Ashtanga Yoga Asana Practise Sheets

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Introduction to Ashtanga Yoga

Said to have been first described in an ancient text called *Yoga Korunta*, Ashtanga Yoga is a disciplined practice of the body and mind, whose aim is to discover our True Self and thus live in harmony with the Universe. It's about manifesting a rhythmic flow of energy and awareness, that enables us to feel connected, whilst promoting good health and heightened spiritual, physical and emotional well-being.

Around two thousand years ago, the Indian sage *Patanjali* composed a work called *Yoga Sutras*, which attempts to outline and standardise Classical Yoga. Expounding upon *Raja Yoga* (how to redefine the mind to serve our needs), Patanjali's underlying principle is the Eight Limbs of Classical Yoga, which can lead to liberation.

These eight limbs are: *Yamas* (ethical behavioural codes: *ahimsa* non-violence; *satya* truth; *asteya* not stealing; *brahmacharya* appropriate sexual conduct; *aparigraha* non-greed); *Niyamas* (personal behavioural observances: *saucha* cleanliness of body and mind; *santosha* contentment with what one has; *tapas* austerities and disciplines; *svadhyaya* self study; *isvara pranidhana* surrender and acceptance without expectation); *Asana* (postural practice, to detoxify and open the body and mind); *Pranayama* (vital life force, or breath control and expansion); *Pratyhara* (withdrawal of the senses from external stimulation); *Dharana* (concentration of the mind); *Dhyana* (meditation: focusing the mind on a single entity) and *Samadhi* (a higher state of conscious awareness, where the mind goes beyond the object of meditation and the individual self).

Ashtanga means eight limbs, thus each of these four external and four internal disciplines make up the Ashtanga Yoga practice. For most people, the easiest way to access Ashtanga Yoga, is via the postural practice (the third limb).

The asana method is characterised by the powerful, synchronised breathing and movement system (*vinyasa*); gaze points (*dristi*) and internal energy locks (*bandhas*). The aim of the Ashtanga asana practice is to attain the perfect alignment of the breath, dristi and movement (known as *tristhana*) and through doing so, develop a moving meditation. Throughout the practice, very slow inhalations and exhalations through the nose, allow *prana* (vital energy) to be carried around the subtle body. Coupled with the correct execution of *tristhana*, stagnant energy in the *nadi* (energy channels) and around the *chakras* (energy centres), will be freed and physical or mental disturbances, dissolved.

Through regular practise of a precise sequence of flowing asanas, the body becomes flexible, powerful and light; toxins are removed and the blood cleaned. Many ailments may be improved. Slow controlled breathing and deep concentration create incredible focus and a strong quiet mind, resulting in a feeling of calmness and peace.

In today's asana system (in the tradition of Sri K Pattabhi Jois) there are six series of Ashtanga Yoga asanas: Primary (*Yoga Chikitsa*) to detoxify, balance, open and strengthen the body; Intermediate (*Nadi Sodhana*) to purify the nervous system; Advanced A, B, C and D (*Shhira Bhaga Samapta*) to demonstrate high levels of strength, flexibility, grace and humility. When one asana is mastered in a controlled graceful manner (with calm deep breathing), the next is added until a complete series is practised regularly. The format of the practice comprises the Suryanamaskara Sequences; the Standing Sequence; whichever "Series" the practitioner is working on; Back Bends and the Finishing Sequence. It takes most people, many years to master the *Primary Series*, with its surrounding sections.

With time (as the body and mind purify, grow stronger and become more open), the other aspects of Ashtanga Yoga transpire organically, allowing us to find our true nature and connection to the Universe.

