



Iyengar Yoga

**By Nancy Wile
Yoga Education Institute**

Table of Contents:

Background of Iyengar Yoga.....	2
Founder and Important Practitioners.....	2
What Make Iyengar Yoga Different.....	4
Overall Areas of Focus in Iyengar Yoga.....	6
Examples of Postures and Teaching Techniques in Iyengar Yoga.....	9
Sample Iyengar Sequences.....	11
Sun Salutations for Iyengar Students.....	21
Use of Props in Iyengar Yoga.....	22
Create Your Own Sequence of Postures Using Props.....	35
Important Literature for Iyengar Yoga.....	36

Background of Iyengar Yoga

Iyengar Yoga, founded by BKS Iyengar, is a form of hatha yoga that emphasizes precision and detail of alignment during the practice of asanas and pranayama. It consists of approximately 200 classical yoga postures and 14 styles of pranayama; ranging from easy to extremely difficult. These asanas have been structured and categorized such that they allow a beginner to progress through the practice safely, while gaining flexibility, strength and a control on their mind. Iyengar yoga focuses on the structural alignment of the physical body through the practice of asanas, and aims to unite the body, mind and spirit for health and well-being. Iyengar differs from the other styles of hatha yoga by four key elements: technique, sequence, timing, and the use of props.

Iyengar Yoga is characterized by great attention to detail and precise focus on body alignment. Iyengar pioneered the use of "props" such as bolsters, benches, blocks, straps and sand bags, which function as aids allowing beginners to experience asanas more easily and fully than might otherwise be possible without several years of practice. Props also allow elderly, injured, tired or ill students to enjoy the benefits of many asanas via fully "supported" methods requiring less muscular effort.

Unlike more experiential approaches where students are encouraged to independently "find their way" to their own full expression of an asana, an Iyengar Yoga class is highly verbal and precise, with misalignments and errors actively corrected. Iyengar teachers complete at least two years of rigorous training for the introductory certificate. They may complete subsequent intermediate levels and senior levels of certification, potentially entailing a decade or more of training.

Founder and Important Practitioners

B.K.S. Iyengar was born into a poor family in India. He was the 11th of 13 children (10 of whom survived) of father Sri Krishnamachar, a school teacher, and mother Sheshamma. Iyengar's home village of Bellur, was in the grip of the influenza pandemic at the time of his birth, leaving him sickly and weak. Throughout his childhood, he struggled with malaria, tuberculosis, typhoid fever, and general malnutrition. When he was five years old his family moved to Bangalore, and within four years his father died of appendicitis.

In 1934, Iyengar's brother-in-law, Sri Tirumalai Krishnamacharya, asked the 15 year-old Iyengar to come to Mysore, so as to improve his health through yoga practice. There, Iyengar learned asana practice, which steadily improved his health. Krishnamacharya had Iyengar and other students give yoga demonstration in the Maharaja's court at Mysore. Iyengar considered his association with his brother-in-law a turning point in his life. Although

Krishnamacharya only taught for a few weeks over a two-year period, Iyengar had said that those days determined what he would become. In 1937, Krishnamacharya sent Iyengar to Pune at the age of eighteen to spread the teaching of yoga. He spent many hours each day learning and experimenting with various techniques.

In 1952, Iyengar befriended the violinist Yehudi Menuhin. Practicing yoga under the guidance of Iyengar helped Menuhin improve his violin playing, and he invited Iyengar to Switzerland to teach a group there. From then on, Iyengar began to regularly visit the west and more and more yoga schools began teaching his system of yoga practice. Iyengar made his first visit to the United States in 1956, when he taught in Ann Arbor, Michigan and gave several lecture-demonstrations.

In 1966, *Light on Yoga* was published. It eventually became an international best-seller and has been translated into 17 languages and sold three million copies. *Light on Yoga* was followed by titles on pranayama and various aspects of yoga philosophy. In total, Iyengar has authored 14 books.

In 1975, Iyengar opened the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune, in memory of his late wife. He officially retired from teaching in 1984, but continued to be active in the world of Iyengar Yoga, teaching special classes, giving lectures, and writing books. Iyengar's daughter, Geeta, and son, Prashant, have gained international acclaim as teachers.

Anthropologist Joseph S. Alter of the University of Pittsburgh stated that Iyengar "has by far had the most profound impact on the global spread of yoga."

Iyengar attracted his students by offering them just what they sought – which tended to be physical stamina and flexibility. He conducted demonstrations and later, when a scooter accident dislocated his spine, began exploring the use of props to help disabled people practice Yoga.

