FREE GUIDE

10 Essential Yoga Postures for Beginners

A clear, illustrated path into practice

Step-by-step instructions · Alignment · Safety · A 20-minute sequence

Yoga Wisdom — Styles, Postures & Practice

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INTRODUCTION

Ten postures, learned well

You do not need hundreds of postures to practise yoga well. A small, well-chosen vocabulary — understood properly and practised regularly — is a far better foundation than a long list half-learned.

The ten postures in this guide appear in almost every yoga tradition, from classical Hatha to Iyengar, Sivananda and Vinyasa. Together they cover the main families of movement: standing and balancing, a mild inversion, spinal mobility, backbending, resting and relaxing. They are accessible to most healthy beginners, yet they never stop being useful; experienced practitioners return to them throughout their lives.

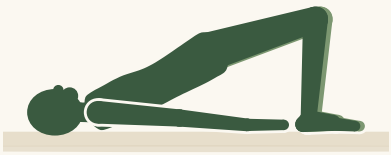
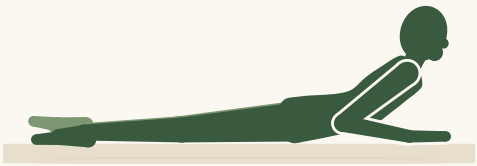
Each posture has its own page, with an illustration, its Sanskrit and English names, the essential facts, numbered steps, an alignment checklist, breathing guidance, how to come out safely, common mistakes, modifications and props, and the situations in which you should avoid or adapt it. At the end, a 20-minute sequence brings all ten together into a balanced session you can practise at home.

Throughout, the emphasis is on quality rather than depth. A posture practised with a steady breath, in a range your body can manage today, is the full posture — whatever it looks like.

Learning objectives

After working through this guide you will be able to:

- ✓ recognise and name ten foundational postures in Sanskrit and English;
- ✓ come into, hold and leave each posture safely, following clear steps;
- ✓ check your own alignment using a short list of key points per posture;
- ✓ coordinate breath and movement, and use the breath to judge your effort;
- ✓ spot and correct the most common beginner mistakes;
- ✓ adapt each posture with props and easier variations, and know when to avoid it;
- ✓ practise a balanced 20-minute sequence that combines all ten postures.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

How to use the posture pages

Read a posture page through once before you try it. Then practise slowly, with the page open beside you, until the steps become familiar.

Reading the facts

- **Category** — the family of movement: standing, balance, inversion, backbend, kneeling, resting or relaxation.
- **Level** — "Beginner" postures suit most healthy newcomers; "Beginner–intermediate" postures need a little more care and usually a modification at first.
- **Hold** — a suggested range. Start at the lower end and lengthen gradually.
- **Sides** — where a posture has two sides, the illustration shows one. Always practise the other side for the same time.

Breathing in the postures

Breathe slowly and smoothly through the nose unless told otherwise. As a general rule, inhale when you lengthen, lift or open, and exhale when you fold, lower or deepen. The breath is your most reliable gauge: if it becomes short, jerky or held, ease off until it flows again.

What you need

- A non-slip mat on a level floor, with space to stretch your arms in all directions.
- A folded blanket — for the knees, under the head and for warmth.
- A yoga block, or a firm cushion or thick book.
- A wall or sturdy chair nearby for balance.
- Comfortable clothing; bare feet.

Sensation versus pain

A stretch or the warmth of working muscles is welcome. Sharp, sudden, burning or joint pain, numbness or tingling, dizziness and breathlessness are not — they are signals to come out and rest.

Preparation and counterposes

Some postures are easier and safer when the body has been prepared, and some are well followed by a counterpose that returns the spine gently towards neutral. Not every posture needs either. Each page ends with a short **"Before and after"** note telling you whether preparation or a counterpose is useful, and why. When in doubt: warm up before standing postures and backbends, and rest in Child's Pose after bending backwards.

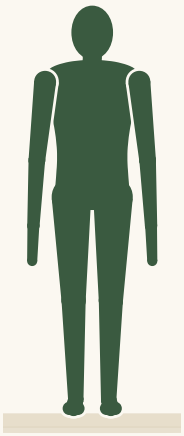
GENERAL PRECAUTIONS

- Consult your doctor before starting if you are pregnant, injured, recovering from surgery, or have a medical condition such as high blood pressure, a heart condition, glaucoma or osteoporosis.
- Practise on an empty or light stomach — ideally two to three hours after a main meal.
- Come up slowly from lying, kneeling and folded positions.
- Stop if you feel pain or dizziness. Please read the safety disclaimer at the end of this guide.

POSTURE 01 OF 10 · STANDING

Tadasana

Mountain Pose · Tāḍāsana · tada = mountain



Standing evenly, arms relaxed by the sides.

