Your own yoga routine

By Gerald Lopez

A daily routine is the key to experiencing the benefits of yoga. Said Patanjali, 2,500 years ago, *"the practice must be done continuously for a long time, and with enthusiasm."* A routine has many important benefits:

- It creates a special time-space just for yourself, a powerful builder of self-esteem;
- Your body and mind love a daily routine, and will respond by naturally relaxing during that period;
- You will make small but cumulative progress in fitness and health, just as small but regular monetary savings eventually lead to large returns;
- You will dive deeply into yoga, gaining an understanding that only comes with practice;
- You will discover deeper aspects of yourself; and gain self-understanding.

Start an achievable routine, one that you can easily do **every single day**. Doing 15-20 minutes everyday is a good introduction to the effects of yoga, either first thing in the morning, or in the evening before dinner. In the morning you will feel how it wakes the body up; and in the evening how it soothes and calms the body down.

Select from the list below to suit your time and needs, and programme your CD player accordingly. Try and bring your awareness to the physical movement as you do each exercise, making it slow and deliberate. This slows down the brain waves, inducing relaxation in the mind and nervous system. This process is enhanced by consciously slowing down and deepening the breath, breathing through the nostrils.

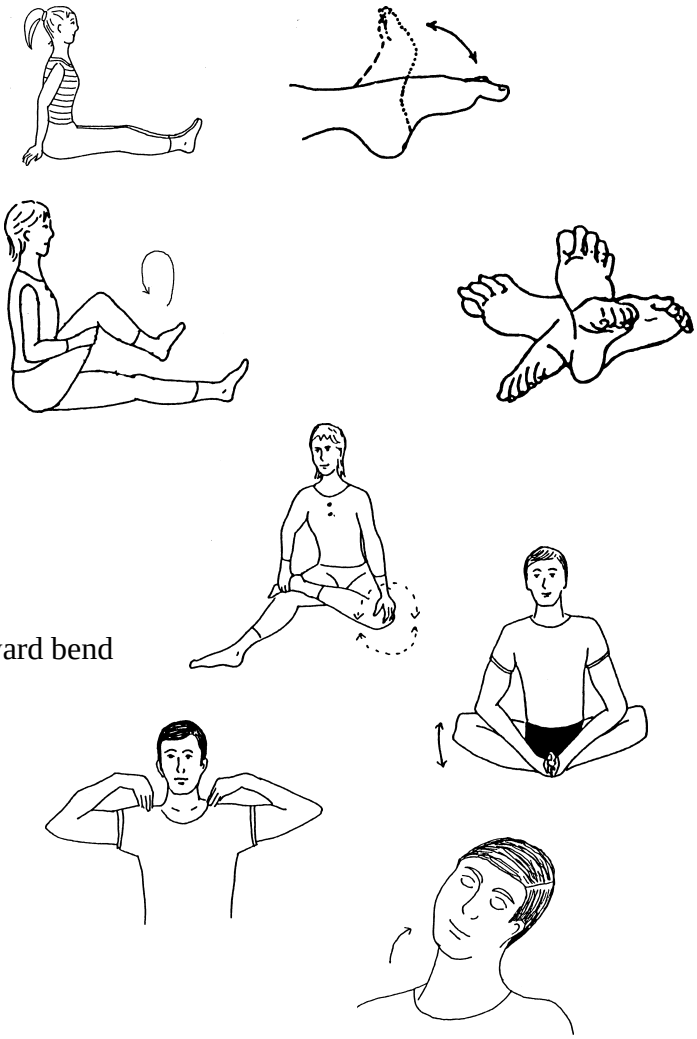
Pawanmuktasana

Pawanmuktasana is good for anyone, regardless of their age or health condition. Pawanmuktasana means *wind releasing pose*, and the exercises remove blockages which prevent the free flow of energy in the body and mind. It consists of the Anti-rheumatic Series, the Digestive Series, and the Shakti Bandha Series - tracks 1, 2, and 3 on the CD.

Track 1: Anti-rheumatic Series

This group loosens up the joints, flushing out built-up waste and toxins, and increasing circulation to the areas.

