

YOGA

21 essential yoga poses to
strengthen your body
and calm your mind



TORI NEUMAN

Yoga

21 Essential Yoga Poses to Strengthen Your Body and Calm Your Mind

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Introduction

I want to thank you and congratulate you for downloading the book, “Yoga: 21 Essential Yoga Poses to Strengthen Your Body and Calm Your Mind”.

This book contains proven steps and strategies on how to do yoga properly to achieve the full benefits of the practice.

You will learn 21 of the most common poses that you will encounter in any yoga tradition. This guide is great for beginners who are just starting on their physical and spiritual journey. The different sequences will allow you to achieve any goals you have for yourself. You will also learn a few tricks and hacks to improve your practice and help you move on to more advanced poses.

Thanks again for downloading this book, I hope you enjoy it!

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Chapter 1 - Basic Concepts and Yoga Beliefs You Must Know Before You Start

Yoga is a practice that was first developed thousands of years ago and has evolved into the modern form it is today. Before you begin, it is important to understand that yoga is more than just an exercise, so you can get its full benefits .

It is a form of moving meditation that is unique to the practitioner .

Yoga is about your personal body, so anyone can practice it. Your success will not be dependent on how flexible or athletic you are. Anyone can get the benefits regardless of weight, body type or fitness level. Only push your body to the extent that you find comfortable. I encourage you to take advantage of less difficult variations of the poses when necessary, and do the more advanced versions if you are up for a challenge. Most beginners are surprised to learn that not all poses involve pretzel-like contortions, but instead simple movements that provide amazing benefits.

The ancient practice of yoga originated in India where it was practiced as a form of meditation that allowed a mortal being to achieve a heightened sense of divinity. It was never done as an exercise or a sport, rather, it was included with prayers or other sacred rituals. You will notice that many of the poses have Sanskrit names that have been translated into English. The term for a pose is an “ asana. ” You will encounter 21 asanas in this book and it would be helpful to remember all their names. Memorizing them is easy because the poses are named after objects in nature that are similar in form like animals or plants.



Always be mindful of your

breathing to help regulate body heat.

The old practitioners of yoga were most concerned with breathing. Traditional Indian belief refers to breath as the source of a person's life force. The disciplined way of breathing in yoga is called "pranayama." This involves more than simple inhaling and exhaling. Proper breathing helps in sending oxygen (life force) to all the parts of the body to allow them to function properly and avoid injury in yoga practice.

Correct breathing in yoga involves breathing in through your nose and breathing out through your nose again. A yogi does not exhale through the mouth. Also, inhale as you do upward poses and exhale as you do downward poses. In Chapter 5, you should breathe in during the upward facing dog and breathe out as you transition to downward facing dog. This method of breathing is more relaxing and does not strain your lungs.

"Ujjayi" is a type of disciplined yoga breathing that is required in more rigorous yoga traditions. This is the type of breathing that you should do for the power yoga poses in Chapter 4. It helps increase body heat quickly and spark what practitioners call the "internal fire." To do ujjayi breathing, constrict the throat and allow air to vibrate through the glottis, which creates a low, rumbling sound that is reminiscent of ocean waves. It is also believed to be similar to the breathing of newborn babies and is probably the most instinctive way of breathing for humans.

You should generate enough body heat through proper breathing so that you no longer require external heat such as an indoor heater or a portable sauna. This is why Bikram and hot yoga, which are done in heated rooms, are not preferred by yoga purists because they believe that artificial heat is unnecessary in the practice.



Be simple and forget material things that will only serve to distract you .

Another benefit of yoga is that all you really need is your body. You may see

a lot of yogis who carry designer mats to class and wear special gloves or socks to improve their performance. While these are good props to have, you do not need them to practice yoga. It only relies on your own body weight and the less distractions and accessories you have, the more in tune you will be with your physicality.

It is all right to practice yoga in a pair of simple leggings and a tank top while you are on your living room carpet. Remember that the ancient practitioners practiced yoga half-naked in caves or forests so they could be in harmony with nature and the gods.

