

## Focus: Basic Asana Cycle 1/Week 1

**Level: Fundamentals**

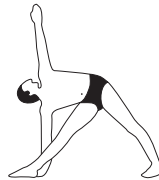
**Theme: Opening hips, extending legs, toning trunk**

### Asana Cycles

This sequence is the first in an ongoing series of 4-week pose cycles designed to work you through a basic syllabus of poses. Each cycle will take you through all the major pose categories. Though based on an overall theme, the sequencing is general in the sense that the poses themselves are designed to provide the intended effects without necessarily practicing at a high level of detail. This makes the sequences suitable for the beginning student who is still learning the basic shapes of the poses.

More advanced practitioners will still benefit from the practice of these cycles, however. It is easy to get stuck in a rut in one's own practice, working the same poses over and over. The balanced sequencing of each cycle will put you through your paces, touching on most of the important beginning poses. Each successive cycle will vary slightly, folding in progressively more challenging poses.

Beginning and intermediate students can use the sequences to tide them over when they run out of ideas or lack inspiration. Built around fundamental energetic principles, they feature all the key elements of a balanced practice session: simple opening poses to focus the mind, standing poses to energize and open the body, a short sequence of targeted floor poses and a simple inversion practice.



### How To Use The Sequence

Each practice is designed to last just over an hour. Feel free to subtract poses according to your needs. If you are practicing every day, you might think of doing the full sequence at least twice in a week, breaking the list down into smaller chunks on other days and allowing yourself more time in inversions and Shavasana (Corpse Pose). If you are practicing less than that, attempt the full sequence at least once during the week. Here are some suggested guidelines based on how often you do yoga. (If you take class more than once a week, substitute one full sequence for the second class you take, one short practice for the third, and so on.)

#### **6 times a week**

Day 1: Class  
Day 2: Short practice (20-30mins)  
Day 3: Full sequence (60-75mins)  
Day 4: Short practice (20-30mins)  
Day 5: Short practice (20-30mins)  
Day 6: Full sequence (60-75mins)  
Day 7: Rest or Shavasana (5-15mins)

#### **4 times a week**







Day 1: Class  
Day 2: Rest or Shavasana (5-15mins)  
Day 3: Short practice (20-30mins)  
Day 4: Full sequence (60-75mins)  
Day 5: Rest or Shavasana (5-15mins)  
Day 6: Short practice (20-30mins)  
Day 7: Rest or Shavasana (5-15mins)




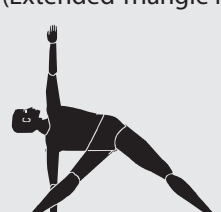


#### **3 times a week**









Day 1: Class  
Day 2: Rest or Shavasana (5-15mins)  
Day 3: Short practice (20-30mins)  
Day 4: Rest or Shavasana (5-15mins)  
Day 5: Full sequence (60-75mins)  
Day 6: Rest or Shavasana (5-15mins)  
Day 7: Rest or Shavasana (5-15mins)

## The Practice

You'll notice that in most of the poses featured here, the thighs are turned out. This means the outward range of motion of the hip joint will be exercised "opening" the hips. In addition, the psoas, the primary hip flexor (the muscle that pulls the thigh in towards the body) gets lengthened, taking pressure off the lower back. The lateral standing poses all have a twisting element to them as you attempt to open the trunk out to the sides. This will strengthen and tone the muscles of the belly and back, as will the chair twist and Setu Bandha (Bridge Pose). Lastly, Adho Mukha Shvanasana (Downward Facing Dog Pose) and the raised arms in the standing poses will strengthen the arms and shoulders.

<i>pose</i>	<i>props</i>	<i>set-up</i>	<i>instructions</i>
Sukhasana (Comfortable Pose)  	2-3 Blankets	Fold blankets to sit on for trunk to be upright with ease.	Centering/Invocation Hold pose for 1-2 minutes. Either sit quietly or chant "OM" 3 times. Draw senses inwards. Become aware of state of mind and body.
Adho Mukha Sukhasana (Downward Facing Comfortable Pose)  	Mat	Grip outer edges of mat and pull forward.	Hold for 30 seconds. Extend arms fully. Lengthen sides of trunk. Soften hips and groins. Repeat with other crossing of legs.
Adho Mukha Shvanasana (Downward Facing Dog Pose)  	Mat	Grip outer edges of mat and pull forward.	Hold for 30-60 seconds. Extend arms and legs fully. Lengthen sides of trunk.
Child's Pose  	Mat	Grip outer edges of mat and pull forward.	Hold for 30-60 seconds. Extend arms fully. Lengthen sides of trunk.
Child's Pose  			Hold for 30-60 seconds. Press palms into floor. Extend arms fully. Lengthen sides of trunk.
Adho Mukha Shvanasana (Downward Facing Dog Pose)  			Hold for 30-60 seconds. Extend arms and legs fully. Lengthen sides of trunk.

