



# 10 YOGA Asanas

YOU MAY HAVE BEEN DOING WRONG



TINT teacher Barbra Noh

THERE IS NO TRY.

# CONTENT

But What About Traditional Alignment? 3

## **STANDING POSES**

Warrior 1 – Strength and Balance 4

Warrior 2 – Not as Easy as You Think 7

Triangle – Why It’s Not Too Basic 10

Tree Pose – Mirror of Your Inner State 13

## **BACKBENDS**

Chair Pose – You Love to Hate It 16

Cobra Pose – Cause of Back Pain? 19

Camel Pose – A Safe Backbend? 22

Wild Thing – Open Your Heart 25

## **ARM SUPPORT POSES**

Downward-Facing Dog – The Ultimate Asana 28

Crow Pose – Overcome Your Fears 31

## BUT WHAT ABOUT TRADITIONAL ALIGNMENT?

Although yoga is a 5000-year-old tradition, it would be naive to assume that the yoga poses (*asanas*) are thousands of years old, and that they have been taught unchanged since the beginning of yoga.

In fact, this is far from the truth: There is no evidence of any form of traditional or even original practice of yoga poses. The truth is that only very few poses have been recorded in the ancient texts and they were all variations of seated or supine meditation postures. There was no Triangle pose or Downward-Facing Dog. The Sanskrit word *asana* actually only means “seat”.

Apart from that, there is no clear textual history or historical lineage of the teachings of yoga. The textual documentation of hatha yoga rather is quite obscure. So, the question arises whether there is such thing as a “traditional” yoga practice or alignment.

Instead, consider yoga as a science and try to understand it on the basis of the most recent insights into applied anatomy and body mechanics. And don't be afraid of questioning them from time to time.

This is why we have created this asana library eBook, which is based on personal experience, on-going study and collective knowledge of the world's greatest yoga minds: our teachers on TINT.

This eBook will not only help you to maximize your range of motion and provide you with helpful alignment cues, but it will also enable you to unleash your true potential and create more health and happiness in your life.

So, step on your mat to feel the difference and ask your inner guru what feels best for you.

Namasté!

## WARRIOR 1 – STRENGTH AND BALANCE

Warrior 1, called *Virabhadrasana 1* in Sanskrit, is the first variation of a series of three standing asanas referred to as warrior poses: Warrior 1, Warrior 2, and Warrior 3. Consider Warrior 1 a yoga position that is a symbol of focus and strength to carry you through the most challenging moments of your yoga practice.

TINT teacher Matt Giordano



### STEP BY STEP INTO THE POSE

1. From Mountain pose, step one foot back into a high-lunge position.
2. Put the heel down and angle the foot to a 45 – 60 degree angle.
3. Press the front heel into the ground to engage the buttocks.
4. Square the pelvis as much as possible with the front of the yoga mat.
5. Press the head of the back thigh away to ground the back heel
6. Bend the front knee so that it is aligned over the ankle of the front foot.
7. Draw the abdomen up and lift the ribcage away from the pelvis.
8. Take the arms overhead with the palms facing each other.
9. Keep the head in a neutral position and gaze forward.

## A QUICK GLANCE AT YOGA ANATOMY

### What Are the Joints Doing?

#### Upper Body

- axial extension of spine with a slight rotation in the thoracic spine
- abduction and upward rotation of *scapulae*
- abduction and external rotation of shoulder
- slight flexion of elbows

#### Lower Body

##### Front leg:

- nutation of SI joint
- flexion of hip
- flexion of knee
- dorsiflexion of ankle

##### Back leg:

- counternutation of SI joint
- extension and adduction of hip
- dorsiflexion of ankle

### Which Muscles Are Engaged?

#### Upper Body

- spinal extensors and flexors to maintain alignment of the spine
- *serratus anterior* to upwardly rotate and abduct *scapulae*
- rotator cuff muscles to stabilize shoulder joints
- *deltoids* and *biceps brachii* to abduct shoulder

#### Lower Body

##### Front leg:

- *adductor longus* and *brevis* to prevent knee abduction at hip
- *gluteus maximus* and hamstrings to flex hip and knee
- intrinsic and extrinsic muscles of foot for ankle dorsiflexion

##### Back leg:

- hamstrings, *gluteus medius* and *maximus*, *adductor magnus* to extend the hip
- *articularis genu* and *vastii* to extend knee.
- intrinsic muscles of foot to maintain the arches of the foot

## BENEFITS

- + Strengthens and stretches the entire body
- + Improves focus, balance and stability
- + Encourages blood circulation and respiration
- + Helps to build strength and stamina

## YOGA SEQUENCE KIT

- Practice Warrior 1 as part of the Sun Salutation series (*Surya Namaskar*), especially Sun Salutation B.
- Build up to Warrior 1 from High Lunge, Mountain pose or Warrior 2, or build a sequence of one or several of these poses.
- Warrior 1 is a good preparation for deeper backbends and a great posture to transition into more complex standing poses such as Prayer Twist or Warrior 3.
- Move further into Humble Warrior by bringing the upper body down on the inside of the bent leg, clasp the hands behind the back, straighten the arms and move the hands towards your head.



### ALIGNMENT QUICK FIXES

- Letting the back toes point rather forward makes the pose more accessible.
- Choosing a shorter stance provides more stability in the legs.
- To angle both hips towards the front, lift the back heel up for a high-lunge position or keep the feet hip-width apart as if on separate train tracks.
- Reach actively through the pinkie-finger sides of the hands toward the ceiling.

## PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

If you're looking for inspiration on how to incorporate Warrior 1 and other standing poses to gain a strong and stable foundation, check out Faith Hunter's [Chakra Awakening Body & Soul](#) program or Desirée Rumbaugh's and Adrew Rivin's [Transformational Home Practice](#) program.

