

## BASIC SITTING POSES and TWISTS

Sitting Poses bring us closer to the earth, allowing us to sit quietly and connect inward to our inner source of stillness and peace. Patience is required in the practice of sitting poses; and Sitting Poses teach us patience as we attempt to let go of tension in the hip joints and tightness in the hamstring muscles. Priority must always be given to the best elongation and freedom in the Spine to lengthen in sitting poses. For beginners to attain this freedom in the Spine, often it is helpful to use a rolled up mat, or block, to sit on to elevate the sitting bones – this allows more ease in the lumbar spine to lift. The benefits are great: Patience, Serenity, Letting-go of judgment, and a deep sense of renewal and connection to our inner being. Sitting poses are restorative in nature, demanding less muscular effort than standing or inverted poses. According to the ancient Sanskrit philosophers in India, the ultimate sitting pose for meditation (via this freedom of the spine) is Padmasana (Full Lotus). The following sequence of sitting poses prepares the hip joints for Padmasana.



1.) DANDASANA - Sitting Staff / Rod Pose - Dandasana is the Tadasana of the Sitting Poses series. It is the foundation, the beginning of awareness in sitting poses. For beginners, or those with tightness in the backs of the legs, use a rolled up mat to sit on, lifting the sitting bones slightly higher than the heels. Stretch the legs straight forward with a slight inward rotation at the tops of the inner thighs. Keep the kneecaps lifting and push out the heels, pulling the toes back toward you. It is also helpful to bring a belt on the tops of both feet and holding with both hands, pull the toes toward the chest. Lift the spine up vertically using the strong muscles of the back. Allow the inner shoulders to hang down from the ears. Relax the eyes and gaze forward. Hold 5-10 deep breaths.



2.) BADDHA KONASANA – Bound Angle Pose – Sit on the edge of a folded mat, bring the heels together as close to the perineum as possible. Keep both heels actively pushing into each other. The spine must be completely vertical engaging the strong muscles of the back to lift. Hold the big toes of both feet with both hands and pull outward, at the same time keeping the heels equally pushing in to each other - right and left. Again there is a slight backbend at the top of the spine, but take great care to lift the front and back of the waist evenly. Relax the eyes and gaze forward. Hold 5-10 deep breaths.



3.) UPAVISTHA KONASANA Wide - Angle Pose – Sit on the

edge of a folded mat this time externally rotating the tops of the thighs and bring the legs out as wide as is comfortably challenging for the adductors (inner thigh muscles). The kneecaps are still actively lifting with the center of the knees and the center of the feet pointing straight up to the sky. Push out the heels and pull the toes back toward you. (A belt can be placed on the tops of both feet to help with this action). Lift the spine as vertically as possible, and as in Baddha Konasana, there is a slight backbend at the top of the spine, but take great care to lift the front and back of the waist evenly. Relax the eyes and gaze forward. Hold 5-10 deep breaths.



4.) JANU SIRSASANA - Head to Knee Pose - This pose is named for the forward bend of resting the head on the knee of the extended leg. However, for Beginners, it is more important that the spine is lengthening as much as possible, (and not rounding at the waist to reach the head toward the knee); so it is better to extend the head, and extend the knee. Sitting on the edge of the mat in Dandasana, bend the right knee as in Baddha Konasana, pushing the right heel into the inner thigh of the left leg. The left leg is extended with all the action of the inward rotation of the inner left thigh, the left kneecap lifting, the left heel pushing out farther than the toes. A belt may be used to pull forward on the toes of the left foot. Lengthen the Spine – from the base of the Spine and keep the back strong and straight as you lengthen the upper body forward over the extended left leg. Relax the eyes and gaze forward. Hold 5-10 deep breaths. lifting up out of the legs. Practice

Determination. Hold for 10 – 20 deep breaths /  
Straighten forward knee to come up on inhalation /  
Repeat other side.



5.) VIRASANA – Hero Pose –  
Begin kneeling with the torso  
vertical and the lower legs behind  
with the feet pointing straight back  
behind you. Sit down on the rolled  
mat (or use a block to sit on if the  
quadriceps are especially tight.)

The weight should be placed evenly on the tops of  
the shins and feet against the floor. The weight of  
the torso and pelvis should be resting just slightly  
forward of the sitting bones. To insure that the knee  
joints are opened first, use the hands and roll the  
flesh of the calves outward, and the flesh of the  
thighs inward. The kneecaps should be pointing  
straight forward. Lift the Spine up as vertically as  
possible. Relax the inner shoulders, and relax the  
face. The hands can rest lightly on the floor beside  
the feet, or on tops of the thighs. Relax the eyes and  
gaze straight forward. Hold 5-10 deep breaths.



6.) TRIANGMUKAKAPADA  
PASCHIMOTTANASANA -  
Three Limbs Facing Forward  
Bend

Begin in sitting in Dandasana. Bend the right  
knee back to Virasana and extend the left leg  
forward.

