

BEGIN YOUR DAY WITH  
**SUN SALUTATION**



CHANGE YOUR LIFE IN LESS THAN 10 MINUTES EACH DAY!

## THE SUN SALUTATION

If you're new to yoga, this is one of the first sets of movements that you may encounter in a yoga class. It is called the Sun Salutation. This is an important series of poses that sets the tone for the rest of your moving practice.

The Sun Salutation is designed to warm up the entire body and prepare you for the continuous movement and postures in a typical yoga session. It incorporates much of the yoga philosophy in this short sequence.

Starting with stillness and silence, the series is an opportunity for the practitioner to set a personal intention for themselves. As you begin to move through the salute, it shifts to a physical practice that results in overall well being. And furthermore, each yoga pose comes with its own meaning. Below is a breakdown of some of the key postures in the Sun Salutation. This is something you try on your own or help you be prepared when you step into a yoga class. The breath, one of the foundations of the yoga practice, is used as a thread to guide the body fluidly from one pose to the next.

Along with the pose description, is a way you can personally connect to the relevance of the pose. Each yoga posture can have a meaning that represents who you are or what you're needing on your life course.

Happy Voyaging!

## MOUNTAIN POSE



The sequence of poses begins with the Mountain Pose. This is the first and last posture of the Sun Salutation. It focuses on the lower parts of your body, strengthening the thighs, knees, and ankles. To get started, stand with your feet about hip distance apart. Feel your feet root strongly into the ground. You may even feel your thigh muscles engage. With your arms down by your side, gently roll your shoulders back. This helps to align your spine and improves your posture. Open your palms forward. Feel the lengthening sensation down your arms. Stand as tall as you can and breathe deeply. The purpose of the pose is to help you feel grounded and connected. It is in this moment that you can set your personal intention (i.e. to feel strong today, to be patient, to be a good listener, etc.) It not only

prepares you for the moving practice ahead, but also sets your mind at ease.

## EXTENDED MOUNTAIN POSE

This next pose involves a slight arching of the back, which is a great way to exercise your shoulder, spine, ribs, and back muscles. From the Mountain Pose, **INHALE**, and extend your arms straight out and up into the air. Feel as if you're reaching for the ceiling. You want to feel a full extension through your arms. This will lengthen the sides of your body. In addition, it will slightly lift your torso to bring some freedom to your low back and hips. Not only do these yoga poses offer physical benefits, but are also influential in meeting your daily and life-long achievements. As you raise your arms in this pose, for example, you can also think about reaching for your goals. As you feel grounded with your feet rooted into the earth, you can reach for things that may seem above and beyond you, but know that these goals are attainable.



## FORWARD FOLD

The Forward Fold is a type of bend that is useful in stretching all the limbs and rear muscles of the body. As you **EXHALE**, extend your arms out to the side (like you're a bird spreading its wings) and slowly fold at the hips down toward your toes. Suggestion: bend your knees as you fold forward. This will protect your back and legs. The picture depicts a yogi with her hands flat on her yoga mat. As a beginner, you may not be able to fully fold this deeply. Instead, rest your hands on your knees or thighs. This fold can also represent an honoring of yourself; you are essentially bowing to yourself.

This is a wonderful way to show appreciation for yourself (something we forget to do.) Let this pose be a reminder that you are very important and have a lot to offer.

## PLANK POSE

This next set of moves stretches the groin, quadriceps, legs, and hips, while also strengthening the back. Before you step into the next posture, take a full **INHALE** to re-extend your spine. For this pose, you may slide your hands up to your shins, knees, or thighs. As you **EXHALE**, bend the knees deeply so that you can place your hands on the yoga mat then step back into Plank Pose shown here. You want to draw a strong straight line in your body.



Be mindful of your midsection. Suggestion: lift your hips slightly so that you don't collapse into your low back. Keeping the hips at about shoulder level in Plank Pose will allow you to engage your core. This posture is dedicated to strengthening the entire body, particularly your upper body. This pose really is a symbol of strength. Not only strength in your body, but also being strong in your mind and spirit. It's an energetic and powerful posture and that should also be a representation of who you are: energetic, strong, and powerful.

## FOUR LIMBED STAFF POSE

This pose strengthens and tones the entire body while helping teach important alignment. Before you start, take a full **INHALE** to create more length in your whole body. Now, as you **EXHALE**, bend your elbows as if you're completing a push-up. If you feel that you don't have enough upper body strength to lower your body with control, simply place your knees on the floor then bend your elbows.