Iyengar died on August 20, 2014 in Pune, India from heart failure at age 95

I think one of his main contributions was making yoga accessible, but also the degree of attention he gave to the practices of asana and to pranayama was immense. He was also an amazing communicator. He was constantly finding new ways to help his students increase their capacity to be aware of what was going on in their bodies and minds. Iyengar is a lot of the yoga people experience in the United States. The teacher may not be teaching Iyengar, but that teacher has been influenced by Iyengar yoga in some way. Finally, as a father of six, Iyengar always emphasized the importance of maintaining your commitments to family or society, while also maintaining your yoga practice, and not allowing one to completely take over the other.

What Makes Iyengar Yoga Different

One of the main aspects that distinguishes Iyengar yoga from other forms is the very high degree of attention paid to alignment. Props may be used to increase awareness and to make the poses accessible. Poses are often held longer than students might be used to in a flow-style class. The diversity of practice is another distinguishing element, as is Iyengar's therapeutic approach to yoga.

Focus on Alignment

Although most forms of hatha yoga focus on proper alignment, Iyengar yoga puts proper alignment at the top of importance. Alignment refers to your body's relationship with gravity. Gravity is pushing down on us all of the time. We don't notice it because it is happening all of the time. But your body is dealing with gravity right now. If you lean your body to one side, just about 2 or 3 inches, and hold that position, you will start to get tired. If you consciously sit up straight you will feel a bit lighter. It's no mystery. When the body is in good alignment, you feel lighter. When it is out of alignment you feel heavier. If you stand a pole on its end and align it perfectly, gravity's pressure will hold it up; if the alignment is poor, it will fall. The same is true in the body.

Alignment, in the smaller picture, refers to your body in relation to itself. If you lean your body to one side, just about 2 or 3 inches, and hold that position again, you can feel the muscles on the side you lean away from begin to tense. Those muscles are keeping you balanced in the field of gravity. If they didn't activate at the same time you lean, gravity would push you to the floor. Nobody has perfect alignment. We all lean a bit to one side more than the other. Some imbalances come from overuse (use of one side or area in a specific movement that we repeatedly perform at work or sports, or even sleep), some from injuries, while others arise from simple misuse of the body. For each imbalance, we also have a balancing mechanism, something that responds to the imbalance to keep us from falling over. These are called compensations. If one shoulder is pulled in to the neck more than the other, the ribs will have to compensate. When the ribs shift, the pelvis twists, and then the foot turns. Although the body is balanced, it is a compromised balance, a state where many of the muscles and joints are constantly working against a subtle (or not so subtle) lean, or twist.

Iyengar yoga believes that when we practice the asanas with the intention to bring the body into greater alignment, we address the imbalances and compensations in the body. We address the compromised balance that the body is used to dealing with, and change it to an intelligent balance; one that works with gravity rather than against it.

Detailed Instruction

The instruction and set up for each posture is more detailed and complex than in many other forms of hatha yoga. The alignment and action of each part of the

body is analyzed in each posture. Iyengar focuses on proper alignment in a posture of both the main joints, limbs and body parts involved, as well as those parts of the body that may be forgotten in a particular pose.

Postures Held Longer

Students also hold the asanas for a longer period of time than in other forms of yoga. This is because yoga Iyengar believed that if a student holds these postures for a longer period of time, it helped the body achieve the asana's benefits completely, allowing its effects to penetrate deeper in to the body. Apart from that, according to the principles of Iyengar yoga, when a person gets into an asana it takes the body some time to acclimate and become stable in that posture. After that, the person can focus on their breathing and allow their body to benefit from the asana. Postures cannot be done swiftly or without awareness. It takes time to move into a posture and become stable. When this has been achieved, it then takes some time to intensify the depth of the posture and so extract its benefit. Otherwise the potential effects and benefits remain small compared to what is possible.

Practice of Pranayama Comes Later

Pranayama comes only after a student has mastered the asanas: In most other forms of yoga a person can perform pranayama (deep breathing techniques) as soon as they start practicing the asanas, but Iyengar yoga emphasizes that a student should perform pranayama only after they have mastered the asanas. This is because while performing an asana a person is taught to fine-tune the movements of their body. They are taught to discipline their body, make it more flexible and better aligned. At the same time they learn to breathe correctly and to focus on even the smallest parts of their body; helping them intensify their meditative state while performing asanas. This also allows the flow of life energy or prana without any blocks, which is how pranayama essentially benefits the entire body. Moreover, if a person practices asanas properly they will also be able to be more aware of their entire body making their mind more sharp and attentive. Once they have mastered all these techniques, they may start practicing pranayama as it is not simply a form of deep breathing but requires one to sit in a posture for a long period of time, reign in their mind and breath in and out with the correct technique to gain it's full benefits – for which a person's body and mind has to be ready.

