

## Spider 3

Level 2 Difficulty

*Spider 3* – a great abdominals builder! It's a strong hamstring stretch, great for hip rotators, and rebuilds and strengthens your lower back, even if your lower back is very delicate. It aligns hips and lower body correctly. It stretches deeply under the shoulder blades, in a way that few poses can. *Spider 3* combines *Spider 1* and *Spider 2* for a combination that remedies many lower back and hip issues. Some people find it a little awkward to hold on to their foot in this pose. You'll find some of the tips here helpful for that.

### Main Benefits:

Loosens & strengthens lower back, inner thighs, hip rotators & shoulders.

**Body Parts Used by This Posture:** Lower Back, Sacrum, Hamstring, Abdominals, Shoulders (Trapezius), Fingers, Wrists, Upper Back, Spine, Biceps

**Combines Well with:** Hip Opener, Leg Overs

**Compensating Pose:** Leg Fold 1

**Warms You Up for / Builds You Up for:** Hamstring Stretches like Wood Chopper, Chest Expansion 2, Chest Expansion – Leg Extensions, Leg Clasp, Leg Stretch, Back Stretch & Leg Overs; Lunges, Shoulder Stand, Plow, Balancing Poses, Hip Openers, Twists, Balancing Poses

**Build Up to with:** Abdominal Lifts 1, Abdominal Lifts 2, Jumping Frog, Wood Chopper 1, Back Stretch, Leg Stretch, Leg Clasp, Leg Over 1, Leg Fold 2, Reclining Butterfly, Butterfly, Butterfly Extension, Happy Baby, Dead Bug, Back Stretch, Cat 1, Child Pose, Child Pose - Modified, Child Pose - with Bust Expansion, Moon Salutation 1, Rock & Rolls, Sitting Wide Angle Pose, Standing Wide Angle, Sun Salutations

**Good for These Practice Goals:** Morning yoga, Seniors yoga; Better breathing; Core strengthening; Improving personal posture; Flexibility & Strength in Neck, Shoulders, Upper Back, Trapezius, Hands, Wrists, Lower Arm, Upper Body, Spine, Middle Back, Lower Back, Sacrum, Glutes, Hip Rotators, Inner Thigh, Hamstrings, Ankles, Feet; Sports warm up & practice including running, biking, swimming, martial arts; Chakra clearing cleansing & energizing in the root, belly, solar plexus, heart; chanting & meditation warm up.



**Best Breathing Theme:** Works very well with almost all Breathing

Themes.

**Best for Flexibility or Strength:** Both flexibility & strength

**Best if:** Static (Pose is held rather than kept in motion.)

**Traditional Pose Type:** Forward Bend, Lunge

**Energy Center Used:** Root and Belly

**Recommended for These Health Conditions:** carpal tunnel syndrome, frozen shoulders, allergies, asthma, weak bladder, bronchitis, compressed disc in lower back, cystosis, excessive bloating, chronic hip injury, chronic lower back injury, IBS, lung removed, menopause & pre-menopause, menstruating (having your period) at this moment, migraines & headaches, both chronic and at the moment of doing your routine, pneumonia, pregnancy - first half, restless legs, sciatica, scoliosis, spondylitis, sleeping difficulties, pronation of feet & or hips

**Avoid Under these Health Conditions:** arthritis in fingers, knees, toes; osteoporosis in lower back, hips, knees, toes, spine, neck; compressed disc in upper neck, upper shoulders, middle back, lower back; diverticulitis; femoral; hiatal or umbilical hernia; fresh injury or surgery of hip, knee, lower back; untreated high blood pressure; pins in upper, middle or lower back; pins in knee or ankle region; pregnancy - last half; prolapsed intestines or uterus; fresh whiplash

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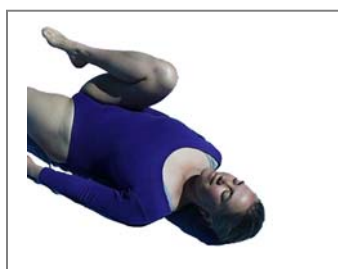
Level 2

### Basic Instruction

Try learning *Spider 1* and *Spider 2* first. *Spider 3* is simply a combination of both.

