

Focus: Core and Revolved Poses

Level: Advanced

Theme: Integrating the core and back in core poses, twists and inversions.

The Abdominals, The Back and The Ribs

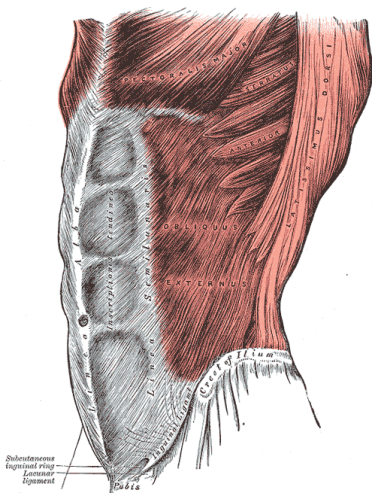
The more you can lengthen the trunk, the more you will bring the spine into a neutral alignment and the more balanced your trunk will be as you revolve. It is possible to focus on any number of body actions in your twists, but in this practice we will be looking to organize and integrate them all: lifting the rib cage and opening the chest, connecting the arm and shoulder blade into the back, elongating the waist; revolving from the base, the middle and upper part.

Body Actions

We will, essentially, be looking at three different actions in this practice.

1) *Knit the abdominals inwards and draw them up.* Think of your abdominal wall as a girdle supporting the trunk. You will be engaging the abs

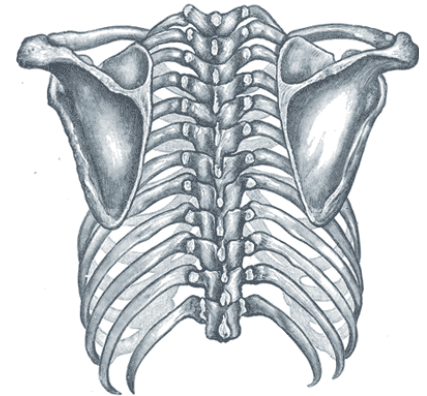
- front and sides - without shortening them. Pull the lower abs in towards the spine. Wrap the sides of the waist inwards towards the navel. Firm the upper abs. And then take all three of these and draw them up, lengthening them toward the chest.



The External Obliques

2) *Expand and lift the side ribs.*

Revolved poses work from the outer extremities to the core, so it becomes necessary to engage and define those extremities. Building on the lift and support of the abdominal wall, expand the rib cage laterally as much as possible and lift the ribs straight up so you get a sense of the full length of the side trunk elongating from pelvis to collarbones.



The Shoulder Blades

3) *Connect the shoulder blades into the back.* The purpose of this is to engage the muscles of the upper back to both lift and open the top chest and to initiate the revolution from the back rather than the front. Initiating from the front will thicken the chest and shoulders and will pull downward, towards the navel, limiting the expansive elongation you have created in the belly and sides.

The Practice

We begin with Surya Namaskar (Sun Salutations) to get the whole body working in a synchronized manner. Try not to think of these Sun Salutes as a way to get hot and sweaty. Think of them rather as a way to observe the organs of action, the arms and the legs, as they support, elongate and manipulate the trunk. Instead of

whipping through them, take them slowly and follow the transitions with your awareness as much as the poses themselves.

After the Sun Salutes we have a series of abdominal poses. The goal here is to create maximum length in the trunk by using the organs of action once again, in conjunction with the abs. In Makarasana (Crocodile Pose) shift the awareness to the arms and the connection of the shoulder blades into the back. Take that awareness then into Vashisthasana (Vashistha's Pose) to fully integrate the side of the trunk: hip, waist, ribs and back. Take your time as you flow through the core vinyasa, following

the transitions once again.

The practice up to this point is really a preparation for the poses that follow. If you do not have time to do the whole practice, pick and choose from these earlier poses to lead you into the inversions and twists. The twisting action is more straightforward in Head Stand and the seated twists. The combined elongation and revolving here will help you integrate the poses in the Shoulder Stand variations. Here the actions become less clear as you manage your center of gravity and balance in these challenging inversions.

pose	props	set-up	instructions
Surya Namaskar (Sun Salutations)			Any variation of sequence. Maintain an awareness of the core working in conjunction with the arms and the legs. In Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward Facing Dog) and Uttanasana (Intense Stretch Pose) allow the belly to soften and release. In all other poses, draw the belly in towards the spine and up towards the chest, keeping the sides of the waist elongated. 3 to 8 cycles.
Dandasana (Staff Pose)			Press the palms into the floor and stretch the legs. Lift and lengthen the waist and the ribs, opening and broadening the chest.
Paripurna Navasana (Full Boat Pose)			Draw the belly in and up. Lift the side ribs up off the waist, integrating the elongation of the sides. Hold for 20-30 seconds.
Dandasana (Staff Pose)			Press the palms into the floor and stretch the legs. Lift and lengthen the waist and the ribs, opening and broadening the chest.
Ardha Navasana (Half Boat Pose)			Draw the navel back into spine and lengthen the waist back towards the wall behind you, away from the stretch of the legs. Hold for 20-30 seconds.

