



A WELCOME GIFT

# Ten Poses to Begin With

*Photographed and taught by Alicia Elliott.*

CALIBRATION WELLNESS · ALICIA ELLIOTT  
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# Welcome

A gift from me to you. This is yours to keep.

Ten poses, one to a page. Every photograph is me, in my own room, on my own mat. Nothing here is staged and nothing here is out of reach.

Each page has the same four parts. **How to do it** is the pose in six steps. **Helpful tips** are the things I find myself saying out loud in every class. **Common mistakes** are worth reading before you start rather than after. **If this is hard** is where the blocks, the chair and the wall live, and it is the part I would read first.

**A block or a chair is not a lesser version of the pose.** It is the pose, set at a height your body can work at today. I use props. Everyone I teach uses props.

If something hurts, come out of it. Sharp, pinching or electrical sensations are not the feeling we are after. A long, warm stretch is.

If you are working around an injury, a replacement, high blood pressure, glaucoma, or anything your doctor has an opinion about, ask them first and tell me when we meet.

Practice barefoot, on a surface that will not slide, with something steady within arm's reach. Five slow breaths in a pose is plenty. Ten is generous.

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# Chair Pose

## Utkatasana

UTKATA, FIERCE OR POWERFUL · ASANA, POSTURE



Draw the buttocks back into a low sit in midair, weight in the heels, arms up strong.

### How to do it

- 1 Stand and find the floor**  
Feet together, or hip-width apart if that is steadier. Ground the heels and the big-toe mounds.
- 2 Raise the arms**  
Inhale the arms up strong, shoulder-width, palms facing. Shoulder blades root down, away from the ears.
- 3 Sit back**  
Exhale, bend the knees and draw the buttocks back, as though lowering into a chair.
- 4 Find the low sit**  
The legs form a low sit in midair. Weight back toward the heels, knees over the ankles, never out past the toes.
- 5 Hold the pelvis neutral**  
Lift the chest away from the thighs without arching the low back.
- 6 Hold, then rise**  
Five slow breaths. Press through the heels and come up on an inhale.

### Helpful tips

- ✓ The tailbone creates an energetic line to the fingertips.
- ✓ Lower is not better. Sit only as deep as you can keep the heels heavy and the back long.
- ✓ If you can lift your toes, your weight is in the right place.

### What it does

- ✓ Engages the largest muscle groups we have, the thighs and glutes, strengthening the legs.
- ✓ Furthers your balance: the whole body held over a narrow base with the arms raised.
- ✓ Trains the exact movement of sitting down and standing back up.
- ✓ Working the biggest muscles takes more energy, which is why it warms you so quickly.

#### COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ Knees drifting out past the toes, which moves the load off the thighs and onto the knees.
- ✗ Knees falling in toward each other.
- ✗ Arching the low back with the ribs flaring to get the arms higher.

#### IF THIS IS HARD

Back against a wall, slide down only as far as feels solid. A block squeezed between the thighs keeps the knees tracking. Hands at the heart or on the thighs if the shoulders complain.

**Go easy** with knee pain. Stay higher, and stop anywhere the knees object. A real chair behind you gives you somewhere to land.

# Warrior I

## Virabhadrasana I

VIRABHADRA, THE WARRIOR SHIVA MADE FROM A LOCK OF HIS OWN HAIR



The front knee bends toward ninety degrees over the ankle. Build the stance first, then raise the arms.

### How to do it

- 1 Step back, and stay wide**  
Step one foot back about a leg's length, feet hip-width apart side to side rather than on a tightrope.
- 2 Set the back foot**  
Turn it out around forty-five degrees and ground the outer edge. Wider is fine if a tight calf will not let the heel land.
- 3 Straighten the back leg**  
Press the back thigh bone back. Let the leg stay turned out rather than screwing it in to square the hips.
- 4 Bend the front knee**  
Toward ninety degrees, tracking over the second and third toes. The knee stays behind the ankle, never past it.
- 5 Let the pelvis find its place**  
Bring the back hip forward only to where it meets resistance, then stop. Lower belly lightly in, tailbone long, no hard tuck.
- 6 Raise the arms**  
Inhale them overhead at shoulder width, palms facing. Soften the front ribs as they rise. Five breaths, then the second side.

### Helpful tips

- ✓ Press the whole triangle of the back foot down. An outer edge lifting means the pelvis is being forced.
- ✓ Widen the inner back thigh toward the outer thigh. This is the action that protects the back knee.
- ✓ If the low back complains, shorten the stance before you change anything else.

