

Use of Props in Yoga Practice

Yoga props (blocks, straps, blankets, bolsters, etc) can be very helpful in improving alignment and going deeper into yoga postures. Below are some examples for use of props during yoga practice.

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.





A block can also be used between the hands in dolphin to help students maintain proper distance between their hands and forearms.



Down Dog with Ropes

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.



Chair Pose

A block can be placed between the thighs in Chair pose to help maintain the alignment of the knees and to engage the muscles of the inner thighs and core.



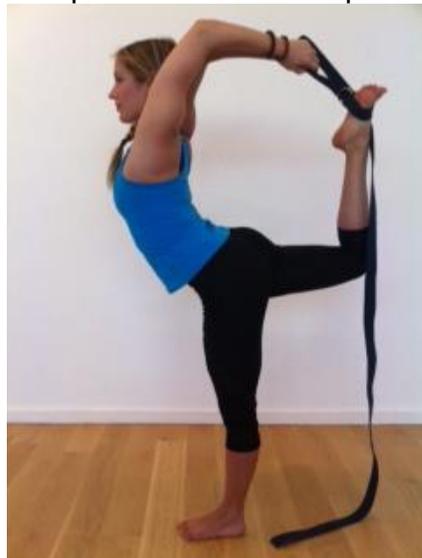
Standing Hand to Foot

A strap can be used to provide an extension of your arm when you may find it difficult to reach your hand to your foot directly. Simply make a loop with your strap and place the loop around the foot of the leg you are lifting.



Dancer

Place the loop of your strap around the foot of the leg that will be lifted. Hold onto the strap with the hand of the same side as the lifted leg. As you begin to lift your leg, turn your elbow forward, and reach for your strap with your other hand. A strap can be used around the foot of the lifted leg in order to do this posture with arms overhead without having to reach your hands all the way to your foot. This provides for more openness in the chest and shoulders.



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 with less flexion of the hips, while maintaining the natural S-curves of the spine.



Seated Postures

Boat

Using the wall or strap for Boat pose can help improve stability and upper body posture in this position.



Cow's Face

Using a strap to bridge the gap between your hands in Cow's Face and provide leverage to stretch more deeply.



Seated 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 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.



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.



Wheel

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



Inclined Plane

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.



Upward Facing Dog

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.



Locust/Bow

A strap can be used around the arms to assist in keeping the arms back and reaching towards each other.



A strap can be used around the foot of your lifted leg in half bow to create more openness in the front of the body.



A strap or two straps can be used around the tops of the ankles in full bow to create for space for the pose.



Reclined Postures

Reclined Hero

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



Reclined Hamstring Stretch

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.



Open through your hips by dropping your foot (with strap) and hand to the side (right hand and foot drop to the right), and keeping your hips open to the ceiling. A sandbag can be used on the opposite hip to help keep your hips facing open rather than turning towards the side.



Reclined Twist

A strap can also be used for a more intense supine twist and it band stretch.



Reclined Bound Angle

Sitting with the soles of your feet together, make a large loop with the strap and place the strap around your torso. Then bring the strap in front of your feet and tuck it in behind them. Cinch up the strap until it is holding you snug. Relax down onto your back. Using the strap this way helps to keep your feet in close and your thighs pressing down.



Legs Up the Wall

A strap can be cinched around the thighs during legs up the wall posture to keep the legs together without having to use any muscular force.



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 to practice with props

Now, try out your sequence.