Use of Props

Iyengar yoga emphasizes the correct alignment of all parts of the body while performing an asana. In order to facilitate this, he developed several props like the yoga block, chairs, blankets and belts that can aid a person in performing asanas. Today, these props are common in many forms of hatha yoga, but these props were first introduced in Iyengar yoga. Props help a person adjust and support themselves so that they can practice the asana with correct alignment in a way that is safe and effective.

Much Variation in the Sequences Used

In Iyengar, there is an emphasis on changing the sequences every day. The sequences of the asanas in Iyengar yoga can be very different each practice. Even though some of the postures may be repeated, it encourages teachers to drastically change the sequencing of those postures from one day to the next. Iyengar yoga believes that this diversity in the practice helps to prevent injury and overuse, and engages both the mind and body in the practice. According to the principles of Iyengar yoga, by varying the sequence in which postures are practiced, the effect of the asana (both mental and physical) can be intensified. Iyengar also believed that this alteration helped bring about a change in the whole person, including his/her spiritual evolution.

Inversions are Important

Headstand and shoulder stand are really important poses in Iyengar practice. They are not always taught in other styles of yoga. Iyengar yoga offers alternatives for people who are not able to do them. If someone comes to an Iyengar class, they know there will be some inverted pose that is taught. Inversions are often made more accessible to students through the use of props, such as a yoga blanket to prevent overstretching of the neck area.

Cautious and Mindful

Iyengar yoga is very cautious and mindful. The use of props helps create a safe and supported practice, as does the slow pace. Iyengar emphasizes the need to keep students safe and to protect the joints.

Importance of Learning with a Guru

In Iyengar, an emphasis is placed on gurus and knowledgeable teachers. Iyengar yoga describes a guru as someone who is free from ego and who lead their student through a spiritual path. It is believed that a guru can help eliminate obstacles to the student's practice and that a guru is essential to learning postures and pranayama correctly.

Specifics of Practice in Iyengar Yoga

For physical practices of asanas, Iyengar yoga emphasizes that first the yamas and niyamas must be mastered. To start practice, it is recommended that the stomach is empty, to take a shower or bath both before and after practice, and to practice early in the morning or late in the evening. It encourages practitioners to relax their facial muscles and breathe slowly and relaxed during practice.

Typically in Iyengar practice, students can begin by warming up with sun salutations. Sometimes headstand or shoulder stand will be practiced first to help clear the belly before other asanas are practiced.

In an Iyengar practice, much time is spent on each asana, carefully examining the alignment of each part of the body in the asana. Each posture is often held

for about 3 minutes and then repeated once or twice. A practice that lasts 90 minutes may only include about 8 or 9 postures. Each posture is separate and distinct rather than flowing from one posture to the next. Typically, in Iyengar a posture would be practiced on both sides (right and left) before moving onto the next posture, rather than practicing a variety of postures on one side first, and then doing those same postures on the other side.

Iyengar Yoga emphasizes:

- 1) sequencing,
- 2) timings,
- 3) alignment, and
- 4) use of props.

Sequencing

Many styles of yoga practice a similar sequence of yoga poses every time. The Iyengar method is unique in that it treats sequencing as an art and science that develops and deepens with longevity in the practice. A beginning student will often only practice a few postures during 90 minutes, repeating the postures a few times, and spending much time analyzing the alignment within each posture. More experienced students will still stay in one posture for a more extended length of time than other forms of yoga, but will typically do less repetitions of each posture.

Also, it incorporates yoga therapy into the practice. For example forward bends are calming to the nervous system while backbends are exciting. Understanding the nature of the different poses, gives us the ability to utilize different sequences for desired effects. In this way, the Iyengar yogi looks at sequencing in a similar way to a yoga therapist. The synergy of the parts has everything to do with the end result. Mr. Iyengar has given specific guidelines regarding sequencing, for safety and effectiveness in practice.

Timing

How long you hold a yoga pose is another conscious aspect of the Iyengar method. Doing a yoga pose quickly with many repetitions will have a different effect than holding the same pose for 3 minutes, for example. In many cases in Iyengar yoga, students stay in poses to allow the circulatory system and/or endocrine system to benefit. More quickly moving repetitions, or movements with breath, are usually only done within a warm up.

