



Uttitha Hasta Padangusthasana

Description



Utthita Hasta Pad

"Extended

UTTHITA HASTA PADANGUSTHASANA (14 MOVEMENTS)

1	EKAM	Inhale, right leg up, hold toe
2	DVE	Exhale, fold
3	TRINI	Inhale, up
4	CATVARI	Exhale, open leg out, look left
5	PANCA	Inhale, leg to the front
6	SAT	Exhale, fold
		Inhale, up, hands to waist
7	SAPTA	Exhale, Samasthiti
8	ASTAU	Inhale, left leg up, hold toe
9	NAVA	Exhale, fold
10	DASA	Inhale, up



11	EKĀDĀSA	Exhale, open leg out, look right
12	DUADĀSA	Inhale, leg to the front
13	TRAYODĀSA	Exhale, fold
14	CATURDĀSA	Inhale, up, hands to waist Exhale, Samasthiti

Anatomy

Utthita hasta padangusthasana uses many of the same principles that apply to tree pose. Again we have several plots involved in the story of this pose balancing on one leg, intensely stretching the lifted leg, extending the back to maintain the body erect, and contracting the muscles of the arm to lift the foot. Even the action of the big toe that is being held is a subplot. Then there is the mental aspect of staying calm to maintain balance. This is aided by focusing on the breath the underlying story in all of the asanas. Balance the action of the person, which presses the ball of the foot into the floor, with the action of the tibialis posterior, which spreads the weight across the sole of the foot. Essentially all of the lower leg and foot muscles help to create a firm foundation for the pose. The key to success in this posture is actively flexing the hip of the lifted leg. The tendency is to use the hand and arm to lift the foot. Instead, use the hip flexors to lift the leg and the arm as an adjunct to refine the lift.

BASIC JOINT POSITIONS

- The standing knee extends.
- The standing hip is in neutral.
- The raised knee extends.
- The raised hip flexes.
- The shoulder of the raised arm flexes.
- The back extends slightly to counterbalance reaching forward for the foot.

Preparation

Use a wall to balance at first, and train yourself to lift the leg in the air by activating the hip flexors. In the beginning, bend the knee. Hold the knee in the air without using your hand. This trains the hip flexors to engage. Then wrap a belt around the foot to allow the leg to straighten. As you develop flexibility and balance, move away from the wall. Create stability by bending the standing leg to lower the center of gravity, and then work toward straightening the leg. You can also bend the leg in the air to release the hamstrings, and then work toward extending the knee of this leg. If you start to lose balance, bend both knees to regain stability.

STEP 1 Activate the quadriceps to straighten the knee of the standing leg. The tensor fascia lata runs along the side of the leg and synergizes the quadriceps in extending the knee while stabilizing it. Remember to align the femur and tibia bones along their long axes, avoiding hyperextension of the knee. The gluteus medius will automatically contract to stabilize the pelvis.



STEP 2 Here we illustrate the hip flexors and knee extensors of the lifted leg in action. The psoas is the prime mover of hip flexion. Holding the bent knee in the air aids in educating the psoas to contract in this pose. Use it to lift the leg. The pectineus and adductors longus and brevis synergize this action. Activate the quadriceps to straighten the knee. The sartorius, running from the inside of the knee to the front of the pelvis, refines this action. Visualize this muscle engaging.

STEP 3 Now use the arm to lift the leg higher. Contract the upper sternoclavicular region of the pectoralis major and the anterior deltoid to lift the arm. To get a feel for engaging these muscles, press the palm of the hand against a wall and attempt to scrub it up toward the ceiling. Then return to the pose. Bend the elbow by activating the biceps and brachialis muscles. These actions raise the leg and augment the stretch of the gluteus maximus, hamstrings, and gastrocnemius.

STEP 4 There is a tendency to lean forward in this pose due to the pull of the raised-leg hamstrings and gluteus maximus on the structures of the posterior chain. Correct this by arching the lumbar to activate the erector spinae and by engaging the standing-leg buttocks, quadratus lumborum, and gluteus maximus. Note how this draws the foot that is held in the air higher and accentuates the stretch at the back of the leg.

SUMMARY In Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana, the main plot played out in the pose is the hamstring stretch of the lifted leg. The subplot, or secondary stretch, takes place at the gastrocnemius and gluteus maximus muscles.

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