Chapter 2 - Four Warm-up Yoga Poses



Warming up prepares your body for the rest of your yoga practice. Similar to doing any other type of physical activity, warming up helps prevent injury and improves the movement of your body. Because these poses may not seem very challenging, they are easy to take for granted. However, with any asana, you should ease into the movement and take time to appreciate the pose. Cold muscles are susceptible to strain, so be careful at the beginning of your practice, as it will set the tone for the rest of your yoga session .

Child's Pose

The child ' s pose is a very relaxing asana. It starts with you sitting down on your mat with your legs folded behind you and the tops of your feet touching the mat.

- Point your toes back.
- Gently separate your thighs so that your bottom is firmly set on the ground.
- Bend forward from your waist and bow down.
- If you can, fold forward far enough that your forehead touches the floor.

- You can keep your arms on your sides in a relaxed position or reach them out forward.

When doing the latter, make sure to stretch your arms forward as much as you can without lifting your bottom or calves off the ground.

- Breathe normally and think of your goals for the practice.

This asana regulates your heartbeat, so it is good to go back to a child ' s pose every time you feel tired or even faint during the session. It also allows you to stretch without straining any muscles.



Forward Bend

The Child ' s Pose is a gentle sitting forward fold while the full Forward Bend or “ Paschimottanasana ” is a more rigorous forward fold.

- In this version, you begin by sitting down on the ground with your legs stretched out in front of you.
- Sit up straight and raise your arms above your head.
- Bend forward from your waist with your hands reaching for your toes.

Some people may only be able to reach their calves, so you can stop there. You can also just hold on to your ankles or toes. However, the full pose requires you to clasp your hands together behind the soles of your foot.

Remember to flex your feet and keep your toes pointing straight up.

- Do not bend your knees or let your legs lift off the floor.
- Bow down and set your forehead on your thighs if you can.

This asana will help prepare you for any other asanas that involve forward folds. It also helps regulate your heartbeat and increase body temperature at the start of your session.



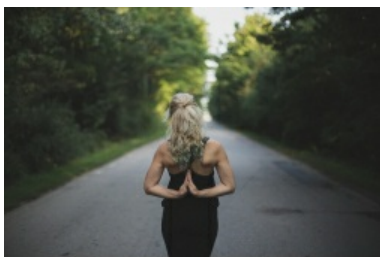
Standing Back Bend

Now that you have done forward folds, it is time to do the opposite - back bends.

- The Standing Back Bend in yoga starts with you standing straight on your mat.
- Reach your arms up over your head. You may place your palms together into prayer hands (the “ anjali mudra ” position) or clasp your hands with the index fingers pointing out (the “ ksepana mudra ”).

The former hand position is meant as a salutation to the universe while the latter position is said to redirect negative energies out from the body in an act of letting go, so this movement will help you to find your center.

- Next, bend backward from your waist taking care not to bend your knees your lift your toes from the mat.
- Gaze at your fingertips the entire time.
- Bend back as far as you can and hold this position for at least six breathing cycles.
- Come back up by straightening your torso.



Behind Back Clasp

The Behind Back Clasp is a reverse standing prayer position.

- Begin by standing straight on your mat. Engage your core muscles so that you are not bending sideways, forwards or backwards.
- Keep your feet planted firmly on your mat, and then bend your arms as if you are going to put your hands on your waist.
- Move them past your waist and towards your back.
- Roll your shoulders back as you do this and place your hands in anjali mudra between your shoulder blades.

If this is too difficult for you, just clasp your hands together at a lower point on your back. You can also try clasping your hands behind your back and pushing them away from your body before attempting to put them into prayer hands. This asana is known as a heart opener and helps prepare your chest and arms for binding asanas. It is meant to relieve any tension you may have in your upper body.

Chapter 3 - The Four Warrior Poses



“ Virahabdrasana ” or

The Warrior Poses are very important asanas in yoga. It is also present in any yoga tradition. They engage the entire body including the arms, legs and core muscles, making you stronger and improving your balance. There are four different types of Warrior Poses. The first three are identified by the numbers 1, 2 and 3, while the last one is called the Reverse Warrior. They are usually done in that sequence as the poses build up in intensity .

