

Asana

Sun Salutation

Surya Namaskar

Starting Position: stand erect on the upper edge of your yoga mat, with your feet close to each other and parallel, your hands with the palms separated, fingertips joined and placed at the level of your heart; lungs full.



1 - While exhaling, join your palms together.

Your forearms remain aligned and slightly away from your torso in order to further refine and stabilize your sense of balance. Keep your feet close to each other and parallel on the external edge; weight uniformly distributed.

2 - While inhaling, extend your whole body from your heels to the back of your head; your big toes press into the ground; your pelvis move forward; your knees do not bend and your glutei close inwards. Your upper body opens when you move your arms to the sides, thumbs pointing backwards. Your chin stretches upwards at the end of the movement.

When suffering from problems in the cervical area, don't stretch your neck; if you are having shoulder problems, keep your hands in the Namaskara Mudra.





3 – Holding your breath, move back to the vertical position. While exhaling, bend forward into the Intense Pose (your barycentre slides backwards).

4 – While inhaling, take a long step backward with your right foot; keeping it in line with the external side of the hip or slightly more open. Foot, knee and hip in line; heel aligned with toes.



The energy moves from your heel up towards the back of your head, as though your heel is pressing back on a pedal sustained by a spring. Your hands stay in contact with the ground only through the middle fingers, your pelvis slides forward and further down; your shoulders relax down towards your hips.

Your chin moves away from your chest only in the final phase. Your head rises because of the delicate traction of skin and connective tissue of the back.

5 – Come into Meru Mountain Pose, while holding your breath. Your arms, head and chin are aligned.

If it is difficult to perform this position with a full retention (old-age, respiratory issues), exhale during the execution and then inhale while staying in the pose for few seconds.





6 - While exhaling, move into the Eight Points Pose (Ashtanga Asana). The points of contact are: toes, knees, chest and chin (or forehead).

Your pelvis is lifted 15 cm off the ground. If suffering from problems in the cervical area, rest your nose or forehead on the ground.

The pose can be assumed by moving straight downwards. For those with less arm strength, rest first your knees and then the other parts on the ground by sliding the body downwards. In this way, the load on your arms is almost non-existent.

7 - Inhaling, move to the Cobra Pose (2). If possible, start with your heels together. The body only slides forwards, never backwards. Your shoulders stay low from the beginning, lowering them later is incorrect; if the need to lower them is realized, it is better to start again from the beginning. Your glutei should be completely clenched before your back starts arching. Engage Mula Bandha. Your gaze is directed towards the center of the forehead.



8 - Exhaling, move into the Meru Mountain Pose.

Your arms, head and chin are on the same line. The sit bones point upwards. Your abdomen is naturally pulled in and up. Your gaze is directed towards the central point between the feet. The downward press of your hands is constant.

9 – Inhaling, bring your right foot next to the corresponding hand; your fingers and toes are on the same line. If you are finding the transition difficult, first bring your thigh against your abdomen and then move your body forward.

Always remember to lift your right palm in order to make space for the foot.



10 – Exhaling, step your left foot next to the right one and perform the Intense Pose.

Your barycentre slides backwards, legs remaining straight. Your belly, chest and face are in contact with your thighs.

Check if your feet are correctly aligned and parallel.



11 – Inhaling, move to the vertical position, bring your hands upwards, close your glutei inwards and push forward with your pelvis (remember to lower the diaphragm) thus creating an arc shape with the whole body from your heels to the back of your head.

It is also possible to keep your hands in Namaskar Mudra or to open your arms laterally.

Your big toes push into the ground symmetrically. Your chin is kept in contact with your chest until the last phase of the movement (when it rises) following the opening of the rest of the body.

12 – Exhaling, move back to the erect position and join your hands in front of your heart.

Your forearms remain parallel and away from the torso; index fingers pointing up.



In order to balance the movement of your legs, Sun Salutation is performed by moving the right leg forwards and backwards one time, and then switching to the left leg; the repetitions are always in even numbers; executing from 12 up to 24 repetitions is a good practice.

Sun Salutation is best executed in front of the rising sun so as to get in touch with the pure energy of the dawn and with its symbolic virtues of renovation and regeneration. In any case, the exercise can also be practiced with great benefit at any point in the day by activating its symbolic meaning.

Contraindications: the Sun Salutation sequence is very stimulating and tends to overload the lumbar area, cervical area and the knees a little. Collateral effects are avoidable by practicing correctly and slowing down the execution, keeping the focus on elongation. Avoid when suffering from slipped discs. In the case of eye and ear related pathologies, skip the retention. If you are having problems or pain in the lumbar region, during the execution of the Intense Pose bend your knees as much as necessary.

Benefits: it is a very effective exercise both on the physical and psychic level; this sequence together with Moon Salutation represents a complete practice.