CATEGORY	LEVEL
Standing	Beginner
HOLD	**FOCUS**
5–10 breaths	Posture, grounding

ALIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ✓ Weight even between both feet, and between heels and forefeet
- ✓ Knees straight but not locked
- ✓ Pelvis level, tailbone pointing down
- ✓ Ribs stacked above the pelvis
- ✓ Shoulders relaxed away from the ears
- ✓ Crown reaching up, jaw and face soft

Mountain Pose looks like simply standing still, and that is exactly why it teaches so much. It is the template for every standing posture: feet rooted, legs quietly active, spine long, head balanced. Practised with attention, it shows you how you habitually stand — where you grip and where you collapse.

HOW TO PRACTISE

1. Stand at the front of the mat with bare feet, together or hip-width apart — whichever feels steadier and kinder to your lower back.
2. Lift and spread the toes, then lay them down. Feel the base of the big toe, the base of the little toe and the centre of the heel pressing evenly.
3. Engage the thighs so the kneecaps lift gently, without pushing the knees back.
4. Let the pelvis rest level: the tailbone points down, the lower back neither arched nor tucked.
5. Lengthen the sides of the waist; let the lower ribs stay soft rather than flaring forward.
6. Widen the collarbones and let the shoulders settle. Arms hang by the sides, palms facing the thighs.
7. Balance the head with the ears over the shoulders and the chin level. Gaze softly ahead.

BREATHING

Slow, smooth nasal breathing. Let the inhalation widen the ribs in all directions and each exhalation settle you onto the feet.

COMING OUT

Soften the knees, relax the shoulders and face, and move on. After a long hold, shift your weight before walking away.

> **Before and after.** No preparation or counterpose is needed. Tadasana itself is the starting and resting point between standing postures.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Locking the knees: keep a hint of softness.
- Weight in the heels: rock gently forward until the feet feel evenly loaded.
- Lifting the chest by arching the lower back: let the ribs soften down.
- Standing stiffly: think tall and easy, not rigid.

MODIFICATIONS & PROPS

- Feet hip-width apart for more stability.
- Back against a wall to feel the alignment of head, shoulders and buttocks.
- A block between the thighs to wake up the legs.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

- If you feel light-headed or faint, bend the knees, shift the weight and sit down if needed.
- With low blood pressure or balance problems, stand near a wall or chair.
- If your knees tend to hyperextend, keep them slightly bent.

POSTURE 02 OF 10 · STANDING BALANCE

Vrikshasana

Tree Pose · Vṛkṣāsana · vriksha = tree

Balancing on the left leg, right sole on the inner left thigh above the knee, palms together overhead.

CATEGORY	LEVEL
Standing balance	Beginner
HOLD	**FOCUS**
5–8 breaths each side	Balance, concentration

ALIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ✓ Standing foot spread and evenly grounded
- ✓ Raised foot above or below the knee, never on it
- ✓ Pelvis level; hip of the bent leg not hitched up
- ✓ Bent knee opening to the side without twisting the pelvis
- ✓ Spine long, shoulders soft even with arms raised

Tree Pose trains steadiness of body and attention. The standing leg roots like a trunk while the spine grows upwards. Wobbling is not failure: every small correction is the posture doing its work. The illustration shows the left leg standing; practise both sides equally.

HOW TO PRACTISE

1. Stand in Tadasana and fix your gaze on a still point at eye level.
2. Shift your weight onto the left foot, keeping the left knee soft rather than locked.
3. Turn the right knee out and place the right sole on the left ankle, calf or inner thigh above the knee — **never directly on the knee**.
4. Press sole and inner leg gently into each other. Keep the pelvis level and facing forward.
5. Bring the palms together at the chest. When steady, raise the arms overhead, palms together or shoulder-width apart.
6. Hold, then lower the arms and foot slowly, stand evenly for a breath and repeat on the other side.

BREATHING

Keep the breath slow and even. Holding the breath almost always makes the balance shakier.

COMING OUT

Lower the arms first, then the foot. Stand in Tadasana for a breath before changing sides.

> **Before and after.** Prepare with Tadasana to find even weight. No counterpose is needed; shake out the legs briefly before changing sides.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Foot pressing on the knee joint: move it up or down.
- Hip of the standing leg jutting out to the side: draw it in.
- Gaze wandering: return it to a fixed point.
- Shoulders lifted with the arms: keep the hands at the chest.

MODIFICATIONS & PROPS

- "Kickstand": heel against the ankle, toes on the floor.
- Touch a wall or chair back with one hand.
- Keep the hands at the chest or on the hips.

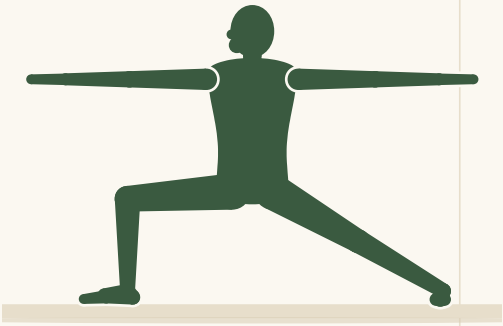
CONTRAINDICATIONS

- With balance problems, low blood pressure, dizziness or in pregnancy, practise beside a wall or chair.
- With high blood pressure, keep the hands at the chest rather than overhead.
- With knee or hip injury of the standing leg, seek guidance first.

