

core values

Take a playful approach to building strength and flexibility in your torso.



Arm balances require more than Popeye's strength. Just ask senior Iyengar teacher John Schumacher. "Hardly anyone can muscle their way into arm balances," he says. Schumacher describes some of his students as men who are strong enough to do 100 Sun Salutations but who can't do an arm balance because they lack the flexibility to get their arms and legs into position. He also teaches a lot of flexible people who need to develop more strength. Schumacher came up with the sequence on the following pages to help you increase both **strength and flexibility**.

The sequence will definitely work your abdominal muscles and build core strength, even in your spinal muscles. Once you've toned your core, you'll put it to the test in the arm balances. You'll need to use your strength and flexibility for a key action you'll do in the last four poses: tucking your abdominals up and in toward your spine. Yoga students are often instructed to lengthen the spine, but here Schumacher wants you to move your sacrum away from your lumbar spine and "tuck" inward as you round or curl. Visualize wrapping yourself around a beachball, he advises.

Even when practicing taxing poses, Schumacher encourages having a playful, adventurous attitude. "Kids will try to stand on their heads, laugh, and have fun—not get mad—and try again," he says. Infuse your practice with this spirit of playfulness and realize that you might not get a pose right away. "But try to learn about yourself as you play," Schumacher says. "See if you can maintain equanimity as you discover what your response is to a difficult situation." DIANE ANDERSON

to begin

Set an intention Sit in Virasana (Hero Pose) and become clear about your intention. This is a challenging practice, but resolve to be more interested in learning about yourself than in "getting" the pose. Keep a playful nature in mind and enjoy yourself.

to finish

Unfold Practice Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward-Facing Dog Pose) and a few simple backbends to balance the spine. Lie in Supta Baddha Konasana (Reclining Bound Angle Pose) to soften the groin and abdomen. Then stretch your legs into Savasana (Corpse Pose).

1 Tadasana (Mountain Pose)

Stand with the inner edges of your feet touching each other. Spread the balls of your feet, press your heels firmly into the floor, and lengthen your inner ankles upward. Draw your tailbone down and forward into the pelvis and move your groins back. Reach toward the floor with your arms. Stay for 1 minute.



2 Utkatasana (Chair Pose)

From Tadasana, lift your arms overhead. Bend your knees so your thighs are as nearly parallel to the floor as possible. Keep your heels heavy and continue to move your tailbone down and forward. Lift your abdomen and chest away from the inner groins and reach up through your arms. Stay for 30 seconds to a minute.

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together. Tilt your knees to the right. When you feel your left waist begin to lift, revolve your abdomen back to the left and lower your left waist toward the floor. Go as far to the right as you can, continuing to revolve the abdomen and to lower the left waist. Stay for 30 seconds to 1 minute. Come to center and change sides. Repeat 3 times.

5 Supta Padangusthasana (Reclining Hand-to-Big-Toe Pose)

Lie on your back. Keep your left leg on the floor and raise your right leg. With your right hand, catch your big toe, or place a strap around the ball of your foot, and stretch the leg straight up to the sky. Place your left hand on your left thigh. Pull your straight right leg toward your head. Slide your left hand down your left thigh toward your knee and lift your chest and head toward your right leg. Stay for 1 to 2 minutes. Come down and change sides.

3 Urdhva Prasarita Padasana (Leg Lifts)

Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet on the floor. Stretch your arms overhead and place the backs of your hands on the floor. Raise your knees to your chest and stretch your legs up perpendicular to the ceiling (90 degrees). Press the sides of your waist toward the floor. Lower your legs halfway to the floor (45 degrees) while moving your tailbone away from your lower back and pressing your low back into the floor. Hold for 3 breaths then raise your legs back to 90 degrees. Keep the sides of the waist down to avoid back strain. Repeat 3 to 10 times. As you get stronger, you can lower the legs from 45 degrees all the way to just above the floor.

4 Jathara Parivartanasana (Revolved Abdomen Pose)

Lying on your back, stretch your arms out to your sides with your palms up. Bend your knees and lift them to your chest. Keep both shoulder blades on the floor and your knees

6 Paripurna Navasana (Full Boat Pose)

Sit in Dandasana (Staff Pose), with your hands on the floor by your hips. Stretch your legs straight on the floor. Lean back and raise your straight legs until your feet are at eye level. Balance just behind your sitting bones and raise your arms to shoulder level, with your palms facing each other. Lift your chest and hold for as long as you can (up to 1 minute).

7 Ardha Navasana (Half Boat Pose)

Sit in Dandasana and interlock your fingers behind your head. Tilt your pelvis back, lower your sacrum halfway to the floor, and move your tailbone toward your heels. Lift your side ribs and move your sternum toward your feet. Your spine



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will flex in this pose. Hold for 30 seconds. Keeping your legs straight, lift your feet to chest level, keeping your lower back slightly rounded.

8 Lolasana (Pendant Pose)

Sit in Dandasana with hands pressed to the floor. Lift your buttocks, bend your right knee, and sit on your right foot. Lean back, lift your right knee, bend your left knee, and tuck your left calf under your right shin with your feet as close together as possible and your toes pointed back. Lean forward and lift the side of your waist toward the ceiling. Press your palms down, stretch your arms, and lift your legs up from the floor toward your chest. Engage your core by lifting your navel to your spine. Hold as long as you can and repeat a few times.

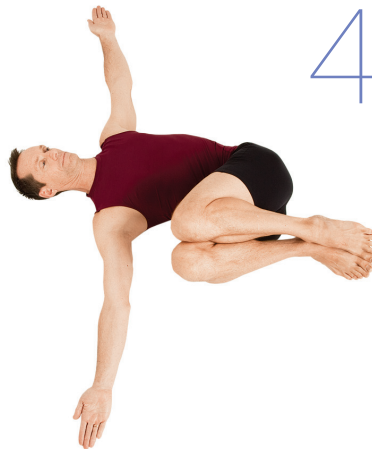
9 Malasana (Garland Pose)

Stand in Tadasana. Bend your knees and squat, keeping your feet together but separating your knees. Lean forward and lower your waist between your thighs. Wrap your arms around your shins, press your upper shins into your armpits, and grasp your ankles. Pull your head toward your feet and roll your tailbone toward your heels. Hold for 30 seconds to 1 minute.

10 Bakasana (Crane Pose)

Come into a squat. Lift your heels, lean forward, and bring the backs of your armpits onto your shins near your knees. Place your palms shoulder-width apart, lean farther forward, and lift your feet up off the floor. Pull your heels toward your buttocks and roll your tailbone toward your heels. Lift your upper back toward the ceiling and stretch your arms. Breathe here for as long as you're able. Hold for as long as you can and do a couple of repetitions.

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cut out
and save!