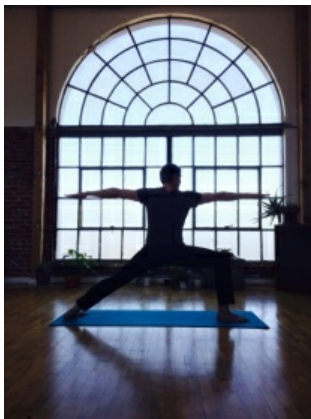
Warrior 1

Every Warrior Pose starts with a standing position.

- Keep your feet together and place your hands in normal anjali mudra in front of your chest.
- Then, step one foot back (you can start with the right foot). The back foot should be at a 45-degree angle with your toes pointing to the upper corner of your mat and the heel aligned with the heel of your front foot.
- Next, bend your front leg at a 90-degree angle. Make sure that your knee does not collapse inwards or roll out. It should also be positioned right on top of your ankle and not beyond it. Your torso should remain straight. You will now be in a lunge position,

which is the base of every Warrior Pose.

- Reach your arms straight up over your head. You can keep them in this position or place your palms together in a high anjali mudra. If you feel like you are about to topple over when doing this, separate your hands and just extend them up.
- Align your arms with your ears. Do not shrug your shoulders and look straight up to gaze at your fingertips without losing your balance.
- Stay in this pose for at least ten breath cycles.
- Let go of this pose by lowering your arms and straightening your front leg.
- Go back to the standing position you were in at the start of the sequence.
- Do the same sequence for the other leg.



Warrior 2

The Warrior 2 looks similar to Warrior 1 except the torso is twisted and the arms are in a different position. From the lunge position, transition to Warrior 1.

- Lower your arms to your sides so that you are forming a T.
- Twist your torso so that your chest faces the side of your back foot. Your arms should now be aligned with your legs.
- Keep your head looking forward with your gaze on the fingers of your front arm.

- Your torso should be straight. Hold this pose for at least ten breath cycles.
- Release the pose by reversing the sequence to get back to Warrior 1 and the standing position.
- From there, do the lunge for the other side and follow the same steps.



Warrior 3

The Warrior 3 is an advanced asana. It is great if you want to practice balance and tone your abs.

- You can achieve the pose by going from Warrior 1 to Warrior 2.
- Simultaneously tilt your torso forward while lifting your back leg off the floor and straightening your front leg.
- Your arms should now form a horizontal line with your back leg. This is Warrior 3.
- You can do a more difficult variation by bending your back leg and grasp your back foot with the hand on the same side.
- Place your other hand (the one remaining in front) in wisdom position or “jnana mudra” with your thumb touching your index finger to form a circle.
- Gaze at the fingers of your front hand and keep your standing leg straight.
- Make sure not to lock your knees so that you stay stable in this position.
- Hold this pose for at least ten breath cycles.
- Release the pose by reversing the sequence to get back to Warrior

2 then Warrior 1.

- Repeat the pose on your other side.



Reverse Warrior

Reverse Warrior is a back bend asana. It is a complement to the Warrior 3, which is a forward bend.

- Go from Warrior 1 to Warrior 2, and then wheel your front arm over your head as you bend back.
- Place your backhand on the calf of your back leg.
- Keep your raised arm pointing straight up or bend back further so that your arm is slightly bent back.
- Keep your front leg bent and your back leg straight.
- Hold this pose for at least ten breath cycles.
- Release the pose by reversing the sequence as with the other poses.
- Repeat the pose on your other side.

Chapter 4 - Five Power Yoga Poses

Power yoga poses are intense asanas. These are sequences that make you sweat and increase your heart rate. It is possible to burn even more calories doing power yoga poses than doing cardio exercises for the same amount of time. These poses require a lot of concentration and strength, so a lot of yogis like them because they can be challenging to do.

Boat Pose

The Boat Pose is a great ab workout.

