

Yoga For Men and Guideline

Get Better Life and Stay Healthy
For Men to Do Yoga



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ACKNOWLEDGE



Yoga for men, it's a little different for us right?

I mean sure, it needn't be. After all, it's the same poses for everybody. But in reality, we face our own unique challenges both on and off the mat.

When you've never tried yoga, it can be intimidating, especially if you've been scoping the jaw-dropping, super bendy, pretzel-like poses your girlfriend practices each morning. But relax: It's actually the most basic postures—not the fancy positions—that provide you

with the foundation of flexibility and strength every man needs.

Sometimes it feels like we're a stiff square peg trying to fit in an impossibly bendy round hole. Wait, that sounds wrong..

Lucky for us, the rewards are so worth it.

Greater strength and mobility? ✓ Improved athletic performance? ✓ Better health and happiness? ✓ and the list goes on.. If all men truly understood and experienced the benefits, everyone would be doing it.

So whatever your motivation, you've decided to give it a shot, but you're not sure where to start?

You've come to the right place.

With that said, there are a number of yoga styles, and finding the right one will help ensure you keep up your practice. For those who want a more fast-paced practice,

consider power yoga. If you want to wipe yourself out and break a serious sweat (no joke), try Bikram (hot) yoga. Hatha yoga is good for beginners because of its slow pace and introductory poses. And Vinyasa focuses around the mind-breath connection and works the body with aggressive stretching. That's just a handful of different yoga variations designed to improve flexibility, athletic ability, mental clarity, and more.



In this book you'll learn all the paths you can take to start your yoga journey – and which is right for you.

You'll find out how best to approach the practice, how to prepare and what you can expect to find. All from the

angle of a dude who's been there and tried it all, and made the embarrassing mistakes so you don't have to.

So I'm here to tell you – man to man – how to get started on your yoga journey.

REASONS MEN SHOULD DO YOGA



Before we get into the basic poses, here's why you should practice yoga, in any variation.

1. Relieve stress

We all find ways to deal with stress. But Terrence Monte, a managing teacher at Pure Yoga, says, “going to

amped up gyms or punching a punching bag can make you more aggressive or more tired.” Yoga, on the other hand, employs a number of relaxation techniques, which, with regular practice, can make you calmer overall. Sadie Nardini, host of “Rock Your Yoga,” adds: “Along with training your body, yoga trains your mind to see the bigger picture and act from integrity instead of freaking out. If you want to be more James Bond than Charlie Sheen, get yourself on the mat.” Being forced to unplug from text, calls, and email for 60 to 90 minutes doesn’t hurt either.

2. Get flexible

Most series of yoga asanas (physical postures) include one or more spinal twists to loosen the many joints that make up your spine. This can improve your tennis game and golf swing, as well as promote detoxification and good digestion. Yogi Cameron Alborizan, Ayurvedic

healer, yoga guru, and author of *The One Plan*, says: “Think of the body as a sponge filled with dirty sink water. Gentle twists help to wring the sponge out and purge toxins.”

3. Build more muscle

Yoga widens range of motion and increases access to more muscle fibers, allowing for more substantial hypertrophy in any given muscle group,” says Kate Abate, a certified trainer and yoga teacher. Hypertrophy is when a muscle is enlarged because its cells are enlarged (it’s basically muscle growth on a cellular level).

If you supplement your regular lifting routine with yoga classes, you’ll be able to activate ignored sections of muscle. For example, take the serratus anterior or “boxer’s muscle,” which is located under your armpit and over the side of your ribs. This muscle provides stability for your shoulders and is a base for developing deltoids

and pectorals. Making your serratus anterior pop will help your abs look ripped, and you can get at it with yoga.

4. Prevent workout injuries

Most yoga classes begin with a reminder to honor your body's particular needs and limits on that particular day. This basic ability to scan and assess yourself as you practice will help reduce the incidence of injury when running or playing other sports. Plus, flexible, well-stretched yoga muscles will heal and recover more quickly after working out or getting strained.