If you want to understand the foundations of proper alignment in Warrior 1, check out Matt Giordano's [Essentials of Yoga](#).

Experience a variety of warrior poses to really feel the strengthening effects of these poses with Finlay Wilson's [Freedom](#) class.



PRACTICE NOW.

## WARRIOR 2 – NOT AS EASY AS YOU THINK

Warrior 2 is a very common yoga pose and seems so basic that it is often neglected. However, if properly executed, *Virabhadrasana 2* can be a very intense pose since it aligns the whole body. Therefore, it's very important to be careful about the alignment in this position and to practice it with dignity.

TINT teacher Barbra Noh



### STEP BY STEP INTO THE POSE

1. Start in Mountain pose (*Tadasana*) and take a big step back with one leg.
2. Align the back foot with the short edge and the front foot with the long edge of the mat.
3. Bend the front knee in a 90 degree angle above your ankle.
4. Externally rotate the front thigh and push the front leg forward and the back thigh backward.
5. Externally rotate the back thigh and keep the back leg straight with the foot engaged.
6. Lift the arms parallel to the floor with external rotation to open the chest.
7. Maintain this openness and rotate the hands to let the palms face down.
8. To increase the lung volume, lift the armpits and lengthen the waistline.
9. Keep the spine straight, i.e. the body in a vertical line.

## A QUICK GLANCE AT YOGA ANATOMY

### What Are the Joints Doing?

#### Upper Body

- neutral spine with a slight rotation in the chest
- pelvis level
- abduction and external rotation of shoulder
- abduction of *scapulae*
- pronation of forearms

#### Lower Body

- Front leg:
- nutation of SI joint
  - flexion and abduction of hip
  - extension of knee
  - dorsiflexion of ankle
- Back leg:
- counter-nutation of SI joint
  - extension and abduction of hip
  - extension of knee
  - dorsiflexion of ankle

### Which Muscles Are Engaged?

#### Upper Body

- spinal extensors and flexors to maintain alignment of spine
- *serratus anterior* to abduct *scapulae*
- rotator cuff muscles to stabilize shoulder joints
- *deltoids* and *biceps brachii* to flex shoulders
- *pronator quadratus* and *teres* to pronate forearms

#### Lower Body

- Front leg:
- *gluteus medius* and *minimus* to abduct hip
  - pelvic muscles to prevent hip from collapsing
  - hamstrings to flex hip and knee
  - intrinsic muscles of foot for ankle dorsiflexion
- Back leg:
- *gluteus medius* and *minimus*, hamstrings, *piriformis* and pelvis muscles to extend and abduct hip
  - *articularis genu* and *vastii* to extend knee
  - intrinsic muscles of foot to maintain arches of the foot

## BENEFITS

- + Opens the hips, chest and shoulders
- + Activates the back muscles, especially the *erector spinae*
- + Strengthens the quadriceps, adductors and hamstrings
- + Stretches the inner thighs, groin and chest
- + Strengthens the ankles and arches of the feet

## YOGA SEQUENCE KIT

- Practice Warrior 2 in dynamic transitions into and out of a High Lunge, Warrior 1, or Warrior 3.
- Prepare the muscles of the outer and inner hips for the external rotation required in Warrior 2 by performing Bound Angle pose.
- One of the most common transitions may be moving from Warrior 2 into Reversed Warrior, back to Warrior 2 and into Side Angle or Extended Side Angle.
- Practice Warrior 2 as a transition into or out of Triangle pose since the alignment of the feet is the same. You just need to straighten the front leg when transitioning into Triangle.



### ALIGNMENT QUICK FIXES

- Do not hyperextend and lock the knee of the back leg.
- Engage the legs by pulling the feet and shins in and pushing the hips back.
- Engage the whole waistline and firm the belly.
- Keep a slight curve in the lower back to avoid stress in the front of the back hip.

## PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Get some inspiration on how to incorporate Warrior 2 and other standing poses into your yoga practice from Desirée Rumbaugh and Adrew Rivin's [Transformational Home Practice](#) program or David Lurey and Mirjam Wagner 's [Yin & Yang for Hips and Lower Spine](#).

Dive deeper into the proper alignment in Warrior 2 with Barbra Noh's [Therapeutic Alignment Immersion](#).

Yoga newbies can start with the basics of Warrior 2 in Matt Giordano's [Yoga for the Absolute Beginner](#).



PRACTICE NOW.

## TRIANGLE – WHY IT’S NOT TOO BASIC

*Trikonasana*, as this pose is called in Sanskrit, consists of straight lines and clear angles: The spine, upper arm, and front leg form a perfect triangle. Although it is a very basic yoga pose that is accessible for beginners and advanced practitioners, it should never be considered too basic to pay attention to the proper alignment in this asana.



TINT teachers  
Desirée Rumbaugh & Andrew Rivin

### STEP BY STEP INTO THE POSE

1. Enter Triangle pose from Extended Side Angle pose.
2. Bend the knees, place both hands on the ground and arch the back.
3. Straighten the legs again and widen the sitting bones.
4. Pull up the pubic bone and lift the arm of the back-leg side.
5. Turn the head to the floor without collapsing the chest.
6. Lengthen the bottom side of the body to create space in the upper body.
7. Angle the back foot in a 90 degree angle.
8. Push the front thigh down and the back thigh backward.
9. Turn the navel toward the upward-facing side of the body.
10. Open the chest without collapsing into the shoulder joints.
11. Bring the arms and shoulders in one vertical line.

