

**Benefits:** Strengthen thighs (quads), loosen hamstrings and inner thighs. Some upper body strengthening as well, and toe stretcher.

**Time to Do:** 3 mins.

**Body Parts Used:** Entire lower body, including thighs, legs, hamstrings, toes, also shoulders, upper arms.



**Builds You Up for / Warms You Up for:** Camel, Wheel (Back Push Up), Full Bow, Sun Salutation.

**Build Up to This Posture / Warm Up with:** Pelvic Lift, Bridge Pose, Half Bow, Balance Posture 1 & 2, Back Bend 1, 2 & 3

**Combines well with:** the rest of the Sun Salutation; Warrior poses; makes a good mini-routine with the Downward Dog.

**Best Breathing Theme:** Breathing themes that support strong muscle work outs, like Breathing Themes #2 and #4.

**Energy Centers Used:** First three: Root, Belly, Solar Plexus.

The Lunge provides a strong workout for the quads and hips. Athletes seem to enjoy this pose for its body building capacity. It builds you up for doing demanding poses like the Wheel (Back Push Up) and is an important part of the Sun Salutation. As with all Sun Salutation poses, learn it well on it's own, so you can incorporate it into your Salutation with ease and flow.

### Yoga Snack

Try Lunges as a warm up before jogging, biking or skiing.

## Start

Lunges can start from four basic positions: On hands and knees (Table Stance) From a standing position, (Mountain Pose) From the Plank Position Or from Dog Pose (such as when you're doing a Sun Salutation)

### If you starting from Standing



Beginning in Mountain Pose

Fold forward at your waste & bring your hands to the floor (they way you do in the Wood Chopper)



**Tip** Be sure to have your spine elongated as you settle your hands onto the floor.

Swing one leg back as far as possible. This will mean bending your front knee.



### If you start from Table Stance & Plank Pose

1.



1. Beginning in **Table Stance**, with  
? hands straight down from your shoulders  
? and knees straight down from your hips.

Or from **Plank Pose**,  
? hands straight down from your shoulders  
? body straight  
? weight on your hands and feet



2.

2. Lift your hips and lower body up, using your arms and feet to push upward slightly

3. Swing one leg forward.



**Tip:** Ideally, the leg that comes forward lands in between your hands.

**Tip for the Round Bodied** If you have any belly or a large chest to deal with, how do you swing that leg forward? This is where it becomes especially important to push your hips and lower body upward before you swing your leg forward. It is this upward lift that will give you the room to move your leg. The more an upward lift, the better.

If you start from the Dog Pose (for example, during the Sun Salutation)



1.

1. In Dog Pose with hips in the air



2.

2. Lift your shoulders up slightly, letting go of the scoop in your back. Shift some weight into your hands.

3. Swing one leg forward as far as possible.



3.

**Tip:** Ideally, the leg that comes forward lands in between your hands.

### Completing the Movement



Now that you are in position with one leg forward and one leg back...



Straighten the back leg as much as it will allow, (without pain of course)

Lean some weight on your back toes. This increases the stretch in the hamstrings and inner thighs. Do this by shifting the weight in your hips back.

Look Up



### You will feel this in

Your hamstrings, thighs and a little bit in your shoulders.

Hold for 1 – 6 breaths

To increase the stretch as you hold the pose:



Feel your back leg straightening as you **breathe in**.

Hold that increase in the stretch while you breathe out.



Feel your hips sinking straight downward as you **breathe out**.

Hold that position as you breathe in.

This means that as you hold the pose and breathe in and out, your back leg will get straighter and straighter and your lunge will go deeper and deeper.

## Release

Release the pose in much the same way as you got into it.

Shift a little bit of your weight into your hands.



Lift your hips and lower body up, using your arms and feet to push upward slightly.

Swing your back leg forward. Both legs are now together.

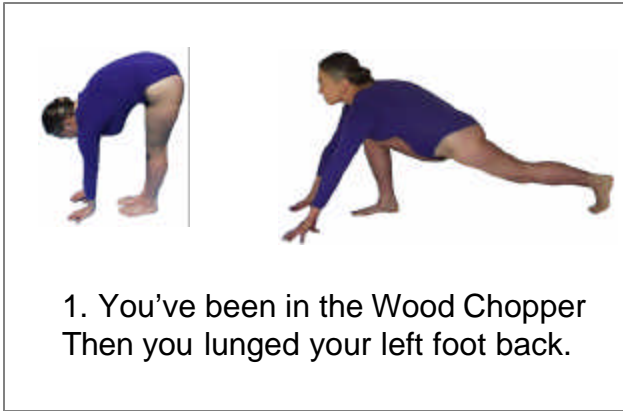


## Switch legs. Repeat.

Ideally, do 3 repetitions on each side.