5. Have better sex

A study published in the *Journal of Sexual Medicine* found yoga to seriously enhance a woman's experience in the bedroom via greater lubrication, and more powerful orgasms as a result of strengthening the pelvic floor muscles. For guys, yoga helps reduce anxiety

and increases body awareness and confidence; and it speeds the release of hormones that boost arousal and increase blood flow to the genital area, which is important for erections.

6. Calm your mind

In the midst of a jam-packed schedule, committing to the relaxed space of a yoga class might be the only way for some guys to slow down and breathe right. A 2013 review found that yoga relieves mild clinical depression, even in people that didn't take antidepressants. The ancient Indian practice also was found to help better sleep better and longer. Furthermore, A study in the *Journal of Physical Activity and Health* found that 20 minutes of Hatha yoga stimulates brain function more than walking or jogging on the treadmill for the same amount of time.

7. Smell better

Seriously. Michael Hewitt, founder of Sarva Yoga Academy says yoga is very much about waste removal. “Pheremonally, regular practice is more effective than cologne,” he says. Exhaling and sweating help get rid of toxins during class, so that afterward, your sweat really will smell sweeter. “After a class,” says Hewitt, “[your body is] cleaner, more confident and focused than when you walked in.”

Now that you’ve found out why you regularly do yoga, it’s time to lay down the mat and start opening up your hips (and every other joint too). But before you do that, remember these three beginner tips.

SHOULD YOU LEARN YOGA AT HOME OR AT A CLASS?

We're lucky enough to live in a world where yoga is freely available to us, as long as we have a will and a solid internet connection. Whether you're looking to learn from the comfort of your home, or you're ready to brave a yoga class, you have plenty of options.

So where do you start?

That depends on your budget, your goals and your access to yoga studios.

Getting expert guidance from an experienced teacher is going to be the most effective way to start, so if you can make it to a real-life class then I'd recommend starting there. But, I know that's not available to everyone for various reasons. Whether it's distance, money or

something else entirely – life can get in the way of making it to studios.

Fortunately, access to a yoga studio is not a barrier to yoga. **Learning exclusively from home is entirely possible.** You'll just have to be thorough.

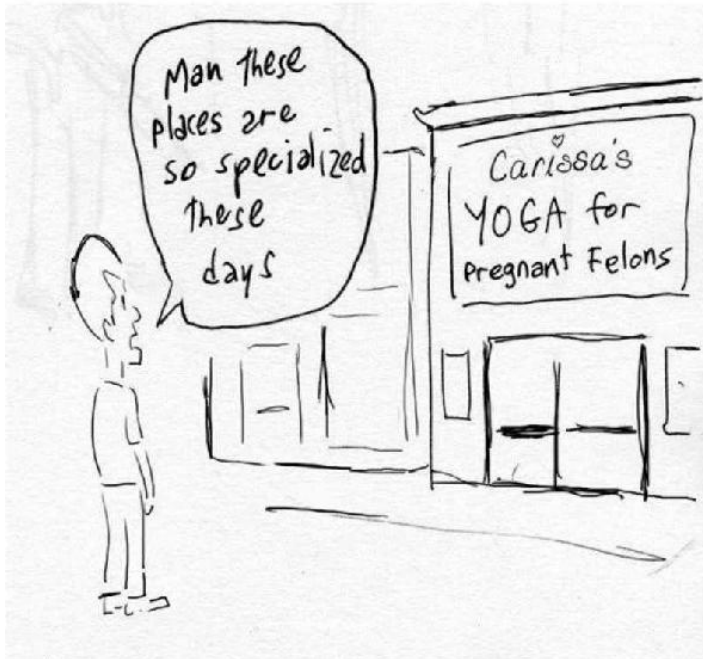
Let's dive in.

Yoga Classes

Do men go to yoga classes? Absolutely.

We're definitely still in the minority, but things are levelling out quickly. I'd say it's about 60/40 women to men at my local studio.

It is important to find the right classes to start with, as yoga classes come in all shapes and sizes. With varying degrees of complexity, chanting and all-round weirdness.



