



**When most runners** think "yoga," they likely imagine an active practice: forward fold into upward-facing dog into downward-facing dog, and so on. These better-known types of yoga—including flow, power, and hot varieties—build strength, balance, and range of motion in a way running does not. These classes appeal to runners because you *feel* like you're working out.

Yin yoga, on the other hand, involves holding gentle poses for up to 10 (!) minutes. Remaining still for that long is hard—especially for runners—but relaxing into these poses promotes joint mobility and prevents degeneration. Plus, the inward focus developed through yin yoga can help you better tolerate discomfort and keep calm in the face of adversity—skills that carry over into running.

To practice, come into a pose and go to the "first point of resistance," where you feel a mild stretch in the areas the pose targets. Then, stay there: As your muscles relax, the stress will transfer to your denser connective tissues.

## BODY SHOP

# REAL SLOW

*Holding yoga poses for minutes at a time releases tension in the body and the mind.*

BY TERRY COCKBURN







### 1. Twisted Deer

**HOW** Sit with your feet on the floor, mat width apart, dropping your knees to one side and creating a pinwheel shape with your legs. Walk your hands away from your body and drop to your forearms. Hold, then repeat on the other side.

**WHY** This pose internally and externally rotates the legs, which is a complementary action to the constant hip flexion and extension that takes place while running. This pose also gently stretches the quadratus lumborum, a spine and hip stabilizer located in the lower part of the back.

### 3. Inside Dragon

**HOW** Step your left foot forward, slightly wider than your hips, planting your hands or forearms inside your left leg on the floor. Hold, then repeat on the other side.

**WHY** This pose targets the hip flexor of the back leg. Running can shorten your hip flexors, which then pull on other areas of the body, creating imbalance. You'll also feel it in your front leg's inner thigh and groin, areas that are vital for knee stability.

Start by holding each pose for three minutes; as you gain experience, add time. In between, rest on your stomach or back, observing the effects of the previous pose.



### 2. Sphinx

**HOW** Place your elbows under your shoulders with legs relaxed. Keep your head in a neutral position, let it fall forward, or rest it on a block.

**WHY** Running, poor posture, and aging can flatten the curvature of your spine, which is curved to absorb the stress of movement. Sphinx pose causes a gentle compression to help maintain spinal health and integrity.



### 4. Sleeping Swan

**HOW** Take your left knee forward, externally rotating your thigh. You may place a block or blanket under your thigh (near your knee). Keep your left shin as parallel to the front of the mat as is comfortable. Fold forward to the degree you safely can, avoiding sensation in the knee. Hold, then repeat on the other side.

**WHY** You'll release two tight areas (your outer hip on the forward leg and the hip flexor of the back leg) and promote proper hip function.



### 5. Cat Tail

**HOW** Lie on your left side, supporting your head in your hand. Draw your right knee up to rest on the ground and reach your right hand to hold your left foot. Stay on your side, or roll back to achieve a slight twist in your spine. Hold, then repeat on the other side.

**WHY** Running shortens the front line of the body, including the fronts of the thighs. The quadriceps benefit from a release in this pose.



Terry Cockburn, a 10-time marathoner, has been teaching yoga since 2006 and owns Freeport Yoga Company in Freeport, Maine ([freeportyogaco.com](http://freeportyogaco.com)). She works with many teams and athletes, including yin yoga advocate and 1984 Olympic Marathon gold medalist Joan Benoit Samuelson.



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