Alignment

The difference between hatha yoga styles is not which poses are practiced, but how the poses are practiced. The Iyengar method emphasizes alignment, noting that the body usually goes out of proper alignment due to postural imbalances. Maintaining alignment demands mental focus, which brings us into the present, and ultimately makes us straighter and healthier.

Props

The use of blocks, belts, benches, chairs, walls, mats, blankets, and other props has become a signature of Iyengar Yoga. Iyengar actually innovated the use of all props seen today in his more than 70 years of practice. Props have different functions depending on usage. They are generally used to maintain proper alignment, provide support, help educate the body, and/or intensify the practice.

Examples of Postures and Teaching techniques in Iyengar Yoga

Notice the phrasing and teaching techniques for hatha yoga postures when practiced Iyengar style.

Extended Side Angle



Steps

- From tadasana, take a deep inhalation and jump into a standing straddle with the feet 4 to 4 ½ feet apart.
- Raise the arms sideways in line with the shoulders, palms facing down.
- On the exhale, slowly turn the right foot sideways 90 degrees to the right, and the left foot slightly to the right, keeping the left leg stretched out and tight at the knee.
- Bend the right leg until the thigh and calf create a right angle and the right thigh is parallel to the floor.
- Place the right palm on the floor by the side of the right foot, the right armpit covering and touching the outer side of the right knee.
- If the chest begins to turn towards the floor, then place a block under the right hand to increase the space, and open the chest to the side.
- Stretch the left arm out over the left ear, keeping the head up.
- Draw the top shoulder back and open through the chest
- The chest, hips and legs should be in one straight line.
- Press down firmly through the left (back) foot
- Stretch every part of the body, concentrating on the back side of the whole body.
- Remain in this position for 1 to 2 minutes, depending on experience.
- Inhale, lift the right hand off the floor and come back into a standing straddle.
- Repeat the posture on the other side.

Notice how the posture is held still for at least 1 minute – even for beginning students – and held longer for more experienced students.

Sample Transcript for Teaching Triangle (Trikonasana) the Iyengar Way

(Start in Tadasana). Really stretch your feet, spread your heels sideways, spread your soles side ways. Feel the floor evenly with the right and left foot. Take a deep inhalation and jump your feet apart about 4 to 4 ½ feet. Extend your fingers, arms out at parallel height. Take the left foot in without turning the left knee in too much. Turn the right foot out, so it is in a straight line from the leg. Place your weight into the left foot and leg to stabilize. Lift through the chest. Look to your right hand. Remember that as you look to your right, you should never forget your left side. Tip to the right, moving from the hips, and place the right hand on the floor behind the right ankle. Place the palm of your hand on the floor if possible. Check that your chest is fully open to the side as you reach your right hand to the floor. If your chest is not fully open, then place a block under your right hand. Extend your left hand directly overhead. Extend your body back. Check that the front body and back body are equal distance off the floor. There should be one straight line from your left finger tips through both shoulders and down through your right hand. Gaze at the thumb of your outstretched left hand. Keep the right knee tight by pulling up the knee cap and keep the right knee facing the toes. Stay here and breathe deeply and evenly (staying in this position for a full minute). As you inhale, feel the lengthening through your shoulders, arms, and fingertips, and the opening through your chest. As you exhale, press down through your back foot and press your shoulders away from your ears. Make your left elbow slightly concave and turn your hand slightly from side to side until your hand is facing directly out. Fingers together and feeling the energy lift up through the fingers. Press down through your front toes and then feel your back hip spiral open as you keep your back foot in place turned in. Connect each of the points of your body as a single unit, so that your consciousness becomes a single unit.

(Repeat on the other side). Come up and take your feet in. As you inhale, jump your feet together and come back to tadasana. (Repeat the entire posture once more on both sides)

Sample Iyengar Sequences

Overview

Although many students of Iyengar practice sun salutations as a way to warm up, they are not usually considered part of the practice, but may be included as a warm up before the actual practice begins. Each posture may be practiced twice. At least 5 minutes should be spent on each posture. For postures that are practiced on both the right and left side, this means about 3 minutes per side. Practicing the posture twice on each side would mean about 1-2 minutes each time for each side. Pranayama is typically practiced after savasana and is done in a seated posture. Iyengar only uses pranayama practices that are done through the nose (no mouth breathing exercises). Most pranayama exercises are only practiced once the student has gained some experience with asanas.