POSTURE 03 OF 10 · STANDING

Virabhadrasana II

Warrior II · Vīrabhadrāsana II · Virabhadra = a warrior figure from Hindu mythology



Right side: right knee bent over the ankle, back leg straight, arms at shoulder height.

CATEGORY	LEVEL
Standing	Beginner
HOLD	**FOCUS**
5–8 breaths each side	Leg strength, stamina, hip opening

ALIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ✓ Front knee over the ankle, tracking over the 2nd and 3rd toes
- ✓ Front thigh moving towards parallel only as far as comfortable
- ✓ Back leg straight, outer edge of the back foot grounded
- ✓ Shoulders directly above the hips
- ✓ Arms level, palms down, shoulders relaxed

A wide, open standing posture in which the front knee bends, the back leg stays straight and the arms reach in opposite directions. It builds strength and stamina in the legs and teaches you to stay calm while working. The illustration shows the right side.

HOW TO PRACTISE

1. From Tadasana, step the feet about 1–1.2 m apart, depending on your height. Stretch the arms out at shoulder height, ankles roughly below the wrists.
2. Turn the right foot out 90°, so the toes point to the front of the mat. Turn the left foot in slightly, about 15°.
3. Align the right heel roughly with the arch of the left foot. Hips and chest face the long side of the mat.
4. As you exhale, bend the right knee towards a right angle. The knee stays above the ankle, pointing over the second and third toes.
5. Press the outer edge of the left foot down and keep the left leg straight and strong.
6. Keep the trunk upright, centred between the legs. Reach through the fingertips, shoulders soft.
7. Turn the head to look over the right hand. Hold, then straighten the leg, turn the feet and repeat on the left.

BREATHING

Inhale to lengthen through arms and spine; exhale to settle into the front leg while keeping the knee aligned.

COMING OUT

Inhale and press into both feet to straighten the front leg. Lower the arms, turn the feet parallel and step back to Tadasana.

> **Before and after.** Prepare with Tadasana. Warrior II needs no counterpose; it leads naturally into Triangle Pose, which uses the same foot position.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Front knee falling inwards: guide it towards the little-toe side.
- Knee moving past the ankle: lengthen the stance.
- Trunk leaning over the front leg: draw it back to centre.
- Back foot rolling onto its outer edge: ground it fully.

MODIFICATIONS & PROPS

- Shorter stance and a smaller knee bend.
- Hands on the hips to rest the shoulders.
- Back heel against a wall for stability.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Knee problems: bend less and watch the knee alignment; stop with knee pain.
- High blood pressure or heart conditions: keep holds short, hands on hips.
- Neck problems: look forward instead of over the hand.
- Hip or groin injury: shorten the stance and seek guidance.

POSTURE 04 OF 10 · STANDING

Trikonasana

Triangle Pose · Utthita Trikoṇāsana · trikona = three angles; utthita = extended

Right side: right leg forward, right hand on the shin, left arm reaching up.

CATEGORY	LEVEL
Standing	Beginner–intermediate
HOLD	**FOCUS**
5–8 breaths each side	Side stretch, leg strength

ALIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ✓ Both legs straight but not hyperextended
- ✓ Front heel roughly in line with the back arch
- ✓ Lower and upper side of the waist equally long
- ✓ Top arm vertical, above the shoulder
- ✓ Neck in line with the spine; no strain in the head turn

A classic Hatha standing posture combining strong, straight legs with a long sideways extension of the trunk. The aim is length, not depth: a hand on the shin with a long spine is far better than a hand on the floor with a collapsed side. The illustration shows the right side.

HOW TO PRACTISE

1. Stand with the feet about 1 m apart, a little narrower than for Warrior II. Arms out at shoulder height.
2. Turn the right foot out 90° and the left foot in slightly. Engage both thighs, keeping the knees soft rather than locked.
3. Inhale and lengthen the spine. As you exhale, reach the trunk out over the right leg, hinging at the hip — not bending at the waist.
4. Lower the right hand to the shin, ankle or a block. Extend the left arm straight up, in line with the shoulders.
5. Keep both sides of the waist long and the chest turned towards the side of the mat.
6. Look forward, down or — if your neck is comfortable — up towards the top hand.
7. Inhale and press into both feet to come up with a long spine. Repeat on the left.

BREATHING

Breathe steadily. Inhale to lengthen the spine from tailbone to crown; exhale to widen the chest and settle the legs.

COMING OUT

Bend the front knee slightly, press into the feet and rise on an inhalation. Turn the feet parallel and pause before the second side.

