



Yoga Teacher Training

Teaching and Practicing Sun Salutations and Moon Salutations

**Nancy Wile
Ed.D., E-RYT500
Yoga Education Institute**

© Yoga Education Institute, 2012

All rights reserved. Any unauthorized use, sharing, reproduction or distribution of these materials by any means is strictly prohibited.

Sun Salutations (Surya Namaskar)

A sun salutation is a graceful sequence of positions performed as one continuous exercise. Sun Salutations (or Surya Namaskar) limber up the whole body in preparation for the asanas (yoga postures). Surya means the sun and Namaskar is a greeting of honor and respect. Sun Salutations are traditionally practiced at sunrise, when yogis believed the air to be rich in prana (cosmic energy). All the Sun Salutations are helpful in warming up muscles throughout the body before practicing and holding standing poses. Sun Salutations are an effective way to increase the suppleness of the spine and tone the entire body. Each position counteracts the one before it, stretching the body in a different way and alternatively expanding and contracting the chest to regulate the breathing. Eventually, as students become well-practiced in Sun Salutations, breath and movement become more and more connected, making this a breathing exercise as well as a set of physical postures. Practiced daily, it brings great flexibility to the spine and joints. Students should begin with two or three rounds and work up to twelve rounds.

Even for more experienced classes, it is important to begin to move the body and do parts of a sun salutation before doing an entire sun salutation series.

Preparation for Sun Salutations

To prepare for Sun Salutations, have students do specific warm-ups or have them do the following preparation for Sun Salutations:

- Start on all fours
- Curl toes under and press back into Down Dog (warm-up version)
- Come forward into Plank (top of push up)
- Lower down (Chaturanga)
- Inhale, lift head and chest to Cobra (keeping low belly and thighs on floor)
- Curl toes under, exhale, press back to down dog
- Repeat steps from first down dog once more
- From down dog, walk feet forward into an easy forward fold
- Come up to standing and begin Sun salutations.

Traditional Sun Salutations

In this course, we will discuss the three most common forms of the Sun Salutation: Sun Salutation A, B and C. While there are many other variations, these three are the most traditional forms of sun salutations. You should experiment and discover the forms of sun salutations that work best for you and your students.

Sun Salutation A

Steps:

- Start standing with hands together at heart
- Inhale, sweeping arms overhead, bringing palms towards each other
- Exhale, fold forward, folding from the hips, keeping the chest open, spine long, bringing nose towards knees
- Inhale, hands to shins, look up slightly to lengthen through spine
- Hold breath, place hands on floor, fingers spread wide and step back (or jump back) to plank (top of a push up)
- Exhale, lower chest towards floor, keeping elbows in and bringing chest down before stomach reaches the floor
- Inhale, lift head and chest, press down with hands until only hands and tops of feet are on floor – shoulders back (Up Dog)
- Exhale, press hips up and back to Down Dog. Take 3-4 long breaths through the nose
- Inhale, walk or jump feet forward
- Exhale, fold forward, nose toward knees
- Inhale, bend knees, sweep arms out and up, standing up
- Exhale, bring hands to heart, still standing

Variation for Flow Class:

Follow through all the steps of Down Dog to the last forward fold. As you come up from the last forward fold, reach arms straight up. Then, instead of bringing your hands to heart, fold forward again as you exhale. So you're going right into the next sun salutation.

Sun Salutation A

Step 1



Step 2-inhale



Step 3-exhale



Step 4-inhale



Step 5-hold breath



Step 6-exhale



Step 7-inhale



Step 8-exhale/take 3 breaths



Step 9-inhale



Step 10-exhale



Step 11-inhale



Step 12-inhale



Step 13-exhale



Sun Salutation B

Similar to Sun Salutation A, but with additional emphasis on developing strength and endurance, it is most appropriate for more advanced students. In addition to the steps in Sun Salutation A, it includes additional movements, such as coming into Warrior 1 from Down Dog on each side.

Steps:

- Inhale, bend knees as you sweep arms up (Chair)
- Exhale, straight legs and fold forward, folding from the hips, keeping the chest open, spine long, bringing nose towards knees
- Inhale, hands to shins, look up slightly to lengthen through spine
- Place hands on floor, fingers spread wide and step back to plank (top of a push up)
- Exhale, lower chest towards floor, keeping elbows in and bringing chest down before stomach reaches the floor
- Inhale, lift head and chest, press down with hands until only hands and tops of feet are on floor, shoulders back (Up Dog)
- Exhale, press hips up and back to Down Dog.
- Inhale, step right foot forward
- Exhale, turn back foot out and bend right knee over right ankle
- Inhale, lift head and chest and reach arms overhead (Warrior 1)
- Exhale, drop hands back to floor
- Inhale, step back to plank (hold breath in plank)
- Exhale, lower chest towards floor, keeping elbows in and bringing chest down before stomach reaches the floor
- Inhale, lift head and chest, press down with hands until only hands and tops of feet are on floor, shoulders back (Up Dog)
- Exhale, press hips up and back to Down Dog.
- Inhale, step left foot forward
- Exhale, turn back foot out and bend left knee over left ankle
- Inhale, lift head and chest and reach arms overhead (Warrior 1)
- Exhale, drop hands back to floor
- Inhale, step back to plank (hold breath in plank)
- Exhale, lower chest towards floor, keeping elbows in and bringing chest down before stomach reaches the floor
- Inhale, lift head and chest, press down with hands until only hands and tops of feet are on floor, shoulders back (Up Dog)
- Exhale, press hips up and back to Down Dog. Take 3-4 long breaths through the nose
- Inhale, walk or jump feet forward
- Exhale, fold forward, nose toward knees
- Inhale, bend knees and keep knees bent while lifting head and chest and sweeping arms up (Chair)
- Reach all the way up with hands and straighten legs
- Exhale, bring hands to heart, still standing

