

Bow

Level 7 (Demanding)

Benefits:

Strengthens quadriceps, shoulders & lower back, upper back, abdominals, builds stamina.

Time to Do: 3 minutes

Body Parts Used by This Posture:

Thighs, lower back, upper back, shoulders, abdominals



Build Up to This Posture with: Half Bow

Preparatory Pose, Half Bow, Balance Posture 1, 2; Pelvic Lift, Lunge, Incline Plane, Shoulder Stand.

This Posture Builds You Up for: If you can do this pose, you can do just about any pose! It can help your Shoulder Stand and Head Stand and will improve any pose that uses the back, shoulders, abdominals or thighs – like I said, just about every pose!

Energy Center Used: Root, Belly, Solar Plexus, Heart, Throat

Best Breathing Themes: Any breathing theme that helps you build power, like the Fourth Breathing Theme. Or, to build flexibility, use a Breathing Theme that easing you into and out of the pose without long holds, like the Yellow Level Breathing Themes.

Try Learning First: Half Bow Prep. Pose, Half Bow, Balance Posture 2

Who Should Not Do This Pose: Pregnant women (but you probably can't even imagine giving it a try!) People with back problems should check this with their doctor before trying it. It can help rebuild your back, but, too much too soon and you'll make your back worse. Try building up to it with the Half Bow and the Half Bow Preparatory Pose.

The Bow is an excellent way to keep in shape for any of the more demanding postures. It's an excellent body builder and, for people who are already very fit, it is an excellent way to release stress and, ultimately, relax. Many people can't manage this one for long and get discouraged with it. Rather than abandon it completely, try it in little snacks, here and there for a second or two. This will build your body very quickly. For those who just can't manage it or who should not be doing this pose, the Half Bow and the Half Bow Extension are excellent substitutes.

Yoga Snack

Another great TV watching pose! But watch out for that tendency to fall asleep on the spot! Try it in short bursts now and then throughout your favourite show. A good one before bed to help you fall asleep.

Difference from Half Bow Pose: The Bow uses most of your body and releases stress as only a tough posture can! The Preparatory Pose uses mostly the thighs and is a good body builder. However, it's harder to do than the Preparatory Pose, especially for those with round bodies.

Difference from Half Bow Extension: The Half Bow is easier! And it is very similar to the full Bow in benefits. The full Bow is a stronger work out and is preferred by those who are already fairly fit. If you're not quite up to the full Bow, the Half Bow is an excellent substitute.

Overview



Hold for 6 breaths. Relax



Hold for 6 breaths Relax



Hold for 6 breaths. Relax



Hold for 6 breaths. Relax.



Hold for 6 breaths. Relax.



Hold for 2 – 6 breaths. Relax.
Or go to next step.



Rock 2–20 times. Relax!

Basic Instruction**Start**

Lying on your stomach, legs together, arms by your sides, forehead on the floor.

**Highly Recommended Option**

As a warm up, do the Half Bow Prep Pose, once on each leg, then one round with both legs.



& then do the Half Bow, one round for each leg, then one round with both legs.

**Then – Next Round**

Bend both knees, bringing your feet toward your bum.

Hold on to your feet



Then lift your thighs off the floor.
Lift your shoulders off the floor.
Pull your feet up and away from your body.

Tip Your hands pull up and toward your shoulders, your feet try to pull up & away from your hands.



You Will Feel This In

Your thighs, your shoulders, your upper & lower back, your belly, your hips – basically, everywhere!

Safety Tip Watch out for pain, pressure or burning in your lower back or neck. This means you've come up too far.

Hold for 6 breaths. See if the stretch will increase each time you breathe out.

Release

Lower your legs and arms to the floor.
Relax.

Do a total of 3 stretches, including counting the optional Half Bow Prep Pose and the Half Bow as warm ups.

Optional Addition

Once you're comfortable doing the full bow, you can add another repetition with this step:

Go into the full bow.



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Instead of holding the pose, go into a rocking motion. 2 – 10 rocks back and forth builds tremendous strength in all the muscle groups, especially in your abdominals and thighs!



Tip To get the pumping action going: Start by bringing your chest toward the floor. Think of it as a tug-of-war between your hands and your feet, hands pulling your body forward, and then the feet pulling your body up and back. Keep your whole body in the full bow position the whole time.

Encouragement Even if you only do one or two rocks, you are building up your abdominals and your back muscles at a tremendous rate! Keep coming back to this, a little bit at a time, whenever you can!

Details

Start

Try to start with your forehead or chin on the floor. This will allow you to elongate your spine, giving you maximum flexibility with minimum strain on your lower back.



Safety Tip – if you rest your chin to the side it can put more pressure on your lower back. Also if you turn your head to the side, you will not be able to fully elongate your spine.

Elongating your spine Once you are in your starting position, take a moment to lengthen your spine – let your spine “grow” a little. This will give you better results: more flexibility, more benefits & less injury.

See our separate instructions on Lying Down and on Elongating the Spine.



Safety Tip Do not twist your ankle to hold on to your foot. If you can't manage this safely, then hold on to your ankle or your leg, or your pant leg or use a belt.



Safety Tip Many people get very ambitious with this pose and push their bodies up too much. This will strain the lower back, is harder work for your shoulders than you might be ready for – and so is discouraging. If you're fighting the pose, try going a little lighter & try not aiming for so much extension so soon. Or go back to the Half Bow or the Half Bow Preparatory Pose to build up to this one more.

Posture Excellence

To get the most out of this pose – once you're in the pose aim your belly & chest toward the floor for a rounded, boat-like shape. If you've taken the time to elongate your spine first, this will be easier and you'll achieve better extension.



Modifications

If you can't reach your feet:

If you can't reach your foot, it can be difficult to squirm into & out of the posture. Try holding on to your ankle(s), your pant leg(s), or using a belt. If you still can't manage this without pain, then consider not doing the Bow right now, but do more poses that build up the strength and flexibility in your thighs and shoulders.



If you use one of these modifications – after each repetition, relax the stretch but **don't let go** of your ankle / pants / belt. Do 3 repetitions on one side, then do the other side.

Bow

Level 7 Difficulty (Demanding)

Breathing



Settle into your starting position, elongate your spine.
Breathe in & out feeling your body settle and relax



Still breathing in, pulling the feet up & back & pull your body upward.

Hold for 2 - 6 breaths, feel your extension increasing every time you breathe in.

Breathe in
drawing your feet up & holding onto them



Release
Breathe in



Breathe out, lowering your body, letting go and relaxing.

The Extension (rocking),

Before you release the pose, try the rocking movements:

Start by breathing out and rocking forward.

Breathe in when you rock up.

(This breathing almost naturally suggests itself as you rock up and down.)

