

FLAT TUMMY YOGA

Your Secret Weapon Yoga Guide For A Sculpted Stomach

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FLAT TUMMY YOGA

*Your Secret Weapon Yoga Guide For A Sculpted
Stomach*

By Julie Schoen

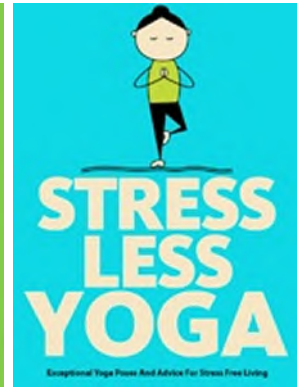
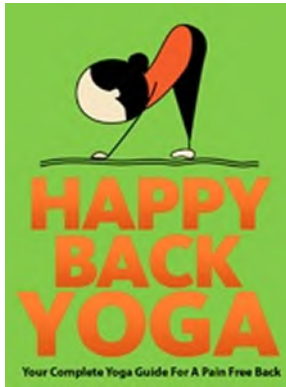
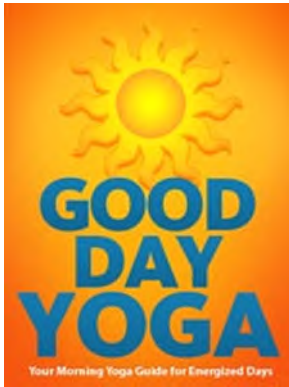
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FLAT TUMMY, HERE I COME!

Flat stomachs are one of the many side effects of yoga. Of course just rolling out your mat and laying in everyone's favorite pose, Savasana, at the end of class isn't going to magically give you a tight tummy. So how does yoga do it?

First of all, not all yoga classes will be able to boast the ability to shrink bellies and tighten abs. The class must incorporate three very important things. First, you have to be able to work up a sweat, burn calories through cardiovascular work. If your heart rate doesn't increase while practicing yoga, you won't benefit from a lean middle. Second, core-strengthening exercises that work *all* of the abdominal muscles must be included. In order to really flatten your tummy, you must work all sections of your core, not just the superficial muscles in the center that are targeted by doing set after set of sit-ups and crunches. A lot of people never get the results they want not because they can't, but simply because they are doing the wrong type of exercises. Lastly, the class must also strengthen the back. If the back is weak, the core won't be able to strengthen and flatten – the front of the body needs the back of the body in order to see results.

One of the awesome aspects of yoga is that, when done correctly, nearly every pose works to strengthen and tone the core. For example, balancing poses make the core work to keep your center of gravity. Forward folds are great for toning the stomach so long as the navel is sucked in towards the spine and then up under the ribcage – this is so often overlooked, but is one of the best ways to flatten your tummy! Backbends help to lengthen the abdominal muscles, giving you a look that is long and lean. On top of all of that, there are some amazing poses in yoga that do an excellent job in strengthening the core and in ways that target crucial muscles that are often neglected in regular “ab-workout” routines.

I gave birth to my son just five months ago and with nothing but lots of yoga, I was able to get my flat tummy back! It really does work!

With consistency and effort, a flat tummy is yours for the taking! And the best part is that you can honestly do it all right from your own living room, with nothing more than a yoga mat and the following sequences.

XOXO

Julie



FLAT TUMMY YOGA FLOW – BURN CALORIES

Benefits: This sequence should be repeated as many times as possible or until you are able to increase your heart rate and work up a bit of a sweat. Burning calories through cardiovascular exercise is one of the keys to getting a flat tummy — no one can see how strong your stomach is if you have a bit too much around the middle! The goal should be to work your way up to doing 10 to 12 of these flows each day.

As you flow from one pose to the next, remember to keep the core engaged – pulling the navel up and in on folds and then using its strength to transition from one to the next. Use the breath to guide you, moving with each inhalation and exhalation. The goal should be to eventually move quickly through the poses. However, feel free to hold a pose longer if it feels good or if you need a little breather.

If jumping back and forward (as shown in the video) is too much for right now, simply step back and forth instead.

