



Developing a Home Practice Handout week 1

The following practice should take approx. 15 minutes if you include the focus and the relaxation, or 10 minutes if you exclude these elements.

Find a quiet space where you have enough room to work on your mat and you won't be disturbed. Ensure you leave 2 hours after a meal before practicing, and follow the precautions mentioned in this handout. *If at any time you feel uncomfortable or unwell please stop immediately.*

Step 1: Centering the mind – 1 minute

Come to a comfortable seated position and focus into the breath. Breathe in and out through the nostrils and be aware of the rise and fall of the chest and abdomen as you breathe. Observe how you feel. Do not force the breath, but allow it to come and go gently and smoothly as you concentrate on drawing in energy in the inhale, and letting go of tension on the exhale.



Step 2: Preparatory work – 5 minutes

Apanasana: lying on your back, bend the knees and draw them in towards the chest. Keep them together. Take the hands around the shins, and begin to gently circle the knees in one direction. Take the circle in the other direction. 



Hamstring Stretching: Still lying on the back, take the feet and place them on the floor a little way away from the buttocks. On an inhale take the sole of the right foot up towards the ceiling. Clasp the hands behind the thigh to support it. Begin to point and flex the foot strongly, feeling the stretch in the calf and in the shin. Then take a strap or tie, and place it around the ball of the foot, or clasp the hands behind the thigh. Bring the knee in towards the abdomen and place the thigh on the abdomen. Maintaining this contact, begin to stretch the foot away over the head, gradually straightening the leg away. Breathe into the back of the knee and hold. Repeat both steps on the left.

Moving bridge: Still lying down and keeping the knees bent with the feet a little way from the buttocks, begin to gently raise the lower back up off the floor on an inhale. Lower it down again on an exhale, gently and slowly. Start to develop this movement, lifting a little higher each time; keep the shoulders down and push strongly into the feet. As the hips begin to come higher, begin to take the arms overhead and towards the floor on the inhale and lower them with the exhale.



Step 3: Postures – 10 minutes

Warrior II: Stand with the feet wide apart, sideways on the mat. Turn the right toes out to 90 degrees, and take the left heel out slightly. Inhale the arms to shoulder height. Exhaling, bend the right knee, ensuring it tracks directly over the middle toes. Hold for three breaths, developing to 5 or 8. To come out, tone through the abdominals and inhale back up to centre, exhale and release the arms and come out. *Modifications:* If you suffer from high blood pressure do not hold the pose, keep moving in and out of it gently. If the pose feels too strong with the arms at shoulder height keep the hands on the hips.



Downward facing dog: Come onto all fours, ensuring hands are underneath the shoulders shoulder width apart, and knees are underneath the hips and hip width apart. Tuck the toes under. On an inhale push strongly into the hands and lift the hips into the air. Exhale, taking the heels towards the ground and pushing back into the hips. Ensure there is no tension in the head and neck. Breathe evenly and deeply. Hold for three to five breaths, then release the knees back down to the ground. Repeat. If holding feels too strong, come in and out of the pose by releasing down to the knees and then pushing back up. Do not hold if you suffer from high blood pressure.

Sphinx: Lie on the belly. Keep the legs slightly apart, tops of the feet pushing into the mat. Bring the elbows so that they are underneath the shoulders, with the forearms extending along the mat. Push into the forearms and raise the head to look forward. Ensure there is no discomfort in the lower back. Hold and breathe for 3 breaths, then exhale down. Work up gradually to hold for 15 breaths.



Rest in child's pose: kneeling, bring the forehead towards the mat and take the hands down to the sides of the knees extending backwards. Hips stay on the heels: if they do not place a block or cushion under the hips. If your forehead doesn't reach the floor rest it on two fists, one placed on top of the other.



Step 4: Relaxation.

Ensure you put on an extra layer or cover yourself with a blanket. Lying onto the back, take your feet mat width apart. Take the arms slightly out from the sides, palms turning upwards. Support the head and neck if desired, and ensure you are completely comfortable. Allow the eyes to close and focus into the breath, concentrating on the breath and letting any outside thoughts go. Focus on letting go with every out breath. Stay for 3 minutes, or longer if desired.

