

Yoga for Beginners



A Six Week Series
On the Fundamentals of Yoga

By Tom Barry

Yoga for Beginners

Teaching beginners should be a very rewarding experience for both the teacher and the students. Most beginners come to yoga to improve their physical health and/or to reduce stress. As a teacher it is important to take some time with each student that enrolls in the beginners series class to understand why they are taking the class, what they hope to get out of the class, what previous yoga experience they may have and any pre-existing conditions or health issues they may have.

The intention of this beginner's series program is to introduce fundamental concepts of yoga and yoga poses (asanas) to develop strength and flexibility, preparing students to move into beginning level yoga classes. Using asanas along with breathing (pranayama) and introduction to meditation the course will focus on developing breath awareness, linking movement to the breath, developing concentration and balancing effort and ease. The classes will be conducted in a safe, welcoming environment that challenges without being intimidating and provides a rewarding experience for the beginning yoga students.

The series starts with an introduction and an overview of the program. The intention for the first class is to develop breath awareness, and then start to link the breath and movement through basic supine, standing and seated postures. Each successive week the class will introduce new asanas and a new intention while maintaining a consistent class format throughout the series.

Common Challenges for Beginners

- Lack of body awareness
- Tight hamstrings
- Tight hips
- Weak back
- Lack of core strength
- In older students these limitations may be more pronounced

Tips for Teaching Beginners

- Meet students where they are at. Teach students not poses.
- Make it safe, interesting and fun.
- Make it challenging without being intimidating.
- Keep the format consistent from class to class.
- Focus on fundamentals, breathing, grounding, inner focus and concentration.
- Emphasize connecting the lower body, feet and legs, to the earth. Teach standing poses and hip openers to ground the students.
- Repetition is more important than holding postures
- Teach how to get in and out of poses, limiting set-up to three cues, and then focusing on one key action at a time.
- Beginners need to be taught breath awareness and inner focus to withdraw their attention away from external stimuli.
- Tell them exactly what you want them to do, do not give them choices.
- Be aware of students pre-existing conditions or health issues and teach them how to modify poses for their conditions.
- Include Savasana in every class.
- Building up confidence is important in beginning classes, so stick with the basic poses and with sequences that are simple to follow.
- To practice correct form can be very challenging even in basic postures; take the time to teach the pose properly from the ground up, and to observe whether or not the students have understood and been able to respond.

Asanas

Asana practice improves structural stability, physiological and emotional health. Structurally, it will improve stability, strength, flexibility and alignment. Physiologically, practice will balance neurological and hormonal activity, strengthen cardiovascular and respiratory systems and strengthen the body's immune system. Emotionally, practice will increase self-confidence, help us become more tolerant, compassionate, accepting of change and appreciate life.

The essential qualities of asana practice were defined in the Yoga Sutras by the sage Patanjali. These qualities are “Sthira”, to be firm, stable, alert and present, and “Sukha”, to be at ease without pain or agitation. According to the Yoga Sutras our ability to be alert and present in asana is through the breath. Through the breath we link the mind to the body. Our asana practice needs to balance the effort of stability while being alert and at ease without agitation.

Asana practice is a means of developing and deepening self-awareness which is the key to the process of transformation. One can use asana practice to develop understanding of the mechanisms that are responsible for our present condition and use that information to improve the functioning of the body's systems and their interaction with each other.

Repetition versus Holding

Asana practice for beginners should include the repetitive movement into and out of the asana postures and the holding of the postures for a short period of time. Repetition alternates between contracting and stretching muscles to increase circulation and improve flexibility and strength. Repetition prepares the student for holding postures for extended periods with minimal resistance. Repetition helps students notice habitual movement patterns and develop new ones that are adapted to structural and functional needs. Musculoskeletal and neuromuscular is significantly improved through repetition. On the other hand, holding postures significantly improves inner purification and physiological transformation.

The body must be sufficiently prepared for longer holding or else it will be impossible to hold or not beneficial and actually reinforce existing conditions or create additional stress and tension. To ensure students are using their asana practice to transform they need to bring full attention to the relationship between the breath, the movement and the spine. Instead of focusing on the external form of an asana posture, the students focus and feel from the inside how the body is responding to the movement. This develops and experimental quality to the practice that will help the student learn, grow and progress.

Adapting the Practice

Adapting the practice to meet the needs of the student provides the means for making asana postures accessible. Breaking the pose down into smaller parts is an excellent way to help students learn a posture. Using props to make the poses more accessible is beneficial to students who do not have the flexibility or strength to get into correct alignment. Some examples of adaptations are:

- Elevate the buttocks in seated postures for tight hips to facilitate the forward rotation of the pelvis to help safely stretch the low back.
- Use blocks to “raise the ground” for students that can’t reach the mat in forward folds
- Use a wall for students to stand against in Tadasana to feel correct alignment. The wall is also excellent for assisting in learning balance postures, open hip standing postures and variations for Adho Mukha Svanasana.

The Breath

It is important to have beginners bring awareness to their breath. In asana practice the main focus of attention should be on the movement of the body through the breath. All movement in asana should be initiated by the action of the breath. Movements linked to inhale are: raising the arms, expanding the chest, arching the back, moving into backbends and extension postures and straightening the spine from a forward fold, a twist or lateral stretch. Movements linked to exhale are: lowering the arms, compressing the abdomen in forward folds, twists, and lateral stretches and moving out of backbends.

The conscious control of the breath allows the student to link her attention directly to the movement of the spine which is the core of all movement. The student then move consciously rather than moving mechanically thus bringing a deeper awareness to all movements. This helps the student develop an internal focus rather than focusing externally on the form of the posture and allows him to feel from the inside how the body is responding to the movement.

Sequencing the Class

Teaching beginners like teaching all students needs to have a well-conceived sequence to facilitate an effective class. Following the general principles of vinyasa krama a class should move progressively from the gross to the subtle, from external to internal, from simple to complex and from easy to more challenging.

- Set an intention for the practice. In teaching beginners it may be working on grounding, linking movement to the breath and using a particular asana group such as standing poses or forward folds.
- Be efficient . Limit the number of postures and link your postures to achieve the intention of the practice.
- Focus on linking the breath with the movement. Maintain a smooth, deep, even breath pattern throughout the practice. Draw the students’ attention back to the breath repeatedly.

- Make transitions smooth. Sequence warm-ups, standing poses, seated poses and lying poses in groups and avoid moving up and down from standing to seated or lying and back again multiple times.
- Use rest appropriately with beginning students. Watch the class and provide for recuperation and bringing the breath back to a smooth steady pattern when needed.
- Always teach Savasana.

The Classes



The following is a class plan for a six week series class. The plan follows a weekly intention and asanas used to teach that intention. Each class and group of students will be different. The class plan is a guide so that fundamental principles and all asana categories are reviewed during the series. The class plans should be modified as needed to best suit the students in the class. The classes can also be adapted for a shorter or longer series of classes.

Week One

Intention – Breath awareness and linking breath with movement

Asana Focus – Fixed and dynamic movement in basic prone, seated and standing postures

Introductions and Overview of the Course

- **Supine Breath Awareness and Belly Breathing**
 - Blankets and/or bolster supporting spine and head
- **Supta Tadasana**
 - Feet grounded at wall
 - bend knees grab sides of mat and straighten legs
- **Supta Urdhva Hastasana**
 - Feet grounded at wall
 - extend arms overhead, reach through finger tips
- **Apanasana, Right Leg, Left Leg, Both Legs**
 - Bend knee, clasp hands around shin and hug knee to chest
- **Leg Lifts**
 - Bend both knees with feet on mat
 - alternate lifting one leg, extending sole of foot toward ceiling
- **Jathara Parivartanasana**
 - Extend arms out to the side
 - bend knees bringing knees over hips
 - lower knees toward right elbow, back to center and then lower toward left elbow
- **Dandasana**
 - Sit with legs extended together
 - In all seated poses see that the pelvis tips forward slightly. Sit up on height as needed
 - Press palms down next to hips
 - Lift side ribs, sternum and crown of the head up
 - extend arms overhead dynamically in Urdhva Hastasana
- **Cakra Vakrasana**
 - Come to hands and knees
 - Inhale, extend sternum forward spreading collar bones and look up slightly
 - Exhale pull navel to spine and bring hips to heels and chest to thighs
- **Table**
 - Extend opposite arm/leg
- **Adho Mukha Svanasana (AMS)**
 - From table extend hands forward one hand length
 - Lift sitbones up and back keeping knees bend for a few breaths to allow the spine to lengthen and release
 - Press thighs back firmly to straighten legs

- Press the chest toward the shoulders
- **Balasana**
 - From AMS come down to knees, big toes together knees hip width apart
 - press sit bones back to heels
- **Adho Mukha Svanasana to Plank**
 - From AMS shift body forward shoulders over wrists
 - Extend body in straight line from heels through crown of head
- **Bhujangasana**
 - Lower from plank to the mat and bring tops of feet to mat
 - Extend sternum out and up into low cobra
- **AMS to Uttanasana**
 - Press up to plank and back to AMS
 - Look forward and step feet between hands coming into forward fold
 - Keep slight bend in knees and clasp opposite elbows
- **Tadasana**
 - Stand with back against wall
 - Feet together and parallel heels touching wall
 - Calves, buttocks, shoulder blades and back of head aligned against the wall
- **Urdhva Hastasana to Ardha Chandrasana I**
 - Extend arms overhead
 - Clasp right wrist with left hand
 - Ground through left heel and pull right arm up lengthening right side of body
 - Extend laterally to left stretching right side of body
 - Repeat on left side
- **Prasarita Padottanasana**
 - From Tadasana step out to wide stance with feet parallel
 - Ground through feet and lengthen through front of torso
 - Fold forward at hip crease keeping length in front of torso
 - Bring hands to blocks and extend torso with flat back
 - Walk hands back toward feet folding forward and releasing head and neck
- **Supine Twist**
 - Come onto back on mat with knees bent soles of feet on mat hip width apart
 - Exhale and lower knees to right, inhale back to center and exhale knees to left
- **Apanasana**
 - Clasp hands around both shins and hug knees in toward chest
- **Savasana**
 - Lie comfortably with blanket under head and neck and use other props as needed