1. Tadasana with Anjali Mudra (Mountain Pose with Offering Seal)



Stand at the top of your mat with your hands in Anjali Mudra (palms pressing together at heart center). Feel your feet ground down, balancing the weight of your body through all four corners. It should feel like you are actually pressing the ground away from you. Lengthen both sides of the ankles and gently engage the muscles of the thighs by lifting the kneecaps. Roll the inner thighs back to help create more space in your lower back. Scoop the tailbone down and under to help the spine curve naturally, protecting the lower back from over arching. Feel the vertebrae of the spine naturally stack on top of each other as you lengthen your back by feeling as if someone is pulling you straight up by a string attached to the top of your head. Keep your chin parallel to the ground and the neck long on all four sides.

As you breathe in this pose, feel free to shut your eyes, working on maintaining your center of gravity. Stay in this pose for as long as you'd like – there's a lot of benefit to learning how to stand properly!

2. Urdhva Hastasana (Upward Salute)



Inhale, bring your hands overhead, keeping the shoulders relaxed and bringing your gaze up. Try to keep the same alignment from Tadasana – it's harder when you extend your arms so really pay attention to your hips and lower back. Allow the chest to open and expand evenly across the collarbones and shoulder blades as you feel a gentle stretch through the shoulders.

3. Uttanasana (Standing Forward Bend Image)



Exhale, bending from the hips, bring the hands down to the ground. If your hands do not touch, allow them to rest on your shins or thighs. Allow the head to be heavy so that your neck can relax and lengthen. Keep the legs strong and engaged by pulling the kneecaps up. To more effectively perform this pose, pull the lower abdomen up and in. The spine should feel like it is lengthening as you continue to get deeper and deeper into

the fold.

4. Ardha Uttanasana (Standing Half Forward Bend)



Inhale and bring your hands to your shins. Open the chest forward and gently squeeze the shoulder blades together. Keep your hips directly over the ankles and your gaze forward.

5. Plank Pose



Exhale and hop or step back into Plank Pose, aligning your hands so that they are directly under your shoulders and making sure that your body is parallel with the floor. Engage the core and as you inhale bring your gaze slightly forward.

6. Chaturanga Dandasana (Four-Limbed Staff Pose)



Exhale and lower down to Chaturanga. Keep the body parallel to the mat and the elbows in close to the body. Your elbows should never go above the shoulders in this pose in order to keep the shoulder joint safe. Look forward and keep the neck and spine long. If you need to drop the knees in this pose until you build enough strength feel free to do so.

7. Urdhva Mukha Svanasana (Upward Facing Dog Pose)



Inhale, press up into Upward Facing Dog by rolling the body forward and lifting the hips and legs off the mat. With your hands directly under the shoulders, push the upper body forward between the arms, opening the chest. If there is too much pressure on the lower back in this pose, you can drop the hips and legs down to the ground and practice Bhujangasana (Cobra Pose) instead.

8. Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward Facing Dog)



Exhale, bring the hands back over your head and down on the mat in front of you. Spread the fingers wide and press up into Down Dog by straightening the arms and legs. Press the hands into the mat and lift up and out of the shoulders. Your feet should be hip-width apart with the heels directly behind the toes. Engage the legs by lifting the kneecaps and rolling the inner thighs back. Focus on lengthening the back body, especially the spine, with each breath.

To help loosen the neck, feel free to shake your head up and down, yes and no while in this pose.

9. Tri Pada Adho Mukha Svanasana (Three Legged Downward Facing Dog)



Inhale as you lift one leg up towards the sky, doing your best to keep both hips in one line as you do so. Try to find balance in your body by centering the weight and distributing it evenly between both hands.

10. High Lunge



Exhale and step one foot forward between your hands, lifting into High Lunge. The knee of your front leg should be bent directly over the ankle, making the thigh parallel to the mat. The back leg should be straight and lifted, balancing on the ball of the foot. Lift the arms up overhead, but keep the shoulders and neck relaxed. As you lift your arms, feel your

sides and the space between your ribs lengthen.

Return to Plank ([Pose 5](#)) and repeat the poses on the other side.

11. Utkatasana (Chair Pose)



Inhale as you step the back foot forward to meet the front foot.
(Alternately, you could step back from High Lunge into Plank and repeat Chaturanga Dandasana, Urdhva Mukha Svanasana, and Adho Mukha Svanasana before coming into this pose.)

With the sides of your feet touching, bend your knees as if you are going

with the sides of your feet touching, bend your knees as if you are going to sit down in a chair behind you. Keep the weight in your heels and sit down lower. Raise your arms over your head, making sure that the chest stays lifted and the shoulder joints and neck stay loose and relaxed.