## A QUICK GLANCE AT YOGA ANATOMY

### What Are the Joints Doing?

#### Upper Body

- neutral spine with slight rotation in the chest
- abduction of *scapulae*
- abduction and external rotation of shoulders
- neutral position of forearms

#### Lower Body

- Front leg:
- nutation of SI joint
  - flexion and abduction of hip
  - extension of knee
  - slight plantar flexion of ankle
- Back leg:
- counter-nutation of SI joint
  - extension and adduction of hip
  - extension of knee
  - dorsiflexion of ankle

### Which Muscles Are Engaged?

#### Upper Body

- spinal extensors and flexors to maintain alignment of spine
- *serratus anterior* to abduct *scapulae*
- rotator cuff muscles to stabilize shoulder joints
- *deltoids* and *biceps brachii* to abduct shoulder joints

#### Lower Body

- Front leg:
- *gluteus medius* and *minimus* to abduct hip
  - *articularis genu* and *vastii* to extend knee
  - *gluteus maximus* and *piriformis* to abduct and flex hip
  - intrinsic and extrinsic muscles of foot to stabilize it
- Back leg:
- hamstrings to extend hip
  - *articularis genu* and *vastii* to extend knee
  - *piriformis* and pelvic muscles to maintain extension of hip
  - *gluteus medius* and *minimus* to abduct hip

## BENEFITS

- + Strengthens the muscles in the upper body
- + Opens the chest and hip
- + Increases flexibility in the groins and hamstrings
- + Strengthens the thighs, knees and ankles
- + Stretches the entire body
- + Stimulates the abdominal organs

## YOGA SEQUENCE KIT

- To make the pose more accessible, place the palm of the bottom hand on a block or place it higher up the leg.
- Transition from Warrior 2 into Extended Side Angle and then into Triangle pose.
- From Triangle pose, move into other standing poses such as Warrior 2, High Lunge, Warrior 1, Revolved Triangle, or Revolved Side Angle.
- Extend the arms to the sides for Five-Pointed Star pose and fold forward into a standing wide-legged forward fold.
- Engage the core by taking the weight out of the bottom hand and let it hover.
- Wrap the top arm behind the back and catch the inner thigh of the back leg.



### ALIGNMENT QUICK FIXES

- Enter the pose from Extended Side Angle instead of Warrior 2.
- Arch the back to bring the hip into an anterior tilt before straightening the leg.
- Suck the upper arm bone into the shoulder socket before raising the arm.
- To avoid compression in the neck, look to the ground rather than to the ceiling.
- Imagine you want to tear the mat apart to engage the legs.

## PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Practice Triangle pose in a well-rounded sequence in one of the programs on TINT, such as Alex Harfield's [Dips, Binds and Balances](#) or Matt Giordano's [Essentials of Yoga](#).

Thanks to Desirée Rumbaugh and Adrew Rivin's [Transformational Home Practice](#) program, you can practice along with their instructions right in your living room or flow through a reviving yoga practice with David Lurey and Mirjam Wagner's [Yin & Yang for Hips and Lower Spine](#).



PRACTICE NOW.

## TREE POSE – MIRROR OF YOUR INNER STATE

Tree pose (*Vrksasana*) is one of the first standing balancing poses that yoga practitioners learn. However, the fact that it is a fairly easy asana doesn't mean that it can't be challenging. Unsteadiness and lack of focus can turn this yoga pose into a mirror of your inner state.



TINT teachers  
Desirée Rumbaugh & Andrew Rivin

### STEP BY STEP INTO THE POSE

1. Start in Mountain pose and shift the body weight into one leg.
2. Raise the other leg up and bend the knee.
3. Reach down with the hand to catch the ankle.
4. Place the sole of the foot against the upper thigh of the standing leg with the toes pointing down.
5. Squeeze the lifted foot into the thigh of the standing leg and the thigh against the foot.
6. Bring the bent knee into the midline.
7. Stretch the spine from inside the ribs in two directions, i.e. down into the legs and up through the top of the head.
8. Gaze at a fixed point on the floor in front of you for focus and balance.
9. Once the body is stable, take the arms up overhead.

## A QUICK GLANCE AT YOGA ANATOMY

### What Are the Joints Doing?

#### Upper Body

- neutral spine
- pelvis level
- slight flexion and adduction of shoulder
- extension of elbows
- pronation of forearms
- extension of wrist, hand and fingers

#### Lower Body

- Standing leg:
- neutral hip
  - extension of knee
- Lifted leg:
- flexion, external rotation and abduction of hip
  - flexion of the knee
  - dorsiflexion of ankle

### Which Muscles Are Engaged?

#### Upper Body

- spinal extensors and flexors maintain alignment of spine
- *triceps* to extend the elbow
- *pronator quadratus* and *teres* to pronate forearms

#### Lower Body

- Standing leg:
- *articularis genu*, *quadriceps*, and hamstrings to keep knee in neutral extension
  - intrinsic and extrinsic muscles of foot to maintain balance
- Lifted leg:
- *iliacus* and *psoas major* to flex hip
  - *gluteus* and pelvic muscles to externally rotate ,leg
  - *adductor magnus* and *minimus* to press foot into standing leg
  - *pectinueus*, *adductor longus* and *brevis*, *gracilis* passively lengthen the leg

*Like a tree, extend your roots down and blossom your arms up toward the sun. The stronger the roots, the taller the tree.*



– Baron Baptiste

## BENEFITS

- + Strengthens the core and spine
- + Stretches groins and inner thighs
- + Stretches chest and shoulders
- + Opens the hip
- + Improves focus and balance

## YOGA SEQUENCE KIT

- Make the pose more accessible by practicing it against a wall: Place either the buttocks, the bent knee or the hand against the wall for support.
- Make it a challenge by practicing it on an uneven surface or with closed eyes.
- Try a bound tree pose variation by bringing the bent leg into a Half Lotus position. Wrap the arm of the same side behind the back and try to clasp the big toe. Fold into a Standing Forward Bend.
- Experiment with different variations of aligning the arms: bring them straight up, in a cactus shape, or let the palms touch to form an inverted V shape.