### Start as in *Spider 1*

lying on your back, legs together, arms by your sides



#### Next

Bring one knee up toward your chest



#### Next

Reach down and hold on to the tops of your toes. Do this with the arm that corresponds to the leg. **Arm goes inside the leg.**



#### Next

**Keeping your knee close to your chest**, tug your foot in a motion down the line of the arm toward your shoulder, so that the foot and the knee are coming closer to your head.



### You Will Feel This In

Your inner thigh & in your lower back

#### Key

Your knee stays bent and your heel stays close to your body. The motion is like a lunge.

**Hold for 6** breaths or until you feel you can go no deeper into the stretch, even with breathing out.

**Then go on to the next step – *Spider 2***



#### Detail

Wrap your fingers over the tops of your feet and secure them over the ball of the foot.

#### Key

Your arms go *inside* the leg. This will turn the knee and leg out slightly but do not allow the leg to wander out to the side any more than is necessary.

By having the arm inside the leg, you free the hip rotators enough to put the stretch deep into the hip, lower back and sacrum.

Step 2 – Spider 2

5. On to Spider 2

- Without letting go of your toes
- Straighten your leg
- Then sit up to meet it, (bringing your nose toward your thigh). Let your non stretching leg and its arm rest loosely on the floor.

You Will Feel This In Your

- Hamstrings
- Lower back
- Abdominals
- Upper Back (slightly)



6. Hold Spider 2 for 2 – 4 breaths or until your abdominals begin to tire.

With each breath in, elongate your spine (but don't lose the height you've gained in your pose)

With each breath out, sit up more and more, bringing your upper body closer to your leg.

**Tip** Breathe out strongly. This will help you sit up **Tip** Let your non-stretching side relax, hanging loosely against the floor.

Release

Lower your leg and arm to the floor. Wait while your body lets go of the pose

Switch Legs

Repeat until you've done 2 – 3 repetitions on each side alternating sides.



**Key** Allow the knee and leg to come as straight back toward the head as in a Lunge. To get the full benefits of the pose, it's essential to keep the knee well bent not to allow the leg to 'open' (not to allow it to straighten up)

**Tip** Once your leg is in place upright, the action is *sitting up* to meet the leg, as opposed to drawing the leg closer to your head.

**Key** Hold on to your foot with the corresponding hand, (left hand for left leg, right hand for right leg). Also, do not cross the other one over to assist; this will warp your alignment and close off your breathing.



**Modifications**

If you can't hold onto your toes, it's OK to hold onto your ankle or your leg. Try not to hold the foot from the instep or from the outer edges. If your fingers keep slipping or if you have arthritis in your fingers or toes, try lacing your fingers in between your toes. As a final option, a yoga strap can work, when wrapped across the middle of the foot.



**Lacing fingers in among your toes might help your grip.**

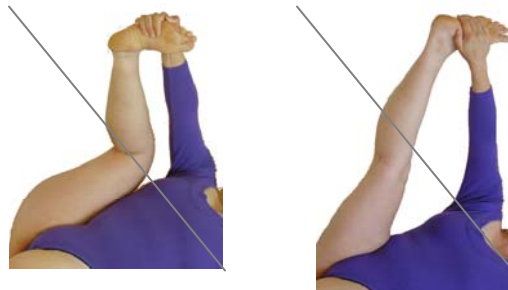


A yoga strap can be an option to help you reach your foot while keeping your alignment. In which case, lace it across the middle of the foot, just below the ball.



**Modification:** If you can't hold onto your toes, it's OK to hold onto your ankle or your leg, although not ideal.

**Try not to hold the foot from the instep or from the outer edges.** This will tend to twist the hip and the ankle, increasing your chance of injury.



**Safety Tip for people with sensitive lower backs** In your case, it's advisable not to straighten the leg completely, but to keep it slightly bent. Even better if you hold on to your leg and not your toes.



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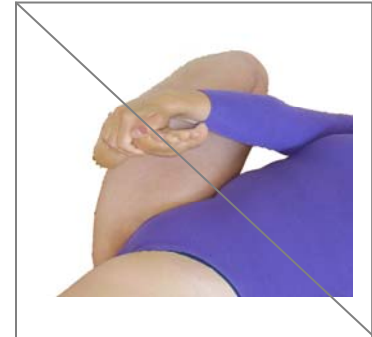
### Common Errors



Several errors are shown here, including twisting the foot, having the arm inside the leg and stretching the leg upward a little rather than having it fully bent. These are rotating the leg outward, reducing the benefits of the stretch and increasing the risk of injury. Here Corinne is also sitting up while doing the stretch, which reduces the flexing in the lower back and hip.

