

Teaching asana in stages is an excellent tool we can use to great effect where every student will practice each stage, stopping at a particular stage and repeating it, if they cannot or should not move on to the next stage. There are many benefits to using this method:

- The earlier stages provide excellent preparation for the later stages
- Earlier stages give us the opportunity to provide pertinent teaching points as we build up to more complex and intense stages, giving us more time to repeat them and add to them.
- An earlier stage(s) can be an excellent modification for those who have: -
 - health conditions which would preclude practice of the main pose
 - lack of experience
 - reduced strength and/or flexibilitymeaning they can stay repeating an earlier stage whilst others move on to a later stage.
- We can also offer developments to make the asana more challenging for some students so that students are able to practice at their edge, and continue to grow

This tool helps to **differentiate** our teaching in a way that means every student will be practicing at a suitable level.

To teach asana in stages we need to be able to work out how we can make the asana simpler and understand which students would benefit from staying at a particular stage. (Note that sometimes a simpler stage can be practicing dynamically before we stay statically in a pose.) Then our greatest challenge is to persuade students to work at the correct level for their current ability!

1. To help our students to decide where to stay we can offer guidance regarding conditions present in our class such as:

For Vrksasana, Tree Pose 'those with CAD' (Coronary Artery Disease) benefit from keep hands in Anjali Mudra or raise arms to shoulder level only'.

2. We can provide pointers for inner reflection so students can better gauge whether to stay at a particular stage such as:

For Ustrasana, Camel Pose, 'we need to keep the thighs vertical and the lower back feeling comfortable and open, so it may be enough to keep hands to the lower back, but if you can keep these in place then you could lower hands to blocks or to heels – However if you are experiencing any discomfort at all within the lower back or feel you are sitting down a little, so your thighs are not vertical, you will have gone too far and need to raise up placing your hands at a higher position – remember we want to keep the lower back as comfortable and open as possible'

Notice it is always better whenever possible to phrase our points in a positive manner and it can be very helpful for students to understand why the modifications are useful for them.

There can be simply two stages or more where you will need to break down the pose seeing if any area of potential difficulty can be omitted for an earlier stage(s) – and whilst there are no absolutely 'correct' stages they must make logical sense and be useful for your students -

Staging Asana

Can you think of potential staging for: -

1. Vrksasana, Tree Pose

2. Bhujangasana, Cobra Pose

3. Prasarita Padottanasana, Standing Spread-leg Pose

4. Utkatasana, Squat Pose

5. Jathara Parvriti, Revolving Stomach Pose