



Mindful Asana Transitions

Description

About Asana Transitions



- Transitioning in *asana* may refer to moving in or out of any pose or moving between poses.
- It's considered a sign of advancement in practice when we're as mindful during transitions as during aligning and holding poses.

- Transitions are an opportune time to practice mindfulness. (See [Theme: Mindfulness](#) and [Mindfulness Meditation](#).)

Teaching Considerations



1. A key teaching is to slow movement down and to move mindfully with the breath.
2. Focus on the weight bearing / grounding aspects of a pose and conscious, mindful weight shifting during the transition.
3. Jason Crandell notes [here](#) that transitions are often executed with an exhale. Thus, a long slow exhale can support the transition.
4. Other focus points during transitioning may be [drishti \(gaze\)](#), [core engagement](#) and/or [bandhas](#).

Focus on the Weight Shift

The key to making a skillful transition is to focus on the movement of your weight. This will help you counterbalance your body where itâ??s necessary. Essentially, you want to limit the weight of your body from moving too quickly in any one direction. Bringing your attention to your core (specifically your pelvis and lower belly) is usually the most effective way to tune into your weight as it is transitioning.

â?? Jason Crandell

More Considerations

- Slowing down and mindfully moving into a [balance pose](#) may be another effective way to teach transitions. An example below is moving from Warrior 1 Pose to Warrior 3 Pose and back to Warrior 1.
- In addition to the practice of mindful transitions, you may be interested in creative transitions. The [Transitions Flow \(Int / Adv 75-min\)](#) class was developed especially for Yoga Teacher Central members to invite presence during the “in-between” space by employing unique transitions.

The Actions of Entering & Exiting a Pose

Mindful transitioning may be highlighted during movement in and out of a pose, and between poses. Teaching specific actions and alignment techniques can help students to focus on their movement.

- To review steps for moving in and out of poses, see Basic Form in any [Asana Digest](#). There you will find many options and clear directions for focusing on specific actions.
- For instance, [Navasana Basic Form](#) includes the following.

Set Up



- Start in *Dandasana*.
- Slide feet back toward sit bones. Place hands outside hips.

Moving into Pose



- Sit up tall, rotate pelvis forward, lean back about 30°.
- Maintain weight between tailbone and sit bones.
- Broaden collarbones.

Inhale

- Lift chest
- Spread collarbones

Exhale

- Contract belly
- Lift legs up and extend out
- Reach arms forward, palms facing each other

To Emphasize



- Draw sternum toward sky; keep heart center spacious
- Roll shoulders back and down
- Lift lower back
- Press out through balls of feet (if legs straight)

Coming Out

- Exhale
- Lower legs

Vinyasa Flow Transitions



Mindful transitioning is particularly important during flow sequences, of course. Moving too quickly or moving through transitions without mindfulness can lead to poor form and potential injury.

And since anything done repetitively over time will naturally be a place we tend to “check out,” focusing on transitions during flow can be particularly apt.

Reasons to Slow Down

[Particularly when addressing low back pain or when advising students to reduce intensity:] In vinyasa, be careful in transitions and hold poses longer. “A minute to two minutes will start really changing the fascial plains, shifting the joint space,” Little says. Gently moving in and out of the same pose can have a similar effect. In either case, avoid rushing off to the next shape. “**Bill Giebler**

Each Pose Should Have its Own Individual Resonance

Each pose in a flow—or each pose within a transition—should have its own individual resonance. So, when you transition into a pose, don’t rush. Take your time and land. Stabilize and maintain the pose that you’re transitioning into. “**Jason Crandell**

Teaching Vinyasa Transitions



Adho Mukha Svanasana > Chaturanga Dandasana > Urdhva Mukha Svanasana

This is, of course, the familiar transition in [Surya Namasakar](#) and often referred to as *Vinyasa* in Power and Flow classes. A key consideration is focusing on proper execution of [Chaturanga Dandasana](#) and teaching variations and prep poses to students who are not able to safely practice the pose. Following are some considerations:

- Teach the poses and transition slowly before expecting students to perform this transition with only one breath per pose.
- Explain the cautions and demonstrate [improper and unsafe form](#). Clearly describe the risk from practicing the pose improperly.

Example of Improper Form: Elbows Flaring Out



- Teach a *Chaturanga Dandasana* variation such as knees down.

Example of Variation



- Teach alternatives to classes or individual students who are unable to safely practice this transition. Options include [Ashtanga Namaskar \(Eight Limbed Pose / Knees-Chest-Chin\)](#) in place of *Chaturanga Dandasana*. Typically, [Bhujangasana \(Cobra Pose\)](#) then follows—as opposed to [Urdhva Mukha Svanasana \(Upward Facing Dog Pose\)](#).

Example of Alternative: Ashtanga Namaskar



Malasana > Bakasana

A teaching consideration: [Malasana \(Garland Pose / Yogic Squat\)](#) to [Bakasana \(Crane / Crow Pose\)](#) and back to *Malasana*. See the Malasana asana digest for detailed instructions.

This transition focuses on transitioning your weight from your feet to your hands. It's not easy, but it's simple. â?? **Jason Crandell**

Malasana



Beginning to Transition



Bakasana



Vira I > Vira III

You may wish to highlight mindful transitioning when moving from [Virabhadrasana I \(Warrior 1 Pose\)](#) to [Virabhadrasana III \(Warrior 3 Pose\)](#) and back to *Virabhadrasana I*. See *The Space Between* for detailed instructions.

Virabhadrasana I



Virabhadrasana III



Parsvakonasana > Ardha Chandrasana

You may wish to focus on mindful transitioning during movement from [Utthita Parsvakonasana \(Side Angle Pose\)](#) to [Ardha Chandrasana \(Half Moon Pose\)](#) and back to *Utthita Parsvakonasana*. See *The Space Between* for detailed instructions.

Utthita Parsvakonasana



Ardha Chandrasana



Vira II > Ardha Chandrasana

Another consideration: [Virabhadrasana II \(Warrior 2 Pose\)](#) to [Ardha Chandrasana \(Half Moon Pose\)](#) and back to *Virabhadrasana II*. See *How to Teach Yoga Transitions* for detailed instructions.

This is such an important set of transitions because it's common and accessible—and, even more, it lays the foundations for transitions between all of your standing postures. — **Jason Crandell**

Virabhadrasana II



Ardha Chandrasana





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