

## Focus: Basic Asana Cycle 1/Week 2

**Level: Fundamentals**

**Theme: Stretching back of legs, tilting pelvis, opening chest**

### Asana Cycles

This sequence is the second 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)










## The Practice

The general theme of this sequence is forward extension. This means stretching the back of the body, especially the hamstrings and lower back. This requires thoughtful tilting of the pelvis so that the forward extension initiates in the hip joint rather than somewhere in the middle of the waist. Because the back is being stretched, it will have a tendency to round and the chest will tend to collapse, so additional attention must be paid to keeping the front of the body long and the chest broad. This opening in the chest also applies to the two twisting poses, which will help to free up the back of the body. Notice the placement of the inversions. In the other practices in this cycle Shoulder Stand is placed at the end. Because of the calming qualities of both Shoulder Stand and the seated forward bends, the inversion is placed first to help the nervous system settle.

<i>pose</i>	<i>props</i>	<i>set-up</i>	<i>instructions</i>
Vajrasana (Thunderbolt Pose) 	Blanket	Fold blanket and slip behind knees.	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 Shvanasana (Downward Facing Dog Pose) 	Block	Place block high up between thighs.	Hold for 30-60 seconds. Pull block up and back with thighs. Straighten legs. Extend arms fully. Lengthen sides of trunk.
Vajrasana (Thunderbolt Pose) with Pashchima Namaskar (Reverse Prayer Pose) (not shown)	Blanket	Fold Blanket and slip behind knees.	Hold for 30-60 seconds. Lift and open chest. Broaden back. Press index fingers and thumbs together. (Grab wrists if this is too hard or painful.)
Adho Mukha Shvanasana (Downward Facing Dog Pose) 	Block	Place block high up between thighs.	Hold for 30-60 seconds. Pull block up and back with thighs. Straighten legs. Extend arms fully. Lengthen sides of trunk.
Utthita Trikonasana (Extended Triangle Pose) 	Block	Place hand on block	Hold for 20-30s each side. Extend arms and legs fully. Pull front hip back and deepen hip crease. Lift and open chest. Reach it away from back heel.

<b>pose</b>	<b>props</b>	<b>set-up</b>	<b>instructions</b>
<p>Utthita Trikonasana (Extended Triangle Pose)</p> 	Block	Place hand on block.	<p>Hold for 20-30s each side.                      Extend arms and legs fully.                      Pull front hip back and                      deepen hip crease.                      Lift and open chest. Reach it                      away from back heel.                      Eliminate for shorter sequence.</p>
<p>Parshvottanasana (Intense Side Stretch Pose)</p> 	2 Blocks	Place hands on blocks placed either side of front ankle. (Different from shown.)	<p>Hold for 20-30s each side.                      Pull thighs up and back.                      Take the back ribs in to flatten                      back.                      Open chest out towards front                      toes.</p>
<p>Parshvottanasana (Intense Side Stretch Pose)</p> 	2 Blocks	Place hand on block placed either side of front ankle. (Different from shown.)	<p>Hold for 20-30s each side.                      Pull thighs up and back.                      Take the back ribs in to flatten                      back.                      Open chest out towards front                      toes.                      Eliminate for shorter sequence.</p>
<p>Prasarita Padottanasana I (Wide Spread Feet Pose) preparation only</p> 	2 Blocks	Place hands on blocks under shoulders. (Not shown.)	<p>Hold for 30-60s.                      Pull thighs up and back.                      Tilt pelvis forward.                      Take the back ribs in to flatten                      back.                      Open chest out towards                      blocks.</p>
<p>Uttanasana (Intense Stretch Pose) Flat back only (not shown)</p>	2 Blocks	Place hands on blocks under shoulders.	<p>Hold for 30-60s.                      From previous pose, walk feet                      in to hip width, maintaining                      flat back and open chest.                      Pull thighs up and back.                      Tilt pelvis forward.</p>
<p>Uttanasana (Intense Stretch Pose)</p> 	2 Blocks (if needed)	Place hands on block to remove pressure on lower back.	<p>Hold for 30-60s.                      Pull thighs up and back.                      Tilt pelvis forward.                      Take the back ribs in to flatten                      back.                      Open chest towards floor.</p>