Some are definitely more appropriate for beginners than others.

So unless you can already wrap your legs around your head, or you happen to be a regular masochist – skip the Ashtanga, Kundalini and Vinyasa Flow for now. If your studio offers a **beginner series**, that's your best place to start.

They're tailored to absolute beginners and have a sort of workshop vibe with a slow and methodical pace. Over the course of a few weeks, you'll be gradually introduced to the fundamental poses and breathing techniques. Usually with the same group of people, just as new as you.

If you can't find a studio that runs a beginner *series*, they will almost certainly run regular beginner yoga classes. Whilst they won't be aimed exclusively at first-timers, the pace is definitely slow enough for you to join in and pick it up as you go along.

Just in case you were wondering.. You're not too inflexible for yoga classes, it doesn't matter if you struggle with certain poses and you are absolutely welcome even if you're the only guy 😊

Men's Yoga Classes

That being said, if you'd feel more comfortable practicing in a men's only yoga class, you may be in luck.

These days, there are yoga brands like Broga which cater specifically to men, but I'm seeing more and more individual studios offering them too. Personally, I like the more balanced dynamic of a mixed class, but there are benefits to yoga classes for men.



In fact, I'd arguably make more progress at these classes, because they tend to cater to men's natural strengths, and work on their weaknesses. Skipping poses

I can't get into yet and spending extra time on hamstrings
and shoulders sounds real good to me.

Yoga at Home



For those who can't make it to class, don't feel ready for it (or just don't want to), learning yoga online from home is a great option.

What you miss in personalised advice and alignment fixes, you make up for in other ways.

- It's much cheaper
- More accessible (provided you have an internet connection)

- It's faster (no need waste an hour driving to/parking at the studio)
- Access great teachers from around the world
- There's no pressure – just you and the mat

In fact, even if you do go to classes, I'd wholeheartedly encourage you to start a home practice too. Classes are amazing for teaching poses and alignment, but you really deepen your practice at home.

There are some fantastic online yoga subscription services out there like Grokker which offer free trials. They can provide everything you need in a neat video program package. Definitely worth a try.

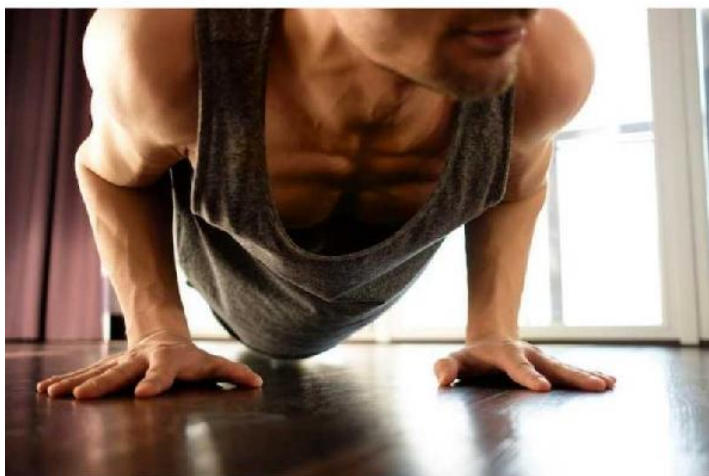
Alternatively, YouTube has plenty to offer the beginner yogi too.

YouTube - The Best Free Online Yoga Option

Granted, there's a lot of shit on YouTube these days, but the yoga content is (mostly) top notch. With everything from coffee-break warm-ups to hour long sweat sessions, there's plenty to keep you going.

To begin, you should be looking for a beginner series that takes the time to explain the fundamentals of moving and breathing. It can be tempting to dive into the "Ignite Power Fat-Shredding Flow" kinda video, but try these first..

WHAT YOU'LL NEED TO PRACTICE YOGA



What Do Men Wear for Yoga?

Male yoga wear isn't quite as straightforward as it is for women.