- Ankle bending
- Ankle rotation
- Knee crank
- Half butterfly
- Hip rotation
- Full butterfly - with forward bend
- Shoulder rotation
- Neck Rotation

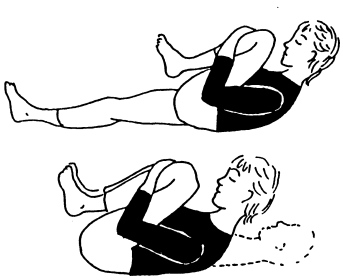


Track 2: Digestive Series

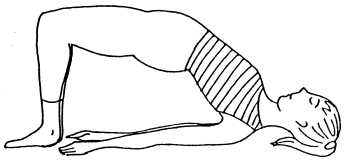
This group tones up the abdomen as well as the back muscles. Increased abdominal strength means a stronger base for a better posture; it also gives a feeling of emotional strength. The group massages the abdominal and reproductive organs, increasing circulation to the areas and helping with elimination. It also stimulates *Agni*, the Digestive Fire; this is the energy that governs digestion, absorption and assimilation of food. A strong *Agni* is vital for excellent health.

Keep the poses at a manageable level of difficulty, and keep your lower back supported.

- Leg raise
- Leg lock - each leg and both legs

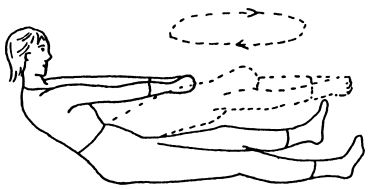


- Lying down twist
- Shoulder pose
- Universal spinal twist

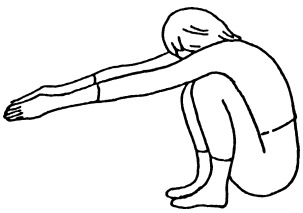


Track 3: Shakti Bandha Series

Shakti bandha means energy locks. When we sit for long periods in chairs and car seats, stagnation in the hips gives rise to stiffness. This group specifically works on the pelvic area, increasing flexibility and loosening tension and emotional locks. It is said that the pelvis is the seat of deep and primitive unconscious memories. The key to living with increased awareness is to unlock those memories and emotions, which otherwise unconsciously influence our behaviour and thinking.



- Churning the mill
- Dynamic spinal twist
- Squatting salute

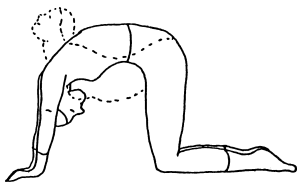


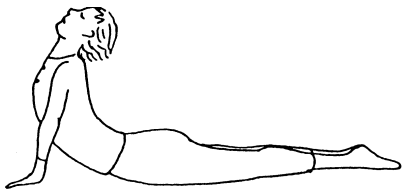
Track 4: Vajrasana series

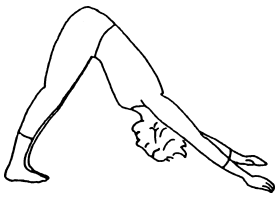
This group is based on Vajrasana, or the kneeling pose. This pose is an important meditation posture because it keeps the body upright and the spine in its optimum position. It strengthens the pelvic muscles, maintains health of the reproductive organs, and stimulates digestive system – thus it is good to do during or after eating.

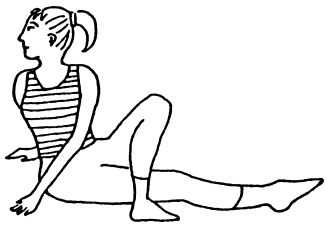
The following postures work on keeping flexibility in the spine, and help to correct poor posture. Together they also help balance the endocrine system, build strength, and stimulate the digestive system.

