

# How to Perform a Sun Salutation in Yoga

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## Background

A sun salutation, in ancient Indian texts, refers to a greeting of recognition or respect to the natural presence in each of us. It should be the foundation of any vinyasa style yoga class. It is a sequence of poses that help to set the flow for each yoga class. Ideally, it is performed at the beginning of a class, but can be incorporated at any point as an extension of the opening sequence.

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## Considerations

Safety should be a top priority.

- Pay attention to alignment cues throughout the instructions to avoid any discomfort.
- If something in your body feels uncomfortable or painful, you should immediately get out of the pose.
- As you expand your body, you should inhale your breath. As you collapse it, you should exhale.

By combining the poses of a sun salutation with strong alignment and intentional breath, you create stability and awareness for your mind and body that will follow you into the rest of your yoga routine.

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## Materials

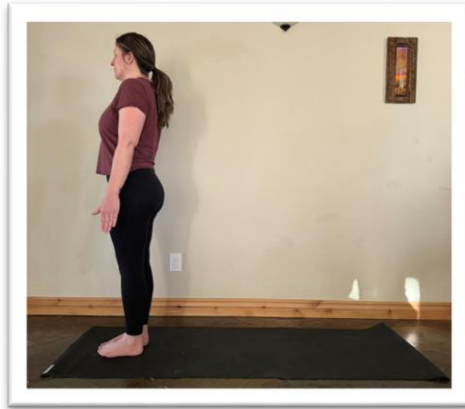
- Yoga Mat
  - Comfortable Clothing
  - Water
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## Safety and Precautions

Those with ongoing injuries in the back, neck, shoulders, or abdomen should talk to a doctor before performing yoga. If you are pregnant, you should also ask your doctor if certain yoga poses are alright to do. Alignment cues to consider for safety are highlighted in red throughout the instructions.

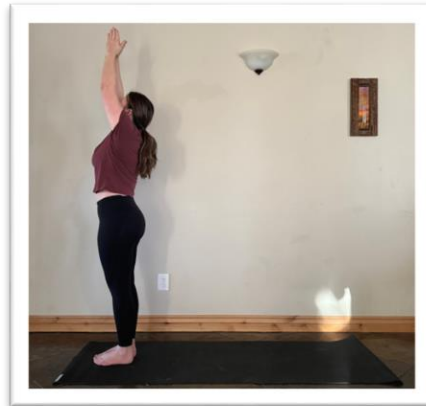
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## Instructions



1. Stand at the front of your mat and bring both feet together. Stretch your hands down to your sides. Activate your leg muscles and keep your spine long. Look straight ahead and breathe through your nose.

Shift your body weight to the center of your feet to balance your weight.



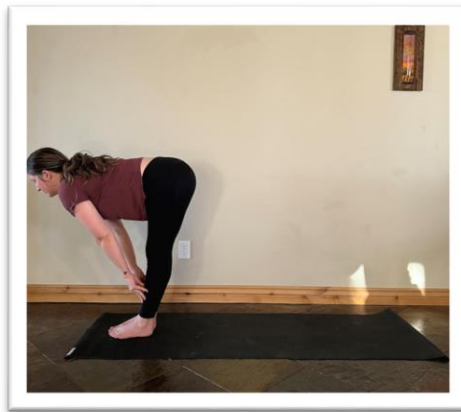
2. **Inhale.** Raise both arms straight up. Bring the palms together. Look up at your thumbs.

Keep belly muscles tight to not over arch your back. Drop your shoulders away from your ears to keep the spine aligned.



3. **Exhale.** Fold your body forward with straight legs. Drop your hands toward the floor. Bring your chest toward your knees. Look toward your toes.

Shift your body weight to the center of your feet to balance your weight. Place the palms of your hands on your thighs, shins, or feet; whichever allows you to feel most comfortable. Relax your shoulder muscles. Bend your knees slightly if you feel too much pulling in the back of your thighs.



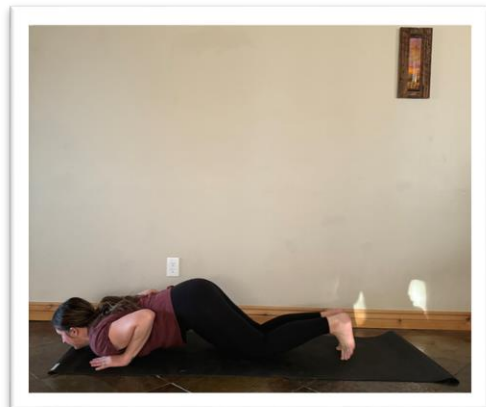
4. **Inhale.** Lift your head and chest to flatten your back. Lift from your palms to your fingertips to exaggerate the stretch in your spine. Look straight ahead.