Straighten your legs and return to Tadasana ([Pose 1](#)) to repeat this sequence.



FLAT TUMMY YOGA FLOW – TONE TUMMY

Benefits: This flow targets all of the muscles in the core, helping to sculpt, tone, and flatten tummies of every shape. Make sure, as with all of the flows, to keep the navel pulled in and up in order to reap all of the toning benefits.

1. Ardha Chandrasana Pada Hastasana Series (Half Moon With Hands To Feet Series)







From Tadasana, raise your arms over your head, interlacing the fingers and releasing the index fingers. Squeeze the palms of the hands together and try to keep the biceps close to the ears. Gently push your hips forward as you begin to bend from the hips to the right. Reach the arms back as you continue to press the thighs forward. Keep your chin lifted and the chest open. Hold the pose for five breaths then come back to center before repeating on the other side.

Keeping the hands in the same position, readjust your arms so that the biceps are once again squeezing in towards the ears. Spread across your collarbones and gently press your hips and thighs forward, squeezing the buttocks to protect your lower back as you begin to bend

backwards. Use your fingers to trace a line in the air behind you, dropping your head to follow. Stay in the backbend for as long as you can – although it is tough to take a full, deep breath it is important to not hold your breath.

Slowly come back up to stand when you are finished with the series – repeat if you want!

2. Lunar Uttanasana (Lunar Standing Forward Fold)



Gently bend the knees and fold forward, lowering your chest onto the thighs. Allow the spine to lengthen by keeping the back of the neck long and heavy. This is a great way to release any tension you might be feeling in your back after the previous series, so hang here as long as feels good.

3. Plank Pose



With an exhale, hop or step back into Plank Pose, aligning your hands so that they are directly under your shoulders and making sure that your body is parallel with the floor with strong extended legs. Engage the core and bring your gaze slightly forward.

4. Dolphin Plank



From Plank Pose, lower down onto your forearms while keeping the entire body parallel to the ground. Press your forearms down into your mat so that you can lift your shoulders up and broaden across your shoulder blades. Gaze slightly forward, keeping the neck long. Breathe into your core, tapping into its strength to keep you in this pose for several (6 to 8 complete rounds) breaths.

5. Dolphin Side Plank Series



From Dolphin Plank, keep your forearms in the same position but take the outside of one foot to the mat and stack your other foot on top. Press your forearms firmly down in order to keep the shoulders lifted. Utilizing the strength of your core, as you inhale lift your hips up towards the sky. As you exhale lower your hips back down towards the mat. Repeat 10 to 12 times on each side.

6. Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward Facing Dog Pose)



Press back into Down Dog. Your hands should be shoulder width apart and your feet hip width apart. Engage the legs by lifting the quadriceps muscles and rolling the inner thighs back. Pull your navel back in towards your spine. Spread the fingers wide on the mat.

7. Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward Facing Dog Pose), *variation*



As you inhale bring your right knee to your nose. Allow the spine to round as you engage your core. As you exhale, straighten the leg back up behind you into a Three-Legged Down Dog. Repeat this exercise 4 to 5 times before moving on to the next pose.

8. Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward Facing Dog Pose), *variation*



As you inhale bring your right knee to your right elbow. Engage the core by drawing your navel in towards your spine. Keep the arms strong by pressing your hands firmly into the mat. Hug your knee against your elbow for 3 to 4 breaths before returning to a Three-Legged Down Dog.

9. Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward Facing Dog Pose), *variation*



As you inhale bring your right knee to your left elbow. Continue to engage and breathe into the core, keeping your face and neck relaxed. For an extra boost for your core, lower the knee down towards your wrist and then bring it back up to your elbow several times. Hold this pose for 2 to 3 full breaths before returning to Downward Facing Dog.

Go back to [Pose 7](#) and repeat these core poses with your left leg.

10. Vasisthasana (Side Plank Pose)



From Downward Facing Dog come forward into Plank Pose. Bring the outside of your right foot to the mat and stack your left foot on top. Flex the feet and press your hips up towards the sky. Keep the chest open. Breathe deep into the lungs and hold for 5 to 6 full breaths.

If this variation is too difficult at first, instead of stacking your top foot, bring the sole of the foot to the mat to provide you extra support when balancing.

Press back into Down Dog and repeat this pose on the left side.

