

Benefits:

Loosens & strengthens lower back, inner thighs, hamstrings, neck, shoulders, arms.

Time to Do: 3 minutes

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

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, Standing Wide Angle Pose.

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

Combines Well with: Standing Wide Angle Pose.

Energy Center Used: Belly, Solar Plexus, Throat

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 with Standing Wide Angle Pose

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.

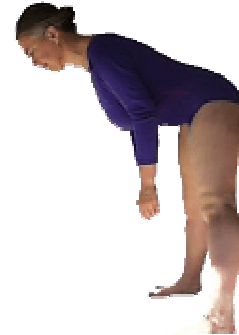
Tip The wider apart your legs are, the easier it will be to touch the ground, but it will be harder to do an added twist, (see Twisted Standing Wide Angle Pose). So, as you get to know the pose, adjust the space between your legs to make it harder or easier.



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.

Next – add the Twist

- Bring your right hand toward your left foot.
- If this is easy for you, hold on to your left ankle.
- If this is still easy for you, hold the outside of your left heel.



Bring your other hand up and back, toward the ceiling.

Tip Do this in a wide, sweeping movement.

Keep traction in your upper arm, keep it gently stretched, throughout the rest of the twist. This will give you more of a twist and will bring the benefits of the twist to the sides of your chest.



Hold this position for 2 – 8 breaths or until your body has worked to its limit, plus one extra breath.

Keys

As you breathe in, be sure your upper arm is reaching as far as possible. Extend this reach without raising your

As you breathe out

- Feel your upper body sinking, dropping forward, increasing the forward bend more and more.
- Feel your upper arm and upper body turning more and more.

Release

Reverse your movements. Return to the front, still in Standing Wide Angle Pose.



Hold this position for 3 – 6 breaths. Notice your body letting go of the twist, your upper body sinking down as you breathe out and the forward bend increasing.

Next
Twist to the other side.

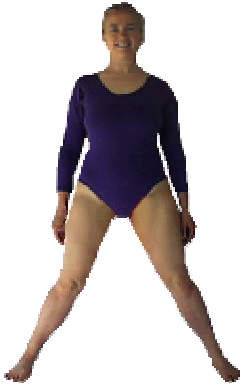
Do 1 – 3 rounds.

Release in the same way that you would release Stand Wide Angle Pose. Come to the front, in Standing Wide Angle. Pause, breathing in and out as the twist relaxes. Bend your knees and come up like a rag doll.



Breathing

You go into the forward bend while breathing out.



Breathe in & out settling into place.

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



Breathe out going into the forward bend.



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

You set up for the twist while breathing in and go into the twist while breathing out.

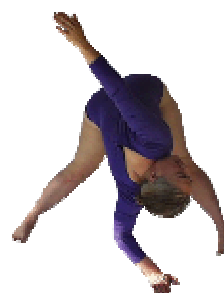
Bring your right hand toward your left foot while breathing in.



Breathing out, sweep your top arm upward, going into the twist.



Keep breathing in and out as you increase the twist and the forward bend.



Breathe out as you return to the front.



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

Then continue, back and forth until you've completed your rounds.

When finished, return to the front, **breathe in & out** while feeling the final twist letting go.

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.

Bending one knee while doing the twist. This can give you the feeling of being able to twist farther, but it reduces the benefit to the inner thigh, the lower back and the obliques. This error is especially common for people who have to have their knees bent a little to do the pose.

Encouragement

If you get dizzy or find your muscles straining after a round or two, it's OK to come up, pause, relax, and then go back into the pose.