Week Two

Intention – Grounding and building strength

Asana Focus – Fundamental Standing Poses

Review of Week One

- **Supine Breath Awareness and Belly Breathing**
 - Blankets and/or bolster supporting spine and head
- **Supta Tadasana**
 - Feet grounded at wall
 - bend knees grab sides of mat and straighten legs
- **Supta Urdhva Hastasana**
 - Feet grounded at wall
 - extend arms overhead, reach through finger tips
- **Apanasana, Right Leg, Left Leg, Both Legs**
 - Bend knee, clasp hands around shin and hug knee to chest
- **Leg Lifts**
 - Bend both knees with feet on mat
 - alternate lifting one leg, extending sole of foot toward ceiling
- **Jathara Parivartanasana**
 - Extend arms out to the side
 - bend knees bringing knees over hips
 - lower knees toward right elbow, back to center and then lower toward left elbow
- **Table**
- **Adho Mukha Svanasana (AMS)**
 - From table extend hands forward one hand length
 - Lift sitbones up and back keeping knees bend for a few breaths to allow the spine to lengthen and release
 - Press thighs back firmly to straighten legs
 - Press the chest toward the shoulders
- **Balasana**
 - From AMS come down to knees, big toes together knees hip width apart
 - press sit bones back to heels
- **Adho Mukha Svanasana to Plank**
 - From AMS shift body forward shoulders over wrists
 - Extend body in straight line from heels through crown of head
- **Tadasana**
 - Feet together and parallel heels touching wall
 - Calves, buttocks, shoulder blades and back of head aligned against the wall
- **AMS to Uttanasana to Ardha Uttanasana to Uttanasana to Tadasana**
 - Repeat several times linking breath to movement
 - Use blocks to ground hands in forward fold
- **Utkatasana**
 - In Tadasana extend arms overhead
 - Bend knees and lower hips as if sitting in a chair
 - Lift through front of torso and extend through finger tips
- **Trikonasana**
 - From Tadasana step feet apart to wide stance and extend arms out to sides

- Turn right leg and foot out 90 degrees and left foot in slightly 15 degrees
- Externally rotate both thighs and contract the quadriceps
- Keep hips open to side with torso facing away from front leg
- Inhale and lift the pit of the belly, side ribs and sternum
- Exhale and glide the right ribs and right arm horizontally over the front leg
- Allow the right hand to land on the front shin, ankle or block(s).
- ***Virabhadrasana II***
 - From Tadasana step feet apart to wide stance and extend arms out to sides
 - Turn the right leg and foot out 90 degrees and left foot in slightly 15 degrees. The right knee cap should face directly forward
 - Line up the front heel with the arch of the back foot
 - Keep hips open to side with torso facing away from front leg
 - Exhale and slowly bend the front knee to 90 degrees. Resist the back leg away from the front leg as you descend
 - The front knee is aligned directly over the front ankle
 - Turn head and look out over the right fingertips
- ***Parsvakonasana***
 - Start in Virabhadrasana II
 - Inhale and lift the sternum
 - Exhale and glide the right ribs and right arm horizontally over the right thigh
 - Bring your right fingertips to a block behind the front leg directly under the right shoulder.
 - Right shin is perpendicular to the floor
 - Inhale and extend the left arm straight up
 - Exhale and reach the left arm over the left ear with palm facing down
- ***Prasarita Padottanasana***
 - From Tadasana step out to wide stance with feet parallel
 - Ground through feet and lengthen through front of torso
 - Fold forward at hip crease keeping length in front of torso
 - Bring hands to blocks and extend torso with flat back
 - Walk hands back toward feet folding forward and releasing head and neck
- ***Virabhadrasana I***
 - From Tadasana step feet apart to wide stance
 - Turn the right leg and foot out 90 degrees and turn the left foot in 45 – 60 degrees
 - Line up inner edge of front heel with inner edge of back heel. For more stability widen stance a few more inches
 - Turn hips to face the front foot
 - Extend arms up shoulder width apart
 - Exhale and slowly bend the front knee to 90 degrees with front knee stacked directly over front ankle and front shin vertical
 - Press the outer back heel down
 - Look forward at the horizon keeping the back of the neck long
- ***Parsvottanasana***
 - From Tadasana step feet apart to wide stance
 - Turn the right leg and foot out 90 degrees and turn the left foot in 45 – 60 degrees
 - Line up inner edge of front heel with inner edge of back heel. For more stability widen stance a few more inches
 - Turn hips to face the front foot
 - Bring right hand to back at sacrum and extend left arm up by left ear

- Inhale lift sternum looking up
- Exhale and extend the front spine toward the front leg
- Place both hands on mat or blocks and extend front of spine
- Exhale and release head and neck
- **Adho Mukha Savasana**
- **Dandasana**
 - Sit with legs extended together
 - In all seated poses see that the pelvis tips forward slightly. Sit up on height as needed
 - Press palms down next to hips
 - Lift side ribs, sternum and crown of the head up
- ***Viparita Karani***
 - Place bolster 2 inches from wall so there is room for the sit bones to descend
 - Recline with pelvis supported on the bolster, with buttocks and legs touching the wall and shoulders touching the floor
 - Check that belly is level
- **Savasana**
 - Lie comfortably with blanket under head and neck and use other props as needed

Week Three

Intention – Practice with mindfulness, bringing our attention inward

Asana Focus – Forward Folds

Review of Week Two

- **Supine Breath Awareness and Belly Breathing**
 - Blankets and/or bolster supporting spine and head
- **Dandasana**
 - Sit with legs extended together
 - In all seated poses see that the pelvis tips forward slightly. Sit up on height as needed
 - Press palms down next to hips
 - Lift side ribs, sternum and crown of the head up
- ***Baddha Konasana - Upright***
 - Sit in Dandasana. Bend the knees out to the sides and bring the soles of the feet together
 - Press hands into mat behind you to lift hips and move them toward the feet
 - Lift spine and broaden across chest
- ***Upavista Konasana – Upright***
 - Sit with straight legs extended out wide
 - In all seated poses see that the pelvis tips forward slightly. Sit up on height as needed
 - Pull buttocks flesh out and back to rest on front edge of sit bones with knees and toes facing straight up
 - Press palms down next to hip and press thighs down firmly
 - Lift side ribs sternum and crown of the head up
- **Cakra Vakasana**
 - Come to hands and knees
 - Inhale, extend sternum forward spreading collar bones and look up slightly
 - Exhale pull navel to spine and bring hips to heels and chest to thighs
- **Table**
 - Extend opposite arm/leg
- **Adho Mukha Svanasana (AMS)**
 - From table extend hands forward one hand length
 - Lift sitbones up and back keeping knees bend for a few breaths to allow the spine to lengthen and release
 - Press thighs back firmly to straighten legs
 - Press the chest toward the shoulders
- **Balasana**
 - From AMS come down to knees, big toes together knees hip width apart
 - press sit bones back to heels and chest between thighs
- **Adho Mukha Svanasana to Plank**
 - From AMS shift body forward shoulders over wrists
 - Extend body in straight line from heels through crown of head
- ***Bhujangasana***
 - Lower from plank to the mat and bring tops of feet to mat
 - Internally rotate legs by rolling inner thighs to the sky. Point toes back
 - Contract the quadriceps and shoot legs back keeping them active

- Place hands by low ribs and point elbows straight back and slide shoulder blades down toward the hips
- Inhale and lift from the pit of the belly to lift the chest and head off the floor. Anchor the sacrum down.
- Look slightly ahead with chin down and back of neck long
- Move low ribs away from the waist and lengthen sacrum, buttocks and legs away from the lumbar
- **AMS to Uttanasana**
 - Press up to plank and back to AMS
 - Look forward and step feet between hands coming into forward fold
 - Keep slight bend in knees and clasp opposite elbows
- **Tadasana**
 - Stand with back against wall
 - Feet together and parallel heels touching wall
 - Calves, buttocks, shoulder blades and back of head aligned against the wall
- **Ardha Uttanasana**
 - Long hold with hands on blocks or against a wall to maintain a flat back
- **Uttanasana**
 - From Tadasana extend arms overhead into Urdhva Hastasana
 - Exhale and hinge forward at the hips to bring hands to mat of blocks
 - Shift more weight into ball mounds of feet so that legs are vertical and sitbones lift
 - Release crown of head toward the floor
- **Surya Namaskar A**
 - Move slowly and mindfully through this sun salutation linking breath to movement
- **Trikonasana**
 - From Tadasana step feet apart to wide stance and extend arms out to sides
 - Turn right leg and foot out 90 degrees and left foot in slightly 15 degrees
 - Externally rotate both thighs and contract the quadriceps
 - Keep hips open to side with torso facing away from front leg
 - Inhale and lift the pit of the belly, side ribs and sternum
 - Exhale and glide the right ribs and right arm horizontally over the front leg
 - Allow the right hand to land on the front shin, ankle or block(s).
- **Virabhadrasana II**
 - From Tadasana step feet apart to wide stance and extend arms out to sides
 - Turn the right leg and foot out 90 degrees and left foot in slightly 15 degrees. The right knee cap should face directly forward
 - Line up the front heel with the arch of the back foot
 - Keep hips open to side with torso facing away from front leg
 - Exhale and slowly bend the front knee to 90 degrees. Resist the back leg away from the front leg as you descend
 - The front knee is aligned directly over the front ankle
 - Turn head and look out over the right fingertips
- **Parsvakonasana**
 - Start in Virabhadrasana II
 - Inhale and lift the sternum
 - Exhale and glide the right ribs and right arm horizontally over the right thigh
 - Bring your right fingertips to a block behind the front leg directly under the right shoulder.
 - Right shin is perpendicular to the floor