### What it does

- ✓ Front thigh and glutes work hard against a bent, loaded knee. The back leg works to stay straight.
- ✓ Lengthens the back leg's hip flexors and calf, which is most of what sitting shortens.
- ✓ Shoulders and upper back work overhead against gravity.
- ✓ Builds the hip range under load that standing up out of a chair asks for.

#### COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ The front knee drifting inward, which loads the inside of the joint and switches off the outer hip.
- ✗ Forcing the hips square. It turns the back thigh against a planted foot and levers the sacroiliac joint.
- ✗ Tucking the tailbone hard while the ribs flare. The torso looks upright and the low back pays for it.

#### IF THIS IS HARD

Shorten the stance. It fixes more than any other adjustment. A folded blanket or wedge under the back heel if the calf is tight, or lift the back heel entirely and balance on the ball of the foot. Hands can stay on the hips.

**Go easy** with a hip replacement, a groin or hamstring tear, or a sacroiliac joint that gives trouble. Widen the stance side to side and do not chase square hips.

# Warrior II

## Virabhadrasana II

VIRA, HERO · BHADRA, AUSPICIOUS · ASANA, POSTURE



Wider than Warrior I, and the hips open to the side. The torso stays stacked over the pelvis.

### Helpful tips

- ✓ Do not try to square the pelvis to the long edge. Most hips lack that range.
- ✓ Work both legs. Without the back heel rooting, the front thigh does everything.
- ✓ The arms should look effortless and feel like work.

### What it does

- ✓ Front thigh and glutes work against a loaded, bent knee. That is why it burns.
- ✓ The outer hip works to stop the front knee falling inward.
- ✓ Shoulders hold the arms level against gravity for as long as you stay.
- ✓ Lengthens both inner thighs through the wide stance.

### How to do it

#### 1 Step wide

Face the long edge of the mat. Open the arms wide and step the feet so the ankles land under the wrists.

#### 2 Turn the feet

Front foot ninety degrees toward the short edge, back toes turned in slightly. Teachers differ on how the heels line up.

#### 3 Bend the front knee

Until it stacks over the ankle, kneecap tracking toward the little-toe side.

#### 4 Root the back foot

Press the outer edge down and straighten the back leg, working down into the heel.

#### 5 Stack the torso

Shoulders over hips, head over pelvis, back wrist over back ankle. Resist the pull to lean forward.

#### 6 Open the arms

Shoulder height, palms down, shoulders away from the ears. Look past the front fingertips.

### COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ The front knee dropping inward. This is the riskiest thing a beginner does in this pose.
- ✗ Leaning forward and pushing the hips back. The shape survives; the work leaves.
- ✗ A stance too short, so the knee passes the ankle and the joint takes what the thigh should.

### IF THIS IS HARD

Bend the front knee less; the thigh need not reach parallel. Bring the feet closer if the inner thighs are tight, or rest the front thigh on a chair.

**Go easy** with a hip replacement. The wide turned-out stance is exactly the movement most surgical precautions limit. Ask the surgeon, not the internet.

# Wide-Legged Forward Fold

## Prasarita Padottanasana

PRASARITA, SPREAD WIDE · PADA, FOOT · UTTANA, INTENSE STRETCH



The halfway stage, shown here, is where the pose is taught. Back long, chest forward, eyes on the floor ahead.

### Helpful tips

- ✓ The fold happens at the **hip joints**, not the waist. If the back rounds, you have gone past your range.
- ✓ Your weight stays in your legs. The hands steady you, they do not hold you up.
- ✓ Blocks are not a compromise. Height under the hands buys length in the spine.

### What it does

- ✓ Lengthens the hamstrings, inner thighs and calves.
- ✓ Works the legs and the muscles along the spine to hold you there.
- ✓ Teaches spinal length under load, which carries into every forward bend after it.
- ✓ Unhurried by nature. The long exhale available here is most of why people find it settling.

### How to do it

#### 1 Turn to the long edge

Face the long side of the mat. Step the feet wide, about three to four feet apart.

#### 2 Set the feet

Outer edges parallel, toes pointing straight ahead. Press the outer heels down and lift the inner arches.

#### 3 Firm the legs

Straight but not locked. Lift the kneecaps and draw the thigh muscles up.

#### 4 Hinge from the hips

Hands to the floor or to blocks under your shoulders. Lengthen forward through the crown, chest open, eyes ahead.

#### 5 Fold, if the fold is there

Bend the elbows and let the crown travel toward the floor. Walk the hands back in line with the feet.

#### 6 Rise with a long back

Hands to the hips, spine flat, come up on an inhale.

### COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ Rounding from the belly to get the hands down. How low the hands go matters less than how long the spine stays.
- ✗ Locking the knees back into the joint.
- ✗ Turning the toes out, which shortens the stretch and loads the inner knee.

### IF THIS IS HARD

Hands on blocks, a chair seat or a stack of books. Let the floor come up to meet you.

**Go easy** on the full fold with high blood pressure, glaucoma, or if you get dizzy head-down. The halfway stage is a complete pose on its own.

# Downward-Facing Dog

*Adho Mukha Svanasana*

ADHO, DOWNWARD · MUKHA, FACE · SVANA, DOG



A long spine with bent knees beats straight legs with a rounded back, every time.

## Helpful tips

- ✓ Heels to the floor is not the goal and is not a sign of progress. Nobody is scoring it.
- ✓ Hold yourself up with the arms and shoulders rather than hanging into the joints.
- ✓ If the wrists hurt, the answer is a change of position, not patience. See below.

## What it does

- ✓ Lengthens the hamstrings and calves, more so as the legs straighten.
- ✓ Works the shoulders and arms and asks for overhead range most days never use.
- ✓ Lengthens the broad muscles of the back.
- ✓ Puts weight through the arms, which almost nothing else in a day does.

## How to do it

### 1 Start on hands and knees

Hands a little forward of the shoulders, fingers spread wide, toes tucked under.

### 2 Spread the load

Press through the whole hand, especially the base of the index finger, so weight does not pile into the wrist.

### 3 Lift the hips

Exhale, lift the knees and send the hips up and back. Keep the knees clearly bent to begin.

### 4 Lengthen the spine

From the tailbone to the crown. Straightening the back matters more than straightening the legs.

### 5 Let the legs come later

Straighten them only as far as the back stays long. Heels can stay lifted.

### 6 Rest the head

Neck soft, head between the upper arms. Stay five breaths, then sit back into Child's Pose.

## COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ Rounding the spine to force the heels down. The lengthening moves out of the hamstrings and into the low back.
- ✗ Sinking into the shoulders. Common in flexible people, and it loads the joint instead of the muscle.
- ✗ Dumping the weight into the heels of the hands. This is where most yoga wrist pain comes from.

## IF THIS IS HARD

Hands on a wall, hips hinged to a right angle, gives the shape with no wrist load and no inversion. A chair seat works too. Bend the knees generously.

**Go easy** with wrist or shoulder trouble, high blood pressure, or glaucoma. The head sits below the heart here. The wall version does not.

# Revolved Crescent Lunge

## *Parivrtta Ashta Chandrasana*

PARIVRTTA, REVOLVED · CHANDRA, MOON. OFTEN CALLED PARIVRTTA ANJANEYASANA, WHICH NAMES THE KNEE-DOWN VERSION.



Back knee lifted, back heel pressing away. Drop the knee any time; the pose still works.

### Helpful tips

- ✓ The revolving comes from the ribcage, not the arm. The elbow rests there; it is not a lever.
- ✓ Keep the hips level and forward. When the back hip swings forward, the pelvis is turning and the spine is not.
- ✓ Keep the back leg working. The moment the knee sags, the hip flexor stretch disappears.

### What it does

- ✓ Front thigh and glutes work against a bent, loaded knee.
- ✓ Lengthens the back leg's hip flexors, more than the knee-down version does.
- ✓ Asks for and trains rotation through the middle back.
- ✓ Balances on a narrow base, which builds steadiness on one side at a time.

### How to do it

- 1 Find the lunge**  
Front knee over the ankle at about ninety degrees. Feet hip-width apart, not on one line.
- 2 Lift the back knee**  
Straighten the back leg and press the heel straight back, weight on the ball of the foot.
- 3 Level the hips**  
Hands to the hip points and square them forward. Draw the tailbone down.
- 4 Palms together**  
At the sternum, pressing firmly into each other.
- 5 Revolve from the ribs**  
Exhale and rotate the ribcage toward the front leg, then hook the opposite elbow outside the front thigh.
- 6 Open and look**  
Roll the top shoulder back and look past the top elbow, or down at the floor.

#### COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ Feet on one line, which removes the side-to-side base.
- ✗ Levering the elbow into the knee, which pushes a deeply bent, weight-bearing knee inward.
- ✗ Turning the pelvis instead of revolving up top. It looks like the pose and is not.

#### IF THIS IS HARD

Lower the back knee to a folded blanket. That is the low lunge, a real pose and not a lesser one. Widen the stance. Hands can stay at the sternum.

