



Arm Balancing

Description

A person writing on a piece of paperDescription automatically generated with medium confidence

1. **ADHO MUKHA VRKSASANA** â?? Handstand / Downward Facing Tree Pose
2. **ARM BALANCING POSES** â?? Weight of the body is balanced upon one or both hands or forearms
3. **ASTAVAKRASANA** â?? Eight Angle Pose
4. **BAKASANA** â?? Crane Pose
5. **BHUJAPIDASANA** â?? Arm Pressure Pose
6. **CAMATKARASANA** â?? Wild Thing
7. **DWI PADA KOUNDINYASANA** â?? Two-Legged Koundinyaâ??s Pose
8. **EKA HASTA BHUJASANA** â?? Leg Over Shoulder Pose
9. **EKA PADA BAKASANA** â?? One Legged Crane Pose / Flying Crow
10. **EKA PADA GALAVASANA** â?? Flying Pigeon Pose
11. **EKA PADA KOUNDINYASANA** â?? Pose Dedicated to Sage Koundinya
12. **EKA PADA KOUNDINYASANA II** â?? Flying Splits
13. **KAKASANA** â?? Crow Pose
14. **KUKKUTASANA** â?? Cock / Rooster Pose
15. **LOLASANA** â?? Pendant Pose
16. **MAYURASANA** â?? Peacock Pose
17. **PARSVA BAKASANA** â?? Side Crane/Crow Pose
18. **PINCHA MAYURASANA** â?? Peacock Feather Pose / Forearm Balance
19. **TITTIBHASANA** â?? Firefly Pose
20. **TOLASANA** â?? Scale Pose
21. **VASISTHASANA** â?? Side Plank
22. **VISVAMITRASANA** â?? Flying Warrior
23. **VRSCHIKASANA** â?? Scorpion Pose

Introduction

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In arm balancing poses, students bear their weight on one or both hands or forearms.

Olga Kabel of SequenceWiz offers the following excellent overview of arm balance types and the characteristics of each. ([source](#))

As shown in the graphic, there are three types of arm balances:

Mostly Upright

- Neutral shoulder, arms close to body
- Less stress on joint

Leaning Forward

- Shoulder flexion 45 to 90 degrees, arms in front of body
- More stress on joint

Upside Down

- Shoulder flexion 90 to 180 degrees, arms above head
- Most stress on joint

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Effects & Benefits

Balancing Poses Have Many Benefits

- See the physical and energetic effects of Balancing Poses in general [here](#).
- Arm balances require and promote additional strengthening for shoulder joints and muscles of the upper body and [core](#).

ARM BALANCING STRENGTHEN SHOULDER STABILIZERS

We spend most of our lives in the bipedal position, walking, standing, etc. The hip joints are structured for weight-bearing in these types of activities. The shoulders, on the other hand, are highly mobile and designed for interacting with the environment through our hands. Practicing poses like handstand reverses this design by turning the mobile shoulder joint into the joint that must be stable for weight-bearing. This strengthens the muscular stabilizers of the shoulder. â?? Ray Long

FOR THOSE WHO CANâ??T SIT STILL

Arm balancing is a fabulous way to add a bone strengthening, weight lifting component to your practice. It also provides space to meditate for those of us who just can't sit still. — Amber Scriven

Weight-Bearing Alignment of Hands

A picture containing floor, person, wooden, woodDescription automatically generated

When the hands are supporting the body weight, consider the following guidelines.

1. Place hands shoulder-distance apart.
2. Align wrist creases with front of mat.
3. Check to be sure palm is flat on earth, fingers spread (but not excessively so). Press down with hands so that all fingers and knuckles are pressing evenly. The intention is to fan the fingers open mindfully as opposed to an unconscious or awkward "splaying," which can cause wrist tension.
4. Watch for uneven spacing between fingers and/or a pinky that wings out too far.*
5. Ensure weight is not concentrated in wrist and heel of hand. You may need to focus on pressing into knuckles and roots of fingers to avoid excessive pressure in wrists.
6. Consider pressing with pads of fingers and pulling them back isometrically. (John Friend)
7. Invite self-reflection: Are you experiencing any pain or discomfort? Where do you feel yourself bearing weight?
8. Once hands are aligned, you may wish to visualize drawing energy up from the center of the palms.
9. See also this brief, insightful [video](#) by Leslie Kaminoff teaching breath-driven arm alignment in preparation for weight bearing. (Called "Integrating the Double-Spiral Arm Position" it highlights the arm position for Chaturanga.)

A thicker yoga mat may be helpful but it should still be firm. Practicing on a soft or cushioned surface may cause hyperextension of the wrist.

* However, in the case of [Dupuytren's Contracture](#), uneven spacing may be desirable.

