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Intermediate Junior II Level Practice

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Sequence created & modeled by: Nichole Baker, Intermediate Junior II CIYT, IAYT Certified Yoga Therapist, Owner & Director of StudiOm Yoga in Jackson, Mississippi



Nichole Baker is the owner and director of StudiOm Yoga in Jackson, MS. Nichole began her yoga studies to help her understand how to strengthen and stretch her scoliotic back, to create more evenness. During her 23 years of teaching she has attended numerous workshops and teacher trainings with senior teachers, including the late Karin O'Bannon, Dean and Rebecca Lerner, Gabriella Giubliaro and Randy Just. Nichole has been to the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Institute (RIMYI) in 2015 and is returning in 2018. StudiOm in Jackson is hosting 2 Teacher trainings this year with Randy Just. Nichole serves as Social Media Chair on the board of IYASE. For more info about Nichole and StudiOm go to www.studiomyogaofms.com.

In every asana when the *Gunas* come up, we need to bring action to the dull with *rajas*, control the scattered mind and steadiness to the body with *tamas* and bring harmony and illumination with *sattva*. B.K.S. Iyengar says this window to the mind is through the eyes, when the *asana* is no longer in motion with concentrated effort, quiet the mind, creating the *sattvic* state. To bring the *sattvic* state, we can work with the Five Elements.

The Five Elements (*pancha mahabhutas*)

1. Earth (*prithvi*) element to bring groundless and firmness
2. Water (*ap*) element to bring extension and expansion
3. Fire (*tej*) element for actions like turning and swinging
4. Air (*vayu*) element to distribute energy (*Prana*) though out the body
5. Ether (*Akasha*) element to create the even flow of consciousness

Sequence for *Ardha Baddha Padma Paschimottanasana*

Approximate Time: 1.5 hours

Props required: 1 mat, 1 block, 1-2 straps, 3-4 blankets, 2 bolsters

Photography: Stephanie Mimms and Lauren Thompson

Adho Mukha Virasana

Downward Facing Hero Pose



Have 2-3 blankets handy.

- Place 1 blanket in front of the mat.
- Bring the buttocks to the heels. If the buttocks don't reach the heels, place a blanket between the buttocks and heels. If the knees are tight, place a blanket behind the knees.
- Fold forward at the hip creases and press the hands on the blanket in front of the mat. For the moment, keep the head off the floor.
- Press the top of the feet and shins down to contract from the outer knees back to the outer hips.
- Press the inner hands down to roll the inner upper arms out.
- Keep the abdomen spreading and the shoulder blades moving in as you exhale and push the blankets forward, using the element of *ap* (water) to create fluidity for extension of the arms and lengthen the side bodies, to bring the head to the floor or blanket.
- To come up, inhale and pull the blankets towards you.

Adho Mukha Svanasana (AMS)

Downward Facing Dog Pose

- Remove the blankets and come up into AMS with straight arms, maintaining the shoulder blades firmly on the back and the abdomen spreading back towards the spine.
- Press down the big toe ball mounds and center of the heels.



- As in *Adho Mukha Virasana*, press the inner hands down to roll the inner upper arms out.
- With an exhalation, press the hands forward onto the floor to press and firm (*prithvi*/earth element) the shoulder blades onto the back.
- Firm the legs, lifting from the outer knees to the outer hips to draw the femur head into hip socket. The heels should feel the *prithvi*, even if they are not on the floor.
- With an inhalation, lift the inner groins up to bring the chest even closer to the thighs.