Sun Salutation B

Step 1



Step 2 - inhale



Step 3 - exhale



Step 4 - inhale



Step 5 – hold breath



Step 6 – exhale



Step 7 - inhale



Step 8 – exhale



Step 9 – inhale



Step 10 – hold breath



Step 11 – exhale



Step 12 – inhale



Step 13 - exhale



Step 13 – inhale



Step 14 – hold breath



Step 15 - exhale



Step 16 – inhale



Step 17 – exhale



Step 18-inhale



Step 19-exhale



Step 20-inhale



Step 21 – inhale



Step 22 - exhale



For flow variation:

Instead of bringing hands back to the heart at the end of each salutation, you flow right into the next salutation. So, the sequence is:

- Inhale, sweep arms up
- Exhale, fold forward
- Inhale, step right foot back then left foot back to plank
- Exhale, lower down (chaturanga)
- Inhale, up dog
- Exhale, down dog
- Inhale, step right foot forward and then left foot forward
- Exhale, fold forward

- Inhale, bend knees and sweep arms all the way up
- Exhale, fold forward (going directly into your next salutation)

Sun Salutation C

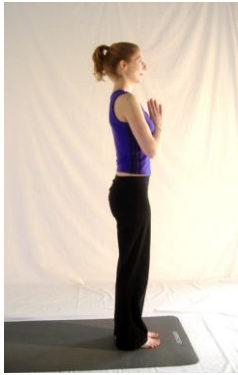
This sun salutation is similar to the form in Sun Salutation A, but focuses more on developing flexibility than strength.

Steps:

- Inhale, sweeping arms up and arching back (hips press forward as arching back)
- Exhale, fold forward, folding from the hips, keeping chest open, then bringing nose towards knees.
- Inhale, step the right foot back and drop down into a lunge (left knee is bent directly over left ankle)
- Exhale
- Inhale, step left foot back, coming into plank (top of a push up)
- Exhale, drop knees, chest and chin to the floor, keeping the hips raised (inchworm)
- Inhale, lift head and chest, pressing down through hands. Keep elbows slightly bent and in close to ribs. Keep low belly on floor (Cobra).
- Exhale, press hips up and back to down dog
- Inhale, step right foot forward and drop down into lunge (right knee over right ankle)
- Exhale
- Inhale, step left foot forward
- Exhale, fold forward, bringing nose toward knees
- Inhale, bend knees, sweep arms out and up, standing up, then arching back
- Exhale, bring hands to heart, in standing position.
- Repeat on other side (bringing left foot back first)

Sun Salutation C

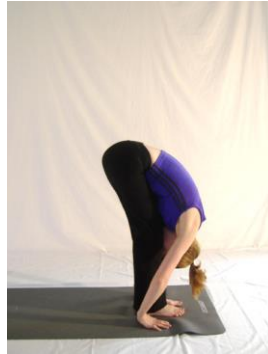
Step 1



Step 2-inhale



Step 3-exhale



Step 4 – inhale



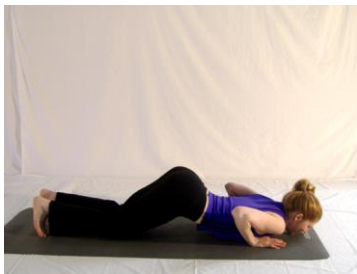
Step 5 – hold breath



Step 6 - exhale



Step 7 – exhale



Step 8 – inhale



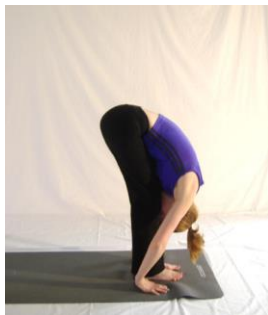
Step 9 - exhale



Step 10 – inhale



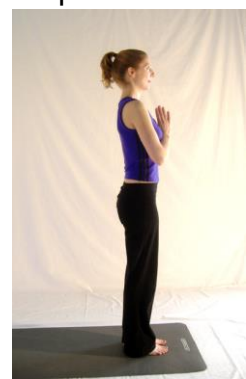
Step 11 – exhale



Step 12-inhale



Step 13-exhale



Correcting Specific Problems in Sun Salutations

There are some common problems that students often face when practicing sun salutations. Becoming aware of these problems will enable you to better help your students.