Most of our typical clothes are too baggy or too restrictive, and we have extra "bits" to keep in check. But don't worry, there's probably something in your wardrobe that you can get started with, and the range of dedicated men's yoga clothing is **so much better** these days.

First things first, work-wear and street-wear are **not** appropriate. I can't imagine anything worse than practicing yoga in jeans or trousers. As for the workout clothing you might already own, these can work:

- Well-fitted cotton t-shirts
- Vests, singlets and tank tops
- Workout shorts
- Swim shorts
- Baggy cotton t-shirts
- Big hoodies
- Long board shorts
- Cycling shorts

Striking a balance between comfort and fit is the aim of the game. You want something that's not too baggy, so that your teacher can see your alignment and you're not getting swamped in fabric. But you also don't want clothing so tight that it restricts your movements. Unless they're yoga pants – which men absolutely can wear!

Ideally you also want a sweat-wicking material, so while cotton can be okay in a pinch, it's not suitable for yoga where you're going to be sweating a lot.

If the climate (and the yoga studio) allows it, feel free to go shirtless too. I always do.

Yoga Equipments You Need

To start, not that much really.

After all, one of the greatest benefits to a home practice is the freedom to practice when, and how you want – at no cost. So no, you probably don't need that yoga trapeze just yet.. but for a full practice, there is some must-have yoga equipment.



- A Yoga Mat

The bread and butter of your yoga setup.

The price and quality of yoga mats vary a lot, but as a one-off purchase, it's worth paying to get a solid one. Your typical man is going to be bigger and heavier than your average yogini, and you might find that a Walmart mat just doesn't cut it.

For the full low-down, check out my guide to the best yoga mats for men.

Personally, I'm a fan of the Liforme Yoga Mat. It's got extra room all around, grips like a champion and has super helpful alignment cues. It's amazing for beginners, but it's not cheap.

If you're (understandably) not ready to drop that kind of dollar on a yoga mat. The Heathyoga Mat is a great budget alternative. Sporting similar alignment cues, generous dimensions and a textured surface, it's a good place to start.

- A Yoga Block and Strap

If you've already been to a class, you soon realise how useful a block and strap can be for your practice.

There are many pose variations that are only accessible if you've got these things for support. If you can't reach the floor, you can reach for a block. If you can't reach for your leg, reach for a strap.

You can definitely practice without them, but you'll be limited in some areas.

A simple block and strap will do

- Other Honorary Mentions

There are lots of other useful yoga accessories. From bolsters and blankets, to sticky toe socks and handstand blocks.

They all have their uses but they're not all necessary right way.

- Let's Wrap Up

That's a lot to take in, right? Don't sweat it.

Yoga is a process, not a destination.

It doesn't matter if you struggle at the beginning, or even after years of practice. Trust me, you'll always be able to find a practice that challenges you.

You can forget about all the advanced moves and practices for now. Don't worry about how you look, or how close you can get to touching your toes.

Go into your practice with an open mind and heart. Everything else will come in time.

Finally, just keep at it!

BEST YOGA TIPS FOR BEGINNERS

1. Stay in the back row

For your first few visits, lay your mat down in the back row so you can see what the people around you are doing. This helps you learn, keeps your neck from straining to see what's going on, and provides you with an awesome view of your mostly female class.

2. Remain calm

Yoga is not easy. Don't freak out if your athletic build is getting in the way of some moves. Progress is supposed to be slow and steady, and the most challenging aspects are usually what your body needs the most.

3. Focus on your breathing

Deep abdominal breathing is a huge part of yoga, and it activates the parasympathetic nervous system. This lowers levels of cortisol, a hormone that forces your body to hold on to belly fat. Training yourself to breathe deeply through yoga can reduce stress and cortisol levels in your daily life.



Ready to feel a stretch like never before?

THE BEST BEGINNER YOGA POSES FOR MEN

1. Mountain (Tadasana)



Why you should do it: Simple but effective, mountain pose builds a solid foundation for all other standing poses. It strengthens and returns flexibility to your feet, improves your posture, and works your thighs and core.

