



Yoga Teacher Training

Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation

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Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction..... | 3 |
| Sanskrit Sounds Using the Roman Alphabet..... | 4 |
| Sanskrit Alphabet..... | 7 |
| Glossary of Sanskrit Terms Related to Yoga..... | 8 |
| Sanskrit Terms of Yoga Asanas..... | |
| Mountain (Tadasana)..... | 11 |
| Chair (Utkatasana)..... | 11 |
| Forward Fold (Uttanasana)..... | 11 |
| Down Dog (Adho Mukha Svanasana)..... | 11 |
| Warrior 1 (Virabhadrasana 1)..... | 12 |
| Warrior 2 (Virabhadrasana 2)..... | 12 |
| Full Lunge (Alanasana)..... | 12 |
| Humble Warrior (Sirangushtasana)..... | 12 |
| Extended Side Angle (Utthita Parsvakonasana)..... | 13 |
| Triangle (Utthita Trikonasana)..... | 13 |
| Revolved Triangle (Parivrtta Trikonasana)..... | 13 |
| Half Moon (Ardha Chandrasana)..... | 14 |
| Pyramid (Parsvottanasana)..... | 14 |
| Tree (Vrksasana)..... | 14 |
| Eagle (Garudasana)..... | 15 |
| King Dancer (Natarajasana)..... | 15 |
| Standing Hand To Foot (Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana)..... | 15 |
| Warrior 3 (Virabhadrasana 3)..... | 16 |
| Hands to Feet Forward Fold (Padangusthasana)..... | 16 |
| Standing Straddle Forward Fold (Prasarita Padottanasana)..... | 16 |
| Camel (Ustrasana)..... | 17 |
| Gate (Parighasana)..... | 17 |
| Plank (Chaturanga Dandasana)..... | 17 |
| Side Plank (Vasisthasana)..... | 17 |
| Crow (Bakasana)..... | 18 |
| Prayer Squat (Malasana)..... | 18 |
| Pigeon (Eka Pada Rajakapotasana)..... | 18 |
| Kneeling/Sitting on Heels (Bhujrasana)..... | 18 |
| Child's Pose (Balasana)..... | 18 |
| Cow's Face (Gomukhasana)..... | 19 |
| Locust (Salabhasana)..... | 19 |
| Cobra (Bhujangasana)..... | 19 |
| Upward Facing Dog (Urdhva Mukha Svanasana)..... | 20 |
| Bow (Dhanurasana)..... | 20 |
| Headstand (Sirshasana)..... | 20 |
| Easy Seated Position (Sukhasana)..... | 21 |

Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

| | |
|--|----|
| Cobbler's Pose/Diamond (Bhadrasana)..... | 21 |
| Boat (Navasana)..... | 21 |
| Inclined Plane (Purvottanasana)..... | 21 |
| Seated Staff Pose (Dandasana)..... | 22 |
| Seated Forward Fold/Back Stretch (Paschimottanasana)..... | 22 |
| Seated One Leg Forward Fold/Knee to Head (Janu Sirsasana)... | 22 |
| Revolved Knee to Head (Parivrtta Janu Sirsasana)..... | 22 |
| One Knee Up Fold/Name of a Sage (Marichyasana)..... | 22 |
| Heron (Krounchasana)..... | 23 |
| Splits (Hanumanasana)..... | 23 |
| Lotus (Padmasana)..... | 23 |
| Seated Twist (Bharadvajasana)..... | 24 |
| Seated Straddle/Open Angle (Upavistha Konasana)..... | 24 |
| Turtle (Kurmasana)..... | 24 |
| Hero (Virasana)..... | 25 |
| Reclining Hero (Supta Virasana)..... | 25 |
| Bridge (Setu Bandhasana)..... | 25 |
| Wheel/Upward Bow (Urdhva Dhanurasana)..... | 26 |
| Reclined Hand to Foot (Supta Padangusthasana)..... | 26 |
| Reclined Side Leg Lift (Anatasana)..... | 26 |
| Plow (Halasana)..... | 27 |
| Shoulder Stand (Sarvangasana)..... | 27 |
| Fish (Matsyasana)..... | 27 |
| Reclined Spinal Twist (Jathara Parivartanasana)..... | 28 |
| Corpse Pose (Savasana)..... | 28 |
| Sanskrit Review Assignment..... | 29 |

Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

Introduction

Sanskrit is one of the oldest known languages still spoken today. Sanskrit is a historical Indo-Aryan (or Indo-European) language, one of the languages of Hinduism and Buddhism, and one of the 22 official languages of India. The Sanskrit language is written in various Indian scripts, such as Devanagari. In order to represent the sounds of Sanskrit accurately in the Roman/Latin alphabet scholars have agreed on a system of romanization now used around the world. Since the late 1800s, Sanskrit has been transliterated using the Latin alphabet. The system most commonly used today is the IAST (International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration), which has been the academic standard since 1912.

Example:

| <u>Original</u> | <u>Transliteration</u> | <u>Translation (meaning)</u> |
|-----------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| कमल | kamala | lotus |
| शान्ति | śānti | peace |

Vedic Sanskrit was the earliest form of Sanskrit language (approximately around 1500 BC), when most language and knowledge was handed down through generations orally. The oldest known text in Sanskrit from this period is the Rigveda – a collection of over a thousand Hindu hymns. Classical Sanskrit developed and became the norm between approximately 500 BC and 1000 AD. Two of the best known literary works from this period were “Ramayana” and “Mahabharata.” Classical Sanskrit also includes works of philosophy, astronomy, science, medicine and law. Today, there are about 50,000 people who fluently speak Sanskrit.

Why should you learn the Sanskrit names of yoga postures if you are teaching yoga? Sanskrit names are often used in yoga teachings to provide a uniform system of naming yoga postures (asanas) throughout the world. Having a single language for yoga can help us communicate more clearly with our students, and have a better understanding of what we are teaching. Also, Sanskrit was the language of those who first developed a system of yoga thousands of years ago and, as such, gives us a better understanding of the source of yoga. Finally, the sounds of certain Sanskrit words are thought to create specific vibrations in the body, which are thought to be useful in particular mantras.

In this manual, you will first see a brief Sanskrit pronunciation guide, followed by a short dictionary of Sanskrit words related to yoga and yoga philosophy. After that section, you will see a list of asanas (yoga postures) with a picture of the posture and the Sanskrit name of the asana in parentheses.

Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

Sanskrit Sounds Using the Roman Alphabet

Classical Sanskrit uses at least 49 letters (14 vowels, 33 consonants, and 2 special letters). Four additional letters are sometimes used. Since we only have less letters in the Roman alphabet, supplements are used to express all the sound.

Sanskrit Pronunciation Key

14 Vowels (some have 2 forms)

| | | | | | |
|-------|---|---------------------------|-------|----|-----------------------------|
| अ | a | another | ऋ / ॠ | ī | trill for 2 beats |
| आ / ऀ | ā | f <u>a</u> ther (2 beats) | ॠ / ॡ | ī | table |
| इ / ि | i | pin | ॠ / ॡ | ī | trill for 2 beats |
| ई / ी | ī | nee <u>d</u> (2 beats) | ए / ै | e | et <u>u</u> de (2 beats) |
| उ / ु | u | fl <u>u</u> te | ऐ / ै | ai | ai <u>s</u> le (2 beats) |
| ऊ / ू | ū | mo <u>o</u> d (2 beats) | ओ / ौ | o | yo <u>o</u> ke (2 beats) |
| ऋ / ॠ | r | mac <u>a</u> b <u>r</u> e | औ / ौ | au | fl <u>a</u> utist (2 beats) |

