

## Focus: Basic Asana Cycle 1/Week 3

Level: Fundamentals

Theme: Engaging abs, revolving trunk, opening chest

### Asana Cycles

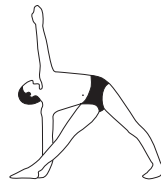
This sequence is the third in an ongoing series of 4-week pose cycles designed to work you through a basic syllabus of poses. Each cycle will take you through all the major pose categories. Though based on an overall theme, the sequencing is general in the sense that the poses themselves are designed 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)

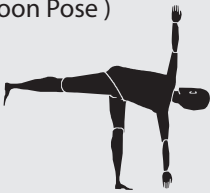
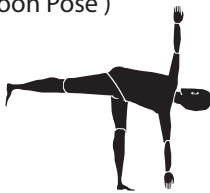
## The Practice




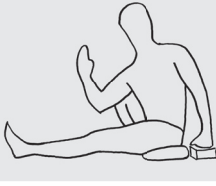




The general theme of this sequence is twisting. The most important thing in a revolved pose is to keep the trunk as balanced as possible. If you do not take special care to maintain a balanced trunk, the twisting action will cause one side to shorten as the oblique abdominal muscles engage, pulling the chest down and distorting the spine. The net result will not be the desired revolving around your central axis, but a distorted and uneven slump. The other thing to watch out for is the pelvis. Without proper grounding, the pelvis will turn and the hips will become uneven. This means you will be losing the bottom part of the twist. A well-executed revolved pose will engage and tone all the muscles of the trunk and abdomen and will stimulate all of the vertebrae and their relevant muscles and nerves in a largely balanced fashion. In addition, it is important also to throw in the occasional symmetrical pose to even out the inevitable imbalances that come from our generally asymmetrical




<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.
Parvatasana in Vajrasana (Mountain Pose in Thunderbolt Pose) 	Blanket	Fold blanket and slip behind knees. (Parvatasana shown here in Virasana, not Vajrasana.)	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.
Parivrtta Vajrasana (Revolved Thunderbolt Pose) (not shown)	Blanket Block	Fold Blanket and slip behind knees. Place block behind you	Hold for 20-30s each side Inhale, raise arms. Exhale, revolve trunk to right. Place left hand on thigh and right hand on block. Inhale lengthen trunk, open chest. Exhale, revolve. Repeat on second side.
Parivrtta Vajrasana (Revolved Thunderbolt Pose) (not shown)	Blanket Block	Fold Blanket and slip behind knees. Place block behind you	Hold for 20-30s each side Inhale, raise arms. Exhale, revolve trunk to right. Place left hand on thigh and right hand on block. Inhale lengthen trunk, open chest. Exhale, revolve. Repeat on second side. Eliminate for shorter sequence.
Adho Mukha Shvanasana (Downward Facing Dog Pose) 	Block	Place block between thighs.	Hold for 30-60s. Extend arms and legs fully.

<i>pose</i>	<i>props</i>	<i>set-up</i>	<i>instructions</i>
<p>Utthita Trikonasana (Extended Triangle Pose)</p> 	Block	Place hand on block. Place raised hand on hip. (Not shown.)	Hold for 20-30s each side. Extend legs fully. Revolve entire rib cage. Roll shoulder back to open raised collarbone. Lift and open chest.
<p>Utthita Trikonasana (Extended Triangle Pose)</p> 	Block	Place hand on block. Place raised hand on hip. (Not shown.)	Hold for 20-30s each side. Extend legs fully. Revolve entire rib cage. Roll shoulder back to open raised collarbone. Lift and open chest. Eliminate for shorter sequence.
<p>Parshvottanasana (Intense Side Stretch Pose)</p> 	2 Blocks	Place hands on blocks placed either side of front ankle. (Different from shown.)	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>Parshvottanasana (Intense Side Stretch Pose)</p> 	2 Blocks	Place hand on block placed either side of front ankle. (Different from shown.)	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>Parivrtta Trikonasana (Revolved Triangle Pose)</p> 	2 Blocks	From Parshvottanasana as described above. Right leg forward: Place right hand on hip. Cross left hand to right block. (Not shown.)	Hold for 20-30s each side. Right leg forward: Inhale, lengthen trunk evenly. Exhale, roll right shoulder up towards ceiling. Lift and open chest. Hold and repeat on second side.
<p>Parivrtta Trikonasana (Revolved Triangle Pose)</p> 	2 Blocks	From Parshvottanasana as described above. Right leg forward: Place right hand on hip. Cross left hand to right block. (Not shown.)	Hold for 20-30s each side. Right leg forward: Inhale, lengthen trunk evenly. Exhale, roll right shoulder up towards ceiling. Lift and open chest. Hold and repeat on second side. Eliminate for shorter sequence.

