

Padmasana (Lotus pose)



Pronounced puhd-maah-suh-nuh the word padma means lotus in Sanskrit.

This is perhaps the best known of all yoga asana and is used for the quieter more meditative aspects of a yoga practice. It requires extremely good hip flexibility and for many students an alternative will be required. It is important to realize that some students possess hip sockets and femur heads which do not naturally allow for maximum hip rotation and also that sometimes bone length and bulky muscles will also make this pose inaccessible. We can always however teach students to reach their optimal position taking a less challenging option as needed.

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Teaching Points regarding vulnerable areas:

As we move through the stages students must be asked to ensure the work is primarily occurring within the hips and **there should be no discomfort within the ankles or knees**. If the ankles or knees are overstretching there can be pain and soreness and in the long term structural damage can follow, so instruct student to remain aware and stay at the correct level. It is very important students are advised to not to end-gain.

Stage one: sukhasana

Sit in a simple sukhasana pose with legs crossed, placing blocks beneath buttocks if needed; lean forwards with a slight anterior pelvic tilt, nestling the sitting bones into the ground. Once the sits bones are placed then slowly sit up drawing the belly to the spine creating a level balanced pelvis. Lift the top front of throat to engage the hyoid bone so the crown feels to be rising easily upwards and the muscles of the front of the body are engaged. Ideally there is now the feeling of simultaneously being grounded downwards and rising upwards through the spine, feeling almost weightless.

Stage two: ardha padmasana

If we can progress then move into half lotus pose where we place the top of the outside of the right ankle across the crease at the top of the left thigh allowing the right knee to drop, the lower foot drawn in towards the right buttock. We must however check the right ankle and knee are not being excessively compressed and rotated by ensuring the right foot is hanging over the left thigh, if necessary flex the right foot to help prevent the ankle being twisted. We may also need to place padding under the right knee if the knee does not touch the ground.

Stage three: padmasana

To move into the final position of full lotus then from half lotus move the lower leg away so the knee drops and pick up the left leg and lift the leg so the heel is positioned towards the navel, then drawing the outer ankle of the left foot into the crease at the top of the right thigh. Ensure the ankle is fully over the thigh or it is likely stress to the ankle ligaments & tendons will be experienced. Stay here relaxing all effort as the upper body remains erect. As always check both ankles and knees remain comfortable. No end-gaining!

To release from these poses simply stretch out the top leg and then the bottom leg rolling the legs from side to side on the heels

Always work on both sides so we do not favour one hip.

Benefits:

Increases energy available to upper body
Facilitates balanced functioning of visceral organs & has a balancing effect upon the metabolism in general
Tones lower nerves

Balances mind and emotions as nervous system is balanced (i.e. balances mental and pranic forces)

Provides a stable seated position, increasing capacity for concentration

Good preparation:

Knee warming, hip mobilisers, ankle mobilisers, leg stretches, iliopsoas (hip flexor) stretches, back mobilisers & strengtheners.

This pose requires good long term preparation for the full pose to be achieved with structural integrity. Whilst students may like the idea of adopting the full pose it can potentially cause injury through use, especially over the longer term so needs to be treated with respect.

Note: Whichever cross-legged pose we adopt we must ensure the natural lumbar curves are maintained and for many people this requires sitting in a simpler pose with padding beneath buttocks to lift hips higher than knees. If knees are positioned above hips then the pelvis tilts posteriorly (backwards) and the spine moves into more flexion, losing the natural spinal curves. This means there will be too much effort exerted to work against gravity to stay here for the quiet practices.

Also, along with the erector spinae muscles, we contract the iliopsoas muscle to sit upright with a natural lumbar curve, however if the iliopsoas is tight this can pull the thighs up as the hip is drawn into flexion, again reinforcing the posterior tilt; this is because the iliopsoas is attached to the lumbar spine and down into the medial part of the femur bone so it can perform flexion of the leg at the hip. Again this creates excessive effort as other muscles are contracted to compensate.

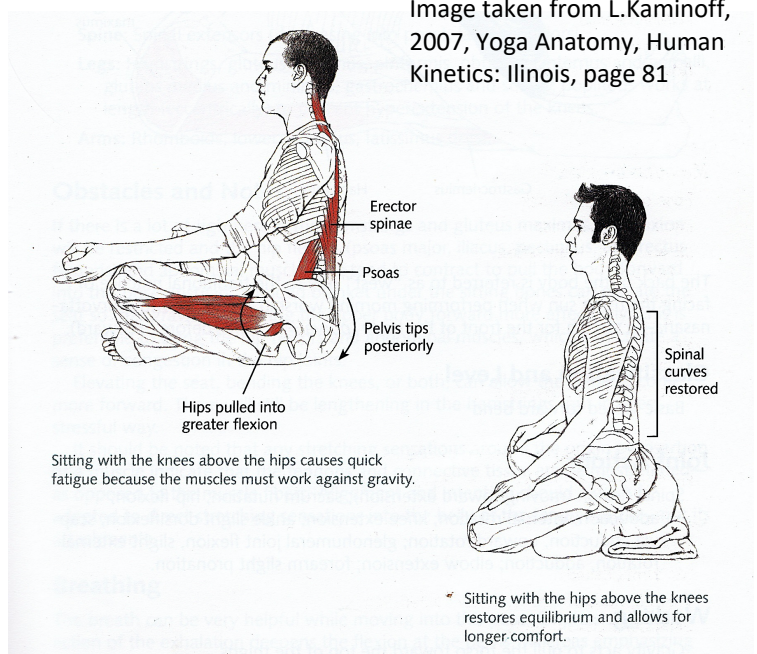
Always check that the natural spinal curves are present for seated poses, and that knees are at the same height or lower than hips, offering padding for buttocks to aid the anterior tilt if needed.

Cautions:

Use a more comfortable alternative such as sukhasana or burmese pose for:

General inflexibility
Knee injuries and knee conditions
Ankle discomfort

Varicose veins
Sacral problems & sciatica



Or use another alternative such as *vajrasana* (kneeling), *dandasana* (staff pose) or a *chair*

Simple versions and modifications:

Sukhasana can be used and blocks can be placed beneath the buttocks where necessary, padding can be placed under thighs and a blanket can be wrapped around ankles.



Adopt baby lotus

Here we simply cross the ankles only, drawing the feet as close as possible. This can be used when the body is extremely tight or there are knee or hip issues.

Developments & Variations:

Bound lotus

Wrap the arms behind the back and grasp the big toes with the opposite fingers.

Tolasana (scales pose)

We place hands to the ground beside the hips and inhaling press down into hands as we raise the hips from the floor. If arms are short relative to the length of the torso we can place hands upon blocks.

We can also practice *Siddhasana/Siddha Yoni Asana* (lower heel to perineum & upper foot between lower calf & thigh) or *Swastikasana* (toes of both feet between either calf and thigh).

Adjustments:

For all seated poses if the body is not upright we can place one hand lightly just below shoulder blades and the other just to the front of the shoulder, indicating a lift is needed by gently lifting the lower hand up a little.