### ALIGNMENT QUICK FIXES

- Keep the hips as square as possible and avoid letting one side pop out.
- Do not place the lifted foot directly onto the knee of the standing leg.
- Keep the bent knee pointing outside rather than forward.
- Spread the toes of the standing leg instead of clenching the foot.
- Externally rotate the upper arms and rotate the scapulae upwards.

## PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Explore your inner state with Tree pose in a well-rounded sequence especially designed for beginners with Matt Giordano and his [Yoga for the Absolute Beginner](#).

Experience the benefits of this and other standing asanas in Desirée Rumbaugh and Andrew Rivin's Building Blocks for a [Transformational Home Practice](#) where they devoted two entire classes to standing poses, including Tree pose.



PRACTICE NOW.

## CHAIR POSE – YOU LOVE TO HATE IT

Five syllables that make every yoga student sigh and every yoga teacher feel like a drill instructor: *ut-ka-ta-sa-na*, an asana also known as Chair pose, Awkward Pose or Fierce pose. Since the knees are in a very vulnerable position, it bears the risk of causing knee pain. Compressing the lumbar spine can turn this asana into the culprit for back pain. That's why proper alignment is crucial in this pose.

TINT teacher Ami Norton



### STEP BY STEP INTO THE POSE

1. Start in Mountain pose with the feet hip-width apart and bend the knees.
2. Lower the hips down and picture an imaginary chair behind you.
3. Open the chest and raise the arms up overhead with the palms facing.
4. Lift and spread the toes to engage the feet.
5. Widen the knees and inwardly rotate the thighs.
6. Create a gentle concave curve in the lower back.
7. Lift chest and shoulder blades up and outwardly rotate the upper arms.
8. Shift the body weight backward and tilt the pelvic floor to the front.
9. Lengthen and lift up the ribcage.
10. Lift up the chin slightly without hyperextending the neck.
11. Don't forget to smile – it makes the pose a lot easier!

## A QUICK GLANCE AT YOGA ANATOMY

### What Are the Joints Doing?

#### Upper Body

- axial extension of spine
- abduction, elevation and upward rotation of *scapulae*
- flexion of shoulder
- extension of elbows

#### Lower Body

- flexion of hip
- flexion of knees
- dorsiflexion of ankles

### Which Muscles Are Engaged?

#### Upper Body

- *erector spinae* and other back muscles to maintain alignment of spine
- *psoas minor* and abdominal muscles to avoid anterior tilt of pelvis and overextension of lower back
- *trapezius* and *serratus anterior* to upwardly rotate, abduct and elevate *scapulae*
- rotator cuff muscles, *pectoralis* muscles, *biceps brachii* and *deltoids* to stabilize and flex shoulder joints
- *triceps brachii* to extend the elbow

#### Lower Body

- *adductor* muscles to keep knees stable
- *gluteus* muscles and hamstrings to flex hip and knee
- intrinsic muscles of feet to effect ankle dorsiflexion

*Chair pose is a defiance of spirit, showing how high you can reach even when you're forced down.*

– Terri Guillemets

## BENEFITS

- + Strengthens the entire legs
- + Strengthens supporting muscles around the knees, hips, ankles, and shoulders
- + Lengthens the spine
- + Stimulates abdominal organs, diaphragm, and heart
- + Builds strength and heat in the body

## YOGA SEQUENCE KIT

- Approach Chair pose in two separate steps: prepare the lower body first by bending the knees before working on stretching the arms.
- Experiment with the position of the arms: clasp the hands behind the back for a nice shoulder stretch and bow down into a forward fold.
- Bring your palms together into a prayer position. Twist to one side and hook the elbow on the thigh for Revolved Chair pose.
- Use Chair pose as a transition into or from Mountain pose, Crescent Moon, or Standing Forward Fold.
- Make the pose more challenging by squeezing a block between the thighs.



### ALIGNMENT QUICK FIXES

- Increase the range of motion on the hip by bringing the feet hip-width apart.
- Instead of tilting the pelvic floor back (posterior tilt), bring it into an anterior tilt.
- Lengthen through the sides of the body and lift the ribcage.
- Open your hands to increase the space in the shoulder area.
- Lift the shoulders up towards the ears instead of pulling them down.

## PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Take your chair pose practice to the next level with Alexandra Harfield's program [Beginning Advanced](#).

For a well-rounded strengthening and detoxing yoga practice, hop on the mat with Matt Giordano on his [Detox Flow](#).

Dive deeper into the proper alignment in Chair pose with Young Ho Kim's [Inside Yoga Alignment](#) on TINT.



PRACTICE NOW.

## COBRA POSE – CAUSE OF BACK PAIN?

After sitting in front of a computer all day, Cobra pose (*Bhujangasana*) can be a great counteraction to stretch out the spine and chest. Although this asana can bring more flexibility to the spine and open the chest and heart, it can also cause back pain itself if not practiced correctly.

TINT teacher Barbra Noh



### STEP BY STEP INTO THE POSE

1. Lie down on the belly with the legs straight and the feet hip-width apart.
2. Press all ten toe nails into the ground to engage the leg muscles.
3. Place the palms on the ground next to the ribs with the forearms vertical.
4. Outwardly rotate the forearms so the index fingers face forward.
5. Bend the knees slightly and lift the pelvis to widen the sitting bones.
6. Pull the pubic bone to the navel and roll up the spine.
7. Lower the pubic bone again and lengthen through the thoracic spine.
8. Lift up the shoulders and armpits and move the shoulders back.
9. Outwardly rotate the upper arms.
10. Rotate the tips of shoulder blades towards each other.
11. Push the chest forward and up and lift the chin slightly.

