

Downward Dog

Level 8

Benefits: Strengthens shoulders & lower back. Loosens spine & hamstrings. Energizes.

This is one of the most demanding poses used commonly in yoga today. So, not surprisingly, it's also one that delivers a lot of benefits. It's a strong work out for the shoulders, spine, lower back and hamstrings, and can be a great stress reliever, energizing you.



Warm Up with / Build Up to It With:

Forward bends like Back Bend, Leg Stretch, Leg Clasp, wood Chopper, Lunge. Also warm up with spine and shoulder looseners like Puppy, Cobra, Cat, Side Bends, Triangle Poses and Side Stretches, including Sitting side Stretch and Half Moon.

Follow with: Puppy, Cobra, Upward Dog, Lung, Child Pose.

Try Learning First: Puppy (This is basically the Downward Dog without the leg movements.)

Do Not Do This If: You have frozen shoulders or arthritis in your shoulders, wrists or hands.

Great for Pregnant Women: It gives a great workout, helps your circulation, eases tension in your body and relieves the feeling of cramping in your leg muscles.

Yoga Snack

Good anytime you have the floor space and 2 minutes! You'll need to be sure the floor will be sticky enough to keep you from slipping. Using a yoga mat is best.

Start

You can start the Downward Dog out of:

Table Stance



Plank



Lunge



© 2004 www.audioyoga.com

Downward Dog (continued)

Starting in Table Stance

From Table Stance

Raise your knees off the floor.



Starting from the Lunge Position

(for example, in the Sun Salutation)

Starting in the Lunge, with one foot back.
back.

Lift your hips & move the other foot
back.



Have a little space between both feet when you're done.
(Having your feet about hip width apart is best.)

Starting from Plank Position

Shift the weight in your shoulders back
While shifting your hips up and back.

© 2004 www.audioyoga.com



Downward Dog (continued)

The Next Step

Shift your hips, so that your belly is shifting closer to your thighs.



Think of this as pointing your tailbone more toward the ceiling. Or think of this as 'scooping out your back'.

Push against the floor with your hands.



You're pushing your body up and away from your hands,
- pushing your tailbone more toward the ceiling.

Feel your arms, shoulders and spine moving away from your hands.

As you do this, you will feel

your shoulder blades coming together
your chest sinking more and more toward the floor.

This flattens out your back and shoulders.
See how far your body will willingly allow you to do this movement.

Now add Leg Movements

When you've stretched your upper body into place



Start straightening your knees slowly.

Safety Tip Stop before you feel pain or burning in the backs of your legs.

Downward Dog (continued)

Finally, if you knees are straight

Increase the stretch in your legs by:

Lowering your heels more and more toward the floor.



If they're already on the floor, press them more and more deeply into the floor.



To further increase the stretch in your legs
Draw your hips bones up higher.

Do these leg movements without losing the position you've achieved in your upper body.

Safety Tip When stretching your legs, it's very easy to go past your body's limit without realizing it. A sure sign that you're overdoing it, is if you're hobbling around with sore knees and calves the next day. Avoid this by paying close attention to signals from the backs of your legs. Burning or pain mean – far enough.

Breathing

The key with the Downward Dog is that the stretch naturally likes to flow as you breathe out.

Move into position – while breathing out.

- Each time you breathe out, feel your shoulders sinking more and more toward the floor, flattening out more and more.

If you are still getting to know this pose, try doing this in separate steps. The first time you breathe out, feel your shoulders sinking. The next time, press your heels closer and closer to the floor.

Breathing in is an excellent opportunity to bring your hips upward, toward the ceiling. This will increase the stretch in your legs.

Always keep in mind – don't work to the point of pain. Gradual movements allow you to coax your body farther, without injury, and make you aware of when you've hit our limit. That is why we do all movements slowly and with control.

Downward Dog (continued)

Integrating the Downward Dog into your Sun Salutation

The Dog fits into the Serenity Sun Salutation in two places. In the beginning, between the Lunge and the Cobra. And toward the end, between the Cat and the closing Lunge.



Going from the Lunge into the Dog

Starting in the Lunge, with one foot back. Lift your hips & move the other foot back.



Have a little space between both feet when you're done.
(Having your feet about hip width apart is best.)

Going from the Dog to the Cobra

Shift your weight into your hands and start dropping your hips down.

Lower your hips to the floor.

Stretch your body up and back into the full Cobra.



If this is too hard for you, try dropping your knees to the floor and getting yourself down onto the mat however you can. (Yoga is about working *with* your body. Thank heaven for that!)

Downward Dog (continued)

Going from the Cat into the Dog

This is done much like coming out of Table Stance into the Dog

From Cat Pose

Raise your knees off the floor.



Going from Dog Pose into the Lunge

Starting in Dog Pose



Give a quick lift in your hips, lifting your heels off the floor



Then shift some weight forward into your hands

Swing one leg forward, and you're into the Lunge.

