

Practical Yoga

Online Workshop



INSTRUCTOR TRAINING OUTLINE

AEROBICS and FITNESS ASSOCIATION of AMERICA

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PRACTICAL YOGA INSTRUCTOR TRAINING

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

A. The Aim of the Workshop	1
B. Workshop Objectives	1
C. Various Yoga Styles	2
D. The Sunrise Yoga Format	3

SEQUENCING AND PLANNING

A. Pose Order	7
B. How Long To Hold Poses	7
C. AFAA's Yoga Pose Level Guide and Precautions	8
D. The Role and Use of Breath in Yoga	9

POSE ANALYSIS

A. The AFAA 5 Questions	11
B. AFAA Yoga Series Poses	11
C. Illustrated Poses	14

TEACHING EFFECTIVELY

A. Cueing/Common Yoga Terms	54
B. Whose Class Is It?	55
C. How to Be a Good Yoga Teacher	55
D. Keeping The Class Safe	56
E. Fine Tuning Alignment in Poses	57
F. Emotional Releases/The Power of Yoga	57
G. Use of Props and Accessories	58

ANATOMY REFERENCES

59

BIBLIOGRAPHY

62

INTRODUCTION

A. THE AIM OF THE WORKSHOP

The aim of the AFAA Practical Yoga Instructor Training Workshop is to introduce yoga to the potential instructor. Learning to be a yoga instructor is a task that cannot be fulfilled in a two-day training course because it is, in fact, a process that will develop over a lifetime. Yoga is a long and winding path that will lead practitioners into new and wonderful places: physical, emotional and spiritual. There is no destination, no end. There is only a long, continuous search.

What will be attempted in this workshop is to give participants a greater understanding of specific asanas (AH-sah-nahs), or poses (the words pose and asana are used interchangeably throughout this program). Why certain asanas go together to help balance the body will be explained, as will the proper methods for teaching these asanas in a safe way. Participants have already successfully completed the first two segments of the course and should have considerable knowledge of yoga history, philosophy, and styles.

After successfully completing the three-part program participants will be very familiar with the AFAA Yoga Series and its 40 asanas. This series is comprised of 40 specific poses, sequenced to create a flowing, athletic style of yoga appropriate in a multi-level fitness environment.

B. WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of AFAA's Practical Yoga instructor training, you will be able to:

1. Learn the principles of AFAA's Sunrise Yoga Format in preparation for teaching group yoga classes.
2. Use the principles of The Sunrise Yoga Format for incorporating yoga postures into a class.
3. Learn how to evaluate yoga postures based on the AFAA 5 Questions, and how to determine the appropriateness of pose progressions for class use.
4. Learn how to progress, change intensity, and modify specific postures within The Sunrise Yoga Format.
5. Learn how to develop and effectively use The Sunrise Yoga Format to create classes of different lengths.
6. Understand various popular yoga formats and breathing styles.
7. Learn how to better communicate and cue yoga postures.
8. Gain continuing education toward all AFAA certifications, and demonstrate the highest level of professionalism as guided by the AFAA Code of Ethics.

C. VARIOUS YOGA STYLES

The word yoga comes from “yuj,” the Sanskrit word meaning union; to join together. Yoga is one of the oldest mind/body activities in the civilized world, and the concept of union of mind and body is a fundamental principle in its practice. Below is a list of the non-physical (spiritual focused) practices of yoga.

Jnana Yoga	Union by knowledge
Bhakti Yoga	Union by love and devotion
Karma Yoga	Union by action and service
Mantra Yoga	Union by voice and sound
Yantra Yoga	Union by vision and form
Laya & Kundalini Yoga	Union by arousal of latent psychic nerve-force
Hatha Yoga*	Union by bodily mastery
Raja Yoga	Union by mental mastery
Tantric Yoga	Union of the inside/outside (control of physiological and sexual energy)

Hatha Yoga

The physical practice of yoga is called Hatha yoga, which focuses on bodily mastery. Hatha yoga is the yoga most widely practiced in the west, and centers on asanas, or physical poses. The word hatha (ha meaning sun, and tha meaning moon) signifies a combining of complementary forces. Likewise, a pose is often followed by a counter pose to balance the body. In Hatha yoga, asanas are held for varying lengths of time, and most poses can be modified to some extent to make them more appropriate for various fitness levels. Within Hatha yoga there are many subdivisions or styles including, but not limited to:

Ashtanga Yoga	Associated with powerful movements and difficult postures
Iyengar Yoga	Associated with precise cuing and the use of props
Yin Yoga	Associated with sustained poses and forward bending
Vinyasa Yoga	Associated with a flowing style
Kundalini Yoga	Associated with chakras and conscious breathing techniques
Jivamukti Yoga	A Combination of Vinyasa and Kundalini style
Anusara Yoga	Tantric influenced with less structure
Bikram Yoga	Associated with heat (working in a hot environment)

Keep in mind that new styles of yoga are constantly evolving.

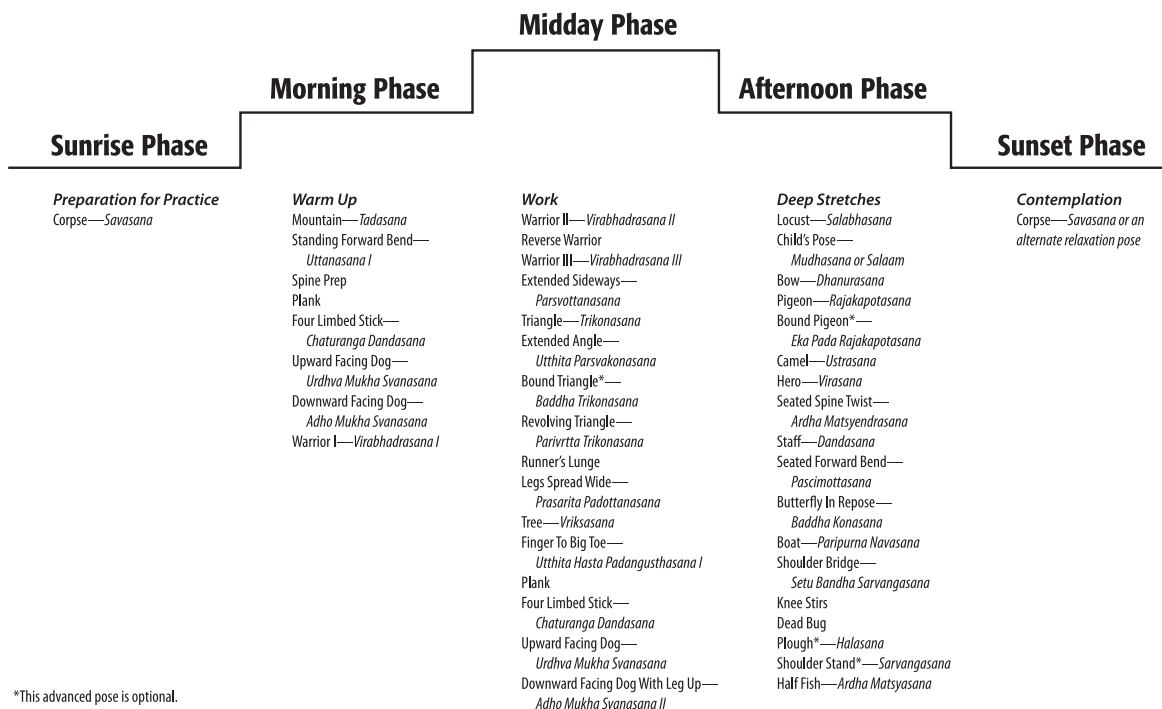
D. SUNRISE YOGA FORMAT™

The AFAA Yoga Series follows The Sunrise Yoga Format. This five-part format consists of preparation for practice, warm-up, work, deep stretches, and contemplation. The Sunrise Yoga Format is illustrated below.

What exactly is AFAA's Sunrise Yoga Format?

1. The Sunrise Yoga Format is a compilation of postures appropriate for group exercise that are derived from Hatha yoga.
2. The Sunrise Yoga Format is based on a progressive series of poses that accommodate all fitness levels to increase strength, flexibility, and balance of the entire body, focusing on breathing and mindful movement.
3. The Sunrise Yoga Format creates a balanced flow of movement that warms the body, builds to a logical progression of intensity, and completes with a thorough blend of relaxation and flexibility work.
4. The Sunrise Yoga Format is performed on a mat on the floor, utilizing a variety of positions (e.g., seated, supine, prone, or side-lying).
5. The Sunrise Yoga Format focuses on core and stabilizing techniques that involve unified body movement to improve health and posture.
6. The Sunrise Yoga Format philosophy reflects today's fitness trend and focus.

SUNRISE YOGA FORMAT™



1. Sunrise Phase: Preparation for Practice

Class begins with preparation for practice in Corpse pose/Savasana or another relaxation pose such as sitting cross-legged, or standing. Why? The world is a hectic place. Everyday life is all consuming, filled with appointments, meetings, deadlines, and obligations. By starting with Savasana, students are given an opportunity to push worries and commitments aside and bring themselves into the present. It is time to push aside all thoughts of what happened before they walked into the studio and all thoughts of what may happen after they leave the studio. This 3–15 minute period (depending on the total length of class) is very important because it is the buffer from the outside world that allows students to be present in their practice. Savasana can consist of a mantra meditation, a visualization, breath work, or simply quiet time. Whatever is chosen for the preparation for practice should be relaxing and inwardly focused.

Poses/asanas during Sunrise Phase:

Corpse—*Savasana* or an alternate relation pose.

2. Morning Phase: Warm Up

Warm-up consists of Sun Salutations, which should begin slowly and deliberately, moving from one asana to the next as student's bodies slowly begin to heat up. It might be wise during the first and second series repetitions to begin with the modification level of each pose (M). As the core body temperature begins to rise and the joints loosen, the pace begins to move faster from one pose to the next during this 10–15 minute period. The Sun Salutation should be repeated two to five times on each side, alternating one side with the other.

Poses/asanas during Morning Phase:

Mountain—*Tadasana*

Standing Forward Bend—*Uttanasana I*

Spine Prep

Plank

Four Limbed Stick—*Chaturanga Dandasana*

Upward Facing Dog—*Urdhva Mukha Svanasana*

Downward Facing Dog—*Adho Mukha Svanasana*

Warrior I—*Virabhadrasana I*

3. Midday Phase: Work

This phase consists of the standing postures and focuses on strength. These asanas are held for longer periods of time during this 20–25 minute period. Special focus should be placed on core stabilization with constant reminders to breathe.

Poses/asanas during Midday Phase:

Warrior II—*Virabhadrasana II*

Reverse Warrior

Warrior III—*Virabhadrasana III*

Extended Sideways—*Parsvottanasana*

Triangle—*Trikonasana*

Extended Angle—*Utthita Parsvakonasana*

Bound Triangle*—*Baddha Trikonasana*

Revolving Triangle—*Parivrtta Trikonasana*

Runner's Lunge

Legs Spread Wide—*Prasarita Padottanasana*

Tree—*Vrikshasana*

Finger To Big Toe—*Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana I*

Plank

Four Limbed Stick—*Chaturanga Dandasana*

Upward Facing Dog—*Urdhva Mukha Svanasana*

Downward Facing Dog With Leg Up—*Adho Mukha Svanasana II*

*This advanced pose is optional.

4. Afternoon Phase: Deep Stretches

This phase consists of deep stretches, twists, backbends, and inversions. In this phase the body is hot and the joints are loose and fluid. Each stretching pose should flow from one asana to the next during this 20–25 minute period.

Poses/asanas during Afternoon Phase:

Locust—*Salabhasana*
Child's Pose—*Mudhasana or Salaam*
Bow—*Dhanurasana*
Pigeon—*Rajakapotasana*
Bound Pigeon*—*Eka Pada Rajakapotasana*
Camel—*Ustrasana*
Hero—*Virasana*
Seated Spine Twist—*Ardha Matsyendrasana*
Staff—*Dandasana*
Seated Forward Bend—*Pascimottasana*
Butterfly In Repose—*Baddha Konasana*
Boat—*Paripurna Navasana*
Shoulder Bridge—*Setu Bandha Sarvangasana*
Knee Stirs
Dead Bug
Plough*—*Halasana*
Shoulder Stand*—*Sarvangasana*
Half Fish—*Ardha Matsyasana*

*This advanced pose is optional.