Forward fold –

Problem - Head up in forward fold (strains neck)

Solution – Nose drops towards your knees

Lunge –

Front heel up, hands in front of front foot or knee in front of ankle

Solution – hands on either side of front foot, front knee directly above ankle, move back knee back further

Plank –

Problem – Hips too high or sagging too low

Solution – should be able to see only tops of thighs and feet

Up Dog/Cobra –

Problem – not doing one or the other, but some type of combination where the arms are straight, but the thighs or knees are still on the floor. In up dog, only the tops of the feet should be on the floor and in cobra the arms should remain bent

Solution – have everyone do cobra first, then move onto up dog, practicing both after warm-ups, but before starting sun salutations

Down Dog –

Problem – hands or feet too far apart or back too rounded

Solution – hands are shoulder width apart, feet hip width apart. Bend knees if necessary to keep from rounding back.

Reaching Arms Straight Up or Standing Backbend

Problem – swayback

Solution – tighten thighs, press hips forward slightly

****Note – You will find more detailed information about each of these poses in subsequent sessions of the teacher training program.**

Practice teaching the three main forms of Sun Salutations, using both a traditional form and a flow variation.

Moon Salutation

This salutation is a gentler form of salutation that works well in a basic or beginning yoga class. The focus is on the flow and the flexibility it helps develop.

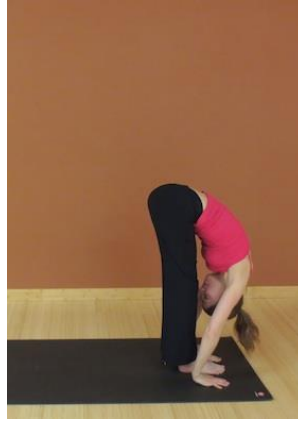
Steps:



Start standing



Inhale



Exhale



Inhale (step back), Exhale



Begin to straighten back leg



Inhale (arm up), Exhale



Inhale (up to standing)



Turn feet to other side



Exhale (triangle), Inhale



Exhale-lunge, Inhale-step forward



Exhale (fold)



Inhale



Exhale



Inhale



Exhale (fold)



Inhale (step back), Exhale



Inhale (arm up), Exhale



Inhale (come up)



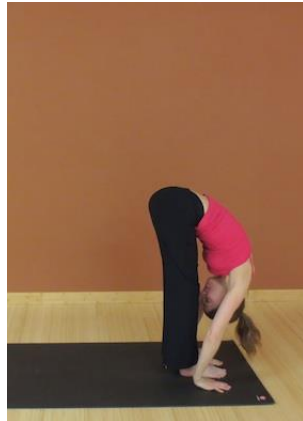
Turn feet to other side



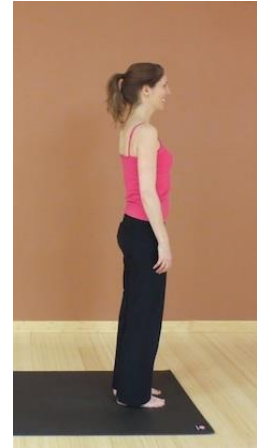
Exhale (triangle), Inhale



Exhale-lunge, inhale-step forward Exhale



Inhale



Exhale

Steps:

- Inhale, sweeping arms up and arching back (hips press forward as arching back)
- Exhale, fold forward, folding from the hips.
- Inhale, step the right foot back and drop down into a lunge (left knee is bent directly over left ankle)
- Exhale
- Inhale, turn right foot out, straighten both leg, and reach right hand up (coming into triangle).
- Exhale
- Inhale, come up to standing
- Exhale, turn feet to the right (to the back of room), reach right hand to right foot, and left hand up, coming into triangle.
- Inhale
- Exhale, drop left hand to floor and bend right knee, coming into a lunge (facing the back of the room)
- Inhale, step left foot forward next to right
- Exhale, fold forward
- Inhale, bend knees, sweep arms out and up, standing up, then arching back
- Exhale, bring hands to heart
- Inhale, reach arms overhead, arching back
- Exhale, fold forward, folding from the hips
- Inhale, step the left foot back and drop down into a lunge (left knee is bent directly over left ankle)
- Exhale
- Inhale, turn left foot out, straighten both leg, and reach left hand up (coming into triangle).
- Exhale
- Inhale, come up to standing
- Exhale, turn feet to the left (to the front of room), reach left hand to right foot, and right hand up, coming into triangle.

- Inhale
- Exhale, drop left hand to floor and bend left knee, coming into a lunge (facing the front of the room)
- Inhale, step left foot forward next to right
- Exhale, fold forward
- Inhale, bend knees, sweep arms out and up, standing up, then arching back
- Exhale, bring hands to heart