

## Ankle to Forehead

Level 5

### Benefits:

Loosens & strengthens lower back, hamstrings, shoulders & neck; strengthens abdominals, loosens thighs.

**Time to Do:** 3 minutes

**Body Parts Used by This Posture:** Lower back, thighs, hamstrings, shoulders, neck, abdominals.

**Build Up to This Posture with:** Spider 1, 2, 3, Leg Clasp, Chest Expansion, Chest Expansion Extension, Leg Over, Shoulder Stand, Plow, Rishi's Posture, Twist 2, 3; Half Bow, Bow, Elbow to Knee, Balance Posture 3, Butterfly, Butterfly Extension, Leg Stretch, Back Stretch

**Energy Center Used:** Root, Belly

**Try Learning First** Spider 1 or Spider 3

**Who Should Not Do This Pose** Pregnant women – it compresses the belly too much. However, you'll hardly need the warning, since there's not much chance you'll want to do it after the fourth month!

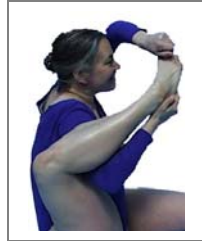


Here's one of those quintessential yoga poses. How yogi-like to have your foot tucked behind your head! Remember, the point isn't actually achieving the ultimate position here. If you get your foot only part way to your face, you're getting the same benefits as the yogi who can fall asleep with their foot neatly tucked behind their head. Maybe more so, since you have to be extra focused and have to concentrate on breath and relaxation to gain that extra flexibility. Given that, this is a worthwhile pose, no matter how far you can get with it. Just don't overdo it.

### Yoga Snack

Another great TV watching pose! OR do this at parties and see how many people give it a try along with you!

Overview



Basic Instruction



**Start** sitting, legs together, arms by your sides.

**Step 1**

Raise your right leg rest your right foot in your right palm.



Grip the top of your right toes with your left hand.



**Push up** on your heel with your right hand.

Pull up on your toes with your left hand.

**Hold 6** breaths  
**OR Go on to Step 2**



### Step 2

If you've managed Step 1 OK

While stilling pulling up on your toes

Push your foot back toward your shoulder with your right hand

**Hold 6 breaths**

**OR Go on to Step 3**

### Step 3

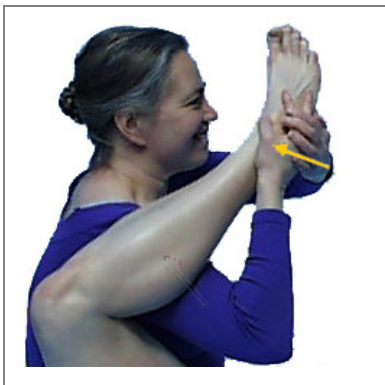
If you're becoming very flexible

you may want to pursue a stronger stretch by going for broke and getting that foot behind your head. In that case, after you've done step 1 & 2, you'll have to shift your hand position and change the direction of your motion to complete the last step.

Slide your right hand to the outside of your foot, so that you're supporting your ankle and the side of your foot.



**Safety Tip** This hand position is to keep your ankle from twisting



With your right hand push your foot directly back so that it, eventually, slides into place behind your head.

**Hold 6 breaths**

Or until someone can come and untangle you!

**Release**

With the left hand gripping your toes  
With your right hand supporting the ankle & the side of the foot

Pull up  
allow the foot to come forward  
slowly lower the leg to the floor.

**Switch legs****Do 3 times** on each leg**Alternate sides.****Details**

Start sitting, legs together, arms by your sides.

**In Step 1**

Raise your right leg, rest your right foot in your right palm.  
Grip the top of your right toes with your left hand.

Push up on your heel with your right hand.

Pull up on your toes with your left hand.

**Discovery**

The first time you do this pose, you might like to try sitting in this position and just seeing how the motion feels in this position:

pushing the foot up and lowering it with your right hand. This will give you a sense of the support and motion required of the supporting hand.

You might also like to play with pushing up with your right hand and pulling up on your toes with your left hand, so that you get a feel for the motion. Where does this stretch you? Where does it challenge you?

**Hold 6** breaths**OR Go on to Step 2**

**Step 2**

If you've managed Step 1 OK

While stilling pulling up on your toes

Push your foot back toward your shoulder with your right hand

**Tip** This feels much like the motion in **Spider 1**.  
You're pushing the heel and the leg straight back toward the head.

**Hold 6** breaths

**You Will Feel It In**

Even more strongly in your inner thigh and your hamstrings, possibly even more strongly in your shoulders.

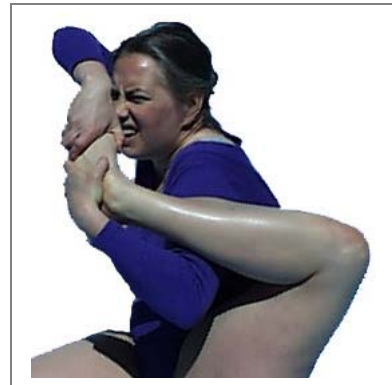
**Safety Tips****Common Errors at Step 2**

Twisting the ankle. This will also twist the knee. Either twist can injure you.

Pushing the foot toward the head without pushing the knee back toward the head also.

This twists the knee to the side as the foot comes forward.

This can injure your knee.



## Encouragement

This is as far as most people get with this pose. As such, it's a great work out! However, you might find that if you are diligent about doing 3 repetitions each time you do this pose, and if you do this pose very regularly, even daily, your flexibility will improve rapidly, to the point where you can soon go on to Step 3.

## Step 3

If you're becoming very flexible

After you've done step 1 & 2, shift your hand position and change the direction of your motion to complete the last step.

Slide your right hand to the outside of your foot, so that you're supporting your ankle and the side of your foot.

With your right hand push your foot directly back so that it, eventually, slides into place behind your head.



**Hold 6** breaths

Or until you get an answer from 911-Yogi

**Safety Tip** Be sure to go through Steps 1 & 2 first, rather than rush straight into Step 3. This will give you a better stretch, more benefits in more muscle groups, will help you get farther and will help prevent injuries!

### Most Common Errors

Rushing!

Not doing the pose at all!

## Breathing



### Start

Breathe in

Breathe out  
feeling your  
weight settle and  
your body  
relaxing



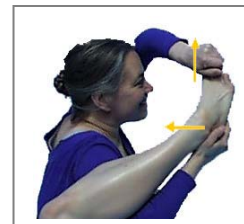
### Breathe in

Breathe out,  
placing your foot  
in your hand &  
gripping your  
toes



### Breathe in

Breathe out  
doing Step 1  
(pushing &  
tugging your foot  
up)



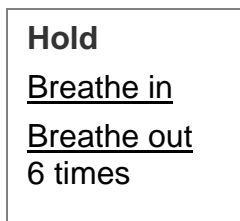
### Breathe in

Breathe out  
pushing the foot  
back toward the  
head



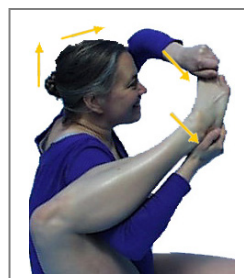
Breathe in  
shifting your  
hand position

Breathe out  
pushing your foot  
behind your head



### Hold

Breathe in  
Breathe out  
6 times



### Release

Breathe in, lifting  
the foot up

Breathe out,  
letting the foot  
come forward &  
lowering it.



Breathe in & out  
feeling the  
muscles release  
& relax.

**Switch legs.  
Repeat 3 times.**