

Benefits:

Strengthens quadriceps, ankles, lower back, upper arms, shoulders; improves balance.

Time to Do: 3 - 5 minutes

Body Parts Used by This Posture:

Quadriceps (thighs), legs, ankles, upper back, shoulders, upper arms, lower back.

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

Warm Up with: Dancer's Posture, Pelvic Lift, Balance Posture 1

Builds you up for: Postures requiring strength in the thighs (quads), ankles, lower back, upper body; postures requiring good balance: Balance Posture 3; Back Bend; Bow; Half Bow; Back Push Up, Warrior; Lunge; Dancer's Posture; Pelvic Lift, Cobra, Chest Expansion

Try Learning First Dancer's Posture, Mountain Pose 1, Mountain Pose 2, Pelvic Push, Pelvic Lift, Leg Fold, Spider, Balance Posture 1

Energy Center Used: Root, Belly, Solar Plexus



Who Should Not Do This Pose: **Pregnant women.** It is easy for pregnant women to over strain their backs or lose their balance with this pose.

People with lower back pain or lower back injuries. Poses like Balance Posture 2 & 3, Cobra, Chest Expansion can help rebuild your lower back, but they are also demanding enough that they can make your back worse. Consult with your Doctor before doing these poses. You might want to begin by building up your back strength with Pelvic Push, Pelvic Lift, Leg Fold and Spider.

If you're a runner, you probably already do Balance Posture 1 as a warm up. Now try adding the steps in Balance Posture 2 or 3 to give you a stronger stretch and to build your upper body and lower back.

For the rest of us, this is one of the few poses that develops balance and ankle strength while giving you a good, overall work out. As you become comfortable with this pose, it can start to flow – it becomes almost like a slow moving dance. I look forward to that feeling from this pose – it makes me more at home in my body and it feels peaceful.

Yoga Snack

Actually, this is one of the poses I suggest you don't approach in a snack-like way. Think of it more as your Oasis in a hectic day. Take 5 – 10 minutes alone with it to rebuild your piece of mind. Once the movements become familiar to you, look for that sense of flow that comes with moving slowly through the posture – and for a few minutes, the world disappears.

Difference from Balance Posture 1: Balance Posture 2 has an extension, an added step – pulling the leg up and back. This gives you a stronger stretch in the thigh, works the shoulders and the lower back. It's also demanding of the lower back, so watch for pressure there. **Pressure in the lower back says you've gone too far.**

Overview



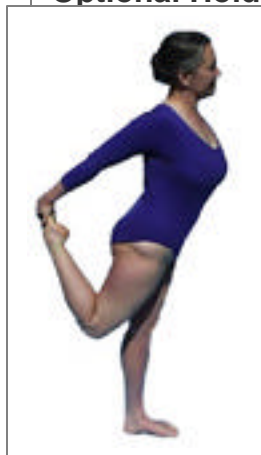
Start
With **Balance Posture 1**



Bring your foot up toward your body. Tug the foot closer.

Optional Hold 1 – 6 breaths

Pull your foot up and back
Optional Hold



Relax the stretch



Lower foot. **Switch feet Repeat 3 times each side**



Details

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** or **Balance Posture 1** 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 – Step 1

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.

Optional Hold 1 – 6 breaths

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

OR Simply Pause (no hold as such)

You Will Feel It In Your thigh!

Step 2 – the Extension

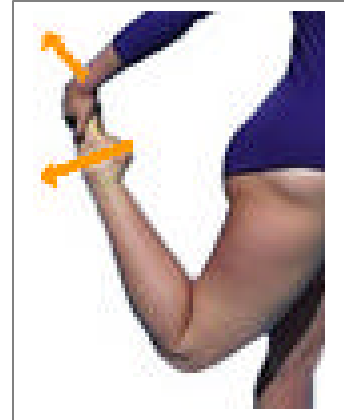
Pull your foot up and back

Tip Imagine your body is forming a bow, (which is why this pose is sometimes called “The Archer”). Arch forward with your belly and chest.

Key Your hand and your foot are working against each other. The hand is trying to pull the foot up. The foot is trying to pull away from the body.

You Will Feel It In

Your thigh, your lower back, your ankle, your upper back, your shoulders & your upper arms.



Safety Tip Watch for pressure in your lower back – that tells you you’ve gone too far: you are working your lower back too hard and might be injuring it.

Optional Hold 1 – 4 breaths **OR Simply Pause**

Release

Key It’s most beneficial if you release this pose in steps rather than just dropping your foot back to the floor.

Step 1

Relax the stretch, returning your foot toward your body

Pause

Step 2

Lower your foot

Do 3 times on each side

Alternate sides.



Tip If you feel yourself wanting to quickly let go of the pose, you’re probably holding it too long. Try holding it for shorter periods and focus on doing each step gradually. This will build up your body strength just as well and will add the benefit of learning control, poise and balance.

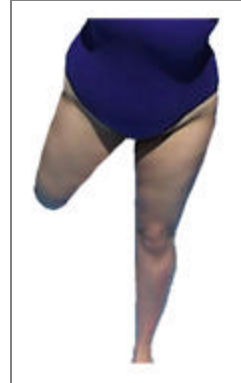
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Details

Common Errors



Not keeping knees together in the first step. This makes it harder to keep your balance in the second step.



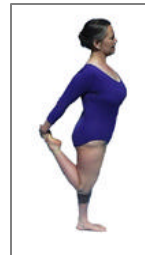
Letting the working knee drift to the side. (This increases the strain on your back, twists your ankle and reduces the thigh stretch.)

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

Not pulling the foot away from the body in step two.
(Pulling up, but not away from the body.)

Letting the leg down quickly or haphazardly.

Instead, let the leg down in two steps. Relax the stretch, bringing foot back toward the body, then, next step, lower the foot.



Leaning forward during the extension.

You get a better stretch and will be more flexible if you don't lean forward.

Tip If you find it hard to keep your balance, try steadying yourself against a wall or hold on to the back of a chair. This will help give you most of the benefits of the pose while you're body builds up to doing it without support.

However, if you use support, please be sure you keep your posture well aligned – don't let holding on to the support twist you or make you lean.

Breathing



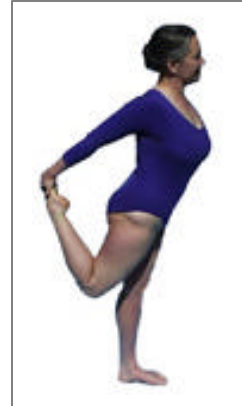
Start
Breathe in
Breathe out
settling into starting position & letting your weight sink toward your feet as you let go of the breath.



Breathe in
Breathe out
raising your foot & settling in to position



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



Extension
Breathe in
Pulling the foot up & back.

Pause

OR
Optional Hold
Breathe out
Breathe in
1 – 6 times



Release
Breathe out
relaxing your foot, returning it toward your body



Still breathing out

slowly lower your foot