

Caroline Klebl



I've been practicing and teaching Ashtanga yoga for almost 20 years and have taught workshops, retreats and teacher trainings across the world. I started teaching workshops internationally in 2002 and taught workshops in Vienna, Prague, Amsterdam, Edinburgh, the UK, Barcelona, Singapore, Bangkok, Kenya and other locations around the world. The first yoga retreat I lead was a yoga safari retreat in Tanzania. Additionally, I led yoga retreats in Ibiza and Bali. When yoga centres requested I teach yoga teacher training courses, I developed a week-long program, which I taught in South Africa, Jakarta, Dubai and Kuala Lumpur.

In 2008, I developed 200 and 500-hour yoga teacher training programs, which meet the international yoga teacher training standards of the yoga alliance. I conducted my first yoga teacher training retreat in Bali. Since this course was a wonderful success, I continued teaching yoga teacher training programs in Bali, Costa Rica, Hawaii, Brazil, Jamaica, Greece, Italy, India, Mexico, San Francisco, Chicago and Los Angeles. My yoga teacher trainings are open to yoga teachers, aspiring teachers and to those who would like to learn Ashtanga yoga or improve their yoga practice.

I've trained over 200 yoga teachers in Los Angeles, in addition to the 250 yoga teachers I trained on retreat courses. Graduates of my courses teach yoga all over the world.

I teach Ashtanga yoga, a Vinyasa based yoga asana practice, which includes hundreds of yoga poses that are divided into the primary, intermediate and advanced series. Vinyasa are breath-initiated movements, which connect one pose to the next.

I trained in Mysore, India with renowned yoga guru, Sri K Pattabhi Jois, from 1999 until 2008. Alongside teaching yoga, I produced a 2007 and 2008 yoga calendar, a primary series of Ashtanga yoga instructional DVD, and wrote 'Ashtanga Yoga, primary and intermediate series'.

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BEGINNERS POSE



Urdhva Mukha Shvanasana

(Upward Facing Dog pose)

Urdhva Mukha Shvanasana is a very important pose in Ashtanga yoga. It is part of Sun Salutation A & B and is entered 20 times when practising the Sun Salutations at the beginning of each Ashtanga yoga series. Upward Facing Dog pose is a dynamic pose compared to Bhujangasana (Cobra pose), which is practised in its place in other styles of Sun Salutations.

Urdhva Mukha Shvanasana is also one of three poses, which are considered to be the Vinyasa between poses in Ashtanga yoga. Chaturanga Dandasana (Four-Limbed Staff pose) is practised before Upward Dog and Adho Mukha Shvanasana, (Downward Facing Dog) is practised after Upward Dog.

In Ashtanga yoga Urdhva Mukha Shvanasana is entered on the inhale and exited on the exhale. It is only held for a moment between the inhaling and exhaling breath.

HOW TO PERFROM

- Urdhva Mukha Shvanasana is entered from Chaturanga Dandasana on the inhale by reaching the rib cage forward and straightening the arms, while rolling forward over the toes and finally reaching the head back and practising brumadhyha dristi, looking up into the forehead.
- The legs are toned by pressing the tops of the feet on the floor.
- The arms are perpendicular to the floor and the hands shoulder-width apart.
- On the exhale, roll back over the toes, reach the heels down to the floor, while lifting the hips up and back, keeping the legs straight, until the spine straightens and the torso is in line with the arms, then draw the chin into the chest and practise nabi drishti, looking toward the navel in Adho Mukha Shvanasana.

BENEFITS

- Urdhva Mukha Shvanasana is a backbending pose. It stretches the abdomen, chest and neck and opens the heart.
- It strengthens the back and tones the arms and legs.
- The three asana Vinyasa, Urdhva Mukha Shvanasana is part of, keeps the body warm during the practice and relaxes the body between poses.
- In Ashtanga yoga the primary series is known as yoga chikitsa or yoga therapy. It is said to cure all the diseases of the body. Over 70 poses of the primary series work together to purify and strengthen the body.



INTERMEDIATE POSE

ARDHA SHIRASANA

(HALF HEADSTAND POSTURE)



Ardha Shirasana is part of the finishing sequence of Ashtanga yoga. The finishing sequence is practised at the end of the primary, intermediate and advanced series. The finishing sequence includes Urdhva Dhanurasana (Upward Facing Bow pose), Paschimottanasana (Forward Bend), Sarvangasana (Shoulderstand), Matsyasana (Fish pose), Shirasana (Headstand), Padmasana (Lotus pose) and Shavasana (Corpse pose). After practising Shirasana for 10 deep breaths, Ardha Shirasana is practised.