- Start by sitting on your mat with your legs straight out in front of you.
- While keeping your core muscles engaged the entire time, lean backwards and lift your legs up off the floor.
- This should let you form a V and balance on your bottom so you look like a boat.
- Your hands should be off the floor and should not keep you up. This move may look simple, but it is actually challenging.
- You may prop your legs up on the wall or on an exercise ball if you find it difficult to keep your legs up.
- If you do not have a wall or ball, you may bring your arms forward and grasp your thighs.
- It is all right to bend your knees, but the full pose requires you to keep your legs straight.
- Hold this pose for at least ten breath cycles.
- Release the pose by sitting back down. Repeat the pose three times.



Crow Pose

The Crow Pose or Bakasana ” is an arm-strengthening pose that is more effective than doing weights because you are essentially carrying on entire weight on your hands.

- Start in a squat sitting position with your knees spread apart.
- Place your hands on the floor in front of you.
- Bend your arms and lift your bottom up as you touch one knee to your upper arm.
- Set your knee on top of your upper arm. Do the same with your other knee.
- Tilt your body forward.
- Stop before your head hits the ground, as you should now be balancing on your elbows. You will look like a perched crow, hence, the name.
- Hold this pose for at least ten breath cycles.
- Release by squatting back down. Repeat the pose three times.



Three Legged Dog

The Three Legged Dog is the basis for the popular body weight exercise called mountain climbers.

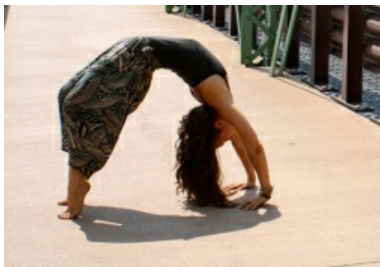
- Start with a plank, which you may recognize as the upper

movement of a push up.

- Your arms are straight and your torso forms what looks like a level plank of wood.
- Lift your bottom up and push away from your arms to form an upside down V shape.
- Gaze at your navel.
- Next, lift one leg up towards the sky. Hold this pose for at least ten breaths before bringing your leg back down to the ground.

A variation of this pose involves shifting back to a plank position with your leg still raised up.

- Bend your raised leg and touch its knee to your forehead.
- Stay in this position for five breath cycles before pushing your leg back and raising it up again.
- Go back to your upside down V to repeat on the other leg before releasing the pose back to the beginning plank position.



Wheel Pose

The Wheel Pose is an advanced back bend asana and serves to prepare you for inversions or asanas where your head is at a lower level than your torso or feet. This helps circulate blood to your head, which can make you feel more refreshed. Inversions are also thought to stimulate hair growth and cure baldness.

The Wheel begins with the Bridge Pose.

- Start by lying down on your mat with your knees bent.
- Lift your hips up while keeping your arms flat on the ground on your side. This is a bridge.

- You can set your hips back to the floor and lift them back into Bridge three times before entering the Wheel Pose.
- Next, while in Bridge, set the top of your head on the mat.
- Move your arms over your head and bend them to set your hands to either side of your head.
- Push up to straighten your arms and lift the rest of your torso away from the floor. Straighten your legs as you do this. You are now in Wheel. Hold this pose for at least ten breath cycles. Release the pose by lowering your hips back to the ground. Repeat the sequence three times.



Headstand

Many yoga practitioners consider doing the Headstand as a milestone in their practice. You will eventually get to that point after practicing yoga for a while and diligently doing the other power sequences. The Headstand is the ultimate ab challenge, as you need a strong core to stay straight up while upside down.

- Begin the pose in a tabletop position with your knees bent, your arms straight and your back forming what looks like the top of a table.
- Bend your arms so that you are resting on your elbows.
- Clasp your hands together.
- Nestle your head between your hands and walk your feet closer to your head. You will notice that when you can no longer walk your

feet any closer, then your bottom will lift up and your legs will start to rise.

- Continue raising your legs up towards the sky until you are forming a straight line.
- Your body should look as if you are simply standing on the floor, except everything is upside down.
- Engage your core muscles the entire time and make sure that your neck is not bent in any way.
- You may release the clasp on your hands and simply balance on your head. Your hands can be placed in front of you with your palms flat on the floor.
- Gaze forward at one point on the ground. Hold this pose for at least ten breath cycles.
- Release the pose by slowly bringing your legs back down to the floor.