## A QUICK GLANCE AT YOGA ANATOMY

### What Are the Joints Doing?

#### Upper Body

- extension of spine
- slight flexion of elbows
- pronation of forearms
- dorsiflexion of wrists

#### Lower Body

- counter-nutation of SI joint
- extension and adduction of hip
- extension of knees
- plantar flexion of ankles

### Which Muscles Are Engaged?

#### Upper Body

- spinal extensors to extend spine
- *serratus posterior superior* to extend thoracic spine
- *psoas minor* and abdominal muscles to avoid overextension of lower back
- *serratus anterior* and rotator cuff muscles to stabilize shoulders
- *biceps brachii* to flex elbows
- *pronator quadratus and teres* to pronate forearms

#### Lower Body

- *adductor magnus* and hamstrings to extend, adduct and internally rotate hip
- *vastii* to extend knees
- *soleus* to effect plantar flexion of ankles

*A mind that is stretched by new experience can never go back into its old dimensions.*

“ — Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.

## BENEFITS

- + Mobilizes the spine
- + Strengthens the spine, legs, and buttocks
- + Strengthens the arms and shoulders
- + Stretches the entire front of the body
- + Stimulates the abdominal organs

## YOGA SEQUENCE KIT

- Cobra pose is often practiced as part of Sun Salutations (*Surya Namaskar*) and can also be an alternative to Upward-Facing Dog in Vinyasas as a transition from Plank pose into Downward-Facing Dog.
- The lower variation Baby Cobra is easier accessible if less flexible in the spine.
- Make the pose more challenging by lifting the palms off the floor.
- An easier variation is Sphinx pose with the forearms on the ground.
- Try a more advanced variation with Upward-Facing Dog where the legs are lifted off the ground.



### ALIGNMENT QUICK FIXES

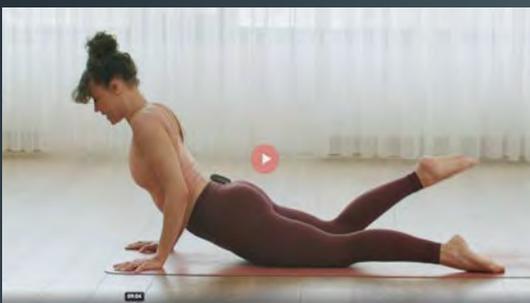
- Keep the elbows slightly bent for more range of motion in the shoulder.
- Decompress the lower back by pushing the lower body down and back, and the upper body up and forward.
- Keep the neck long instead of hyperextending the neck.
- Push the thighs away to create more space for the hip flexors.

## PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Practice Cobra pose in the context of a well-rounded class such as Barbra Noh's [Bamboo Backbends](#).

Flow through some Vinyasas in one of the flowing yoga programs on TINT, such as Ami Norton's [Master Your Flow](#) or through some rounds of Sun Salutations with David Lurey and Mirjam Wagner in their [Yin & Yang for Hips and Lower Spine](#).

Let Desirée Rumbaugh and Adrew Rivin guide you step by step through the proper alignment in [Building Blocks for a Transformational Home Practice](#), where they devoted two entire classes to backbends such as Cobra pose.



PRACTICE NOW.

## CAMEL POSE – A SAFE BACKBEND?

While most of us picture really strong, deep backbends such as Wheel pose, Camel pose (*Ustrasana*) may be much more accessible. It is a great exercise not only for the body, but also for the mind since this asana teaches to let go of the ego instead of forcing the body into an Instagram-worthy position for which it may not be ready yet.



TINT teacher Barbra Noh with students

### STEP BY STEP INTO THE POSE

1. To enter the pose, kneel on the mat with the knees hip-width apart.
2. Tuck the toes and widen the feet so that they are about mat-width apart.
3. Place the hands onto the waistline and push the buttocks back.
4. Bring the bent elbows towards each other to open the chest.
5. Pull up the pubic bone so that the pelvis moves back (posterior tilt).
6. Push the buttocks forward until there is a gentle stretch on the thighs.
7. Bring the feet back in so that the shins are parallel to each other.
8. Lift the chest and move the shoulders up and back.
9. Reach back to the heels and outwardly rotate the arms.
10. Push down through the toes and push the thighs back.
11. Elevate the heart up to the ceiling.
12. To come out of the pose, raise one arm up and pull the upper body up.

## A QUICK GLANCE AT YOGA ANATOMY

### What Are the Joints Doing?

#### Upper Body

- extension of spine
- adduction and downward rotation of *scapulae*
- extension and adduction of shoulders
- extension of elbows

#### Lower Body

- counter-nutation of SI joint
- extension and adduction of hip
- flexion of knees
- plantar flexion of ankles

### Which Muscles Are Engaged?

#### Upper Body

- spinal extensors to extend spine
- *psoas minor* and abdominal muscles to avoid hyperextension of lower back
- *rhomboids* and *levator scapulae* to adduct, elevate and downwardly rotate *scapulae*
- rotator cuff muscles to stabilize the shoulder joint
- *triceps brachii* to extend the elbows, and extend and adduct the shoulder

#### Lower Body

- *adductor magnus*, *gluteus maximus* and hamstrings to extend, internally rotate and adduct the hip
- eccentric contraction of *rectus femoris*, to resist hip extension and knee flexion
- *articularis genu* and *vastii* to resist knee flexion

*Body is not stiff, mind is stiff.*

– Patthabi Jois

## BENEFITS

- + Strengthens the back muscles
- + Improves flexibility of the spine
- + Stretches the entire front body
- + Creates space in chest and lungs
- + Stimulates the abdominal organs

## YOGA SEQUENCE KIT

- Use props to modify Camel pose: Press a block with the inner thighs or place blocks on the outsides of the feet to rest the hands on.
- Open the chest, shoulders and arms more by crossing the forearms and reaching for the opposite ankles.
- Try the one-legged version *Eka Pada Ustrasana* by kneeling on one leg only and stepping the other one forward into a 90-degree angle.
- Build Camel pose into a sequence before or after one or several of the following poses: Table pose, Hero pose, Child's pose, or Gate pose.