How to do it: Stand with your big toes touching and heels slightly apart. Balance the weight evenly on your feet and lift up the arches. Engage the thigh muscles

slightly to lift up the kneecaps, but avoid locking your knees.

Pro tip: With every inhale, imagine lengthening your spine by stretching your head toward the ceiling. Keep your shoulders relaxed and your shoulder blades drawing down your back.

2. Tree (Vrksasana)



Why you should do it: Like other standing balance poses, tree pose will improve your focus while strengthening the muscles in your ankles, calves and thighs. It also stretches the inner thigh and groin muscles on the bent leg.

How to do it: Shift your weight onto your right foot, pressing it firmly onto the floor. Bend the left leg at the knee and place the sole of the left foot on your inner right

thigh. Point the toes toward the floor. If this is difficult, you can also place the sole of the foot on the inner calf or ankle (but avoid the knee). Bring your palms together in front of your chest and keep your weight centered over the left foot. Press the right knee back to open the groin while keeping your hips parallel to the front of the room. Release the foot and repeat on the other side.

Pro tip: To improve your balance, keep your attention on the floor a few feet in front of you.

3. Standing Forward Bend (Uttanasana)

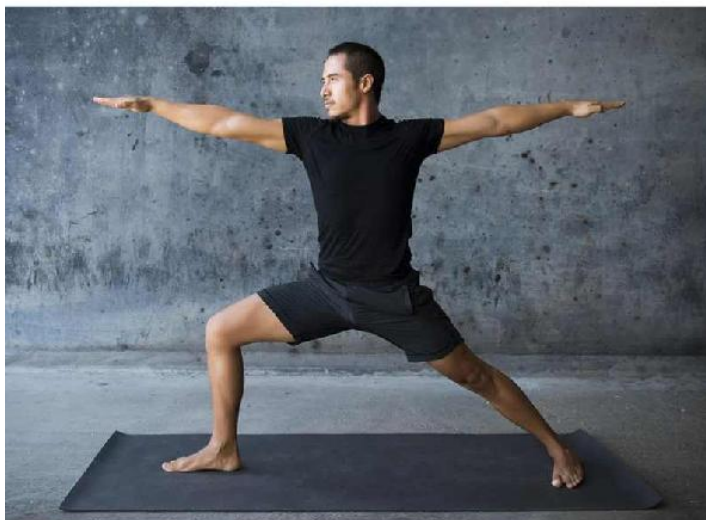


Why you should do it: Standing forward bend can calm your mind, while also stretching the hamstrings and muscles of the spine.

How to do it: Start in mountain pose with your hands on your hips, then exhale, tucking your chin slightly toward your chest and bending forward at the hips. (As you fold forward, lengthen the front of your torso to avoid curling the spine.) Relax your head, neck and shoulders and let your arms hang loosely. Place your palms or fingertips on the floor beside or slightly in front of your feet. (If you can't touch the floor, cross your forearms and grab your elbows.) To come out of the pose, bring your hands to your hips and lift up on an inhale. Keep your chin tucked and lengthen the front of your torso as you come back up.

Pro tip: If your hamstrings are very tight, bend your knees slightly to let the spine stretch toward the floor. Avoid pulling yourself down with your hands—let gravity do the work.

4. Warrior I (Virabhadrasana I)



Why you should do it: Warrior I is often encountered during the Sun Salutation sequence. In addition to improving your balance, this pose stretches and strengthens the ankles, calves and thighs. It also stretches the chest, lungs, shoulders and groin.

How to do it: From mountain pose, step your right foot forward and lift your arms overhead. Turn your left foot 45 to 60 degrees to the left. Bend your right knee

until it is over the ankle. Bring the hips parallel to the front of the room. Arch your upper back slightly, lifting your chest up toward the ceiling. Press your palms together, if possible, or keep your hands shoulder width apart with your palms facing each other. Look forward or up at your thumbs. When done, step the right foot back into mountain pose. Repeat on the other side.

Pro tip: The most challenging part of this pose is lining up the front heel with the arch of the back foot. If you feel unbalanced, widen your stance.