- Inhale and extend the left arm straight up
- Exhale and reach the left arm over the left ear with palm facing down
- ***Prasarita Padottanasana***
 - From Tadasana step out to wide stance with feet parallel
 - Ground through feet and lengthen through front of torso
 - Fold forward at hip crease keeping length in front of torso
 - Bring hands to blocks and extend torso with flat back
 - Walk hands back toward feet folding forward and releasing head and neck
- ***Parsvottanasana***
 - From Tadasana step feet apart to wide stance
 - Turn the right leg and foot out 90 degrees and turn the left foot in 45 – 60 degrees
 - Line up inner edge of front heel with inner edge of back heel. For more stability widen stance a few more inches
 - Turn hips to face the front foot
 - Bring right hand to back at sacrum and extend left arm up by left ear
 - Inhale lift sternum looking up
 - Exhale and extend the front spine toward the front leg
 - Place both hands on mat or blocks and extend front of spine
 - Exhale and release head and neck
- ***Dandasana***
- ***Ardha Matsyendrasana***
 - From Dandasana bend the left knee and place the left foot to the outside of the right thigh
 - Slide the right foot to the left as the right knee bends bringing the right foot on the floor to the outside of the left thigh
 - Shift your hips to sit evenly on both sitbones
 - Place your right hand on the floor behind your sacrum
 - Inhale extend the left arm up
 - Exhale twist from your roots and wrap left arm around right knee
- ***Janu Sirsasana***
 - From Dandasana, sit on a height as needed to maintain a forward tilt in the pelvis
 - Bend the right knee outward and draw the right leg back placing the sole of the right foot against the left inner thigh and keep the hips square to the top or the mat
 - Pull the buttocks flesh out and back to rest on the front edge of the sitbones
 - Inhale, lift arms, side ribs, sternum and crown of the head up
 - Exhale and keeping the sitbones grounded turn the pelvis to the left and grab the outside edges of the left foot, left calf or use a strap around the left foot.
 - Inhale and relift sternum broadening the chest and collar bones
 - Exhale and extend the sternum forward over the straight leg
- ***Paschimottanasana***
 - From Dandasana, sit on blanket as needed so sacrum tilts forward approximately 30 degrees
 - Inhale reach arms up to lengthen waist and side ribs
 - Exhale and hinge forward at hip joint keeping front of torso long
 - Grab outer edges of feet or use a strap
 - Inhale, look up and lift sternum as you press roots of thighs down
 - Exhale extend torso forward and down
- ***Savasana***
 - Lie comfortably with blanket under head and neck and use other props as needed

Week Four

Intention- Cleanse, release and rejuvenate

Asana Focus – Twists

Review of Week Three

- **Supine Breath Awareness and Belly Breathing**
 - Blankets and/or bolster supporting spine and head
- ***Virasana***
 - Kneel on shins and tops of feet with knees pointing straight ahead. Spread feet just enough for hips to descend between feet. Sit on block or folded blanket as needed.
 - Use thumbs behind the knees to drag calf flesh down
 - Press the shins down firmly with the hands
 - Point the feet straight back
 - Place hands on top of thighs
 - Lift ribs and sternum
- ***Shoulder Openers in Virasana***
 - Urdhva Hastasana dynamically with the breath
 - Hold strap approximately 3 feet in width at waist level, extend arms overhead and down behind head toward lower back. Then reverse motion bringing strap back to starting point
 - Gomukasana arms
 - Garundasana arms
 - Seated twist
- **Adho Mukha Svanasana**
- **AMS to Plank**
- **Balasana**
- ***Dolphin***
 - From table place elbows where hands were on the mat shoulder width apart
 - Lift sitbones up and back keeping knees bent for a few breaths to allow the spine to lengthen and release
 - Press thighs back firmly to straighten legs
- **AMS to Uttanasana to Tadasana**
- **Surya Namaskar A**
 - Do three rounds of the sun salutation moving mindfully and linking movement to the breath
- **Trikonasana**
 - From Tadasana step feet apart to wide stance and extend arms out to sides
 - Turn right leg and foot out 90 degrees and left foot in slightly 15 degrees
 - Externally rotate both thighs and contract the quadriceps
 - Keep hips open to side with torso facing away from front leg
 - Inhale and lift the pit of the belly, side ribs and sternum
 - Exhale and glide the right ribs and right arm horizontally over the front leg
 - Allow the right hand to land on the front shin, ankle or block(s).
- ***Ardha Chandrasana II - against the wall***

- Set up in Trikonasana with back against the wall
- Bend the right knee, look down at the right foot keeping the chest open and place left hand on left hip
- Place right fingertips on a block 12 -18 inches in front of the right foot
- Inhale and press the right inner heel down to lift the left leg up into the air. Stack the left hip over the right hip
- Extend the left arm straight up
- ***Prasarita Padottanasana with a twist***
 - From Tadasana step out to wide stance with feet parallel
 - Ground through feet and lengthen through front of torso
 - Fold forward at hip crease keeping length in front of torso
 - Bring hands to blocks and extend torso with flat back
 - Place right hand on floor or block aligned between shoulders
 - Exhale and twist from the root of the spine to the left
 - Left hand comes to sacral area of low back
- ***Virabhadrasana I***
 - From Tadasana step feet apart to wide stance
 - Turn the right leg and foot out 90 degrees and turn the left foot in 45 – 60 degrees
 - Line up inner edge of front heel with inner edge of back heel. For more stability widen stance a few more inches
 - Turn hips to face the front foot
 - Extend arms up shoulder width apart
 - Exhale and slowly bend the front knee to 90 degrees with front knee stacked directly over front ankle and front shin vertical
 - Press the outer back heel down
 - Look forward at the horizon keeping the back of the neck long
- ***Parsvottanasana***
 - From Tadasana step feet apart to wide stance
 - Turn the right leg and foot out 90 degrees and turn the left foot in 45 – 60 degrees
 - Line up inner edge of front heel with inner edge of back heel. For more stability widen stance a few more inches
 - Turn hips to face the front foot
 - Bring right hand to back at sacrum and extend left arm up by left ear
 - Inhale lift sternum looking up
 - Exhale and extend the front spine toward the front leg
 - Place both hands on mat or blocks and extend front of spine
 - Exhale and release head and neck
- ***Parivrtta Trikonasana***
 - From Parsvottanasana leg stance with right leg forward place hands on hips
 - Inhale and lengthen front of spine
 - Exhale and fold forward at hip crease extending torso parallel to mat
 - Place left hand on block(s) to the inside of the right foot
 - Exhale and twist from root of spine to the right
 - Extend right arm to the sky
- ***AMS***
- ***Dandasana***
- ***Bharadvajasana***
 - Sit in Dandasana on the short end of a bolster

- Bend knees and swing legs to the left. The left leg will be in virasana and the right foot will be perpendicular to the left shin.
- Place the left ankle over the arch of the right foot
- Place the right hand behind the sacrum on the bolster and the left hand to the outside of the right knee
- Inhale and lift the pit of the belly
- Exhale and turn your chest to the right and look over the right shoulder
- ***Ardha Matsyendrasana***
 - From Dandasana bend the left knee and place the left foot to the outside of the right thigh
 - Slide the right foot to the left as the right knee bends bringing the right foot on the floor to the outside of the left thigh
 - Shift your hips to sit evenly on both sitbones
 - Place your right hand on the floor behind your sacrum
 - Inhale extend the left arm up
 - Exhale twist from your roots and wrap left arm around right knee
- **Baddha Konasana**
 - Sit in Dandasana. Bend the knees out to the sides and bring the soles of the feet together
 - Press hands into mat behind you to lift hips and move them toward the feet
 - Clasp hands on feet or ankles
 - Inhale lift spine and broaden across chest
 - Exhale folding forward at the hip crease
 - Release head and neck
- **Viparita Karani**
 - Place bolster 2 inches from wall so there is room for the sit bones to descend
 - Recline with pelvis supported on the bolster, with buttocks and legs touching the wall and shoulders touching the floor
 - Check that belly is level
- **Savasana**
 - Lie comfortably with blanket under head and neck and use other props as needed

Week Five

Intention – Open and energize

Asana Focus – Back Bends

Review of Week Four

- ***Sukasana Breath Awareness and Ujjayi Breathing***
 - Sit on enough height so that the knees at or below the level of the hips
 - Bend knees and cross legs at the shins
 - Press sitbones down and lift the side ribs up
 - Rest hands on the knees
- ***Cakra Vakasana***
 - Come to hands and knees
 - Inhale, extend sternum forward spreading collar bones and look up slightly
 - Exhale pull navel to spine and bring hips to heels and chest to thighs
- ***Adho Mukha Svanasana (AMS)***
 - From table extend hands forward one hand length
 - Lift sitbones up and back keeping knees bend for a few breaths to allow the spine to lengthen and release
 - Press thighs back firmly to straighten legs
 - Press the chest toward the shoulders
- ***Table***
 - Extend opposite arm/leg
- ***Adho Mukha Svanasana to Plank***
 - From AMS shift body forward shoulders over wrists
 - Extend body in straight line from heels through crown of head
- ***Bhujangasana***
 - Lower from plank to the mat and bring tops of feet to mat
 - Internally rotate legs by rolling inner thighs to the sky. Point toes back
 - Contract the quadriceps and shoot legs back keeping them active
 - Place hands by low ribs and point elbows straight back and slide shoulder blades down toward the hips
 - Inhale and lift from the pit of the belly to lift the chest and head off the floor. Anchor the sacrum down.
 - Look slightly ahead with chin down and back of neck long
 - Move low ribs away from the waist and lengthen sacrum, buttocks and legs away from the lumbar
- ***Urdhva Mukha Svanasana***
 - From prone position place hands next to side ribs with palms spread wide
 - Curl toes under and internally rotate inner thighs opening back of thighs away from each other
 - Inhale press into palms and ball mounds of feet
 - Lift the chest and legs off the floor extending them away from each other
 - Look forward at the horizon to keep the back of the neck long
- ***AMS to Uttanasana to Tadasana***
- ***Surya Namaskar Lunge***

