

Puppy

Level 2 Difficulty

Benefits: Strengthens Shoulders, Arms, Thighs; Stretches & Improves Flexibility of Upper Back, Middle Back & Shoulders

Time to Do: 1 - 3 minutes

Body Parts Used by This Posture: Arms, Shoulders, Upper Back, Middle Back, Thighs



Warms You Up for: Cat 1, Cat 2, Child Pose; any pose that works the shoulders or inner thighs.

Good Immediately After: Cat1, Cat2, Dog, Cobra, Back Bend

Builds you up for: Dog, Sun Salutation

Combines Well with: Cat1 or Cat2, Child Pose

Energy Center Used: Heart; (also, a little, Solar Plexus & Throat)

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This is a great stretch for your shoulders. It's a good warm up for postures that work the shoulders, like the Bust Expansion, the Shoulder Stand and the Dog. And an essential compensating pose for many Back Bends. Once you come to terms with this pose, you can hold it for longer and longer periods of time. That's when it becomes meditative and you can just listen to your breathing. In this way, the Puppy teaches you to let go of stress.

Start in Table Stance

- Kneel on all fours
- Arms coming straight down from the shoulders.
- Knees coming straight down from the hips.



Next

- Walk your knees back one full step behind you, (moving them about one knee length backward).
- Keep your knees level with each other.
- Walk your hands in front of you one full hand width farther ahead.
- Keep your hands even with each other.



Puppy (continued)

Next

Swivel your back downward. That is, let the middle of your body sag toward the floor. This is what we call 'scooping out your back'. It's achieved by doing a Pelvic Tilt, so that your lower hips come closer to your thighs. Some people think of it as swiveling your tail bone upward toward the ceiling.



Next

Sink your upper body toward the floor, bringing your chest and head downward.



Continue this downward movement until your forehead is on the floor.

Key Think of this as bringing your chest toward the floor. Feel your shoulder blades coming together.

Complete the movement by feeling your body stretch up and back, pulling your arms and back away from your finger tips, drawing your tailbone toward the ceiling.

Key Your elbows are off the floor. Your hands, arms and back should form a nice smooth line from fingertips to tailbone.

Key Your thighs and hips will be over your calf muscles, not over your knees. If this is not achieved you need to stretch your arms farther forward and slide your hips farther back.

Modifications

If you have trouble with your shoulders or hands holding your weight, you can rest some weight on your elbows. Be sure to keep your body well stretched and your hips over your calves.



If you have trouble keeping your thighs and lower legs separated, you can place a cushion there as a reminder. But – don't rest your weight on the cushion. It's just there to tell you when you've come down far enough.

Do once. Hold for 4 – 20 breaths or as long as you like!

Puppy (continued)

Tip If your hips are up and back enough, you will feel your shoulder blades flatten and come together. Then your whole body looks like one straight line from hips to finger tips.

Tip Allow your weight to be divided between your arms & hands, your knees and your forehead.

Release

Raise your body up
Slide your hands back under you.



Or

Slide your body back
Lower your hips
And curl into Child Pose

Breathing



Release the pose,
coming up while
breathing in.

In Table Stance, **breathe in and out**, feeling your weight settle, feeling the weight in your shoulders and hips sink into the floor.

Go into the Puppy while **breathing out.**

Hold breathing in & out.

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Breathing for Alternative Release into Child Pose



As you finish the
Puppy, **breathe in**

Breathe out,
sliding into the Child
Pose

In the Child Pose

Every time you breathe out feel your weight settling, feel the gentle stretch starting to happen along your shoulders and lower back as you breathe out and your weight settles.

Puppy (continued)

Common Errors

- Not reaching far enough forward. This reduces the stretching in your back.
- Resting weight on elbows. This is OK as a modification until you can do the full pose, but you will not feel the full stretch in your body until your elbows are off the floor.
- Having hips directly over the knees. This reduces the stretch in your lower back.
- Letting the middle back sag toward the floor. This is a sign that your hands aren't far enough forward and your hips aren't far enough up-and-back.
- Letting the thighs touch or rest on the lower leg. This reduces the stretches on the lower back and makes the pose, technically, a version of the Child Pose, which is a different stretch with different benefits.
- Not allowing enough weight in the hands. As you stretch, it should feel some weight is pressing into the fingertips while your body is stretching up and back.



Here Corinne is resting her weight on her elbows and is not reaching her hips back enough. This makes her middle body sag and has the effect of not stretching her arms or her back.

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