

Pigeon

Level 5 Difficulty

This is the classic version of the Pigeon, the center point for all advanced variations of this great hip & groin loosening pose. Great for athletes and anyone with hip issues, it can be demanding, so you might want to build up to it with the gentler Baby Pigeon first. Once you find your comfort zone with Pigeon, you'll be ready for the extra benefits of Sleeping Pigeon. Awkward as it can be to come to terms with Pigeon poses, there are modifications that can make it more comfortable until your body is more ready for the full versions.



Main Benefits: Loosens outer hip, sacrum, lower back, hip rotators, inner thighs, knees, groin ligaments, firms glutes.

Body Parts Used by This Posture: Lower Back, Sacrum, Inner Hip, Glutes, Hip Rotators

Compensating Pose: Resting Sage or Puppy

Combines Well with: Sleeping Pigeon, Puppy, Resting Sage, Seated Twists

Build Up to with / Warm Up with: Abdominal Lifts 1 & 2; Butterfly poses, Hip Openers; Outer hip stretches such as Side to Sides, Knee Over, Leg Overs, Hip Rolls, Simple Side Bend, Triangle Poses, Twists and Eagle pose; Forward Bends such as Back Stretch, Leg Stretch, Leg Clasp, Wood Chopper, Chest Expansion & Chest Expansion – Leg Extensions, Sitting Wide Angle, Standing Wide Angle; Back Bends such as Back Bend 2 & 3, Supported Back Bend, Upward Dog, Cobra poses; Balance Posture 1& 2; Downward Boat; Frog & Jumping Frog, Half Moon, Leg Fold 1, Leg Fold 2, Lunges, Puppy, Rabbit, Rishi's Posture 1, 2 & 3; Side Splits, Spider 1, 2 & 3; Standing Leg Stretch 1& 2; Sun Salutations; Moon Salutations; Wood Chopper 1, 2 & 3

Builds You Up for / Warms You Up for: Hip Opener, Leg Over 2; Lunges; Camel; Bow Poses; Balance Posture 3; Plow 1 & 2; Shoulder Stands; Standing Leg Stretch 2 & 3; Twisted Triangle; Twisted Side Stretch; Cross Legged Pose; Lotus

Best for Flexibility or Strength: Flexibility

Best if Movement Oriented or Static: Static

Traditional Pose Type: Hip Openers, Lunges

Energy Center Used: Root, Belly (Sacrum), Solar Plexus, Heart, Throat

Best Breathing Theme Matches: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6b, 7b, 15a, 15, 15b, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23, 22b

Good for These Practice Goals: General flexibility and also flexibility specifically of: Hip Rotators, Outer Hips, Glutes, Groin, Inner Thigh, Hamstrings, Quads, Knees, Ankles, Feet; Sports in general and specifically: Running, Biking, Swimming, Martial Arts; Improving Personal Posture; Clearing Cleansing & Energizing of the Root, Belly & Solar Plexus; Chanting from the Root, Belly or Solar Plexus;

Recommended for These Health Conditions: Chronic injury of hip; menopause & pre-menopause; menstruating (having your period) at this moment; pronation of feet & or hips.

Avoid Under these Health Conditions: Arthritis in hips; osteoporosis in knees or hips; femoral hernia; fresh injury or surgery in hip, lower back or knee; chronic lower back pain; pins in knee or ankle region; prolapsed intestines or uterus.

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Try learning Baby Pigeon first. This will help you learn the basic movements and will prepare your body to be able to do this pose. For Baby Pigeon, you keep your back leg bent.

Start

- Sitting with your legs out in front of you.
- Tuck your left foot in toward your groin.
- Bend the other (right) knee & foot off to the (right) side.
- Turn your body slightly, so that you are facing your right knee

1.



2.



Place a hand on either side of that knee.

Tip Your belly button should be in line with your knee, but if you can't turn that far, that's OK. This will happen in time.

Next

Extend your back (right) leg straight out behind you as much as possible.

Tip This is done by rotating the hip while stretching it out. As your leg straightens, start turning your knee and the top of your foot so that they make more complete contact with the floor.

3.



4.



Encouragement You might not be able to fully straighten your leg, or it might not completely rotate into place. This is OK. In time, this pose and others will increase your ability to do this. So don't force your leg into position and definitely do not twist it to the point of pain.

Progress Marker If you can't get your leg much farther back than the starting position in picture #2, then you might not be ready for the full Pigeon. Baby Pigeon might be more appropriate for you for now. You

might also like to use hip openers like Happy Baby and Dead Bug, in combination with Outer Hip loosening poses like Knee Stretches and Side to Sides; also various Lunges like Spider 1 and the basic Lunge pose in order to make this pose more possible for you.

Next

Right now you are probably leaning more on your right hip than on your right. Roll your weight more toward the center line of your body, beginning to even out the weight on each hip. You'll start to feel the stretch in your right glute.