Two Special Letters

| | | | | | |
|----|----|--------------|----|----|------------|
| अं | am | h <u>u</u> m | अः | aḥ | out-breath |
|----|----|--------------|----|----|------------|

33 Consonants

| | | | | | |
|---|-----|--------------------------|---|-----|--------------------------------|
| क | ka | pap <u>r</u> ika | थ | tha | eat h <u>o</u> ney |
| ख | kha | thick h <u>o</u> ney | द | da | soda |
| ग | ga | sag <u>a</u> | ध | dha | good h <u>o</u> ney |
| घ | gha | big h <u>o</u> ney | न | na | banan <u>a</u> |
| ङ | ṅa | in <u>k</u> | प | pa | pat <u>e</u> rnal |
| च | ca | ch <u>u</u> tney | फ | pha | scoop h <u>o</u> ney |
| छ | cha | much h <u>o</u> ney | ब | ba | scub <u>a</u> |
| ज | ja | Jap <u>a</u> n | भ | bha | rub h <u>o</u> ney |
| झ | jha | raj h <u>o</u> ney | म | ma | arom <u>a</u> |
| ञ | ña | in <u>ch</u> | य | ya | employ <u>a</u> ble |
| ट | ṭa | borscht ag <u>a</u> in | र | ra | ab <u>r</u> a cadab <u>r</u> a |
| ठ | ṭha | borscht h <u>o</u> ney | ल | la | hul <u>a</u> |
| ड | ḍa | sh <u>u</u> m | व | va | vari <u>e</u> ty |
| ढ | ḍha | sh <u>u</u> h <u>u</u> m | श | śa | sh <u>u</u> t |
| ण | ṇa | sh <u>u</u> m | ष | ṣa | sh <u>n</u> apps |
| त | ta | past <u>a</u> | स | sa | Lis <u>a</u> |
| | | | ह | ha | h <u>o</u> ney |

Please note that you will often not see the “a” after the consonant (for example “da” you would just see written as “d” in the word “deva.”)

Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

Sanskrit Vowels

| Sanskrit Vowels | How to Pronounce |
|------------------|---|
| a (short) | Like the “a” in sofa. Example: manas (mind) |
| a (long) | Like the “a” in father. Example: asana (yoga posture). |
| i (short) | Like the “i” in pin. Example: idam (this) |
| i (long) | Like the “i” in pique. Example: jiva (life) |
| u (short) | Like the “u” in put. Example: guna (quality) |
| u (long) | Like the “u” in tune. Example: rupa (form) |
| r (short) | Like the “er” in fiber. Example: pitr (father) |
| r (long) | Like the short “r” but held longer. Example: pitrnam (fathers) |
| l (short) | The “l” vowel is not usually by itself, but only rarely found with other sounds. It is sometimes just a pause, not really a sound |
| l (long) | Doesn’t really appear at all, but was invented by scholars as something of a place holder |
| e (always long) | Like the “e” in rein. Example: deva (god) |
| ai (always long) | Like the “ai” in aisle. Example: vaisya (merchant) |
| o (always long) | Like the “o” in opal. Example: loka (world) |
| au (always long) | Like the “ou” in out. Example: Gautama Buddha |

Two Special Letters

am (like the “um” in hum)

ah (like saying “ahhh”)

Sanskrit Consonants

You can pronounce the following consonants as you would in English:

b (ba) as in buddha (awakened)

d (da) as in deva (god)

j (ja) as in jiva (life)

k (ka) as in karma (action)

l (la) as in lotus (yoga posture)

m (ma) as in mantra

n (na) as in navasana (yoga posture)

p (pa) as in pitr (father)

r (ra) as in rupa (form)

s (sa) as in sat (reality) (note in the next section that s is often pronounced “sh”)

t (ta) as in tat (that)

Other consonants are pronounced as follows:

c (ca) is like the “ch” in church, never like the “c” in car

g (ga) is always a hard “g” like in garden, never soft like “gym”

h (ha) is usually pronounced like “h” in hot, but can also be silent like in “brahman”

s (sa) can be pronounced like “s”, but more often is pronounced like “sh” in shirt

v (va) is usually pronounced like “v” in voice, but can also be pronounced as a “w”, example: the first “v” in svabhava (inherent nature)

y (ya) is like the “y” in yoga, never like the “y” in gypsy.

Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

Pronunciation of sets of consonants are as follows:

bha is pronounced like “b” and “h” in “rub honey”
cha is pronounced like “ch” and “h” in “much honey”
dha is pronounced like “d” and “h” in “glad hum.”
gha is pronounced like a hard “g” and “h” in “big honey”
jha is pronounced like a “j” and “h” in “raj honey”
kha is pronounced like a “k” and “h” in “thick honey”
pha is pronounced like a “p” and “h” in “scoop honey”
tha is pronounced like a “t” and “h” in “eat honey”
jha is pronounced like a “j” and “h” in rajhoney

The sound of the consonant and the sound of the “h” tend to run together, especially when the consonant is at the beginning of the word (and the consonant sound is emphasized), so you mainly hear the consonant sound.

In Sanskrit, the last letter in a word is sometimes not pronounced. So, for example, there is disagreement about whether to pronounce the last “a” in the word “asana” or to pronounce it “asan.” However, the majority of yoga teachers today do pronounce the last letter in the word “asana,” so, that is how it will be illustrated in this manual.

Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

Sanskrit Alphabet

अ आ इ ई उ ऊ
ए ऐ ओ औ
ऋ ॠ लृ अं अः
क ख ग घ ङ
च छ ज झ ञ
ट ठ ड ढ ण
त थ द ध न
प फ ब भ म
य र ल व
श ष स ह

Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

Glossary of Sanskrit Terms Related to Yoga (Phonetic spelling is in parentheses)

Ahimsa (ah-heem-sah) Means non-violence. It is the undertaking to live without causing injury to others or self. This non-violence is practiced in action, speech and thought.

Ananda (ah-nahn-dah) Means bliss, which is one of the attributes of pure consciousness, making up basic reality.

Asana (ah-sah-nah) (the middle “sa” is pronounced like the “a” in sofa) A yogic posture held to induce various mind states and to release energy. Asana is both physical and mental, using the body and concentration to develop more mindfulness and peacefulness.

Ashram (ahsh-rahm) The dwelling of a guru and his/her followers, which is devoted to spiritual practices.

Atman (aht-mahn) The true Self, the ever-present universal spirit.

Aum (om, ahh-ooH-mm) The sacred symbol which first appears in the Upanishads as a mystical tri-syllable, regarded as the basis of all mantras. “A” and “U” blend together to create the “O” sound and the “M” is sounded without parting the lips.

Bandha (bahn-dah) Muscular contractions to gain control over the life-force in the physical body.

Bhagavad Gita (bah-gah-vahd gee-tah) Recognized as one of the great scriptures of the world. The Gita is taken from a much larger work, the Mahabharata. Each chapter of the Gita deals with the development of the whole person – physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.

Bhakti (bahk-tee) Means love or devotion.

Bhastrika (bah-stree-kah) The bellows breath.

Buddhi (bood-hee) Means comprehension. The term buddhi denotes the higher mind, as contrasted to the lower mind (manas).

Chakras (chalk-rahS) Mass-energy converters. Seven are considered the most significant, and are located at various levels along the spinal column.

Chit (cheet) Means pure consciousness. It should not be confused with the lower mind or mind stuff (chitta).

Deva (day-vah) Celestial or heavenly beings (sometimes used to mean god).

Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

Dharana (dahr-ahn-ah) Concentration. The holding of the mind to one point through effortful use of the mind.

Dhyana (die-ahn-ah) Meditation. The meditative examination of truths.

Guna (goo-nah) The three qualities of nature: tamas (laziness, inertia), rajas (restlessness, excitability), and sattva (light, wisdom, orderliness).

