

Benefits: Strengthens obliques, (muscles at the sides of your body). Loosens outer hips. Strengthens and loosens breathing muscles in chest, (improves breathing). Helps you understand correct alignment for side stretches.

Time to Do: 1 – 3 minutes

Body Parts Used by This Posture: Muscles at the sides of your chest and at the sides of your hips. Inner thighs, a little.

Warms You Up for: Any side stretches.

Builds you up for: All side stretches. It's good to understand this pose before learning any side stretches. It will help you know how to keep your alignment when you're in those poses.

Energy Center Used: Belly and Solar Plexus

One of the most difficult things about doing side stretches, (like the Triangle), is getting your body to stretching *directly* to the side, not twisting while you do the stretch. If you twist while doing a side stretch, you will strain your lower back, and you won't get the same benefits to your sides. The Triangle Primer helps you explore the way side stretches will feel when they're done correctly. As you become comfortable with the movements and feel confident you understand the sideways movement, you can then apply what you know to poses like the Triangle, the Twisted Triangle and the Side Stretch.

For audio instructions and to practice this pose along with Corinne, go to <http://www.audiyoga.com/SOUND/TriangleDiscovery.mp3>

Tip Most people twist out of alignment as they are reaching their limit – because you can seem to get more extension that way. You do get more extension, but at the expense of your lower back. So, notice, as you're reaching your limit, if the stretch is still in the side muscles and outer hips only, or if you're starting to feel pressure in your lower back.

1. Start

- Standing with your legs slightly more than shoulder width apart
- Let your arms hang loosely by your side, in line with the side of your hip. If you're wearing gym slacks with a seam down the outside, have your arms in line with the seam.



Tips for good alignment

- Notice where your weight falls on your feet. See that your weight falls in the center of each foot and is even front to back, left to right. See that you have the same amount of weight on each foot.
- Do a slight pelvic tilt. This will straighten your back without straining. (See notes on the Pelvic Tilt, at www.audioyoga.com. Go to the *Posture* menu, and scroll down to *Posture Basics and Starting Positions*.)

**2. Slide your arm down the side of your leg.**

Slide your arm down the side of your leg. It's important that you slide directly to the side. If you're wearing seamed slacks, follow your seam downward.

As you do this, your upper arm should rest loosely and comfortably on your upper side. There should be no shifting back and forth of this upper arm while you do the slide.

If done well, you might feel this in the side of your chest, in the waist and in the outer hip.

If you feel it in your lower back, it means you've twisted. Most likely your upper shoulder has dropped forward.

If you feel it in your groin and in your abdominals as well, it means you've twisted your upper shoulder backward.

In either case, you need to bring that shoulder back into alignment by turning your upper body slightly. You'll know you've turned enough when you no longer feel the stretch in your lower back.

To Release the Pose

Reverse your movements. Slide your body upright, allowing your hand to retrace its path up your leg. **When you do this well, you will feel your obliques, the muscles in the sides of your body, working hard to lift you upright.**

At this point, many people again find themselves twisting, or tempted to twist. This is because it can feel easier to lift yourself up using your back muscles or your abdominals rather than use the muscles in the sides of your body.

Repeat on the Other Side

Alternate sides until you've done this three times on each side.

See if you can go farther down with each repetition – but don't do this at the expense of your alignment. ☺

Breathing

Side Stretches go best when you go into them while breathing out. You breathe in as you release them



Breathe
in & out settling
into place



Breathe out



Breathe in



Breathe out

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Remember, this is a Discovery Exercise. It's a chance to discover your body, to feel how a pose works, to notice what muscles engage when you do the pose. It's also a chance to play with the movements so that you can get the feel for what it's like to do the pose correctly and what it feels like when you're doing it incorrectly.

Discovery 2

I'm going to have you experiment with what it feels like to do the pose incorrectly, so that you'll better understand what it feels like to do it well. However, if you are otherwise healthy, this Discovery Exercise should be safe to try, as long as you do it mildly.

1. Start by going into the Triangle Primer as before:



Once you are in the pose, continue to breathe in and out while you notice which muscles are working.

Now we're going to experiment with the placement of your lower hand.

2. Try placing your lower hand in front, on your knee.

Notice how this changes which muscles are working. You'll probably notice it in your lower back. This is how it feels when you've twisted out of alignment by turning your shoulder to the front.



Now correct your alignment, noticing once again how it feels to have your hand and body properly lined up.



3. Try placing your lower hand on the back of your knee.

Notice how this changes which muscles are working. You'll probably notice it in your lower back *and* in your groin in the front. This is how it feels when you've twisted out of alignment by turning your shoulder toward the back.



Now correct your alignment, noticing once again how it feels to have your hand and body properly lined up.

Release the pose, slide your body upright, allowing your hand to retrace its path up your leg, noticing the muscles on the sides of your body working to bring you upright.