> **Before and after.** Warrior II and Tadasana are good preparation. A short Uttanasana or rest in Tadasana afterwards lets the legs recover; no specific counterpose is required.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Collapsing the lower side of the waist to reach the floor: bring the hand higher.
- Locking the front knee: keep a micro-bend.
- Chest rolling towards the floor: use a block and turn the chest open.
- Straining the neck: look forward or down.

MODIFICATIONS & PROPS

- Hand on a block or on the thigh.
- Back against a wall to feel the plane of the posture.
- Top hand on the hip with neck or shoulder issues.

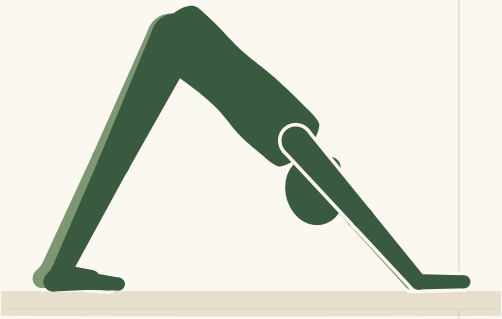
CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Low blood pressure or dizziness: come up slowly; keep the gaze down.
- Neck problems: do not turn the head upwards.
- Hamstring, hip or lower-back injury: shorten the stance and use a block; seek guidance.
- With high blood pressure, keep the top hand on the hip.

POSTURE 05 OF 10 · MILD INVERSION

Adho Mukha Svanasana

Downward-Facing Dog · Adho Mukha Śvānāsana · adho mukha = face down; shvana = dog



Inverted V: hips highest, arms and back in one line, heels reaching down.

CATEGORY	LEVEL
Mild inversion	Beginner–intermediate
HOLD	**FOCUS**
3–8 breaths	Back and leg lengthening, arm strength

ALIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ✓ Hands shoulder-width, fingers spread, wrist creases parallel to the front of the mat
- ✓ Arms and back in one long line
- ✓ Hips the highest point
- ✓ Neck relaxed; ears between the upper arms
- ✓ Knees bent as much as needed to keep the spine long

One of the most widely practised yoga postures: hands and feet on the mat, hips lifted, the body forming an inverted V. It lengthens the back and the backs of the legs and builds strength in the arms and shoulders. For beginners the key is to bend the knees as much as needed to keep the back long.

HOW TO PRACTISE

1. Start on hands and knees. Place the hands slightly in front of the shoulders, shoulder-width apart, fingers spread.
2. Tuck the toes under. Knees hip-width apart.
3. Exhale and lift the knees, sending the hips up and back.
4. Keep the knees generously bent at first, so that the spine can lengthen from the hands to the tailbone.
5. Press the whole hand into the mat, especially the base of the index finger. Let the head hang between the upper arms.
6. If the back stays long, begin to straighten the legs gradually. The heels move towards the floor; they do not need to reach it.
7. Hold, then lower the knees to the mat and rest in Child's Pose.

BREATHING

Calm nasal breathing. With each exhalation, let the hips lift and the spine lengthen a little more.

COMING OUT

Exhale, bend the knees and lower them to the mat. Sit back into Child's Pose for a few breaths.

> **Before and after.** Prepare with Cat–Cow to warm the spine and wrists. Afterwards, Child's Pose rests the arms and shoulders.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Rounded back with straight legs: bend the knees and lift the hips.
- Weight sinking into the wrists: press through the fingers and knuckles.
- Shoulders hunched to the ears: widen the shoulder blades.
- Pushing the heels down at all costs: they are a direction, not a goal.

MODIFICATIONS & PROPS

- Hands on a chair seat or a wall ("half dog").
- Feet wider apart for more space.
- Forearms on the floor ("dolphin") to spare the wrists.

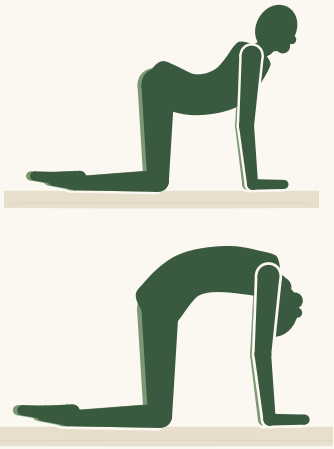
CONTRAINDICATIONS

- High blood pressure (uncontrolled), glaucoma, eye conditions or a recent head injury: avoid or practise the wall version, as the head is below the heart.
- Wrist or shoulder injury, carpal tunnel syndrome: use forearms or a wall.
- Later pregnancy: only with guidance.
- Come up slowly if you feel dizzy.

POSTURE 06 OF 10 · KNEELING, SPINAL MOVEMENT

Marjaryasana–Bitilasana

Cat–Cow · Mārjāryāsana–Bitilāsana · marjari = cat; bitila = cow



Above: Cow — belly softening, chest forward. Below: Cat — spine rounding upwards, head relaxed.