Guru (goo-roo) A person who takes on the responsibility of the spiritual unfoldment of another soul.

Hatha Yoga (haht-hah yo-gah) One of the many forms of yoga. It deals more with the body postures and breathing patterns symbolized by “ha” which relates to the Sun and “tha” which relates to the Moon.

Japa (jah-pah) Means the repetition of a mantra or the repetition of an idea. The japa of a mantra can be produced mentally, or spoken softly or loudly. The most common mantra to be used in this way is Om (Aum).

Jiva (jee-vah) A person’s true self beyond the body and mind factors. In Western thought it would relate to the psyche.

Kapala-Bhati (kah-pah-lah bah-tee) Skull-shining as in the skull-shining breath.

Karma (kar-mah) The idea that everything is caused, that all things that happen to you are caused by your past actions, and that what you do today will modify yesterday and recreate tomorrow.

Kriya (kree-yah) The word “kriya” means action. Kriya energy is energy brought about by the action of the mind.

Mantra (mahn-trah) The word means “thought form”. Mantra is an instrument of thought. Mantras typically carry some type of primary vibrational force to create a new state of consciousness.

Mudra (moo-drah) The word means “seal.” This refers to hand gestures (or gestures with the fingers) that are used during certain types of meditations. Yoga texts list from 12 to 37 different yoga mudras. The main purpose of a mudra is to gather energy.

Nadis (nah-dees) Nadi means river. It is the name for the channels in the subtle body through which kriya and/or prana energy flows.

Namaste (nah-mah-stay) Traditional Indian greeting, “The light in me honors the light in you.”

Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

Niyama (nee-yah-mah) Five observances of one's own physical appearances, actions, words and thoughts, including: shauca (purity or cleanliness), santosha (contentment), tapas (desire for self study), svadyaya (self study or self inquiry), and isvara pranidhana (surrender to what is, acceptance)

Padma (pahd-mah) The lotus posture.

Prajna (prahj-nah) Wisdom containing spiritual understanding. It manifests in the mind of the yogi when he/she has walked in the eight stages of yoga.

Prana (prah-nah) The life force or cosmic energy

Pranayama (prah-nah-yah-mah) The control or regulation of the breath and of prana

Rupa (roo-pah) Form

Samadhi (sah-mahd-hee) It is the highest and last stage of yoga. Samadhi is the state of wakefulness and consciousness, the perfect union of self with reality.

Sat (saht) The reality, truth or brahman

Satya (saht-yah) Truthfulness

Shanti (shahn-tee) Means equilibrium or peace.

Surya Namaskar (sur-yah nah-mah-scar) Sun Salutation

Tat (tot) Means "that" and refers to the boundless

Uddiyana Bandha (oo-di-ah-nah bahn-dah) A bandha performed by pushing the stomach muscles slightly in and up repeatedly.

Ujjaiya (oo-ji-yah) or Ujjaiyi (oo-ji-ye) The hissing breath

Upanishad (oo-pan-i-shads) The ancient mystical texts found at the end of the Vedas, containing the direct revelation of truth by the yogic sages. The word "Upanishad" is often interpreted as "sitting at the feet of the guru."

Vedas (vay-dahs) The primary Hindu scriptures. The word "Vedic" refers to these scriptures.

Vidya (veed-yah) Knowledge

Yama (yah-mah) These are five virtues or restraints that govern our relationships with others and the world, including: ahimsa (non-injury), satya (truthfulness), asteya (non-stealing), brahmacharya (moderation) and aparigraha (non-attachment)

Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

Sanskrit Names of Yoga Asanas

The following pictures show the western name of each pose, followed by the sanskrit name and the phonetic spelling to help you remember how to sound it out.