- Cat pose
- Cobra pose
- Locust pose
- Mountain pose
- Seated spinal twist





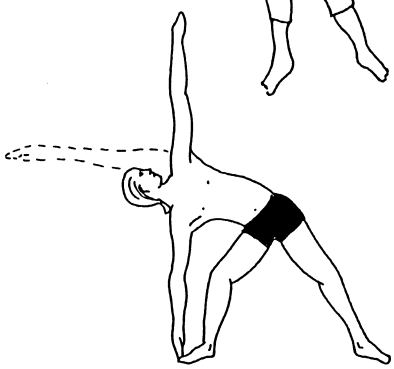




Track 5: Standing Poses

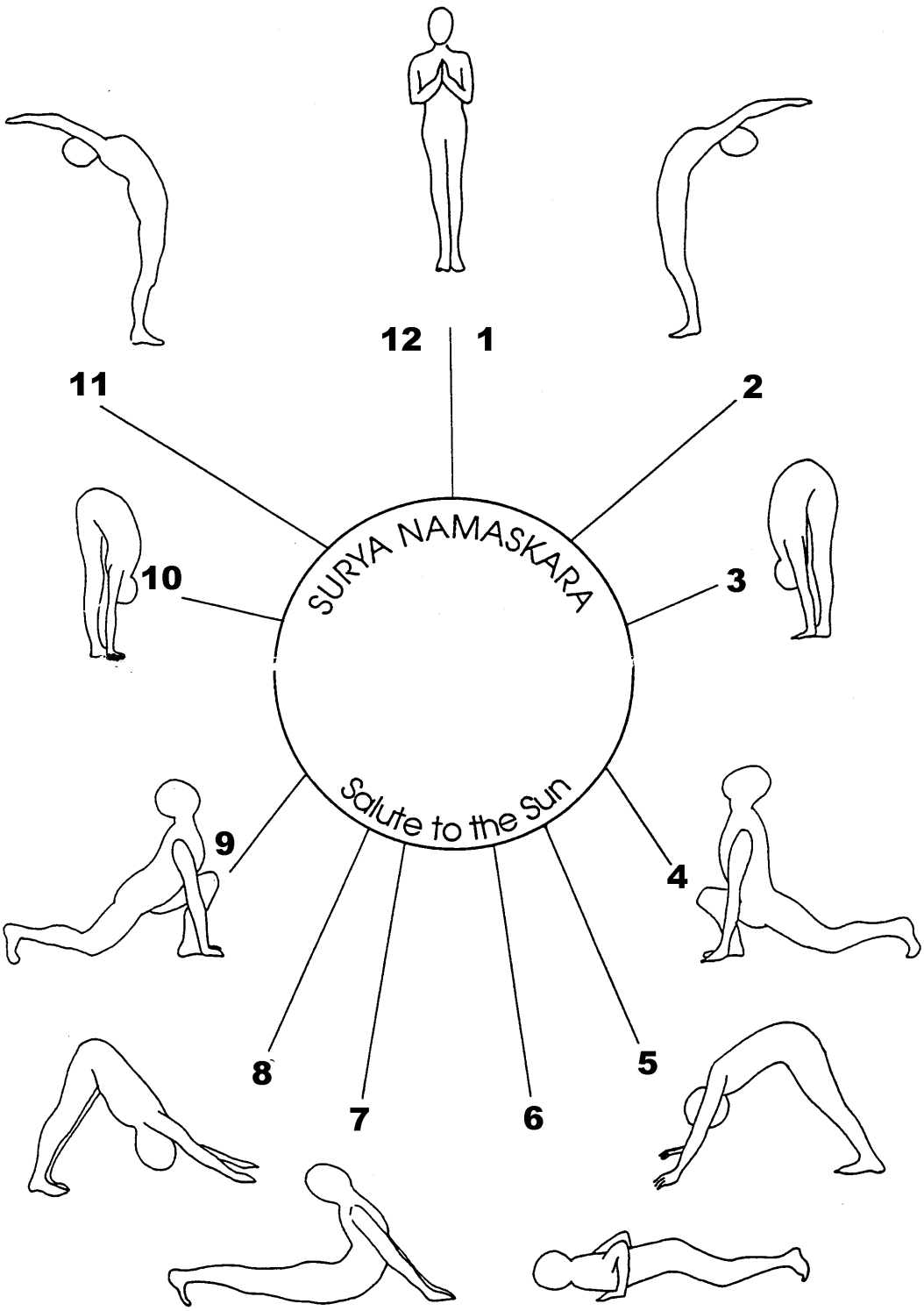
Standing poses generally strengthen the legs, especially the Warrior poses. They also tend to be big body stretches – great for stimulating energy. They work the spine in all directions, toning the back.

- Palm tree pose
- Swaying palm pose
- Triangle
- Warrior I
- Warrior II



Track 6: Sun Salute

Wonderful series for starting the day – wakes the body up, gets you warm from the inside, increases flexibility and strength, builds up energy, stimulates the lungs, uplifts the emotions, and flushes out wastes and toxins. When you have got used to the series, remember to breathe deeply in time with the movements.



Track 7: Alternate Nostril Breath

This is one of the classic breathing techniques; good for calming the nervous system and mind; for balancing both sides of the brain; and for moderating the emotions. Breathing techniques allow your body to better utilise energy - known in yoga as *prana*..

Track 8: Relaxation

Try and complete any yoga practice with some breathing and relaxation - it makes a great difference. You can also do this relaxation at any other time - for instance, at midday if you need to recharge, or at night before sleeping to clear your mind and wind the body down.

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Please email your comments and suggestions to gerald@gezzmedia.co.nz