5. Sunset Phase: Contemplation

The class finishes just as it started—coming full circle. This is an opportunity for the students to become aware of how they feel, acknowledge the differences created in themselves, and relax and turning within during this 3–15 minute period.

Poses or asanas during Sunset Phase:

Corpse—*Savasana* or an alternate relaxation pose

SEQUENCING AND PLANNING

The AFAA Yoga Series has been created in a Vinyasa, or flowing, style of yoga, a form of Hatha yoga. This flowing style of yoga works well in a fitness environment because it is athletic in nature. The asanas have been sequenced so that each pose flows into the next, seamlessly. As a whole, the class works the entire body, creating strength, suppleness, and balance.

A. POSE ORDER

In this outline, sequencing refers to the order in which the asanas are arranged. The aim of sequencing is two-fold. First, the class should flow smoothly without awkward or radical posture changes between poses. Second, it is important to balance the body. For example, the class should include similar amounts of back extension and back flexion. Lack of balance can lead to injury.

For the novice instructor, the AFAA Yoga Series should be practiced in the order presented in this outline for the most effective, safe yoga class. As the instructor becomes more experienced, he/she may wish to begin substituting or eliminating some poses and creating his/her own order within the given Sunrise Yoga Format. Keep in mind, however, that the basic framework of The Sunrise Yoga Format should always be followed for a safe, complete class.

There are a variety of teaching environments with a range of time allotments. For many teaching in the corporate fitness setting, classes may be 45 minutes long. In the spa setting, classes are traditionally 50 minutes. Most fitness clubs have 60-minute classes and traditional yoga studio classes range from 60–90 minutes. In order to accommodate the varying time constraints, certain asanas may be removed within each stage of a class. Some asanas may also be removed because they are too challenging for particular students' fitness levels. This will be explained in greater detail in the pose analysis.

B. HOW LONG TO HOLD POSES

One of the most commonly asked questions is how long should a pose be held. The answer is that it depends on many factors. Consider the following questions. How long is the class? How difficult should the class be? What is the strength and flexibility level of the students in the class? All of these factors must be considered when deciding how long to hold poses. Most instructors will have to decide on the length of time to hold poses when they see who is in their class. Every class is a different experience. Each student will experience the poses in a different way based on his/her individual level of strength, flexibility, mobility, and stability.

The longer each pose is held, the more challenging the class becomes. This is true of strength, balance, and flexibility poses alike. And, as seemingly restful as meditation is, it becomes more difficult the longer it is sustained. It is important not to focus on “time,” or on holding the pose for “30 seconds.” Instead, think of holding the pose for a certain number of breaths.

In this outline's “Pose Analysis” section, there is a suggested number of breaths for holding each pose. This number should be thought of as a rough guideline. Each person breathes at a

different rate; therefore, telling the class to hold the pose for five breaths will mean that some students will be in the pose for a very short time and others for a long time. This is not conducive to a smooth, flowing class with group energy. Instead, remind students to breathe, then choose someone with deep, slow breaths and count his/her breaths. Or, the instructor can count his/her own breaths. Do not count aloud as this brings people outside themselves as they attempt to unify their breath with the instructor's counting, creating an unnatural rhythm.

C. AFSA'S YOGA POSE LEVEL GUIDE AND PRECAUTIONS

On the following illustrated pose pages, poses are photographed and described according to three levels.

LEARNING LEVEL (A)—An easy approach to the pose for beginners and those with mobility or stability issues.

GOAL LEVEL (B)—The mastery pose, or more commonly recognized yoga pose

MODIFICATION LEVEL (M)—This is a more extensive modification of the pose for participants with more challenging limitations.

Students with the following conditions may need to proceed with caution and begin with the modification level poses (M) pictured on the right of each pose page. Conditions include but are not limited to the following.

- Arthritis
- Back issues
- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Eye conditions (i.e., glaucoma or compromised retinas)
- High blood pressure
- Low blood pressure (orthostatic hypotension)
- Hip replacement
- Inner ear issues
- Knee issues
- Neck issues
- Obesity
- Pregnancy
- Shoulder issues

Please note that this is **not** a complete list of conditions. It is the responsibility of the students to be aware of their physical limitations and follow their physician's recommendations prior to engaging in this or any other physical exercise program.

D. THE ROLE AND USE OF BREATH IN YOGA

Breath is a vital component of the complete Hatha yoga practice. Breath is believed to be the entryway for prana (life force). Pranayama is yogic breath control. Yogis use breath training to manipulate their prana and keep it from leaking out of their bodies. A person who is ill, injured or in pain is said to have too much prana outside their body. To break down the word, prana is “that which is infinitely everywhere,” and ayama is “stretch or extend” and is the action of pranayama. The best way to describe prana is as a life force or energy that is everywhere and can be manifested through the breath. Prana is not oxygen or the breath itself, but the life energy that fills all living things—a universal energy.

How does prana work? According to yoga scripture, prana flows through the body along specific pathways on either side of the spine: ida on the left and pingala on the right. The left side represents the moon and the right side represents the sun. Energy also runs down the spinal cord. This pathway is called sushumna. By inhaling fully and exhaling completely, constant flow of energy is created and promote good health is promoted.

Breath should lead the asana. When a yogi begins a pose it should be in union with the breath. The inhalation or exhalation should be the catalyst for that movement. In moving poses, the inhalation of breath will typically accompany spinal extension or opening movements, while exhalation accompanies spinal flexion, or folding or closing movements (enhancing abdominal compression). In static (held) poses, the yogi should breathe throughout the pose. During static poses there should be a focus on elongating the spine during inhalation and abdominal compression during exhalation. Teachers are encouraged to hold a pose for a certain number of breaths, rather than minutes.

It is the yoga teacher’s responsibility to provide students with constant reminders to breathe. During especially challenging asanas, some students will hold their breath. A yoga teacher may give as many as 100 breathing cues during a one-hour class. Especially for new yoga students, these reminders are very important.

There are many styles of breathing, each with a purpose and result. For the purpose of learning the AFAA Yoga Series, the Ujjayi breath is used throughout. The use of a single breath will help new teachers become familiar with this breathing style and become proficient at it. Teachers must continue to be students as well, learning and practicing new techniques, then passing on this knowledge by introducing a new breath from time to time during classes.

1. Where do certain breaths and breath work belong in a yoga class?

A specific breath may be incorporated into the opening meditation, the warm-up, the cool-down (perhaps the sitali breath here) or the closing meditation. Specific breaths can heighten the experience of a certain pose.

For many yogis, breath work is most effectively learned and understood in one's personal practice.

2. Four commonly used yoga breaths

Ujjayi Breath or Victorious Breath is soothing to the nerves, cools the head, helps digestion, and brings mental clarity. Inhale through the nose keeping the lips closed. Soften the tongue and jaw and fill the lungs from the bottom up. Slowly exhale allowing the air to flow over the vocal cords creating a vibration in the back of the throat. This will create a humming noise. Allow the self to become aware of the rhythm of the breath.

Full Complete Breath—Inhale through the nose, filling the entire abdominal cavity with air. The feeling should be of filling the lungs in three-dimensional space: bottom to top, forward to back, side to side. The shoulders and chest should not rise or move. Retain the breath for a few beats, and then slowly exhale through the nose, emptying lungs completely.

Sitali or Cooling Breath—Sitali is healing to the body, rids the body of excessive heat and activates the liver. Soften the face and mouth, roll the tongue into a tube and then poke the tongue between the lips. Suck the air in through the tongue like sipping water through a straw. When lungs are completely filled, draw the tongue back into the mouth and close the lips. Hold the air in the lungs for a few seconds and then slowly exhale through the nose.

Bhramari or Bee Breath—Bhramari is a meditative breath designed to bring stillness and focus to the mind. This breath is said to awaken Kundalini (psychospiritual) energy and alleviate insomnia. With the right thumb, block off the right nostril then inhale through the left nostril. When the lungs are full, block off both nostrils and hold the air in for a few seconds then slowly exhale through the left nostril making a soft buzzing noise (thus the name of the breath) in the back of the throat. Alternate nostrils.

POSE ANALYSIS

A. THE AFAA 5 QUESTIONS™

When evaluating any exercise or movement, use the AFAA 5 Questions. This tool was developed to help guide instructors in selecting exercises for their routines with the general fitness participant in mind. Use this tool when analyzing the yoga poses to better understand, cue, and modify each pose to meet the varying needs of today's group yoga participant.

1. What is the purpose of this exercise?
Consider: muscular strength or endurance, cardiorespiratory conditioning, flexibility, warm-up or activity preparation, skill development and stress reduction
2. Are you doing that effectively?
Consider: proper range, speed or body position against gravity
3. Does the exercise create any safety concerns?
Consider: potential stress areas, environmental concerns or movement control
4. Can you maintain proper alignment and form for the duration of the exercise?
Consider: form, alignment or stabilization
5. For whom is the exercise appropriate or inappropriate?
Consider: risk-to-benefit ratio; whether the exerciser is at a beginner, intermediate, or advanced level of fitness; and any limitations reported by the participant

B. AFAA YOGA SERIES POSES

The 40 poses of the AFAA Yoga Series are shown in detail below. Following the English name is the Sanskrit name for each pose (when one exists). Some poses do not have commonly recognized Sanskrit names, as is often the case with transition poses. It must be understood that in yoga the same pose may have several different names. Some poses, which appear in the *AFAA Mat Science I* or *II* educational workshop outlines with different names, will be followed by the *Mat Science I* or *II* name for clarification.

Try to be familiar with all of the poses and their English and Sanskrit names. Although listed, it is not necessary to know the names that are used in *Mat Science I* or *II*. Here is the list of AFAA Yoga Series poses in order of practice. Some of these poses are practiced more than once to work both sides of the body.

Note: repeat asanas are ***bold italic***

1. CORPSE—Savasana
2. MOUNTAIN—Tadasana
3. STANDING FORWARD BEND—Uttanasana I
4. SPINE PREP
5. PLANK

6. FOUR LIMBED STICK—Chaturanga Dandasana
7. UPWARD FACING DOG—Urdhva Mukha Svanasana
8. DOWNWARD FACING DOG—Adho Mukha Svanasana
9. WARRIOR I—Virabhadrasana I
- 10. MOUNTAIN—Tadasana**
- 11. STANDING FORWARD BEND—Uttanasana I**
- 12. SPINE PREP**
- 13. PLANK**
- 14. FOUR LIMBED STICK—Chaturanga Dandasana**
- 15. UPWARD FACING DOG—Urdhva Mukha Svanasana**
- 16. DOWNWARD FACING DOG—Adho Mukha Svanasana**
- 17. WARRIOR I—Virabhadrasana I (with opposite foot forward)**
18. WARRIOR II—Virabhadrasana II
19. REVERSE WARRIOR
20. WARRIOR III—Virabhadrasana III
21. EXTENDED SIDEWAYS—Parsvottanasana
22. TRIANGLE—Trikonasana
23. EXTENDED ANGLE—Utthita Parsvakonasana
24. BOUND TRIANGLE*—Baddha Trikonasana
25. REVOLVING TRIANGLE—Parivrtta Trikonasana
26. RUNNER’S LUNGE
- 27. WARRIOR II—Virabhadrasana II (with opposite foot forward)**
- 28. REVERSE WARRIOR**
- 29. WARRIOR III—Virabhadrasana III**
- 30. EXTENDED SIDEWAYS—Parsvottanasana**
- 31. TRIANGLE—Trikonasana**
- 32. EXTENDED ANGLE—Utthita Parsvakonasana**
- 33. BOUND TRIANGLE—Baddha Trikonasana**
- 34. REVOLVING TRIANGLE—Parivrtta Trikonasana**
- 35. RUNNER’S LUNGE**
36. LEGS SPREAD WIDE—Prasarita Padottanasana
37. TREE—Vrikshasana
38. FINGER TO BIG TOE—Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana I

39. PLANK

40. FOUR LIMBED STICK—Chaturanga Dandasana

41. UPWARD FACING DOG—Urdhva Mukha Svanasana

42. DOWNWARD FACING DOG WITH LEG UP—Adho Mukha Svanasana II

43. PLANK

44. FOUR LIMBED STICK—Chaturanga Dandasana

45. UPWARD FACING DOG—Urdhva Mukha Svanasana

46. DOWNWARD FACING DOG WITH LEG UP—Adho Mukha Svanasana II

47. LOCUST—Salabhasana

48. CHILD’S POSE—Mudhasana or Salaam

49. BOW—Dhanurasana

50. PIGEON—Rajakapotasana

51. BOUND PIGEON*—Eka Pada Rajakapotasana

52. CAMEL—Ustrasana

53. HERO—Virasana

54. SEATED SPINE TWIST—Ardha Matsyendrasana

55. STAFF—Dandasana

56. SEATED FORWARD BEND—Pascimottasana

57. BUTTERFLY IN REPOSE—Baddha Konasana

58. BOAT—Paripurna Navasana

59. SHOULDER BRIDGE—Setu Bandha Sarvangasana

60. KNEE STIRS

61. DEAD BUG

62. PLOUGH*—Halasana

63. SHOULDER STAND*—Sarvangasana

64. HALF FISH—Ardha Matsyasana

65. CORPSE—Savasana

*** Indicates An Optional Advanced Pose**—Remember that all poses are optional in yoga, and students should be reminded to avoid poses that are not physically appropriate for them, or to begin with the modification level of the pose (marked “M”) and advance slowly as their practice develops.