**Go easy** with disc trouble that dislikes rotation, or after knee, hip or spinal surgery. Dropping the back knee solves most of it.

# Tree

## Vrksasana

VRKSA, TREE · ASANA, POSTURE



The foot goes above or below the knee, never on it.

### How to do it

- 1 Stand and ground**  
Both feet down through all four corners, legs awake, weight even.
- 2 Find your point**  
Fix the eyes on something still, straight ahead at eye level, before the foot leaves the floor.
- 3 Shift and press**  
Move the weight into the standing leg and press that foot down firmly. Standing foot points straight ahead.
- 4 Place the foot**  
Sole to the inner calf or the inner thigh. Never against the side of the knee. Toes down with the heel at the ankle is a good third option.
- 5 Press both ways**  
Foot into leg and leg into foot, equally. Keep the pelvis level and facing forward.
- 6 Add the arms**  
Hands at the heart, then overhead if the balance holds. Five breaths, then the other side.

### Helpful tips

- ✓ The steadiness comes from the mutual press of foot and leg, not from the shape.
- ✓ Level the pelvis first, then open the knee as far as it goes. If that is thirty degrees, that is thirty degrees.
- ✓ Lift the lower belly and the side ribs rather than arching the back to get the arms up.

### What it does

- ✓ The standing hip, ankle and the small muscles of the foot work continuously.
- ✓ The trunk works to hold you over one base instead of two.
- ✓ Lengthens the inner thigh and groin of the lifted leg.
- ✓ Trains single-leg balance, which improves with practice at any age.

#### COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ The foot pressed against the side of the standing knee. The knee is a hinge with little sideways strength.
- ✗ Forcing the lifted knee out to the side, which turns the pelvis and tips you over.
- ✗ Turning the standing foot out, which undoes the arch support the pose is building.

#### IF THIS IS HARD

Toes on the floor with the heel against the inner ankle is the steadiest version and a fine place to stay. A wall or a chair back under one hand. The whole thing works seated, with the ankle resting on the opposite shin.

**Go easy** with vertigo, an inner ear problem, or numbness in the feet. Practice within arm's reach of something solid.

# Half Moon

## Ardha Chandrasana

ARDHA, HALF · CHANDRA, MOON · ASANA, POSTURE



The block at its tallest, set forward of the standing foot and outside the little-toe edge. It raises the floor so the chest can lift.

### Helpful tips

- ✓ Turn from the belly, not the top hip. Rolling the top hip back is the single most common cause of the wobble.
- ✓ Press the lifted foot back into an imaginary wall. That resistance is what makes the leg feel light instead of dangling.
- ✓ The bottom hand is a kickstand, not a weight-bearer.

#### COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ Rolling the top hip backward to look open. It turns the pose into a twist and drops the lifted leg behind you.
- ✗ The standing knee collapsing inward, which shears the joint and cancels the hip work.
- ✗ Leaning into the bottom hand and letting the chest sink toward the thigh.

### How to do it

- 1 Set the block**  
Tallest height, six to twelve inches in front of the standing foot and a little outside the little-toe edge. Never under the ankle.
- 2 Bend and shorten**  
From Triangle, bend the front knee deeply and slide the back foot in about half a step. Walk the front hand onto the block.
- 3 Float and straighten**  
Shift into the standing foot and lift the back leg to hip height as the standing leg straightens. Both happen together.
- 4 Track the standing knee**  
Keep the standing thigh turned out so the kneecap points toward the little-toe side, not inward.
- 5 Keep the lifted leg neutral**  
Toes pointing to the side wall, not up. Foot level with the hip, not behind you.
- 6 Open and reach**  
Turn the chest and belly toward the ceiling, top arm straight up. Look down at the front foot, or up only if the neck is easy.

### What it does

- ✓ The standing outer hip works hard. That is the main event.
- ✓ Lengthens the standing leg's hamstrings and inner thigh.
- ✓ The side of the trunk holds the chest open against gravity.
- ✓ Trains balance and body position sense on one leg at a time.

#### IF THIS IS HARD

Back to a wall, with the lifted foot, hip and head lightly touching it. This is the standard way to learn it, not a lesser version. Use a cork or wood block rather than soft foam. A chair under the bottom hand raises the floor further still.

**Go easy** after a hip or knee replacement, with osteoporosis, with high blood pressure, or with vertigo. Keep the gaze down rather than turning the head up.

# Warrior III

## Virabhadrasana III

VIRA, HERO · BHADRA, AUSPICIOUS · ASANA, POSTURE



Alicia is rising into it here. The finished pose is one long line from the crown to the lifted heel.