The home of Ashtanga Yoga in the tradition of Sri K Pattabhi Jois, is the *KPJ Ashtanga Yoga Institute* in Mysore, South India. kpjayi.org
Vinyasa Sequences

(synchronised movement & breathing sequences, that gracefully link asanas together)

“Samasthiti”
“Uttanasana A”
“Urdhva Vrksasana”
“Uttanasana B”
“Chaturanga Dandasana”
“Urdhva Mukha Svanasana”
“Adho Mukha Svanasana”
“Jump or Step”

(F) Full Vinyasa: takes the form of Suryanamaskara A, until jumping or stepping into the state of the next asana eg: before “Utkatasana”

(S) Samasthiti: ‘equal standing’ or neutral position eg: at the beginning of “Full Vinyasana”

(H) Half Vinyasa: uses the middle section of Suryanamaskara A, from jumping into Chaturanga, until jumping or stepping into the next asana eg: after “Utkatasana” lift up & jump back

“Lift Up”
“Jump Back”

(V) Vinyasa from Sitting: jumping back & jumping through eg: after “Pascimottanasana C or D”

“Jump Through”

exhale

“Inhale & Push”

exhale

inhale

exhale

inhale

“Inhale & Push”

exhale

inhale

exhale

inhale

“Jump Through”

(C) Cakrasana: vinyasa from lying down eg: after “Supta Padangusthasana”

exhale
Dristi nose unless otherwise stated

Suryanamaskara A & B
(5 of each)

A (x 5)
1. ekam inhale thumbs
2. dve exhale
3. trini inhale
4. catvari exhale
5. panca inhale
6. sat exhale navel (5 breaths)
7. sapta inhale
8. astau exhale
9. nava inhale thumbs

B (x 5)
1. ekam inhale thumbs
2. dve exhale
3. trini inhale
4. catvari exhale
5. panca inhale
6. sat exhale navel
7. sapta inhale thumbs
8. astau exhale
9. nava inhale

10. dasa exhale
11. ekadasa inhale thumbs
12. dvadasa exhale
13. trayodasa inhale
14. caturdasa exhale navel (5 breaths)
15. pancadasa inhale
16. sodasa exhale
17. saptadasa inhale thumbs

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Standing Sequence

1. "Padangusthasana" (5 breaths) dristi: inhale
2. "Padahastasana" (5 breaths) dristi: inhale
3. "Uttihita Trikonasana A" (5 breaths) hand
4. "Uttihita Trikonasana B" (5 breaths) hand
5. "Uttihita Parsvakonasana A" (5 breaths) hand
6. "Uttihita Parsvakonasana B" (5 breaths) hand
7. "Prasarita Padottanasana A, B, C, D" (5 breaths)
8. "Parsvottanasana" (5 breaths) toe
9. "Uttihita Hasta Padangusthasana" (5 breaths) toe
10. "Ardha Baddha Padmottanasana" (5 breaths) toe
11. "Utkatasana" (5 breaths) thumbs
12. "Virabhadrasana A" (5 breaths) thumbs
13. "Virabhadrasana B" (5 breaths) hand

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First Half of Primary Series

Drishti nose, unless otherwise stated

“Dandasana” (5 breaths) dristi:

“Pascimottanasana A, B, C, D” (5 breaths) toes

practise C or D

“Purvottanasana” (5 breaths) toes

“Ardha Baddha Padma Pascimottanasana” (5 breaths) toes dristi:

“Triyanga Mukhaikapada Pascimottanasana” (5 breaths) toes

“Janu Sirsasana A” (5 breaths) toes

“Janu Sirsasana B” (5 breaths) toes dristi:

“Janu Sirsasana C” (5 breaths) toes

“Maricasana A” (5 breaths) toes

“Maricasana B” (5 breaths) toes

“Maricasana C” (5 breaths) toes dristi:

“Maricasana D” (5 breaths) toes dristi:

“Navasana” (5 breaths) toes dristi:

repeat Navasana sequence 4 times

(Lolasana) inhale

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Second Half of Primary Series

1. Dristi nose, unless otherwise stated
2. “Bhujapidasana” (5 breaths)
3. “Kurmasana” (5 breaths) third eye or nose
4. “Supta Kurmasana” (5 breaths)
5. “Garbha Pindasana” roll clockwise in circle (5 breaths)
6. “Kukkutasana” (5 breaths) exhale back & inhale up (5-9 times)
7. “Baddha Konasana” (5 breaths)
8. “Upavistha Konasana A, B” (5 breaths) dristi third eye or nose
9. “Urdhva Mukha Pascimottanasana” inhale up (5 breaths)
10. “Setu Bandhasana” (5 breaths)

