

Sitting



To sit well for yoga requires many muscles groups to be strong and flexible and it can be difficult to do at first.

For example, in this lotus position you can see many muscles around the abdomen and shoulders working to hold the body upright. There are also muscles along the entire spine and throughout the hips that are needed to comfortably support you while you are seated.

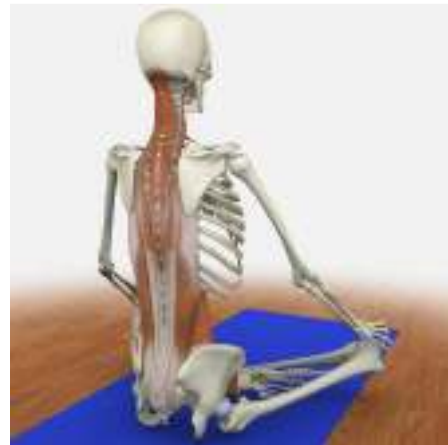
For many students, this is difficult at first. As

you do more and more yoga, these muscles will become stronger, more flexible and you'll find these seated positions easier.

Until then there are modifications you can use to help you sit comfortably.

The Basics

Sitting with Legs Outstretched



This is the starting position for forward bends like the Back Stretch and for hip stretches like the Pigeon and Sleeping Pigeon. It's also where to start to put yourself into all other seated positions.

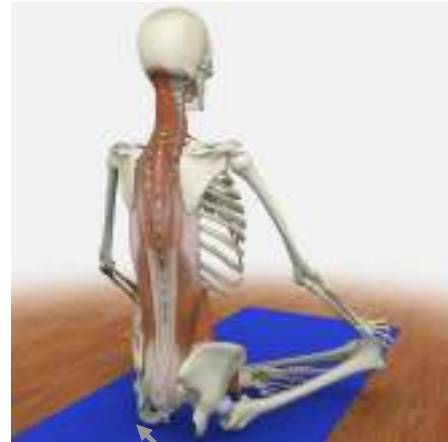
Start

Start with your legs together.

Let your arms fall in line with your hip bones. This will bring you more or less straight without having to work hard at it.

Finding Your 'Sits Bones'

Your 'Sits Bones' are bones in the lower hip and upper legs. Together, they form a triangle which helps you sit in a more upright, more stable position without have to work hard at it. Nature loves the stability of a triangle and has given you one to support you while you sit through these bones. If you look on this picture you will see the base of the triangle of 'Sits Bones' .



"Sits Bones"

To be more comfortable sitting, , once you're sitting, hike one leg and hip back a "step". Then hike the other leg and hip back a "step" to match the first. See how that feels different? See how that rests the weight of your body on the bottom of your hips?



Once your legs and hips are in place, take a slow breath in and feel your body growing a little taller. (See our notes on Elongation of the Spine.)

As you breathe out, stay tall in your body but feel your weight dropping down into your hips and into the floor.

You are now sitting upright.

Modifications

If your hamstrings are tight or if you have a "bad back", prop your knees up by putting a cushion under your thighs. This takes strain off your lower back and hamstrings, while allowing you to let go of your body weight and sit comfortably.



Common Errors

Allowing the feet to roll to the side.

This makes your knees roll to the side as well which puts too much strain on your knees. Keep your knees together, pointing upward & relaxed.



Sitting Cross Legged

Start sitting well with your legs outstretched, as shown above. Once you are properly positioned, cross your legs or go into the lotus position. Also try "walking back" on your hips, one step, after you've crossed your legs.

Once you're in position, take a moment to be sure your spine is elongated. Then, breathing out, feel your weight sinking into the floor. You should still have most of your weight on your 'sits bones' rather than on your feet and ankles.



Modification If this is too uncomfortable, you might like to sit on a very firm, thick cushion, such as the type used for meditation. This will take some of the pressure off your knees and ankles, and puts you easily into a straighter posture.

Or try putting cushions under your thighs to support your hips until they are more comfortable with sitting positions.

- **Common Errors**
 - Leaning forward.
 - Hunching the back forward
- Your back and body should end up at a 90 degree angle to the floor.

Sitting on Knees

Have your heels underneath the bottom bones of your hips. (See 'Finding Your Sits Bones' above.)

Let your arms fall in line with the flat sides of your hips. This will make you more or less straight without your having to work hard at it.



Elongate your spine Once you are properly in position, imagine your spine is growing, the vertebrae separating a little, so that you feel a little taller - but not so much that you're working hard at it. (See our notes on the Elongation of the Spine.)

Now you're body is flowing straight up from the floor, at a 90 degree angle to the floor. You're in a good starting position now for postures like Bust Expansion and Back Bends.

If you like, you can now bring your hands to rest in front of you.

Modifications This position is difficult for many people. Knees injuries, arthritic toes and circulation problems can all make sitting this way very uncomfortable. You might like to try sitting on a cushion at first, or putting a pillow under your thighs. This can also be combined with leaning your weight forward, and over time encouraging your weight to fall more and more directly onto your feet.