



# DESIGN YOUR OWN YOGA PRACTICE ©

This hand-out is designed to help you choose yoga poses for a simple daily practice. You must consult a yoga teacher if you have any injuries or medical conditions. Some prior knowledge is assumed in this hand-out so please do not pass it on to beginners.

With such a vast subject as yoga, it can be very daunting designing your own practice. Firstly, we must overcome initial resistance to the idea of regular practice. Allan Goode (an Iyengar yoga teacher in NSW) puts it very eloquently:

***“The challenge of practice is not to do it for perfection, but to do it at all.”***

If we only practice when we feel like it we are limiting ourselves in our learning. By practising with illness and injury, in all moods and different times of day, we can learn a good deal more about how the yoga affects us. As we become more confident in our practice, we can use the yoga to help us in a therapeutic way.

**Self-discipline** is a gnarly thing for most humans but when you are ready to bring some yoga structure into your week, here are some general hints:

- 1. Be realistic** If, right now, you can only see 15 minutes per week to practice...so be it!
- 2. Make a time and stick to it** Our bodies love habits (good and bad!). Train your family and friends to respect your yoga time. They'll notice how much more pleasant you are *after* the yoga!
- 3. Do what you need to do** Make sure the poses you do are appropriate. Doing strong poses when you need to rest can make you feel lousy (“Yoga makes me feel sick!”) and doing very soft poses when you are energetic can be boring (“Yoga’s just too slow for me!”).
- 4. Don’t give up** If your practice slides for a week, a fortnight, a month, a year...come back to it without self-recrimination!

A balanced practice includes poses of each of the following types:

**CENTERING  
DYNAMIC  
RESTORATIVE  
BREATH**

Some poses are quite versatile and may be practiced in different ways for different effects, but for the sake of simplicity we have grouped them generally. To create your own practice choose one or several poses from each section depending on time and need. If you are feeling well and strong your practice may look like this:

1 Centering pose  
5 Dynamic poses  
1 Restorative pose  
1 Breathing practice

However, if you are menstruating, unwell, highly stressed or exhausted you may choose:

3 Centering poses  
1 Dynamic pose  
4 Restorative poses  
2 Breathing practices

As your familiarity with the poses grows, let your practice become adventurous and nourishing! Our hope is that you will feel an increasing sense of empowerment, as you learn to treat symptoms or imbalances in your body before they manifest as illness and disease. If a joint is too sore to work with, try to encourage movement in the joint closest to it. For example, if you have a sore knee, try to approach it via the hip and/or the ankle.

CONTACT WORKING YOGA t: (08) 8390 3955 or through: [www.workingyoga.com.au](http://www.workingyoga.com.au)

# CENTERING POSES

The time you set aside for yoga has a different intensity and focus to the rest of your life. In order to prepare for the increased concentration required, it is important to take at least a few minutes to allow yourself to become present to your body, mind, mood and breath. This time is also useful to determine how you are and what you need to be doing in your yoga practice. If your time is limited you may choose to sit for a moment in cross-legged position, close your eyes and focus on your breath for a full minute or two.

Otherwise choose from the following:

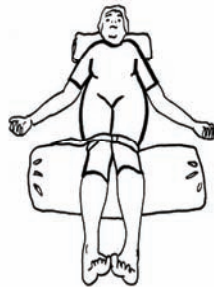
## SAVASANA



## SUPTA BADDHA KONASANA



## LEGS STRAIGHT (With bolster or blanket roll underneath spine or knees)

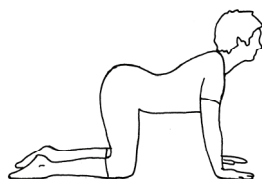


Then:

## FORWARD VIRASANA



## And/or MAJRASANA



Inhale up

Exhale under

# DYNAMIC POSES

There are so many dynamic poses to choose from—all designed to increase strength, agility, postural alignment and stamina! Mix and match at will...Just one specific caution: don't go straight from a backbend into a forward bend or vice versa. Do at least one twist in between. If your back is feeling particularly stiff or dull do some twists before anything else.

## TWISTS

Do for equal length of time on each side. Great for tension headaches, migraines and fatigue. Not so great for gastric bugs, late pregnancy or during the first 2 days of menstruation.



CROSS LEGS



HIP ROLL TWIST



SUPINE TWIST



BHARADVAJASANA

## BACKBENDS

Be sure to use the BANDHAS for support and don't be too ambitious in the back-bending action. Do a twist before and after your chosen back-bends.



SETU BANDHASANA



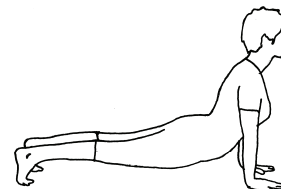
DHANURASANA



PASSIVE SETU B.



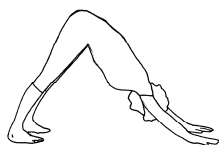
USTRASANA



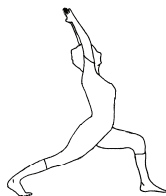
UPWARD DOG

## STANDING POSES

Prepare with dog pose. Use the BANDHAS to aid your alignment. Protect your neck. Breathe smoothly.