CATEGORY
Kneeling, spinal movement

LEVEL
Beginner

HOLD
6–10 rounds

FOCUS
Spinal mobility, breath coordination

ALIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ✓ Wrists under shoulders, knees under hips
- ✓ Movement spread evenly along the spine
- ✓ Neck following the spine, not leading it
- ✓ Arms steady; shoulders away from the ears
- ✓ Range small enough to stay comfortable

Two postures linked by the breath into one flowing movement: the spine arches gently in Cow and rounds in Cat. Cat–Cow is a gentle way to warm up the whole spine, to connect breath with movement and to notice how your back feels today.

HOW TO PRACTISE

1. Come onto hands and knees: wrists under the shoulders, knees under the hips, a blanket under the knees if needed.
2. Spread the fingers and start with a neutral, long spine, gaze down.
3. **Cow:** as you inhale, let the belly soften towards the floor, draw the chest forward and lift the gaze slightly. Keep the back of the neck long.
4. **Cat:** as you exhale, press the floor away, draw the navel in and round the spine towards the ceiling. Let the head relax down.
5. Continue slowly, letting each movement last as long as the breath. Let the movement start from the pelvis.
6. After the last round, return to a neutral spine.

BREATHING

Inhale into Cow, exhale into Cat. Let the breath lead and the movement follow.

COMING OUT

Return to a neutral spine and sit back into Child's Pose, or move on to Downward-Facing Dog.

> **Before and after.** Cat–Cow is itself a preparatory movement for Downward-Facing Dog, backbends and forward bends. It needs no counterpose.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Throwing the head back in Cow: lift the gaze only slightly.
- Moving faster than the breath: slow down.
- Sinking into the shoulders: press the floor away.
- Forcing a large range: keep it comfortable.

MODIFICATIONS & PROPS

- Fists or forearms on the floor for sensitive wrists.
- Extra padding under the knees.
- Seated version on a chair, hands on the knees.

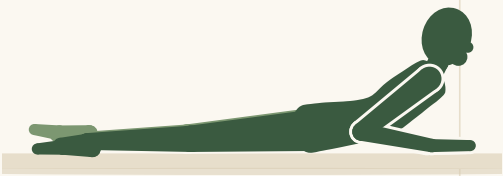
CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Neck problems: keep the head in line with the spine.
- Back injury: keep the movement small and pain-free; seek guidance.
- Knee pain: pad generously or use the chair version.
- In pregnancy, avoid letting the belly sink strongly in Cow.

POSTURE 07 OF 10 · PRONE BACKBEND

Bhujangasana

Cobra Pose · Bhujaṅgāsana · bhujanga = serpent



Low Cobra: elbows bent and close to the body, chest lifted, legs long.

CATEGORY	LEVEL
Prone backbend	Beginner
HOLD	**FOCUS**
3–5 breaths, 2–3 rounds	Back strength, chest opening

ALIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ✓ Elbows bent and hugging the body
- ✓ Shoulders down, chest broad
- ✓ Pubic bone and legs grounded
- ✓ Backbend spread evenly, not concentrated in the lower back
- ✓ Neck long, chin not jutting forward

A gentle backbend practised lying on the front, the chest rising like a cobra lifting its head. The lift comes mainly from the back muscles; the hands support rather than push. Beginners should keep the elbows bent and the lift modest — a low Cobra done well is the real posture.

HOW TO PRACTISE

1. Lie on your front, legs extended and hip-width apart, tops of the feet on the mat.
2. Place the hands under the shoulders, fingers forward, elbows bent and close to the sides.
3. Press the tops of the feet and the pubic bone lightly into the floor. Draw the shoulders back and away from the ears.
4. As you inhale, lengthen forward and lift the head and chest, using the back muscles. Keep the elbows bent.
5. Keep the back of the neck long; gaze forward and slightly down.
6. Hold for a few breaths, then lower slowly on an exhalation and rest with one cheek on the stacked hands.

BREATHING

Inhale as you rise, exhale as you lower. Breathe steadily into the chest while you hold.

COMING OUT

Exhale and lower the chest and forehead slowly. Rest with the head turned to one side, then push back into Child's Pose.

> **Before and after.** Prepare with Cat–Cow. Child's Pose afterwards — a mild forward bend — gently releases the lower back.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Pushing up with straight arms: keep the elbows bent.
- Pinching in the lower back: lift less, lengthen the tailbone.
- Shoulders lifting to the ears: draw them back and down.
- Throwing the head back: keep the neck long.

MODIFICATIONS & PROPS

- Sphinx: forearms on the floor, elbows under the shoulders.
- Hands-free Cobra: lift a few centimetres with the hands hovering.
- A folded blanket under the hips for comfort.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Pregnancy: avoid lying on the front.
- Recent abdominal surgery or hernia: avoid unless cleared by your doctor.
- Back injury or spondylolisthesis: seek guidance; keep the lift very low.
- Stop if you feel any pinching or pain in the lower back.