HOW TO PERFORM

- To practise Ardha Shirasana it is important to be able to maintain a strong steady headstand for 10 deep ujjai breaths.
- In Shirasana keep the weight of your body in your forearms, so that the neck is not compressed. The elbows should be shoulder-width apart.
- On the exhaling breath begin lowering the legs, keeping them straight, by reaching the hips back over the head.
- Point the toes and lower the legs until you can see your toes. In Ardha Shirasana, the legs are straight and parallel to the floor.
- Practise nasagrai drishti, by looking to the tip of the nose.
- Remain in Ardha Shirasana for 5 deep breaths.
- Inhale raise the legs, back up into Shirasana.
- Exhale lower the toes all the way down to the floor, keeping the legs straight.
- Then bend the knees and drop the hips down onto the heels into Balasana (Child's pose).
- Reach the arms down the sides of the body, with the palms of the hands facing up and rest the forehead on the floor for 5 deep breaths. Enjoy this wonderful pose!

Benefits

- Since Ardha Shirasana is an inverted pose, it improves blood circulation, and assists with lymph drainage.
- In the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, it is mentioned that amrita, the nectar of immortality resides in the centre of the head. Over time it drips down and is consumed by the digestive fire. Inversions preserve the amrita and stop it from dripping down into the digestive fire. Shirasana is therefore known to promote longevity.
- Ardha Shirasana strengthens the arms, shoulders, back and legs.
- It also helps to improve focus, since it is a balancing pose.
- When practised regularly Shirasana can reduce headaches.

ADVANCED POSE



VISHVAMITRASANA

(POSE DEDICATED TO VISHVAMITRA)

Vishvamitrasana is dedicated to one of the most venerated rishis (seers) of ancient India. He is credited as the main author of the 3rd mandala of the Rig Veda, which includes the Gayatri Mantra. The Gayatri mantra is dedicated to Savitri, the sun deity. Monier-Williams translated the Gayatri mantra as "Let us meditate on that excellent glory of the divine vivifying Sun. May Savitri enlighten our understandings."

How To Perform

- Vishvamitrasana is the second pose of the 3rd series of Ashtanga yoga.
- From Adho Mukha Shvanasana (Downward Facing Dog pose), exhale step the left foot forward in front of the left hand around the outside of the left arm.
- Simultaneously rotate the right leg externally, keeping the leg straight, until the sole of the right foot is on the floor.
- Reach the left upper arm underneath the left thigh, until the thigh is on the top of the upper arm.
- Straighten the left leg and point the left toes.
- Shift the weight of the body into the left hand.
- Inhale, raise the right arm and reach it up to the sky with the palm of the right hand facing right.
- Straighten the left arm and look up to the right thumb.
- Breathe deeply for 5 breaths.
- Place the right hand down shoulder-width apart from the left hand, bend the elbows and raise the right leg.
- Exhale, swing the left leg back into Chaturanga Dandasana (Four-limbed Staff pose).
- Inhale Urdhva Mukha Shvanasana (Upward Facing Dog pose), exhale Adho Mukha Shvanasana.
- Then practise Vishvamitrasana on the left side.

Benefits

- Vishvamitrasana is a third series yoga pose. In Ashtanga yoga the advanced series are known as Sthira Bhaga or stabilising radiance. The third series poses work together to improve strength and flexibility and enable the practitioner to master 30 advanced yoga poses. The third series is commenced, once the postures of the first and second series have been deeply integrated into the body.
- Vishvamitrasana strengthens the arms, shoulders and back and stretches the legs and hips deeply. Enjoy Vishvamitrasana!



Standing pose sequence

In Ashtanga yoga, standing poses are practised after completing five Surya Namaskara A and five Surya Namaskara B. Sun Salutations warm up the body and deepen the ujjai breath. Standing poses stretch all the major muscle groups. They strengthen the legs and hips and connect your energy to the earth. They improve blood circulation and prepare the practitioner for the poses of the primary series. Sun salutations and standing poses are practised at the beginning of the second and advanced series of asanas as well.