- Complete three rounds working mindfully linking movement with the breath
- **Trikonasana**
 - From Tadasana step feet apart to wide stance and extend arms out to sides
 - Turn right leg and foot out 90 degrees and left foot in slightly 15 degrees
 - Externally rotate both thighs and contract the quadriceps
 - Keep hips open to side with torso facing away from front leg
 - Inhale and lift the pit of the belly, side ribs and sternum
 - Exhale and glide the right ribs and right arm horizontally over the front leg
 - Allow the right hand to land on the front shin, ankle or block(s).
- **Ardha Chandrasana II - against the wall**
 - Set up in Trikonasana with back against the wall
 - Bend the right knee, look down at the right foot keeping the chest open and place left hand on left hip
 - Place right fingertips on a block 12 -18 inches in front of the right foot
 - Inhale and press the right inner heel down to lift the left leg up into the air. Stack the left hip over the right hip
 - Extend the left arm straight up
- **Virabhadrasana I**
 - From Tadasana step feet apart to wide stance
 - Turn the right leg and foot out 90 degrees and turn the left foot in 45 – 60 degrees
 - Line up inner edge of front heel with inner edge of back heel. For more stability widen stance a few more inches
 - Turn hips to face the front foot
 - Extend arms up shoulder width apart
 - Exhale and slowly bend the front knee to 90 degrees with front knee stacked directly over front ankle and front shin vertical
 - Press the outer back heel down
 - Look forward at the horizon keeping the back of the neck long
- **Virabhadrasana III**
 - Begin in Virabhadrasana I on right side
 - Exhale and extend the torso forward and the arms out to the side like airplane wings
 - Shift the weight over the right heel
 - Stamp the right heel down and lift the left leg squaring the hips with the floor
 - Extend from the crown of the head and the extended back leg
 - Bring hands to blocks under shoulders if balance becomes an issue
- **AMS to Plank to prone on mat**
- **Sphinx**
 - Lie face down with feet hip width apart externally rotating the thighs
 - Come on to forearms with elbows slightly in front of the shoulders
 - Anchor the sacrum down
 - Inhale and pull grounded hands toward torso as the sternum moves forward and up
 - Keep head and neck in line with spine
- **Salabhasana**
 - Lie face down with feet hip width apart
 - Extended arms at sides with palms facing up
 - Internally rotate legs rolling inner thighs to the sky and point toes back
 - Extend arms palms facing up
 - Inhale, lift the chest and head off the floor and extend the legs back and up
 - Anchor the sacrum down

- Look forward to open the chest
- ***Dhanurasana***
 - Lie face down with feet hip width apart
 - Extend arms at sides
 - Internally rotate legs rolling inner thighs to the sky
 - Bend knees and catch hold of the ankles
 - Inhale, lift the chest and thighs off the floor, extending them away from each other
 - Anchor the sacrum down
 - Look slightly ahead on the floor with chin down and neck long
- **AMS**
- ***Setu Bandha Sarvangasana***
 - From supine position bend knees and place feet on the mat hip width apart. Turn heels out slightly and toes in
 - Inhale and press down through feet to lift outer hips up. Lift the chest
 - Interlace fingers behind the back in yoga mudra
 - Tuck one shoulder under then the other
 - Lift and expand the chest
 - Keep the throat and face soft
- ***Viparita Karani***
 - From Setu Bandha Sarvangasana place a block(s) under sacrum to support pose
 - Bring knees over hips with thighs perpendicular to the floor
 - Inhale and extend the legs up toward the sky
 - Bring soft gaze toward navel
 - To come out bend knees and lower one leg to the mat at a time
 - Come up on toes, lift hips and remove the block(s)
- ***Savasana***
 - Lie comfortably with blanket under head and neck and use other props as needed
- ***Seated Meditation***
 - Come to a comfortable seated position that allows for the spine to be erect without strain. Use props to support as needed
 - Guide through a short breath focused meditation

Week Six

Intention – Finding balance and focus

Asana Focus – Inversion prep and balance postures

Review of Week Five

- ***Sukasana Breath Awareness and Ujjayi Breathing***
 - Sit on enough height so that the knees at or below the level of the hips
 - Bend knees and cross legs at the shins
 - Press sitbones down and lift the side ribs up
 - Rest hands on the knees
- **Dandasana**
 - Sit with legs extended together
 - In all seated poses see that the pelvis tips forward slightly. Sit up on height as needed
 - Press palms down next to hips
 - Lift side ribs, sternum and crown of the head up
- **Baddha Konasana - Upright**
 - Sit in Dandasana. Bend the knees out to the sides and bring the soles of the feet together
 - Press hands into mat behind you to lift hips and move them toward the feet
 - Lift spine and broaden across chest
- **Upavista Konasana – Upright**
 - Sit with straight legs extended out wide
 - In all seated poses see that the pelvis tips forward slightly. Sit up on height as needed
 - Pull buttocks flesh out and back to rest on front edge of sit bones with knees and toes facing straight up
 - Press palms down next to hip and press thighs down firmly
 - Lift side ribs sternum and crown of the head up
- **Cakra Vakasana**
 - Come to hands and knees
 - Inhale, extend sternum forward spreading collar bones and look up slightly
 - Exhale pull navel to spine and bring hips to heels and chest to thighs
- **Adho Mukha Svanasana (AMS)**
 - From table extend hands forward one hand length
 - Lift sitbones up and back keeping knees bend for a few breaths to allow the spine to lengthen and release
 - Press thighs back firmly to straighten legs
 - Press the chest toward the shoulders
- **Table**
 - Extend opposite arm/leg
- **Adho Mukha Svanasana to Plank**
 - From AMS shift body forward shoulders over wrists
 - Extend body in straight line from heels through crown of head
- **Bhujangasana**
 - Lower from plank to the mat and bring tops of feet to mat
 - Internally rotate legs by rolling inner thighs to the sky. Point toes back

- Contract the quadriceps and shoot legs back keeping them active
- Place hands by low ribs and point elbows straight back and slide shoulder blades down toward the hips
- Inhale and lift from the pit of the belly to lift the chest and head off the floor. Anchor the sacrum down.
- Look slightly ahead with chin down and back of neck long
- Move low ribs away from the waist and lengthen sacrum, buttocks and legs away from the lumbar
- **Dolphin at the Wall**
 - From table place elbows where hands were on the mat shoulder width apart
 - Lift sitbones up and back keeping knees bend for a few breaths to allow the spine to lengthen and release
 - Press thighs back firmly to straighten legs
- ***Pinca Mayurasana Prep***
 - Begin in Dolphin with heels at the wall
 - Walk feet up the wall so that legs are hip height and parallel to the floor
 - Extend right leg up toward the sky, hold for two to three breaths
 - Return right leg to the wall and extend left leg up toward the sky
- ***Parighasana***
 - Kneel on shins and tops of the feet with knees directly under hips
 - Extend right leg out to the side as in trikonasana
 - Line up right heel with left knee, externally rotate right thigh and contract the quadriceps
 - Inhale and lift the pit of the belly, side ribs and sternum and extend the arms up to horizontal. Turn the navel a little to the left
 - Exhale and glide the right ribs and right arm horizontally over the right leg. Allow the right hand to land on the right shin or ankle without bearing weight on the leg.
 - Extend the left arm up and over the left ear, palm facing down
- **Tadasana**
- ***Vrksasana***
 - Begin in Tadasana, bring the weight of the body into the left leg and bend the right knee coming onto the ball mound of the right foot
 - Bring your right foot to the inner left calf or inner left thigh pointing right toes down
 - Balance on the left leg with hands in prayer position in front of the heart
 - Focus your gaze (dristi) at the horizon
 - Inhale and extend arms over head pressing palms together, then opening arms to shoulder width
 - Stay for 5 breaths
 - Exhale, lower arms and bring right foot to mat
- **Surya Namaskar Lunge**
 - Complete three rounds mindfully linking movement with the breath
- **Trikonasana**
 - From Tadasana step feet apart to wide stance and extend arms out to sides
 - Turn right leg and foot out 90 degrees and left foot in slightly 15 degrees
 - Externally rotate both thighs and contract the quadriceps
 - Keep hips open to side with torso facing away from front leg
 - Inhale and lift the pit of the belly, side ribs and sternum
 - Exhale and glide the right ribs and right arm horizontally over the front leg
 - Allow the right hand to land on the front shin, ankle or block(s).