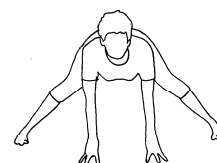
DOG POSE



VIRABHADRASANA 1 & 2  
Check alignment of knees before holding.  
Practising Warrior 2 (above right) with a chair is helpful for fatigue, but not necessary otherwise.



TRIKONASANA



PRASARITA  
PADOTTANASANA



TADASANA

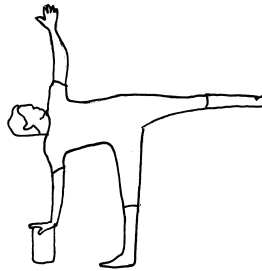
# DYNAMIC POSES cont'd

## BALANCES

Do for equal lengths of time on each side. Use the BANDHAS!



VRKSASANA  
'Tree pose'



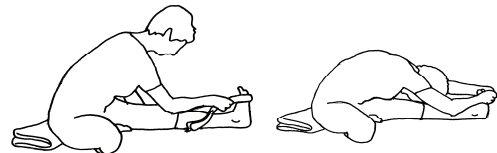
ARDHA CANDRASANA  
Half-moon pose  
Practise with or without block.



SIMPLE BALANCE  
Don't lock  
standing-leg knee.

## FORWARD BENDS

Be sure to use the BANDHAS for support. Take your time to soften. Keep the chin tucked in. Supported forward virasana is the only one suitable for slipped or bulging discs or unstable sacro-iliac joints.



### JANU SIRSASANA

Do not practice advanced version (above right) if your lower back is weak or hamstrings are tight.



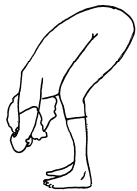
PASCIMOTTANASANA variations



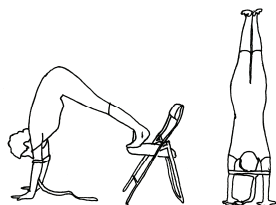
FORWARD VIRASANA Supported or not

## INVERSIONS

Not when menstruating, or with high blood pressure, glaucoma or late pregnancy (once the baby has turned). Bandhas, bandhas, bandhas!

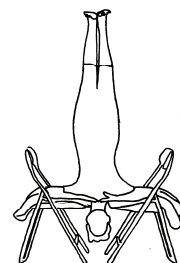


UTTANASANA  
With bent knees.  
Suitable for  
menstruation &  
pregnancy.

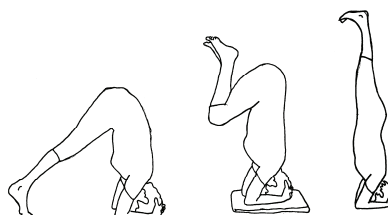


HANDSTAND  
Preparation and proper

EASY HEADSTAND  
(Pictured right)  
Although this does not  
require the same strength  
as full headstand, it is  
important to use the props  
correctly. Consult a teacher  
before attempting this one!

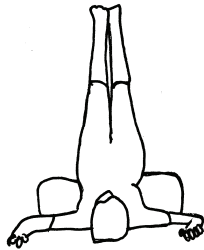


Protect your neck at every  
stage of headstand (pictured  
right). Do not attempt this for  
the first time without the full  
attention of your teacher.



# RESTORATIVE POSES

Time to rest and recover and allow the benefits of your practice to be integrated! Put on some gentle music or enjoy the peace and quiet.



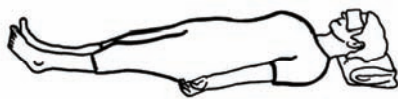
VIPARITA KARANI



SUPTA BADDHA KONASANA



BOLSTER UNDER STRAPPED KNEES



THE CLASSIC SAVASANA (CORPSE POSE) AND VARIATION FOR PREGNANCY AND CHEST COLDS (pictured right)

# BREATHING PRACTICES

Viloma may be done while lying in savasana or supta baddha konasana, or you may prefer to sit up at the end of your practice and do them both. One is plenty if you are not experienced with pranayama practices. Do not strain. Also, do not practice if you have respiratory problems (including a sore throat) as it may worsen your condition.

## VILOMA

The simplest way to achieve a calm mind and body is to practise moderate breath retention:

Inhale...hold a moment...exhale...hold out a moment. Counting can help, too. Try a 'rectangle' breath (ie inhale full count, hold for half count, exhale full count, hold out for half count) Always measure your inhalation *each* time. If the count gets shorter, or your breath gets "tighter" ...relax and breathe normally.

## NADI SODHANA

Raise your right hand to your face. The fingers on this hand will control the flow of air through the nostrils. Place your middle finger in the space between the eyebrows. Your thumb is placed near the right nostril. The ring finger and little fingers are placed near the left nostril. This is the first stage only.

**Close the right nostril gently with your thumb.** Inhale and exhale 5 times through the left nostril. Keep breathing rate normal. Then release the pressure of the thumb.

**Close the left nostril gently with your ring and little fingers.** Inhale and exhale 5 times through the right nostril. Keep breathing rate normal. Then release the pressure of the fingers against the left nostril.

5 breaths equals 1 round. Do up to 20 rounds, unhurried and with awareness.



**COMPLETE YOUR PRACTICE BY SITTING STILL FOR A MOMENT WITH EYES CLOSED.**