Padangusthasana (Thumb to Foot pose)

Begin standing in Samastitihi, equal standing with the hands in anjali mudra, prayer position. Inhale hop the feet hip-width apart and place the hands on the hips. Exhale fold forward keeping the legs straight. Lower the arms and encircle big toes with the thumb and first two fingers of each hand. Inhale lift the head and straighten the arms. Exhale fold down. Look to the nose. Breathe deeply for 5 breaths. Inhale raise the head until the arms straighten.



Padahastasana (Hand to Foot pose)

Slide the palms of the hands underneath the feet, with the backs of the hands down, until the toes touch the wrist. Exhale, fold deeply into the pose, until the chest touches the thighs. Drop the weight of the head and look to the nose. Breathe deeply for 5 breaths. Inhale raise the head, until the arms straighten. Exhale place the hands on the hips. Inhale raise the torso, leading with the chest, exhale Samastitihi.



Trikonasana (Triangle pose)

Begin in Samastitihi. Inhale hop the feet, 3-4 feet apart, 90-degrees to the right and reach the arms out to the sides, so that the arms are parallel to the floor, with the palms of the hands facing down and the fingers together. Rotate the right foot 90- degrees to the right. Keeping the legs straight, exhale tilt down to the right and encircle the right big toes with the first two fingers and thumb of the right hand. Reach the left arm up to the sky, with the palm of the left hand facing forward and rotate the head to the left and look at the left thumb. Breathe deeply for 5 ujjai breaths. Inhale, raise the torso and extend the arms to the sides. Exhale into Trikonasana on the left side. Take 5 deep breaths in Trikonasana on the left side. Inhale up, extending the arms out the side and exhale hop to the front of your mat into Samastitihi.



Parivrtta Trikonasana (Revolving triangle pose)

From Samastitihi, inhale, hop the feet, 3 to 4 feet apart 90-degrees to the right and reach the arms out to the sides. Inhale, raise the left arm, rotate the hips and torso to the right, rotate your left foot 45-degrees to the right and your right foot 90-degrees to the right. Exhale, fold forward and place the palms of the left hand on the floor to the right of the right foot. Inhale, raise the left arm, keeping it straight, with the palm of the left hand facing forward, rotate the head to the right and look up to the right thumb. Breathe deeply for 5 breaths. Inhale raise the torso and reach the arms out to the sides. Raise the right arm and practise Parivrtta Trikonasana on the left side. Take 5 deep breaths in the pose. Inhale, raise the torso and extend the arms out to the sides. Exhale back into Samastitihi.



Parshvakonasana (Side Angle Stretch)

Starting in Samasitihi, inhale, hop the feet 4 apart. Extend the arms out to the sides. Rotate the right foot 90-degrees to the right. Bend the right leg until the right knee is above the right foot. Place the right hand on the floor to the right of the right foot and reach the left arm over the head to the right. Drop the hips and spread the feet farther apart until the left leg is in line with the torso and left arm. Tilt the head back and look up to the palm of the left hand. Breathe deeply for 5 deep breaths. Inhale up, extend the arms out the sides and straighten the right leg. Exhale into Parshvakonasana on the left side. Breathe deeply for 5 breaths. Inhale up, exhale Samastitihi.



Parivrtta Parshvakonasana (Revolving Side Angle Stretch)

From Samastitihi, inhale, hop the feet 4 feet apart. Raise the left arm, rotate the hips to the right. Rotate the left foot 45-degrees to the right and the right foot 90-degrees to the right. Bend the right knee until the right knee is above the right foot. Exhale, twist to the right and reach the palm of the left hand down to the floor to the right of the right lower leg. Inhale, reach the right arm over the head away from the left foot. Tilt the head back and look up to the palm of the right hand. Take 5 deep ujjai breaths. Inhale, lift up, untwist and extend the arms out to the sides. Rotate to the left and exhale into Parivrtta Parshvakonasana on the left side. Take 5 deep breaths. Inhale up and extend the arms out the sides. Exhale Samastitihi.