*Tadasana with
Urdhva Hastasana Arms*
Mountain Pose with Upward Arms

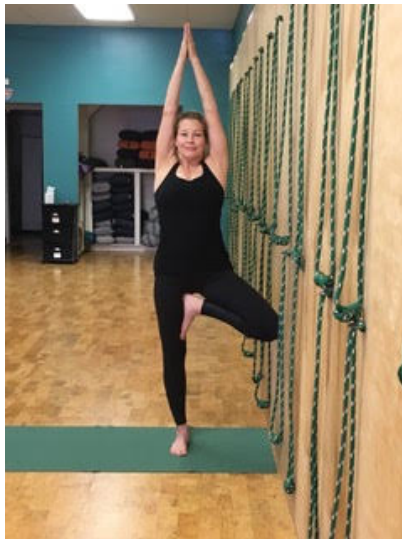
- Face the wall with the toes close to the wall.
- Extend the arms up and bring the palms to the wall.
- Press down with the big toe ball mound and center of the heel to firm the legs.
- Inhale, contract the outer knees up into the outer hips
- Move the abdomen back and the center of the buttocks in and down.
- Take the head forward to touch the wall.
- Press the inner hands like in the previous two poses. Maintain the actions in the arms and without pushing the



head into the wall, inhale and bring the arms away from the wall to firm the shoulder blades in and open the armpit chest.

- Exhale. Soften the eyes and the abdomen.
- Repeat a second time away from the wall with the same actions. Do not let the head push forward. (No photo)

Vrksasana
Tree Pose



- Stand in *Tadasana* with the wall next to your left side.
- Bring the left outer knee to the wall so that the knee is a little forward of the hip. The knee is facing down, and the hips even.
- In the bent leg, lift from the outer knee up to the outer hip to bring the left buttock in. Feel the stability and compactness in both hips.
- Maintain *Tadasana* awareness in the straight leg, pressing the big toe ball mound and center heel into the floor.
- Lift the arms to *Urdhva Hastasana*. Bring the hands together (*Urdhva Namaskar*) if you can maintain straight arms.
- As you inhale, move the arms back, and the shoulder blades in, having the feeling of denseness of the earth *prithvi* element in the shoulder blades.
- Exhale release the left leg. Turn and repeat on the right side.

- Then repeat, both sides away from the wall with the same actions.
- If the foot keeps sliding, do *Tadasana* with the block between your upper thighs. Squeeze the block evenly with both legs, then remove the block and repeat *Vrksasana*, imagining now that your foot is the block. Squeeze evenly with both legs (No photo)

Utthita Parsvakonasana
Extended Side Angle Pose



- Place a belt around the right upper thigh near the groin.
- Turn the right foot and leg out. Press the big toe ball mound and center of the heel down to firm the legs. Without moving the feet, with an inhalation squeeze the heels towards each other to feel the legs lift up into the hips.

For additional stability, place the back foot against the wall.

- Exhale to take the left arm back to hold the belt from behind. The belt should be tight enough so that the back of your hand is at the buttock, allowing you to feel the grip of the buttock.
- Place the right hand on right hip. Roll both upper arms back.
- Maintain the *Tadasana* action of the left leg (pressing the thigh back), straighten your right arm out and bring the right hand to the floor in front of the foot (on a block if needed).
- As you start to bend the right leg, contract the outer knee back, as you did in *Vrksasana*.
- Inhale *and* pull with the left hand on the belt to lengthen the trunk.



- With a deep inhalation, roll the upper arms out, with more forward movement of the right shoulder blade to keep the trunk even. Exhale to turn from the abdomen and the neck to look up.
- Release the belt and take the left arm up and over the head, palm facing down.
- Change sides and repeat all actions on the left.

For rest, as needed, do *Adho Mukha Svanasana* between sides.

- Repeat both sides a second time, without the belt. Use the same foot and leg work as above. Start with the arms straight out to the side, as in *Virabhadrasana II* (Warrior II).
- Bring the right hand to the floor in front of the foot.
- Swing the left arm from the shoulder 2-3 times with effort to grab the thigh of the right leg. You need *tej* (Fire) to make more effort here. Put the hand back on the hip if you cannot grab the thigh.
- Roll both upper arms back. Use the hand on the thigh to turn from the abdomen and neck to look up.
- Inhale, and swing the top arm over the head.
- Repeat on the second side.