ENGAGE LEG MUSCLES STRONGLY

Bring pressure into each of your fingers, all the way down to the tips. At the same time, remember to engage your leg muscles strongly so they can carry some of your weight. All of this will lighten the load on your wrists. — Ann Pizer

CUEING A PARTICULAR FINGER FORWARD VS WRIST CREASE

Someone else asked the question that had been on my mind for years: "Which fingers should actually point forward in downward facing dog, and why do so many teachers cue this differently?" The teacher explained that it wasn't so important which fingers were pointing forward, but that the wrist creases were parallel with the front of the mat. Because one person's hands can be different from the next person's and because, most of the time, the whole point of the "finger" cue is to

end up with wrist creases straight and parallel with the front of the mat. â?? Kat Heagberg

CUE TO CONSIDER AVOIDING: â??PRESS DOWN WITH THE BASE OF YOUR INDEX FINGERâ??

Just as the base of the big toe is an important rooting point for the feet in standing poses, the base of the index finger is an important weight-bearing point in poses where hands bear weightâ?|. Yet just as bearing too much weight in the big toe mounds can lead to imbalances, pressing down vigorously or exclusively through the base of the index fingers can also be problematic â?? especially for those who have [kyphosis](#) and/or roll their shoulders inward so that the inner elbows face each otherâ?|. For instance, says Reif, â??â?|Itâ??s more important to align the shoulders than to get the base of the index finger down.â?|• A better cue: â??Root the outside edge of each hand, and aim your inner elbow toward the webbing between the index finger and thumb. Bring the base of your index finger down only as much as you can while keeping this external rotation.â?|• â?? Amber Burke

See Also

- [Wrist Pain & Wrist Issues: Prevention & Adaptation](#)

Form & Teaching Considerations

A couple of women doing yogaDescription automatically generated with low confidence

Please be sure to review Form and Teaching Considerations for [Balancing Poses](#) in general. That lesson provides a crucial foundation. Additional considerations follow.

Itâ??s All About the Core, Baby

Arm balancing may appear to rely on arm strength but in fact, alignment and core strength are the foundation of arm balance poses.

From the outside, arm balancing postures look like they are all arm strength. Two hands on the floor, and her feet are where??! Actually, arm balancing doesnâ??t require guns of steelâ?|. The bedrock of a solid arm balancing practice boils down to core strength. In order to take flight in an arm balance, the first step is to align your anatomical infrastructure for success (looking for 90-degree angles, bones supporting bonesâ?|) and from there itâ??s all core strength. â?? KC Whitsett

Active Legs & Feet (And More)

A key aspect of arm balancing is activating the legs. See this [2-min video](#) by Jim Bennett as well as the comment below.

Try not to forget about your legs when youâ??re balancing. The floppier your legs, the more heavy they will be, and the more likely you are to fall from your shape, or not be able to control a transition. Continually activate your feet and thighs. â?? Amber Scriven

These poses look like theyâ??re all about the arms, but thatâ??s not true. You have to learn to use so many muscles to make them happenâ??the core, shoulders, hips, legs, feet â?? basically the whole body! Life lesson: If you donâ??t want to feel burnt out, make sure you spread out your effort so no one thing gets overtaxed. â?? Erica Rodefer Winters

More

Other aspects of arm balancing include:

- [Moving forward as opposed to up](#) (Jason Crandell)
- Focusing the [gaze](#) upward to look forward (Amber Scriven)
- Using [intention](#) to focus on values and philosophy such as persistence and non-attachment
- The willingness to [face and transform fear](#)

LOOKING UP TO LOOK FORWARD

Youâ??re trying to lift UP, so use the idea that where your eyes go, your body followsâ?! Focus your intention and your gaze, then press directly towards that goal. In arm balances, looking up often means you are actually looking forward. I like to tell my students to think of this gaze as a metaphor for you moving forward in your practice, your confidence, and your inner as well as outer strength. Positive thinking goes a long way after all! â?? Amber Scriven

PERSISTENCE AND NON-ATTACHMENT

Arm balances are the perfect poses to practice persistence in the face of challenge, as well as non-attachment to the fruits of your labors. â?? Julie Gudmestad

DECIDING ON HOW APPROPRIATE A POSE IS VS BEING AFRAID OF IT

It is one thing to consciously make a choice that arm balances are not appropriate for you (if you have wrist or shoulder injuries, for example). But simply being scared of them is another story altogether. In reality, there is nothing to be scared of â?? most balance poses can be done in stages to reflect the studentâ??s physical ability. â?? Olga Kabel

See Also

- We provide dozens of verbal cues to consider for each *asana*. For more information, scroll down to pose list
- [Wrist Issues](#) â?? includes many options for lessening or eliminating weight-bearing on hands

Sample Poses

Arm Balancing Poses

- **Pose Category Visual Views** â?? See [here](#) for a pictorial view of arm balancing poses. The poses are ordered in a generally increasing level of difficulty.
- **Alpha Pose List** â?? See below for an alpha list of arm balancing poses.

