

5 YOGA MOVES FOR TRAIL RUNNERS

THAT WON'T BEND YOU LIKE A PRETZEL

Oh no, I'm not flexible enough to do yoga," I hear you shout. It's OK, I completely understand why for many runners the mere thought of rolling out a yoga mat and standing barefoot imitating a tree might seem unappealing. I guess the images of extremely flexible ex-gymnasts creating stunning shapes with their bodies hasn't done yoga many favours in making it look accessible to other athletes, especially runners.

The truth is yoga is about so much more than just showing off your flexibility. The word yoga simply means to connect, join or balance. It's the union of your mind, body and breath, and as a runner you know firsthand the importance of these three things working in harmony.

Adopting a regular yoga practice can help you build both mental and physical strength. It will help improve your posture and your body awareness as well as improving muscular imbalances within the body which, unchecked, could lead to injury.

When considering yoga, you should be aware that the yoga postures will not look exactly the same on everyone. Whilst of course we are aiming for certain alignment in the poses to gain maximum benefits and avoid injuries, it's important to remember that not everybody is built identically.

The yoga asanas (poses) that I am suggesting to you here can be practiced as part of a yoga flow sequence or independently as standalone poses. I suggest that, for maximum benefit, you hold each pose for between three to five deep breaths. By breathing deeply, we are aiming to activate the parasympathetic nervous system. This should help the body come out of fight and flight mode and support your recovery post run.

And, while I am demonstrating these yoga poses in a pair of trainers, I would recommend you do hop on a mat and practice them in bare feet as it will be much an altogether more comfortable and relaxing experience.



PICS: THE STUDIO WIZARD

WHO IS GEMMA NAYLOR?

Gemma is not only a qualified yoga instructor, but also a personal trainer and life coach. She specialises in 'lifestyle interventions', to help people from all walks of life perform under pressure. More info: stressbuster.london

UTTHITA PARSVAKONASANA EXTENDED SIDE ANGLE POSE

How to do it

- Start in a high lunge position
- Turn the back foot out 90 degrees as you open the hips
- Rest your front arm on your thigh as you bring the other arm above your head opening the shoulder

Benefits

- Strengthens and stretches the legs, knees and ankles
- Stretches the groin, spine, waist, chest and shoulders



PARIVRITTA ANJANEYASANA LOW LUNGE WITH ROTATION

How to do it

- From a high lunge position, lower your back knee to the floor.
- Lift up through the spine as you rotate your body in the direction of your front knee
- Use the back of your wrist of the opposite arm to front leg to help you twist deeper into the pose
- Lengthen the other arm in line with your shoulder to open your chest

Benefits

- Opens the chest and back
- Opens the hips
- Stretches the quadriceps and hip flexor



VIRABHADRASANA III WARRIOR 3

Do not practice this pose if you have a heart condition.

How to do it

- Start in a high lunge position with your arms straight above your head.
- Move your body weight forward over your front leg
- Lift your back leg up as you lower your body forward
- Aim to make a straight horizontal line with your body

If you have tight hamstrings this pose might feel challenging. Don't worry if you aren't in a perfectly straight line to begin with, this will improve with practice.

Benefits

- Strengthens ankles, legs, back and shoulders
- Lengthens hamstrings
- Improves balance and concentration



UTKATA KONASANA GODDESS POSE

How to do it

- Stand with your legs one leg length apart
- Open your hips as you turn your feet out 45 degrees
- Rise up on to the balls of the feet and bend the knees, keeping them in line with the feet
- Engage your core and lengthen the spine as you allow the hips to lower
- Place the palms of the hands together
- Relax your shoulders and open your chest

Benefits

- Improves balance
- Builds strength in the feet, ankles, calves, quadriceps, glutes and core
- Elongates the spine
- Lengthens adductors



UTKATASANA AWKWARD POSE

How to do it

- Stand with your feet hip width apart
- Rise up on to the balls of your feet
- Bring your arms out in front of you in line with your shoulders
- Engage your abdominals
- Bend your knees 90 degrees

Benefits

- Strengthens the feet, ankles, legs and core
- Lengthens the spine
- Improves posture
- Improves balance
- Improves focus

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