11. Virabhadrasana II (Warrior II Pose)



From Down Dog, step your right foot forward between your hands. Press into the outside of your back foot while keeping the heel on the ground. Your two heels should be in one line. Keep the front leg bending deeply with the knee directly over the ankle. Ground through the back foot as you open your inner thighs and groins. Find strength and steadiness as you breathe into this pose.

Hold this pose for 2 to 3 breaths.

12. Utthita Parsvakonasana (Extended Side Angle Pose)



Keeping your legs in the same position from Warrior II, bring your right hand on the ground by your front foot or alternately you can do this pose with your forearm resting on your front thigh. Reach the left arm over your head so as to create a straight line from your feet to your fingertips. Breathe deeply into your lungs as you open the chest by rolling the top ribs back and pressing the bottom ribs forward. Bring your gaze up to

ribs back and pressing the bottom ribs forward. Bring your gaze up to your top hand. Stay in this pose for 3 to 4 breaths.

13. Utthita Parsvakonasana (Extended Side Angle Pose), *variation*



Begin to lift your right hand off of the ground or thigh and extend it forward, as if reaching for something in front of you. With both arms lifted your core has to work extra hard to hold your body in this pose. Be careful not to hold your breath. Continue to work into this pose by opening the chest and breathing into the open lungs. Hold this pose for 2 full breaths before returning to Warrior II.

14. Ardha Chandrasana (Half Moon Pose)



From Warrior II walk your back left foot forward a few inches to shorten your stance. Bring your right hand down to the mat outside of your right foot and 5 to 6 inches in front of you. Shift your weight forward, straightening your right leg as you lift your left leg into the air. Adjust your right hand if necessary so that it is directly under your shoulder. Lift your left leg up higher, working to get it in line with the rest of your body.

Start to open your chest to the left, stacking your left hip on top of the right. Extend your left hand up creating a straight line with both arms. If possible, bring your gaze to your left hand. Hold this pose for 5 to 6 breaths before carefully lowering back down into Warrior II.

Return to Down Dog and rest for 4 to 5 breaths before starting the

sequence with Warrior II ([Pose 11](#)) on the left side.

15. Navasana Series (Boat Pose Series)





Sit down on the center of your mat, rocking back slightly so that you can balance on your Sit Bones. Engage your core as you begin to extend and straighten your legs, lifting them as high as you can. Keep the back straight and extend the arms forward alongside your legs. Breathe deeply as your core begins to work in junction with your hips and legs. Remember to relax the muscles of your face.

With an inhalation, draw your knees towards your chest, keeping the feet off the ground. Keep your spine long and the chest open. Hold this pose for a full inhalation before extending your legs back into full Boat Pose on your exhalation. Repeat this sequence 10 to 12 times.

16. Yoga Crunches



Lie down on your back in the center of your mat. Allow your lower back to naturally curve so that there is room between it and your mat – this will keep you from straining your low back.

keep you from straining your low back.

On an inhalation, raise both legs straight into the air so that they are perpendicular to the ground. Begin to lower your left leg down just a few inches above the mat. Try to keep both of your legs straight as you do this. Exhale. On your next inhalation, lift your shoulders up off of the mat and reach your hands forward on either side of your right leg. Try to keep your chest and the space between your shoulder blades open. Do not hold your breath! Stay in this lifted pose for 2 to 3 full breaths before lowering your shoulders back down to the mat. Rest here for a breath or two.

With your legs in the same position, inhale and lift your shoulders off the mat again. This time, bring your hands to the outside of the right leg. Keep the spine elongated and the face relaxed as you work here for 1 to 2 breaths.

Lower down to the mat completely and rest for several breaths before repeating this series on the other side.

17. Savasana (Corpse Pose)



Lie down flat on your back in the center of your mat. The heels of your feet will touch but allow your toes to fall out to the sides. Rest your arms with hands palms up alongside your body, far enough away from your sides that there is no effort required to keep them there. Allow your fingers to curl naturally in towards your palms. Gently tuck your shoulder blades under your body to add more comfort to this final resting posture.

As you rest here, observe your breath. Let your body and mind rest by bringing stillness into this pose. Rest here for as long as you would like – your body and mind will thank you!