*Uttanasana with
Paschima Hastasana Arms*
Intense Stretch Pose with Arms Back



- Place a shoulder-width belt (a little wider for tight shoulders) on the arms, behind the back, and above the elbows, so that the belt is touching the lower back ribs.
- Keep the lower front lower ribs in towards the back (as you did in *Adho Mukha Svanasana*).
- Inhale to turn the inner upper arms out. Feel the arms rotate inside the belt so you feel the upper arms rotate out. Turn from your wrist to bring the hands to face each other.
- Exhale to extend the trunk forward, then downward.
- Keep the legs firm.
- Stretch up from the inner shoulders to the fingers to firm the shoulder blades (belt moves off your ribs) and descend the sides of the trunk evenly down.
- Inhale, press the feet, and reach the arms up to come up and out of the pose.

Parsvottanasana
Intense Side Stretch Pose

- From *Tadasana*, exhale to swing the arms from the shoulders to bring the palms together behind you, fingers facing down. Use the element of *tej* (fire) to swing the shoulders and elbows forward as you turn the fingers upward and shimmy the hands up the back to bring the hands between shoulder blades. Attempt in this manner 2-3 times. If the hands are still not up the back, bend forward and attempt from *Uttanasana*. If still unavailable, bring the hands to *Baddha Hastasana* (holding the elbows).



- Jump the feet apart and turn the left foot in and right foot out. Align your heels. Like in *Utthita Parsvakonasana*, press the big toe ball mound and center of the heel to firm the legs. Without moving the feet, inhale and squeeze the heels towards each other to grip the outer knee up into the hips for stability. Exhale and maintain the firmness of the legs.
- Inhale and rotate the upper arms out. Have the *smirti* (memory) of the belt to bring the shoulder blades firmly on the back. Move the chest away from the hands.
- Look up, exhale, and bend from the hips bringing the left hip and ribs forward to level the trunk over the right leg. Practice *svadhyaya* (self-study) to see if both shoulder blades feel even. Like *Uttanasana*, lift the inner shoulders and elbows up to extend the sides of the trunk evenly down to bring the head to the shin.
- Inhale, press the feet down and pull up on the arms to come up and out of the pose.
- Turn the legs to the left and repeat on the other side.

Parsva Sirsasana
Legs and Trunk Turning to the Side in Headstand

- If you have not been taught *Sirsasana* or are unable to hold *Sirsasana* for 5 minutes do *Utthita Parsva Hasta Padanghustasana* at the wall (not shown).
- *Parsva Sirsasana* can be done at the wall or away from the wall.
- From *Sirsasana*, maintain the inner arms pressing down and the inner shoulders lifting up. Inhale as you press the big toe



ball mounds up and turn the fronts of your thighs in to lengthen up through the inner legs and feet and contract the outer knees into the outer hips.

- Have the feeling of the spine extending all the way up through the inner feet.
- Keep your shoulders lifted and stationary, then exhale (keeping the legs turning in) and turn to the right from your lower abdomen and hips around your imaginary (*Vikalpa*) spine that extends all the way up through your inner feet.
- Inhale and reach up from the inner shoulders, buttocks, and inner legs. Exhale and turn. Repeat this turning action 2-3 times. Inhale, extend and reach. Exhale and turn until the side of the left hip is facing forward. Keep the hips lifted evenly.
- Spread your consciousness (*Citta prasadanam*) with the element of *akasha* (ether).
- Exhale and return to *Sirsasana*. Stay for a couple of breaths and find your inner balance by softening your eyes and focusing on your breath.
- Repeat, turning to the left and repeating the above instructions.
- Come down from *Sirsasana* and briefly do *Adho Mukha Virasana* to *Uttanasana* to release the neck.

Parsvaika Pada Sarvangasana
One Leg to the Side Whole Body Pose



Press the outer elbows down and in. Your upper arms are now doing the belt work from *Uttanasana*. Move the abdomen back.