Iyengar Sequences for newer students

Warm Up with Sun Salutations

Tadasana

Jump feet out into a standing straddle

Triangle (Practice once on each side, then practice a second time on each side)

Extended Side Angle

Warrior 1

Warrior 2

Pyramid

Come down onto the floor

Shoulder stand

Plow

Savasana

Pranayama

Sample Iyengar Based Sequences for Beginning Students:



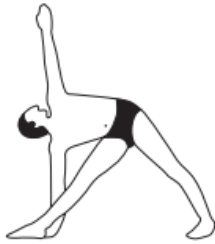
1 Tāḍāsana/Samasthiti
to Ūrdhva Hastāsana
3 x



2 Tāḍāsana/Samasthiti
to Ūrdhva Baddhāṅguliyāsana
(change interlock)
2 x



3 Vṛkṣāsana
2 x each side



4 Utthita Trikoṇāsana
2 x each side



5 Utthita Pāṣvakoṇāsana
2 x each side



6 Pārsvottānāsana
(hands on hips; concave back)
2 x each side



7 Prasārita Pādottānāsana
(hands on floor, arms straight;
concave back)
2 x



8 Adho Mukha Śvānāsana
2 x



9 Ūrdhva Prasārita Pādāsana
(resting version: legs up wall,
back flat on floor)
stay quietly for 5 minutes



1 *Utthita Trikoṅāsana*
2 x each side



2 *Virābhadrāsana II*
2 x each side



3 *Ardha Uttānāsana*
(half *Uttānāsana*;
hands on wall at
shoulder height;
concave back)
1 x



4 *Pārvattānāsana*
(concave back; hands
on chair or blocks)
2 x



5 *Prāsārita Padottānāsana*
(hands on floor, arms
straight; concave back)
2 x



6 *Sukhāsana*
(simple cross legs;
switch cross and twist
to each side) 2 x



7 *Baddha Koṅāsana*
(back supported
against wall or couch)
sit on support for
several minutes



8 *Vajrāsana (Ūrdhva Hasta & Parvatāsana in Vajrāsana)* sit with blanket between calves and thighs



9 *Adho Mukha Vīrāsana*
(knees apart; relax
forward; then arms
forward) 2 x



10 *Pavanmuktāsana*



11 *Adho Mukha Śvānāsana*
2 x



12 *Supta Baddha Koṅāsana*
(with support under
legs, back, and head)



1 *Urdhva Hastasana*
2 x



2 *Utkaṭasana*
3 x



3 *Utthita Trikoṇāsana*
2 x each side



4 *Utthita Pāśvakoṇāsana*
2 x each side



5 *Vimānāsana*
2 x each side



6 *Vīrabhadrāsana I*
2 x each side



7 *Adho Mukha Śvānāsana*
2 x



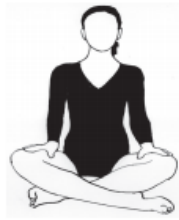
8 *Catuṣpādāsana*
2 x



9 *Adho Mukha Vīrāsana*
(release the back)



10 *Śavāsana*
(legs resting on chair or support; 5 minutes)



1 *Sukhāsana*
(change cross)
1 x



2 *Sukhāsana Twist*
(simple cross legs, twist,
change cross, and repeat)
2 x



3 *Adho Mukha Vīrāsana*
(extend arms forward
then change cross)
2 x



4 *Utthita Trikoṇāsana*
2 x each side



5 *Vīrabhadrāsana II*
2 x



6 *Ardha Chandrāsana*
(with or without wall)
2 x



7 *Adho Mukha Śvānāsana*
2 x



8 *Bharadvājāsana*
(in chair)
2 x



9 *Śavāsana*
5 minutes

Sample Iyengar Sequences for More Experienced Students

Warm Up with Sun Salutations

Tadasana

Step feet out into a standing straddle

Triangle

Extended Side Angle

Warrior 1

Warrior 2

Pyramid

Prasarita Padottanasana (Standing Straddle forward fold)

Hands to feet forward fold (padangusthasana)

Come down to the floor

Shoulder stand

Plow

Wheel (Urdhva dhanurasana)

Boat (Navasana)

Seated forward fold (Paschimottanasana)

Inclined Plane (Purvottanasana)

Savasana

Pranayama

Sequence 1 (more experienced students)