### ALIGNMENT QUICK FIXES

- Tuck the toes instead of pointing them. This helps to engage the leg muscles.
- Place the fingers inside the heels and the thumbs on the outsides.
- Avoid hyperextending the neck to keep your airway open.
- Push the thighs back to avoid compression in the lower back.

## PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

It is always a good idea to prepare the body for Camel pose by specifically warming up for backbends. On TINT, Young Ho Kim provides a well-rounded and safe [warm-up sequence for backbends](#).

Feel the great benefits of backbends such as Camel pose in Mathieu Boldron's [Master Your Backbends](#) or Barbra Noh's [Bamboo Backbends](#) or in Finlay Wilson's program [Deep Roots, Strong Foundations](#), where a whole class is devoted to backbends.

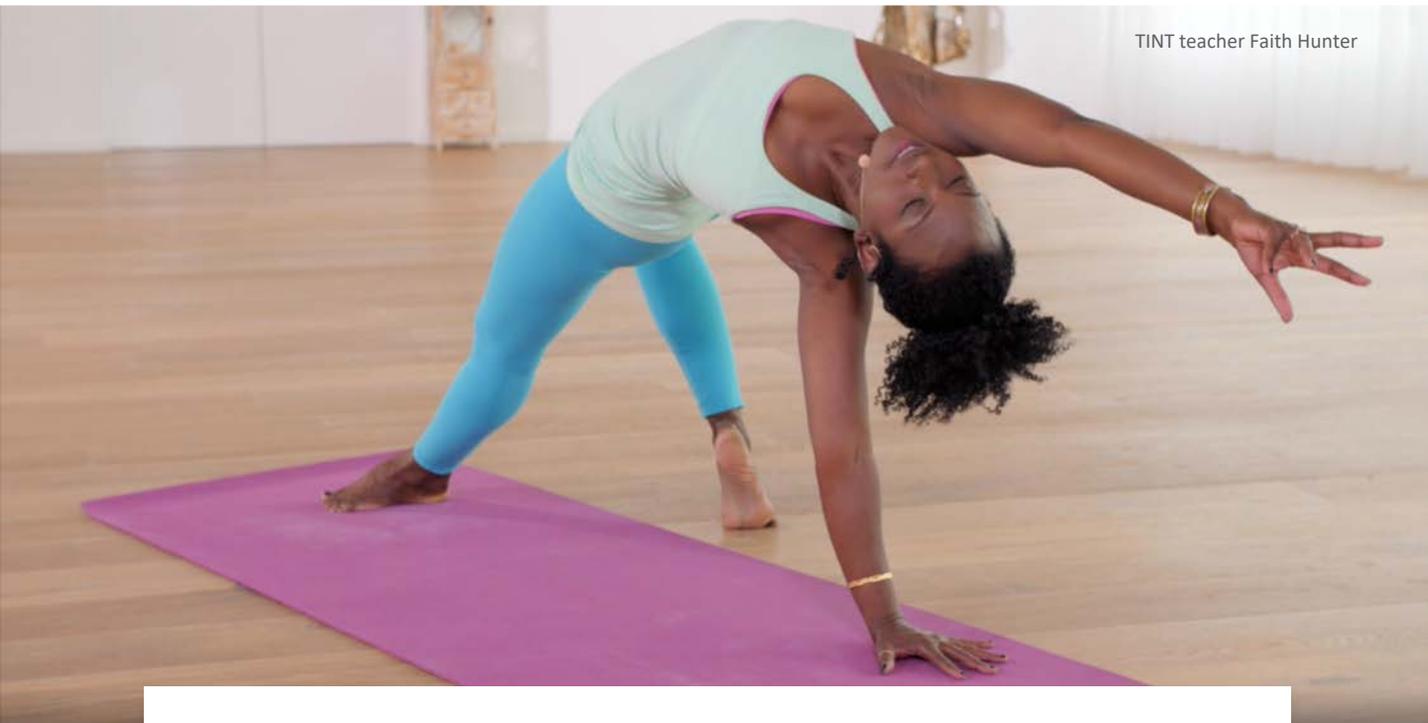
Practice Camel pose in preparation for [King Pidgeon](#) with Matt Giordano.



PRACTICE NOW.

## WILD THING – OPEN YOUR HEART

An asana that has many names: Wild Thing, Rock Star, Flip Dog, or in Sanskrit *Camatkarasana*. The word *Camatkarasana* can be translated as "the ecstatic unfolding of the enraptured heart." This is a pretty good description of the strong back-bending pose, since the open chest does not only open your heart, but also gives you strength and confidence.



TINT teacher Faith Hunter

### STEP BY STEP INTO THE POSE

1. Start in a seated position with one leg straight and the other one bent with the foot on the floor.
2. Place the hand of the straight-leg side on the ground behind you.
3. Outwardly rotate the hand on the ground to outwardly rotate the arm.
4. Bend the elbow, lift the shoulder up and back. Then straighten the arm.
5. Lift the buttocks up to come into the pose.
6. Push the inner edge of the straight leg into the ground to lift the hip.
7. Push the mat away with the hand that is on the floor to lift the shoulder.
8. Push the heart up and keep the legs strong.
9. Bring the hand of the bent-leg side behind the head and push the back of the head against the hand to engage the back muscles.
10. Straighten the arm again and outwardly rotate this arm as well.

