

## Cat-Cow Yoga Stretch

1. Start on your hands and knees, aligning your wrists underneath your shoulders and your knees underneath your hips.
2. Think of the spine as a straight line connecting the shoulders to the hips. Try visualizing the line extending forward through the crown of the head and backward through the tail bone. This is the position of a neutral spine.
3. Keep the neck long, as the natural extension of the spine.



## Child's Pose – Balasana

1. Child's pose is a simple posture with a big part to play in your yoga practice. Aside from being a nice way to gently stretch various parts of your body, child's pose is yoga's most important resting posture. It's a chance to stop what you are doing, reassess your position, reconnect with your breath, and prepare yourself to move forward.
2. In class, the teacher may offer the opportunity to rest in child's pose after a fast-paced vinyasa sequence, a long hold in a pose like [downward facing dog](#) or [plank](#), or an attempt at a challenging inversion. These are all examples of a good time to rest, but when to take child's pose is really up to your own discretion.



## Cobra Pose - Bhujangasana

1. If you're in the middle of a sun salutation, you'll be coming into cobra from [knees, chest, and chin](#). If not, you can begin by lying down flat on your stomach.
2. Place your palms flat on the ground directly under your shoulders. Bend your elbows straight back and hug them into your sides.
3. Pause for a moment looking straight down at your mat with your neck in a neutral position. Anchor your pubic bone to the floor.
4. Inhale to lift your chest off the floor. Roll your shoulders back and keep your low ribs on the floor. Make sure your elbows continue hugging your sides. Don't let them wing out to either side.
5. Keep your neck neutral. Don't crank it up. The gaze stays on the floor.
6. Exhale to release back to the floor (or push back to downward facing dog in you are doing a sun salutation).



## Downward Facing Dog

1. Come to your hands and knees with the wrists underneath the shoulders and the knees underneath the hips.
2. Curl your toes under and push back through your hands to lift your hips and straighten your legs.
3. Spread your fingers and ground down from the forearms into the fingertips.
4. Outwardly rotate your upper arms to broaden the collarbones.
5. Let your head hang and move your shoulder blades away from your ears towards your hips.
6. Engage your quadriceps strongly to take the burden of your body's weight off your arms. This action goes a long way toward making this a resting pose.
7. Rotate your thighs inward, keep your tail high, and sink your heels towards the floor.
8. Check that the distance between your hands and feet is correct by coming forward to a [plank](#) position. The distance between the hands and feet should be the same in these two poses. Do not step the feet toward the hands in down dog in order to get the heels to the floor.



## Downward Facing Dog Split

1. Begin in [downward facing dog](#).
2. On an inhale, raise your right leg off the ground behind you.
3. Keep your hips level with one another as you lift the right leg. The hips should stay squared with the floor.
4. Continue releasing the left heel toward the floor.
5. Try to keep an equal amount of weight in both your arms.
6. Extend through the raised right heel and the crown of your head.
7. After holding the pose with the hips squared for several breaths, you can open the right hip, stacking it over the left hip. This will allow the right leg to come higher and give you a nice hip stretch.
8. Although you are opening the hips, try to keep the torso from twisting to the left.
9. In the open hips position, you can bend the right knee and let the right heel come toward your left buttock.
10. After several breaths, straighten the right leg and resquare your hips toward the floor.
11. Release the right foot back to the floor. Take several breaths in downward dog and then repeat the sequence on the left side.



## Warrior II

1. From [downward facing dog](#), step your right foot to the inside of your right hand.
2. Bend your right knee directly over your ankle so your thigh is parallel to the floor.
3. Pivot on the ball of your left foot to bring your left heel to your mat. Your left foot should be at a 90-degree angle with the sole firmly planted. Your front heel is roughly lined up with your back arch.
4. Rise to stand.
5. Open your hips to the left side of your mat. Your torso will be facing left.
6. Extend your right arm toward the front of the mat and your left arm toward the back of the mat with your palms facing down. Keep both arms parallel to the floor. Release your shoulders away from your ears. Reach out through the finger tips of both hands.
7. Turn your head to face the front of your mat. Your gaze is forward over the right hand.
8. Both thighs are rotating outward.
9. Engage your triceps to support your arms, your quadriceps to support your legs, and your belly to support your torso.
10. After several breaths, windmill your hands down to either side of your right foot and step back to downward dog. Stay here for a few breaths or [go through a vinyasa](#) before repeating the pose with the left foot forward.



## Extended Side Angle Pose

1. From [downward facing dog](#), bring your right foot to the front of your mat, placing it to the inside of your right hand.
2. Drop your left heel down to the floor. Angle your heel toward the center of your mat. Opinions vary on the ideal angle for the foot in relation to the ankle. Somewhere between 90 (which would be parallel to the back edge of your yoga mat) and 45 (toes pointing at the top left corner of your mat) degrees is acceptable.
3. Bend your right knee so that your calf and thigh form a right angle with your thigh parallel to the floor.
4. Bring your right hand inside or outside the right foot, depending on which is more comfortable. Stay lifted up on the right fingertips so that you are not dumping too much weight into your hand. Lift your left arm up straight up toward the ceiling. Open your chest and make sure your left shoulder is aligned over your right shoulder.
5. Bring your gaze up towards your left hand if that feels ok on your neck. Otherwise, it's ok to look to the side or even down at your mat as long as your chest remains open.
6. To keep the body in balance, repeat the pose with your left foot forward.



## Lunge

1. From [downward-facing dog](#), step your right foot up to inside your right hand on an inhalation. If your foot doesn't make it all the way up to the top of your mat, move it into position with the right hand. It's important that you build the pose from the ground up by setting up your feet at opposite ends of your mat. If you need more info, see our advice on [adjusting your foot position manually](#)

2. Bend your right knee so that it is directly over your right ankle with the right thigh parallel to the floor. Take particular care that your knee does not get in front of your ankle since this places the knee in a vulnerable position. A little behind the ankle is ok if this is as deep as is comfortable.

3. Line your fingertips up with your toes.

4. Flatten your palms or tent your hands to come up onto the fingertips, whichever allows you to open your chest forward.

5. Roll your shoulder blades down your back, lengthen your spine, and bring your gaze to the horizon line.

6. Keep your back leg very straight and strong. Extend from your back heel up through the crown of your head. Stay on the ball of your back foot.

7. Hold up to five breaths, then return back to downward dog on an exhalation.

8. Repeat with the left leg forward.



## Plank Pose

1. From [downward facing dog](#), bring your hips forward until your shoulders are over your wrists and your whole body is in one straight line from the top of your head to your heels.

2. This is very similar to the position you would take if you were about to do a push-up.

3. 2. Make sure your hips are neither drooping toward the floor nor hiked up toward the ceiling.

4. 3. Spread your fingers and press the firmly down into your fingertips and palms.

5. 4. Don't lock your elbows. A little microbend is the way to go because it's safer for your joints and strengthens all the little support muscles around them.

6. 5. Press back through your heels.

7. 6. Move your shoulders away from your ears.

8. 7. Keep your neck in line with your spine (neither cracked up nor dropping down) and your gaze at the floor.