1 *Tāḍāsana/Samasthiti*
to *Ūrdhva Hastāsana*
2 x



2 *Uttitha Trikoṅāsana*
2 x



3 *Uttitha Pārśvakoṅāsana*
2 x each side



4 *Ardha Candrāsana*
2 x



5 *Vimānāsana*
2 x each side



6 *Parivṛtta Trikoṅāsana*
2 x



7 *Parivṛtta Pārśvakoṅāsana*
2 x



8 *Uttānāsana*
1 x



9 *Prasārita Pādottānāsana*
1 x



10 *Sālamba Śirṣāsana*
1-5 minutes



11 *Adho Mukha Vīrāsana*
(rest for 15 seconds)



12 *Catuṣpādāsana*
3 x



13 *Sālamba Sarvāṅgāsana*
3-8 minutes



14 *Eka Pāda Sarvāṅgāsana*
2 x



15 *Pārṣva Halāsana*
2 x



16 *Śavāsana*
5-10 minutes

Sequence 2 (more experienced students)



1 *Adho Mukha Virāsana*
30 secs. to 1 min.



2 *Adho Mukha Śvānāsana*
1-3 minutes



3 *Uttānāsana*
1-3 minutes



4 *Pāśvottānāsana*
2 x



5 *Prasārita Padottānāsana*
1 x



6 *Sālamba Śirṣāsana*
(optional)
1-5 minutes



7 *Sālamba Sarvāṅgāsana*
3-8 minutes



8 *Halāsana*
1-3 minutes



9 *Daṇḍāsana*
1-3 minutes



1 *Adho Mukha Virāsana*
(head supported/resting)
1-3 minutes



2 *Adho Mukha Śvānāsana*
(head supported/resting)
1-3 minutes



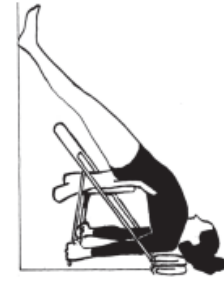
3 *Uttānāsana*
1 x



4 *Prasārita Pādottānāsana*
(head supported on floor or
block)
1-3 minutes



5 *Sālamba Śīrṣāsana*
1-5 minutes



6 *Chair Sarvāṅgāsana or Setu
Bandha (over bolster)*
1-3 minutes



7 *Supta Baddha Koṅāsana*
(supported)
5-8 minutes



8 *Supta Virāsana*
(supported)
5-8 minutes or as long
as comfortable



9 *Pāścimottānāsana*
(head supported)
1-3 minutes



10 *Śavāsana*
5-10 minutes or as
time permits

Select one of the sample sequences to practice.

Sun Salutations for Iyengar Students

Sun Salutations, or Surya Namaskar, are often performed in sets of 5 in Iyengar Yoga, but new students can begin with 2 or 3. Iyengar yoga typically practice Sun Salutation A. Each time that students flow through this sequence, they should synchronize their breath with the movements of their body (as with other forms of hatha yoga). Below is a transcript of teaching sun salutation in Iyengar yoga.

- To begin, stand in Tadasana (Mountain Pose). Distribute your weight evenly over both feet. Establish a slow, steady rhythm for your breath. Find your center.
- Inhale and stretch your arms out to the side and overhead into (Urdhva Hastasana).
- Exhale, hollow out your belly and fold into Uttanasana (Standing Forward Bend), connecting down into the earth. Keep your legs firmly engaged.
- Inhale and lengthen your spine forward into Ardha Uttanasana (Half Standing Forward Bend). In this pose, the gaze is lifted, the spine is extended, and the fingertips can stay on the floor or rise to the shins.
- Exhale and step or lightly hop your feet back behind you into Plank Pose. Your wrists should be flat on the floor, shoulder-distance apart, and your feet should be at hip distance. Take a full breath in as you lengthen through your spine.
- Exhale and lower into Chaturanga Dandasana (Four-Limbed Staff Pose), keeping your legs straight and pushing back into your heels or bringing your knees to the floor. Build heat in the center of your body as you hold this challenging posture.
- Inhale and carve your chest forward into Urdhva Mukha Svanasana (Upward-Facing Dog), directing that energy out from your heart. Pull your shoulders back and open your collarbones. Engage your legs but relax your gluteal muscles.
- Exhale and roll over the toes, coming into Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward-Facing Dog Pose). Ground down through your hands and feet as you lengthen your spine. Remain here for five breaths.
- On your fifth exhale, bend your knees and look between your hands. Then inhale and step or lightly hop your feet between your hands, returning to Ardha Uttanasana.
- Exhale back to Uttanasana, surrendering into the fold.
- Inhale, reaching your arms out wide to your sides and coming to stand through a flat back. Feel a renewed sense of energy as you draw your arms overhead into Urdhva Hastasana.
- Exhale and return to Tadasana, your home base. Remain here for a few breaths, feeling the movement of energy through your body, or continue on to your next salute.

