

Yoga for Beginners

Sometimes it is hard to find a class that suits your needs, or perhaps you cannot remember what felt so great at your favorite class. When you are first practicing yoga, it is nice to have clear written instructions on how to do certain poses.

This short practice will take 15-20 minutes and the benefits will last much longer. I promise you will notice the difference; do this practice 2-5 times per week for a month and then add your comments here.

I always recommend you hold each pose for at least 5-10 breaths (where appropriate) and remember to lengthen with the inhale and surrender with each exhale.

Cat/Cow



On hands and knees, inhale, heart moves forward, head lifts, shoulder blades pull together and work towards the hips.

On the exhale, head drops, stomach lifts towards spine, back rounds. Repeat with the breath.

Bhaktasana (Devotional Pose)



From hands and knees, open knees to the width of the mat and push back to rest hips on heels, hands outstretched.

On exhale, walk fingers to left, rest here several breaths, inhale to return to center.

Repeat on other side.

Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward Facing Dog)



Come back to hands and knees, tuck toes under and push hips towards ceiling, keeping the knees bent at first.

Push down through the index finger knuckles, lifting shoulders to hips, lengthening spine.

Finally straighten legs to drop heels towards the floor.

Uttanasana (Standing Forward Bend)



Walk feet to hands and rest in a deep forward bend. If necessary, keep the knees slightly bent or use blocks under the hands.

The inhale lengthens the sit bones to the ceiling as the legs grow long, exhale surrenders you into the pose.

It is important to keep the spine long – there is no benefit to the head touching the knees, think of lengthening the sternum towards the shins.

Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward Facing Dog)

Return to the previous pose; place hands on the floor either side of the feet and step back, tuck toes under and push hips towards ceiling, keeping the knees bent at first.

Push down through the index finger knuckles, lifting shoulders to hips, lengthening spine.

Finally straighten legs to drop heels towards the floor.

Eka Pada Kapotasana (Pigeon Pose)



Inhale and bring right knee to between the hands, allowing the foot to come towards the center.

Slide left leg back so both hips face the floor. Use a block under the right buttock if necessary.

Lengthen the spine and rest over the bent right knee. Breathe.

Bend left knee and hold ankle for quad release. Use strap as shown, if needed. Hold 5-10 breaths. Release left ankle.

Repeat on other side.

Jathara Parivartanasana (Reclining Twist)



Lying on the back with the knees pulled to the chest, arms open to the sides, shoulders tucked under.

Let both knees drop to the floor at the right, keeping left knee on top of right, if possible.

If you have low back concerns, roll fully onto your right side and then open the left arm to the side.

Let your gaze come to your left hand, as your left shoulder works its way to the floor.

Breathe. Repeat to other side.

Savasana (Corpse or Relaxation Pose)

It is important to be warm during Savasana - use a blanket and perhaps even an eye pillow.

Lie on your back, shoulders tucked under, arms 6-12 inches from the sides, palms facing up. Use a bolster under the knees if you have low back concerns. Lengthen each leg from its respective hip and rest it on the floor (or bolster).

Spend a few moments scanning the body to release any clenched muscles.

Allow the mind to rest on the breath. When you notice your mind wandering (and it will), gently bring it back to the breath.

Savasana is the most important pose in any practice - it is the time when the body integrates and assimilates all the work you have just done.