POSTURE 08 OF 10 · SUPINE BACKBEND

Setu Bandha Sarvangasana

Bridge Pose · Setu Bandha Sarvāṅgāsana · setu = bridge; bandha = lock; sarvanga = whole body

Hips lifted, shoulders and head on the mat, arms along the floor.

CATEGORY
Supine backbend

LEVEL
Beginner

HOLD
5–8 breaths, 2–3 rounds

FOCUS
Glutes and back strength, chest opening

ALIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ✓ Feet parallel, hip-width, heels below the knees
- ✓ Knees pointing forward
- ✓ Weight on the shoulders and upper arms, not on the neck
- ✓ Head still, chin slightly away from the chest
- ✓ Buttocks engaged but not gripping

A gentle backbend practised lying on the back. With the feet on the floor you lift the hips, so the body forms a bridge from the knees to the shoulders. Because you control the height of the lift, it is an accessible backbend for beginners, and it may help to open the front of the hips after long periods of sitting.

HOW TO PRACTISE

1. Lie on your back with the knees bent, feet flat and parallel, hip-width apart, heels about a hand's length from the buttocks.
2. Rest the arms by your sides, palms down. Keep the head still and the gaze towards the ceiling.
3. Press the feet and arms into the floor. As you inhale, lift the hips, peeling the spine up from the pelvis.
4. Keep the knees in line with the hips and feet — not falling out or squeezing in.
5. Lift only as high as the lower back stays comfortable. Broaden the chest; the weight rests on the shoulders, not the neck.
6. Hold, then exhale and lower slowly, vertebra by vertebra, from the upper back down to the pelvis.

BREATHING

Inhale as you lift, exhale as you lower. In the pose, breathe calmly — the breath may feel a little more restricted, which is normal.

COMING OUT

Lower the spine slowly. Rest with the knees bent, or hug the knees gently to the chest to release the lower back.

> **Before and after.** Cat–Cow and Cobra are useful preparation. Afterwards, hug the knees gently to the chest — the aim is simply to return the spine to neutral — then rest in Savasana.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Turning the head while lifted: keep it still.
- Knees splaying outwards: hold a block between the thighs.
- Pushing high into the lower back: lift less.
- Feet too far away or too close: heels below the knees.

MODIFICATIONS & PROPS

- Supported Bridge: a block under the sacrum.
- Folded blanket under the shoulders (edge towards the neck, head on the floor).
- Lift and lower slowly with the breath instead of holding.

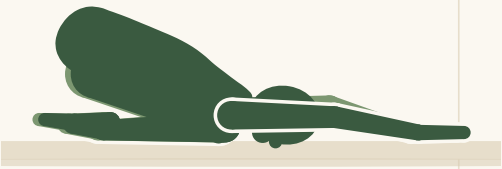
CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Neck injury: practise a low or supported version and never turn the head while lifted.
- Later pregnancy: lying on the back may be unsuitable — consult your midwife or doctor.
- Back or knee problems: lift gently in a pain-free range.
- High blood pressure or eye conditions: keep low and short.

POSTURE 09 OF 10 · KNEELING, RESTING

Balasana

Child's Pose · Bālāsana · bala = child



Sitting back towards the heels, forehead on the mat, arms extended forward.

CATEGORY	LEVEL
Kneeling, resting	Beginner
HOLD	**FOCUS**
30 seconds – 3 minutes	Rest, gentle back release

ALIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ✓ Forehead supported — not hanging
- ✓ Hips moving towards the heels without forcing
- ✓ Back rounding gently and evenly
- ✓ Shoulders and neck relaxed
- ✓ No pressure or pain in the knees

The resting posture of yoga. Kneeling and folding forward over the thighs, you let the back round gently and the breath slow down. Child's Pose is a place to return to whenever you need a pause, and a gentle counterpose after backbends.

HOW TO PRACTISE

1. Kneel on the mat with the big toes touching. Keep the knees together or take them hip-width or wider.
2. Sit back towards the heels as far as is comfortable.
3. Fold forward from the hips and rest the forehead on the mat, a block or stacked fists.
4. Extend the arms forward with the palms down, or rest them along the body with the palms up.
5. Let the shoulders, jaw and belly soften. Stay as long as you like.

BREATHING

Breathe into the back of the ribs; feel them widen as you inhale and soften as you exhale.

COMING OUT

Place the hands under the shoulders and walk them back towards the knees, lifting the trunk slowly to sit on the heels. Pause before standing.

> **Before and after.** Child's Pose is itself the classic counterpose after Cobra and after Downward-Facing Dog. It needs no preparation.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Forcing the hips down: use a cushion.
- Forehead not reaching the floor and the neck straining: use a block.
- Holding the breath: let it be easy.
- Staying despite knee pain: change the version.

MODIFICATIONS & PROPS

- Cushion or blanket between buttocks and heels.
- Rolled blanket behind the knees or under the ankles.
- Bolster or pillows under the chest; knees wide.

