

# Triangle 1

# Level 3 Difficulty

A pose that prepares you for many advanced postures, including the essential Full Triangle (Triangle 2), Triangle 1 stretches the obliques (the sides of your chest), as well as the outer hips and it loosens and strengthens the neck and shoulders. Its key purpose in *Serenity Yoga* is as a tool to help your mastery of the sideways movement of Triangle poses, building up the strength in your obliques in order to make the acquisition and release of the *Full Triangle* possible. While you're becoming comfortable with it, *Triangle 1* makes a great addition to your Breathing Warm Up, substituting nicely for the slightly more difficult Simple Side Bend or the Full Triangle. It can be used in your *Serenity Yoga* program to help 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:

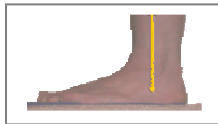
- *Triangle Discovery*

With close attention on mastering the sideways movement.

### 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.

Take a breath to let the weight in your shoulders drop, feeling the weight in your whole body sink down into your feet and into the floor.

#### Next

Breathing out, slide your left arm down the side of your left leg. Hold on to your leg.



**Safety Tip** Be sure to slide your arm directly down the side of your leg, not slipping toward the front or back. Going directly to the side will put the stretch in your side, where we need it, and will avoid straining your lower back. To learn how this detail feels, practice *Triangle Discovery*.

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

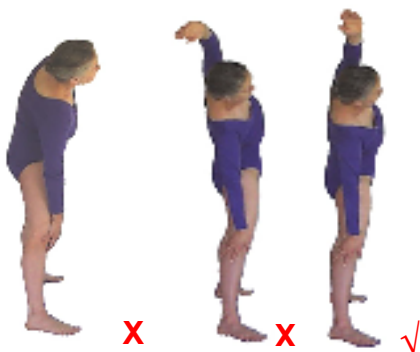
**Next**

With your lower arm in position, reach your upper arm up and over your head, reaching for the opposite wall. 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. Then lower it to your side.



Your lower arm now lets go of your leg. Slowing return upright, with your lower arm retracing its movement up the side of your leg.

**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 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 Discovery Pose* for an easier version that brings some of the same benefits. This 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**



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



Breathe in, lifting your other arm toward the ceiling.



Breathing out, reach your upper arm over your head.

**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.



Breathe out, returning your upper arm to its side



Breathing in as you retrace your movements to become upright.



Breathing out as your shoulders sink and the weight in your body drops into your feet.

**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, 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.

**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.

<b>Benefits</b>	Releases neck, shoulders and hips and inner thighs, while loosening the breathing muscles in the chest.
<b>Time to Do</b>	3 – 5 minutes
<b>Best Breathing Themes</b>	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.
<b>Body Parts Used by This Posture</b>	Neck, Shoulders, Biceps, Obliques, Outer Hips, Inner Thigh
<b>Warm Up with any of</b>	Simple Side Bend
<b>Build Up to this Pose with</b>	Triangle Discovery, Simple Side Bend, Twist 1, Seated Wide Angle with Twist
<b>Builds You Up for</b>	Better Breathing, Triangle 2 (Full Triangle), Modified Side Stretch 1, Modified Side Stretch 2, Twisted Side Stretch, Warrior Poses, Twist 1, Twist 2, Cobra with Twist, Standing Wide Angle with Twist, Moon Salutations,
<b>Alternative (Substitute) Pose(s)</b>	Triangle Discovery, Simple Side Bend
<b>Energy Center Stimulated by This Pose</b>	Solar Plexus, Heart, Throat