Mountain Pose

Tadasana

(Tah-dah-sah-nah)



Chair

Utkatasana

(oot-kah-tah-sah-nah)



Forward Bend

Uttanasana

(oot-tah-nah-sah-nah)



Downward Facing Dog

Adho Mukha Svanasana

(ahd-ho mook-hah svahn-nah-sah-nah)



Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

Warrior 1
Virabhadrasana Ekam
(Vear-ahb-hah-drah-sah-nah
Ay-Kum)



Warrior 2
Virabhadrasana Dve
(Vear-ahb-hah-drah-sah-nah
Dway)



Full Lunge
Alanasana
(ahl-ahn-ah-sah-nah)



Humble Warrior/Head to Toe
Sirangushtasana
(shir-ahn-goost-ah-sah-nah)



Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

Extended Side Angle
Utthita Parsvakonasana
(oot-hee-tah pars-vah-kon-ah-sah-nah)



Extended Triangle
Utthita Trikonasana
(oot-hee-tah tree-ko-nah-sah-nah)



Revolved Triangle
Parivrtta Trikonasana
(pahr-e-vree-tah tree-ko-nah-sah-nah)



Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

Half Moon
Ardha Chandrasana)
(ard-hah chahn-drah-sah-nah)



Pyramid/Side Intense Stretch
Parsvottanasana
(pars-vote-tahn-ah-sah-nah)



Tree
Vrksasana
(virks-ah-sah-nah)



Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

Eagle
Garundasana
(gair-oon-dah-sah-nah)



King Dancer
Natarajasana
(nah-tah-rah-jah-sah-nah)



Extended Hand To Foot - Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana
(oot-hee-tah hahs-tah pahd-ahn-goost-ah-sah-nah)



Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

Warrior 3 - Virabhadrasana Trini
(vear-ahb-hah-drah-sah-nah Tree-nee)



Hands to Feet
Padangusthasana
(pah-dahn-goost-ah-sah-nah)



Spread Apart Leg Stretch
Prasarita Padottanasana
(prah-sah-ree-ta pah-dote-tahn-ah-sah-nah)



Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

Camel - Ustrasana
(oo-strah-sah-nah)



Gate/Beam – Parighasasana
(pah-reeg-hahs-ah-sah-nah)



Plank - Chaturanga Dandasana
(chah-tur-ahn-gah dahn-dah-sah-nah)



Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

Side Plank - Vasisthasana
(vah-sist-ah-sah-nah)



Crow - Bakasana
(bahk-ah-sah-nah)



Prayer Squat – Malasana
(mahl-ah-sah-nah)



Pigeon - Eka Pada Rajakapotasana
(ekah pah-dah rah-jah-kah-pote-ah-sah-nah)



Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

**Kneeling/Sitting on Heels - Bhujrasana
(boo-jrah-sah-nah)**



**Child's Pose
Balasana (bah-lah-sah-nah)**



**Cow's Face – Gomukhasana
(go-mook-ah-sah-nah)**



**Locust – Salabhasana
(sah-lahb-ah-sah-nah)**



Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

Cobra – Bhujangasana
(boo-jahng-ah-sah-nah)



Upward Facing Dog - Urdhva Mukha Svanasana
(erd-vah moo-kah svahn-ah-sah-nah)



Bow - Dhanurasana
(dahn-your-ah-sah-nah)



Headstand - Sirshasana
(shirs-ah-sah-nah)



Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

Easy Seated Position
Sukhasana
(sook-ah-sah-nah)



Cobbler's Pose/Diamond
Bhadrasana
(bahd-rah-sah-nah)



Boat - Navasana
(nahv-ah-sah-nah)



Inclined Plane – Purvottanasana
(purr-vote-ahn-ah-sah-nah)



Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

Seated Staff Pose – Dandasana
(dahn-dah-sah-nah)



Seated Forward Fold/ Back Stretch - Paschimottanasana
(pah-shee-mote-tahn-ah-sah-nah)



Seated One-Leg Forward Fold/ Knee to Head - Janu Sirsasana
(jah-noo-shirs-ah-sah-nah)