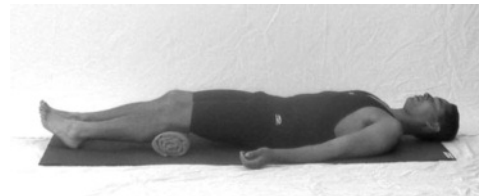
C. ILLUSTRATED POSES

The pose analysis that follows is in the order of first appearance in the AFAA Yoga Series. Remember that many poses are repeated.

1. CORPSE—*Savasana* (sah-VAH-sah-nah)



A & B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Relaxation and restoration

This is a static pose; stay here for as long as it feels appropriate, breathing naturally. The instructor may also choose to lead the class through a guided body scan or meditation.

Set-up: Lie supine, legs extended and relaxed, allowing feet to flop open naturally. Let arms relax by sides, palms up. Draw shoulder blades down the back to relax neck and shoulders. Relax jaw and close eyes.

A & B: Supine position on mat

M: Place a rolled towel or mat under the back of the knees and/or neck if support is needed to comfortably lie in this position. This modification may be more appropriate for participants with low-back or neck problems.

Additional cues: Allow the floor to support body weight, continue to breathe naturally, and feel the body relax, allowing more and more of the body to come into contact with the floor.

Breathing: Ujjayi or full complete breathing

Number of breaths: Stay here for 3–15 minutes in complete relaxation.

2. THE MOUNTAIN — *Tadasana* (tah-DAH-sah-nah)



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Establishes posture and stability in a standing position; strengthens legs, torso, and scapular stabilizers.

This is a foundation base pose; all standing movements are derived from the traditional yoga pose known as the Mountain pose, which is neutral.

Set-up: Stand with feet parallel and all four corners of the feet touching the floor. Separate the toes. Legs are straight and active by contracting thigh muscles, lifting kneecaps upward. Pull navel inward toward spine, lifting rib cage upward and drawing tailbone downward to bring spine into a neutral position. Drop shoulders away from ears, squeezing shoulder blades down and back, broadening chest, and lengthening spine. Arms hang by sides of body, active and straight. Head is balanced on neck without tension.

A: Stand with feet at hip-width apart.

B: Stand with feet together.

M: Stand with a chair or support structure nearby. This modification may be more appropriate for participants with balance deficits.

Additional cues: Feel the subtle strength in the legs and pelvis; feel the balance of anterior and posterior muscles helping to maintain a balanced standing position.

Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 4–8

3. STANDING FORWARD BEND—*Uttanasana I* (ooh-tah-NAH-sah-nah)



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Increases flexibility of hamstrings, spine, and hips.

Set-up: Begin in Mountain pose.

A: Bend the knees, maintain a neutral position, exhale and hinge forward from the hips, placing hands on the thighs. Let head and neck hang naturally, with top of head pointing toward the floor. Slowly straighten the legs until a gentle stretch is felt in the hamstrings and low back.

B: Same as above, with legs straight and hands reaching behind the ankles, pulling the chest toward the thighs.

M: Reduce flexion in the spine and/or have a chair or support structure near by. This modification may be more appropriate for participants with back problems and/or balance deficits.

Additional cues: Feel the subtle strength in the legs and pelvis; feel the balance of anterior and posterior muscles helping to maintain a balanced standing position.

Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 4–8

4. SPINE PREP



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Lengthens and strengthens spinal erector muscles and stretches hamstrings.

Spine Prep is sometimes referred to as a transition pose, or a pose whose main purpose is to link one pose to the next.

Set-up: Begin in Standing Forward Bend.

A: Inhale, with knees bent deeply and hands above the knees, look forward. Keep spine straight, lengthening through the torso, lifting head and tailbone.

B: Inhale, with knees straight and hands on the shins, look forward. Keep spine straight, lengthening through the torso, lifting head and tailbone.

M: Stand with a chair or support structure near by. This modification may be more appropriate for participants with back problems and/or balance deficits.

Additional cues: Keep knees soft, but encourage students to straighten knees as flexibility improves.

Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 1

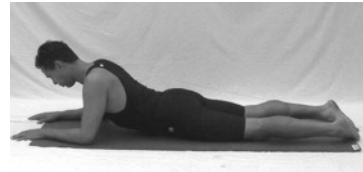
5. PLANK



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Strengthens upper body and core.

This is a static pose. It is also referred to as a transition pose.

Set-up: Inhale and step back with one foot and then the other into a prone plank position on hands and knees or hands and feet.

A: Keep knees on the mat.

B: Balance on hands and toes.

M: Drop to elbows and knees or elbows and hips. This modification may be more appropriate for participants with wrist problems.

Additional cues: Keep the buttocks lifted and the back straight so the torso does not sag downward. Be solid and steady through the shoulders. Neck should be in a straight line with the back, gaze directed at mat. Do not hyperextend the elbows.

Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 1

6. FOUR LIMBED STICK — *Chaturanga Dandasana* (cha-tah-**RON**-ga-don-DAH-sah-nah). Also known in *Mat Science I and II* as Chatarunga.



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Strengthens arms, legs, and abdominals.

It is also a transition pose.

Set-up: Begin in Plank pose, and inhale while lowering torso towards the mat.

A: From the knees, lower the torso down to the mat.

B: From push-up position, lower the chest to a few inches off the mat and hold

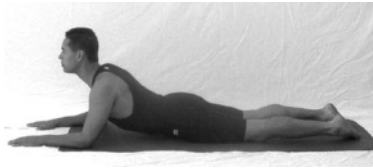
M: Lower to elbow and knee position. This modification may be more appropriate for participants with wrist issues and/or inefficient core strength.

Additional cues: Stabilize the torso, maintaining one straight line from heels to shoulders/head by contracting abdominals. Keep the navel pulled in so that the low back does not sag. Do not drop the head or sink the chest toward the mat. Draw shoulders back and down.

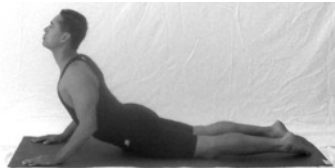
Breathing: Ujjayi (Exhale during movement.)

Number of breaths: 1

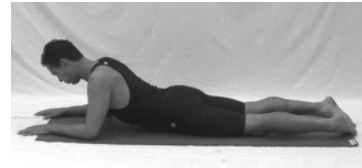
7. UPWARD FACING DOG — *Urdhva Mukha Svanasana* (OORD-vah-MOO-kah-shvah-NAH-sah-nah)



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Strengthens the back; stretches the chest and shoulders; improves torso mobility.

Set-up: Begin in Chaturanga Dandasana, lying prone, with legs extended and active and the tops of the feet in contact with the floor.

A: Slide hands forward and place forearms and palms on the mat. Slowly press the torso upward, keeping the hips and thighs on the floor. Make as much room between the pubic bone and sternum as possible without creating discomfort in the low back.

B: Place wrists just in front of shoulders; elbows are bent, fingers spread and pointing forward. Straighten arms, lifting hips off the floor and elongating spine, lifting thighs off the mat and balancing on the tops of the feet. Roll shoulders back and away from ears.

M: Keep torso closer to floor with minimal spinal or neck extension. This modification may be more appropriate for persons with back and/or neck problems.

Additional cues: Move into Up Dog, hands should feel as though they are sliding back toward the body as they press into the floor. Feel chest puff upward, pulling forward and away from tailbone. Do not hyperextend the elbows. Contract the gluteals to support the back muscles.

Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 3–6

8. DOWNWARD FACING DOG —*Adho Mukha Svanasana* (AH-doh-MOO-kah-Shvah-Nah-sah-nah)



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Strengthens upper body; increases bone density in wrists; stretches shoulders, hamstrings, and calves; and lengthens spine.

Set-up: Begin in Upward Facing Dog. Bring bottoms of toes to the mat and tighten the abs and glutes.

A: With glutes tightened to support the low back, raise hips to Plank pose, then press hips back until body is in an inverted V shape, keeping the knees bent deeply. Press the heels toward the mat, but not necessarily onto the mat. Tip the tailbone upward. Sink the chest and head down toward the mat.

B: With glutes tightened to support the low back, raise hips to Plank pose, then press hips back until body is in an inverted V shape, keeping the knees straight and pressing the heels down to the floor. Tip the tailbone upward. Sink the chest and head down toward the mat.

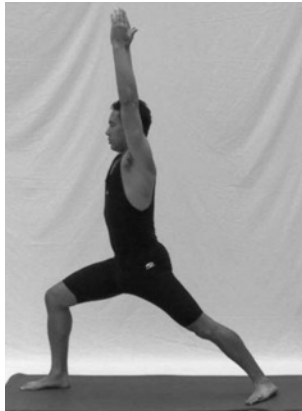
M: Have a chair or support structure near by to reduce the range of inversion. This modification may be more appropriate for participants with eye conditions (i.e., glaucoma, compromised retina), or inner ear, blood pressure, or balance issues.

Additional cues: Draw up on the quadriceps and gently press the heels downward. Don't push too far too quickly; allow the hamstrings to release as practice progresses. Hollow out the abdomen with each exhaled breath. Balance the weight load between the hands and feet.

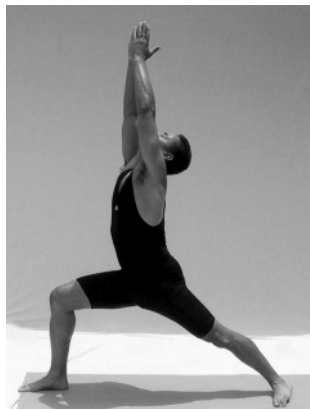
Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 3–6

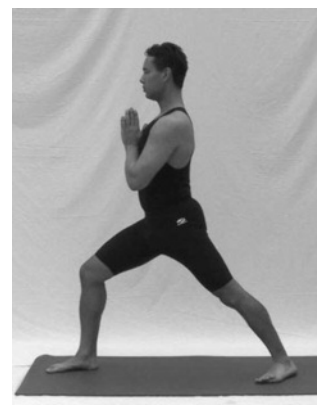
9. WARRIOR I — *Virabhadrasana* (vee-rab-hah-DRAH-sah-nah). Also known in *Mat Science II* as High Lunge.



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Strengthens lower body; stretches hips and lats.

Set-up: Begin in Downward Facing Dog.

A: Draw the upper body forward over the hands. Bring one foot forward between the hands. The rear foot stays in back. Turn the toes of the rear foot out at a 45° angle. Bend the forward knee to about a 90° angle, with the knee joint directly above the ankle. Turn the chest toward the front of your mat. Raise arms in the air overhead with palms together or hands separated. Look forward.

B: For a greater challenge, widen your stance and sink lower into position as you go into a mild back bend. Bring the palms together and look up at the hands.

M: Keep the arms close to the center of the torso and reduce the depth of the lunge. This modification may be more appropriate for participants with knee problems or limited hip mobility. A chair or support structure may also be used for participants with balance deficits.