Inhale:

- “Bhujapidasana”
- “Kurmasana”
- “Garbha Pindasana”
- “Kukkutasana”
- “Upavistha Konasana A, B”
- “Urdhva Mukha Pascimottanasana”

Exhale:

- “Bhujapidasana”
- “Kurmasana”
- “Garbha Pindasana” roll clockwise in circle
- “Kukkutasana”
- “Urdhva Mukha Pascimottanasana”

Third eye or nose:

- “Kurmasana”
- “Upavistha Konasana A, B”
- “Urdhva Mukha Pascimottanasana”

Drsti:

- “Garbha Pindasana”
- “Upavistha Konasana A, B”
- “Ubdhaya Padangusthasana”

Toe:

- “Kukkutasana”
- “Supta Konasana”
- “Supta Padangusthasana”
- “Ubdhaya Padangusthasana”

Right:

- “Supta Padangusthasana”

Left:

- “Ubdhaya Padangusthasana”

5-9 times:

- “Garbha Pindasana” roll clockwise in circle

C:

- “Ubdhaya Padangusthasana”
- “Supta Padangusthasana”
Back Bending

Drists nose, unless otherwise stated

**Urdhva Dhanurasana**
- Inhale up (5 breaths)
- Exhale
- Navel or floor

**Cakrasana**
- Inhale
- Exhale
- Navel or floor

**Drop Backs**
- Inhale
- Exhale
- Navel or floor
- Repeat Drop Back sequence twice more

**Tirieng Mukha Uttanasana**
- Inhale
- Exhale dangle
- Inhale catch legs
- 5 breaths

**Pascimattanasana**
- Inhale
- Exhale toes
Finishing Sequence

- **Salamba Sarvangasana**
  (10-25 breaths)

- **Halasana**
  (8-10 breaths)

- **Karna Pidasana**
  (8-10 breaths)

- **Urdhva Padmasana**
  (8-10 breaths)

- **Pindasana**
  (8-10 breaths)

- **Matsyasana**
  (8-10 breaths)

- **Uttana Padasana**
  (8-10 breaths)

- **Sirsasana**
  (15-25 breaths)

- **Optional: Head off floor, 10 breaths**

- **Exhale**

- **Balasana**
  (8-10 breaths)

- **Baddha Padmasana**
  (10 breaths)

- **Yoga Mudra**
  (10 breaths)

- **Padmasana**
  (10-25 breaths)

- **Utputhih**
  (10 breaths)

- **Take Rest**
  eyes closed
Opening invocation

OM
VANDE GURUNAM CHARANARAVINDE
SANDARSIYA SVATMA SUKAVA BODHE
NIH SREYASE JANGALIKAYAMANE
SAMSARA HALAHALA MOHASANTYAI
ABAHU PURUSAKARAM
SANKHACAKRASI DHARINAM
SAHASRA SIRASAM SVATAM
PRANAMAMI PATANJALIM
OM

Om
I bow to the lotus feet of our great teacher
who uncovers our true self and awakens happiness.
Like a Jungle physician, he brings complete well-being
and can heal the poison of conditioned existence and illusion.
His torso is human. Carrying a conch,
a discus and a sword,
having a thousand bright heads,
I bow to Patanjali
Om

Closing chant (Mangala Mantra)

SVASTI PRAJABHYAH PARIPALAYANTAM
NYAYENA MARGENA MAHIM MAHISAH
GO BRAHMANEKBHYAH SUBHAMASTU NITYAM
LOKAH SAMASTAH SUKHINO BHAVANTU
OM SANTIH SANTIH SANTIHI

May all be well with mankind. May all the leaders of the world
protect in every way, that keeps to the right path.
May there be goodness for those who know the earth to be sacred.
May all the worlds be happy.
Om, Peace, peace, peace