Key Don't allow your glutes leave the floor. Only roll to the center as far as you can without either hip lifting off the floor. If this means that you are not fully centered, then that is OK. In time your hips will loosen and you will be more able to center your weight.

5.



Note In this respect, *Serenity Yoga* teaches Pigeon poses differently than some other schools do. You might be familiar with the more common method of centering your weight and, over time, training the hips to drop to be in full contact with the floor. We've found that our approach, (of starting with the hips fully dropped and then encouraging your weight to center) will bring you to the final, correct alignment sooner and with less chance of injury.

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Key Once your back leg is in place, your front hip, (your front glute), needs to be in touch with the ground. If this means you have to roll your weight more onto one side than the other, this is OK for now. In time, your hips will loosen and you will be more able to have your weight evenly spread between both hips. In all cases, it's important that your front leg and hip be fully in touch with the floor.

A Note on Your Front Leg

The more you 'square off' your front leg, the more difficult the pose will get. That is, the more your front calf and knee form a squared corner with your front thigh, the more demanding the pose. In this way, you can control some of the intensity of the pose.



Finishing the Set Up and Holding the Pigeon

Now that you are more or less set up, fine tune your alignment:



Turn to face the front, with your belly button lined up with your front knee. Adjust your back leg so it's lined up with your belly button and front knee as much as possible.



Breathe in and elongate your spine, making your body as perpendicular (straight up and down) as possible.

Breathing out, feel the weight in your hips sinking, your groin stretching, your legs sliding more and more apart as your hips drop closer to the ground.

Hold for 6 or more breaths, or until your body will not release any farther into the pose.

You Will Feel This In

- Your groin ligaments (the front of your thigh)
- Your hip rotators

Encouragement You might find that you're 'holding back', not allowing yourself to fully drop into this pose. This especially happens when we're afraid that the pose is going to bring us pain. However, by taking your time with the pose and letting your weight drop with each breath out, you can safely let your weight fully go – thereby bringing yourself its maximum benefits.

Safety Tip

If you're feeling pinching in your lower back, you're holding yourself too upright. You need to lean slightly forward until the day that your hips loosen enough to allow you to be more straight.

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Optional Next Step – Sleeping Pigeon

Before you release the pose, you might like to slide directly into Sleeping Pigeon, to add a stretch for your sacrum, spine and shoulders.

Release by reversing your steps and resting in Resting Sage until your hips have fully let the stretch go. **Repeat to the other side. Do 2 – 3 times to each side.**



Modifications

Most modifications for Pigeon focus on reducing the weight you're placing on your groin. It's OK to lean forward a little, and even bend your back leg slightly until such time as your hips allow you to more fully acquire the exact alignment.



However, if you have to bend your back leg a lot or lean forward a lot, you might find Baby Pigeon more appropriate for you for now.

Advanced Acquisition

Once you are full comfortable with the Pigeon and can easily acquire the correct alignment, you might be ready for the advanced method of getting into the pose. Only do this if you can easily center your weight in the middle of your groin; keep your leg, belly button and knee lined up when you're in the pose; and still keep your front hip and back thigh in touch with the mat.

Start in Table Stance with your knees fairly close to your hands.

Slide one leg backward, straightening it so it begins to settle into the back position.



As your back leg settles into place, start bringing your front foot slightly forward, squaring it off.



While you do this, you begin to adjust your front knee so it's more in line with your belly button.



Begin to rest weight onto your front hip.



Adjust the weight distribution between your hips.

When releasing the pose, return to Table Stance and then go briefly into the Puppy (as your compensating pose).

Once you get used to this method, it can become one easy motion to slide your legs and body into the correct alignment.

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Breathing

Breathe however you like while you are setting up the pose.



Once you are in your opening position, take a slow breath or two to settle into place. Let your weight drop as you breathe out.



Breathing in – elongate your spine. Breathing out – fully drop your weight down toward the floor.

The Hold

Each breath in – feel your body opening up, your spine elongating.

Each breath out – feel the weight in your body sinking more and more your hips dropping downward, your legs spreading apart.

Optional Sleeping Pigeon

Breathe in – elongating your spine

Breathe out – stretch your body forward and down in the Sleeping Pigeon



Each breath in – feel your body opening up, especially in the back of your chest & sacrum.

Each breath out – feel your body sinking, your hips and shoulders letting go.



Release the pose by breathing in and sliding back into *Puppy*. Breathe out as you settle into *Puppy*.

Breathe in and out as your muscles release the Pigeon and before you continue on to doing *Pigeon* or *Sleeping Pigeon* on the other leg.

Great Combinations

Pigeon moving directly into Sleeping Pigeon, repeating at least twice on each side, alternating sides; then Seated Twist, at least twice to each side, alternating sides. Together these will give a thorough release for your hip girdle and sacrum. Best *Breathing Themes* for this combination include the *Red Level Breathing Themes*, (1, 2 & 3) and several of the *Green Level Ones*: 14, 15A, 15, and 15B.