Additional cues: Lift the chest, drop the shoulders, and elongate the spine.

Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 4–8

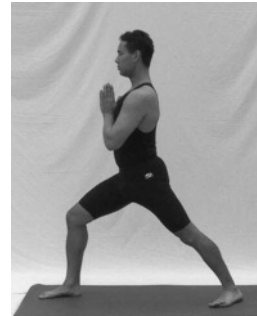
10. WARRIOR II — *Virabhadrasana II* (vee-rab-hah-DRAH-sah-nah)



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Strengthens legs and hips; stretches groin, intrinsic muscles used for scapular, torso, and pelvis stabilization.

Set-up: Begin in Warrior I.

A: Keep the lower body in the same position. If the right foot is forward, draw the right hand forward and the left hand back as the upper body rotates toward the left side of the mat. Do the opposite if the left foot is forward. Keep arms level, at about shoulder height with palms facing down. Square the hips with the side of the mat. Turn head to look over forward hand.

B: For a greater challenge, widen stance and sink lower into the pose.

M: Keep the arms close to the center of the torso and reduce the depth of the lunge. This modification may be more appropriate for participants with knee problems or limited hip mobility. A chair or support structure may also be used for participants with balance deficits.

Additional cues: For A and B, reach for either wall with your fingertips. For all levels, keep the heart lifted, shoulders blades down and spine long. Press forward, lowering hips if you can to get deeper into the pose and still maintain knee/ankle alignment.

Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 3–10

11. REVERSE WARRIOR



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Strengthens legs, hips, and abdominals; stretches forward side of body and hip adductors.

Set-up: Begin in Warrior II. Legs and feet remain in the same position as for Warrior II. Only the upper body and hips will change position.

A: Drop the rear hand down to the rear thigh, and raise the forward hand toward the sun. Look up through the fingertips. Hips face the side of the mat.

B: Widen stance and reach down further on thigh.

M: Reduce the depth of the lunge position and have a chair or support structure near by to assist in balance. This modification may be more appropriate for those with knee problems, limited hip mobility, and/or balance deficits.

Additional cues: Lift the upper body and elongate the upward-reaching side of the body. Sink lower at the hips if possible without compromising knee/ankle alignment.

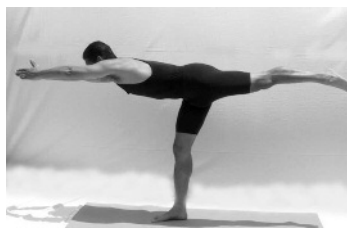
Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 3–6

12. WARRIOR III—*Virabhadrasana III* (vee-rab-hah-DRAH-sah-nah)



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Strengthens feet, ankles, legs, abdominals, and spine; improves balance.

Set-up: Begin in Reverse Warrior. Bring arms to Namaste position (hands in prayer position in front of chest), and push off with the back foot, bringing feet together at the front of the mat. Keep weight on the foot that was forward during Reverse Warrior.

A: Bending support leg as needed, begin to lean forward, bringing arms to sides. At the same time, gently lift the back foot and extend the leg backward and up. Gaze at a point out in front to help maintain balance. Return foot to floor and bring hands back to Namaste position.

B: Bending support leg as needed, begin to lean forward, bringing palms together and reaching forward, extending out through the fingertips. At the same time, gently lift the back foot and extend the leg backward and up. Create as much distance between the tips of the fingers and the tips of the lifted toes. Gaze at a point out in front to help maintain balance. Return foot to floor and bring hands back to Namaste position.

M: Have chair or support structure near by and keep rear foot in contact with the floor. This modification may be more appropriate for participants with balance deficits and/or back or core weakness.

Additional cues: Keep support foot flat on the floor. Continue to breathe deeply. Feel the strength of the support leg and the natural balance between outstretched arms and rear leg.

Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 3–6

13. EXTENDED SIDEWAYS — *Parsvottanasana* (par-shvoh-tah-NAH-sah-nah)



A



B



M = Modification



Hand Placement

Purpose and benefits: Stretches the hamstrings, low back, chest, and anterior shoulder girdle.

Set-up: Stand in Namaste. The support foot from Warrior III will remain in place.

A: Keeping the support foot in place, take a long step back with the other foot. Knees are straight but not locked. Turn the toes of the back foot slightly outward to about a 45° angle. Reach behind the back and clasp hands, wrists, or elbows. Inhale, lift up from the hips, and **slowly** fold the front of the torso forward as if attempting to rest the ribs on the forward thigh. Allow the head to drop gently downward. After the suggested number of breaths, gently draw the upper body upward.

B: Same as A, but place the hands behind the back above the waistline with the palms together, fingers pointing up toward the head. Slide the hands upward between the shoulder blades while gently pulling the shoulder blades together.

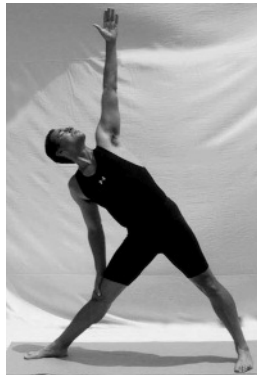
M: Place hands on front thigh for support. This modification may be more appropriate for participants with eye conditions (i.e., glaucoma, compromised retina), or inner ear, blood pressure, or back problems. A chair or support structure may also be used for participants with balance deficits.

Additional cues: : Be careful not to rush into this pose; flexibility builds slowly with regular practice.

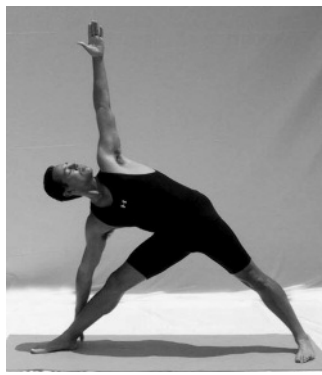
Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 2–4

14. TRIANGLE — *Trikonasana* (trih-koh-NAH-sah-nah))



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Creates flexibility in the hips; strengthens legs and ankles; lengthens hamstrings; opens the chest.

Set-up: Begin in a wide stance, with knees straight. Extend arms to the right and left.

A: Keep the torso in line with the side of the mat. Pull the rear hip back and reach the forward hand out in the opposite direction as far as possible. Then cartwheel the torso slowly down, reaching the forward hand to the forward knee or thigh, reaching the fingers of the other hand straight up.

B: Same as A, then slide the lower hand down to the shin or ankle, or rest the hand on the floor to the outside of the forward foot. Look up to the sky. Hold for the designated number of breaths.

M: Place the hand for support on the thigh and reduce the range of lateral spinal flexion. May also be performed over the seat of a chair. This modification may be more appropriate for those with back problems or balance deficits.

Additional cues: Keep the front of the body open and one-dimensional, as if being pressed between two sheets of glass. Open chest toward sun. Increase the challenges of this pose slowly.

Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 4–10

15. EXTENDED ANGLE— *Utthita Parsvakonasana* (oot-HEE-tah- par-shvah-tah-NAH-sah-nah)



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Strengthens the core and lower body; stretches the groin and lats.

Set-up: Begin in Triangle pose.

A: Bend the forward knee and lower the upper straight arm down next to the ear. Keep the hips and shoulders square. Press upward from thighs to keep the torso lifted. Keep the forward knee bent. Rest the lower elbow above the bent knee.

B: From Triangle pose, bring the upper hand toward the head and cover the ear with the biceps. Extend through the fingertips, making as much room between the tips of the fingers and the outside of the back leg as possible.

M: Reduce the range of flexion and/or perform over the seat of a chair. This modification may be more appropriate for those with back problems or balance deficits.

Additional cues: Reach long with the fingers of the upper hand and feel the stretch develop.

Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 3–6

16. BOUND TRIANGLE — *Baddha Trikonasana* (bad-hah-trih-koh-nah-sah-nah)

Note: This advanced pose is optional



A

B

M = Modification



Front View

Purpose and benefits: Strengthens the lower body; stretches the shoulders and groin.

Set-up: Begin in Extended Angle.

A: Lower the reaching upper arm and drop it behind the back. With the lower arm, reach between the legs toward the buttocks and place the hand on the lower gluteus. The top arm hangs behind the back. Open the upper shoulder toward the sun.

B: Same as A, but clasp the hands behind the back.

M: Reduce the depth of the lunge position and clasp hands behind the back without lacing under the leg. This modification may be more appropriate for those with back problems or mobility limitations in the shoulder girdle. A chair or support structure may also be used for participants with balance deficits.

Additional cues: Feel as though the body is lifting upward, not sinking.

Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 2–4

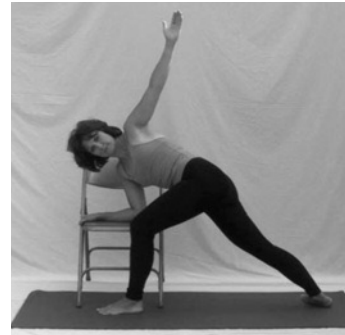
17. REVOLVING TRIANGLE— *Parivrtta Trikonasana* (Pah-VRIH-tah-trih-koh-NAH-sah-nah)



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Strengthens and improves mobility in the core, especially the obliques; creates flexibility in the hips and hamstrings.

Set-up: Begin in Extended Angle. Release the hands, and bring the upper hand around front. Keep the forward knee bent. Place upper hand on the mat to the inside of the forward foot and keep it there.

A: Keeping the forward knee bent, rotate the torso gently toward the forward thigh and raise the other hand up to the sky. This creates a rotation in the torso. Keeping the neck aligned, look up at the raised hand and lift the heart.

B: Same as A, then begin to slowly straighten the forward knee.

M: Rest forearm on chair seat for support and reduce range of lunge and/or spinal rotation. This modification may be more appropriate for those with back problems and/or balance deficits.

Additional cues: Scoot the rear foot closer to the front foot if it feels like they are too far apart. This might make it easier to straighten the forward knee. Be careful not to hyperextend either knee.

Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 3–6

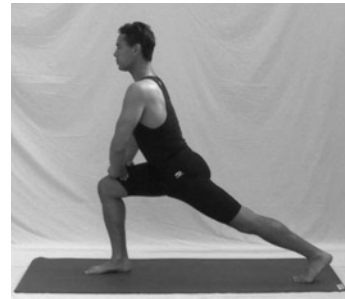
18. RUNNER'S LUNGE



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Stretches the calf and hip flexors.

This is also a transition pose

Set-up: Begin in Revolving Triangle

A: Bring the reaching hand down onto the mat to the outside of the forward foot. Rotate the back foot so the toes point forward, drop the knee to the mat, and gently press the hips forward. Lower the chest towards the forward knee. Lift up the heart.

B: Bend the forward knee to about a 90° angle, while bringing the reaching hand down onto the mat to the outside of the forward foot. Rotate the back foot so the toes point forward and gently press forward through the hips. Lower the chest towards the forward knee. Lift up the heart.

M: Reduce depth of lunge and keep hands on front thigh. This modification may be more appropriate for participants with knee problems or hip mobility limitations. A chair or support structure may also be used for participants with balance deficits.

Additional cues: Draw the shoulders down and away from the ears, opening the chest.

Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 2–6

19. LEGS SPREAD WIDE—*Prasarita Padottanasana I* (prah-sah-REE-tah-pah-doh-tah-NAH-sah-nah)



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Stretches hamstrings, hips, and adductors; lengthens spine.

Set-up: Begin in Runner's Lunge.

A: Rotate back and front feet so toes point toward the side of the mat as trunk is rotated to face side of mat. In a wide straddle, place hands on thighs. Gently fold the torso forward, letting the head drop.

B: Same as A, but extend arms so that hands clasp ankles or big toes.

M: Reduce range of hip flexion, keeping head and torso parallel to the floor. This modification may be more appropriate for participants with eye conditions (i.e., glaucoma, compromised retina), or inner ear, blood pressure, or back problems. A chair or support structure may also be used for participants with balance deficits.

Additional cues: Tip the sitting bones upward. Feel the upper body “pouring” out of the hips toward the mat. Hollow out the abdomen as you breathe.

Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 4–8

20. TREE POSE—*Vrikshasana* (vrik-SAH-sah-nah)



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Strengthens legs and postural muscles; stretches groin and hamstrings; improves balance.

