

Full Triangle (Triangle 2)

Level 4 Difficulty

A key pose that prepares you for many advanced postures, the Triangle stretches the obliques (the sides of your chest), as well as the outer hips and it loosens and strengthens the neck and shoulders. Once mastered, it also becomes the starting position for poses like Modified Side Stretch and Standing Wide Angle as well as for many Warrior poses. It makes a great addition to your Breathing Warm Up, substituting nicely for the slightly more difficult Simple Side Bend. We use it often in the Serenity Yoga program to learn to pace your breathing.



Great with Breathing Theme 5 for a strong workout, and with *Yellow Level Breathing Themes* to train pacing the breath. Use *Red Level Breathing Themes* when mastering the pose.

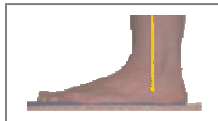
Try Learning First:

- *Side Stretch Basics*
 - *Triangle Discovery*
- and then
- *Triangle 1*

Basics

Start

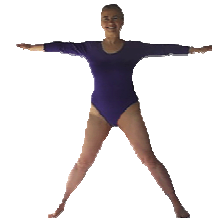
- Standing
- Feet open to just past shoulder width apart
- Feet pointing outward at 45 degrees.
- Pelvic Tilt in Place



Tip Once your pelvic tilt is in place, your weight should be resting just forward of each heel.

Next

Lift your arms to the sides, to shoulder height. Take a breath to let the weight in your shoulders drop, even while you hold this position, so that you're not holding them up or holding them tightly.



Tip Provide a little 'traction' in your arms by reaching each arm very slightly for its corresponding wall. This keeps your arms from being loose and noodle like, allowing you to keep your alignment during the pose. It also becomes more graceful.

Next

Rotating from your hips, lower your left arm toward your left leg. Your right arm will rotate up toward the ceiling.

Tip Rotate from the hip, not from the shoulder. This keeps your alignment and puts the stretch where you need it, in the obliques and outer hip, and gives you more extension. You'll go farther into the pose, with less injury.

Tip Be sure to keep your hips pointing forward. Do not twist your hips in hopes of sinking down farther.





Tip Many people bend from the shoulders while sinking down. This puts your body out of alignment. Think of your body as a windmill or an air plane propeller, rotating at the belly button, as a unified piece.

Next

Once you have rotated as far as you can comfortably go, lower your bottom arm to hold on to your leg.

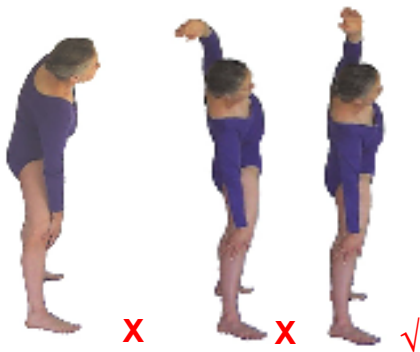
Last Step

With your lower arm in position, reach your upper arm up and over your head, reaching for the opposite wall. Turn your palm toward the floor. You need your arm to be in line with your ear and the side of your head, not forward of your head, so only bring your arm up and over to the extent that you can keep this alignment. For some people, this isn't very far and the arm remains pointing toward the ceiling. That's OK. The benefits come from working to your limit, to from achieving extremes.



Tip Do not bend your elbow. Instead, *reach* your arm up and over your ear.

Tip The more you reach your upper arm, the stronger the stretch in the sides of your chest (your obliques) and in your outer hip. By changing how strongly you are reaching your arm, you can change how difficult or how gentle the workout is for your upper body.



Safety Tip It is important that you don't bend forward or backward and your shoulders don't drop or twist. If you twist or drop out of alignment, the stretch will shift and begin to strain your lower back.

See our notes on **Side Stretch Basics**, and **Triangle Discovery** to master moving directly to the side.

Holding the Pose

- With each breath in reach your arm more and more toward the wall (or ceiling).
- With each breath out see if your body will bend any more from the hip, going deeper and deeper into the stretch. Your body and shoulders follow your hips down, as a single unit.

As you go deeper, you can bend your lower elbow (the one holding on to your leg) or slide that arm farther and farther down your leg.



To Release**Reverse your movements, returning upright.**

This is where most people makes mistakes and lose their alignment. Think of it in these steps, starting from being in your extreme position:



Raise your upper arm to point toward the ceiling, so that it is 'square' or at 90 degrees to the body, pointing away from your body.



Your lower arm now lets go of your leg. Straighten the lower arm so it's now in line with the upper arm.

Now, rotate your body from the hip, bringing you back upright. Your arms will be rotating like a propeller or like a windmill.

Safety Tip It's at this point that most people let their alignment slip. Make sure you do not bend forward when you're returning upright. That puts strain on your back. If you're doing it right, you'll feel the muscles at the sides of your chest and your outer hip working hard to return you upright.

Repeat for the Other Side

Do 2 – 3 Repetitions of each side, alternating sides.

Encouragement

Even if you don't get great extension in the pose, the benefits come from doing the pose to the limit of your ability. It is by finding the limit of our ability to stretch and coaxing it forward with the breath that we achieve more flexibility and strength.