It is helpful to use the hands to roll the flesh of the  
right calf outward and the flesh of the right thigh  
inward to protect the bent right knee. Keep the same  
inward rotation of the inner left thigh as in the  
extended leg action of Dandasana. Push out the heel  
of the left leg and attempt to hold the left foot  
keeping the left knee straight. A belt can be used as  
an extension of the arms to more easily lengthen the  
spine at the same time holding the left foot. Giving  
priority to lengthening the spine and not bending at  
the waist, lift the torso forward over the extended  
left leg. A bolster can be used on top of the left leg  
to rest the forehead over the left thigh to allow more  
relaxation to the brain. Let the head release forward.  
Keep the inner shoulders softening down from the  
ears and allow the eyes to rest. Hold 5-10 deep  
breaths and repeat on other side.

7.) MARICHYASANA I – Asana dedicated to the  
sage, Marichi –Sitting Twist – From Dandasana,  
bend the right knee and bring the right foot up close  
to the perineum. Press the sole and heel of the right  
foot down to the floor. The left leg should remain  
grounded and extended forward in one straight line.  
The shin of the right leg should be perpendicular to  
the floor with the calf touching the thigh. Stretch the  
right side of the chest forward bringing the right  
shoulder as far forward of the right shin. Turn the  
right arm around the right shin. Bend the right  
elbow and swing the left arm around the back at the  
level of the waist to clasp the right hand at the wrist.  
A belt can be used as an extension of the arms to  
catch the ends of the belt if not yet ready to  
interlock the hands. Turn the spine to the left  
keeping the whole spine lifting up. Look back over  
the left shoulder. Keep the eyes soft. Exhale to  
move deeply into the twist. Hold 5-10 deep breaths.  
Repeat on other side.



8.) MARICHYASANA II -  
Sitting twist over bent leg  
heel. – Begin in



Marichyasana I, but before extending the right  
arm around the right shin, lift the torso up, bend the  
left knee and sit directly over the left heel. Extend  
the right side of the chest and bring the right shoulder  
beyond the right knee. Swing the left arm around to  
catch the right wrist (or use belt so that the hands can  
work toward each other). Keep the Spine lengthening up  
vertically as much as possible. Look back over the  
left shoulder and deepen the twist as the exhale  
deepens. Hold 5-10 deep breaths. Repeat on other  
side.



9.) ARDHA MATSYENDRASANA – Pose dedicated to Lord of the Fish – Sit in Dandasana with a rolled mat to elevate the

sitting bones. Extend the right leg forward. Remember to maintain the inward rotation at the top of the inner right thigh.. Bend the left knee until the left shin is perpendicular to the floor. Bring the right side of the chest around to the left so that the right shoulder reaches beyond the left knee. Bend the right elbow and swing the left arm around the back to interlock the hands behind you at the level of the waist. Again, a belt is a very good tool to use to

help bring the arms around left shin. Keep the Spine lengthening up vertically as much as possible. Look back over the left shoulder and deepen the twist as the exhalation breath deepens. Hold 5-10 deep breaths. Repeat on other side.

10.) PASCHIMOTTANASNA – Full Forward Bend.(Back of the body fully extended Pose) Begin sitting in Dandasana with both legs extended forward. Sit on the rolled mat to elevate the sitting bones up and shift the



weight slightly forward of the sitting bones. Remember to maintain the inward rotation to both legs and keep the kneecaps lifting. Push out the heels and pull the toes forward toward the chest. A belt should be used around the toes to help keep the back lengthening and not rounding to reach the feet. Lengthen the Spine again from the base of the spine. On exhalation breath, extend the torso forward to rest over the legs keeping the back lengthening as much as possible. Let the belly drop, the chest to drop and the head to drop over the extended legs. The most beneficial place for the brain to relax completely is when the forehead is supported. So if the forehead is not yet resting over the legs, use a bolster on the tops of the thighs so that when lengthening forward, the forehead can rest on the bolster. Move deeply into this forward bend as the exhalation breath deepens. Relax the eyes and the muscles of speech. Hold 5-10 deep breaths.



**Ann Barros** is a senior Iyengar yoga instructor with over 30 years teaching experience, including 5 years at UCSC, and over 40 successful Yoga In Bali tours. She has led workshops both domestically in California and Colorado, and internationally in Singapore, Jamaica, Greece, Mexico, Jakarta, as well as her beloved Bali, which has become her second home. Ann first studied with BKS Iyengar in India in 1976 who personally guided her into curing her own scoliosis. She is certified by the Iyengar Yoga Institute of S.F. since 1980, and later that year after

studying again in India, first came to Bali. Ann's teaching approach is compassionate, yet challenging, with emphasis on precise and careful alignment of the joints for the greatest freedom: strength and flexibility, balance in the body, quieting of the mind, and a soaring of the spirit.

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