5. Downward-Facing Dog (Adho Mukha Svanasana)



Why you should do it: Downward-facing dog, another pose found in the Sun Salutation sequence, strengthens the legs and arms, while stretching the calves, hamstrings, shoulders, hands and wrists.

How to do it: Start on your hands and knees, with your hands just in front of your shoulders and your knees directly below your hips. Press your hands firmly onto the floor, with index fingers pointing forward. As you

exhale, lift your knees off the floor, keeping the knees slightly bent. Stretch your tailbone toward the ceiling to lengthen your spine. Press your heels down toward the floor and your thighs back to straighten your legs. Keep pressing the base of your index fingers into the floor and lift along your arms from your hands to your shoulders. Draw your shoulder blades against your back and down toward your tailbone. When done, drop your knees to the floor.

Pro tip: It's okay to keep the knees slightly bent in this pose—focus more on lengthening your spine. Use your triceps to straighten your arms, but keep the shoulders from moving toward your ears.

6. High Lunge (Crescent Lunge)



Why you should do it: Also known as crescent lunge, this is similar to Warrior I, except with the back heel lifted and the feet about hip width apart. In this position, you may find it easier to keep your hips parallel to the front of the room, but your leg muscles will work harder to maintain your balance. High lunge will also strengthen the arms and stretch the muscles of the groin.

How to do it: Start in downward-facing dog. As you exhale, step your left foot forward between your hands, keeping your left knee over the ankle and your feet hip-

width apart. As you inhale, lift your torso upright and bring your arms out to the side and overhead. If possible, bring your palms together—or keep the hands shoulder width apart with the palms facing each other. Press back through your right heel and lift up through the torso. To come out of the pose, bring your hands to the floor as you exhale and step back to downward-facing dog. Repeat on the other side.

Pro tip: Don't lean forward—keep the torso directly over the hips, and think about sinking your hips straight downward while engaging the back thigh to keep the back leg straight. Don't let the front knee move ahead of the ankle. To give your legs a rest, drop the back knee onto a mat or folded blanket, and focus on the stretch in your groin.

7. Boat (Navasana)



Why you should do it: While often known for its ab-busting potential, boat pose also works the deep hip flexors, as well as the spine. When you add in the arms, even your shoulders will get stronger.

How to do it: Start seated with your legs extended in front of you. Press your hands into the floor just behind the hips, pointing your fingers forward. Lean back slightly and lift up through your chest, to keep your back from rounding. As you exhale, bend your knees and lift your feet off the floor until your thighs are at a 45-degree

angle from the floor. Straighten your legs slowly. When you feel stable, lift your arms off the floor and bring them out in front of you, parallel to the floor with the palms facing each other. To come out of the pose, lower your legs and arms as you exhale.

Pro tip: If your hamstrings are tight, keep the knees bent so you can maintain the neutral shape of the spine—similar to as if you were sitting in a chair. For a more intense workout, lift your arms overhead.

8. Locust (Salabhasana)



Why you should do it: Locust pose is a great way to slowly strengthen your back and prepare you for more challenging backbends. In addition to working the muscles of the spine, locust strengthens the buttocks and the muscles on the back side of the arms and legs. It will also stretch the chest, shoulders and thighs.

How to do it: Lie on your belly with your forehead on the floor and your hands by your hips, palms facing up. Point your big toes toward each other slightly to roll your thighs inward. As you exhale, lift your head, chest, arms

and legs off the floor. Rest your weight on your belly, lower ribs and pelvis. As you inhale, lengthen your spine by stretching your head forward and your legs backward. Stretch back through your fingertips while keeping your arms parallel to the floor. Look down or slightly forward to avoid crunching your neck backward. Lower down on an exhale.

Pro tip: As you hold the pose, think about lengthening your spine on every inhale and lifting the chest and legs slightly higher on each exhale. If you feel pinching in the back, lower the chest and legs slightly.

9. Bridge (Setu Bandha Sarvangasana)



Why you should do it: A deeper backbend than locust, bridge pose stretches the front side of the body, as well as the spine and the rib cage.

