

Frog

Level 3 Difficulty

Here's a great warm up for walking, jogging, biking or for more difficult yoga poses involving the hips and thighs. *Frog* can be awkward at first, until you become comfortable with your best foot placement, but once it's part of your repertoire you'll find it quickly brings progress in hip and lower back flexibility. Awkward at first for some seniors, it is also ideal for them to loosen their hips and lower back. Also a wonderful remedy for lower back strain and sciatic issues. Great before and after gardening to help you avoid that lower back and knee stiffness. Blends beautifully with *Simple Side Bend* to give a quick, whole body work out to start your day. Combine it with *Jumping Frog* for fullest benefits.



Great with Red & Green Level Breathing Themes to help release the hips and lower back, and, if combining with *Jumping Frog* it goes well with *Yellow Level Breathing Themes* to train pacing the breath. Use *Red Level Breathing Themes* when mastering the pose.

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| Benefits | Releases lower back and hips, loosens quads, strengthens knees. |
| Time to Do | 1 – 3 minutes |
| Best Breathing Themes | <i>Red & Green Level Breathing Themes</i> to help release the hips and lower back, and, if combining with <i>Jumping Frog</i> it goes well with <i>Yellow Level Breathing Themes</i> to train pacing the breath. Use <i>Red Level Breathing Themes</i> when mastering the pose. |
| Combine with | Jumping Frog; Simple Side Bend |
| Follow with | Jumping Frog, then Simple Breath or Simple Side Bend |
| Body Parts Used by This Posture | Lower Back, Sciatic, Inner Hips, Outer Hips, Inner Thighs, Quads, Knees |
| Build Up to this Pose with | Butterfly, Butterfly Extension, Reclining Butterfly, Happy Baby, Dead Bug, Puppy, Spider 2, Pelvic Lift |
| Builds You Up for | Pelvic Lift, Modified Side Stretch 1, Modified Side Stretch 2, Lunge, Warrior, Back Bend 2, Back Bend 3, Camel, Bow 1, Full Bow, Rocking Bow, Back Push Up (Wheel) |
| Energy Center Stimulated by This Pose | Root |

Discovery Exercise

Before you begin practicing this pose, it's helpful to get a feel for your best foot placement. It's an essential part of making this pose go well and everybody's is slightly different. So take the time for this exercise to help you find what foot placement works best for you.



- Start by bringing with you to the mat 4 small stickers or some sturdy tape like electrical tape.
- Then, stand in Mountain pose, legs together, arms by your sides.
- Open your feet to just past hip width apart.
- Have your feet at 45 degrees, pointing slightly out from the center line.

From this position

- bend forward at the hip, as if you're doing *Standing Wide Angle* or *Wood Chopper 2*.
- Let your hands hang down from your shoulders.
- Bend your knees as much as you need to, to touch your fingers to the mat.



Next, squat directly downward

Key Feel your weight sinking into your heels.

Squat as far as your lower back and hips will allow.
(If your heels roll in or leave the floor, this is fine for now.)



Now that you're in the initial squat,

adjust your foot placement so that your feet and heels are flat on the mat.

- This is done by adjusting the angle that your feet are turned out
- *and* the distance they are apart.

Continue making these adjustments until you can squat comfortably and your feet are completely flat, (not rolled inward or outward) and your weight is resting in your heels.
Some people never achieve this completely, but it's important to do the best you can.

Once you've found your best foot placement

- place on your mat one sticker under the front of each foot, to mark where the balls of your feet rest.
- place on your mat one sticker under the heel of each foot, to mark where your heels go.

These stickers now mark the spot where you place your feet each time you practice the *Frog*. In time you will get a feel for the pose and will instinctively place your feet where they need to go.

Frog Basics**1. Start**

- Standing
- Feet open to just past shoulder width apart
- Feet pointing outward at 45 degrees
- Adjust your foot placement, the width between them and the angle, so that it's suitable for you, as discovered in the *Discovery Exercise*. If you have stickers on your mat, place the balls and heels of each foot on your stickers.



Take a breath to let the weight in your shoulders drop, feeling the weight in your whole body sink down into your feet and into the floor.

Next

- Bend forward at the hip, as if you're doing *Standing Wide Angle* or *Wood Chopper 2*.
- Let your hands hang down from your shoulders.
- Bend your knees as much as you need to, to touch your fingers to the mat.

**Next**

Squat directly downward

Key Feel your weight sinking directly downward into your heels.

Key Do not sink down so far that your feet start to leave the mat. It's important to keep the full area of your feet, especially your heels, completely in contact with the mat and your weight needs to sink directly downward into your heels.

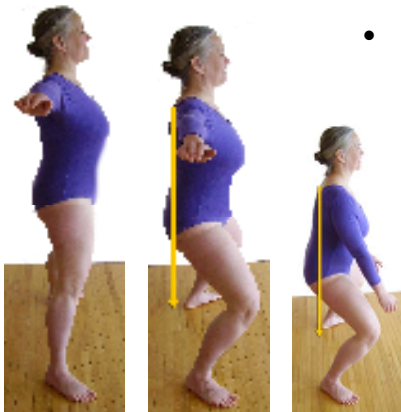
Tip If you roll forward or any part of your feet start to leave the mat, you're either going too far or your foot placement needs to be adjusted. You might need to revisit the *Discovery Exercise* on page 1.

