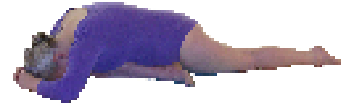


# Sleeping Pigeon

Level 5 Difficulty

Here's a pose that thoroughly opens your hips, loosening your groin ligaments and releasing your lower back and sacrum. It might feel awkward at first and may challenge your ability to bend forward, but if you can get comfortable in it, you'll love the way it brings you to a slower, calmer frame of mind. If this pose is still difficult for you, you might like to start with the simpler *Baby Pigeon*. People with round bodies and women in the first half of pregnancy can still gain lots of benefit from this pose by taking tips in the 'modifications' section below.



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

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

**Compensating Pose:** Resting Sage

**Combines Well with:** 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:** Forward Bend

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

**Best Breathing Theme Matches:** 1, 2, 3, 4, 6b, 7b, 15a, 15, 15b, 16a, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 22b

**Good for These Practice Goals:** General flexibility and also flexibility specifically of: Hip Rotators, Upper Back, Upper Chest, Spine, Middle Back, Lower Back, Sacrum, Outer Hips, Glutes, Groin, Inner Thigh, Hamstrings, Quads, Knees, Ankles, Feet; Sports in general and specifically: Running, Biking, Swimming, Martial Arts; General Fitness; General Yoga Practice; Better Sleep; Improving Personal Posture; Clearing Cleansing & Energizing of the Root, Belly, Solar Plexus & Heart Chakras; Chanting from the Root, Belly or Solar Plexus

**Recommended for These Health Conditions:** Arthritis in spine; chronic injury of hip, lower back or shoulders; pneumonia; bronchitis; asthma; lung removed; menopause & pre-menopause; menstruating (having your period) at this moment; IBS; sciatica; scoliosis; spondylitis; sleeping difficulties; hyperactivity; attention deficit; mind racing; pronation of feet & or hips.

**Avoid Under these Health Conditions:** Arthritis in hips; osteoporosis in knees or hips; diverticulitis, femoral, hiatal or umbilical hernia; fresh hip injury or surgery in hip, lower back or knee; pins in upper, middle or lower back; pins in knee or ankle region; high blood pressure (untreated); pregnancy - last half; prolapsed intestines or uterus.

**Note** *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.

**Try learning Baby Pigeon and Pigeon first.** This will help you learn the basic movements and will prepare your body to be able to do this pose. If Pigeon is still difficult for you, you might not be ready for this pose, in which case, Baby Pigeon is a good substitute. If Baby Pigeon is difficult, you can still practice other hip opener poses and forward bends until your body is more limber.

### Start by going into Pigeon

- 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.  
Place a hand on either side of that knee.

2.



**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.

the top of your foot so that they make more complete contact with the floor.

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; plus also various Lunges like Spider 1 and the basic Lunge pose in order to make this pose more possible for you.

1.



3.



## Sleeping Pigeon

Level 5 Difficulty

### Next



Right now you are probably leaning more on your right hip than on your left. 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.



**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



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.

**Optional 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

## Advanced Acquisition of Pigeon

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 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.

**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 in the Pigeon and are 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.

## Next Step – Sleeping Pigeon

From Pigeon, slide directly into Sleeping Pigeon. This is done in much the same way as you would go into Child Pose:



- Stretch your body forward, along your thigh.
- Lower your body down to rest on your thigh. Your sternum, (the middle of your chest), should be resting on your knee or thigh.

**Key** On a good day, (when you are fully able to be in the pose), your knee, sternum, belly button and back leg will be lined up with each other.



**Once you are in place, the challenge is to fully let your weight drop.**

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

## Optional Extension



Once you have held the Sleeping Pigeon in this way for your full length of time you can go into the Extension before you release the pose.

- Reach your arms forward, holding your hands in prayer position, so that your arms and hands continue the straight line formed by your back leg and spine.
- Feel the stretch along your shoulder sockets, along your arms and into your hands.

### Keys for the Optional Extension

\* Don't lift your body at all. The movement is only in the arms.

\* Elbows need to be straight – do not drop them to the floor.

## You Will Feel The Sleeping Pigeon In

- Your groin ligaments of one leg
- Your hip rotators, (your hips sockets)
- Your glutes
- Your lower back (sacrum)
- Possibly your spine, shoulders and knee.

**Release** by reversing your steps, ending up in Resting Sage, where you wait until your muscles have fully let go of the stretch.

**Repeat on the other leg.**

**Do 2 – 3 times to each side.**





**Modifications**

Most modifications for Pigeon and Sleeping Pigeon focus on reducing the weight you're placing on your groin.

For the Pigeon part, 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.



Most modifications for Sleeping Pigeon focus on reducing the distance you need to bend forward. In that way, you ease the stretch in your lower back and glutes. For example, you can:



Make a 'nest' for your head with your hands.



Put a small, firm cushion under your head.



Or bend well forward, but continue to hold yourself slightly upright using your hands.

**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 onto your leg.

**The Optional 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.



Preparing to move into Sleeping Pigeon – breathe in, elongating your spine.



Breathe out – stretching your body forward and down.



Still breathing out – settle into place.

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Level 5 Difficulty

### The Hold

Each breath in – feel your body opening up, especially noticing the sides and back of your chest opening.

Each breath out – feel the weight in your body sinking more and more onto your leg, your shoulders dropping, your sacrum stretching and letting go, your hips sinking.



**Release** the pose by breathing in and sitting up.  
Breathe out as you settle into Resting Sage.

Breathe in and out as your muscles release the Baby Pigeon and before you continue on to the other leg.

### Optional Extension

Breathe in – moving into the extension

Breathe out – allowing your weight to sink.

Each breath in – reach your arms farther, but without lifting your body.

Each breath out – feel your body sinking, but don't allow your arms to drop.



## Great Combinations

Pigeon, Sleeping Pigeon, then optional Seated Twist. 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.