Revolved Knee to Head
Parivrtta Janu Sirsasana
(pah-r-e-vreet-ah jah-noo shirs-ah-sah-nah)



One Knee Up Forward Fold/ Name of a Sage - Marichyasana
(mah-ree-she-ah-sah-nah)



Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

Heron – Krounchasana (crownch-ah-sah-nah)



Splits – Hanumanasana (hah-noo-mahn-ah-sah-nah)



Lotus – Padmasana (pahd-mah-sah-nah)



Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

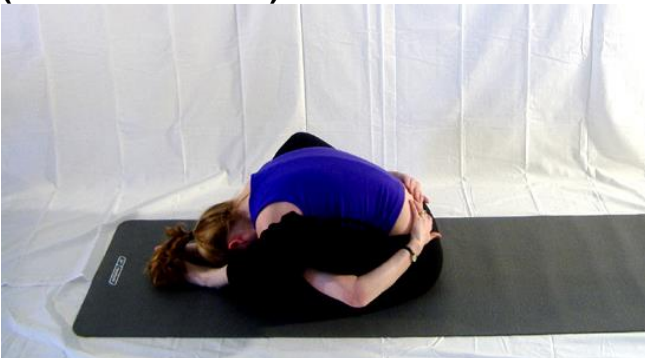
Seated Twist (Bharadvajasana) (bah-rahd-vah-jas-ah-nah)



Seated Straddle/Open Angle - Upavistha Konasana (oo-pah-veest-ah kone-ah-sah-nah)



Turtle – Kurmasana (kerm-ah-sah-nah)



Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

Hero – Virasana
(ver-ah-sah-nah)



Reclining Hero - Supta Virasana
(soup-tah ver-ah-sah-nah)



Bridge - Setu Bandhasana
(seh-too bahnd-ah-sah-nah)



Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

Wheel/Upward Bow Pose - Urdhva Dhanurasana
(erd-vah dahn-your-ah-sah-nah)



Reclined Hand to Foot - Supta Padangusthasana
(soup-tah pah-dahn-goost-ah-sah-nah)



Reclined Side Leg Lift – Anatasana
(ah-naht-ah-sah-nah)



Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

Plow – Halasana
(hahl-ah-sah-nah)



Shoulder Stand – Sarvangasana
(sahr-vahng-ah-sah-nah)



Fish – Matsyasana
(maht-see-ah-sah-nah)



Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

Reclined Spinal Twist - Jathara Parivartanasana (jaht-hahr-ah pahr-ee-vart-ahn-ah-sah-nah)



Corpse Pose/Supported Corpse Pose Savasana (shah-vah-sah-nah)



Mantra

Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu (loe-kah-sa-mah-stah, sook-hee-no, bah-vahn-too)

May all beings everywhere be happy and free

Lokah – location, all universes existing now

Samastah – all beings

Sukhino – centered in happiness, free from suffering

Bhav – the divine mood or state of unified existence

Antu – may it be so, it must be so

Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

Sanskrit Review Assignments

Create a yoga sequence (5 to 6 postures) and say the sanskrit names of the yoga postures as you practice the sequence.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Write 10 yoga-related Sanskrit terms and their definitions.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Sanskrit Words and Pronunciation for Yoga Teachers

Match the Following Terms

___ Mountain
___ Standing Forward Fold
___ Down Dog
___ Warrior
___ Triangle
___ Plank
___ Child's Pose
___ Camel
___ Locust
___ Bow
___ Hero
___ Lotus
___ Boat
___ Turtle
___ Seated Back Stretch
___ Plow
___ Fish

a. navasana
b. matsyasana
c. chaturanga dandasana
d. balasana
e. tadasana
f. adho mukha svanasana
g. kurmasana
h. uttanasana
i. dhanurasana
j. paschimottanasana
k. virabhadrasana
l. padmasana
m. trikonasana
n. halasana
o. ustrasana
p. virasana
q. salabhasana