Do not allow your leg to wander away from the body, as shown in the photos to the left and to the right. Keep the knee as close to the body as you can without strain. When the knee swings out, you lose much of the stretch and risk injuring your knee & hip. Allowing the knee to wander outward often goes with the error of twisting your ankle to reach the toes.

Do not twist your foot in order to hold on to it. This can strain your ankles and hips. This often happens when people grip the outside or inside edge of their foot, rather than the top. If you can't hold your toes or the ball of the foot, try holding on to your leg instead.



Try not start with your hand and arm outside of the leg. This will make it difficult to straighten your leg and will strain your hip rotators and shoulder. You need to keep your arm on the inside. This will also allow you to make a smooth transition between *Spider 1* to *Spider 2*.

Do not stretch your leg upward during *Spider 1*. (Stretching upward is what you'll be doing in *Spider 2*.) Keep your knee well bent and your heel close to the body.

Do not sit up while doing Spider 1, (save that for *Spider 2*). Sitting up does not allow the hip and lower back muscles to relax enough to go deeply into the lunging movement.

### Discovery Exercises

- Experiment with having your hand holding on to your foot in different places, such as your toes, the outside of your foot and the inside of your foot. Notice how this changes the alignment in the hip and knee and how it tends to move the leg away from or toward the center line of the body. (Do this gently and not to any great extent. Stop before anything in your hip or knee hurts.)
- Experiment with having your knee tucked close to your body, and then have it swing out away from the body. (Do this gently and not to any great extent. Stop before anything in your hip or knee hurts.) Notice how that changes the stretch. To do *Spider 1* correctly, have your leg & knee tucked closely to your body.

**Breathing**



**Start**

Breathe in

Breathe out, letting your weight settle & body relax.

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Breathe in

Breathe out bringing your knee up toward your chest & holding on to your foot.

Breathe in and out as you firm your grip and settle into place



**Optional hold for 2 – 6** breaths or to the limit of your ability to stretch.

(Breathing in, & out see if the stretch willingly increases, without forcing it.)



Breathe in, sitting up, elongating your spine.

Breathe out, sitting up farther.

**Hold for 2 – 4 breaths** or until your abdominals begin to tire.

With each breath in, elongate your spine (but don't lose the height you've gained in your pose)

With each breath out, sit up more and more, bringing your upper body closer to your leg.

**Release**  
Breathe in,  
Breathe out, lowering leg and arm to the floor.

Wait while the tension in the muscles dissolves.

**Switch**, do other side.

**Repeat 3 times each side**

**Yellow Level Breathing**

**Start** by relaxing into your starting position.

Breathe in, bringing up your knee  
Pause your breath while you hold on to your foot or your leg

Breathe out, tugging the knee closer to your upper body

Pause your breathing and your movements

**Then, for the repetitions:**

1. Breathe in, stretching your leg upward.
2. Pause your breathing and your movements
3. Breathe out, sitting up to you're your leg.
4. Pause your breathing and your movements.
5. Breathe in, elongating your spine
6. Pause your breathing and your movements
7. Breathe out, lowering your leg to the *Spider 1*, folded position.

**Repeat** steps 1 – 7 for several breaths. 5 repetitions is ideal.

## Spider 2

Level 2

### Great Combinations Using Spider 1

**Spider 1**, held for several breaths, then **Hip Opener** for several breaths, returning to Spider 1 position, then go into **Spider 2** for several breaths. **Option:** Go from Spider 2 into **Leg Over 2**. Hold Leg Over 2 for several breaths before returning to the Spider 1 position and then releasing the pose. **Switch Sides. Repeat.** This is even better than the above combination for rebuilding the lower back, relieving sciatic pain, improving the flexibility of the hip rotators while supplying a great hamstring stretch. It also releases the psoas and stretches out the trapezius in the shoulders. However, it is more demanding, being a level 5 in difficulty, and, as a remedial combination, it requires that you've restored your lower back and sciatic somewhat with the Spider 1 & 2 combination first.



Hold each position until you reach the limit of your ability to stretch, feeling your body letting go and relaxing more and more into the stretch with each breath out (*Red Level Breathing Theme*), or use *Yellow* or *Green Level Breathing Themes* for great results also.