



Lateral / Side Bends & Asymmetrical Poses

Description

Introduction

- Here we cover two pose categories: Lateral / Side Bends and Asymmetrical Poses.
- While all side bends are asymmetrical, not all asymmetrical poses are side bends, of course.

Lateral / Side Bending



- Purpose: Alternately stretch and contract each side of the body.

Asymmetrical Poses



- Purpose: Help to balance sides.

Effects & Benefits

People Experience Poses Differently

- The following effects may be associated with this category of poses.
- Knowing such common effects is typically useful for planning sequences. However, since there are no universal truths in how different people experience poses, please use caution with this

information.

- For example, rather than telling students what to expect when practicing a pose or technique, you may wish to invite them to take note of effects on their breathing and their mind, and what they feel in their body.

See Also

- [Wise Word Choice](#)
- [Inclusive & Accepting Word Choice](#)
- [Asana Categories Hub](#)
- [Planning & Sequencing Hub](#)

Side Bending

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1. Stretch muscles between the ribs and pelvis.
2. Increase spinal flexibility.
3. Open sides of the rib cage.
4. Stretching the intercostals can allow for more expansion of the lungs and improved breathing.
5. Develop strength, especially of the abdominal region.
6. Tone waist.
7. Improve digestion.
8. In sidebends where an arm stretches overhead to reach for the foot, the latissimus dorsi muscle, which extends from the back waist to the armpit, will also stretch. (Julie Gudmestad)
9. Bring awareness to the side body.

HELPFUL FOR LOW BACK, SPINE & SHOULDERS

[Side bends are] the most efficient way to stretch some of the major muscles of the back and sides, such as the latissimus dorsi and the quadratus lumborum, which may leave your lower back feeling more comfortable and flexible! Increasing your range of motion in the side body will help create more mobility in your spine and shoulders, leading to a feeling of greater ease and contentment in your body. — Jason Crandell

HIGHLY NEEDED RELEASE

Side bending is not a common action in our daily lives, which means we are majorly lacking in—and longing for—the release and space a side bend offers. They improve breathing capacity by stretching your intercostal muscles, relieve lower back pain by releasing your QL, and serve as a fantastic prep for backbends. — Kathryn Budig

Asymmetrical Poses

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1. Demonstrate differences in strength and flexibility.
2. Help to balance sides.

Beginners & Low Back Caution



Expert Julie Gudmestad points out that some seated side bends such as [Parivrtta Janu Sirsasana \(Revolved Head-to-Knee Pose\)](#) and [Parivrtta Upavistha Konasana \(Revolved Wide-Angle Seated Forward Bend\)](#) may put beginners and “stiffer students” at risk of straining their low backs.

As a result, Gudmestad recommends working first with side bends over a stack of blankets and with poses that improve [adductor and hamstring](#) flexibility in safe poses such as [Supta Padangusthasana \(Reclined Hand to Toe\)](#).

SIDEBENDS FOR BEGINNERS

While sitting sidebend stretches may feel great to experienced yoga practitioners and teachers, beginners and stiffer students may struggle to find any enjoyment in them—and they may in fact strain or injure their low backs in the attempt! It’s probably best to work first on sidebends while leaving the legs out of the equation. One relaxing way to do this is by [sidebending over a bolster](#) or stack of blankets; continue practicing poses to improve their adductor and hamstring flexibility in poses such as [Supta Padangusthasana \(Reclined Hand to Toe\)](#) and [Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana \(Extended Hand to Foot\)](#) with their top foot supported on a chair or ledge.

â?? Julie Gudmestad

Sequencing Considerations



- After completing one-sided poses such as [Parivrtta Janu Sirsasana \(Revolved Head to Knee\)](#), itâ??s common to follow with a pose from center such as [Paschimottanasana \(Seated Forward Bend\)](#).
- Some teachings suggest practicing the more open side first to â??show the other side how.â?• Others suggest practicing tighter or weaker side first.
- Some sources suggest equal time for both sides, and some suggest practicing tighter or weaker side a second time or longer than the more flexible side.

More

- To learn more about how lateral / side bends and asymmetrical poses can serve as counterbalancing postures for all ranges of motion in the spine: [Sequencing Fundamentals](#).
- For sequences focused on lateral / side bends and asymmetrical poses, see: [Sequence Library: Asana Category Themed Classes](#).

Sources & Resources

For *asana* lists, sequences and more resources, please see [online version](#) of Asana Categories: Lateral / Side Bends & Asymmetrical Poses

Category

1. Uncategorized

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