- **Virabhadrasana II**
 - From Tadasana step feet apart to wide stance and extend arms out to sides
 - Turn the right leg and foot out 90 degrees and left foot in slightly 15 degrees. The right knee cap should face directly forward
 - Line up the front heel with the arch of the back foot
 - Keep hips open to side with torso facing away from front leg
 - Exhale and slowly bend the front knee to 90 degrees. Resist the back leg away from the front leg as you descend
 - The front knee is aligned directly over the front ankle
 - Turn head and look out over the right fingertips
- **Parsvakonasana**
 - Start in Virabhadrasana II
 - Inhale and lift the sternum
 - Exhale and glide the right ribs and right arm horizontally over the right thigh
 - Bring your right fingertips to a block behind the front leg directly under the right shoulder.
 - Right shin is perpendicular to the floor
 - Inhale and extend the left arm straight up
 - Exhale and reach the left arm over the left ear with palm facing down
- **Ardha Chandrasana II**
 - Set up in Trikonasana
 - Bend the right knee, look down at the right foot keeping the chest open and place left hand on left hip
 - Place right fingertips on a block 12 -18 inches in front of the right foot
 - Inhale and press the right inner heel down to lift the left leg up into the air. Stack the left hip over the right hip
 - Extend the left arm straight up
- **Prasarita Padottanasana**
 - From Tadasana step out to wide stance with feet parallel
 - Ground through feet and lengthen through front of torso
 - Fold forward at hip crease keeping length in front of torso
 - Bring hands to blocks and extend torso with flat back
 - Walk hands back toward feet folding forward and releasing head and neck
- **Virabhadrasana I**
 - From Tadasana step feet apart to wide stance
 - Turn the right leg and foot out 90 degrees and turn the left foot in 45 – 60 degrees
 - Line up inner edge of front heel with inner edge of back heel. For more stability widen stance a few more inches
 - Turn hips to face the front foot
 - Extend arms up shoulder width apart
 - Exhale and slowly bend the front knee to 90 degrees with front knee stacked directly over front ankle and front shin vertical
 - Press the outer back heel down
 - Look forward at the horizon keeping the back of the neck long
- **Virabhadrasana III**
 - Begin in Virabhadrasana I on right side
 - Exhale and extend the torso forward and the arms out to the side like airplane wings
 - Shift the weight over the right heel
 - Stamp the right heel down and lift the left leg squaring the hips with the floor

- Extend from the crown of the head and the extended back leg
- Bring hands to blocks under shoulders if balance becomes an issue
- **AMS**
- **Ardha Matsyendrasana**
 - From Dandasana bend the left knee and place the left foot to the outside of the right thigh
 - Slide the right foot to the left as the right knee bends bringing the right foot on the floor to the outside of the left thigh
 - Shift your hips to sit evenly on both sitbones
 - Place your right hand on the floor behind your sacrum
 - Inhale extend the left arm up
 - Exhale twist from your roots and wrap left arm around right knee
- **Setu Bandha Sarvangasana**
 - From supine position bend knees and place feet on the mat hip width apart. Turn heels out slightly and toes in
 - Inhale and press down through feet to lift outer hips up. Lift the chest
 - Interlace fingers behind the back in yoga mudra
 - Tuck one shoulder under then the other
 - Lift and expand the chest
 - Keep the throat and face soft
- **Viparita Karini**
 - From Setu Bandha Sarvangasana place a block(s) under sacrum to support pose
 - Bring knees over hips with thighs perpendicular to the floor
 - Inhale and extend the legs up toward the sky
 - Bring soft gaze toward navel
 - To come out bend knees and lower one leg to the mat at a time
 - Come up on toes, lift hips and remove the block(s)
- **Savasana**
 - Lie comfortably with blanket under head and neck and use other props as needed
- **Seated Meditation**
 - Come to a comfortable seated position that allows for the spine to be erect without strain. Use props to support as needed
 - Guide through a short breath focused meditation

Overview of the Classes

I taught the beginner series classes at Prana Yoga Center in several sessions that ran from January through the end of March in 2015. Overall the classes were well received by the students. Some of the students have taken the beginners series several times and other have continued their yoga practice and take regular drop-in classes at the studio.

What went well

Breaking poses down and teaching smaller parts helped the students learn good alignment and built their confidence. Repeating moving in and out of poses before holding helped the students experience how the poses felt in their bodies and how they could adjust their alignment. It also helped them learn to link movement with their breath.

The beginner's series attracts a diverse group of students with varying levels of fitness. The reason I wanted to teach this series is because I saw new students struggle and some quit doing yoga because they felt that it was beyond their ability. It was very important to be able to teach basic fundamentals by using variations and modifications during the classes so that all students could work at the appropriate level.

The format for most the beginner's series is to focus on a different category of asanas each week. I wanted to change the focus of each week to a fundamental principle of yoga and use the asanas to teach that principle. So over the course of the program more attention is paid to using the asanas to teach breathing, linking movement with the breath, grounding, finding a balance of stability and ease, inward focus and awareness. So for example, when the week's class asana focus is on standing poses, the intention is to focus on teaching grounding and alignment. One way we help students learn grounding is by pressing the back heel into the wall. We look at correct alignment of the front leg in bent knee poses with a block pressed against the shin at the wall.

I have learned a lot from teaching the beginner's series. I have seen how knowing good fundamentals is more important than how many poses a student has been exposed to. Strong fundamentals will allow students to learn asanas and get greater benefit from their yoga practice. I enjoy working with new students and seeing them develop an enthusiasm for learning more and continuing to advance in their practice.

What can be improved for next time

I have taught three different groups of students the beginner's series as part of this thesis. Each group has been different in number of students and students abilities and challenges. It has been important to use the class plan as a guideline and modify it and the pace of the class for the students being taught.

I found that I usually did not get through all the asanas in the plan. So as I continued to teach the series, I focused more on the intention and taking the time for the students to experience that intention and feel comfortable in the pose.

The studios that I have taught the beginner's series have different lengths to their beginner's series classes. I will continue to utilize this program and adapt it to the series lengths as needed.

The Poses



Fundamental Standing Poses

The fundamental standing poses are the foundational building blocks for a beginners asana practice. These poses connect the student to grounding energy and should be taught regularly to beginners. The standing poses tone the legs, ankles and feet. They develop a sense of grounding, strength and power.

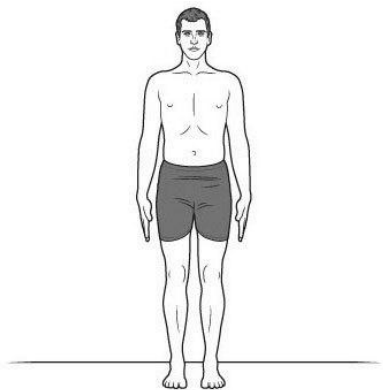


The fundamental standing poses can be divided into two categories, hip open and hip forward poses.

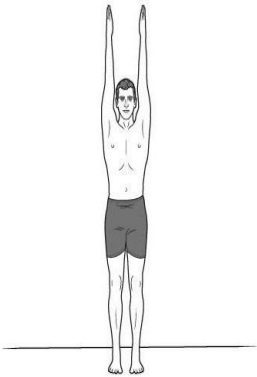


Hip open poses include; trikonasana, parsvakonasana, virabhadrasana II and ardha chandrasana.

Forward hip poses include; virabhadrasana I, parsvottanasana, parivrtta trikonasana, anjaneyasana.

In standing poses keep all four corners of the feet grounded placing emphasis on the ball mound of the big toe and the outer heel. Lift ankles and lift inner arches to active the inner leg line. The back leg is the anchor in standing poses. Press the leg back strongly and ground through the outer heel. Contract and lift the quadriceps to lift energy from the ground into the legs.

Earlier in class prepare the legs for standing poses. To help open hamstrings practice supta padanguthasana I and uttanasana. For tight groins practice supta padanguthasana II and baddha konasana.

Fundamental Standing Asanas			
Asana	Set-up	Key Actions	Variations/Props
 <p>Tadasna</p>	<p>Stand with big toes touching and space between inner heels.</p> <p>Keep four corners of feet grounded and press thighs back with most of body weight in heels.</p> <p>Extend arms down by sides, lift chest and gaze softly at the horizon</p>	<p>Press down ball mounds of big toe and outer heels.</p> <p>Lift inner arches.</p> <p>Press tops of thighs back to align hips over heels.</p> <p>Contract quadriceps and lift the pit of the belly.</p>	<p>Stand with back to wall.</p> <p>Place block between thighs.</p>
 <p>Parsvakonasana Extended Side Angle</p>	<p>From Virabhadrasana II, inhale and lift sternum.</p> <p>Exhale and glide right ribs and right arm horizontally over right leg</p> <p>Touch right hand to floor behind right leg or bring right forearm to right thigh.</p> <p>Extend left arm straight up and then reach left arm over ear, palm down</p>	<p>Lift arches and ankles of both feet.</p> <p>Draw outer right hip in.</p> <p>Press outer left foot down and left thigh back.</p> <p>Zip up low belly.</p> <p>Extend sternum and crown of head away from hips</p>	<p>Blocks for front hand.</p> <p>Chair.</p> <p>Against the wall.</p>
 <p>Parsvottanasana Pyramid</p>	<p>From wide stance turn right leg out and left leg in. Increase width between heels for stability</p> <p>With hips forward and hands clasped behind back inhale and lift sternum</p> <p>Exhale and extend spine over front leg releasing head and neck</p>	<p>Rotate the back leg internally while pressing into outer heel.</p> <p>Rotate the front leg externally while pressing into the big toe ball mound.</p> <p>Press the head of both femurs back</p>	<p>Blocks for hands or hand on seat of chair.</p>

