

Stretching for Pole Flexibility Week 5

Tips for Safe Backbending- (parts taken from www.yogawithmaheshwari.com)

- 1) Spinal twists are great to warm-up and help prepare the body for backbends and they are equally good to unwind after doing back bends.
 - 2) Concentrate your bend more at the tips of your shoulder blades than at the lower back. The lower back (lumbar region of the spine) is the most flexible part of the spine. It tends to get overused already.
 - 3) Engage the Abdominal muscles. If you are taking a pose that starts off lying on your stomach, for instance a cobra pose, it's easy to feel the work in the abs. When you go deeper into a full wheel for example, this becomes more difficult as your stomach stretches. Practice makes perfect though! Keep practicing the principles and eventually the bend will happen throughout your spine as opposed to just at one particular area (usually the lumbar portion).
 - 4) Take a bit of the round out of the lower back. This can be done by dropping your tailbone just slightly toward your heels. You don't want the low back to flatten completely, just come to a normal lordotic curve. As soon as we start backbending this curve becomes more pronounced and can lead to some amount of back pain. By starting off in a normal curve we allow the spine to open a little more gradually and ensure that we don't blast into a pose and end up injured.
 - 5) Pay attention to the position of your head. Your neck should feel comfortable. If it hurts your neck to take it out of alignment with the upper spine keep it in line.
- Always practice with a mind for compassion for yourself.

Week 5 Stretches



Shoulder Stretch:

Overhead Wall Stretch- Stand facing wall, place forearms on the wall: shoulder distance apart, parallel to each other, walk feet back and lean into the arms until you feel the stretch. Press chest towards the floor. You can also do this with your hands on the wall and your arms extended. Keep your spine long, do not allow your back to sag.



Back Stretch:

Back Arch at Pole- Stand in front of a pole and grab it with your hands above your head, keeping your elbows as straight as possible. Proceed to arch your back carefully without separating your legs and coccyx from the pole. This is another exercise that's good for your shoulder elasticity as well. If you do not have a pole at home, you can use a door.



Side Splits Stretch:

Monkey Splits- From a low lunge, begin to lengthen your front leg out in front of you, using your hands on the floor or up on blocks for support. The hip of your front leg is pulling back, and the hip of your back leg is pulling forward to try to keep the hips square. Hold. Repeat on second side.



Middle Splits Stretch:

Pancake- Start by sitting up tall, and spreading your legs wide apart. Then slowly and with control, lift your chest to create length in your spine. Flex your toes to create some tension along your legs. Place your fingertips just in front of your pelvis on the floor, and slowly walk them forward, moving your chest towards the floor. Only go as far as you can with a long straight spine.

Week 5 Chart

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Shoulders							
Back							
Side Splits <small>(Left Side) (Right Side)</small>							
Middle Splits							