FLAT TUMMY YOGA FLOW – STRENGTHEN BACK

Benefits: Strengthening your back helps the muscles of the abdomen work more effectively, which means that the benefits of every core-strengthening move are doubled if your back is strong. Each of the poses in this flow can be repeated twice, one right after the other. Hold each pose for as long as possible, using your breath as a tool to keep you focused and aware of your body.

1. Baddha Konasana (Bound Angle Pose)



Bring the soles of your feet together and allow gravity to pull your knees down towards the earth. Press the soles of the feet together and lengthen the spine. Imagine your pelvis is a bowl of water. When most people enter this pose their bowl of water tips backwards because of tight hips and groins as well as weak backs. To help remedy this issue, bring your hands to your hip points and imagine yourself lifting them up and pressing them forward – the bowl of water will no longer tip backwards, but instead will be centered and slightly forward.

Focus your attention to your breath, breathing into your hips and lower back. Stay in this pose for several breaths, allowing the back to strengthen and the hips to relax.

2. Paschimottanasana (Seated Forward Bend)



Extend your legs straight out in front of you. Roll your inner thighs down towards the ground as you fold forward from the hips. Feel your entire back body from your calves to your neck lengthen. Keep the spine straight and the upper back engaged by gently drawing your shoulder blades together and down your back. The depth in this pose comes from lengthening the spine and folding at the hips, not bringing your head as low as possible. Find rest in this pose, only pushing yourself deeper when your body allows it.

3. Plank Pose



Place your hands on the mat directly under your shoulders with the fingers spreading wide. Extend your legs straight back behind you, resting on the balls of your feet. Lift out of your shoulders and feel the core engage. Hold this pose for one full breath before lowering your entire body onto the mat, face down.

4. Salabhasana (Locust Pose), *variation*



Lying on your stomach, bring the insides of your legs and feet together, imagining as if you only have one. Interlace your hands behind your back, clasping the fingers. Keeping the feet down on the ground, begin to lift the hands up away from your back, straightening your arms on an inhalation. As you do this, allow the chest to lift off of the mat, working on strengthening the muscles of your upper back as you do so. Hold this pose for 4 to 5 full breaths before lowering back to the ground. Rest on your belly for a few breaths before moving into the next pose.

5. Salabhasana (Locust Pose)



Once again, keep the legs together and sides of the feet touching. Extend the arms away from the body palms down, making a capital letter “T”. On an inhalation, begin to lift the arms up off of the ground, lifting the chest at the same time. Simultaneously, lift the feet off of the ground, keeping the legs and feet together. Look up as you lift off of the ground – your body follows where your eyes go.

This pose works the entire spine, so it is not easy. Do your best to smile as you work, keeping the mind in a positive state. Hold this pose for as long as you can before lowering back to the mat. Rest for several breaths before moving to the next pose.

6. Salabhasana (Locust Pose), *variation*



Lying on your stomach, roll your body to one side so that you can bring your arm with palm down under you. Then roll to the other side, bringing your other arm palm down right next to your other hand. The closer your hands are together under your body, the easier this pose becomes. Allow your chin or your mouth to rest firmly on your mat. Grip your hands into the mat as if you are pressing it away from you.

On an inhalation, raise one leg into the air, keeping the other in complete contact with your mat. Lift your raised leg as much as possible and then hold for a complete breath. Lower your leg on an exhalation and repeat on the other side. Do 5 to 6 sets with each leg before resting on your stomach.

7. Salabhasana (Locust Pose), *variation*



Bring your hands under your body just as you did for the previous pose. Again, work the hands and arms as close together as possible – this will be a bit uncomfortable for your wrists and elbows, however the pressure you are putting on them actually does wonders for helping to keep the joints healthy and to heal past injuries by flushing scar tissue out of the joint.

Instead of alternating legs like you did before, this time you will lift both legs up at the same time, working to keep the legs together by squeezing your thighs in towards the center line of your body. The more you are able to press your hands down into the mat, the more leverage you will have for lifting your legs off the ground. Remember to keep your chin or mouth in contact with the mat to prevent any injury or strain to your neck.

Hold this pose for 3 to 4 breaths before resting.

8. Dhanurasana (Bow Pose)



Lying on your stomach, begin to bend the knees, lowering your feet towards your heels. Reach back for your feet, grabbing onto the insides of your ankles, thumbs up. It's very important to keep the knees and ankles in line with your hips as you do this pose, so focus on pulling everything in, arms and legs, towards the center body.