 <p>Urdhva Hastasana</p>	<p>Stand in tadasana.</p> <p>Inhale and reach arms forward and up maintaining tadasana alignment.</p> <p>Keep arms in line with shoulders and externally rotate arms, palms facing each other</p>	<p>Lifts arms from side ribs.</p> <p>Press thighs back firmly.</p> <p>Squeeze outer arms in and lengthen through elbows.</p>	<p>Back to wall.</p> <p>Strap on forearms.</p>
 <p>Trikonasana Triangle</p>	<p>From wide stance turn right leg out 90 degrees and left foot in 15 degrees lining up front heel to back arch. Externally rotate both thighs contracting the quadriceps</p> <p>Inhale and lift torso, exhale and extend torso and right arm horizontally over front leg .</p> <p>Right hand comes to shin or block and left arm extends straight up.</p>	<p>Lift arches and ankles.</p> <p>Rotate right femur externally pressing down ball mound of right foot.</p> <p>Extend left leg away and press down outer heel.</p> <p>Draw left rib cage into the body and extend right rib cage away from hip.</p>	<p>Block(s) for lower hand or chair.</p> <p>Against the wall.</p> <p>Facing the wall.</p> <p>Strap on back heel.</p> <p>Bind top arm.</p>
 <p>Utkatasana</p>	<p>From tadasana inhale and extend arms up into urdhva hastasana.</p> <p>Exhale, bend knees and descend hips.</p> <p>Shift weight into heels.</p> <p>Lift pit of belly, sternum and crown of head.</p>	<p>Squeeze legs together.</p> <p>Lift pit of belly and allow tailbone to descend.</p> <p>Wrap outer arm pits forward.</p> <p>Lift front of pelvis away from hips.</p> <p>Lift arms and side ribs.</p>	<p>Block between thighs.</p> <p>Block between hands.</p>



Virabhadrasana I
Warrior I

From wide stance turn right leg out 90 degrees and left foot in 60 degrees.
Heel to heel alignment or widen for more stability.
Hips face forward.
Inhale and extend arms up shoulder width apart.
Exhale, slowly bend front knee to 90 degrees with front knee stack over ankle.
Press outer back heel down.

Descend heels and ball mounds and lift arches and ankles.
Lengthen inner right thigh out toward knee and pull outer right knee back toward outer hip.
Roll outer left hip forward and press the outer left heel back.
Reach up through the side ribs, arms and fingertips.

Ground back heel at wall.
Facing wall block between wall and knee/shin, press hands into wall.
Sit through chair facing back of chair.



Virabhadrasana II
Warrior II

From wide stance turn right leg out 90 degrees and left foot in 15 degrees.
Front heel to back arch alignment.
Hips open to the side torso facing away from front leg.
Exhale and slowly bend right knee 90 degrees with knee stacked over ankle.
Resist back leg away from front leg as you descend.

Lift pit of the belly, side ribs and sternum.
Lengthen inner right thigh out toward knee and pull outer right knee back toward outer hip.
Slide inner shoulder blades toward hips.
Extend arms horizontally stretching from sternum.

Ground back heel at wall.
Sit across chair.
Against the wall.

Forward Folds

Forward folds stretch and strengthen the entire back of the body. They also strengthen the abdominal muscles which contract in forward folds and gently compress the abdominal organs providing a visceral massage. Forward folds are soothing and quieting to the nervous system and help draw our attention inward.


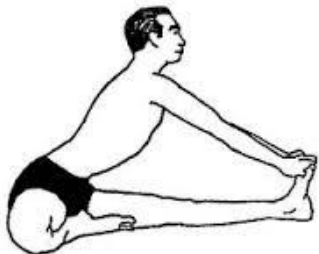

A lot of beginners will have tight hips and hamstrings making forward folding very challenging. Check the students sacrum while sitting in Dandasana. The sacrum should have a slight forward tilt. If it tips back have the student sit up on enough height so that the sacrum angles slightly forward.


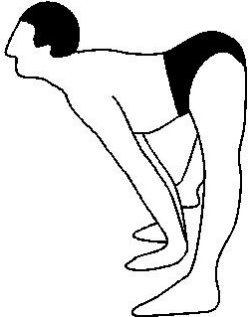

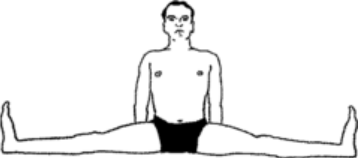
The key to forward folds is the ability to control the proportional relation between the progressive flattening and potential reversal of the lumbar curvature and the forward rotation of the pelvis at the hip joints.

The key to maintaining that correct lumbar-pelvic rhythm is the technique of lifting the pit of the belly and drawing the top of the sacrum in. Lengthen between the chest and belly and maintain that length throughout the forward fold.

Precautions

Avoid forward folds if there is any low back pain. For beginners with tight hamstrings work on opening the hamstrings in postures without seated forward folding. Supta Padanguthasana, Ardha Uttanasana, Prasarita Padottanasana and Danadasana are all excellent poses that will work on opening the hamstrings without straining the low back. When the student is ready to start forward folds make sure they stay upright with a lifted spine. In seated forward folds have the student place a belt around the foot or feet and pull on the belt to keep their spine erect.

Forward Folds			
Asana	Set-up	Key Actions	Variations/Props
 <p>Baddha Konasana Bound angle</p>	<p>Sit in dandasana, bend knees out to sides and bring the soles of the feet together.</p> <p>Use hand behind you to lift hips and move them toward feet.</p> <p>See that pelvis is tilted slightly forward and sit on a height if needed.</p> <p>Interlock finger around feet and pull with arms to lift the sternum</p>	<p>Externally rotate thigh bones.</p> <p>Press heels and ball mounds of feet together.</p> <p>Extend from inner groins to inner knees.</p> <p>Draw sacrum in and up and lift sternum.</p>	<p>Blanket, Block between feet</p>
 <p>Janu Sirsasana Head to the knee pose</p>	<p>From dandasana bend right knee and place the sole of right foot on left inner thigh.</p> <p>Check pelvic tilt and sit on height if needed.</p> <p>Inhale and lift arms, side ribs and sternum up.</p> <p>Exhale turn pelvis to left and reach sternum forward over left leg.</p> <p>Grab outside edges of right foot with hands or use strap,</p>	<p>Internally rotate left leg, knee cap and toes point straight up.</p> <p>Contract left quadriceps and press thigh down.</p> <p>Draw the pit of the belly up and in.</p> <p>Relift sternum on inhale.</p>	<p>Blankets, strap</p>
 <p>Parsvottanasana Pyramid</p>	<p>From wide stance turn right leg out and left leg in. Increase width between heels for stability</p> <p>With hips forward and hands clasped behind back inhale and lift sternum</p> <p>Exhale and extend spine over front leg releasing head and neck</p>	<p>Rotate the back leg internally while pressing into outer heel.</p> <p>Rotate the front leg externally while pressing into the big toe ball mound.</p> <p>Press the head of both femurs back</p>	<p>Blocks for hands or hand on seat of chair.</p>

 <p>Paschimottanasana</p>	<p>Sit in dandasana on blankets as needed so sacrum tilts forward 30 degrees. Inhale and lift arms up to lengthen side ribs and waist. Exhale and hinge forward at the hip joint. Grab outer edges of feet or use a strap.</p>	<p>On inhale lift sternum and press roots of thighs down. On exhale extend sternum forward and down. Look down slightly to lengthen back of neck. Bend elbows to sides to broaden back.</p>	<p>Blankets Strap</p>
 <p>Prasarita Padottanasana Wide Leg Forward Fold</p>	<p>From tadasana step to wide stance with feet lining up under wrist. Feet are parallel. Inhale and lift sternum. Exhale and hinge forward at hip joint bringing hands to blocks or mat. Exhale and lower torso and head walking hands in line with feet. Release head and neck.</p>	<p>Shift weight into ball mounds with legs vertical and sit bones lifting. Lift through inner arches, ankles, knees and groins. Lift traps away from ears to free neck.</p>	<p>Blocks for hands.</p>
 <p>Trianga Mukhaikapada Paschimottanasana</p>	<p>From dandasana bend right knee into virasana using a blanket to level hips if needed. Lean forward and grab the left foot with both hands or use a strap. Inhale lift sternum, side ribs and head up. Exhale and reach sternum forward over left leg.</p>	<p>Internally rotate left leg so that knee and toes point up. Press right foot, shin and toes down. Draw the low belly in and up. Bend elbows out to broaden upper back.</p>	<p>Blankets Strap</p>
 <p>Upavista Konasana Seated wide angle</p>	<p>Sit with legs extended out up to 120 degrees. Check pelvic tilt and sit on a height if needed. Sit on front edge of sit bones with knees and toes straight up. Inhale lift side ribs and sternum. Exhale, fold forward keeping length in front of torso.</p>	<p>Beginners may stay upright and focus on drawing their sacrum in and up and concaving the upper back. Extend out from inner groins to heels. Contact quadriceps and press thighs down. Release head and neck</p>	<p>Blanket(s), bolster or chair to rest head</p>



Uttanasana

Stand in tadasana and extend arms up into urdhva hastasana. Exhale and hinge forward at the hip joint bringing hands to floor or blocks. Draw pit of the belly in and up on exhale. Release head and neck.

Lift through inner leg line from arches to inner groins. Lift and widen sit bones away from each other. Contract quadriceps and press roots of thighs back.

Hands on block or chair half way up with flat back. (Ardha Uttanasana) Back to wall feet one foot apart and one foot from wall and lean back against the wall. Fold forward moving tailbone up the wall. Stop when tailbone stops moving up the wall.

Back Bends



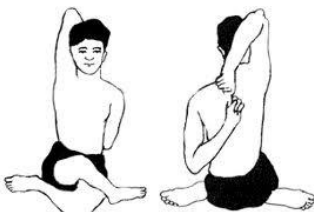
Back bends stretch and strengthen the front side of the body. In addition they strengthen the superficial and deep muscles of the back which contract during back bends. Back bends are energizing and uplifting. They stretch the diaphragm, open the chest and lungs and create more space for the breath.