Use of Props

As mentioned, the use of props is very important in Iyengar yoga. Below are some examples for use of props when teaching an Iyengar inspired yoga class.

Down Dog

Blocks can be used under the hands to reduce the stretch in the calves and hamstrings, so the hips can remain lifted as the heels reach towards the floor.



A block can also be used under the forehead to encourage lengthening through the neck.





If the studio has ropes available, they can be used to take weight off the hands and feet and provide support in down dog.



Other Standing Postures

Triangle

A block or chair can be used in order to maintain the alignment of the shoulders and hips, while providing support in the posture.



Revolved Triangle



Pyramid

Blocks can be used for support and give more space to ensure that flexion is from the hips with the pelvic bowl tipping forward, and space to square the hips forward.



Extended Side Angle

A block can be used to prevent the chest and side body from collapsing into the posture by giving more space and allowing the front leg to have less of a deep bend in the knee.



Warrior 3

A block can be used to provide stability and support, making it easier to maintain the posture and square the hips towards the floor. Students can also place their back foot against a wall for additional support and stability.



Half Moon

A block can be used in half moon to provide more stability and support, making it easier for the student to balance and open the chest and hips to the side.



Standing Straddle Forward Fold

Blocks can be used under students' hands to give more space and decrease the stretch in the hamstrings. This helps the student maintain a flat back and press back from the hips so the pelvic bowl tips forward.



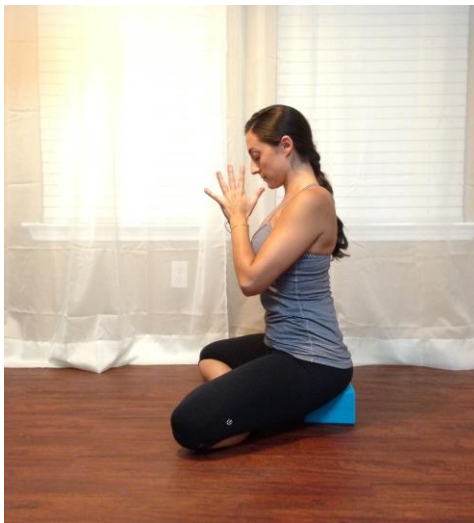
Lunges

Blocks can be used with a low lunge posture to provide space and support, which helps the student lift through the chest rather than collapsing forward.



Sitting

Blankets, blocks or bolsters can be used to lift the hips, taking pressure off the knees and low back. It allows the student to sit more comfortably while maintaining the natural S-curves of the spine.



Back Bends

Bridge

A block can be used between the knees to maintain proper alignment, engage the muscles of the hips and thighs, and keep the knees from falling away from each other.



A second block can be squeezed between the feet to prevent the feet from turning out.



A block can be used under the sacrum to provide support so any alignment issues of the feet and knees can be more easily examined and modified.



Blocks can be used against a wall under the students' hands to provide more space and reduce strain on the low back.



A chair can be used to support Inclined Plane posture so that alignment issues of the feet, legs and shoulders can be more easily analyzed and changed.



Blocks can be used under the hands in upward facing dog to provide extra space to reduce stress on the low back and allow students to draw their shoulders down and back rather than collapsing into the posture.



A bolster can be used in reclined hero to provide support and take pressure off the knees.



Forward Bends

Students can place a bolster under their knees to support the legs while reducing the stretch on the hamstrings, so the pelvic bowl can tip forward as the back remains flat.



Students can sit on a block to lift the hips, create more space, and help tilt the pelvic bowl forward.



Students can use a strap to assist in flexing the feet and keeping the knees straight.



Students can use a bolster between their legs and forehead to support them in this posture and allow them to relax into the posture without dropping the head too much if the pelvic bowl is not tipping forward enough.



Reclined Postures

Students can use a strap around the sole of the foot of their raised leg to assist in maintaining a straight leg, while reducing any stress in the neck and shoulders.



These are just a few examples of how props, as introduced by Iyengar yoga, can be used to support and enhance a yoga practice.

Create Your Own Sequence of Postures Using Props

List five postures:

Practice teaching these postures using props in various ways. Make notes of how the props may help a student improve their alignment in the posture.