Set-up: Begin in Legs Spread Wide. Jump or step the feet together to stand in Mountain pose. Place palms together in Namaste position, elbows bent with thumbs to breastbone.

A: Gazing at an unmoving point straight ahead to help maintain balance, bend one knee, rotating hip outward, and place sole of foot flat against the inside of support leg at the calf. Engage abdominals to help maintain torso balance. Raise arms above head, pressing palms together. Return to Mountain pose with hands in Namaste position. Switch sides

B: Same as A, but bring foot to inner thigh and press the heel firmly into the groin.

M: Keep arms near the center of the torso and foot supported on floor. This modification may be more appropriate for those with balance deficits. A chair or support structure can also be used. Switch sides.

Additional cues: Press down through the floor with your standing leg; at the same time press sole of foot against standing leg, tightening muscles of standing leg to help maintain balance. To avoid risk to the knee joint, do not place foot on the inside of the knee.

Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 3–10

21. FINGERTO BIG TOE—*Utthita Hasta Padanguthasana* (oot-HEE-tah-ah-stah-pah-don-goo-STHA-sah-nah)



A



A1



B



B1



M



M1

Purpose and benefits: Strengthens legs and postural muscles; stretches groin and hamstrings; and improves balance.

Set-up: Begin in Mountain pose.

A: Standing on one foot, raise the other foot off the mat, bending the knee, and drawing it up toward the chest. Reach out, grasp the knee with the corresponding hand. The opposite hand reaches upward. For A-1, slowly open the knee to the outside and hold. Switch sides.

B: Standing on one foot, bend the right knee and draw it upward until the index and middle fingers of the corresponding hand can reach between the big toe and second toe. Hook fingers around the big toe. Slowly extend the knee straight in front of the body. For B-1, stabilize, then open the hip and draw the foot to the right until the arm and leg are fully extended and pointing outward. Raise the opposite arm and point the fingers toward the sky.

M: Have a chair or support structure near by to assist in balance. This modification may be more appropriate for those with balance deficits. Switch sides.

Additional cues: Be sure to engage the abdominals. Try not to tense up too much as this makes balancing more difficult. Think of the head as floating above the neck.

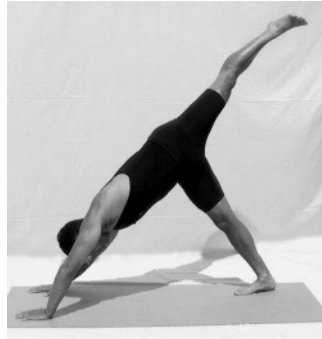
Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 3–6

22. DOWNWARD FACING DOG WITH LEG UP—*Adho Mukha Svanasana II*
(AH-doh-MOO-kah-Shvah-Nah-sah-nah)



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Stretches the hip flexors, hamstrings, and calves; strengthens glutes and upper body.

Set-up: Begin in Upward Facing Dog. Bring bottoms of toes to the mat and tighten the glutes.

A: With glutes tightened to support the low back, raise hips to Plank pose, then press hips back until body is in an inverted V shape. Tip the tailbone upward. Sink the chest and head down toward the mat. Lift one leg while opening the hip toward the sky. Hold. Return the foot to the mat and repeat with the other leg.

B: Same as A, but with rear leg lifted higher.

M: Place hands on chair back or support structure and reduce height of rear leg. This modification may be more appropriate for participants with eye conditions (i.e. glaucoma, compromised retina), inner ear, blood pressure, or balance issues.

Additional cues: Draw up on the quadriceps of the support leg and gently press the heel downward. Open the hip upward. Hollow out the abdomen with each breath.

Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 3–6

23. LOCUST—*Salabhasana* (sah-lah-BAH-sah-nah)



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Increases range of motion and flexibility; strengthens spine; improves core and pelvic stability; opens front of torso.

Set-up: Begin in Downward Facing Dog. Drop knees to the mat, then lie prone with arms alongside the body. Roll shoulders back and away from ears. Pull abdominals inward, dropping the tailbone down. Contract glutes and thighs, and press hips and pubic bone to the mat activating thighs as well so that knees leave the floor.

A: Inhale and lift the upper body, and arms, and hands off the mat, keeping head aligned with the spine.

B: Same as A, but lift higher, balancing on the pelvis.

M: Keep the feet on the floor and reduce the range of spinal extension. This modification may be more appropriate for those participants with back problems.

Additional cues: Create length in the spine, lifting up and forward with the breastbone as the scapula draws down the back. Keep shoulders rolled down and back.

Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 3–10

24. CHILD'S POSE — *Mudhasana* (moo-DAH-sah-nah) – and *EXTENDED CHILD'S POSE* *Salaam* (sah-LAHM) – Also known in *Mat Science I and II* as Extended Cat Seal



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Lengthens the spine; stretches the muscles at the front of the lower leg, as well as the lats; promotes relaxation.

Set-up: Begin in Locust. Draw hands with palms facing down, under shoulders, and come to hands and knees. Knees are positioned under hips, with arms under shoulders, fingers pointing forward. Exhale, tuck chin, and pull belly in toward spine, rounding spine and dropping the tops of feet onto the floor to allow sitting back onto heels.

A: Draw arms alongside the body with the backs of the hands, along with the arms, resting on the mat.

B: Arms reach forward and spine lengthens.

M: Place a support block or rolled towel under the head for neck support, and a rolled towel between back of thighs and lower leg for knee comfort. This modification may be more appropriate for those participants with neck and/or knee problems.

Additional cues: Keep the roundness in spine while sitting back on heels. It's not necessary to sit completely back onto heels if muscles are tight.

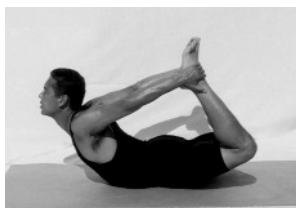
Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 4–6

25. BOW — *Dhanurasana* (DAH-noo-RAH-sah-nah)



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Stretches quads, chest, and shoulders; strengthens glutes, hamstrings, and spine.

Set-up: Begin in Child's pose. Come to hands and knees, then lie prone with the torso elongated, with arms alongside the body. Roll shoulders back and away from ears. Pull abdominals inward, dropping the tailbone down. Contract glutes and thighs, and bend the knees.

A: Lying flat on the stomach, reach back with one hand and clasp the corresponding ankle, drawing the heel gently toward the buttocks. Switch sides.

B: Clasp the shins or ankles. Inhale and pull gently on the shins. Draw the shoulder blades together and, with straight arms, lift the chest, waist, and thighs. Contract the glutes. Hold. Release after suggested number of breaths.

M: Lie flat down and use a strap or towel to assist in drawing the heel towards the buttocks. Switch sides. This modification may be more appropriate for participants with shoulder limitations, or back or knee problems.

Additional cues: Think of pressing the feet back toward the wall behind them, essentially initiating the movement from the attempted extension of the knees, rather than from the upper body. Keep the knees fairly close together. If unable to reach the ankles or feet, a strap may be used as an aid.

Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 4–8

26. PIGEON — *Rajakapotasana* (rah-jah-kha-poh-TAH-sah-nah)



A or A1



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: This pose is a deep stretch for the hip. As pictured in A, it extends the spine and lengthens the front of the torso. As pictured in B, it lengthens the spine and stretches the muscles of the back.

Set-up: Begin after releasing Bow pose. Bring hands under shoulders and knees under hips (on hands and knees).

A: Draw the right knee up toward the chest and position the knee so it points toward 2 o'clock and the outside of the foot is resting on the mat at about 8 o'clock. Slowly draw the other foot backward, and lower the body to rest on the bent forward leg. Keep the torso upright, with weight resting on the hands. Switch sides.

B: Same as A, but extend arms forward, bringing the face down toward the mat. The closer the upper body is to the mat, the deeper the stretch.

M: From a supine position cross one foot over the opposite leg and draw the legs towards the torso until an appropriate stretch is felt in the hip. Switch sides. This modification may be more appropriate for those with knee and hip problems.

Note: *If a participant has severe knee or hip problems or has had recent knee or hip surgery, he/she should avoid the Pigeon pose.*

Additional cues: Maintain spinal alignment, keeping hips and chest squared to the front.

Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 4–8

27. BOUND PIGEON—*Eka Pada Rajakapotasana* (ECK-ha-PAH-dah-RAH-jah-kah-poh-TAH-sah-nah)

Note: This advanced pose is optional



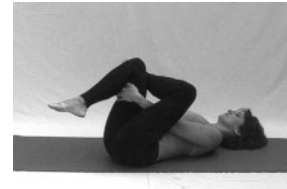
A



B



M1



M2

Purpose and benefits: Stretches quadriceps, hips, chest, biceps, and shoulders; improves balance.

Set-up: Begin in Pigeon pose (A) with upper body weight resting on hands with straight elbows, and the thigh of the rear leg down on the mat.

A: Engage the abdominals and bend the rear knee. Lift the heart up and reach back with the opposite hand and take hold of the foot or ankle. Stabilize and hold. Switch sides.

B: Same as A, then reach back with the other hand and grasp the ankle or foot with both hands. Stabilize and hold.

M1 or M2: Perform level A or M of Pigeon pose. Bound Pigeon is advanced and may be omitted or performed as the less advanced and modified Pigeon pose. The modifications may be more appropriate for those with hip or knee problems.

Note: *If a participant has severe knee or hip problems or has had recent knee or hip surgery, he/she should avoid the Bound Pigeon pose.*

Additional cues: Draw the shoulder blades together, open and lift the chest.

Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 3–6

28. CAMEL — *Ustrasana* (oohs-TRAH-sah-nah)



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Strengthens core and glutes; stretches hip flexors and abdominals; opens rib cage and front of body.

Set-up: Begin by kneeling on both knees with knees hip-distance apart, hips extended and arms at sides. The bottoms of the toes are touching the mat and the backs of the heels are facing up.

A: Tighten glutes and make fists, draw them around back and place the fists just above the buttocks. Press the hips forward, draw the shoulder blades together, lift the heart upward, and look up.

B: Contract the glutes, reach backward with the right hand and rest it on the right heel. Do the same with the left. Press the hips forward, draw the shoulder blades together, lift the heart upward, and gently look up.

M: Step one foot forward and reduce range of spinal extension. This modification may be more appropriate for those with back and/or neck issues.

Additional cues: Be sure to support the low back by contracting the glutes from beginning to end.

Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 3–6

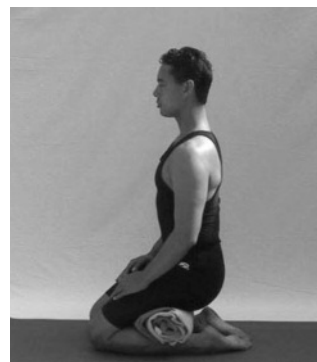
29. HERO—*Virasana* (vee-RAH-sah-nah)



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Stretches quadriceps and ankle muscles; soothes tired legs and; is a meditative pose.

Set-up: Begin kneeling with hips extended, after releasing Camel pose.

A: Draw knees and ankles together and drop the glutes down onto the heels and bottoms of feet. Bring the shoulders directly above the hips, draw the shoulders down and away from the ears. Lengthen the spine upward, allowing the head to float above the shoulders. Place the hands on top of the thighs, palms up or down.

B: Widen the feet and gently drop the glutes to the mat. Lift the ribcage upward out of the hips and drop the tailbone down. Draw the shoulders down and away from the ears, allowing the head to float above the neck. Relax the hands on the thighs.

M: Keep heels under the gluts and position a rolled towel or mat between back of thighs and lower leg for knee comfort. This modification may be more appropriate for those with knee problems.

Additional cues: Keep the abdominals engaged, but somewhat soft. Do not sink through the core or slouch.

Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 4–8

30. SEATED SPINETWIST—*Ardha-Matsyendrasana* (AR-dah-mahts-yehn-DRAH-sah-nah) - Also known in *Mat Science II* as Bull Seat Twist.



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Stretches the low back and hip; opens the chest.

Set-up: Begin in Hero pose.

A: Sit with both legs extended in front of the body. Bring one foot back toward buttocks and cross the foot over the opposite thigh with the sole of the foot flat on the floor, knee pointing at the ceiling. Grab the bent knee with the opposite arm and pull it gently toward the midline of the body. Place the opposite hand on the floor close to the tailbone, with the elbow extended, keeping the torso lifted and tall. Gently open the shoulders in the direction of the hand on the floor and look over that shoulder. Hold for designated number of breaths, then reverse and repeat on opposite side.

