

## Simple Side Bend

Level 1 / Posture 74

### Benefits:

Loosens & strengthens spine, neck, shoulders, breathing muscles; strengthens arms.

**Time to Do:** 1 - 3 minutes

**Body Parts Used by This Posture:** Arms, shoulders, neck chest, spine.

**Build Up to This Posture with:** Complete Breath, Triangle Discovery, Wood Chopper, Bust Expansion, Cobra with Twist, Twist 1.

**This Posture Builds You Up for:** Triangle poses, Side Stretches, Twists.

**Try Learning First:** Triangle Discovery

**Energy Centers Used:** Solar Plexus, Heart, Throat



The Simple Side Bend wakes up the breathing muscles in the front and side of your chest and releases tension in your shoulders. This makes it a great start to your day, for lots of energizing, relaxed breathing. It's an essential part of many Serenity Yoga routines, to warm up the breathing muscles.

**We strongly recommend you learn and practice Triangle Discovery first. This will help you understand how to use your side muscles in a side stretch without straining your back.**

### Yoga Snack

A good break any time you have a minute. Refreshing!

### Start

- Standing in Mountain Pose
- Arms by your sides
- Legs together

Then bring your hands in front of you into Namaste (prayer) position.



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**Key** Before you begin it's important to do a slight pelvic tilt and elongate your spine. Keep these in place throughout the posture. These actions will protect your lower back and give you better extension during the pose.

**Next**

Bring your arms in front of you and link your fingers together. Keep your fingers linked throughout the exercise.

Your arms should be at shoulder height.



Press your palms outward, stretching your arms forward.

**Feel** the stretch reaching along your arms, pulling your shoulders gently forward away from your body.



**Breathing in**, draw your arms upward, in a wide circle, stretching them overhead.

**Key**

Keep your arms well stretched while you are bringing them overhead. Think of this movement like the spokes on a wheel turning. Your arms are the spokes. Your shoulders are the center of the wheel. Your hands are the outer edge of the wheel circling around the center point.



**Pause**

**Next**

With your arms still well stretched, bend your body directly to one side.

**You Will Feel This in:** the muscles at the side of your body and outer hip.

**You should NOT Feel This in:** your lower back or groin.



**Key** Bending directly to the side is important to keep from injuring your back. If you twist slightly forward or slightly backward, you will feel your lower back straining or your abdominals and groin straining. This reduces the benefits to the sides and risks injuring your back. If you feel this in your lower back or in your abdominals or groin, turn your body slightly until you only feel this in your sides and outer hip.

**Hold** the stretch for 1 – 8 breaths or until you feel your body has worked to its limit.

**As you breathe out,** notice the stretch increasing.



**Next**

Reverse your movements until you are at the top again. Then stretch to the other side.

**Hold the stretch.**

Return to the upright position and stretch the first side again.

**Do 3 rounds, alternating sides.**

**Take a break** in between rounds if your shoulders are very tight.



**Breathing**

**Breathe in** as you stretch up.

**Breathe out** as you stretch to the side.

**Common Errors**



**Twisting** so that you're not stretching directly to the side. You can feel this as straining in your lower back or abdominals or groin.

**Dropping one shoulder forward.** This helps you stretch farther, but reduces the benefits to the muscles in your sides.

**Not keeping the arms fully stretched** throughout the entire exercise. People especially tend to

drop their lower arm. You can tell you're doing this if your upper arm is beginning to rest on your head.



**Tip** If you have trouble keeping your alignment, try practicing this pose against a wall. Start with your heels, bum, shoulders and back of your head against the wall. As you raise your arms, have your little fingers in touch with the wall. Keep all these body parts in touch with the wall the entire time you are doing the pose.

**Symptoms & Remedies**

<p>You feel straining in your lower back.</p>	<p>You're twisting your upper shoulder forward. Turn your upper shoulder back slightly until you feel the stretch only in your side.</p>
<p>You feel straining in your abdominals and / or groin.</p>	<p>You're twisting your lower shoulder forward. Turn your upper body forward slightly until you feel the stretch only in your side.</p>
<p>You're trying this against a wall but still feel strain in your lower back.</p>	<p>You might have too much of an arch in you lower back as you do the pose. Check to see that you're doing a good pelvic tilt.</p>