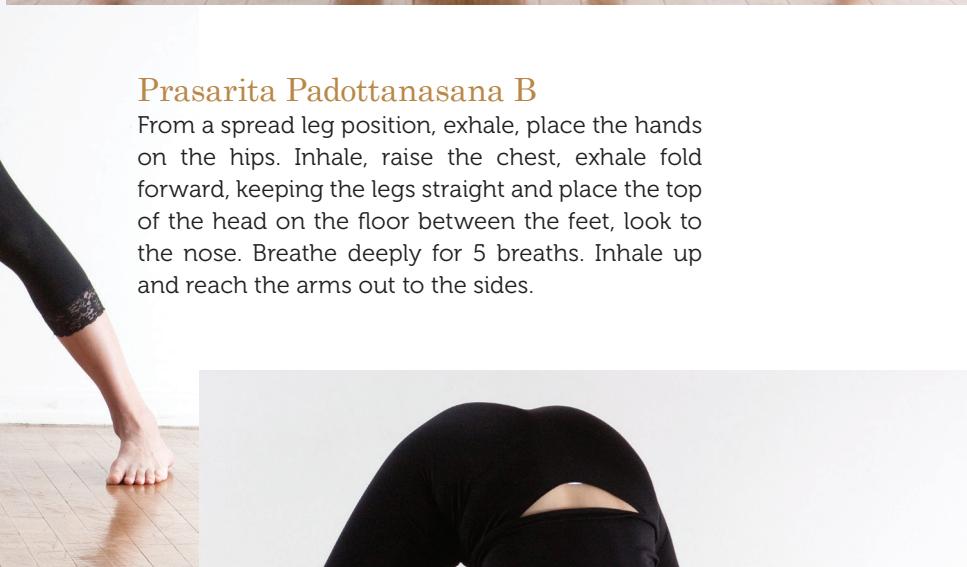


Prasarita Padottanasana A, B, C, D

(Spread Foot Forward Bend)

Prasarita Padottanasana A

Begin standing in Samastitihi. Inhale, hop the feet 3 to 4 feet apart 90-degrees to the right, extending the arms out to the sides. The outsides of the feet should be parallel to each other. Exhale, place the hands on the hips. Inhale, fold forward and place the hands on the floor between the feet shoulder-width apart with the arms straight and the head raised. Exhale, place the top of the head on the floor between the feet. Keep the elbows shoulder-width apart and raise the shoulders up the back. Look to the nose and breathe deeply for 5 breaths. Inhale, raise the head until the arms straighten. Exhale, place the hands on the hips. Inhale, raise the torso and reach the arms out to the sides.



Prasarita Padottanasana C

Interlace the fingers behind you. Inhale, straighten the arms and raise the chest. Exhale, fold forward, keeping the legs straight. Raise the hands and reach them down to the floor over the head, as you place the head on the floor between the feet. Breathe deeply for five breaths. Inhale up and lower the arms down, then reach the arms out to the sides.



arms down, then reach the arms out to the sides.

Prasarita Padottanasana D

From a spread leg position, with the arms extended out to the sides, exhale fold forward keeping the legs and torso straight and take hold the big toes, with the first two fingers and thumbs on each side. Inhale look up and raise the head until the arms straighten, exhale bend the elbows, place the top of the head on the floor between the feet and look to the nose. Raise the elbows and lift the shoulders up the back. Breathe deeply for five breaths. Inhale raise the head, keeping hold of the big toes, until the arms are straight. Exhale place the hands on the hips. Inhale raise the torso and reach the arms out to the sides. Exhale Samastitihi

Parshvottanasana (Side Stretch Posture)

Starting in Samastitihi. Inhale hop the feet 3-4 feet apart, 90-degrees to the right, extend the arms out to the sides. Bend the elbows and place the hands into viparita anjali mudra, reverse prayer position, behind the back. Draw the elbows back, until the palms of the hands touch. Rotate the hips to the right. Rotate the left foot 45-degrees to the right and the right foot 90-degrees to the right. Keep the legs straight. Exhale fold forward over the right leg until the chin touches the shin. Look to the foot. Take five ujjai breaths. Inhale raise the torso and rotate the hips and feet to the left side. Exhale into Parshvottanasana on the left side. Breathe deeply for five breaths. Inhale up, rotate the hips and feet to the right and extend the arms out to the sides. Exhale hop into Samastitihi

Practise this standing sequence, preceded by 5 Surya Namaskara A and 5 Surya Namaskara B until you can practise the standing poses well, then you can proceed with the poses unique to the primary series. As it is stated in the yoga sutras, "Stira sukham asanam", asanas are to be steady and enjoyable.