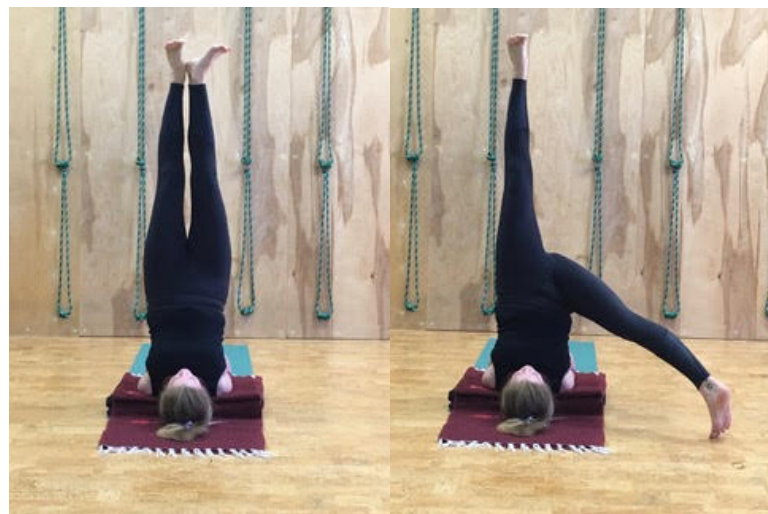
After you have completed the 3-5 minutes in *Salamba Sarvangasana*:

- Bring your right leg to *Vrksasana*. Repeat the same leg work you did when standing in *Vrksasana*. Keep the left leg extending up perpendicular to the floor while keeping the grip of the right buttock. The hip should not drop, if you maintain the grip!
- Inhale, keep the left leg reaching up and straighten the right leg up to return to *Sarvangasana*.
- Repeat on the left side. Maintain the firmness of the shoulder blades.

Second time

- From *Sarvangasana*, go to *Parsvaika Pada Sarvangasana*. Keep the legs reaching upward like in *Sirsasana*. Turn your right leg and foot out to face the right side. Find the same firmness of the right buttock, even though the leg is straight. Maintain the firmness of the outer arms pressing, the firmness of the shoulder blades, and the gripping of the right buttock.
- Keep the left leg perpendicular to the floor as you lower the right leg to the side. The hip should not drop, if you keep the grip!
- Return to *Sarvangasana* and repeat on the left side.
- Come down to *Halasana* (Plow pose) briefly, and then roll out, turn to the side, and come up.

Second Time



*Baddha Konasana to
Utthita Janu Sirsasana to Janu Sirsasana*

Bound Angle Pose to Head of the Knee Pose

In this sequence, this helps with supination of the foot, opening of the hips, and warming up the knees.

First Time



First Time

- Sit in *Baddha Konasana*, on blankets if needed, with enough height to bring the knees lower than the top of your hips.
- Bring the bottoms of the feet together. Press the little toe and outer heel together (opposite of *Tadasana* and *Dandasana*).
- Contract the outer knees into the outer hips (like *Vrksasana*).
- Take the hands behind you and press them down to keep chest and trunk lifted.
- Maintain your right leg in *Baddha Konasana*, and inhale to bring your left knee up. Then exhale to extend your left leg to *Dandasana* (Staff Pose).
- Inhale as the left leg bends up to face the ceiling. Exhale the knee back out to the side in *Baddha Konasana*.

These actions are done slowly with the knee closed and the movements are from the hips. I had a knee injury, so with keeping the knee closed, though out, kept it in the proper position. This is my revised version from the Basic Guidelines for Teachers of yoga (week 7 &8).

- Change legs. Repeat 3 times.

