

Benefits:

Loosens & strengthens lower back, inner thighs, hamstrings

Time to Do: 1 - 3 minutes

Body Parts Used by This Posture: Lower back, hamstrings, inner thighs

Build Up to This Posture with: Butterfly, Butterfly Prep. Pose 2, Butterfly Extension, Reclining Butterfly Elbow to Knee 2, Side to Sides, Leg Over, Back Stretch

This Posture Builds You Up for: Spider 2, Back Stretch, Standing Wide Angle Poses, other forward bends like Wood Chopper.

Combines Well with: Twisted Standing Wide Angle Pose.

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!



Start

1. Standing with legs slightly more than shoulder length apart, feet open at a 45 degree angle, (pointing slightly away from each other).



2. Be sure your weight rests just in front of each heel and is evenly distributed between both feet.

Tip The wider apart your legs are, the easier it will be to touch the ground, but it will be harder to do an added twist, (see Twisted Standing Wide Angle Pose). So, as you get to know the pose, adjust the space between your legs to make it harder or easier.



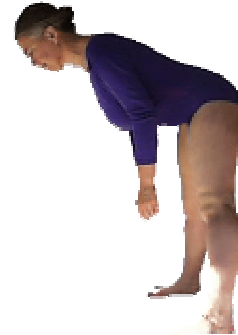
Before you begin, take a moment to **do a slight pelvic tilt**, rotating your hips so that you back flattens slightly. (See our notes on the Pelvic Tilt)

Also, elongate your spine - feel like your body is getting slightly taller. Keep this feeling the entire time you're doing the pose. This will give you greater flexibility as you bend forward and will protect your back.

3. **Fold forward, from the waste.** Keep your arms out to the side until you are about half way down. Then let them come forward so that they are directly below your shoulders. Stop when you have a good stretch that does not hurt.



Tip Fold forward like a door closing, keeping your neck and spine lined up with each other. Try not to hunch your back or drop your head.



Safety Tip If you feel burning in your lower back or behind your knees, (in your hamstrings) you've gone too far. Lift your body up until the discomfort goes away. This is now the limit of your stretch for today.

4. If you cannot yet reach the floor, bend your knees just enough to allow you to put your finger tips on the floor.

5. Distribute your weight evenly between your fingers / hands and your feet.

Hold the pose for 6 – 20 breaths or until you feel you have reached your limit.



Key Every time you breathe out, feel the weight in your upper body dropping down, bringing your hands more and more toward the floor. (Bend your elbows if you need to.) At the same time, notice your knees straightening more and more, your hips reaching toward the ceiling.

Release, by returning upright, retracing your movements. Wait until your body has completely relaxed from the stretch before you do it again.

Repeat, until you've done the pose three times.

See if you can go a little farther with each repetition. But not to the point of pain or burning.

Breathing

As with all forward bends, you go into this pose while breathing out. Breathe in as you release the pose.



Breathe in & out settling into place.

Breathe in, feeling yourself grow taller, elongating your spine.



Breathe out going into the pose



Breathe in & out while going more and more deeply into the pose.

Breathe in to come up.

Common Errors

Hunching over, bending the back.

Forward bends need to be done as if you're a door closing, hinged at the waist. Fold at the waist, with your neck and back staying lined up with each other, (straight), as you come closer and closer to your legs.

Rushing. Wait between repetitions. After you come up, notice your muscles letting go. Wait until they've completely let go of the stretch before you repeat the pose. Waiting lets them loosen and become fully flexible. This will make them ready to give you their best extension in the next round.