If you find that you keep toppling over, you can practice the Headstand near a wall where you can set your feet once you feel that you are starting to tip or fall.

Chapter 5 - Five Fundamental Poses of the Sun Salutation

As a form of moving meditation, the Sun Salutation or “Surya Namaskara ” is the best sequence. It is good to start your day with it, as it does not only let you find your center; it also provides a full body workout that promotes strength and flexibility. The Sun Salutation consists of a series of asanas and the entire cycle should be done at least fifteen times. Take note that the poses in this chapter are to be done in succession .



Mountain Pose

The Mountain Pose or “ Tadasana ” may look like a simple asana, but it takes a lot of work to perfect. It is not a simple standing position. Rather, it serves as a foundation for the rest of the asanas in this sequence. This pose is especially good for the lower body. The feet and toes that are often overlooked are important in this pose because they are the ones rooting you to the ground. As the name suggests, you must stand like a sturdy and tall mountain. Imagine that if someone were to push you, you should still remain in the same position.

- Begin the pose standing at the top of your mat with the big toes on your feet touching together and your heels slightly apart. Spread your toes out to ensure a steady stance.
- Keep your legs straight; they should neither be bent nor hyper-

flexed. Your thighs should face forward. (Roll them out when you are naturally knock-kneed or roll them in if you are a bow-legged. A bit of tension in the legs is good.)

- You may place your hands on your sides and slightly away from your body with the fingers spread out. You may also place them in anjali mudra.
- To allow a smooth transition to the next asana, raise your arms above your head. Take a deep inhale here.



Standing Forward Fold

The Standing Forward Fold is a mild inversion that helps send oxygen to your brain. It also prepares you for the deeper inversion that you will be doing later on in the Sun Salutation sequence.

- From the Mountain Pose with your arms raised up, bend from the waist with your heart leading the way and try to put your hands beside your feet. Exhale as you do this.
- If you are unable to touch the floor, then just grasp your ankles or your calves.

Just make sure that you are not bending your knees.

- Look down, and then look up as you inhale.
- Keep your body in the same position and just move your head. Exhale as you fold back down towards your legs again.

- Do not relax your legs as you may topple over. They should be as they were in Mountain Pose.

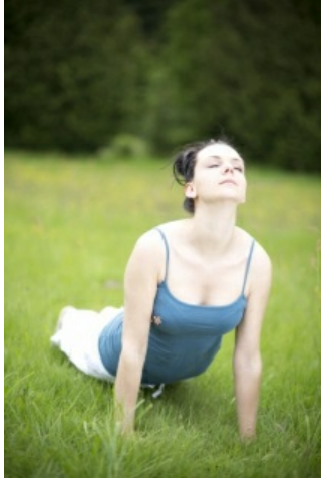


Chaturanga Dandasana

The “ Chaturangadandasana ” is essentially a low plank pose. It is good for the core muscles including the thighs and shoulders. It is also a good preparatory pose for advanced asanas like arm balances and inversions.

- From Standing Forward Fold, set your hands on the floor. If you were unable to touch the floor with your legs straight in the previous asana, then bend your legs here.
- Step your legs back into a plank position. You may also kick them back by jumping (with your hands still firmly flat on the ground) and straightening your legs as you set them down on the floor behind you. Exhale as you do this.
- Your elbows should not be flaring out like in a traditional pushup or plank. Keep them close to your sides and bent so that you look like you are at the lower point of a pushup.
- Your hips should not be raised or be dipping low. The rest of your torso should be as it was in Mountain Pose - straight with the core engaged.
- Try not to collapse all the way down to the floor. Look forward and keep your shoulders away from your ears so that you are not hunching.
- Gaze at a point on the floor in front of you.

The key to doing this pose properly is body alignment, so it is important not to think of this pose as a pushup, which most people perform with a different alignment. For the Chaturanga, the top of your head, your shoulders and hips all the way down to your thighs, knees and heels should form a straight line.



Upward Facing Dog

The Upward Facing Dog is a classic yoga asana.

