



Virabhadrasana II (Warrior 2)

Description

Virabhadrasana II

<https://yogateachercentral.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/virabhadrasana-ii-warrior-2-shutterstock>

Exalted Warrior

https://yogateachercentral.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/exalted-reverse-warrior-shutterstock_37

Introduction

Virabhadrasana II

veer-ah-bah-DRAHS-anna

Virabhadra = name of a warrior hero

Warrior 2 Pose

Heart of Pose

- Standing Pose
- Strengthening, Opening and Building Stamina

Notes

- Warrior 2 Pose is an excellent pose for beginners (as well as experienced practitioners).
- As a [Standing Pose](#), it has the associated benefits and uses, with particular benefits in warming up hips.
- Do you know how the Warrior poses got their numbers of I, II & III? They are traditionally known as 1, 2, and 3 not because of sequence, but because there are that many limbs extended. How does the joining or releasing of the hands affect your breathing? Your sense of strength? What thoughts or feelings arise in you as you hold each pose? Zo Newell, Downward Dogs & Warriors 2007 p 18

See Also

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

Effects / Benefits

Energy, Mood, Emotion

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

- Energizing.
- Centering.
- Grounding.
- Improves mental focus.
- Challenges both physical and emotional stamina.
- Improves breathing.
- Said to activate first, second and third *chakras*.

Inner Body

Inner body effects may include the following.

- Said to stimulate abdominal organs.

Musculoskeletal General

Musculoskeletal effects may include the following.

- Strengthens and stretches legs and ankles.
- Improves muscular endurance and stamina.
- Opens pelvis, stretches groins.
- Expands chest.
- Opens shoulders.

- Baxter Bell notes that the pose is also a mild twist and that because the feet are stepped apart and in different directions, that it's a beginner balancing pose.

Musculoskeletal Specific

- Tones abductors.
- Strengthens deep [hip rotators, glute muscles and knee extenders](#) of back leg.
- Strengthens hip flexors of front leg.
- Strengthens deltoids, upper trapezius, supraspinatus and other muscles that keep arms parallel to the floor.
- Stretches adductors and hamstrings.
- Lengthens [psoas](#) and [gastroc-soleus](#) of back leg.
- Opens pec major and biceps.

Therapeutic Uses*

- [Anxiety](#) (Baxter Bell)
- [Backache](#) opening groin region releases low back compression
- [Carpal Tunnel Syndrome](#)
- [Depression](#) or Fatigue (Baxter Bell)
- [Flat Feet](#)
- Infertility
- [Osteoporosis](#)
- [Sciatica](#)

* 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

When choosing a variation or alternative, consider the following:

1. The heart / purpose of the pose.
2. The role it is playing in the sequence.
3. Why the pose is not accessible or appropriate for this student at this time.

Contraindications

This pose generally not recommended for students with these conditions:

- [Back injury, serious](#)
- [Knee injury, serious](#)

General Cautions

- In the case of uncontrolled blood pressure or a history of heart disease, Baxter Bell recommends holding the pose for no longer than a few breaths as it increases workload on the heart.
- For balance and stability issues, use wall or chair. See [Variations](#).

Cue to Consider Avoiding: â??Square Hipsâ??

Very few practitioners are able to keep their hips squared to the long side of the mat and their knee bent at a 90-degree angle without torquing the knee or compressing the lower back. Instead of trying to square the hips fully, [find your ideal hip angle.] â?? Rachel Scott

- Because most students wonâ??t be able to actually square the hips, perhaps cues such as â??open the hipsâ?? or others may be useful. Please see [Basic Form](#) (or the article link above) for instructions on helping students find their ideal hip angle.
- Add see [Verbal Cues](#) for much more on this topic.

Knee Cautions

- Ensure front knee is aligned over ankle. Avoid allowing the knee to fall in or outward. See quote below.
- Lengthen back knee without hyperextending it.

