



Yodanga Arts

YOGA BASICS EXPLAINED

APRIL 2020 // PREPARED BY STEPHANIE TOWNSEND

INTRODUCTION

Hey Yodanga Chums!

Firstly, thank you for downloading this guide!

This guide features **11 of the most commonly recognised yoga postures** along with some of the key teaching points related to each posture.

Practicing yoga at home and developing your own personal practice is a great way of building your **strength, stamina and flexibility**. But sometimes there can be uncertainty around whether or not you are practicing yoga **safely** and not developing alignment habits that could have a negative impact on your body in the future.

Here at Yodanga Arts we really believe in offering support to those around us & building a community of **likeminded individuals** who are keen to move, develop their practice and learn about working alongside their body in a safe manner.

Throughout this guide, we have offered a few suggestions for how you can modify some of the postures. However, there are many other options available. **You know your body better than anyone else, so ensure you are doing what is right for you.**

We encourage you to listen to your body; it's highly intelligent!

Try not to get too hung up on whether your foot is at the perfect angle, your leg is lifted high enough etc...**Every body is different and those differences are what make you YOU!**

If you would like to see these 11 poses in action, you can!

[Watch our 'Yoga Basics Explained' Video](#)

If you have any questions or queries in relation to anything found within this guide, you are welcome to get in touch - **we'd love to hear from you!**

DISCLAIMER

By voluntarily undertaking any exercise displayed in this guide, you agree to the following terms:

If at any point during your yoga practice you feel faint, discomfort or pain, you should stop immediately. Consult a doctor or suitable professional before beginning any new exercise regime. Always obtain advice from a qualified healthcare professional if you have any questions regarding your exercise regime. It is your responsibility to evaluate your own medical and physical condition, and to independently decide whether to use, perform or adapt any of the information in this guide. Yodanga Arts assumes no responsibility or liability for any loss or injury that is incurred through the use or misuse of the information within this guide.

MOUNTAIN POSE (TADASANA)



Mountain pose is the base for all standing poses. It is used to help you connect down into your feet and also the earth beneath you. It is a pose that is often overlooked and can be viewed as simply 'standing' but there is actually a lot going on.

Guide

Start with your feet together or the feet directly underneath the hips. Distribute your weight evenly across the soles of the feet. Ensure you can feel weight pouring down through all ten of the toes.

Pull your kneecaps up towards the hips, therefore engaging the quadriceps (thigh muscles).

Draw your bellybutton in towards the spine & slightly lift the chest.

Roll your shoulders down into the centre of the back, imagine squeezing the shoulder blades towards each other, allowing some openness across the chest. Make sure your palms continue to face in towards the body too.

Enjoy the feeling of length through the body, from the ground all the way up & out the top of the head.

Hold for 5-8 breaths.

STANDING FORWARD FOLD (UTTANASANA)



A **Standing Forward Fold** is a simple inversion that will wake up and stretch your hamstrings.

Guide

Begin in a Mountain Pose. Inhale lift the hands high above the head, lengthening out the spine. As you exhale, hinge at the hips and forwards fold over the legs.

Try to keep lengthening the front of the body at the same time as keeping the weight forward towards your toes. You want to keep the hips aligned over the heels.

Knees can be bent or straight. If the legs are straight, pull the kneecaps up towards the hips to engage the quadriceps.

If the fingers have contact with the floor, you can bring the hands in front or either side of the feet. Other options include placing the hands on the ankles or grasping the elbows with the opposite hands and gently hanging down over the legs.

Hold for 5 breaths before returning to standing.

Make sure that you keep the length in the torso on the journey back up, not uncurling through the spine.

HALF WAY LIFT (ARDHA UTTANASANA)



A **Half Way Lift** gives you a chance to lengthen the through the torso before coming down into a Forward Fold.

Guide

From a Forward Fold, inhale as you begin to lift the torso away from the thighs, trying to find length between the head and tailbone.

Depending on the hamstring flexibility, you may be able to keep the fingertips gently touching the floor. If this isn't currently available to you, simply slide the palms up the front of the shins.

Legs can be slightly bent or straight.

Hold for 3-5 breaths before exhaling back down into a Forward Fold. Remember to focus on continuing to find length in the spine.

PLANK (KUMBHAKASANA)



The dreaded **Plank!** It may be hard work but boy, is it good for you! This pose is great for finding some balance in the hands and engaging the abdominals.

Guide

Starting in a Table Top position (all fours) with your shoulders stacked above the wrists, hips stacked over the knees and your toes tucked under.

Engage through the arms as you step one foot back until the leg is outstretched, toes tucked under and repeat on the other side.

Try to push the floor away from you, so the shoulders are engaged instead of collapsed.

Imagine energy coming out of the head and the heels to gain as much length throughout the body as you can.

Lastly, tuck the tailbone under slightly as you pull the navel towards the spine and imagine pulling the ribs together - engaging your abdominals

Hold for 5 breaths before returning to a Table Top position.

CHATURANGA (CHATURANGA DANDASANA)



Chaturanga is frequently used in traditional Sun Salutation sequences and is great for building strength in the wrists & arms ready for future arm balances and inversions.

Guide

Begin in a Plank position with the knees on or off the floor.

Shift your weight forwards towards the hands.

On an exhale, slowly begin lowering the body towards the floor and stop when your elbows are in line with your shoulders. Ensure the elbows are pointing straight back and are hugging alongside the body.

Keep the body in a long line by engaging the legs, core and tucking the tailbone under slightly.