## Release during the Sun Salutation

On the way "down"



2. Release and move to the Dog Pose by:

Shifting a little  
bit of your  
weight into your  
hands.



Lift your hips and lower body up,  
using your arms and feet to push  
upward slightly.



3. Swing your front leg back.  
Legs are hip width apart.



4. Go into the Downward Dog.

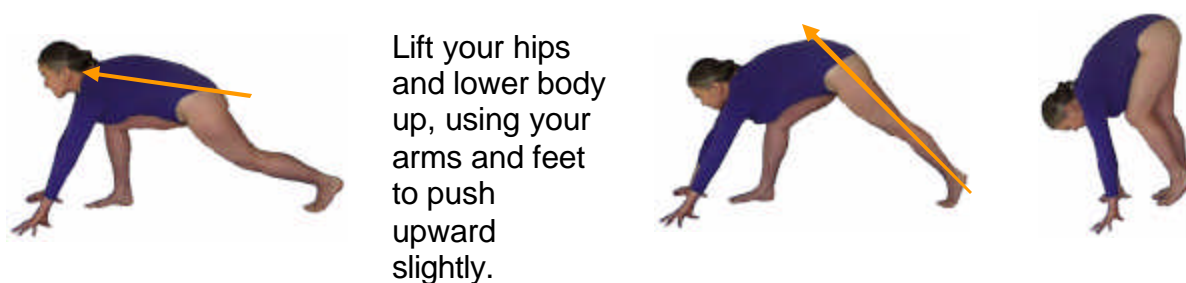
## Release during the Sun Salutation

On the way “up”, finishing a Sun Salutation

You’ve just come out of the Dog Pose and done a Lunge with your left foot forward:



Shift a little bit of your weight into your hands.



Lift your hips and lower body up, using your arms and feet to push upward slightly.

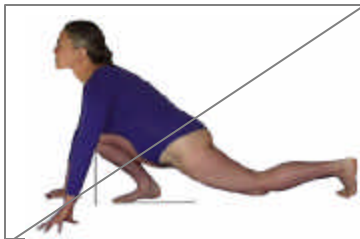
Swing your back leg forward to join your front leg. Legs end up together.

**Tip** To get that back leg to come forward, it is especially helpful to get a good lift in your hips. Let your back leg help this a lot by give a lively push up with your back foot before you bring it forward.

Details – For Best Results

**During the Lunge:**

? Keep the front foot flat on the floor.  
This is more important than having the back leg straight.



Keep the front leg “square”. That is, keep your front knee over its ankle.

The best way to manage this is to make sure your *back* leg is as far back as possible.

**Making it Easier**

It’s OK to keep your back knee bent while you build strength in your thighs and flexibility in your hamstrings.

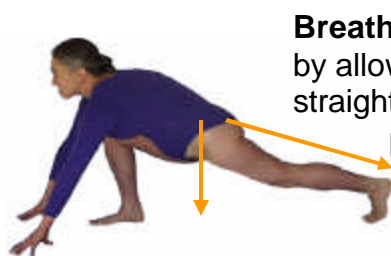
**Still too Hard?**

Try placing chair cushions under your back knee. This eases pain in the knee and gives less distance for it to go before finding support.

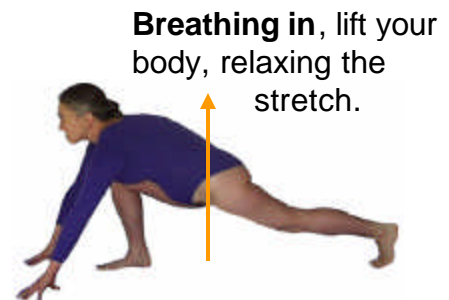
**Working It**

Once you’ve become comfortable with the Basic Lunge, try the following strategy to get a strong work out for your thighs and hips:

1. Go into a Basic Lunge.
2. Breathe in and out, easing into and out of the lunge, deepening and lightening your stretch, without holding the pose, like this:



**Breathing out**, deepen your lunge by allowing your hips to sink, straightening your back leg, putting more weight on the back foot.



**Breathing in**, lift your body, relaxing the stretch.

**Tip** Have your thigh do the work, not your hands. Your hands are there only to steady you. Your hips should go straight up and down as you breathe in and out.

**Best Breathing Theme for this variation:** Breathing Theme Eleven. This has you start movements when you start breathing and end movements when you finish breathing. This Breathing Theme will allow you to build control and strength.

**Tip:** Breathe and move slowly and evenly! This builds control and muscle strength.