pose	props	set-up	instructions
Virabhadrasana II (Warrior Pose III) (variation not shown)	Hands on blocks.	Come into Uttanasana (Intense Stretch Pose) with the feet hip width apart and the hands on high blocks. Raise the left leg and hold. Repeat on the second side.	Hold for 20-30s each side. Fully extend both legs. Lengthen trunk. Open chest.
Virabhadrasana II (Warrior Pose III) (variation not shown)	Hands on blocks.	Come into Uttanasana (Intense Stretch Pose) with the feet hip width apart and the hands on high blocks. Raise the left leg and hold. Repeat on the second side.	Hold for 20-30s each side. Fully extend both legs. Lengthen trunk. Open chest. Eliminate for shorter sequence.
Parivrtta Ardha Chandrasana (Revolved Half Moon Pose) (variation not shown)	Hands on blocks.	Come into Virabhadrasana II (Warrior Pose II) as described above with left leg raised. Place right hand on hip. Lift right shoulder and turn to right without dropping left thigh.	Hold for 20-30s each side. Inhale, lengthen sides and straighten legs. Exhale, lift left leg and right shoulder at same time. Open chest.
Parivrtta Ardha Chandrasana (Revolved Half Moon Pose) (variation not shown)	Hands on blocks.	Come into Virabhadrasana II (Warrior Pose II) as described above with left leg raised. Place right hand on hip. Lift right shoulder and turn to right without dropping left thigh.	Hold for 20-30s each side. Inhale, lengthen sides and straighten legs. Exhale, lift left leg and right shoulder at same time. Open chest. Eliminate for shorter sequence.
Utthita Marichyasana (Extended Marichi's Pose)	Chair. Block. Wall.	Set chair up at wall. Place block on chair and foot on block. Do not set block so high that you cannot maintain a level pelvis.	Hold for 20-30s each side. Inhale, lengthen up through sides and open chest. Exhale, press standing thigh back and revolve trunk.
Utthita Marichyasana (Extended Marichi's Pose)	Chair. Block. Wall.	Set chair up at wall. Place block on chair and foot on block. Do not set block so high that you cannot maintain a level pelvis.	Hold for 20-30s each side. Inhale, lengthen up through sides and open chest. Exhale, press standing thigh back and revolve trunk. Eliminate for shorter sequence.
Adho Mukha Shvanasana (Downward Facing Dog Pose)			Hold for 30-60s. Spread fingers and toes. Fully extend arms and legs. Lengthen sides evenly.



pose	props	set-up	instructions	
Malasana (Garland Pose)	Backside against wall	Stand close to wall and lean back. Slide down wall into pose with backside resting against wall. Extend arms forward.	Hold for 30-60s. Spread toes and roll heel down towards floor. Soften groins. Lengthen trunk forward. Open chest. Extend arms.	
	Adho Mukha Marichyasana (Downward Facing Marichi's Pose)	Block or Blanket	Sit up on block or folded blanket if necessary. Use belt to reach foot if necessary.	Hold for 20-30s each side. Spread toes and roll heel down towards floor. Soften groins. Lengthen trunk forward. Open chest. Extend arms.
	Adho Mukha Marichyasana (Downward Facing Marichi's Pose)	Block or Blanket	Sit up on block or folded blanket if necessary. Use belt to reach foot if necessary.	Hold for 20-30s each side. Spread toes and roll heel down towards floor. Soften groins. Lengthen trunk forward. Open chest. Extend arms. Eliminate for shorter sequence.
	Marichyasana I (Marichi's Pose I) (twist only)	Block Blanket	Sit up on block or folded blanket if necessary. First Side: Bend LEFT leg and plant foot down. Bring LEFT elbow to inside of knee. Place right hand on block.	Hold for 20-30s each side. Inhale, lengthen sides and open chest. Exhale, revolve.
	Marichyasana I (Marichi's Pose I) (twist only)	Block Blanket	Sit up on block or folded blanket if necessary. First Side: Bend LEFT leg and plant foot down. Bring LEFT elbow to inside of knee. Place right hand on block.	Hold for 20-30s each side. Inhale, lengthen sides and open chest. Exhale, revolve. Eliminate for shorter sequence.
	Marichyasana III (Marichi's Pose III)	Block Blanket	Sit up on block or folded blanket if necessary. First Side: Bend RIGHT leg and plant foot down. Bring LEFT elbow to inside of knee. Place right hand on block.	Hold for 20-30s each side. Inhale, lengthen sides and open chest. Exhale, revolve.
	Marichyasana III (Marichi's Pose III)	Block Blanket	Sit up on block or folded blanket if necessary. First Side: Bend RIGHT leg and plant foot down. Bring LEFT elbow to inside of knee. Place right hand on block.	Hold for 20-30s each side. Inhale, lengthen sides and open chest. Exhale, revolve. Eliminate for shorter sequence.
	Setu Bandha (Bridge Pose) (on block)	Wall Block	Block under sacrum. Feet at wall.	Hold for 2-3 minutes. Roll tailbone to heels. Scrub heels into wall. Straighten legs. Roll shoulders down. Roll back ribs up into chest. Soften throat and neck.
				

<i>pose</i>	<i>props</i>	<i>set-up</i>	<i>instructions</i>
<p>Salamba Sarvangasana I (Shoulder Stand I)</p> 	<p>3 Blankets Mat Belt Wall</p>	<p>Fold mat and place under blankets so they don't slide around. Belt elbows shoulder width. Walk feet up wall.</p>	<p>Hold for 2-5 minutes. Roll tailbone to heels. Scrub heels up wall. Straighten legs. Roll shoulders down. Roll back ribs up into chest. Soften throat and neck.</p>
<p>Supta Baddha Konasana (Reclined Bound Angle Pose)</p> 	<p>Bolster or Blankets Belt</p>	<p>Belt the legs in Baddha Konasana (Bound Angle Pose). Lie back over bolster/blankets with blanket under head.</p>	<p>Hold for 3-5 minutes.</p>
<p>Shavasana (Corpse Pose)</p> 	<p>Blankets (Bolster)</p>	<p>Blanket under head. Blankets or bolster under knees.</p>	<p>Hold for 3-10 minutes. Allow entire body to release. Quietly observe breath.</p>