- From Chaturanga dandasana, inhale and straighten your arms.
- Look up and open your chest. This pose is good for back problems as it is a gentle back bend. It serves to counteract the modern habit of hunching over as we usually do at work, especially for those who work on computers or other jobs that require stooping over a desk.
- With your head up, keep your gaze on the tip of your nose.
- Raise your thighs above the ground as you are holding yourself up, so only your toes and hands are touching your mat.
- A more beginner-friendly variation of this pose is the Cobra where you need to set your thighs firmly down on the mat. It has similar back bend benefits.



Downward Facing Dog

The complement to the Upward Facing Dog is the Downward Facing Dog. It serves as a counter-pose to the back bend in the previous asana as it is a

forward bend that is a gentle inversion.

- From Upward Facing Dog, exhale and fold into an upside down V shape by raising your hips up in the air.
- Take care not to stick your bottom out by contracting your stomach muscles inwards. Also, do not arch your back.
- Your arms and legs should be straight.
- Keep your head down and gaze at your navel. This is the last asana of the Sun Salutation.

To release, inhale and step your feet back between your hands or jump towards the front of the mat. Exhale and do another Standing Forward Fold, then inhale and straighten your body back to Mountain Pose. End with your hands at your sides.

Chapter 6 - Three Meditation Poses



It is ideal to end your yoga practice with meditation poses to help bring your heart rate back down, give you time to clear your mind and get ready for the rest of your day or allow you a moment of relaxation before going to bed. These asanas also serve as cooling down poses, so do them at the end of a session. Do not skip doing them, especially the Savasana, which may seem simple and unnecessary but is actually one of the most challenging asanas in yoga .

Tree Pose

The Tree Pose is a balancing pose that requires concentration. Because of this, it allows you to focus only on your body and helps you forget everything else going on around you.

- Start in the Mountain Pose.
- Raise your arms above your head. You may put them in anjali mudra or ksepana mudra.
- Keep your arms aligned with your ears and do not shrug your shoulders.
- Roll them back into their sockets.
- Gaze at a point in front of you or, for a bit more challenge, close your eyes.

- From here, bend one leg and set your foot on the opposite thigh while keeping the other leg engaged and straight.

If you are unable to set your foot on your thigh, just set it above your ankle or on your calf. Never set your foot on the side of your knee as that may cause injury. Stay in this position for at least fifteen breath cycles. Release the pose by setting your foot back down on the ground. Repeat this on the other side.



Lotus Pose

A quintessential yoga pose, the Lotus Pose or “ Padmasana ” is one that is familiar to even non-yoga practitioners. It is the cross-legged sitting position that Buddha and monks or sages usually depict in art. For beginner yogis, the traditional cross-legged position will do.

- You may place your hands in anjali mudra or jnana mudra on top of your knees.

The Half Lotus variation is done by resting the top of one foot on top of the thigh of the opposite leg. The Full Lotus variation is done by resting both feet on top of the opposite thighs. Sit up straight and stay in this position for as long as you want while being mindful of your breathing. Close your eyes and meditate. At this point, you may do a few yoga chants such as a simple repetition of “ Om ” or a full mantra like “ Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu ” (May all things in the world be happy and free).



Dead Man's Pose

Dead Man's Pose or "Savasana" is the ending asana to any yoga sequence in most yoga traditions. It is one of the most challenging asanas because it requires complete relaxation, which is difficult to do for most people especially after a rigorous yoga practice where you have been tensing and flexing every muscle in your body. To onlookers, the pose looks as if the practitioner is simply lying down and taking a nap.

- However, it is done by laying your body down on the mat and allowing your limbs to fall away from your body naturally.
- Your arms should be slightly extended out with your palms facing the sky.
- Your legs should also be slightly apart with your toes shifted to the sides.
- Close your eyes and do yoga breathing.
- Take care not to fall asleep, as you must remain mindful of what your body is feeling.
- Remain in this pose for as long as you want. You may light incense sticks or place a scented pillow over your eyes.

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Conclusion

Thank you again for downloading this book!

I hope this book was able to help you to learn basic yoga poses and better understand the benefits of the practice.

The next step is to use this information to live a more mindful and balanced yogi life.



Finally, if you enjoyed this book, then I ' d like to ask you for a favor, would you be kind enough to leave a review for this book on Amazon?

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