KNEE PAST ANKLE NOT PARTICULARLY INJURIOUS; KNEE FALLING INWARD MORE RISKY

There is nothing inherently wrong with your knee moving past your ankle joint. Really far forward is going to add more stress and strain to the knee joint itself, but itâ??s not like weâ??re loadingâ?? weight onto our back while doing it, which would of course increase the forces going into the knee. The bigger issueâ?? when weâ??re doing yoga poses where the knee is moving forward onto the ankle or beyond, is when the knee starts to sneak inwardâ??! As it sneaks inwards, then you have forces moving in different directions through the knee joint. That is more likely to increase the possibility of injury. â?? David Keil

Watch Out For: Front Knee Falling Inward

https://yogateachercentral.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/W2_knee_in.jpg

Teaching Considerations

- Begin again using [Basic Form](#) setup so that proper hip angle has been found and front knee is aligned over ankle.
- Press knee toward pinky-toe side of foot.
- Roll inner thigh up and out to draw knee over ankle.

Learning Forward

https://yogateachercentral.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/W2_lean_fwd.jpg

Watch out for leaning forward, causing rib cage to be out in front of pelvis, as shown here.

Teaching Considerations

- Align rib cage over pelvis.
- Reach strongly back with back arm.
- Keep back wrist over back angle.
- Keep hips level and pelvis neutral. Avoid pelvis tipping forward, causing a backbend.

Front Knee Beyond Toes

https://yogateachercentral.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/W2_knee_fwd.jpg

Watch out for front knee extending beyond toes as shown here, and/or a stance that is too short.

Teaching Considerations

- Take arms out to sides; position lets so ankles under wrists.
- Extend stride until front knee is over ankle.

More to Watch Out For

https://yogateachercentral.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/W2_knee_fwd.jpg

- Watch out for back foot not grounding and a lack of engagement in back leg.
- Watch out also, for a gaze down rather than to horizon or front fingertips.

Teaching Considerations

- Press into outer edge of back leg.
- Root pelvis down toward back heel.
- Keep back leg firm.
- Distribute work evenly between both legs.

Adaptations & Alternatives

If conditions related to stamina, size or balance make full pose inappropriate, consider such adaptations as these:

- Take arms to waist
- Place a chair under student
- Press back leg into wall

See also [variations](#).

Vary Arm Position

<https://yogateachercentral.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Woman-standing.jpg>

- Consider options such as arms in Cactus / Goal Post shape, Eagle arms, or hands at waist.

Back Foot at Wall

https://yogateachercentral.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/W1_at_wall.jpg

- While the following photo is a variation of Warrior 1 rather than Warrior 2, it demonstrates supporting back foot at wall.

More Options

The options above retain the leg action of the pose to build grounding, strength and stamina while opening. If those poses don't work, some of the shape can be accomplished by having student stand on knees on blanket. Take front knee out as in full pose.

Basic Form

Set Up

https://yogateachercentral.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/standing_pose_setup.jpg

1. Begin in a wide length stance.
2. Turn front foot out 90°.
3. Turn back foot in 30° to 45°.

Moving into Pose

<https://yogateachercentral.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Warrior-2-Vira-II-Setup.jpg>

FIND IDEAL HIP ANGLE

Very few practitioners are able to keep their hips squared to the long side of the mat and their knee bent at a 90-degree angle without torquing the knee or compressing the lower back. Instead of trying to square the hips fully, [find your ideal hip angle as follows.] Rachel Scott

1. With hands on hips, turn hips toward front knee (as in Warrior 1). Pelvis is neutral and the lumbar curve is natural.
2. Keeping knee aligned, slowly turn pelvis toward long side of mat until knee starts to fall inward (which indicates too far).
3. Then turn back foot in to match angle of hips.

Inhale

1. Lift arms parallel to floor, palms down (or take arms to waist).
2. Extend through wrists and fingers.

Exhale

1. Bend front knee to form a right angle.
2. Draw front sit bone down toward feet.
3. Pull low abdominals in.

More

- Inhale, lift chest away from waist.
- Exhale, turn head to gaze over front hand.

Gaze

- Front Fingertips

Hold Time

- 5 to 6 breaths

Coming Out

- Inhale, straighten front knee.

To Emphasize

https://yogateachercentral.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/W2_traditional.jpg

1. Keep front knee aligned over ankle.
2. Draw front sit bone under.
3. Keep back leg firm, grounding through back foot.
4. Keep hips centered and level, pelvis neutral.
5. Draw shoulder blades down back.

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.

