

## Cow Pose 1 (Posture Clasp)

Level 3 Difficulty

These are the arm movements for the full Cow Pose. Cow Pose 1 is a strong upper body builder and excellent at creating full arm rotation. When you combine it with its complementary pose, *Eagle's Wings*, you'll feel a dramatic effect on your posture. When you're done this combination of poses, your balance will almost immediately improve and you'll feel your weight sink straight down into your feet. Needless to say, the benefits ripple through to easier, fuller breathing, more relaxed movement and more energy throughout your day. Great for athletes and anyone dealing with posture, neck or shoulder issues. It is, however, a fairly demanding pose, so it's good to build up to Cow Pose 1 with the less demanding *Simple Side Bend*, *Bust Expansion*, *Chest Expansion*, and *Hug* poses.



**Main Benefits:** Loosens outer hip, sacrum, lower back, hip rotators, inner thigh and knees.

**Body Parts Used by This Posture:** Neck, Shoulders (Trapezius), Eyes, Face, Jaw, Throat; optional fingers, arms & toes.

**Combines Well with:** Hug, Eagle's Wings

**Build Up to with:** Bust Expansion, Elbow Opener, Simple Breath, Supported Back Bend, Back Bend Primer - Seated, Balance Posture 1, Bow 1, Chest Expansion 2, Chest Expansion 3, Puppy, Standing Wide Angle with Twist, Breathing Warm Up 1, Breathing Warm Up 2, Breathing Warm Up 3

**Builds You Up for / Warms You Up for:** Back Bends; Balancing Postures; Bow Poses; Chest Expansion 1, 2 & 3; Fish; Half Moon; Incline Plane; Modified Side Stretch 1 & 2; Plank; Simple Side Bends; Standing Leg Stretch 2 & 3; Sun Salutations; Twisted Triangle; Twisted Side Stretch; Upward Dog, Warrior Poses; Wheel, Corpse Pose; Lotus Poses; Chest Breathing 1, 1B, 2 & 2B; Breathing Exercise 18; Relaxed Breath 2; Camel; Chant 4

**Best for Flexibility or Strength:** Strength

**Best if Movement Oriented or Static:** Movement

**Traditional Pose Type:** Body Opening

**Energy Center Used:** Solar Plexus, Heart, Throat

### Good for These

**Practice Goals:** Dance; Better Balance; Better Breathing; Chair Friendly; Office Friendly; Bus Friendly; Flexibility of Neck, Shoulders (Rotators & Upper Back), Whole Arm, Wrists, Hands, Upper Body, Upper Chest, Obliques, Spine, Middle Back; Building Strength in Shoulders (Rotators & Upper Back), Biceps, Whole Arm, Wrists, Hands, Upper Body, Upper Chest, Obliques, Spine, Middle Back; Pregnancy Yoga; Seniors' Yoga; Swimming; Martial Arts; Golf; Sports Warm Up; Improve Personal Posture; Clearing Cleansing & Energizing of Solar Plexus & Heart Chakras; Preparation for Chanting from the Solar Plexus & Heart; Meditation Warm Up

**Best Breathing Theme Matches:** 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 15b, 16a, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 4, 22b

### Recommended for These Health

**Conditions:** Frozen shoulders, allergies, asthma, bronchitis, lung removed, pneumonia, throughout pregnancy, scoliosis, spondylitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, and for those recovering from whiplash.

### Avoid Under these Health

**Conditions:** Arthritis in fingers; osteoporosis in neck or spine; compressed disc in upper neck, upper shoulders or middle back; fresh injury or surgery to shoulder or upper back, fresh whiplash.

## Start

Standing or sitting  
Arms by your sides



We'll start with your dominant arm on top first. (This will go easier than with it on the bottom, so we'll save that treat for last. 😊 ) Let's assume you're right handed and your right arm starts off on top. (Lefties, start with your left hand on top and substitute left and right in these instructions.)