Second Time



Second Time

- Keep your right leg slightly bent and use your hands to turn your upper thigh out and calf up. Bring your right heel to the right groin, and the top of the foot on the floor with the toes pointing towards left inner thigh.
- Inhale as you bring the arms to *Urdhva Hastasana*, then exhale as you turn your trunk to the left.
- Inhale to press your legs down and contract the outer knees into the outer hips.
- Exhale, move the trunk forward from the hips and hold the foot with both hands or a belt. Like *Parsvottanasana*, your right hip, rib and shoulder blade must move more to make the trunk level with the thigh. Feel the firmness of the shoulder blades on your back.
- Exhale, bend the elbows out and keep the inner shoulders moving back to extend the sides of the trunk evenly forward. Pay attention to see if there needs to be more effort needed on the right side to keep the evenness of the trunk.
- Inhale, lift the head and attempt to lengthen the chest forward more.
- Exhale, extend the elbows forward and up, to move the shoulder blades in, like in *Adho Mukha Virasana*, to bring the head down.
- Inhale, release the hands and bring the legs back to *Baddha Konasana*.

Change legs and repeat all actions on the left side.

Bharadvajasana II

Seated Twist Named after the Sage Bharadvaja

The effort has to be there first, before the pose can become effortless. Do you need more effort from the shoulder? From turning the trunk? From the ankle? This is your investigation (darsana) in your practice. See what needs more effort.



First Time – Twist only. Use a block for the back hand.

- From *Dandasana*, bend the left leg to *Virasana* (Hero Pose).
- Bend the right leg to *Baddha Konasana*.
- Deeply insert your right forearm under the right leg to roll the inner thigh and calf out and hold the heel with your left hand. Let the leg and foot relax, keeping the knee down. Lift the foot and place the foot at the root of the left thigh in *Ardha Padmasana*. If this does not come on your first attempt, reattempt, rotating the calf and ankle up.
- If needed, place a blanket or 2 under the *Padmasana* sit bone to level the hips, or both sit bones if height is needed for the knee to move down and in. Asana practice is an investigation both externally and internally to see what is needed.
- If *Padmasana* is not available after attempting, instead do *Bharadvajasana I*.
- Inhale, press the legs down and swing the arms up into *Urdhva Hastasana*. Firm the shoulder blades in, descend the left sit bone down as you lift the left ribs up.
- Exhale to move the left rib and shoulder blade forward, and the right shoulder blade towards the left shoulder blade.
- Bring the left hand to the right thigh and the right hand behind to a block.
- Inhale to press the hands and turn the inner upper arms out. Remember the belt action in *Uttanasana*.
- Exhale, turn from the abdomen.
- Inhale, lift the chest and chin.
- Exhale, keep your trunk to the right and turn your neck to turn the head to look over the left shoulder.
- Inhale to lift, exhale to turn, 1-2 times.

- Exhale and release the trunk to face forward. Bring the right leg back to *Baddha Konasana*, then *Dandasana*. Then lean to the right to return the left leg to *Dandasana*.
- Repeat on the other side.

Second Time - Leg work as above, placing the belt around the *padmasana* foot

- Take the left foot to *Ardha Padmasana*, as above.
- Place a belt around the left foot.
- Extend the right arm up to *Urdhva Hastasana*.
- Inhale, lift both sides of the trunk up evenly and with an exhalation swing the right arm from the shoulder to grab the left forearm. Walk the hand down to grab the foot or the belt. Lean forward if needed. If you cannot grab the left foot, put the belt into the right hand.
- Lift the right ribs. Descend the right sit bone and maintain the lift to place the hand on the left thigh. Inhale, pull on the foot and press the leg in and down.
- Now pull on the thigh and foot to turn the upper arms out and move the right shoulder blade to the left shoulder blade.
- Keep the trunk turning to the right. From the action of the neck, turn the head to the left.
- Inhale, lift. Exhale, return to center. Release the arms, trunk, and legs.
- Return to *Dandasana* and repeat on the other side.

Ardha Baddha Padma Paschimottanasana
Half Bound Lotus Intense Stretch of the West (Back)
Side of the Body.



First Time - Going forward, holding the foot with both hands. Use a belt if unable to grab the foot.