1B. Alternative Start

Once you are very practiced at this pose, you might like to go into it this way:



- Starting in Mountain Pose
- Open up your feet to your individual foot placement
- Take a moment to settle into place.
- Open up your arms into Triangle position, lifting them to shoulder height.
- Pause and let your weight settle down into your feet as you breathe out.
- Breathe in, feeling your spine elongate.



- Breathing out, squat directly downward, with your arms open, *without bending forward*, like a ballerina squatting.

Do this movement as slowly and as evenly as possible. This will encourage gracefulness, control and will develop even more flexibility in your hips and more strength in your thighs.



Settle into place with your feet flat and your hands resting lightly on the floor.

Key Your weight should be resting in your heels, not in your hands.

2. Next

Once you've settled into your squat

- Bring your elbows to rest inside each knee.
- Place your palms together. This opens up your elbows and uses your elbows to encourage your knees to open.

Do not force your knees open with your elbows. Using your elbows to open your knees is meant to be a passive action.



Take a breath in to elongate your spine. This will open up your chest for better breathing and encourage your weight to sink into your heels.

Tip If you cannot hold your balance it's OK to omit the Namaste movement and keep your hands in touch with the mat. In that case, your hands are not there to bear weight but just to steady you. You need to keep as much weight as possible into your heels and away from your hands.

Remember, if you are losing your balance when in this pose, your best solution is not to use your hands, but to re-examine your foot placement and also check to see that you are not trying to sink down too deeply for your present level of ability.

3. Holding the Squat

- If you've settled into the squat well, it should now take care of itself while you focus on your breathing.
- Notice that, with each breath out, your hips tend to sink farther, stretching your lower back more and more. This is helping your hips and sacrum to release and becomes a wonderful remedy for lower back issues.

Safety Tip Do not bounce.

Stay in the squat for 4 – 6 breaths or

ideally, until your hips sink down no farther even with the breath out.

Encouragement

It's OK if you don't end up going too deeply into this pose or if you can't hold it very long. Even a breath or two in this position will encourage your back and hips to become looser. Remember, it's the effort, not the extremes of accomplishment, that bring you the benefits.

Release



Lift your hips, keeping your hands in touch with the floor. Curl into a 'rag dog' and roll upright, one vertebra at a time.

- Feel your weight pressing into your heels as they push you away from the floor, bringing you upright.
- Keep your knees bent and your back curled, rag doll fashion, as you roll on up like a fern unfolding.



Optional Follow Up 1

Once you are fully upright, stretch upward into Simple Breath. Repeat the Frog until you've done it 2 – 3 times.



Optional Follow Up 2

Or, for best results, follow with Jumping Frog and then repeat the Frog

- Lift up until you're in position for Jumping Frog:
- Keep your fingers in contact with the mat as you lift your hips, releasing the Frog.
- Once you have lifted your hips as high as your hamstrings will allow, while still keeping in touch with the mat, you are ready for Jumping Frog. (See our notes on Jumping Frog pose.)
- After 4 – 5 repetitions of Jumping Frog, repeat the Frog.
- Then release by coming fully upright, stretching into *Simple Breath*.



Breathing Basic Start



Breathe out, bending at the hip, touching your hands to the floor.



Breathe in
Breathing out, squat into your heels.

Alternative Start



Start standing with your feet open to their best foot placement.



Breathe in, lifting your arms to shoulder height, elongating your spine.



Breathing out, squat directing down into your heels.

Holding the Pose



Each breath out, feel your weight sinking more and more into your heels, your hips dropping down closer and closer to the floor.



Each breath in, elongate your spine, opening up your chest.

Hold for 3 – 6 breaths
or (for maximum flexibility) until you reach the limit of your ability to sink your hips toward the floor.

Breathing for Release

Breathing in, lifting your hips, fingers still in touch with the mat.



Keep breathing in curling your spine, lifting your body upright



Keep breathing in reaching upward into Simple Breath



Breathing out, as your arms return to your sides.

Common Errors

- Weight shifting forward into the ball of the foot.
- Not starting out with proper foot placement
- Trying to sink too deeply for your present level of ability.
- Putting weight into the hands, rather than sinking into the heels.

Symptoms and Remedies**Body rolling forward or backward or sometimes losing your balance.**

- You need to play with your foot placement so that your feet can stay flat.
- You might be trying to sink too deeply into the pose.
- You might be sinking your weight into the front of your foot or too far back into the very back of your heel.

Feet rolling inward or outward, and / or heels leaving the floor

- You need to play with your foot placement so that your feet can stay flat.
- You might be trying to sink too deeply into the pose.



To the left, an example of weight shifting forward into the ball of the foot, forcing weight into the hands and tipping the practitioner off balance.

Compare that with proper weight placement in the picture on the right.

**Heels are leaving the floor, but feet are otherwise flat.**

- You're in the pose too deeply. Lift your hips up until your feet flatten. This is the depth to hold until your back and hips release more. This may happen during the session as you breathe and let go or over several sessions.