- Bring your right arm upward
- Bend your elbow
- Rest your right palm against your upper back.
- Bend your left elbow.
- Rest the back of your left hand against your lower back.



Work your two arms toward each other, until you can clasp your fingers together.

**Tip** Be sure to get a firm grip. If you cannot do this, see our notes, below, for modifications.

**Once you have your fingers firmly clasped, raise your upper elbow so that it is pointing as straight up toward the ceiling as possible.**

Take a moment to settle into place.

Breathing out, feel your chest dropping, your shoulders sinking and dropping slightly.



## Next:

1. Each breath in, draw your arms upward, using your upper, (right), arm for the pulling power.
2. Pause your breath and your movements.
3. Each breath out, draw your arms downward, using your lower, (left), arm for the pulling power.
4. Pause your breath and your movements before going back to step 1.

**Repeat 3 – 5 times before releasing the pose.**



Then wait while your arms release the stretch. Feel the tension in your muscles letting go and dissolving. Feel which muscles are letting go. These were the ones that were most involved in the stretch, (and which needed it the most).

## You Will Feel This In

Your biceps; triceps; deltoids, trapezius, (that is, your shoulders); upper back; even your middle back and along each side of your middle and upper spine.



**Next, before you do the other arm on top, go into your compensating or complementary pose.**

The *Hug* is great is a great *compensating pose*, (a pose used only briefly, to help you release and re-align after your original stretch). If you choose this option, **hold the Hug briefly**, with your right arm on top, then let it go before going back to the *Cow Pose 1*.

If you use a *complementary pose*, (a pose that you do fully and completely, one that works the muscles in the opposite direction), *Eagle's Wings* is ideal.

1. Do 1 round of *Eagle's Wings* with your right arm on top.
2. Move your arms up and down in *Eagle's Wings*, in rhythm with your breath
  - a. Breathing in, lifting your arms upward.
  - b. Pause your breath and your movements.
  - c. Breathing out, draw your arms downward.
  - d. Pause your breath and your movements before going back to step 1.



**Repeat all these steps with the other arm (left) on top – Cow Pose then Hug or Eagle's Wings.**

**Tip** It's often much more difficult to do *Cow Pose 1* when your dominant arm is on the bottom. Don't be surprised with the difference between the two rounds.



### Modifications

This is one of the few poses in *Serenity Yoga* where we recommend the use of props. If you can't fully clasp your fingers together, it's best to use a yoga strap or belt or wash cloth. To use a prop, put it in the hand that's going on top. Let the prop drop down along your back, then fully grasp it with your lower hand. Next, work your hands together as close as you can without anything hurting. Give yourself some allowance in the flexibility of your muscles so that you can do the up and down movements. (That is, don't move your hands *too* close together, to the point where you can't move your arms up and down at all.)

### Progress Markers

As you get better and better at *Cow Pose 1*, you'll be able to:

- Have your fingers fully clasped together
- Have your upper elbow completely upright, in line with your spine
- Have plenty of movement up and down as you do the pose.

However, don't force these results. Over time & with practice, you'll find your shoulders and arms being more and more able to do this without forcing them. Remember, forcing a pose works against you, since that will tighten your muscles and reduce their flexibility. ☺

## Cow Pose 1

Level 3 Difficulty

### Common Errors

Turning the head or allowing the head to drop forward. This strains the neck and spine and increases your chance of injury. Keep your chin up, parallel to the floor, and your nose pointing forward.



Other poses that help you become better at this one include:



Bust Expansion



Child Pose  
with Bust  
Expansion



Back Bend 2 or 3



Twist Poses



Elbow  
Opener



Elbow to Knee 1, 2 or 3



Bow 1, 2 or Full Bow



Simple Side Bend



Chest Expansion 1, 2 or 3

### Yoga Snack

For a quick, refreshing boost, do the *Cow Pose 1* while you're waiting for a slow download, standing in line at the bank or waiting for an elevator, watching TV or waiting for the bath to run.