B: Shift weight to one side until the outside of the thigh and glute are resting on the mat. Draw the opposite foot out and cross that leg over the one that is resting on the mat. Grasp the upper knee with the opposite arm and pull it gently toward the midline of the body. Place the other hand on the floor behind the spine and turn the torso and head in that direction. Keep the torso lifted and tall while opening the shoulders. Hold for the designated number of breaths, then reverse and repeat.

M: Perform seated on a chair, keeping knees forward and rotate spine. This modification may be more appropriate for those with knee or hip issues.

Additional cues: Keep the spine as straight as possible with each vertebra stacked neatly upon one another; keep tension out of neck and shoulders, initiating movement from the spine and shoulders rather than from the head and neck.

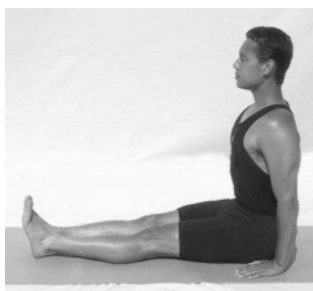
Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 4–6

30. STAFF POSE — *Dandasana* (dahn-DAH-sah-nah)



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Teaches proper alignment and posture in a seated, upright position; stretches hamstrings; tool for assessing student strength and flexibility levels for more challenging exercises in a seated position; base for many other poses.

Set-up: Sit with legs outstretched on the floor with big toes touching and heels slightly apart. Flex feet, creating equal tension between balls of feet and heels. Reach behind and move the fleshy part of the buttocks back and out from underneath to allow sitting tall and erect with sit bones firmly against floor.

A: Place hands on either side of hips with wrists directly under shoulders, fingers pointing forward, arms straight without locking elbows. Press down against hands to lift breastbone up allowing shoulders to relax down and away from ears. Flex at the knees slightly to help maintain correct seated alignment.

B: Extend knees.

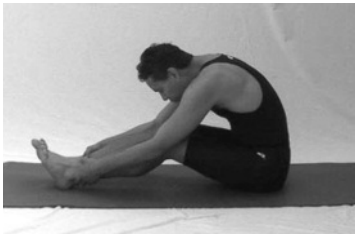
M: Place a rolled towel or mat under hips to help maintain correct seated alignment. This modification may be more appropriate for participants with hip and hamstring tightness.

Additional cues: Feel calves and back of thighs pressing firmly against the floor. Lift torso up and off hipbones, allowing spine to lengthen. Feel a string from the crown of the head lifting upwards allowing the head to float and feel light on the neck.

Breathing: Full complete breathing or Ujjai

Number of breaths: 4–8

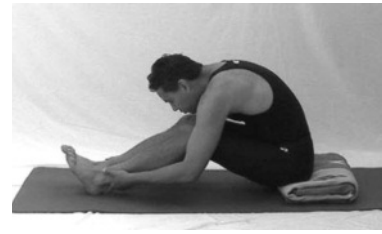
32. SEATED FORWARD BEND — *Pascimottasana* (pah-shee-moh-TAH-sah-nah)



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Stretches the spine, lats, and hamstrings; and aids relaxation.

Set-up: Begin in Staff pose. Reach behind and pull the glutes out and up slightly to settle the sit bones solidly on the mat. Bring the hands around front and rest the palms on the fronts of the thighs.

A: Keeping knees bent, sit up tall and lift the ribcage up and out of the hips. Inhale and reach the hands to knees or shins, depending on flexibility. Exhale, hinge at the hips, and gently fold forward. Sink deeper into the stretch while inhaling and exhaling.

B: Keeping knees straight, sit up tall, and lift the torso up and out of the hips. Inhale and reach the hands to the feet, clasping the soles of the feet with the hands. Exhale, hinge at the hips, and gently fold forward. Sink deeper into the stretch while inhaling and exhaling.

M: Bend knees more and position a rolled towel or mat under the hips. This modification may be more appropriate for participants with hip, low-back, and hamstring tightness.

Additional cues: Imagine that the ribcage could rest on the thighs and that the fingers could reach beyond the feet.

Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 4–8

33. BUTTERFLY IN REPOSE — Baddha Konasana (bah-dah-koh-NAH-sah-nah)



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Stretches the adductors and spine; and aids relaxation.

Set-up: Begin in Seated Forward Bend. Draw the bottoms of the feet together and bring the heels in close to the body. Adjust the sit bones so they are solidly in touch with the mat.

A: Clasp the ankles with the hands and inhale, lifting the torso up and out of the hips. Gently press the forearms downward onto the inside of the knees or thighs. Allow the knees to fall open toward the mat.

B: Clasp the feet with the hands and inhale, lifting the torso up and out of the hips. Exhale and slowly fold downward, inhaling and exhaling while sinking a bit lower with each exhalation. Allow the knees to fall open toward the mat.

M: Sit back into hips from a standing position while leaning forward with the torso, with forearms on thighs for support. This modification may be more appropriate for those participants with hip or knee limitations.

Additional cues: Imagine that the knees could drop all the way to the mat.

Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 4–8

34. BOAT — *Paripurna Navasana* (pah-ree-POOHR-nah-nah-VAH-sah-nah)



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Strengthens core, and low and mid back. As shown in B, also strengthens quadriceps and hip flexors; improves balance.

Set-up: Begin after releasing Butterfly pose. Place the bottoms of the feet on the mat a few inches apart with the knees pointing up.

A: Balancing on buttocks, keep knees bent and feet off the floor with calves parallel to the mat. Hands reach out toward feet. Lengthen up through the top of the head and engage the abdominals.

B: Balancing on the tailbone, lift the feet as high as possible with legs straight. Simultaneously lift the arms up to the same angle as the legs. Lengthen up through the top of the head and engage the abdominals. Hold.

M: Keep the hands on the shins or behind thighs for torso support. This modification may be more appropriate for participants with limited core strength and/or hamstring flexibility.

Additional cues: Keep the abdominals engaged and breathe deeply. Do not sink down through the spine or dive forward with the shoulders. The neck is long and soft.

Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 4–10

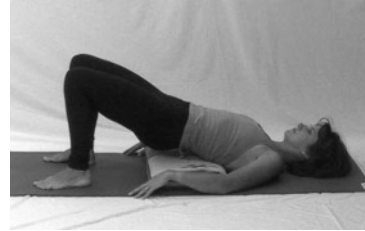
35. SHOULDER BRIDGE — *Setu Bandha Sarvangasana* (SAY-too-bahn-dah-SAHR-vahn-GAH-sah-nah)



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Strengthens glutes, hamstrings, quads, and back; opens chest and ribs; stretches hip flexors, quadriceps and fronts of shoulders.

Set-up: Begin after releasing Boat. Return feet to the mat and separate the feet about 6 inches apart. Knees are flexed, also about 6 inches apart and pointing in the same direction as the toes. Lie back; place the hands, palms facing down, alongside the body. Scoot the heels in a little closer to the glutes so the ankles are directly beneath the knees.

A: Gently lift the hips upward as high as possible by pressing down and into the floor with the feet. Be sure that the weight is resting on the shoulders, not the neck.

B: Gently lift the hips upward as high as possible by pressing down and into the floor with the feet. Be sure that the weight is resting on the shoulders, not the neck. Inch the shoulder blades closer together, clasp the hands together beneath the glutes, and extend the elbows.

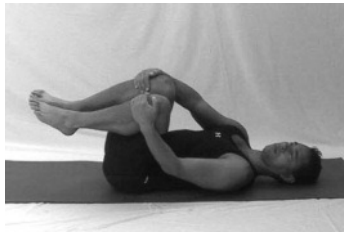
M: Further reduce the height of the lift and place a rolled towel or mat under the mid and lower back for support. This modification may be more appropriate for those with back or neck problems.

Additional cues: Feel the stretch at the hip flexors. Feel the abdomen rise and fall with each inhalation and exhalation. Keep the knees close and aligned, resisting the tendency for the knees to fall apart.

Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 4–8

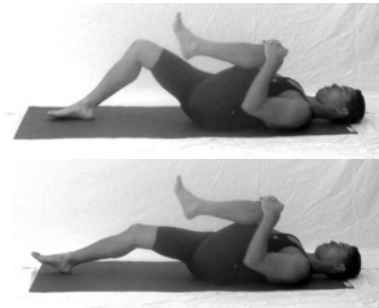
36. KNEE STIRS



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Releases low back; loosens hips.

Set-up: After releasing Shoulder Bridge.

A: In a supine position, draw the knees in toward the chest. Lift the tailbone off the mat while gently compressing the knees into the chest. Lower the tailbone and rock the knees from side to side.

B: In a supine position, draw the knees in toward the chest. Lift the tailbone off the mat while gently compressing the knees into the chest. Lower the tailbone and stir the knees in small circles, about the size of a dinner plate. After a few circles, reverse direction and stir again.

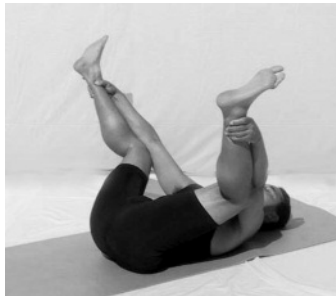
M: Perform the motion with only one knee into the chest at a time, keep the stabilizing foot flat on the ground with a bent knee. This modification may be more appropriate for participants with limited core stability.

Additional cues: Breathe deeply and feel the spine “imprinting” into the mat. Try to picture the individual vertebrae making impressions in the mat.

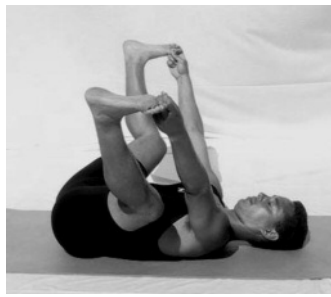
Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 4–8

37. DEAD BUG



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: Stretches the inner thighs and deep into the pelvis; opens hip. This is a conservative inversion, which can improve circulation. Ancient people believed that inversion poses had anti-aging benefits.

Set-up: For all modifications, begin lying supine with knees drawn up near chest.

A: Bring the hands along the lower legs toward the feet. Grasp the ankles, extend the elbows, and rest the forearms along the lower legs, gently pulling knees away from each other and down toward the floor. Feet should be pointing at the ceiling and the tailbone should be firmly pressed against the mat.

B: To further advance the stretch, curl the forefinger and middle finger of the right hand around right big toe and hold on. Do the same with the left hand and toe. Extend elbows and allow knees to drop apart and down toward the floor with the soles of the feet aimed at the ceiling.

M: Clasp the legs under the thighs. This modification may be more appropriate for those with limited hamstring flexibility and/or core stability.

Additional cues: Keep tailbone and lower back firmly pressed against the mat. Breathe deeply.

Breathing: Ujjayi

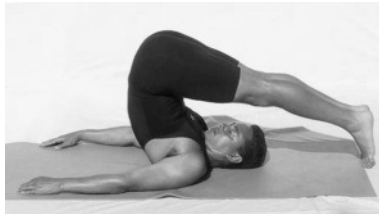
Number of breaths: 4–8

38. PLOUGH POSE—Halasana (ha-LAH-sah-nah)

Note: This advanced pose is optional



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: This is an inversion pose. It stimulates the nervous system and spine; promotes mental relaxation.

Set-up: Lie supine with legs extended, and arms at sides; draw feet up toward the buttocks with knees pointing at ceiling.

A: Bring knees toward face and lift feet off the floor. Tighten abdominals and glutes, and use hands to raise the buttocks off the floor. Use hands to support lower back, facing fingers in toward the spine. Gently roll the body's weight onto the upper back and shoulders, not the neck. Bottoms of feet face the ceiling. Breathe deeply into the abdominal cavity.

B: Extend the legs out bringing the feet toward the floor over the head. Maintain softness in glutes and legs.

M: Reduce the degree of lift, and flex the knees closer to the torso. This modification may be more appropriate for participants with hypertension, eye conditions (i.e., glaucoma or compromised retina), or back or neck problems.