As you inhale, kick the feet back into your hands, lifting the chest off of the ground as you do so. If possible, begin to lift the thighs off of the ground as well, getting a small rocking motion in your hips. Continue to kick up and back higher as you lift the chest and look up. While performing this pose you are increasing flexibility of the total spine, shoulders, and hips – it's the whole package!

Hold this pose for 4 to 5 complete breaths before resting in your final pose.

9. Savasana (Corpse Pose), *variation*



Take your final Savasana on your stomach. Allow your body to completely relax into the ground, toes together, heels fall out to the sides. Rest your arms alongside your body with the palms up. Turn your head to the side and close your eyes, bringing your gaze to the center of your forehead just above your eyebrows. Do your best to remain completely still in this pose for several minutes, bringing your awareness to your breath and then finally dropping into a position of complete relaxation and rejuvenation.



YOUR TOP TUMMY QUESTIONS ANSWERED

1. Should I Keep Doing Crunches?

If your goal is to flatten your tummy, you should definitely *not* be doing crunches. The movement of the crunch itself actually bulks the core up rather than flatten it out. The purpose of the crunch is to strengthen the core, and while that is important, there are much more effective ways to work the abdominal muscles that actually burn more calories and work more muscles.

2. Most Core Strengthening Exercises Hurt My Back – What Should I Do?

Many people have this exact same problem and will give up trying to work on their core because of the discomfort they feel in their back. Thankfully, the most effective core strengthening exercises do not require you to be lying on your back at all. You never need to do another uncomfortable sit up or crunch again and you can still get the flat, toned tummy you are after!

3. How Frequently Should I Work My Core In Order To Get Great Results?

Actual core strengthening exercises only need to be done 2 to 3 times each week. But, in order to get a really great stomach, you need to be exercising 5 to 6 times each week. A flat tummy doesn't just come from lots of core strength, you need to burn calories through cardiovascular exercise as well as strengthen the muscles surrounding the core, especially the back. If done correctly, yoga can provide everything you need in order to flatten your tummy – but you have to put in the effort!

4. Should Men and Women Work The Core Differently?

It makes sense that if men and women want different results that they should work out differently. The majority of women, when asked what their target goal is, say that they want a flat tummy with some definition. Men on the hand want the look of a very muscular stomach with lots of bulk. This is why men can benefit more from certain core strengthening exercises that resemble crunches and sit-ups – these exercises will give them the bulk that they want.

Women on the other hand, need to focus their attention on exercises that strengthen the core, but that also lengthen it as well. While all of the exercises in this book are beneficial for everyone, the result is more focused on the flat, toned tummy that women are after.

5. What Are A Few More Exercises That Are Great For Flattening My Tummy?

Walking Planks



Alternate between Plank Pose and Dolphin Plank, moving quickly from your hands to your forearms. Aim to do 2 sets of 12.

Shoulder Stand (Salamba Sarvangasana)



Lie down flat on your back. Bend your knees and place your hands on your lower back. Shift the weight back so that you lift the hips and spine off the mat, using your hands as support. Extend your legs straight up towards the sky so that they are directly over the body. Engage the core to find steadiness and strength. Aim to hold this pose for 1 to 2 minutes, working up to 5 minutes.

Elephant's Trunk (Eka Hasta Bhujasana)



Sit down on your mat. Bring the thigh of one leg as high as possible on the back of your arm so that the sole of the foot faces in the same direction that you are facing. Bring both hands down to the mat, spreading the fingers and pressing down firmly. Hook the toes of the lifted foot under the opposite leg, which is extended straight out in front of you. Using a lot of core strength, begin to lift your hips and legs off of the mat so that only your hands are touching the ground.

Hold this pose for as long as you can before switching sides.

Crow Pose



Squat at the top of your mat and bring your hands down in front of you shoulder-width apart. Bend your elbows. Bring your legs outside of your arms, resting your knees on the back of your upper arms. Lift your hips and shift your weight forward, lifting one foot and then the other off of the mat. Keep your gaze focused just in front of you – Hold for as long as you can, and remember it's called yoga *practice* for a reason!

One Legged Chaturanga



Come into Plank Pose and lift one leg into the air. Lower down just as you would in Chaturanga Dandasana, but keep the raised leg in the air the whole time. Press yourself back up to Plank and switch legs. Aim to do at least 5 repetitions on each side.