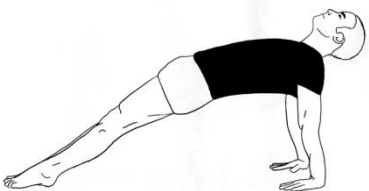



To prepare for back bends warm-up the spine stretching the low back in appropriate forward folds, twists and easy back bends like Bhujangasana and Salabhasana. Warm-up the shoulders with poses like Adho Mukha Svanasana, Dolphin, Gomukasana, Garundasana and Yoga Mudra. Open the front of the body stretching the iliopsoas and quadricept muscles in poses such as Virabhadrasana I, Anjaneyasana, Virasana and Supta Virasana.



The key to back bends is the ability to control the relation between lengthening and flattening the thoracic curve and deepening the lumbar curve. To do this lift the low belly away from the pubis and move the sacrum and thoracic spine away from each other. On the inhale expand the chest and lift the ribs. Open the shoulders and slide them down and then firm them toward the chest. Move the whole spine into the body.

Precautions

Avoid excessive arching of the lumbar spine. Keep attention on keeping the low belly toned and descending the buttocks away from the lumbar spine.

Back Bends			
Asana	Set-up	Key Actions	Variations/Props
 <p>Bhujangasana Cobra</p>	<p>Lie face down with feet together (moves legs apart for low back issues) Contract the quadriceps and keep active in pose. Place hands next to low ribs with elbows at sides of torso. Slide shoulder blades down. Inhale and lift from pit of belly to lift chest and head from floor. Engage back muscles to lift the front spine.</p>	<p>Look slightly ahead with chin down and back of neck long Extend the ribs and sternum forward Lengthen sacrum, buttocks and legs down and away from lumbar.</p>	<p>Blanket under hips.</p>
 <p>Dhanurasana (Bow)</p>	<p>Lie face down with legs hip distance apart. Internally rotate legs, bend knees and catch hold of ankles. Inhale and lift chest and thighs of the mat extending them away from each other.</p>	<p>Lengthen sacrum, buttocks and thighs away from the lumbar. Press sacrum down and ground the pubis. Widen and lift collarbones</p>	<p>Blankets or boster under hips, knees remain on the floor. Strap if can't reach ankles.</p>
 <p>Gomukhasana</p>	<p>From dandasana cross the left leg over the right and bend both knees. Scissor the legs so that the knees are stacked on top of each other. Bring the feet back next to the hips in line with each other. Inhale reach the right arm up palm facing in and place the right hand between the shoulder blades. Reach the left arm straight out, turn the thumb down and sweep the arm behind the back. Clasp hands or use strap</p>	<p>Descend inner groins and sit bones. Open the right arm pit. Firm the shoulder blades into the body to open the chest. Keep head and torso centered facing forward.</p>	<p>Sit on Blanket(s) Strap for arms</p>

 <p>Purvottanasana</p>	<p>Sit in tadasana and move hands back 6 inches with fingers pointing forward. Keep heels grounded, lift ball mounds of feet, bend knees and lift hips half way up. Inhale and lift outer hips as you straighten legs. Open the chest.</p>	<p>Beginners can start with knees bent coming into an upward table. Lift outer hips and upper chest. Squeeze outer legs in. Lengthen sacrum, buttocks and thighs away from sacrum. Lift chest up and away from arm bones.</p>	<p>Block between inner thighs. Strap around sacrum. Chair</p>
 <p>Salabhasana</p>	<p>Lie face down with feet hip distance apart. Extend arms at sides with palms facing up. Internally rotate legs and point toes back. Inhale and lift chest and head and shoot the legs back and up. Anchor the sacrum down.</p>	<p>Press sacrum down and ground pubis. Lengthen sacrum, buttocks and legs away from lumbar. Slide shoulder blades down toward hips. Widen and lift the collarbones.</p>	<p>Lift only torso then only legs. Blanket supporting abdomen.</p>
 <p>Setu Bandhasana Bridge</p>	<p>Reline on mat with knees bend and feet on mat hip distance apart. Turn heels out and toes in slightly. Inhale and press down through feet to lift outer hips. Lift chest.</p>	<p>Track thighs parallel and press knees forward. Draw tailbone in. Lift pit of belly. Press arms down to lift the chest.</p>	<p>Blanket under shoulders, block between thighs, belt around ankles</p>
 <p>Urdhva Mukha Svanasana</p>	<p>Lie face down with legs hip distance apart. Place hands next to side ribs. Internally rotate legs and point toes straight back. Inhale, press into palms and tops of feet. Lift chest and thighs of the mat extending them away from each other. Arms are vertical.</p>	<p>Lift knees and thighs of mat. Maintain internal rotation of legs. Broaden chest and collarbones. Slide the shoulder blades down toward hips. Lengthen sacrum, buttocks and thighs away from lumbar.</p>	<p>Blocks under hands. Block between thighs.</p>

 <p>Ustrasana</p>	<p>Kneel on floor with knees directly under hips and feet and toes pointed straight back. Place hands on hips with thumbs pressing sides of sacrum down. Keep thighs vertical. Inhale lift pit of belly, side ribs and sternum. Exhale and reach hands back to heels or tall blocks. Look straight forward or extend head back and down.</p>	<p>Spin biceps outward. Press shins, tops of feet down firmly. Lengthen sacrum and buttocks down toward shins. Broaden collarbones. Slide shoulder blades down toward hips.</p>	<p>At wall press thighs into wall. At wall facing away and grounding back of head on wall. Bolster on back of legs . Blocks.</p>
 <p>Virasana Hero Pose</p>	<p>Kneel on shins and tops of feet knees pointing straight ahead and feet spread wide enough to sit between. Sit on height as needed. Place hands on of thighs, bend elbows and draw upper arms next to ribs. Lift ribs and sternum.</p>	<p>Sit on front edge of sit bones. Press shins, tops of feet and toes down. Lift the skin from under the knees. Broaden the chest and collarbones. Lift the back of the skull.</p>	<p>Blanket, block(s)</p>



Twists

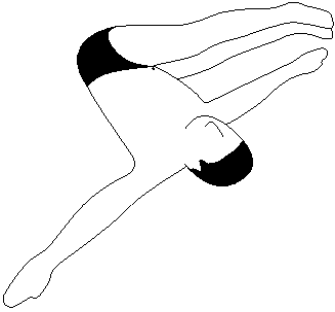
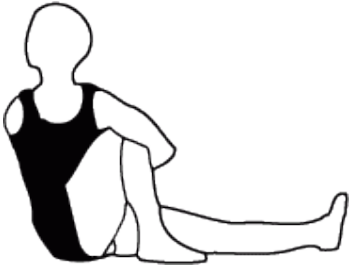
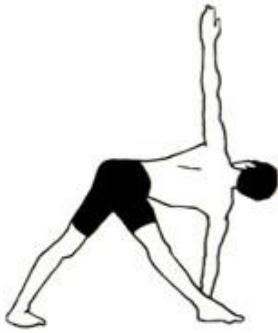
Twist postures create rotation of the spine, building strength and flexibility in the deep and superficial muscles of the back and maintaining elasticity in the discs and ligaments. Twists massage the abdominal organs helping to aid in flushing out toxins, improve elimination and release stuck energy.

The key to twisting is the ability to control spinal rotation from the abdominal muscles rather than through force generated by the shoulders and arms and/or pelvis and legs. On inhalation lengthen the spine and on exhalation contract the abdominal muscles using that action to twist from the root.

Precautions

If there are any preexisting conditions of spinal compression i.e. excessive curvature or excessive lateral spinal asymmetry, the possibility of injury to the discs increases. Minimize risks by adequate preparation, twisting from the root and avoiding using the arm and legs as levers and lengthening the spine on inhalation.

Twists			
Asanas	Set-up	Key Actions	Variations/Props
 <p>Ardha Matsyendrasana</p>	<p>Sit in dandasana, bend the right knee and bring the right foot to the outside of the left thigh. Bend the left knee and swing the left leg around with the left foot on the mat touching the outside of the right thigh. Place the right hand behind the sacrum. Inhale and reach the left arm up and lift the sternum and pit of the belly. Exhale twisting to the right placing the left arm to the outside of the right thigh.</p>	<p>Lift the left kidney in and up. Lift the sternum. Open the chest and widen the collarbones. Descend the shoulder blades down. For all twists on inhale lengthen the spine and on exhale deepen the turn into the twist.</p>	<p>Blanket to sit on Strap to wrap back arm deeper into twist.</p>
 <p>Bharadvajasana Seated Twist</p>	<p>Sit in dandasana on a blanket or bolster. Bend knees and swing both legs to the left bringing your left leg into virasana and your right leg perpendicular to the left shin. Place your left ankle over the arch of the right foot. Inhale, lift the pit of the belly and exhale and turn your chest to the right. Place your right hand behind your sacrum and left hand to the outside of the right knee.</p>	<p>Descend the shins and left sit bone. Lift the left kidney. Descend the shoulder blades down. Open the chest and widen the collarbones.</p>	<p>Blanket or bolster Turn your head to look over the left shoulder. Lower the left ear to the left shoulder.</p>

 <p>Jathara Parivartanasana</p>	<p>Lie on back in apanasana and extend arms out to sides palms up. Exhale and extend legs straight up and squeezed together. Inhale, reach out through heels. Exhale, lower legs toward the floor near right hand. Inhale up and exhale legs to floor by left hand.</p>	<p>Keep back ribs on the floor. Turn legs from hips. Internally rotate legs. Squeeze outer legs in. Strongly reach out through heels.</p>	<p>Beginners can start with knees bent variation. Hold partner's leg and twist to opposite side.</p>
 <p>Maricyasana 3</p>	<p>Sit in dandasana, bend right knee and bring calf to thigh. Line up center of heel with sit bone. Place right hand behind sacrum. Inhale and extend left arm up. Exhale, bend left elbow and place left arm to the outside of right thigh turning chest to right and look over right shoulder.</p>	<p>Lift the pit of the belly and sternum on inhale. Contract left quadriceps and press left thigh down. Open chest and widen collarbones. Descend shoulder blades down.</p>	<p>Blanket Practice twisting toward wall and pressing hands into wall. Chair.</p>
 <p>Parivrtta Trikonasana</p>	<p>From wide leg stance turn right leg out and left in with heel to heel alignment. Increase width of stance for more stability. Place right hand on hip and lift left arm to sky. Exhale and extend left arm forward placing left hand on block or mat next to right foot. Turn chest to right and extend right arm up.</p>	<p>The back leg rotates internally. Press into ball mound of big toe on front foot and roll outer right hip back. Squeeze the head of both femurs and sit bones back. Lengthen the sternum and away from each other.</p>	<p>Blocks or chair. Twist into wall.</p>

Inversions

Inversions turn the body upside down, a process called “active reversal” resulting in the toning of the vital organs, stimulation of the endocrine glands, reduction of stress to the muscles and organs of the torso, and improvement of digestion, respiration and circulation. The active reversal process occurs in postures that raises the legs above the head and when the head moves below the waist.




