

6 Poses for Athletes to Develop Balance



UTTITHA HASTA PADANGUSTHASANA - HAND TO BIG TOE POSE

Great posture for a daily balance check. When standing on one foot, try to feel the opposing actions of grounding into the standing leg from the hips while lifting from the waist through the crown of the head. Keep the glutes of both legs engaged—they help support the standing leg and may help lengthen the adductors of the raised leg. Use a strap around the foot if your hand doesn't reach big toe. In part B, turn the head at the same time as you open the leg to the side to help with balance. Hold A & B 5 breaths each on each leg.

GARUDASANA - EAGLE POSE

Enhances awareness of alignment and develops the sensation of opposing forces. Glutes squeeze towards each other, inner thighs, shins, and arms do the same, but all in different directions. The standing legs roots down, while the elbows and torso rise up. Often taught with a twist to the torso, which mimics the last position of a jump before checkout. Pressing the outer shin of the free leg against the shin of the standing leg adds stability. You can rest toes on a block for balance, or keep gaze forward, if needed. Hold each leg for 5 breaths.



PARIVRTTA ANJANEYASANA - REVOLVED CRESCENT LUNGE

Athletes know that lunges build strength, which helps balance. Adding a twist further challenges the balance. Squeeze sit bones towards each other and lift the front of the extended leg, pushing out through the heel. Engage the core to twist and hold, and press the upper arm against the outside of the thigh to create more twist. This is said to build confidence and courage. Optional: Lower the back knee to the mat for. Hold on each leg for 5 breaths.



ARDHA CHANDRASANA - HALF-MOON POSE

The standing leg uses the gluteus medius to stabilize the pelvis and maintain balance, while the lifted leg is using it to lift. Weakness in this muscle limits balance. Work to create maximum energy and extension in all directions... as we know from moves in the field, extension facilitates balance, even though extension takes extra strength and flexibility. Turning the head towards the lifted hand further challenges the balance. Place the hand on a block or on the floor-- whichever you feel gives you more stability. Hold each side for 5 breaths.



SEATED FORWARD FOLD

While a very effective pose for lengthening the hamstrings, this pose is also important for massaging the abdominal organs and resting the heart, which calms and balances the mind. Engage the quadriceps and hip flexors to avoid overstretching the hamstrings. If low belly is on the thighs, wrap the hands around feet and clasp fingers around wrist. If the hands don't reach the feet, bend the knees to your comfort level, take chest to thighs and clasp hands behind knees. Hold and breathe deeply for 1-2 minutes.

LEGS UP THE WALL

This is by far my favorite pose. I do it when I'm stressed, tired, getting ready to travel, or when my legs are extra achy. Some say this is the #1 pose to do every day. Place a blanket a couple of inches from the wall (or chair or bed), Lay on the blanket with hips slightly off the edge. If hamstrings are tight, you can move blanket further away. Arms can go in a T, overhead, or on the belly. Place a blanket over feet to warm them and help legs stay vertical with minimal effort. Breathe deeply and evenly, and stay for 5, 10, or 15 minutes. Notice how your heart rate slows and your mind becomes more centered. Slowly bring yourself back to sitting and sit in quiet for a few minutes to notice how you feel.



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