### How to do it

#### 1 Shift forward

From a lunge, move the weight onto the front foot until the shin is upright.

#### 2 Keep the standing knee soft

Press through the ball of the foot and leave a small bend rather than locking the knee.

#### 3 Lift the back leg

To about hip height, reaching through the heel as though pressing a wall behind you.

#### 4 Level the hips

Both hip points parallel to the floor. Turn the lifted thigh in so the toes point straight down.

#### 5 Lengthen

Draw the lower belly in so the low back does not sag, and reach from the crown through the lifted heel.

#### 6 Choose the arms

Forward alongside the ears, or palms at the heart, which is easier. Eyes on the floor just ahead.

### Helpful tips

- ✓ Height of the back leg matters least. Hip height with level hips beats shoulder height with a rolled pelvis.
- ✓ Lift from the back of the shoulders rather than reaching from the fingertips. It keeps the chest from dropping.
- ✓ Hands on a chair back is not training wheels. It is how most people should learn this.

### What it does

- ✓ The standing outer hip stops the pelvis dropping on the lifted side.
- ✓ The standing hamstrings and glutes control the descent, then hold it.
- ✓ The back and deep abdominals hold the trunk level.
- ✓ Lengthens the standing leg's hamstrings.

#### COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ Locking the standing knee. It moves the load off muscle and blocks the small corrections balance needs.
- ✗ Hiking the lifted hip so the body rolls open. The outer hip work you came for stops.
- ✗ Sagging in the low back with the chest dropped. This is where people feel it the next day.

#### IF THIS IS HARD

Hands on a wall at hip height, or on the back of a sturdy chair. Keep the standing knee visibly bent and lift the back leg only to knee height. Back toes can stay lightly touching the floor behind you.

**Go easy** with low back pain unless the hands are supported. This pose is usually not given to brand new students, and there is no hurry.

# Dancer

## Natarajasana

NATA, DANCER · RAJA, KING. NATARAJA IS SHIVA AS THE COSMIC DANCER.



A strap around the foot does everything the hand does, without the reach. Most people should start there.

### How to do it

#### 1 Stand and check

Feet grounded, inner arches lifting, hip points level.

#### 2 Take the foot

Bend one knee, draw the heel toward the buttock, and hold the ankle or a strap looped round the foot.

#### 3 Keep the knee in

Draw the lifted knee toward the other knee and toward the midline. Do not let it splay out to the side.

### Helpful tips

- ✓ Lift the foot faster than you tip forward. When the chest dives first, this becomes a hinge instead of a backbend.
- ✓ Keep the belly engaged so the lifted hip does not swing open.
- ✓ Aim for an even bend with a lifted chest. Forcing the foot toward the head is not the goal.

### What it does

- ✓ Lengthens the front of the lifted thigh and hip, which simultaneous knee bend and hip extension reaches like nothing else.
- ✓ Opens the chest, the front of the shoulder and the front of the hip.
- ✓ The standing leg and ankle work to hold single-leg balance under load.
- ✓ The back and glutes work to hold the bend.

#### 4 Press back and up

Send the thigh back and up, leading with the inner thigh. The foot lifts faster than the chest travels forward.

#### 5 Lift the chest

Extend the other arm forward and up and let the bend spread through the upper back.

#### 6 Hold your point

Standing leg strong with a soft knee, neck neutral, eyes fixed on something still at eye level.

### COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ The lifted knee splaying out, which turns the pelvis and swaps the thigh stretch for a hip pinch.
- ✗ Cramping in the back of the lifted thigh. Keep the ankle flexed and treat it as a signal to back off, not push through.
- ✗ Diving the chest forward to get the foot higher, which sends the whole bend into the low back.

### IF THIS IS HARD

A strap around the sole removes the reach entirely. One hand on a wall or chair back. Start with the knees bent and together, pressing the foot into the hand without lifting.

**Go easy** here. This is the most demanding pose in the booklet for balance, shoulders and low back. The strap-and-wall version is the pose; the free-standing one is optional.



WHEN YOU ARE READY

# Come practice with me

These ten will keep you busy for a long while.  
When you want company, here is where to find me.

**Classes and membership** are the front door. Small groups, real rooms, no hurry.

**Coaching** is where we work on what is actually going on, one to one.

**Retreats** are the peak of it. If you want real time away to work on your wellness, come with me!

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Everything, including dates and how to book, lives at **calibrationwellness.com**.

Whatever brought you here, I am glad you came.

*Alicia*