As you bend them, hug them in toward your ribs. This is a challenging movement and posture. Don't worry if you don't master it right away. It takes time and practice before your body builds the full strength to do this and other postures. The picture showed the yogi hovering over the floor. It is perfectly fine to come all the way down to the ground in this posture. Much like Plank Pose, this posture symbolizes your own strength. It articulates how dynamic you are as a person and your willingness to take challenges.

## UPWARD FACING DOG

After you have completed the push-up, **INHALE** and push your palms firmly into the mat to lift your upper body (including your chest, belly, and hips) off the floor. You will be forming a back-bend, which is a posture that works the entire body, from the muscles of the neck to the shoulders, arms, back, and abdomen.



At the top of the position, as pictured, your arms will be fully extended, your legs will be long behind you. Again, this is a lot to ask of your body if you're still new to this yoga sequence. To modify the position, keep the elbows slightly bent and don't feel obligated to bring your upper body to a full perpendicular position. If you're at an angle, that's perfectly fine. Also, you can rest your knees on the floor. This posture offers a sense of direction and focus. Another version of this pose is called Cobra Pose and if we think about the nature of the cobra, they have keen and heightened senses. You can borrow those traits from the cobra: you, too, can be dedicated and driven when it comes to moving forward on your personal life goals.

## DOWNWARD FACING DOG

Our last unique pose will aid in stretching your shoulders, hands, hamstrings, calves, and arches of your feet. It also strengthens the arms, legs, and ankles, reducing stiffness and relieving pain.



As you **EXHALE**, you will flow from your Upward Facing Dog position to a Downward Facing Dog posture. As you breathe out, push your hands into the floor while your hips lift up into the air (with knees slightly bent). You'll end up in an inverted "V" shape. Make sure your hands are pressing flat into the yoga mat, your arms are straight, and for the most part, keep your back flat. Keeping your knees bent will allow you to push your hips up into the air maintaining that length in the spine. Your heels do not have to touch the floor. It's ok if you are on your tip toes.

It is common to hold this pose for a few breaths. This posture works just about every part of your body. It helps with upper body strength, core conditioning, and it lengthens and stretches the legs. And because you are holding this pose a little longer than the others in the sequence, it allows for a moment of inner reflection. In this inverted position, you can close your eyes and look inward. Let your breaths help remind you of your intentions you set for your yoga practice.

## FORWARD FOLD

While in Downward Facing Dog, INHALE to prepare your body to make the next move. As you EXHALE, you have the option of walking or jumping both feet back up to the top of your mat near your hands. You will return to a Forward Fold position (pictured above). INHALE to re-extend your spine. (For this, you can slide your hands up the legs to your shins or knees.) EXHALE to lower your way back down slightly. As the series continues, you are now returning to postures you have already completed. As you come to your Forward Fold again, take that moment to honor yourself.



## EXTENDED MOUNTAIN POSE

From here, you will be returning to a standing position. To do it safely, it is suggested that you bend your knees deeply (dropping your hips like you're about to sit down in a low chair), set your weight back onto your heels, extend your arms out to the side, then take a full INHALE and stand up tall until you've returned to a standing position with your arms in the air. (Pictured above.) Tell yourself, "*I can reach my goals.*"

## MOUNTAIN POSE

EXHALE and lower your arms back down by your side or bring your hands to a prayer position at your heart. Pause here as you return to this meditative space. You can also think of the return to Mountain Pose as a return home. We all have our life journeys and they take us in all different directions. Sometimes, one may feel a little lost, afraid, or confused on that big open road. But remember to create that "home base;" that solid foundation that you can call home. When things get rough out there, remember that you can return home: Mountain Pose.

You can see that the Sun Salutation is a full-circle flow of the body through various postures that repeat and bring you back to your original position. Do this sequence 2-5 times as a good way to warm up your entire body. This is just a portion of the Sun Salutation, but it can also be considered a full yoga practice. If you're practicing on your own, but don't have a lot of time, try this short sequence 2 or 3 times to get your body and breath moving. It stimulates the whole body with very good results and benefits. And as you can see, not only are there physical results to practicing this series, there are benefits that influence other aspects of your life. Each yoga pose has its own story and relevance. But you can have great ownership of your own yoga practice. You can choose when and where to practice and give your own meaning to each of the poses as you move through them. That is the true nature of yoga: it's about YOU and your own self-development and growth.