## A QUICK GLANCE AT YOGA ANATOMY

### What Are the Joints Doing?

#### Upper Body

- extension of spine
- upward rotation and elevation of *scapulae*
- flexion of shoulders
- extension of elbows
- pronation of forearms
- wrist dorsiflexion of weight-bearing arm
- palmar flexion at wrist in the air
- extension of hands and fingers

#### Lower Body

- extension and adduction of hip
- extension or slight knee flexion of weight-bearing leg
- knee flexion at knee of non-weight-bearing leg
- ankle dorsiflexion of weight-bearing leg
- ankle plantar flexion of non-weight-bearing leg

### Which Muscles Are Engaged?

#### Upper Body

- spinal extensors to maximize extension of spine
- *psoas minor* and abdominal muscles to prevent hyperextension of lower back
- *serratus anterior* to upwardly rotate and elevate *scapulae*
- *deltoids* and rotator cuff muscles to stabilize shoulder joints
- *deltoids* and *biceps brachii* to flex shoulders
- *triceps brachii* to extend elbows
- *pronator quadratus* and *teres* to pronate forearms
- intrinsic muscles of wrists and hands to stabilize hands

#### Lower Body

- hamstrings and *gluteus maximus* to extend hip
- *adductor magnus* and *gracilis* to adduct hip
- *articularis genu* and *vastii* to extend knee

## BENEFITS

- + Stretches the entire front body
- + Strengthens shoulders and upper back
- + Strengthens arms and wrists
- + Improves flexibility of the spine
- + Opens the front of the legs and hip flexors

## YOGA SEQUENCE KIT

- Incorporate Wild Thing into dynamic yoga formats like Vinyasa, Power Yoga, or Inside Flow.
- Prepare the body for this pose by practicing Sphinx, Cobra, Locust or Bow pose.
- Strengthen the shoulder girdle and side body with Side Plank variations.
- Stretch and strengthen the spine with a few rounds of Sun Salutations.
- Open the hip in Three-Legged Downward-Facing Dog, Warrior 2, or Triangle.
- Transition into Wild Thing from Three-Legged Downward-Facing Dog.



### ALIGNMENT QUICK FIXES

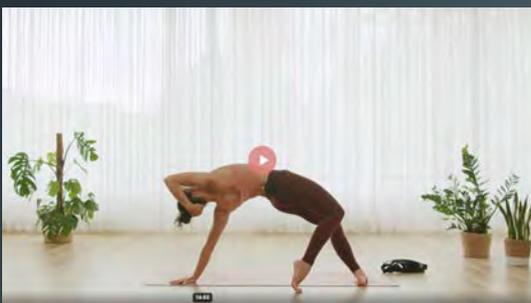
- Do not put too much weight on the hand. Distribute the body weight evenly.
- Outwardly rotate the weight-bearing hand to increase shoulder mobility.
- Bring the tips of the shoulder blades towards each other before lifting up.
- Push the inner edge of the foot down to engage the leg, not the outer edge.
- Activate the back muscles by pushing the head against the hand.

## PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

There are several programs on TINT to experience the great benefits backbends can have on flexibility, posture and overall well-being. Practice backbends with Finlay Wilson in [Deep Roots, Strong Foundations](#), for example, or learn how to [Master Your Backends](#) with Mathieu Boudron.

Since Wild Thing is also said to open your heart chakra (the 4<sup>th</sup> chakra), you should definitely not miss Faith Hunter's [Chakra Awakening Body & Soul](#).

Make sure you also check out Barbra Noh's [Bamboo Backbends](#) or Ami Norton's [Power Ranger – Wild Thing to Lunge](#).



PRACTICE NOW.

## DOWNWARD-FACING DOG – THE ULTIMATE ASANA

You can't think of a single yoga class without Downward-Facing Dog, or *Adho Mukha Svanasana* as it is called in Sanskrit. It is widely considered THE asana and even non-yogis will have heard of this pose. It's not an easy asana, though, and however famous it may be, there is a lot to pay attention to in this pose.

TINT teacher Matt Giordano



### STEP BY STEP INTO THE POSE

1. Determine the distance between the hands and feet in Plank pose.
2. Point the heels upward and keep the legs engaged to form one long line.
3. Keep the arms vertical under the shoulders and spread the fingers.
4. Let the index fingers be parallel and point forward at 12 o'clock.
5. Lift up the buttocks and keep the knees bent to have more space to tilt the pelvis forward.
6. Widen the sitting bones first and straighten the legs.
7. Inwardly rotate the thighs and push them back.
8. Push the buttocks back and up to create a concave shape in the spine.
9. Lift the armpits forward and keep the ears between the biceps.
10. Push the heels down as a last step and only if available.
11. Keep the whole muscle chain from the heels to the fingers engaged.

## A QUICK GLANCE AT YOGA ANATOMY

### What Are the Joints Doing?

#### Upper Body

- axial extension of the spine
- elevation and upward rotation of *scapulae* (shoulder blades)
- flexion of shoulder
- extension of elbows
- pronation of forearms
- dorsiflexion of wrists

#### Lower Body

- nutation of sacroiliac (SI) joint
- flexion of hip
- extension of knees
- dorsiflexion of ankles

### Which Muscles Are Engaged?

#### Upper Body

- spinal extensors and flexors to maintain alignment of the spine
- *serratus anterior* to upwardly rotate and adduct the *scapulae*
- rotator cuff muscles to stabilize the shoulder joint
- *deltoids* and *biceps* to flex the shoulders
- *triceps brachii* to extend elbows
- *pronator quadratus* and *teres* to pronate the forearms
- intrinsic muscles of wrists and hands to stabilize the hands

#### Lower Body

- *adductor magnus* to internally rotate and adduct the thighs
- *articularis genu* and *vastii* to extend the knees
- intrinsic muscles of the feet to maintain the arches of the feet

*So whether you do your first downward dog at 14 or 44, it's not your history but your presence on your mat that counts.*



– Patthabi Jois

## BENEFITS

- + Strengthens the entire body
- + Stretches the back of the body: ankles, calves, hamstrings, and spine
- + Resets the spine between strong forward and backbends
- + Helps to reconnect with the breath in vigorous practices
- + Great transition from one asana into another

## YOGA SEQUENCE KIT

- Practice Plank pose as a preparatory pose. This helps to find the correct distance between hands and feet.
- Child's pose is a great counterpose to relax the whole body after it has been entirely engaged in Downward-Facing Dog.
- Experiment with some variations such as Three-Legged Dog (one leg stretched into the air while the hips are parallel to the floor) or Revolved Downward-Facing Dog (the hand reaches diagonally underneath the body to get hold of the opposite foot or calf).
- This pose is part of the typical Vinyasa, which is the transitional movement from Chaturanga to Upward-Facing Dog to Downward-Facing Dog.