Lastly ensure your weight is equally spread between the hands and feet and that you are keeping your head in line with the rest of the spine.

COBRA (BHUJANGASANA)



Cobra is a gentle backbend that can be used as an alternative to Upward Dog depending on back flexibility or whether the body is warm & ready for a backbend.

Guide

Start by lying on your front with the hands planted underneath the shoulders and the elbows hugging in towards the body. Press the tops of the feet, thighs & front of the pelvis down into the floor.

On an inhale, roll the shoulders open and begin to straighten the arms to lift the chest away from the floor. Continue to lift, keeping the connection between the pelvis, legs & floor. Gently engage through the glutes.

Ensure the shoulders are staying down away from the ears and lift through the sternum.

Try to move away from sending the ribs too far forward, as this will only encourage the lower back to harden.

Hold for 5 deep breaths before returning down to the floor or moving to a Downward Dog.

UPWARD DOG (URDHVA MUKHA SVANASANA)



Upward Dog is the more strenuous of these two backbends, calling on numerous muscles to engage & lift the body. The most common challenges are usually with keeping the shoulders/arms active and also keeping the legs lifted away from the floor.

Guide

You can start from the bottom of a Chaturanga or from lying down on your front.

On an inhale, roll the shoulders open, push into the tops of the feet and begin to straighten your arms. This will allow you to lift and open the chest at the same time as allowing the legs to gently lift off of the floor. The knees should be off of the floor too.

Really push into the hands and round the shoulders down away from the ears, squeezing the shoulder blades in towards each other.

Depending on what is okay for your neck. You can look forwards or up.

Hold for 5 breaths before lowering down to the floor or moving back to a Downward Dog.

DOWNWARD DOG (ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA)



Downward Dog is one of the most widely recognised yoga postures and initially it can be a little tricky. This posture works the whole body, both strengthening and stretching.

Guide

Begin in a Table Top position (all fours) with your shoulders stacked above the wrists, hips stacked over the knees and your toes tucked under.

Slowly lift your hips up & back so some weight pours down into the feet. You're aiming to make a triangular shape, with the three points of the triangle being your hips, heels and hands. Your shoulders should now be back behind the wrists, creating a long diagonal line from the hips to the hands.

Ensure you have an equal amount of weight pouring down through all 10 fingers and through all 4 corners of each of the palms. Wrap or rotate your inner elbows and armpits in towards each other, engaging the shoulders.

Imagine opening through the shoulders, allowing the chest to move back towards the thighs. Heels can be off the floor with the intention of lengthening them to the floor.

You can have your knees bent or straight depending on your hamstring flexibility and you can always create more space between the hands & feet to access more length if you need.

Hold for 5 breaths before returning to a Table Top position.

WARRIOR 1 (VIRABHADRASANA I)



There are three main warrior poses that are known for building strength, stability and stamina. **Warrior 1** contains a minor backbend.

Guide

From a Mountain Pose, take a large step back with your left leg as if coming into a Lunge.

Allow the left heel to rotate down to the floor. Ground down through the back foot and lift the inner arch of the foot to strengthen the legs and avoid collapsing into the pose.

Square off your hips, so that they are both facing forwards. You may find that you need to step the feet closer together and/or minimise the angle of which the left foot is opened out in order to achieve this.

Ensure your torso is facing forwards, draw the rib cage down and try to lengthen out of the lower back.

Lift your chest and raise the arms up overhead.

Hold for 5 breaths and step back to Mountain Pose.

Repeat on the other side.

WARRIOR 2 (VIRABHADRASANA II)



Warrior 2 is one of our favourite poses but has a lot going on. It's a great way to work the external rotation of the hip whilst opening up the inner thighs.

Warrior 2 is regularly used as the starting point of other poses such as Reverse Warrior & Triangle.

Guide

From a Lunge with the left leg back, rotate your left heel down to make contact with the floor. With your left toes pointing towards the long edge of your mat and your right toes facing forwards towards the short edge at the front of your mat.

Allow the right knee to bend until the knee is directly above the ankle. Ensure that your knee is tracking in the same direction as your toes - if the knee is rolling inwards, engage through the leg muscles so that the knee can open outwards slightly to line up with the toes.

Make sure you are grounding the back edge of the left foot down towards the floor too.

Stretch the arms out wide in line with your shoulders. Try to avoid lifting the shoulders up to the ears and instead, roll the shoulders down into the back.

Stack the shoulders above the hips and gently gaze over the right fingertips.

Hold for 5 breaths before returning to Mountain Pose and repeating on the other side

WARRIOR 3 (VIRABHADRASANA III)



Warrior 3 is a pose that builds power and grounding through the legs whilst challenging the body with both backward and forward bending elements.

Guide: Begin in a Mountain Pose and slowly start shifting the weight into the left foot. Avoid sinking into the left hip by keeping the hips level.

Slowly start to float the right leg back behind you, keeping the leg straight and the foot flexed.

Allow the torso to gradually drop forwards at the same time as extending the right leg.

The arms can reach out towards the side or forwards alongside the head.

The supporting leg can be straight or feature a micro-bend.

The arms, torso and lifted leg should be relatively parallel to the floor.

A common habit is where the lifted leg (right) begins to open outwards (demonstrated above). Aim for both of the hip bones to face down towards the floor - therefore squaring off the hips.

Hold for 5 breaths before reversing the process back to Mountain Pose. Repeat on the other side.



See you on the mat



THANK YOU

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We truly appreciate you both and everything that you offer.

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