

H2-3 Relaxation Technique: Yoga Poses (Asanas)

General Guidelines: An open mind, empty stomach, and bare feet are recommended. Do not strain or force any movements. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Pay special attention to breath and body alignment. Hold each pose for a minimum of five inhalations/exhalations (about half a minute).

Tadasana—Standing Mountain Pose

1. Stand with your feet completely together, heels and base of big toes touching; weight centered through the front of the heels.
2. Arms at your side (no hands on hips!), fingertips drip down to the floor.
3. Roll your thighbones off one another, pelvis in “neutral” alignment.
4. Broaden your collarbones and roll your shoulders back.
5. Chin level with the floor, keep the crown of the head spiraling upward, spine straight.
6. Engage abdominal muscles.
7. Breathe with the ujjayi breath, in through the nose—out through the mouth with a slight “ha” sound.

Side-Stretch/Warm-up

1. Sit in “Sukhasana” (easy crossed-legged pose). If your hips are higher than your knees, place a towel-roll or folded blanket under your buttocks to level out hips and knees.
NOTE: One leg may be placed out in front of the other if this is too uncomfortable.
2. Inhale both arms overhead, palms face one another.
3. Drop your shoulders on the exhale. Sit tall through the crown of your head.
4. Inhale again, exhale the right arm down to the floor.
5. As you breathe, you inhale and stretch the left arm to the ceiling—exhale and press the right hand into the floor. Stretch the rib cage area, freeing up the intercostal musculature.
6. Raise right arm up and on an inhale after five breaths.
7. Repeat on the second side.

Ardha Chandrasana—Half-Moon Pose

1. Stand in “Tadasana” to begin.
2. As you inhale, lift right arm up at side—palm facing the floor. When you reach shoulder height, rotate right palm up. Bring hand reaching over top of head, fingers going toward the opposite side.
NOTE: Palm will ALWAYS face the floor, thus the reason it is rotated upon reaching shoulder level!
3. Left arm slides down the thigh, reaching the fingertips toward the floor.
4. Imagine your body is being pressed between two panes of glass, keep shoulders and hips aligned.
5. Breathe for five cycles. Repeat on the second side.

Child’s Pose

1. Sit “Japanese Style” buttocks/hips on top of heels.
NOTE: You may place a towel roll or small folded blanket between buttocks and heels if necessary—the buttocks should rest on top of the heels at all times!
2. Raise arms overhead, inhale and fill the lungs.
3. Slowly exhale and lower arms to ground in front of the body, keeping buttocks/hips on the heels.
4. Palms stay outstretched, forearms off the floor. Forehead reaches toward the floor. Gaze is directed at the floor.
5. Breathe here for five cycles, letting the belly sink into the tops of the thighs.

Spinal Twist

1. Sit on floor with legs straight out in front of you, in Dandasana (staff pose), then bend the left leg so that heel comes in contact with the right buttock and the knee stays on the floor.
2. Place right foot on the floor with a bent right knee, so that ankle of the right leg touches the left knee that is still flat on the floor (right ankle can extend just in front of left knee).
3. Inhale and reach left arm straight up into the air, move the right knee out of the way with the biceps of left arm and press the elbow of the left arm against the knee—grasp the knee of the left leg with the palm of the right hand.
4. Gently wrap right arm behind your back, either rest in on the floor or grasp the inner thigh of the left leg if possible.

H2-3 (continued)

5. Turn your head to the right and twist your face and shoulders to the right. Look out of the corner of your right eye.
6. Breathing may become difficult at first, with every inhalation release the posture slightly and then twist deeper with every exhalation.

Shavasana—Relaxation Pose

1. Lie on your back, heels together, toes apart, arms at your side with the palms facing up. Arms should be in a slight “A-Frame” position with the shoulders rolling back into the ground.
2. Keep the eyes closed, sinking them deep into their sockets.
3. Relax all the facial muscles.
4. Breathe deeply, allowing the belly to “go fat,” lifting it with every inhalation—lowering it with every exhalation.
5. Use this time to connect within yourself. Thank your body for allowing you this chance to use it in the practice of yoga. Connect with yourself.
6. Think **ONLY** of the present moment, practice a hand gesture or “mudra” with the thumb and first finger of each hand touching—relax all the other fingers.
7. When through, roll to your side into the fetal position and rest for a few minutes before getting up.

SOURCE: Mueller, D. 2002. Yoga therapy. *Health & Fitness Journal*, published by the American College of Sports Medicine, January/February. Used with permission.