

Beginner practice notes

The following practice notes are designed to support the asana work in the classes. Beginner level students should focus their practice on the following asanas. For reference use:

- **Yoga: path to holistic health** by BKS Iyengar

Arm and shoulder variations

Parvatasana

Gomukasana

Garudasana

Paschima Namaskarasana

These arm variations can be practiced from Tadasana or from dog pose (Adho Mukha Svanasana – AMS) bend the knees to sit in Virasana.

Standing poses

Tadasana

Urdhva Hastasana

Trikonasana

Virabhadrasana II

Parsvakonasana, hand to block on inner heel

Prasarita Padottanasana

Parsvottanasana (hands to hips/ elbows folded)

Virabhadrasana I (block / wall)

Uttanasana

Utkatasana

Malasana supported (holding chair/mat/blanket under heels)

Sitting poses

Dandasana

Svastikasana (sitting/twist/forward)

Virasana (supported) with Parvatasana arms,

Gomukasana arms, Garudasana arms

Matsyasana (legs crossed)

Marichyasana I

Baddha Konasana (upright)

Supta Baddha Konasana (on bolster with head support)

Forward bends

Triang Mukhaikapada Paschimottanasana (with blanket support and belt)

Janu Sirsasana (with blanket support and belt)

Upavista Konasana (hands behind, upright)

Parsva Upavista Konasana (with belt)

Paschimottanasana (with belt/concave back)

Twists

Chair Bharadvajasana

Bharavadjasana I

Marichyasana III

Inversions

Viparita Karani on single bolster to wall

Chatushpadasana - holding ankles

Chair Chatushpadasana (chair arch)

Salamba Sarvangasana (to wall)

Adho Mukha Vriksasana, preparation – with heels to wall

Supine

Supta Padangusthasana I & II

Supta Svastikasana

Supta Baddha Konasana

Savasana

Other

Adho Mukha Svanasana (AMS – dog pose)

Setu Bandha Sarvangasana on bolsters, feet to wall

Vasisthasana hand to wall/hand to chair/hand to floor, feet to wall

Salabhasana series (one leg/ both legs/ legs, head and arms)

Urdhva Mukha Svanasana

Shoulder opener on chair

Cautions

If suffering from high blood pressure avoid the inverted poses, ie – Salamba Sarvangasana (shoulderstand); consult your teacher.

If you are working with an injury, go quietly. Don't force your body to poses but allow the poses to explore the area – its range of movement, strengths and weaknesses. Be watchful of the tendency to push. In doing so you ignore the subtle sensations in your ambition to achieve progress. Through this approach students often leave the area tired or irritated. Practice should be progressive, building day by day to strengthen and mobilise the area. Don't push through pain.

Yoga can be practiced throughout pregnancy with guidance from a qualified teacher.
If fever is present, practice only Savasana until it has passed.
.Do not drink whilst practicing.

Length

Be regular in your practice. To do 30 minutes daily is better than 2 hours once a week. Don't be too ambitious at first. If you don't meet the demands of your expectations you will avoid practice altogether so as not to feel guilty. In the beginning 30 minutes is sufficient to cover many of the active poses, although as your practice expands to include Shoulderstand about an hour or more is necessary. By establishing a regular practice time you will become familiar with the routine of practice and will start to look forward to that quiet time each day.

Menstruation

Do not practice inversions while in the menstrual period.

You should observe the following:

In standing poses

- Step the feet apart; do not jump the feet
- Work with the back heel to the wall
- Hands on the waist for Virabhadrasana I and II

Do not do Inversions

- Do Setu Bandha Sarvangasana instead of Salamba Sarvangasana

Open sided twists only

Beginner Level Sequence Example

Viparita Karani
Adho Mukha Svanasana – dog pose (AMS)
Virasana with Parvatanasana arms
AMS
Virasana with Gomukhasana arms
AMS
Virasana with Garudasana arms
AMS

Tadasana
Trikonasana
Virabhadrasana II
Parsvakonasana, hand to block on inner heel
Prasarita Padottanasana
Parsvottanasana (hands to hips/ elbows folded)
Virabhadrasana I (block / wall)

Virasana on block
Sarvangasana from wall

Dandasana
Upavistha konasana, upright
Baddha konasana, upright
Janu Sirsasana, upright

Savasana

Practice can be divided into 3 areas – entering, active and closing.

Entering Those poses which develop a sense of interiority – an awareness of the breath and the enlivening of the body. For example – Supta Baddha Konasana, dog pose (AMS) and cycle.

Active More dynamic poses; standing poses, twists, backbends etc.

Closing Poses which quieten the nervous system, cool the body and prepare the mind for Savasana (relaxation). For example, Salamba Sarvangasana, forward bends.

The asanas should not be done for flexibility alone but as a refinement – yesterday's poses with less effort, smoother, lighter. By working with timings you develop the ability to let go in poses, to release tension in the pose. To stay, you need to approach each pose from a different place, not from muscular strength.

By balancing active and passive poses you develop concentration and awareness, not just flexibility.