Keep your hips lined up over your heels. Engage your belly muscles. Soften your jaw muscles.



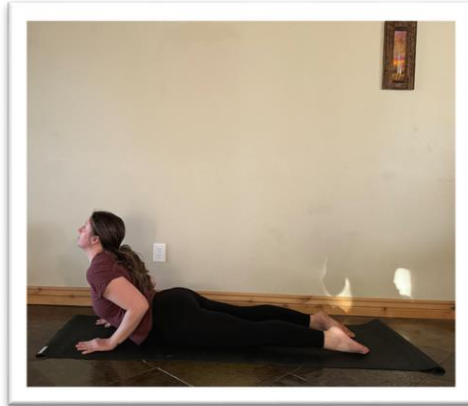
5. **Exhale.** Press your palms into the mat above your feet. (Bend your knees if needed.) Step your feet back into a plank position with straight arms. Create a straight line through the body from the top of the head to the heels. Align your shoulders over your palms. Look straight down. **Inhale.**

Spread your fingers wide for more support. Shift your weight to the thumb and index finger. Keep your belly muscles tight to protect your spine and prevent rounding. Pull your shoulder blades slightly together to open your chest muscles.



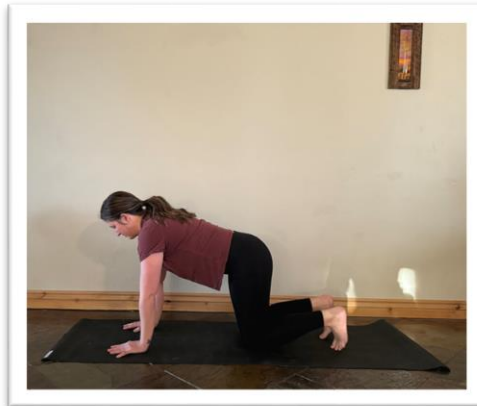
6. **Exhale.** Drop your knees to the mat. Lower your chest and chin to the floor. Look straight ahead.

Keep your shoulders over your palms. Leave your butt high. Tighten your belly muscles to avoid over arching your back. Press your elbows toward your ribs to support your weight.



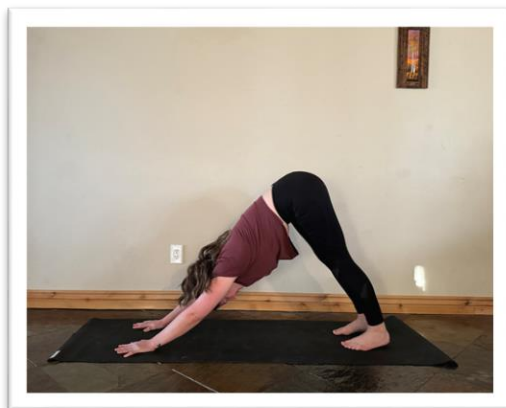
7. **Inhale.** Pull yourself forward and lift through your chest. Keep your elbows bent. Drop your belly to the mat. Roll to the tops of your feet. Lift your chin and look up.

Press your feet and hips into the mat to ground your body. Balance on your palms with elbows drawn into your ribs. Bend deeper into your elbows and look forward instead of up if you feel too much pressure in your spine.



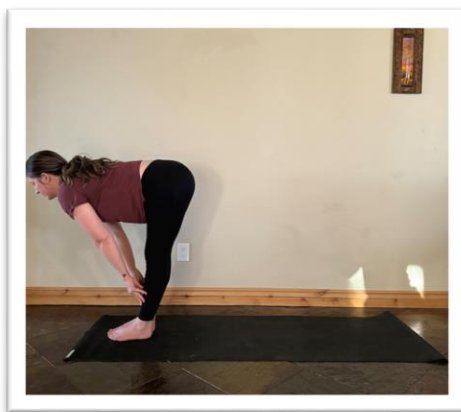
8. **Exhale.** Press into your palms and push your hips back so you are on your hands and knees. Straighten your arms. Tuck your toes and press your heels toward the floor. Look toward the floor. **Inhale.**

Keep your hips over your knees and your shoulders over your palms. Pull your shoulder blades slightly together to open your chest muscles. Straighten your spine.



