

Benefits:

Strengthens quadriceps, ankles, improves balance.

Time to Do: 1 - 3 minutes

Body Parts Used by This Posture: Quadriceps (thighs), legs, ankles

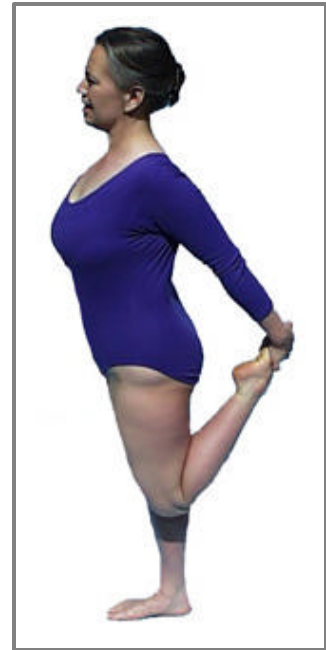
Warms You Up for: Balance Posture 2, 3; Dancer's Posture, Back Bend, Pelvic Lift, Back Push Up, Warrior, Lunge, Bow, Half Bow

Warm Up with: Dancer's Posture, Pelvic Lift

Builds you up for: Postures requiring strength in the thighs (quads) or ankles, postures requiring good balance: Balance Posture 2, 3; Back Bend; Bow; Half Bow; Back Push Up, Warrior; Lunge; Dancer's Posture; Pelvic

Try Learning First Dancer's Posture, Mountain Pose 1, Mountain Pose 2

Energy Center Used: Root



If you're a runner, you probably already do some version of this as a warm up. Next time, try using yogic principles with this stretch – and you'll probably see more benefit from it. Take the time to stand well, (in Mountain Pose) first, relax your body, bit by bit, before you begin the stretch; stretch three times on each side – the first time to warm up to the stretch, the second time to your normal limit, the third time to your extreme limit (short of pain!); and when you're holding the pose, focus on long slow breaths out, feeling your body letting go and the stretch increasing as you're letting go of the breath. These strategies will slow you down, give you a deeper stretch more safely and will begin to focus you for your run.

For the rest of us, this is another one of the few, Level One poses that develops balance and ankle strength – besides being a good Quad stretch. It's easy, simple and can be done anywhere.

Yoga Snack

Another great, unobtrusive pose to do in public! This is an excellent bus stop pose; and a great stretch to do at the beach or outside in the grass at lunch time. To passers-by, you'll look like a running enthusiast have a quick stretch break.

Try it as a quick break while doing the dishes – do one leg once, wash a few dishes, stretch the other leg for a few seconds, wash a few dishes, etc...

Start

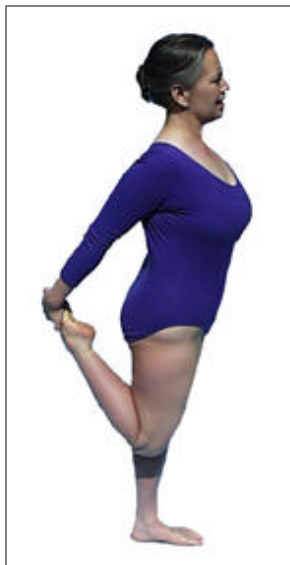
(Option, begin in **Mountain Pose**)

OR Start

Standing
Arms by your sides
Legs together

Tip Have the back of your head, your shoulder blades, the back of your hips and the back of your heels lined up with each other. This makes you more straight and gives you better balance for doing the pose.

Tip If you're wobbly while doing this posture, practise the **Dancer's Posture** more to build up your posture and ankle strength. OR Try checking your starting posture against a wall to see how straight should feel. The straighter you are when you begin, the easier it will be to keep your balance.



Then

Raise one foot behind your back.
Hold on to the foot with the corresponding hand.
(Left foot – left hand.
Right foot – right hand.)

Key See that your knees stay lined up with each other and stay together.

Hold 2 – 6 breaths

Key Each time you breathe out, see if you can tug your heel closer and closer to your body.

You Will Feel It In Your thigh!

Release

Slowly lower your leg. Allow your thigh to relax completely before repeating.

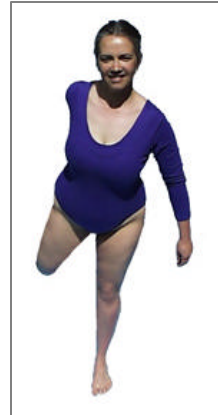
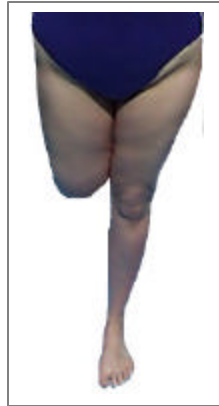
Do 3 times on each side, alternating sides.

Details

Common Errors



Not keeping knees together.

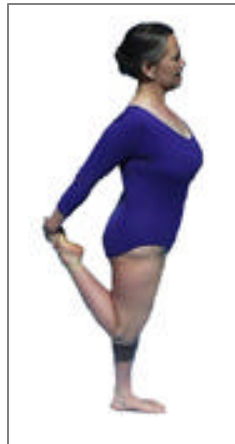


Letting the working knee drift to the side.

(This increases the strain on your back, twists your ankle and reduces the thigh stretch.)

Tip Imagine your body's shadow from the side. You want that shadow to look like you have one leg. →

Breathing



Start

Breathe in
Breathe out settling into position and letting your weight sink toward your feet as you let go of the breath.

Breathe in

Breathe out raising your foot & settling in to position

Hold

Breathe in
Breathe out gently pulling the heel closer to your body.

Release

Breathe in
Breathe out slowly lowering your foot.