Precautions

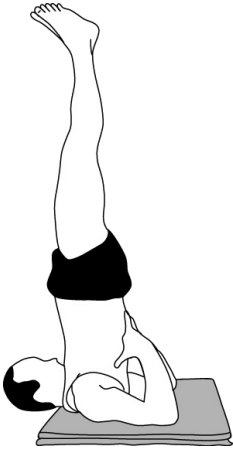
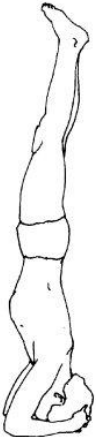
Inversions have significant risk and the benefits of inversions do not warrant the risks if the student is not ready to do the pose. A student's body must be prepared over time. Headstand, in particular, requires a high degree of strength, stability and functional integrity in the neck shoulders and back. With beginners work on building the strength and stability with preparatory poses.




Balance

Balance postures help improve the structural integration and strength of the body while developing mental stability and focused attention. There are two distinct groups of balance postures, leg balances and arm balances. In the beginners yoga series class we will focus on leg balances.

The key to practicing balance postures is achieve equilibrium on an unstable base using the displaced body weight as a counterbalance. The eyes are a key to maintaining balance and should be focused on one point, “dristi”, out in front of the student.

Stability and Ease Balance and Inversion Prep			
Asana	Set-up	Key Actions	Variations/Props
 <p>Ardha Chandrasana Half-Moon</p>	<p>From trikonasana, exhale and bend right knee, look down at right foot and place left hand on hip. Step back foot in and shift weight to right leg. Bring right hand to a block 12 -18 inches in front of right foot. Inhale and press the right inner heel down to lift the left leg up. Keep the left hip open. Extend the left arm up.</p>	<p>Externally rotate the right leg. Contract the right quadriceps. Press the root of the right thigh toward the left heel. Reach the sternum and crown of the head away from the hips.</p>	<p>Block(s) to support hand or chair. Back against the wall. Back foot on the wall.</p>
 <p>Navasana</p>	<p>Sit in dandasana and inhale and open the chest. Exhale and lean back slightly and lift the legs together to 60 degrees off the floor. Toes should be higher than crown of head. Extend arms to side parallel to floor, palms facing each other.</p>	<p>Internally rotate legs. Reach out through heels and ball mounds. Contract quadriceps. Balance on back edge of sit bones Draw sacrum and kidneys in.</p>	<p>Knees bent. Strap</p>
 <p>Pinca Mayurasana</p>	<p>Kneel facing wall, place forearms down on mat with fingertips at wall. Set elbows shoulder distance apart, forearms parallel. Ground inner wrist. Lift hips up into dolphin. Step one foot forward and kick up extending both legs up the wall.</p>	<p>Press through inner forearm, inner wrist and inner hand. Internally rotate legs. Lift chest up off shoulders. Press sacrum to heels.</p>	<p>Strap and block. Beginners can do dolphin at wall and bring legs up the wall perpendicular to the torso then extend one leg up at a time.</p>

 <p>Salamba Sarvangasana Shoulder Stand</p>	<p>Stack 3-4 blanket at edge of mat with folded edges aligned.</p> <p>Fold far edge of mat over blankets to keep elbows from moving.</p> <p>Loop a strap as wide as collarbones and place over one arm.</p> <p>Place the top of shoulders 2 inches from folded edge of blankets keeping C7 supported.</p> <p>Enter into halasana and wrap strap above both elbows.</p> <p>Tuck shoulders under from the sides.</p> <p>Support back with hands fingers pointing up.</p> <p>Reach legs up to sky and stack hips over shoulders, ankles over hips.</p>	<p>Press elbows and tips of shoulders down.</p> <p>Press hands toward chest to keep rib cage vertical.</p> <p>Every 30 seconds or so rewalk hands down the back.</p> <p>Internally rotate thighs.</p>	<p>Blankets, mat on blankets, wall.</p> <p>Strap.</p> <p>Chair for halasana.</p> <p>Chair shoulder stand.</p> <p>Beginners can learn by moving into shoulder stand from viparita karini</p>
 <p>Salamba Sirsasana Headstand</p>	<p>Kneel on mat facing wall.</p> <p>Place outer forearms and outer wrist on mat, interlace fingers keep fingers horizontal and relaxed.</p> <p>Set elbows shoulder distance apart.</p> <p>Keep traps lifted and back of neck long, set crown of head on the mat cupping back of head in cupped hands.</p> <p>Lift hips into dolphin and walk legs in hips over shoulders.</p> <p>Lift shoulder blades and firm them into body.</p> <p>Inhale and lift both legs together bent or straight then extend legs up.</p>	<p>Press outer wrists, outer forearms and elbows down.</p> <p>Slide shoulder blades up toward hips and firm into body.</p> <p>Internally rotate thighs, externally rotate shins.</p> <p>Press sacrum to heels.</p> <p>Squeeze upper arm bones into shoulder sockets.</p>	<p>Beginners can work the prep poses detailed in pincha mayurasana.</p> <p>Strap around upper arms. Feet on the wall (half handstand)</p> <p>Headless headstand variation using three blocks at wall to support upper back.</p> <p>Headstand between two chairs.</p>

 <p>Viparita Karani</p>	<p>Place bolster or blankets a couple of inches from the wall to allow sit bones to descend. Recline with pelvis on bolster with buttocks and legs touching the wall.</p>	<p>Be far enough from the wall to allow the tailbone to drop. Abdomen should be parallel to the floor. Try different arm positions. Prop arms for tight shoulders.</p>	<p>Blanket(s), Bolster For low back and hamstring issues move further from the wall.</p>
 <p>Vrksasana Tree</p>	<p>Begin in tadasana. Bend the right knee and place the sole of the right foot on the left calf or left inner thigh. Point the right toes down and bring the right heel slightly forward. Balance on the left leg and bring hands to Namaste at heart center. Inhale and extend arms up pressing palms together.</p>	<p>Press the right knee back and down. Compact the legs and hips inward. Lift the sternum and broaden the collarbones. Keep your eyes steady with a soft focus on a single point. Relax the face, throat and neck.</p>	<p>Against the wall. Sideways near wall.</p>
 <p>Garudasana Eagle</p>	<p>Begin in tadasana. Inhale and reach arms out to sides at shoulder height. Exhale and cross the left arm over the right and intertwine forearms and wrist without bend in wrists. Point fingers to sky, thumbs toward head. Resist arms against each other. Squat and cross right thigh over left thigh entwining lower legs. Balance on left leg or right toes on a block.</p>	<p>Lift elbows as shoulder blades slide down. Exhale and wrap shoulder blades away from each other. Maintain lift in sternum Broaden sacrum and buttocks. Relax face, throat and neck.</p>	<p>Block Back against wall</p>

Student Evaluation Forms

Fundamentals of Yoga Series Class

Student Feedback

What did you expect to learn from the classes?

Did the classes meet your expectations?

Was the instruction and presentation clear?

During the classes, did you feel engaged mentally, physically and/or spiritually?

Do you feel that you had learned something valuable?

What did you like most about the classes?

Could anything be improved?

Additional comments:

Your Name (Optional):

Program Marketing

The marketing of the beginners yoga series program was done through several channels. Weekly e-mail blasts we sent out to the Prana Yoga Center e-mail list. These were followed up with social media posts on the Prana Facebook page. Flyers were posted at the studio and announcements made to students after classes. I also used personal social media to promote the series and recruited candidates too.

Prana Yoga Center, Inc.

321 Stevens Street, Suite C Geneva, IL 60134 630-262-9642



Fundamentals Of Yoga - 4 Week Series \$65 with [Tom Barry](#)

Thu Date: Jan 08, 2015 to Jan 29, 2015 From: 4:30 PM - 6:00 PM

The Fundamentals of Yoga is a progressive 4 week course designed for students who are new to yoga or those who need a stronger foundation in the practice of yoga. This course teaches the basics and helps students develop strength, balance, flexibility and experience the peace of mind yoga promises to deliver.

This course teaches the fundamental pose alignment, breathe techniques and history & tradition of yoga. This course and is appropriate for people of all fitness levels and is taught by senior instructors in a safe, caring and fun environment. Class size is limited to 16 to ensure individual attention. One make up class allowed and must be made up in the 4 week session.

Yoga Buddy Program Available for this session!

References

“Light on Yoga” BKS Iyengar

“Yoga for Wellness” Gary Kraftsow

“30 Essential Yoga Poses for Beginning Students and Their Teachers” Judith Lasiter

“Prairie Yoga 200 Hour Foundation Teacher Training Manual ” Lori Gaspar

“Prairie Yoga 500 Advanced Yoga Teacher Training” Lori Gaspar

“From the Ground Up” Tias Little