



Marjaryasana (Cat Pose)

Description

Marjaryasana



Bitilasana



Cat-Cow Flow



Balancing Table



Marjaryasana

â??marjariâ?• = cat

Cat Pose

Also known as: Table, Hands & Knees and All Fours

Bitilasana

Cow Pose

Naming Conventions

Marjaryasana

- *Marjaryasana* (Cat Pose) is also called Table, Hands & Knees, and All Fours.
- *Marjaryasana* is also the name given by some sources to Cat-Cow Flow.
- See Basic Form in menu above for a summary of Cat-Cow Flow poses and their various names.



Table, Table Top, Reverse Table Top

- In addition to the name Table, the neutral Cat Pose position is sometimes called Table Top.
- On the other hand, Table Top is occasionally *â??* and confusingly *â??* used to refer to a variation of [Purvottanasana](#) (Upward Plank) with knees bent.
- More often (and more clearly), the Upward Plank variation is referred to as Reverse Table Top.

Messy, Messy Naming

Chakravakasana, Cakravakasana, Sunbird, Sunbird Flow, Ruddy Goose

- First area to note: the potential confusion related to the spelling of *â??Cakravakasanaâ??* (Ruddy Goose) and *â??Chakravakasanaâ??* (Sunbird).
- These usually refer to two different poses, but some sources will mis-spell the name, causing even more confusion.
- *Chakravakasana* is used by some sources to refer to [Opposite Limb Extension](#), and by some to refer to a [flow](#) that begins standing on the knees.
- *Cakravakasana* (Ruddy Goose flow) is a flow from Table Pose to Extended Childâ??s Pose.
- *Chakravakasana* ([Sunbird flow](#)) is a flow from knees to Extended Childâ??s Pose, then to Balancing Table, Extended Childâ??s and back to knees.

See Also

- [Asana Categories](#)
- [General Alignment Principles](#)
- [Alignment Cueing](#)

Effects / Benefits

Transitioning & Strengthening

You can use [Cat-Cow] to transition from seated posesâ??like your initial sitting meditationâ??down to reclining poses. And you can use it after a series of reclining poses as a transition to sitting or standing poses.

Cat-Cow also requires a bit of arm and upper back strength to do properly, so is an upper body strengthening pose. And since you are bearing weight on your hands, it builds wrist bone strength, which could be helpful for folks with osteoporosis, as the wrist is the second most commonly fractured area for people with OP. *â??* Baxter Bell

Musculoskeletal

Musculoskeletal effects may include the following.



- Strengthen low back and abdomen
- Create stability in wrists, elbows, shoulders, hips and knees (Joseph LePage)
- Loosen spine, hips and neck
- Strengthen upper body
- Gentle warming

Energy, Mood, Emotion

Effects to energy, mood or emotion may include the following.

- Relieve stress

Inner Body

Inner body effects may include the following.

- Massage kidneys, adrenal glands and thyroid (Joseph LePage)
- Improve breath capacity

Therapeutic Uses*

- [Arthritis of Hips or Spine](#) (Baxter Bell)
- [Depression](#) (Nina Zolotow)
- [Fatigue](#), Lethargy
- [Low Back Pain](#)
- [Osteoporosis and Osteopenia](#) (Baxter Bell)

* This pose is often associated with positive effects related to the conditions listed. But unless trained in yoga therapy, teachers are usually advised against prescribing particular asanas to address specific conditions.

Cautions

Wrists

- For [wrist pain](#), either prop wrists or place fists, fingertips or forearms on floor rather than palms.
- See Variations in menu above for photos.

Knees

- For knee pain, pad knees or do a seated alternative.
- See photo of seated alternative below.

RECOMMENDATION FOR BLANKET

I recommend using at least one blanket under your knees, as over time the patella of your knees can be very sensitive to pressure. â?? Baxter Bell

Low Back or Neck Pain

- Use caution with low back or neck pain.

MODERATE ROM

Those with active spinal pain in the lower back or neck may have to keep the range of motion more moderate as you assess how your body responds to the movement. â?? Baxter Bell

Cat Pose: Watch Out For



Watch out for these tendencies, some of which are shown here.

- Uneven rounding.
- Hunching shoulders.

- Straining neck.
- Forcing.
- Bending elbows.
- Placing uneven or little weight in hands.
- Holding breath.

Cow Pose: Watch Out For



Watch out for these tendencies, some of which are shown here.

- Forcing.
- Overarching.
- Hunching shoulders.
- Bending elbows.
- Placing uneven or little weight in hands.
- Holding breath.
- Creating uneven bend through spine

Alternative

Seated Cat-Cow



- See [Stretches](#) for instructions.

Basic Form

Neutral

Marjaryasana / Table / Hands & Knees / All Fours



1. Begin on hands and knees.
2. Hands beneath shoulders (or alternatively, hands forward of shoulders), knees beneath hips.
3. Tuck toes or place tops of feet on floor.
4. Spread fingers, middle finger pointing straight ahead, palms firmly grounded.
5. Back is flat and neutral.
6. Keep head in line with spine.
7. Press into hands; avoid sagging into shoulders.

Arching

Bitilasana / Cow



1. Keep arms and thighs straight.
2. Inhale — let back move toward the floor.
3. Reach sit bones up.
4. Lift and broaden chest away from waist.
5. Slide shoulder blades down back.
6. Tilt pelvis forward to arch the spine.
7. Curve spine evenly; avoid over-bending in low back.
8. Keep pressing into hands, avoiding sagging into shoulders.

Rounding

Marjaryasana / Cat / Halloween Cat



1. Exhale — lift between shoulder blades, pull abs back toward spine.
2. Push middle of back up toward sky, tucking tailbone down and under.
3. Press firmly with hands.
4. Release head and neck.
5. Release [wrists](#) afterward.

Verbal Cues

It's typically advised that teachers provide no more than three instructions per pose so that students have time to work with the teaching. Here you'll find many options from which to choose. Some cues make the same point in different ways, and occasionally some can be contradictory, so please try them out for yourself. When cues are unusual or uniquely described, we have noted the source.

Hips & Legs

- Place knees beneath hips
- Keep knees and feet hip distance apart.
- Tuck toes or place tops of feet on floor



Shoulders & Arms

- Place wrists under shoulders (or some sources teach hands a little forward of shoulders)
- Spread fingers, middle finger pointing straight ahead, palms firmly grounded.
- To ensure equal distribution of weight across hands, focus on pressing thumbs & index fingers into mat.
- Straighten arms; keep elbows straight throughout
- Draw shoulders back away from ears.
- Press evenly into hands; avoid sagging into shoulders.

PREPARATION FOR ARM BALANCES

Strong and active arms in [Catâ??Cow Flow] suggest the support needed for Plank Pose, Side Plank, Handstand and other arm balances. â?? Jill Abelson

More

- Lengthen from crown of head to tailbone.
- Gaze down; keep neck in line with spine.
- Soften face.

Variations

Support Knees

Folded Blankets Under Knees



• I recommend using at least one blanket under your knees, as over time the patella of your knees can be very sensitive to pressure. • Baxter Bell

Prop Wrists

Rolled Mat



Prop under heels of hand, allowing fingers to fall downward.

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