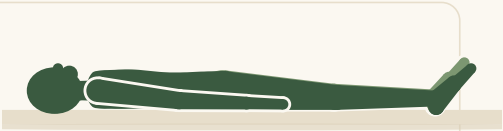
CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Knee injury or pain on kneeling: use cushions, or rest lying on the back instead.
- Pregnancy: knees wide to make room for the belly.
- High blood pressure or eye conditions: keep the head supported, at least level with the hips.
- Ankle stiffness: a rolled towel under the ankles.

POSTURE 10 OF 10 · RELAXATION

Savasana

Corpse Pose · Śavāsana · shava = corpse



Lying flat, arms alongside the body, legs extended, feet falling outwards.

CATEGORY	LEVEL
Relaxation	Beginner
HOLD	**FOCUS**
5–10 minutes	Conscious relaxation

ALIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ✓ Body symmetrical, head centred
- ✓ Legs and arms relaxed outwards
- ✓ Back of the neck long
- ✓ Face, jaw and tongue soft
- ✓ Warm and comfortable — cover yourself if needed

The final relaxation of practice. The name refers to lying completely still; the practice is to remain relaxed and awake at the same time. Many teachers consider Savasana the most important posture of a session, because it gives body and nervous system time to absorb the practice.

HOW TO PRACTISE

1. Sit on the mat with the knees bent, then lower onto your back, one vertebra at a time.
2. Extend the legs. Let the feet fall apart about hip-width or wider.
3. Rest the arms a little away from the body, palms up. Draw the shoulder blades slightly under you.
4. Tuck the chin very slightly so the back of the neck is long. Close the eyes.
5. Move your attention through the body from the feet to the face, letting each part become heavy.
6. Let the breath become natural. When thoughts arise, return gently to the breath or to sensation.

BREATHING

Completely natural. Simply observe the breath without changing it.

COMING OUT

Deepen the breath, move fingers and toes, stretch if you like, roll onto your right side and rest for a few breaths. Push up slowly to sitting.

> **Before and after.** No preparation is needed beyond the practice itself. Savasana is the natural ending of every session.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Skipping it: keep at least a few minutes.
- Fidgeting: settle the position first, then stay still.
- Getting cold: use a blanket.
- Sitting up quickly: roll to the side first.

MODIFICATIONS & PROPS

- Cushion or bolster under the knees for the lower back.
- Folded blanket under the head.
- Eye pillow or cloth over the eyes.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Later pregnancy: rest on your left side with a cushion between the knees instead of lying flat.
- Lower-back discomfort: bend the knees or support them.
- If lying still brings up distress, keep the eyes open and the session short.
- Breathing difficulties lying flat: raise the head and chest.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

A 20-minute sequence

All ten postures in one balanced session: arrive, warm the spine, stand and balance, bend back, rest.

Times include transitions. Move slowly and breathe through the nose. Warrior II and Triangle share the same foot position, so practise them together on the right, then together on the left.

		POSTURE AND CUE	TIME
1		**Balasana — Child's Pose** *Arrive. Let the breath slow down and lengthen the exhalations.*	**1 min**
2		**Marjaryasana–Bitilasana — Cat–Cow** *8–10 slow rounds, breath leading the movement.*	**1½ min**
3		**Adho Mukha Svanasana — Downward-Facing Dog** *5–8 breaths, knees bent. Walk the hands back to the feet, bend the knees and roll up slowly.*	**1 min**
4		**Tadasana — Mountain Pose** *Stand for 6–8 breaths; feel even weight on both feet.*	**1 min**
5		**Vrikshasana — Tree Pose** *5–8 breaths on each side, with a wall nearby.*	**2 min**
6		**Virabhadrasana II — Warrior II** *5 breaths on the right, then straighten the front leg and go directly into Triangle (step 7).*	**2 min**
7		**Trikonasana — Triangle Pose** *5 breaths on the right. Come up, then repeat Warrior II and Triangle on the left.*	**2 min**
8		**Bhujangasana — Cobra Pose** *Come down to lie on the front. Three low lifts of 3–5 breaths, resting between.*	**1½ min**
9		**Balasana — Child's Pose** *Counterpose to Cobra: 6–8 breaths.*	**1 min**
10		**Setu Bandha — Bridge Pose** *Roll onto the back. Two or three rounds of 5 breaths; then hug the knees gently.*	**2 min**
11		**Savasana — Corpse Pose** *Complete relaxation. Roll to the right side and rise slowly.*	**5 min**
		Total	**20 min**

Why the sequence works

The logic of the order

- **Arrive and warm up.** Child's Pose and Cat–Cow mobilise the spine gently before it carries weight in Downward-Facing Dog.
- **Stand while fresh.** Balance and standing postures need focus and leg strength, so they come early.
- **Pairing that saves effort.** Warrior II flows into Triangle with no change of feet.
- **Backbends, then release.** Cobra is followed by Child's Pose; Bridge by hugging the knees.
- **Rest last.** Savasana comes when the body is ready to be still. Do not skip it.