Additional cues: It is imperative to not put weight on the neck or turn the head from side to side in this pose. In B, it is not necessary for feet to touch the floor. They can simply hover above the floor as in A.

Breathing: Full complete breath

Number of breaths: 4–6

39. SHOULDER STAND — *Sarvangasana* (SAHR-vahn-GAH-sah-nah)

Note: This advanced pose is optional



A



B



M1



M2

Purpose and benefits: This is an inversion pose. It strengthens the core stabilizers; improves circulation.

Set-up: Begin in Plough.

A: Bend the elbows and bring the hands up to the buttocks. Draw feet up toward the ceiling. Tighten abdominals and glutes. Use hands to support the lower back, facing fingers in toward your spine. Keep weight on the shoulders, not the neck. Hold for the designated number of breaths.

B: Roll higher onto the shoulders, so that the torso and head are in a straight line. Keep weight high on the shoulders, not on the neck.

M1 or M2: Keep hips and knees flexed towards torso; or perform the level M from the Plow pose. These modifications may be more appropriate for participants with hypertension, eye conditions (i.e., glaucoma or compromised retina), or back or neck problems.

Additional cues: It is imperative to not put weight on the neck or turn the head from side to side in this pose. Stabilize the core for control and support.

Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 4–6

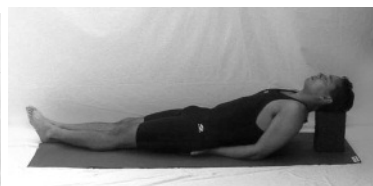
40. HALF FISH — *Ardha Matsyasana* (AR-dah-mat-see-YAH-sah-nah)



A



B



M = Modification

Purpose and benefits: This is a good counter-pose for inversions. Opens chest; stretches front of shoulders.

Set-up: Begin after releasing Shoulder Stand. Lie supine, legs extended.

A: Bring the elbows under the body supporting the body's weight on the mat; place the hands under the glutes, palms facing up. Arch the back and lift the chest up by pulling up on the glutes with the hands. The head remains lifted, head gazing forward.

B: Bring the elbows under the body; place the hands under the glutes, palms facing up. Arch the back and lift the chest up. The head drops gently back toward the mat or rests on the mat.

M: Position a support block under the head to reduce neck extension. This modification may be more appropriate for participants with eye conditions (i.e., glaucoma or compromised retina) and/or neck problems.

Additional cues: Do not tense the neck or turn side to side in this position. Breathe fully.

Breathing: Ujjayi

Number of breaths: 3–6

TEACHING EFFECTIVELY

Many participants come to this workshop with backgrounds in group-fitness instruction (step, low-impact, spinning, kickboxing). For many of these modalities, teacher and students get their workout together. But yoga is different. In yoga, people are placed in unfamiliar and seemingly awkward positions and being asked to explore a deeper part of themselves at the same time. This means that the instructor must “be there” for his/her class, and may or may not perform the poses.

A. CUEING/COMMON YOGA TERMS

Cueing is the process of giving verbal suggestions to students as poses are introduced throughout a class. A “cue” is a phrase that tells students what they might expect to feel in the pose, or it may provide a caution or reminder. Some cues are external, involving physical movement or placement suggestions like: “scoot the rear foot closer to the front foot if it feels like the feet are too far apart.” Other cues are internal and help students to feel a subtle change, such as “lift your heart upward.” Both kinds of cues are effective and can be combined or used separately. Following are additional examples of external and internal cues.

External Cues

- Press the fingers firmly into the mat.
- Draw the shoulder blades toward one another.
- Press the heels down toward the mat.
- Reach the fingertips of each hand toward the opposite sides of the room.
- Turn the toes of the back foot toward the front of the mat.

Internal Cues

- Feel your torso fall out of your hips as you bend forward.
- As you elongate the spine, imagine little bubbles of air filling the spaces between the vertebrae.
- Lift up from the bottom of the pelvic floor.
- Draw up on the quadriceps muscles at the fronts of the thighs.
- Imagine a string attached deep inside your navel, drawing your stomach upward.

Some teachers use Sanskrit terms throughout class as reminders, salutations, pose names, or breathing concepts. Please note that some Sanskrit terms and phrases may be translated in many different ways depending on the context in which the term is used. Following are some common yoga terms and one common translation each.

Asana—Pose or posture (most Sanskrit pose names end in –asana)

Namaste—The divine in me bows to the divine in you; typically hands are in prayer position in front of chest.

Ahimsa—Do no harm or violence to your body or spirit.

Drishti—Directing the gaze, or view to an object, such as during a balancing pose, where gazing at a fixed object may help with steadiness.

Prana—Life force which is infinitely everywhere and can be manifested through the breath. Pranayama is yogic breath control.

B. WHOSE CLASS IS IT?

The class is for the students. The instructor must guide students, spending most of the time helping them into and out of postures, assisting them with correct alignment, and keeping them safe. This means the instructor spends very little time actually practicing yoga during his/her yoga class. The class does need to see the instructor get into the pose, but then he/she needs to help students fine-tune their alignment, to looking for postural problems that may cause them harm if not watched carefully. Instructors must learn how to cue the poses without being in the pose themselves. This requires much practice.

Many inexperienced instructors make the mistake of teaching from their mat. Teaching from the mat makes it difficult to determine if the alignment of a beginner student in the back of the class is correct and safe (especially in a crowded class). Always remember that the instructor's most important task is to keep everyone in the class safe. That is difficult to do from a mat. Yoga instructors should have their own yoga practice outside of their teaching practice where they can grow and develop as students themselves.

Be sure to arrive early—at least 15 minutes before class. Prepare the room and turn off or turn down the volume on anything that might interrupt class—especially your cell phone. Play soft music to create a welcoming and comforting atmosphere for arriving students.

C. HOW TO BE A GOOD YOGA TEACHER

What skills and characteristics make a good teacher?

- Knowledge of yoga asanas, history, and philosophy, as well as human anatomy
- Possessing a wealth of experience as both a yoga student and a yoga teacher
- Consideration and respect for students of all skill sets
- Communication skills that are inviting and instructive
- Caring about the safety of everyone in class
- Ability to lead with confidence
- Ability to modify the class to fit all student ability levels

D. KEEPING THE CLASS SAFE

Safety in a yoga class stretches beyond ensuring that no one physically injures him or herself. While keeping the class safe from injury is very important, it is only part of what the instructor must do.

From a physical standpoint, an instructor must make sure that students inform him or her of any **physical issues or challenges** they may have that would make the class difficult or dangerous for them (known as a contraindication). These issues may include, but are not limited to, knee, back, neck, wrist, shoulder, or hip problems, recent surgery, or pregnancy. If a student has glaucoma (or other retina-related conditions), inversion poses (poses in which the feet are elevated above the level of the heart for a sustained period) can put dangerous pressure on the eyes. For students with hypertension (high blood pressure) or orthostatic hypotension (dizziness resulting from a quick change in posture), these same poses may elevate blood pressure or cause dizziness and loss of balance. The teacher must understand and suggest modifications and variations for poses (see pose analysis section of this outline) and anticipate what class participants may need to know before they begin to attempt a pose that may be contraindicated for their condition. Note that this outline cannot cover all potential contraindications of special conditions and that a physician's approval should be obtained for high-risk populations, such as those with heart or vascular disease, history of strokes, extreme joint or bone degeneration, or neurological disorders, or those who are post surgery or prenatal.

Instructors should always ask at the beginning of each class if there are any physical challenges they need to be aware of to keep everyone safe. Then listen to the challenges, if any, and know what poses are planned in order to guide students through (or help them modify) the poses that may be too challenging. In class settings in which students are regular participants, it is very important to ask before each class if there are any new injuries to be aware of. Many times, small injuries occur during the week, that may affect students in class. Small injuries can become major problems that might have been avoided had the instructor known about them and instructed the student in an appropriate modification/variation. It is always wise to exercise caution.

Instructors must also remind students to be self-responsible and listen to their bodies. They should practice the restriction of ahimsa, and do no violence to their own body. This means that if they begin to feel pain in any pose, they should ease themselves out of it, and do only what is good and correct for their body. This mind/body connection is very important in yoga and can spell the difference between safely improving strength and flexibility or sustaining an injury.

Yoga is commonly practiced in bare feet. From a traditional standpoint, this practiced to allow the yogi to feel completely in touch with the earth. Today, yoga mats are manufactured with a sticky surface designed to adhere to both the floor and the soles of the feet, reducing the risk of sliding during a challenging pose. If the student wears shoes, their toes will press into the front of the shoes and heels will slide up and out of the shoes' back. Shoes also accelerate wear and tear on the yoga mats. Students should not wear socks during yoga, as the mat is not meant to adhere to fabric, and dangerous slips and injuries can occur.

Hydration is extremely important with yoga and other physical exercise. Students should always bring water to class and drink whenever they feel the need. Some traditional yoga studios may prohibit water in the yoga area. In this case, students should be reminded to step outside for water as needed.

E. FINE TUNING ALIGNMENT IN POSES

Physical contact between a teacher and student during class is a complicated subject. One might ask, “Why would a teacher need to touch a student anyway?” Touching can be a very powerful tool in a teaching skill set. Gentle guidance for the body can give students a tactile message for alignment or how a pose should feel. People learn in different ways and, for some, touch can offer direction for a deeper stretch or a cue as to which muscle to activate for a specific movement. Having said that, an instructor needs to consider carefully *how* to touch his/her students.

Pushing or pulling a student into the “perfect pose” is never a good idea and can lead to serious injury. Remember to follow the restriction of Ahimsa (do no harm) during teaching.

Some facilities strictly forbid touching of students for liability reasons. Sexual harassment lawsuits are a fact of life, and teachers must protect themselves and the facility in which they teach by avoiding touching a student in any way that might be interpreted as inappropriate. If an instructor feels the professional need to touch a student, it is imperative that he/she asks permission first. Appropriate wording might be: “I would like your permission to make an adjustment. May I place my hands on you?” or simply, “May I touch you?”

Beginner yoga instructors should be extremely conservative in their use of touch during teaching. Verbal adjustment cues can be very effective and can help students find the depth of a pose or stretch in their own way.

F. EMOTIONAL RELEASES/THE POWER OF YOGA

This subject of emotional releases has been covered in the online portion of the course. However, many teachers coming from conventional fitness modalities are surprised by these reactions and may not know how to handle them, and so the subject bears further study. Yoga can release powerful emotions. It can change the way people view and interact with their bodies and can change their feelings about being physically active. Many of the asanas can be challenging and confusing. It is the responsibility of the yoga instructor to guide students through this maze of physical and emotional challenges, keeping them safe and in no way taking advantage of them during these times of vulnerability.

The body is an incredibly complex organism. Moving this organism in new and unfamiliar ways can often unlock feelings and emotions that are sometimes unexpected or inexplicable. Many people laugh, cry, or have physical releases during class. Many teachers report that emotional releases are especially common while performing deep stretches in the hip area. These emotions can also extend into dependent feelings toward the instructor. Often these emotions or releases can be difficult or embarrassing for the student. It is important to realize that the teacher’s job is not to counsel the student, but to briefly assure his/her that the feeling or release is normal, then allow the student to explore their emotions independently.

For thousands of years, monks, nobility, and common people alike have practiced yoga. Its longevity stems from profound physical, emotional, and spiritual benefits achieved by its

practitioners. Yoga is a powerful human experience, and the instructor has the responsibility and honor of introducing this power to students in a caring, non-judgmental way that is inclusive and welcoming. Be careful not to get caught up in the feelings of self-importance that teaching yoga can bring. Remember that the instructor will learn as much from students as they will learn from the instructor.

G. USE OF PROPS AND ACCESSORIES

The most well known yoga prop is the **mat**. Mats come in many colors and materials. Early yoga mats were made of straw designed to simply keep the practitioner off the cold, hard earth. Modern mats are more high tech. The mat most used in the west is known as a sticky mat, and is so called because it is designed to stick to the floor and to the soles of the feet and hands, reducing the likelihood of slipping during challenging standing poses. These mats come in varying thicknesses. Extra thick mats can be helpful for those with sensitive knees or bony hips that dig into the floor without protection.

Yoga straps are also popular accessories. A strap can be helpful for people with limited range of motion, allowing them to get the most out of an asana that may be challenging.