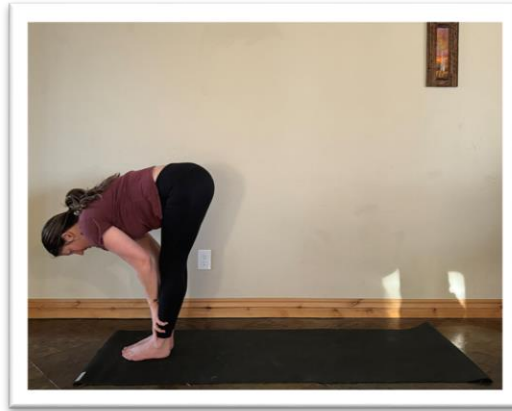
9. **Exhale.** Lift your knees and press your hips back and up toward the sky. Press your heels toward the floor. Straighten your legs. Place your feet hip width apart. Create a straight line through the body from your palms to your hips. Keep your neck aligned with your arms and look toward your toes. **Take 5 deep inhales and exhales.**

Tighten your belly muscles to protect your spine. Rotate your elbows in and create a micro bend so you do not hyperextend them. Bend your knees slightly if you feel too much of a pull in your back or legs. Keep your hips pulled back and your chest drawn toward your legs.



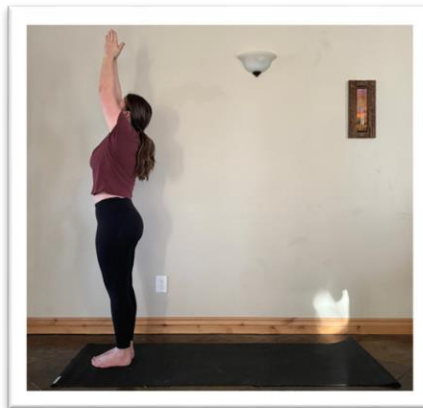
10. **Inhale.** Walk your feet toward your hands to go back into a standing forward fold. (Bend your knees as you do this so you can come all the way forward.) Place your feet together. Lift your head and chest to flatten your back. Straighten your legs. Place your fingertips on your thighs, shins, or feet; whichever allows you to feel most comfortable. Look straight ahead.

Keep your hips lined up over your heels. Engage your belly muscles. Exaggerate the stretch in your spine. Soften your jaw muscles. Relax your shoulder muscles.



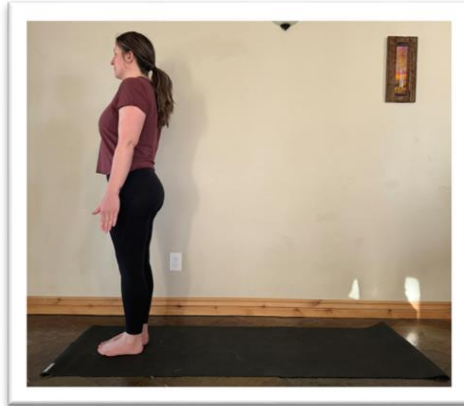
11. **Exhale.** Fold your body forward with straight legs. Drop from your fingertips to your palms. Bring your chest toward your knees. Look toward your toes.

Shift your body weight to the center of your feet to balance your weight. Keep your palms on your thighs, shins, or feet; whichever allows you to feel most comfortable. Relax your shoulder muscles. Bend your knees slightly if you feel too much pulling in the back of your thighs.



12. **Inhale.** Unfold and raise both arms straight up over your head. Straighten your legs. Bring the palms together. Look up at your thumbs.

Keep belly muscles tight to not over arch your back. Drop your shoulders away from your ears to keep the spine aligned. Keep a micro bend in the knees so you do not hyperextend them.



13. **Exhale.** Drop your arms down your side. Lower your chin to straighten your neck. Stand at the front of your mat and keep both feet together. Stretch your fingertips toward the floor. Activate your leg muscles and keep your spine long. Look straight ahead and breathe through your nose.

Relax your shoulders and allow your feet to sink into the mat.

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### What's Next

Now that you have completed a sun salutation, you can incorporate it into any yoga routine you choose.

There are plenty of options online or you can move safely into stretches of your choosing.

You can also repeat the sun salutation up to five times for a great routine by itself.

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