How to do it: Lie on your back with your arms by your side. Bend your knees and bring your heels close to your buttocks, with the feet about hip width apart. As you exhale, push your feet and arms into the floor and lift your hips toward the ceiling. Keep your thighs parallel as you lift. Interlace your fingers beneath your pelvis and stretch your arms toward your feet. To come out of the

pose, release the hands and lower your hips slowly to the floor on an exhale.

Pro tip: In the beginning, you may not be able to lift your hips very high. Instead of forcing it, focus on keeping the thighs parallel and stretching your tailbone toward your knees to lengthen the spine. With each inhale, lift a little higher. To keep the knees from spreading outward, hold a yoga block between your thighs while in the pose.

10. Reclining Big Toe Pose (Supta Padangusthasana)



Why you should do it: One of the best yoga poses for stretching the hamstrings, it also stretches the hips, groin, and calves. Done properly, it will even strengthen the knees.

How to do it: Lie on your back. As you exhale, bend the left knee and pull it toward your chest. Keep the other leg pressed firmly onto the floor while pushing the right heel away from you. Hold a strap in both hands and loop

it around the middle of your left foot. As you inhale, straighten your left leg slowly toward the ceiling. Move your hands up the strap until your arms are straight, while pressing your shoulders into the floor. Once your left leg is straight, engage the left thigh slightly and pull the foot toward your head to increase the stretch. Stay here for 1 to 3 minutes. Then lower the left leg slowly toward the ground, keeping the right thigh pressed into the floor. Continue until the left leg is a few inches off the floor. Work the foot forward until it is in line with your shoulders. Inhale your leg back to vertical. Lower the leg and repeat on the other side.

Pro tip: When you extend the leg upwards, press the heel toward the ceiling. Once the leg is straight, engage the thigh slightly and lift up through the ball of the foot.

If you're a really quick learner and breezed through those 10 poses, try these three challenging yoga poses to really release tension everywhere.

CHALLENGING YOGA POSES FOR MEN

1. Wheel



Why you should do it: According to Stiles, the wheel pose will open up the spine, shoulders and quad muscles

resulting in improved flexibility and safeguard you from injury.

How to do it: To achieve the pose, sometimes called a “Bridge,” Stiles explains, “Lie down on your back and press your feet into the ground next to your hips. Press your palms on the ground beside your ears, elbows up. Press down with your hands and feet and lift up in your chest and abdomen. Only raise yourself to where you can breathe easily. Stay for 10 long deep breaths and lower slowly.”

Pro tip: Practice three sets in a row with rest in between for three days every week.

2. Handstand



Why you should do it: Stiles recommends taking on the challenge of the handstand for strengthening the back, shoulders and core. Similarly to the headstand, this pose also improves athletic balance and focus.

How to do it: Stiles advises starting in the “Warrior 3” position (with one foot placed in front of the other, lift your back leg up and raise your arms straight out in front of you so your body forms a “T”). “Press palms on the ground with arms straight. Gently rock forward and back (inhale forward, exhale back) until you feel steady enough to lift both legs off the ground. Hang with the legs in an ‘L’ shape. If you are steady there bring the second leg up.”

Pro tip: Trying the handstand up against the wall will help improve your knowledge and feel of the pose with less fear of falling.

3. Crow Pose



Why you should do it: When it comes to building strength, increasing body mechanics and coordination,

this is Stiles' pick. A strong core is pivotal in fitness, and it will take most of the brunt along with the shoulders, biceps, triceps and forearms.

How to do it: "Come into a squat. Press your hands on the ground and place your arms inside your knees with your knee propped onto the back of your upper arms or triceps. When stabilized, lift up in your hips and belly until your feet come off the ground and your hands are the only things touching the ground."

Pro tip: To master this pose, Stiles recommends practicing slowly lifting yourself rather than "jumping" into the pose. She says, "It's harder to lift up, but you'll stay focused and be able to stay in the pose longer than if you launch yourself."