Alpha List

1. [Adho Mukha Vrksasana \(Handstand / Downward Facing Tree Pose\)](#)
2. [Astavakrasana \(Eight Angle Pose\)](#)
3. [Bakasana \(Crane Pose\) & Kakasana \(Crow Pose\)](#)
4. [Bakasana Baby Crow](#)
5. [Bhujapidasana \(Arm Pressure Pose\)](#)
6. [Camatkarasana \(Wild Thing Pose\)](#)
7. [Dwi Pada Koundinyasana \(Two Legged Koudinyaâ??s Pose\)](#)
8. [Eka Hasta Bhujasana \(Leg Over Shoulder Pose\)](#)
9. [Eka Pada Bakasana \(One Legged Crane /Crow Pose\)](#)
10. [Eka Pada Bakasana II \(One Legged Crane / Crow Pose II\)](#)
11. [Eka Pada Galavasana \(Flying Pigeon\)](#)
12. [Eka Pada Koundinyasana I \(Pose Dedicated to Sage Koundinya\)](#)
13. [Eka Pada Koundinyasana II \(Flying Splits Pose\)](#)
14. [Half Handstand](#)
15. [Handstand Hops](#)
16. [Kasyapasana \(Half Bound Lotus Side Plank\)](#)
17. [Kukkutasana \(Cock / Rooster Pose\)](#)
18. [Lolasana \(Pendant Pose\)](#)
19. [Parsva Bakasana \(Side Crow Pose\)](#)
20. [Pincha Mayurasana \(Forearm Balance\)](#)
21. [Tittibhasana \(Firefly Pose\)](#)
22. [Tolasana \(Scale Pose\)](#)
23. [Utpluti Dandasana \(Floating Stick\)](#)
24. [Vasisthasana \(Side Plank Pose\)](#)
25. [Visvamisrasana \(Flying Warrior Pose\)](#)

Asana Index

- [Asana Index Sanskrit](#) â?? A visual view of all poses in alpha order by Sanskrit name
- [Asana Index English](#) â?? A visual view of all poses in alpha order by English name

Sequencing & Sample Sequences

Preparation & Alternatives

For those who are not ready for arm balances, typical preparatory poses to strengthen upper body and core include:

- [Plank Pose](#)
- [Adho Mukha Svanasana \(Downward Facing Dog Pose\)](#)
- [Chaturanga Dandasana \(Four Limbed Staff Pose\)](#)
- [Navasana \(Boat Pose\)](#)

Warm neck, shoulders, spine and hips prior to practicing arm balances.

- [Surya Namaskar](#) and [Standing Poses](#) are typical preparation for arm balances.
- [Malasana \(Garland Pose / Yogic Squat\)](#) and [Pasasana \(Noose Pose\)](#) serve as preparatory poses for developing flexibility in spine, groin and hips.

Arm balances require a relatively significant amount of energy and so are typically sequenced earlier in practice after the body is prepared but before too much energy expenditure.

Counter Poses and Cooling Down

I often find that, fun and strengthening as they are, arm balances can sometimes make me feel a little â??bound up,â?• which is why I love to practice a gentle, chest-opening backbend like [bridge pose](#) after. (To make it extra gentle, place a block under your pelvis for a restorative bridge.) From there, you can round out your practice with your favorite finishing poses, like [supta baddha konasana](#), [supine twists](#), [happy baby pose](#), (knees-to-chest pose), and, of course, [shavasana](#). â?? Kat Heagberg

More

Do not do too many arm balances in the course of one practice. Three is the recommended maximum, and those should place different kinds of loads on your shoulders and be spread out throughout the practice (not back-to-back). Be sure to compensate all the same areas after each arm balance. We call it â??mobilizing the jointsâ?• which means moving the arms and/or wrists freely after bearing weight. â?? Olga Kabel

- [Ease Into Arm Balances Yoga Practice, SequenceWiz](#)
- [Planning & Sequencing Hub](#)
- [Sequence Library: Asana Category Themed Classes](#)

Sample Sequences

One way to select sequences is: [Sequence Library: Asana Category Themed Classes](#).

Also, the links below take you to the sequencing pages focused on those poses:

- [Vasisthasana \(Side Plank\) & Camatkarasana \(Wild Thing\)](#)
- [Adho Mukha Vrksasana \(Handstand / Upward Facing Tree Pose\)](#)
- [Bakasana / Kakasana \(Crane Pose / Crow Pose\)](#)
- [Lolasana \(Pendant Pose\), Tolasana \(Scale Pose\) & Kukkutasana \(Cock / Rooster Pose\)](#)

- Bhujapidasana (Arm Pressure Pose)
- [Tittibhasana \(Firefly Pose\)](#)
- Parsva Bakasana (Side Crow Pose) & Koundinyasana Poses (Flying Splits)
- [Astavakrasana \(Eight Angle Pose\) & Eka Hasta Bhujasana \(Leg Over Shoulder Pose\)](#)
- [Visvamisrasana \(Flying Warrior\)](#)

Category

1. Uncategorized

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