

Leg Over

Level 2 Difficulty

Benefits:

Strengthens & loosens lower back; loosens shoulders, inner & outer thighs, hips & hamstrings

Time to Do: 3 minutes

Body Parts Used by This Posture: Shoulders, lower back, hips, thighs, hamstrings

Warms You Up for: Any posture requiring flexibility in the lower back, shoulders & hamstrings, including twists.

Warm Up with: Side to Sides, Elbow to Knee 2

Good After: Butterfly, Leg Presses

Builds you up for: Spider, Chest Expansion, Leg Clasp, Twists, Back Stretch, Leg Stretch

Energy Center Used: Root, Belly

Best Breathing Themes: Yellow Level Breathing Themes, such as the *Eleventh Breathing Theme*.



This is a popular stretch that provides gentle yet effective relief for the lower back. It's great when you're just getting up in the morning, relieving any stiffness that sets in over night. It's also a good tension reliever any time of day or before bed. For people who carry their excess weight in their thighs and tummy, it can be tricky to get that leg over! Adjust your leg position to accommodate your shape, get extra extension by twisting the hips. And don't give up on the pose! As you become comfortable with it, you can start to enjoy the body-mind connection it brings when matching the movements with your breathing.

Not a lot of space to stretch out? Try doing one leg at a time, then adjust your position and shift legs. Or do this with your leg bent – the benefits won't be as great for your hamstrings, but you'll still loosen your outer thigh and unknot your lower back and shoulders – and, at least you'll get a chance to enjoy the posture rather than not do it at all.

Yoga Snack

Another great pose to do while watching TV. Better yet, put on your favourite, relaxing music and do a round of these, matching your breathing with the movement of your legs. In this dance-like way you'll start feeling more connected to your body and calmer.

Overview



Breathing In



Breathing Out

Breathing In



Breathing Out

Start

Lie on your back, legs outstretched, neck lined up with your spine, chin pointing upward.

Open up your arms so that your body makes the little letter 't', (the "airplane" position).

Palms touching the floor, (palms facing downward).



Next

Bend one knee and bring it up toward your chest.

Straighten your leg up toward the ceiling.



Safety Tip Do not raise your leg without bending it first. If you keep your leg straight while raising it up, you put too much strain on your lower back. Bend it, then raise it.



Important When you're done raising your leg, it should be straight. Your knee should not be bent. If your hamstrings are tight you might have to drop your leg down a little to the point where you can straighten your leg. (This pose is a hamstring stretch. Your hamstring won't stretch in this pose if your knee is bent.)

Tip Let your foot be loose. You don't have to point it to the ceiling or square it off. (You don't have to flex or extend it.) Just let the foot sit loosely at the end of your leg.



Pause



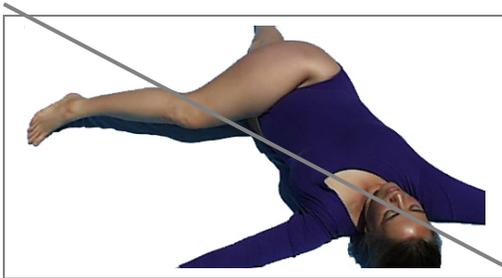
Then slowly lower your leg toward the opposite side of your body



Continue, lowering your leg down toward the floor.



Important Only lower your leg as far as you can without bending your knee. Let the stretch in your hip and your hamstrings be your guide. Don't go to the point of pain, but, for the most benefit, only go as far as you can with a straight leg.



Tip You can swivel your hips to give yourself extra extension.



Tip Keep your shoulders on the floor. This might limit how far you can go in the stretch. If this is true for you, it means your shoulders need to benefit from the stretch more than your legs do – so just enjoy the stretch loosening up your shoulders. In time, your legs will benefit as well.

Hold for 1 – 4 breaths

Release



Bring your **leg upright**

Pause



Lower your leg to the floor – **bending the knee!**

Safety Tip Once again, please do not lower your leg into the starting position without bending it first.

Breathing

Going into the pose
("Acquiring" the pose)



Breathe in

Pause
(movement & breath)



Breathe out



Pause (movement & breath)

Then Hold for 1 – 4 breaths

Going out of the pose
("Releasing" the pose)



Breathe in

Pause
(movement & breath)



Breathe out

Common Errors

Rushing! This makes you take short cuts and makes the movements sloppy. That will reduce the benefits of doing the pose and increase the chance of injury.

Not pausing between steps

→

Pause here both on the way up and on the way down.



←

As you pause here, pause in your breathing also. Breathe in, raising your leg, pause the movement and the breath. Then breathe out to lower your leg.



Bending the knee after you've raised it.

Bending the knee once you're in the pose.



Having the leg straight while you're raising it or lowering it from the starting position.