- From *Dandasana*, take the right leg to *Baddha Konasana*. Let the leg and foot relax and bring your right hand inside the inner right leg to roll the thigh and calf up.
- Keep the knee low as you bring the foot into the root of the left leg. Turn the ankle up and, if needed, move the top of the left thigh away from foot to keep foot in place and supinated (sole up).
- Bring the hands behind your buttocks (*Utthita Ardha Padmasana*). Contract both outer knees up into the outer hips.
- Bring the arms to *Urdhva Hastasana* and move forward from the hips and shoulder blades to hold the foot. Now repeat the same action of the arms as in *Janu Sirsasana*.
- Release the foot, return the legs to *Dandasana* and repeat with the left leg.

Second Time (not shown) – Holding both feet. Use a belt like you did in *Bharadvajasana II*. If you did not reach the foot the first time, you will need 2 belts, one for each foot.

- Place the right foot in *Ardha Padmasana*, press the legs down, and bring the right arm to *Urdhva Hastasana*.
- Pull on the foot and as you turn your trunk to the right, swing your right arm out and back from the shoulder to hold the left forearm. Maintain the turn and lean your left ribs towards your inner left thigh to walk the hand down to hold the foot or the belt. Reach the left hand to hold the outer left foot or belt.



- Inhale and exhale twice. Now, press the legs down, inhale, and pull on both feet to roll the upper arms out.
- Exhale, and bring the right rib, knee and shoulder blade toward the left leg to level the trunk forward over the leg.
- Inhale again, press the legs, pull the feet, look up to lift the chin and the chest. As you exhale, bend your left elbow, move both shoulders and elbows up to move the shoulder blades in to bring the head onto the shin.
- Release the arms, return the legs to *Dandasana*, and repeat with the left leg.

Setu Bandha Sarvangasana
Formation of a Bridge Pose



- 2 crossed bolsters with the feet to the wall.
- Take feet higher up the wall if the lower back feels tightness and cannot extend and release

This pose is intended to open the psoas and the front of the body.

Savasana
Corpse Pose



- Legs over one bolster. The other bolster on top of the thighs.
- Blanket for the head and neck.

With gratitude to Guruji B.K.S. Iyengar, Geetaji Iyengar, Abhijata Iyengar, Dean Lerner, Gabriella Giubliaro, and Randy Just for their teachings and for specific inspirations for portions of this practice.

On our practice of yoga, Guruji says in Light on the Yoga Sutras “Consciousness is imbued with the three qualities (*gunas*) *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, but through the discipline of yoga, both action and intelligence go beyond these qualities and the seer comes to experience his own soul with crystal clarity, free from the relative attributes of nature and actions. This state of purity is *samadhi*. Yoga is thus both the means and the goal. Yoga is *samadhi* and *samadhi* is yoga.”

Sutra 11.1 tapah-svadhyaya-isvara-pranidhani kriya-yogah

Burning zeal in practice (*tapas*), self-study and study of the scriptures (*svadhyaya*) and the surrender to God (*isvara pranidhani*) are the acts of yoga

Guruji also states that *kriya* yoga is path to perfection. Our bodies are purified by self-discipline (*tapas*), our words by Self-study (*svadhyaya*) and our minds by love and surrender to Him (*isvara pranidhana*)

“*Kriya* yoga is perfection in action” (Patanjali)

In the Bhagavad Gita, chapter 3, *slokas* 27-30, Eknath Easwaran:

27. All actions are performed by the *gunas* of *prakriti*. Deluded by identification with the ego, a person thinks, “I am the doer.”

28. But the illumined man or woman understands the domain of the *gunas* and is not attached. Such people know that the *gunas* interact with each other; they do not claim to be the doer.

29. Those who are deluded by the operation of the *gunas* become attached to the results of their action. Those who understand these truths should not unsettle the ignorant.

30. Performing all actions for my sake, completely absorbed in the Self, and without expectations, fight! - but stay free from the fever of the ego.

The Bhagavad Gita states yoga is “Skill in Action.”

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