Making it fit you

- **Feeling stiff?** Double the Cat–Cow, keep the knees well bent in Downward-Facing Dog, and hold Triangle with the hand on a block.
- **Unsteady?** Practise Tree beside a wall and keep the hands at the chest.
- **Lower back sensitive?** Replace Cobra with Sphinx, and use a block under the sacrum in Bridge.
- **High blood pressure or eye conditions?** Replace Downward-Facing Dog with a few extra rounds of Cat–Cow, keep the arms lower and holds shorter.
- **Pregnant?** This sequence is not designed for pregnancy. Please seek a specialist pregnancy class.

A 10-minute version for busy days

Cat–Cow	6–8 rounds	**1½ min**
Downward-Facing Dog	5 breaths, then roll up to standing	**1 min**
Tadasana	5 breaths	**½ min**
Warrior II › Triangle	4 breaths each, right then left	**3 min**
Bridge Pose	Two rounds of 5 breaths, then knees to chest	**1½ min**
Savasana	Rest with natural breathing	**2½ min**
	Total	**10 min**

THROUGHOUT

- Come up from folds and from lying slowly; pause if you feel light-headed.
- Skip anything that causes pain, and rest in Child's Pose or Savasana instead.

GOING FURTHER

Practice recommendations

How often

Two or three sessions a week are a good start; four or five short sessions are better than one long one. Allow at least one rest day, and notice how you feel the next morning — mild muscle awareness is normal, joint pain is not.

How to progress

- Weeks 1–2: learn the steps; hold for the lower end of the suggested range.
- Weeks 3–6: lengthen holds by one or two breaths; reduce props only where the alignment checklist stays intact.
- After that: explore related postures in the Asana Library, one at a time.

When to see a teacher

A qualified teacher can see what you cannot: a knee drifting inwards, a shoulder lifting, a breath held. If a posture repeatedly causes discomfort, or if you have an injury or health condition, individual guidance is worth seeking.

Benefits — honestly stated

With regular practice, many people find that these postures may help to improve mobility in the spine and hips, build strength and balance in the legs and trunk, and increase body awareness. The slow breathing and final relaxation are experienced by many as calming. Results vary from person to person and develop gradually; none is guaranteed.

And their limits

These postures are not a treatment for any condition and do not replace medical care or physiotherapy. A gentle practice offers limited cardiovascular training, so continue to walk, swim or cycle. Learning from a guide also has limits — it cannot see you or adjust to your history.

Closing summary

- ✓ Ten postures, four families: standing & balance, inversion, spinal movement & backbends, rest.
- ✓ Follow the steps, then check the alignment list.
- ✓ Breath first: smooth and nasal, never held.
- ✓ Modify freely — props are tools, not shortcuts.
- ✓ Sensation is welcome; pain means stop.
- ✓ Little and often, and always end with Savasana.

PLEASE READ

Safety disclaimer

This guide is for general education. It is not medical advice and does not replace individual instruction from a qualified yoga teacher or the advice of your doctor.

Yoga is a physical practice, and every body is different. The postures, breathing exercises and sequences described here are intended for healthy adults practising at a gentle, beginner-friendly level. Nothing in this guide is intended to diagnose, treat or prevent any illness or condition, and no particular result is promised.

BEFORE YOU PRACTISE

- Consult your doctor before starting if you are pregnant or have recently given birth, have an injury, have had recent surgery, or live with a medical condition — for example high or low blood pressure, a heart condition, glaucoma or another eye condition, osteoporosis, a spinal or joint problem, or a balance disorder.
- If you are under medical or physiotherapy care, show this guide to the professional treating you and follow their advice.
- Tell any teacher you practise with about injuries or health conditions so that they can suggest suitable modifications.

WHILE YOU PRACTISE

- Stop immediately if you feel pain — particularly sharp, sudden or joint pain — or if you feel dizzy, faint, short of breath, numb or unwell. Rest, and seek medical advice if the symptoms persist.
- Never force a posture or hold your breath under strain. A steady, comfortable breath is the most reliable sign that you are working at the right intensity.
- Practise on a non-slip surface with enough space around you, and use a wall or chair for support in balancing postures if you are unsteady.
- Practise on an empty or light stomach, and come up slowly from lying or folded positions.

You practise at your own risk and remain responsible for your own wellbeing. The author and publisher accept no liability for any injury or loss arising from the use or misuse of the information in this guide. Information is believed to be accurate at the time of publication, but yoga instruction varies between traditions and teachers, and you may meet other valid ways of practising these postures.

YOGA WISDOM — STYLES, POSTURES & PRACTICE

10 Essential Yoga Postures for Beginners

A free guide · First edition, 2026

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More guides, posture pages and articles on yoga styles, breathing and meditation: **yoga.spiritualland.com**

This guide is educational and does not replace medical advice or individual instruction. Please read the safety disclaimer before practising.