<b>pose</b>	<b>props</b>	<b>set-up</b>	<b>instructions</b>
Prasarita Padottanasana I (Wide Spread Feet Pose) 	Block (if necessary)	Place head on block if it does not come to floor.	Hold for 30-60s. Pull thighs up and back. Tilt pelvis forward. Take the back ribs in to flatten back. Open chest towards floor.
Bharadwajasana (Bharadwaja's Pose) on chair 	Chair	Sit sideways in chair.	Hold for 20-30s each side. Inhale, lengthen sides. Lift and open chest. 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. Lift and open chest. Exhale, revolve trunk. Keep knees even. Eliminate for shorter sequence.
Chatushpadasana (Four Feet Pose) 		If you are unable to grab ankles and keep heels on floor, then interlock fingers instead.	Hold for 20-30s. Roll tailbone up towards ceiling. Roll back ribs into chest. Soften and broaden chest.
Chatushpadasana (Four Feet Pose) 			Hold for 20-30s. Roll tailbone up towards ceiling. Roll back ribs into chest. Soften and broaden chest. Eliminate for shorter sequence.
Salamba Sarvangasana I (Shoulder Stand) feet at wall (variation not shown) 	Wall 3 Blankets Belt	Fold mat up and stack blankets on top. Belt elbows shoulder width. Keep feet on wall, legs bent.	Hold for 2-5 minutes. Roll tailbone up towards ceiling. Roll back ribs into chest. Soften and broaden chest. Settle shoulders into blankets.
Parvatasana in Virasana (Mountain Pose in Hero Pose) 	Block or Blanket	Sit up on block or folded blanket if necessary.	Hold for 20-30s for each interlock of fingers. Settle sitting bones evenly down. Spread fingers and palms. Roll palms up parallel to ceiling. Lift and open chest.
Adho Mukha Virasana (Downward Facing Hero Pose) 	2 Blocks	Sit up on block or folded blanket if necessary. Rest head on block.	Hold for 20-60s. Settle sitting bones evenly down. Lift and open chest.

<b>pose</b>	<b>props</b>	<b>set-up</b>	<b>instructions</b>
Triang Mukhaikapada Pashchimottanasana (Three Limbs Facing Intense West Stretch Pose ) 	Block Belt	Sit up on a block and hold onto foot with a belt if necessary.	Hold for 20-60s. Pull Virasana thigh in and down. Extend straight leg out. Pull back on foot. Roll chest out towards toes.
Triang Mukhaikapada Pashchimottanasana (Three Limbs Facing Intense West Stretch Pose ) 	Block Belt	Sit up on a block and hold onto foot with a belt if necessary.	Hold for 20-60s. Pull Virasana thigh in and down. Extend straight leg out. Pull back on foot. Roll chest out towards toes. Eliminate for shorter sequence.
Gomukhasana (Cow Face Pose) 	Blankets or Block Belt.	Sit up on something if necessary. Clasp belt if you are unable to reach fingers, or if you can reach fingers, but chest collapses.	Hold for 20-30s each side. Soften hips, groin and backs of thighs. Lift and open both sides of chest evenly.
Gomukhasana (Cow Face Pose) 	Blankets or Block Belt.	Sit up on something if necessary. Clasp belt if you are unable to reach fingers, or if you can reach fingers, but chest collapses.	Hold for 20-30s each side. Soften hips, groin and backs of thighs. Lift and open both sides of chest evenly. Eliminate for shorter sequence.
Janu Shirshasana (Head of the Knee Pose) 	Blankets or Block Belt.	Sit up on a block and hold onto foot with a belt if necessary. Support knee if necessary.	Hold for 20-60s. Soften bent hip. Extend straight leg out. Pull back on foot. Roll chest out towards toes.
Janu Shirshasana (Head of the Knee Pose) 	Blankets or Block Belt.	Sit up on a block and hold onto foot with a belt if necessary. Support knee if necessary.	Hold for 20-60s. Soften bent hip. Extend straight leg out. Pull back on foot. Roll chest out towards toes. Eliminate for shorter sequence.
Pashchimottanasana (Intense West Stretch Pose) 	Blankets or Block Belt.	Sit up on a block and hold onto foot with a belt if necessary. Support head with blocks or blankets.	Hold for 30s-3mins. Extend both legs. Pull back on feet. Roll chest out towards toes.
Bharadwajasana (Bharadwaja's Pose) 	Blanket or Block	Sit up on a block or blanket.	Hold for 20-30s each side. Lift and open chest. Repeat as desired
Shavasana (Corpse Pose) 	Blankets (Bolster)	Blanket under head. Blankets or bolster under knees.	Hold for 3-10 minutes. Allow entire body to release. Quietly observe breath.