### ALIGNMENT QUICK FIXES

- Determine the correct distance between hands and feet from Plank pose.
- Rotate the upper arms externally.
- Lift the shoulders up towards the ears.
- Do not flex the neck too much. Keep the ears between the biceps instead.
- Maintain a concave shape in the spine. Bent the knees if required.

## PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Warming up for your yoga practice is always a good idea to prepare the body for poses such as Downward-Facing Dog. Get some inspiration for your Down-Dog warm-up from Alex Harfield's [Your Practice as A Constant](#).

Flow through some Vinyasas in one of the various flowing yoga programs on TINT, such as Ami Norton's [Master Your Flow](#), or through some rounds of Sun Salutations with David Lurey and Mirjam Wagner in their [Yin & Yang for Hips and Lower Spine](#).

If you want to learn more about the proper alignment in Downward-Facing Dog, check out Young Ho Kim's [Inside Yoga Alignment](#) on TINT.



PRACTICE NOW.

## CROW POSE – OVERCOME YOUR FEARS

Accomplishing Crow, or *Bakasana*, in yoga may be one of the first big milestones in anyone's yoga career. But the struggle is not over once you finally managed to get into the pose. The real challenge most practitioners face is maintaining this yoga pose for more than a few seconds.

TINT teacher Mathieu Boldron



### STEP BY STEP INTO THE POSE

1. From *Malasana*, place the palms on the ground in front of you.
2. Bend the arms as if practicing a Low Plank (*Chaturanga*).
3. Bring the knees on the upper arms and lift on the tippy toes.
4. Lean towards the fingers and point the toes.
5. Squeeze the elbows and the knees in.
6. Lift the head forward like a turtle that comes out of its shell.
7. Keep leaning forward toward the fingers until the feet get light.
8. Lift the feet one by one and engage the toes.
9. Pull the ribs further in, suck the belly in and draw the navel to the spine.
10. Squeeze the knees against the upper arms and vice versa.
11. Bring the big toes to touch and eventually straighten the arms.

## A QUICK GLANCE AT YOGA ANATOMY

### What Are the Joints Doing?

#### Upper Body

- extension of cervical spine
- flexion of lumbar spine
- abduction of *scapulae*
- flexion and adduction of shoulder
- slight flexion of elbows
- pronation of forearms
- dorsiflexion of wrists

#### Lower Body

- nutation of SI joint
- flexion and adduction of hip
- flexion of knees

### Which Muscles Are Engaged?

#### Upper Body

- *psoas major* and *minor*, abdominal muscles and pelvic floor to flex lumbar spine
- *serratus anterior*, *pectoralis major* and *minor* to abduct *scapulae*
- rotator cuff muscles and *deltoids* to stabilize and protect shoulders
- *triceps brachii* to extend elbows
- *pronator quadratus* and *teres* to pronate forearms
- intrinsic muscles of wrists and hands to stabilize hand

#### Lower Body

- *psoas major* and *iliacus* to flex hip
- *adductor* muscles to adduct and flex hip
- lower hamstrings to flex knee

“What if I fall?” “Oh but my darling, What if you fly?”

– Erin Hanson

## BENEFITS

- + Strengthens the shoulders, upper arms, forearms, and wrists
- + Strengthens and tones the core muscles
- + Stretches the upper back
- + Mobilizes the groins
- + Increases flexibility of the spine
- + Improves balance and coordination

## YOGA SEQUENCE KIT

- Practice the shape of this asana in Happy Baby Pose to open the hips.
- Strengthen the upper body, wrists and core by practicing Downward-Facing Dog, *Chaturanga*, or variations of Plank pose.
- Gradually straighten the arms and lift the heels further up for Crane.
- Have some fun jumping back into *Chaturanga* from Crow.
- Transition into Tripod Headstand and back.
- Consider Crow pose as gateway to other arm-balancing poses such as Side Crow, Dragonfly, or Firefly.



### ALIGNMENT QUICK FIXES

- Keep the forearms vertical so that the line of gravity goes into the ground.
- Keep the neck in line with the spine to avoid that the buttocks sink down.
- Bring the center of gravity towards the hands and resist with the fingers.
- Push the ground away, hollow the stomach and pull the thighs to the chest.

## PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Approach this pose step by step with Matt Giordano and his [Essentials of Arm Balances](#).

For a well-rounded sequence preparing your body and leading up to Crow pose, check out Mathieu Boldron's [Master Your Crow](#) session on TINT.

Have some fun playing around with Crow and other poses with Alex Harfield in her [Dips, Binds and Balances](#) program.



PRACTICE NOW.

## TINT – PREMIUM ONLINE YOGA

TINT provides universal access to premium online yoga classes. Partnering with leading yoga teachers, it brings high-quality content from first-hand knowledge onto one single platform. With TINT, yogis can stream videos to practice yoga and deepen their knowledge.



Access to 500+  
yoga videos



25+ trusted and world-  
class teachers



Download of classes  
with the app



New content  
every month



*“This is the first time for me to really care about what is yoga. I love to be always healthy, both physically and spiritually. Thank you so much for sharing.”*

*Josie,  
passionate yogi*



*“TINT has the highest quality teachers around the world, best platform for those that truly want to learn.”*

*Matt Giordano,  
renowned yoga teacher*

## ALL-ACCESS Membership

Watch every class on the platform for just \$20 per month.

START YOUR YOGA JOURNEY

Download the app