Consider Avoiding: â??Square Hipsâ?•

Very few practitioners are able to keep their hips squared to the long side of the mat and their knee bent at a 90-degree angle without torquing the knee or compressing the lower back. Instead of trying to square the hips fully, [find your ideal hip angle.] â?? Rachel Scott

- Because most students wonâ??t be able to actually square the hips, perhaps cues such as â??open the hipsâ?• or others may be useful.
- Please see [Basic Form](#) (or the article link above) for instructions on helping students find their ideal hip angle.

CONSIDER AVOIDING THE CUE, â??ALIGNâ?• OR â??SQUAREâ?• HIPS WITH LONG EDGE OF MAT

This well-intended cue fails to account for the fact that most of us donâ??t have the skeletal structure to externally rotate the thigh a full ninety degrees at the hip. When we try to square our hips to the side of the mat, we either dump the front of our pelvis forward (creating lower back compression) or collapse our front knee inward. Focus instead on maximizing the range of motion possible for your hips. Once you have bent your front knee to 90 degrees, keep your front knee over your front ankle as you turn your pelvis toward the long side of your mat only to the extent that is possible for your body without the front knee rolling in. â?? Rachel Scott

Pelvis & Legs

Itâ??s usually advised to teach [standing poses](#) â??from the ground up.â?• Avoid focusing on upper body alignment, pose refinements or deepening the expression of the pose until the foundation is properly aligned and steady.

Pelvis

1. Avoid tilting front of pelvis forward.
2. See [Basic Form](#) for safe way to set up.

Back Leg

1. Ground down into outer edge of back foot.
2. Lift inner thigh of back leg.
3. Extend and lengthen back knee.
4. Keep back leg firm.
5. Lift back ankle and maintain natural arch.

Front Leg

1. Align knee over ankle.*
2. Turn knee toward pinky toe as much as you can while staying rooted through base of big toe & hugging inner ankles in.

3. Press into inner heel of front foot.
4. Let front hip drop (keeping back leg firm).
5. If front leg fatigues, partially straighten front knee for a breath or two and then return to fuller expression.

*Please see: [Common Problems in Alignment Cueing for Standing Poses](#)

Both Legs

1. Rotate inner thighs out and away from each other.
2. Stretch mat apart with your feet.
3. Vary feet distance as needed. (See [Variations](#).) As the inner legs warm up, lengthen stride as appropriate.

CORRECT MISALIGNMENT BY FOCUSING ON TWO ACTIONS

[The cue] “As you bend your knee, point your kneecap directly toward your middle toe,” [is designed] to stabilize your thighbone and knee in healthy alignment. But that’s often easier said than done; you may collapse your front knee inward when you come into Warrior II. To correct this misalignment, you need to focus on two actions. The first is stretching your hip adductors. The other secret to proper alignment of the bent leg is engaging and strengthening the muscles that externally rotate your thigh. The main external rotators are the gluteus maximus and the six deep rotators that lie underneath it. Julie Gudmestad

Upper Body

Torso

1. Stack shoulders over hips.
2. Balance rib cage over pelvis.
3. Press shoulder blades into back.
4. Release shoulders down.
5. Expand the chest.
6. Lift sternum and back ribs.
7. Keep lifting up the side waist, lengthening the torso.
8. Lift low belly toward spine.
9. Draw tailbone and low back in.
10. Press tailbone toward front knee.
11. Adjust pelvis so waistline stays parallel to floor.

Arms

1. Extend back arm away from your body.
2. Keep arms parallel to floor.
3. Align front arm directly above front thigh and back arm over back leg.

4. Imagine someone pulling your arms away from each other.

Shoulders

EXPERIENCE â??THE SHRUGâ??

Make sure your arms are in the same plane as your shoulders or slightly forward of the shoulders. To experience â??the shrug,â?? rotate your hands and arms so your thumbs face downward: feel how the muscles on either side of your neck hunch upward, the deltoids tense, and the shoulders feel blocked. Now rotate your hands and arms so the palms face up, even reaching your little fingers upward. The hunching dissipates: the upper inner corners of your shoulder blades release down your back, softening the sides of your neck. Feel how the weight of your arms is supported more by your shoulder blades, which are planted firmly on your back, and less by your neck: youâ??ll especially feel a firming of the muscles at the outer edges of your shoulder blades, as the deltoids soften and the shoulder joints begin to feel more open and free. Do a few small arm circles to feel the support offered by the shoulder blades. â?? Doug Keller

More

1. Gaze over middle finger of front hand.
2. Soften eyes.
3. Breathe deep and free.
4. Become inwardly detached.

CONCENTRATE & YOU WILL RADIATE!

