

Surya Namaskar: The Sun Salutation

Level: All Levels

The Sun Salutation, or *Surya Namaskar*, is central to many systems of Hatha Yoga. A flowing sequence of postures linked by the breath, it is an elaborate form of calisthenics that can tone and strengthen the body and warm it up in preparation for other poses. Some systems of yoga, such as the various Vinyasa forms, place great emphasis on the sun salute, either in whole or in part, to link different categories of pose to each other, whereas in other systems, such as the Iyengar method, it is used only occasionally, either to stir up the energy of a flagging class or as a preparation for poses that require upper body strength, such as inversions.



Approach with Caution

It is extremely easy to get carried away with the sun salutation. Moving quickly from pose to pose often means sacrificing attention to detail. Sometimes the idea is presented that as long as you are present and breathing properly, you cannot injure yourself. I would dispute this notion strongly. The major difficulty with the repetitious nature of the sequence is a dulling of awareness and a falling into habit. Better to move slowly and deliberately as you make the complicated transitions from pose to pose, staying mindful and engaged with your body at all times. Be especially careful at the beginning of the

practice, when the body is not fully warmed up and the mind not quite awakened to the body's needs. Step forward and back whenever necessary, especially if the shoulders or back become challenged.

Modify as Necessary

Apply the knowledge of your own body you have acquired in class learning other poses to the sequence.

If the back is tight or sore, or the hamstrings are tight, do *Tadasana* (Mountain Pose) and *Uttanasana* (Intense Stretch Pose) with the feet hip width apart. Go forward from on to the other with the hands on the hips and bend the legs slightly.

If there is any problem with the shoulders, avoid *Chaturanga Dandasana* (Four Limbed Staff Pose) completely and substitute Plank Pose. If the wrists or back are tight, Plank Pose might work as a substitute for *Urdhva Mukha Shvanasana* (Upward Facing Dog Pose) as well.

If in doubt, never feel you *have* to begin with the Sun Salutation. Perhaps beginning with a softer, or even restorative, pose would be more appropriate.

That said, *Surya Namaskar* is a fun and energizing sequence worth practicing whenever a burst of energy is needed.

Simple Sun Salutation 1

Lunge Back
Level: Fundamentals



Tadasana
(Mountain Pose)

INHALE
→



Urdhva Hastasana
(Upward Hands Pose)

EXHALE
→



Uttanasana
(Intense Stretch Pose)

INHALE
→



Lunge
(Right Leg back)

↓
EXHALE



Adho Mukha Shvanasana
(Downward Facing Dog Pose)

←
EXHALE



Urdhva Mukha Shvanasana
(Upward Facing Dog Pose)

←
INHALE



Adho Mukha Shvanasana
(Downward Facing Dog Pose)

↓
INHALE



Lunge
(Left Leg back)

→
EXHALE



Uttanasana
(Intense Stretch Pose)

→
INHALE



Urdhva Hastasana
(Upward Hands Pose)

→
EXHALE



Tadasana
(Mountain Pose)

Simple Sun Salutation 2

Jump Back
Level: Fundamentals



Tadasana
(Mountain Pose)

INHALE
→



Urdhva Hastasana
(Upward Hands Pose)

EXHALE
→



Uttanasana
(Intense Stretch Pose)

INHALE ↓ **EXHALE**



Adho Mukha Shvanasana
(Downward Facing Dog Pose)

EXHALE
←



Urdhva Mukha Shvanasana
(Upward Facing Dog Pose)

INHALE
←



Adho Mukha Shvanasana
(Downward Facing Dog Pose)

INHALE ↓ **EXHALE**



Uttanasana
(Intense Stretch Pose)

INHALE
→



Urdhva Hastasana
(Upward Hands Pose)

EXHALE
→



Tadasana
(Mountain Pose)

“Light on Yoga” Sun Salutation

Level: Intermediate/Advanced



Tadasana
(Mountain Pose)

INHALE
→
EXHALE



Uttanasana
(Intense Stretch Pose)

INHALE
→
EXHALE



Chaturanga Dandasana
(Four Limbed Staff Pose)

↓
INHALE



Urdhva Mukha Shvanasana
(Upward Facing Dog Pose)

←
EXHALE



Chaturanga Dandasana
(Four Limbed Staff Pose)

←
INHALE
EXHALE



Adho Mukha Shvanasana
(Downward Facing Dog Pose)

↓
INHALE
EXHALE



Uttanasana
(Intense Stretch Pose)

→
INHALE



Tadasana
(Mountain Pose)

Ashtanga Vinyasa Sun Salutation (A)

Level: Intermediate/Advanced



Tadasana
(Mountain Pose)

INHALE
→



Urdhva Hastasana
(Upward Hands Pose)

EXHALE
→



Uttanasana
(Intense Stretch Pose)

INHALE ↓ EXHALE



Chaturanga Dandasana
(Four Limbed Staff Pose)

INHALE
←



Urdhva Mukha Shvanasana
(Upward Facing Dog Pose)

EXHALE
←



Adho Mukha Shvanasana
(Downward Facing Dog Pose)

STAY HERE FOR 5 BREATHS

INHALE ↓ EXHALE



Uttanasana
(Intense Stretch Pose)

INHALE
→



Urdhva Hastasana
(Upward Hands Pose)

EXHALE
→



Tadasana
(Mountain Pose)