<i>pose</i>	<i>props</i>	<i>set-up</i>	<i>instructions</i>
Dandasana (Staff Pose)			Press the palms into the floor and stretch the legs. Lift and lengthen the waist and the ribs, opening and broadening the chest.
Urdhva Prasarita Padasana (Upward Extended Feet Pose)			Broaden upper back into floor. Pull abdominal wall towards back, anchoring lower back and preventing over-arch of lumbar spine. Elongate sides of trunk out through stretch of arms. Hold for 15-30 seconds at 90°, 60°, 30° and 10° from the floor.
Makarasana (Crocodile Pose)			Lift elbows, shoulders and palms. Draw from elbows itowards spine, firming shoulder blades into upper back. Lift hand so they are light against back of head.
Vashisthasana (Vashistha's Pose)			Lift from both side waist and side ribs. Connect shoulder blades into back. Lengthen underside and broaden chest and collarbone.
Makarasana (Crocodile Pose)			Lift elbows, shoulders and palms. Draw from elbows itowards spine, firming shoulder blades into upper back. Lift hand so they are light against back of head.
Vashisthasana (Vashistha's Pose)			Lift from both side waist and side ribs. Connect shoulder blades into back. Lengthen underside and broaden chest and collarbone
Jathara Parivartanasana (Belly Turning Pose)			Inhale, draw belly in and up. Exhale, roll bell and ribs away from legs. Anchor both shoulders down into floor. Hold for 20-30 seconds each side.

pose	props	set-up	instructions
Core Vinyasa			Sequence the above poses in the following flow, adding and omitting poses as desired: Dandasana (Staff Pose) Paschimottanasana (Intense West Stretch Pose) Dandasana (Staff Pose) Halasana (Plough Pose) **INSERT CORE POSE HERE** Halasana (Plough Pose) Paschimottanasana (Intense West Stretch Pose) Dandasana (Staff Pose) Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward Facing Dog Pose) Vashisthasana (Vashistha's Pose) Urdhva Mukha Svanasana (Upward Facing Dog Pose) Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward Facing Dog Pose)
Shirshasana I Cycle: Shirshasana I (Head Stand I) Virasana (Hero Pose) Parshva Virasana (Side Hero Pose) Parshva Shirshasana (Side Head Stand) Parivrttaikapda Shirshasana (Single Leg Revolved Head Stand)			Ground both wrists evenly through twists. Lift both shoulders evenly. Initiate twist in upper back and wrap it all the way around and along the body to the pelvis. Extend both sides evenly through the legs.
Supta Virasana (Reclined Hero Pose)	1 Belt. Padding: blocks, blankets or bolster.	Put as much padding under the trunk as necessary under the ribs. Keep the lower back unsupported. Belt the legs so that they remain parallel.	Roll the sacrum towards the knees. Soften and descend the thighs. Knit the abdominal wall in and press it down into the lower back and towards the floor. Broaden the back ribs. Hold for 3 to 5 minutes.
Bharadwajasana I (Bharadwaja's Pose I)			inhale, lengthen sides and broaden chest. Exhale, wrap waist and ribs around in twist. Hold for 20-30s each side. Repeat pose.
Bharadwajasana II (Bharadwaja's Pose II)			inhale, lengthen sides and broaden chest. Exhale, wrap waist and ribs around in twist. Hold for 20-30s each side. Repeat pose.
Marichyasana III (Marichi's Pose III)			inhale, lengthen sides and broaden chest. Exhale, wrap waist and ribs around in twist. Hold for 20-30s each side. Repeat pose.

pose	props	set-up	instructions
Ardha Matsyendrasana I (Half Lord of the Fishes Pose I)			inhale, lengthen sides and broaden chest. Exhale, wrap waist and ribs around in twist. Hold for 20-30s each side. Repeat pose.
Pashasana (Noose Pose)			inhale, lengthen sides and broaden chest. Exhale, wrap waist and ribs around in twist. Hold for 20-30s each side. Repeat pose.
Sarvangasana Cycle: Sarvangasana I (Shoulder Stand I) Virasana (Hero Pose) Parshva Virasana (Side Hero Pose) Parshva Viparita Karani Mudra (Side Inverted Action Seal) Eka Pada Parsva Sarvangasana (Single Leg Side Shoulder Stand) Parsva Sarvangasana (Side Shoulder Stand) Urdhva Padmasana (Upward Lotus Pose) Parsva Padmasana (Side Lotus Pose)	Blankets. 1 Belt.	Blankets under the shoulders. Belt elbows shoulder width.	Revolve ribs and waist to keep sides even and equally long.
Vajrasana (Thunderbolt Pose)	1 Blanket.	Blanket wedged behind knees.	This variation is here to relieve the knees after the Padmasana variations in the previous pose.
Shavasana (Corpse Pose)	Bolster/blankets.	Bolster under thighs. Blanket under head and neck.	Soften thighs and belly. Soften and broaden lower back. Hold pose for 5 to 10 minutes.