staff	<i>sava</i>	corpse
<i>dhanu</i>	bow	<i>setu</i>	bridge
<i>dharana</i>	concentration	<i>sirsa</i>	head
<i>dhyana</i>	meditation	<i>surya</i>	sun
<i>hala</i>	plow	<i>svadhaya</i>	self-study
<i>hasta</i>	hand	<i>svana</i>	dog
<i>hatha</i>	force	<i>tada</i>	mountain
<i>jathara</i>	abdomen	<i>tapas</i>	austerity
<i>janu</i>	knee	<i>trikona</i>	triangle
<i>karma</i>	action	<i>uddiyana</i>	flying upward
<i>karna-pida</i>	pressure around the ear	<i>ujjai</i>	victorious
<i>kona</i>	angle	<i>urdhva mukha</i>	face upward
<i>mula</i>	root	<i>utkata</i>	fierce
<i>niyama</i>	self-purification	<i>uttana</i>	intense stretch
<i>namaskara</i>	honorable salutation	<i>utthita</i>	extended
<i>nava</i>	boat	<i>virabhadra</i>	warrior
<i>pada</i>	foot	<i>vrksa</i>	tree
<i>padangustha</i>	big toe	<i>yama</i>	ethical disciplines
<i>padma</i>	lotus	<i>yoga</i>	union

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Certified yoga instructor **KIA MEAUX** runs her popular Dynamic classes in the San Francisco Bay area. Her trademark is an energizing workout that combines graceful movements with a powerful breathing technique and a focused gaze. Working with students of all abilities, she helps to create a personal yoga program suited to each individual's needs. Kia was first introduced to yoga while traveling in India in the 1980s, and has since studied with masters of Ashtanga, Iyengar, and Hatha Yoga. She continues to gain knowledge from various forms of yoga and meditation in order to further help her students recognize their own inner strength and beauty.

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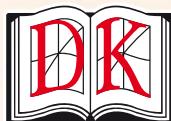
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