Important Literature for Iyengar Yoga

Astadala Yogamala (Volume 1)

This first volume of Astadala Yogamala is a unique book. It is part of a large project being undertaken to gather all the material in the form of lectures, articles, interviews, question & answer sessions, and teaching courses that have been given by BKS Iyengar. The works have undergone extensive editing all of which has been overseen by BKS Iyengar, bringing the wealth of his extensive experience to the subject. This volume, as well as all the future volumes, will be of immense value to all students and practitioners of yoga.

Astadala Yogamala (Volume 2)

This second volume of the collected works of BKS Iyengar contains the distillation of thought born from the long standing sadhana of BKS Iyengar.

Astadala Yogamala (Volume 3)

Articles, lectures and messages by BKS Iyengar. Cornucopia of topics: practice, therapeutics, ayurveda, teaching, schools, sports, and more.

Basic Guidelines for Teachers of Yoga

By BKS Iyengar and Geeta Iyengar. Based on the Teachers Training for the Preliminary Course taught at RIMYI. The Iyengars have specified that the sale of this book is limited to Certified Iyengar Yoga Teachers & Teachers-in-Training.

Light on Ashtanga Yoga

This latest publication by B.K.S. Iyengar was released in July 1999 and is Iyengar's take on Ashtanga Yoga. Like all of his works, this book is very precise and endeavors to make us understand the science of yoga. The book commences with the basics - how the science of yoga originated; how man's understanding and accordingly his definitions of yoga changed vis a vis the era he was born in; and then, Iyengar begins his exposition on yoga as the restraint of the sorrows of the consciousness. He explains the root cause of sorrow - desires and afflictions - and how man tries to be free of it. He makes us realize our own weaknesses - how our thoughts and actions are distorted with our limited understanding, lack of knowledge and fluctuating intelligence. He then explains consciousness, types of consciousness and how they are tainted by afflictions. This marks the introduction of Asthanga Yoga. According to Iyengar, although Asthanga Yoga seems a small part of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, it covers the microcosm of man and the macrocosm of the Universe. Thus, begins the heart of "Light on Asthanga Yoga" where Iyengar explains each of the eight aspects of yoga in great detail. Contemporary analogies, tabulations and sketches make it easy for the reader to grasp this complex subject.

Light on Pranayama

The Light on Pranayama is a worthy companion and sequel to the Light on Yoga. The book is practical and thorough guide for all those wish to learn the art of

pranayama. The book discusses the respiratory system from the point of view of modern anatomy and ancient yoga texts. The 14 basic types of pranayama are analyzed in such a way as to offer the reader a program of 82 carefully graded stages from the simplest breathing patterns to the most advanced. The stages have been tabulated for easy reference. It also describes the difficulties and dangers that one may encounter during pranayama practice.

Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

Patanjali was the first to systematically codify the ancient science of Yoga into 196 aphorisms about 2000 years ago. These sutras are where Patanjali describes the enigma of human existence. He shows how through the practice of yoga we can transform ourselves; gain mastery over the mind and emotions; overcome obstacles to our spiritual evolution. Light on Yoga Sutras of Patanjali is a unique edition, which contains a new translation and commentary by BKS Iyengar who has enriched the text with his own ideas and experience on the subject.

Light on Yoga

This guide to yoga was first published in 1965 in English. This "Bible" of Iyengar yoga has now seen several reprints and has been translated in many languages. It has been called the "most practical and best illustrated book on the subject" running into 550 pages with more than 600 illustrations. It starts with the explanation on "What is Yoga?" and then goes on to explain in intricate details on how to perform more than 200 postures. It also introduces pranayamas, bandhas and kriyas.

The Art of Yoga

Art of Yoga is an expression of the Iyengar's artistic interpretation of the body, mind and soul. The large photographs in this volume and accompanying quotes enables students to observe in detail the action of the muscles, the holding of the joints, the spacing of the limbs, the movements of the skin and finally the way all these integrate. The book is an aesthetic experience.

The Illustrated Light on Yoga

The Illustrated Light on Yoga is a straight forward and comprehensive introduction for the beginner to more experienced students. Illustrated throughout with 150 photographs carefully positioned in the relevant part of the text for easy reference. It includes: an introduction to the philosophy and practice of Yoga; detailed description of 57 key postures; techniques for stilling the mind through pranayama; a 35 week course progressing from beginner to intermediate level; a full glossary of yoga terms.