For example, a student sitting on a mat with legs extended in front and reaching toward his/her feet (Seated Forward Bend—Pascimottasana) may not be able to reach his/her toes. The instructor can assist the student by placing one end of the yoga strap in each of the student's hands, and looping the center around the soles of his/her feet, showing how to gently pull on the strap while leaning forward. The student is able to stretch much further and safely improve flexibility while having the feeling of a full reach forward. This is just one asana in which a strap can be a useful tool.

Blocks are another staple in many yoga classes. In essence, a block brings the floor closer to the student during the yoga pose. The block is rectangular, and when turned to various faces, provides different heights to assist various flexibility ranges. In Triangle pose, the student can rest the lower hand on a block if unable to reach the floor. The block gives the feeling of the hand resting flat on the floor as opposed to gripping an ankle. Blocks can be made of wood, cork or foam rubber.

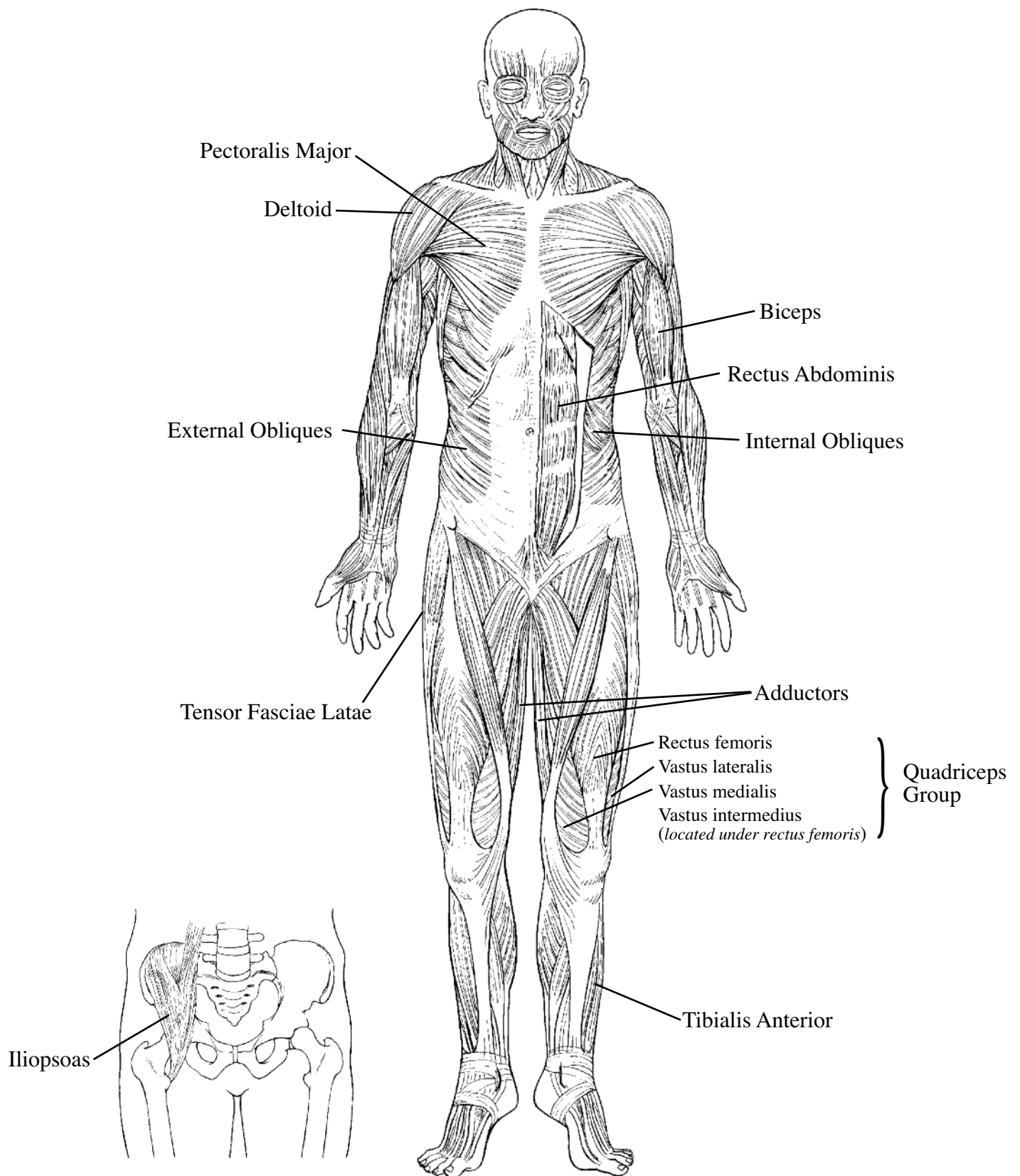
Eye pillows are great tools during Corpse pose—Savasana. These soft, rectangular sacks, large enough to cover both eyes, are filled with herbs or seeds. Placed over the eyes, they serve several functions: They block out light, put gentle, pleasing pressure on the closed eyes, and even deliver aromatherapy if filled with soothing, fragrant, dried herbs such as lavender, chamomile, or eucalyptus.

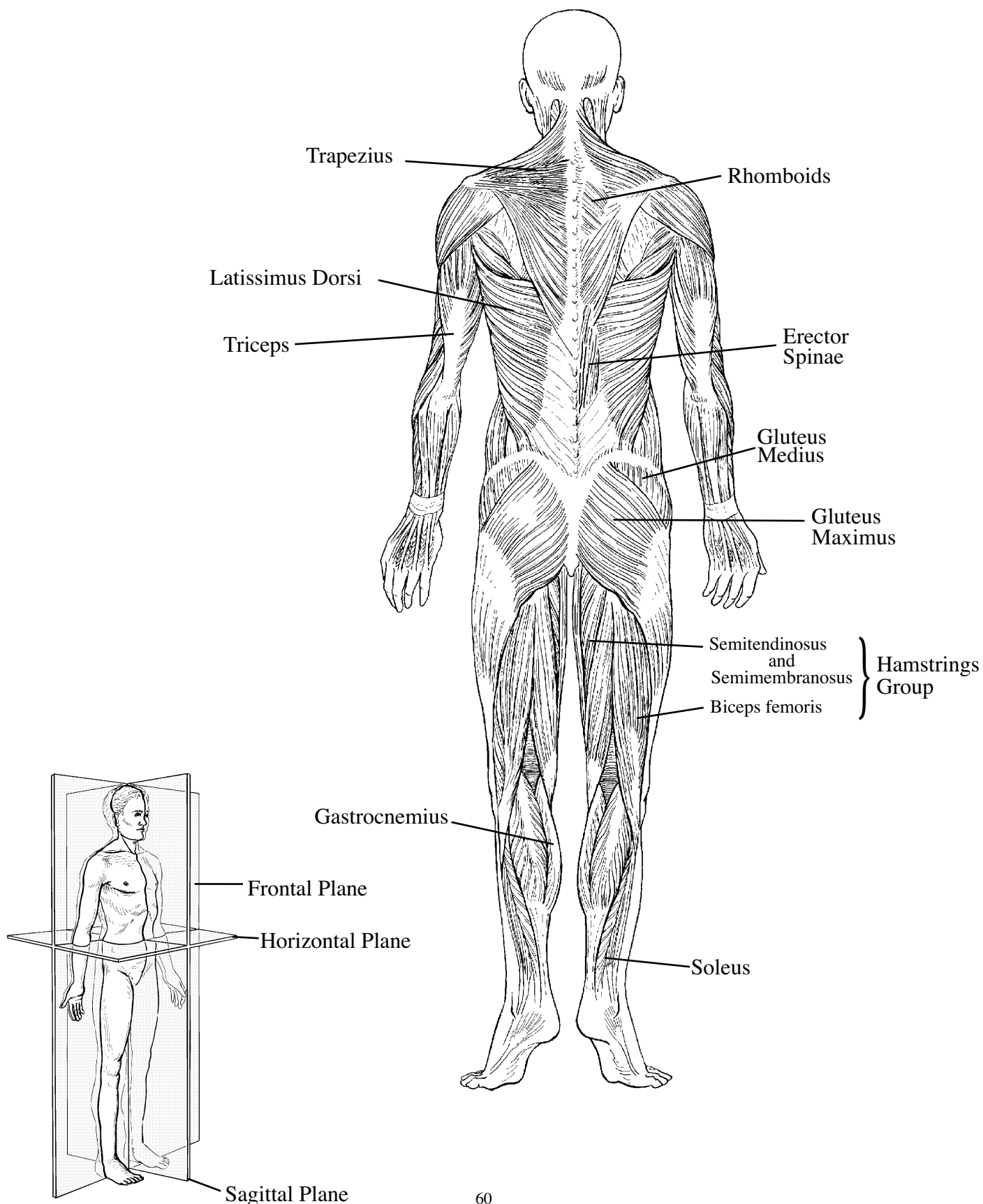
Blankets can be used to cover up the body during meditation in a cold studio, may be placed between the back of thighs and lower legs during Child's pose for students with tight quadriceps or knee issues, or to cushion sensitive parts from hardwood floors during certain asanas.

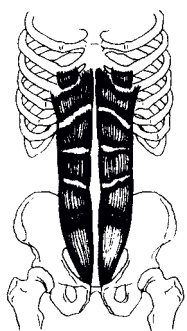
A **sturdy chair** can provide support and a "safety net" during standing poses such as Triangle, for people with balance issues.

Other possible props include **walls**, **handrails**, and **stability balls**. The right props can make yoga more accessible to special populations, such as senior citizens, as well as those who are pregnant, injured, or disabled. In future workshops, participants will learn how to use these tools safely and effectively with special populations.

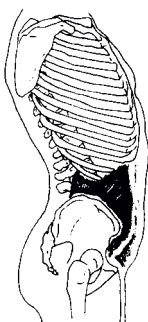
ANATOMY REFERENCES







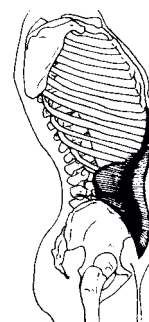
Rectus Abdominis



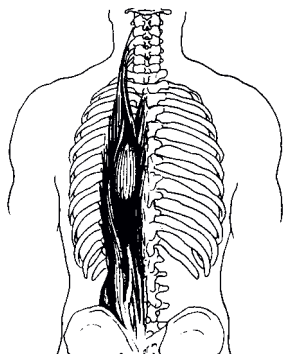
Internal Obliques



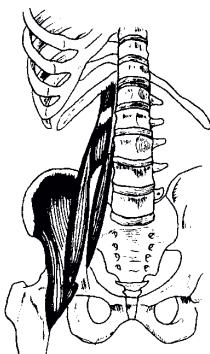
External Obliques



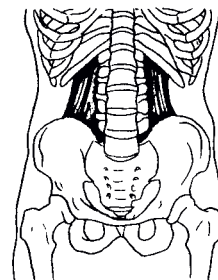
Transverse Abdominis



Erector Spinae
showing the Longissimus,
Spinalis, and Iliocostalis groups

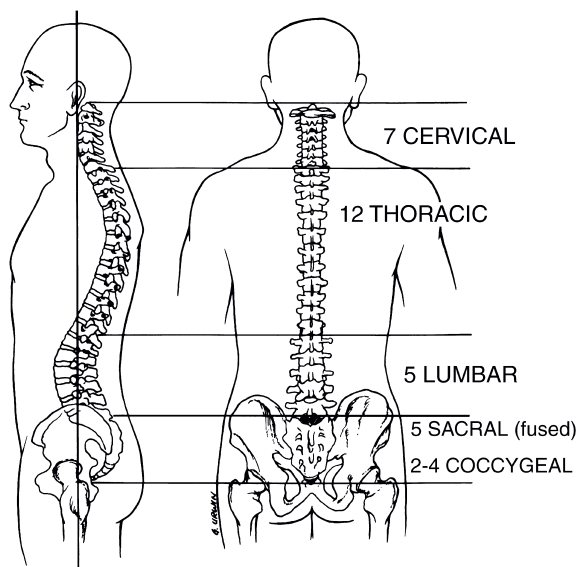


Psoas and Iliacus
(Hip Flexor)



Quadratus Lumborum
(Lateral Rotators)

The Spinal Column



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