

Twist 1

Level 1 / Posture 54

Benefits:

Loosens & strengthens lower back, shoulders, neck, sides of chest.

Time to Do: 3 minutes

Body Parts Used by This Posture: Lower back, shoulders, neck, sides of chest.

Build Up to This Posture with : Leg Over, Elbow to Knee 2, Neck Stretch 1 & 2

This Posture Builds You Up for: Twist 2, 3; Elbow to Knee 2, 3; Leg Over; Triangle, Cobra Extension; Rishi's Posture 1, 2, 3

Energy Center Used: Belly, Solar Plexus

Who Should Not Do This Pose Pregnant women – it compresses the belly too much. However, you'll hardly need the warning, since there's not much chance you'll want to do it after the fourth month!



Here's one of the few yoga poses that gives you a good release in the lower back by gently twisting. It can be instant relief for back strain! I use it a lot as an office break.

Difference from Twist 2 & 3

Twist 1 is simpler than Twist 2 & 3 and is less demanding. It's less pretzel like, so it's easier to understand how to do it. It also doesn't require flexibility or slenderness in the legs. For these reasons it's popular with seniors and with yogis with round bodies. ✍

Yoga Snack

A wonderful, quick office break – which you can do seated in a chair, holding on to the back of the chair as you twist. It's a nice in the park or under a tree at lunch time. You can do this in the car – but wait until you're at a red light! And, it's another great TV watching pose!

Basic Instruction



Start

sitting, legs together, arms by your sides.

Place your right hand on the floor beside your hip.

Reach your other hand, your left hand, across your lap and gently hold onto your right thigh.

Pressing firmly on the floor push against the floor while twisting your body to the left as much as you can.

Tip Twist at the waist, not from the shoulder. Just let your shoulders naturally follow your body as it turns from the waste.



Finally also turn your head and look all the way to the left.

Tip Chase your left ear around and see if you can see it!

Hold for 2 breaths

Each time you breathe out, see if the twist will increase a little bit. Push gently against your thigh for leverage.

Release

Untwist. But don't remove your hands from their places.



Pause – feeling your muscles let go of the stretch.

Then twist again. See if you can go a little farther this time.

Pause. Repeat.

Do a total of 3 times. Then switch sides.

Do 3 times on the other side.

Details

Tip: Elongating Your Spine

Once you are in your starting position, take a moment to feel a little taller in your spine. Imagine your back, neck and head are beads on an elastic thread and someone has pulled very slightly on thread at the top of your head. This should not feel like strain or like working, but you should just feel a little taller. This is called *Elongating Your Spine*. It is an important part of all twisting poses, back bends and forward bends. It helps reduce injury and increases your ability to twist.



Safety Tip

Common Error – Twisting from the Shoulders

Twisting from the shoulders is a common mistake. This will not give you as much of a twist and will strain your lower back.

Discovery – What does it feel like to twist from the shoulders?

Experiment with twisting your shoulders but not your back – keep your body facing forward, but turn your head and shoulders only. See how this strains your back?

Now try twisting at the waist. Twist at the hips and then let your shoulders follow and then turn your neck to look all the way around – it's a three step process, bottom to top. See how this changes the stretch?

Tip In your starting position, when you place both hands on the floor on the left side of your body: start by seeing where your hands naturally come to rest. Don't force it.

Common Error - Slouching

You might not even notice yourself doing this, until you feel the difference!

Discovery

Sit in the starting position.

Now, before you begin, slouch your shoulders forward. Round your back a bit.



Then, try the twist. Turn at the hips, turn your shoulders and look all the way around.

How does your upper back feel? How does your neck feel? How much of a twist are you feeling in your lower back?

Return to the starting position. This time, before you begin, elongate your spine. That is, imagine that your back is growing slightly, as if you are getting a little taller. Then, keeping your spine elongated and your neck in line with your back, twist at the hips, turn your shoulder and look all the way around. How does your upper back feel now? How does your neck feel now? How has this changed the twist in your lower back? How much of a twist did you manage this time?

Breathing

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Start in the starting position
Breathe in & out a few times feeling your weight settle and your body relax.

Breathe in
Growing a little taller, elongating your spine, getting ready to do the stretch.



Breathe out, going into the twist.
Hold
Breathe in & out 2 times.
Feel your legs and hips sinking into the floor & letting go each time you breathe out.



Release
Breathe out, relaxing the twist & returning to the front.