<i>pose</i>	<i>props</i>	<i>set-up</i>	<i>instructions</i>
Vrksahasana (Tree Pose) 	Wall (if needed)	Be near wall to assist with balance if necessary.	Hold for 20-30s each side. Extend arms and standing leg fully. Lengthen sides of trunk. Extend bent leg out to side without turning trunk.
Vrksahasana (Tree Pose) 	Wall (if needed)	Be near wall to assist with balance if necessary.	Hold for 20-30s each side. Extend arms and standing leg fully. Lengthen sides of trunk. Extend bent leg out to side without turning trunk. Eliminate second round of pose for shorter sequence.
Utthita Trikonasana (Extended Triangle Pose) 	Block	Place hand on block.	Hold for 20-30s each side. Extend arms and legs fully. Lengthen both sides of trunk. Roll trunk up towards ceiling.
Utthita Trikonasana (Extended Triangle Pose) 	Block	Place hand on block.	Hold for 20-30s each side. Extend arms and legs fully. Lengthen both sides of trunk. Roll trunk up towards ceiling. Eliminate second round of pose for shorter sequence.
Virabhadrasana II (Warrior Pose II) 			Hold for 20-30s each side. Extend arms and legs fully. Lengthen both sides of trunk straight up.
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<b>pose</b>	<b>props</b>	<b>set-up</b>	<b>instructions</b>
Utthita Parshvakonasana (Extended Side Angle Pose) 	Block	Place hand on block.	Hold for 20-30s each side. Press into back heel. Extend back leg, front thigh and both sides of trunk away from back heel. Roll trunk up towards ceiling.
Utthita Parshvakonasana (Extended Side Angle Pose) 	Block	Place hand on block.	Hold for 20-30s each side. Press into back heel. Extend back leg, front thigh and both sides of trunk away from back heel. Roll trunk up towards ceiling. Eliminate for shorter sequence.
Parighasana (Gate Pose) 	Blanket	Fold blanket up and place under balls of extended foot.	Hold for 20-30s each side. Extend straight leg up into navel. Extend both sides and arms evenly. Roll trunk up towards ceiling.
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Baddha Konasana (Bound Angle Pose) 	Wall Blankets	Sit up on blankets until you can get pelvis flat against wall.	Hold for 1-2 minutes. Lengthen trunk up. Broaden chest. Soften hips and inner thighs. Let thigh bones drop towards floor.
Upavishtha Konasana (Seated Angle Pose) 	Wall Blankets	Sit up on blankets until you can get pelvis flat against wall.	Hold for 1-2 minutes. Stretch legs. Lengthen trunk up. Broaden chest. Soften hips and inner thighs. Let thigh bones drop towards floor.
Bharadwajasana (Bharadwaja's Pose) on chair 	Chair	Sit sideways in chair.	Hold for 20-30s each side. Inhale, lengthen sides. Exhale revolve trunk. Keep knees even.
Bharadwajasana (Bharadwaja's Pose) on chair 	Chair	Sit sideways in chair.	Hold for 20-30s each side. Inhale, lengthen sides. Exhale revolve trunk. Keep knees even. Eliminate for shorter sequence.

<i>pose</i>	<i>props</i>	<i>set-up</i>	<i>instructions</i>
Setu Bandha Sarvangasana (Bridge Pose) with feet on chair (not shown)	Wall Mat Chair 3 Blankets	Place chair on mat against wall. Fold end of mat over and stack blankets on top. Lie with shoulders on blankets, head on floor and feet on chair.	Hold for 30-60s. Interlock fingers behind back. Roll shoulders down. Roll tailbone to ceiling. Roll back ribs into chest.
Setu Bandha Sarvangasana (Bridge Pose) with feet on chair (not shown)	Wall Mat Chair 3 Blankets	Place chair on mat against wall. Fold end of mat over and stack blankets on top. Lie with shoulders on blankets, head on floor and feet on chair.	Hold for 30-60s. Interlock fingers behind back. (Other index finger on top.) Roll shoulders down. Roll tailbone to ceiling. Roll back ribs into chest. Eliminate for shorter sequence.
Viparita Karani Mudra (Inverted Action Pose)	Wall Mat Blankets (Bolster)	Set up mat with blanket on top next to wall. Fold blankets up or use bolster. Lie with pelvis flat on bolster and legs up wall.	Hold for 1-10 minutes. Soften thighs and belly. Release shoulders and back of skull into floor. Soften throat and back of neck. Quietly observe breath.
Shavasana (Corpse Pose)	Blankets (Bolster)	Blanket under head. Blankets or bolster under knees.	Hold for 1-10 minutes. Allow entire body to release. Quietly observe breath.