Modifications

- See *Triangle 1* or *Triangle Discovery Pose* for easier versions that bring many of the same benefits. These will also train you to do the sideways movement well without bending or twisting.
- Try practicing against a wall to train your alignment.
 - In your starting position, have your heels, hips, shoulder blades and the back of your head touching the wall.
 - As you go into the pose and hold it, your heels, hips, shoulder blades and the back of your head should remain in touch with the wall. Do not go so deeply into the pose that you lose contact between these parts of your body and the wall. This is especially important as you reach your extreme position and as you release the pose.

Breathing

Standing in your opening position



Breathe in, lifting your arms to shoulder height.



Breathe in, elongating your spine with your upper arm over your head.



Breathe out, allowing your shoulders to sink, feeling your weight sink into your feet and into the floor.

Breathing out, rotating into the pose

Holding the Pose



Breathe in extending your upper arm farther, to strengthen the stretch in your side.

Breathe out, sinking your upper body more and more, sinking from the hip.

Hold for 3 – 6 breaths

or (for maximum flexibility) until you reach the limit of your ability to stretch more deeply

or (for maximum strengthening in the thighs and obliques) until your legs or sides of your chest begin to tire from the pose. Give yourself time to be able to release the pose with control.

Release

Breathing in, lifting your upper arm and letting go of your leg.



Breathing out feeling your shoulders drop their tension and your weight sink into your feet and into the ground.



Still breathing in rotating your body and arms upright.

Breathing for Yellow Level: Pacing your Breath.

For Yellow Level we don't hold the pose to go deeper, we lightly stretch, release and re-stretch in rhythm with our breathing. This works best once you have mastered the basic movements. For Yellow Level Breathing, **once you are in the full extension of the pose**:

- Breathing in lifting only your upper arm toward the ceiling.
- Hold your breath and the movement
- Breathing out reaching your arm over your head while sinking more deeply into the pose.
- Pause your breathing and your movement.
- Repeat 5 – 10 times. Notice that each breath can take you deeper and deeper into the pose.

Common Errors

- Weight shifting toward either foot. It should be resting just forward of each heel and evenly distributed between both feet.
- Rotating the hips while in the pose. Be sure to keep your hips pointing forward.
- Not opening the feet to 45 degrees. Failing to line your feet up correctly will throw off your hip alignment and twist you out of the pose.
- Bending at the waist while sinking down. Again, this will throw your hips out of alignment and put strain on the lower back.
- Bending the elbow. This reduces the benefits to the neck and shoulders and obliques.
- Dropping the upper arm forward. This starts the whole body twisting and throws off your alignment throughout your shoulders, back and hips, eventually leading to back strain. People usually make this mistake when they get ambitious about getting lots of extension in the upper body and arms and trying sinking the arm too far down over their heads.
- Bending forward while in the pose. This is usually from going too deeply into the pose or from lining up your body incorrectly to begin with. Sometimes, we are just too ambitious and we want to get the additional depth that comes from bending forward. This throws the pose out of alignment and strains the back.
- Losing alignment when releasing the pose. This is the most common moment for people to strain themselves with this pose. Avoid twisting out of alignment by keeping your hips pointing forward and your arms in line with the sides of your body as you come up.
- Bending one knee. It's common for people to do this because it seems to allow you to stretch farther. However, it robs you of the stretch and moves you out of alignment, eventually straining your lower back.

Symptoms and Remedies**Hips twisting**

- You're in the pose too deeply or haven't lined yourself up properly to begin with.

Arm sinking forward of your head

- You're trying to get more extension in your arms than you're ready for. Try lifting the upper arm more toward the ceiling.
- You could simply be bending your elbow. Try being sure it's straight.

You're Feeling the Pose in Your Lower Back

- You're twisting at your shoulders. Your notice which shoulder has drifted forward and rotate your body until it is lined up with your side.

Benefits	Releases neck, shoulders and hips and inner thighs, while loosening the breathing muscles in the chest.
Time to Do	3 – 5 minutes
Best Breathing Themes	Goes well with Breathing Themes that match movement with breathing or that pace the breath, like Yellow Level Themes and Blue Level Breathing Themes; <i>Breathing Theme 11</i> for example. Also works well with <i>Breathing Theme 5, Extending with the Breath</i> , for a strong workout that builds strength.
Body Parts Used by This Posture	Neck, Shoulders, Biceps, Obliques, Outer Hips, Inner Thigh
Warm Up with any of	Simple Side Bend
Build Up to this Pose with	Triangle 1, Triangle Discovery, Simple Side Bend, Standing Wide Angle with Twist, Twisted Cobra, Sitting Wide Angle with Twist, Twist 1, Twist 2
Builds You Up for	Better Breathing, Modified Side Stretch 1, Modified Side Stretch 2, Twisted Side Stretch, Warrior Poses, Moon Salutations, Twist 1, Twist 2, Cobra with Twist, Standing Wide Angle with Twist
Alternative (Substitute) Pose(s)	Triangle 1, Triangle Discovery, Simple Side Bend
Try Learning First	Side Stretch Basics, Triangle Discovery, Triangle 1
Energy Center Stimulated by This Pose	Solar Plexus, Heart, Throat