



Developing a Home Practice Handout week 6

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 and seek appropriate advice.*

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 on 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. Then separate the knees and circle them in opposite directions, warming the hip joints. Reverse direction.



Reclined Cobbler: Remain lying on the back, bringing the soles of the feet together. Allow the knees to fall out to the sides, gradually letting go in the groin area as the knees come nearer to the floor. Try not to overarch in the lower back. Arms are by sides, palms facing downwards. After a few breaths begin to take the arms up and over the head on an inhale, and back down to the floor on an exhale. Repeat several times.

Hamstring Stretching and shoulder opening: Stand in mountain pose, feet together, back straight, hands by the sides, pulling up tall. Bring hands to prayer at the chest. Inhale arms overhead, bring palms together and look to thumbs. Exhale, bend forwards from the hip crease leading with the chest, taking the hands to the shins or the floor. Inhale look forwards, exhale look down. Inhale all the way up bringing arms into prayer overhead, exhale hands to prayer at chest, repeat.



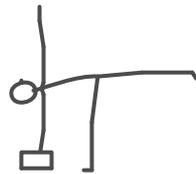
Step 3: Postures – 10 minutes



Navasana, Boat Pose: *Stay with each stage until it feels comfortable before moving on to the next.* Begin seated in dandasana, staff pose, legs straight out in front, hands to the sides touching the floor by the hips.

Stage 1) On an exhale, lean back slightly and lift one leg so that the knee bends and the shin comes parallel to the floor. Hold behind the thigh with the hands. Stage 2) repeat with the other legs; then with both legs together if this is appropriate for you. Stage 3) With both shins parallel to the floor, pull up through the spine, and stretch the arms forward so the palms face each other. Pull the shoulders back and lift the chest. Stage 4) slowly straighten the legs until they are fully extended, lifting the upper body so the lower back doesn't collapse or round. Hold five to eight breaths. Only go as far as you can through the stages without collapsing through the back. *Do not practice this posture if you have weak abdominals or lower back issues.*

Ardha Chandrasana, Half Moon Balance: Stage 1) Kneel on the floor standing up on the knees. Extend the left leg out to the side in line with the body. Exhale the right arm to the floor and inhale the left arm up. Raise the left leg out at a right angle to the body, flexing the foot and pushing out strongly through the heel. Stage 2) Come to stand with your back against a wall, and placing the right foot at a 90 degree angle, bend into the right knee, placing the right hand down on the floor. As you do this lift the left leg to come to a 90 degree angle to the body and raise the left arm up. Shoulders and hips rest against the wall. Stage 3) Place a block flat on the floor slightly in front and to the right of the right foot. Look at the block, bend into the right knee and bring the right hand bridged to the block. Raise the left leg out and back so it is parallel with the floor. Twist the torso to bring the left ribs and chest up towards the ceiling. Raise the left hand straight up and gaze up towards it. Hold for five breaths, breathing steadily. Repeat on other side.



Prasarita Padottanasana, Wide legged forward fold: From mountain pose, step the feet out wide with toes slightly turned in. Ensure you are stable, both feet pressing into the floor. Bring hands to the hips, look up and inhale, pulling out of the lower spine. As you exhale fold the upper body forward with a flat back. Bring your hands to the shins or to the floor, shoulder width apart. Bring the head down towards the floor and relax the neck. Bring the hips forward so that they are in line with the backs of the heels. Lengthen through the spine and keep the shoulders relaxed. Hold and breathe for a count of 5 to 8, then inhale the hands back to the hips and slowly raise the torso with a flat back, bringing the head up last. If you have less flexible hamstrings, fold forward towards the seat of a chair and rest the forearms on it, bringing the forehead down if you are able to.

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. Namaste.