Drop your brain. Drop your shoulders. Lift & open your heart center. Concentrate & you will radiate!
â??Baron Baptiste

Workshop with Roger Cole

See Yoga Internationalâ??s article [Foundation of a Warrior](#) by Roger Cole for in-depth alignment work. Here are primary teachings from the dense article:

Both Virabhadrasana I & II

Back Foot

- In Warrior I turn back foot in 60 degrees.
- In Warrior II, turn back foot in about 10 to 15 degrees.

Back Leg

- In both poses, create *Tadasana* actions in the back leg.

- Straighten knee strongly.
- Press outer side of foot down.
- Move upper-inner thigh backward.

Front Knee & Hip

- In both poses, bend front knee toward 90-degree angle without taking it beyond ankle.

Pelvis

- In both poses, hold front knee and hip stable and use front hip joint as pivot point for pelvis.
- In Warrior I, pelvis swings toward bent knee.
- In Warrior II, pelvis swings away from bent knee.
- In Warrior I, make an additional effort to press sitting bone of back leg as far forward as possible to tilt the pelvis more upright.

Virabhradasana II

Included in the teachings are these points for *Virabhadrasana II*.

Utilize Tadasana actions in the back leg. Balance weight.

1. Place outer edge of back foot against wall, turning foot slightly in.
2. Straighten back knee; press outer edge of foot down; draw upper-inner thigh back away from wall; press tailbone toward wall. • counterbalancing everything so there is little or no actual movement of the leg or pelvis. •
3. Slowly bend front knee directly toward front foot, taking care not to let the knee move in.
4. • The more you bend your [front] knee, the more your weight will shift toward the inside of your [back] foot. You don't want that. So, press the outer edge of your [back] foot down more firmly to keep the weight on the inner and outer foot equal. •
5. • The more strongly you press the outer foot down, the more the [back] knee will rotate outward, so counterbalance this by inwardly rotating the [back] thigh even more.
6. Result: no net rotation. • And there you have it: the action of the thigh of the back leg in warrior II combines intense outward rotation, caused by pushing the outer foot down, with intense inward rotation, caused by pushing the upper-inner thigh back. All of this results in little or no net rotation at all. If you can bend your right knee and hip each a full 90 degrees without compromising any aspect of the alignment just described, do it; if not, just bend as far as you can without losing your alignment. •

Front Leg: Open pelvis rather than outwardly rotate thigh.

1. Take the pose again with the front toes at wall. Bend knee.
2. Place front hand on outside of front knee and back hand on top rim of pelvis on back side.
3. Press front knee against hand, Do not allow knee to move to left or right.

4. Use hand on pelvis to guide back-facing side of pelvis away from front knee as far as it will go. (â??It may not move far.â?•)
5. â??Think of your pelvis as a door and your [front] hip joint as its hinge: as you swing the [back] side of the pelvis away from the [front] knee, the [front] side of the pelvis pivots around the hip joint, just as a door pivots around its hinge. This sideways, door-opening movement of the pelvis relative to the [front] thigh (called abduction)â??rather than outward rotationâ??is the primary movement of the thigh of the bent leg in warrior II.â?•

Variations

Hands to Waist or Front Foot on Block

<https://yogateachercentral.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Beginner-1.jpg>

- To help student focus on lower body actions or to address shoulder strain or fatigue, take hands to waist.
- Another variation: especially for collapsing ankle of back foot, place front foot on one or two blocks. (Jules Mitchell)

Exalted Warrior / Reverse Warrior

https://yogateachercentral.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/exalted-reverse-warrior-shutterstock_37

1. Turn front palm up.
2. Keep bend in knee while beginning to lightly reach back hand down the back leg (without putting pressure on the leg).
3. Keep low belly active and begin to take front arm up and back.
4. Reach heart toward sky.
5. Gaze up under arm or down at ground.

Switch sides.

Category

1. Uncategorized