

Surya Namaskar – Salute the Sun

Important notes:

- This reverential sequence is all about honouring the sun, the source of all life (translation of Surya Namaskar is to bow to the Sun).
- Flows help to warm up the body, bring focus into body and mind. It is important to be conscious of your alignment.
- Flows develop strength, flexibility, grace and co-ordination.
- Flows unleash held energy. Movements co-ordinated with breath increase awareness of breath and flow. Flows are an excellent whole body exercise - you stretch, strengthen, and warm your whole being from the inside out.
- Flows done at a pace stimulate the cardio vascular system so take time to settle the body back down afterwards and feel the effects of the actions on body and mind.

Preparatory work

Stand in a good Tadasana before going into the flow. Weight even on both feet. Stretch legs up, knees straight. Pull up thigh muscles – draw thigh muscles towards the bones. Lift the hips. Move the sacrum and coccyx (tailbone) forwards and up. Lengthen the spine and trunk. Lift the front of the body. Shoulders back with shoulder blades in. Arms hanging loosely at sides, Extend neck up, have chin parallel to the floor, relax the face, look straight ahead. Even extending of left and right sides of body.

Be realistic. A flow that you did with ease in the flush of youth may be more challenging a few decades later. Therefore choose a flow that is comfortable for you at the age you now are and in keeping with the agility level that you now have.

Before practising full Sun Salutation, warm up with versions of flow (e.g. cat flow – gently arching the spine down and up in turn in synergy with in breath and out breath, resp., and keeping the head in line i.e. the cervical vertebrae in the neck are to be held in line with the rest of the spine). Also warm up by practising the Sun Salutations that you find easy.

The classic knees down position can be very awkward.



✧ This is also known as an Indian push up and a considerable amount of upper body strength is required to move into out of this position. If the strength is not there, there is more potential for injury.

The move from cobra to downward dog as per the below is not a natural one.




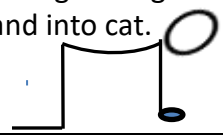


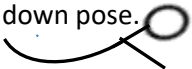
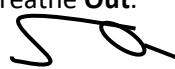
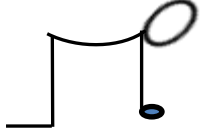





This move may not be easy to execute when you are a “certain age”. Rather, Sun Salutations are best made up of moves that naturally follow each other e.g. if you arch the spine down you may want to follow that move with arching the spine up. It is better to put extra moves in in order to **bring the spine into a neutral position** in between the more extreme moves such as cobra, if with hands supported. For this reason, the versions below include the addition of face down pose to be executed in between the extreme positions.

Surya Namaskar - Salute the Sun

This easier version omits the lunge and the down dog pose.

Breathing pattern detailed above each pose. Inhalation labelled "In" and Exhalation labelled "Out".

1	2 IN	3 OUT	4 IN	5 OUT	6 IN AND OUT
-- 			Alternate taking right leg back and into cat first with taking left leg back and into cat. 		In as you come Out as out as you move to face down pose 
7 IN	8 IN AND OUT	9 IN	10 OUT	11 IN	12 OUT
Breath In as come into a * supported Cobra and Out back to face down pose. 	Start to push back as you breathe In ** and stretch back as you breathe Out . 				

Remember to keep the pelvis and the upper body moving together as you take the forward bend (**no. 3**). Keep the knees soft and contract the abdomen (the front core of the body) to create support for the lower back. Head stays in line with spine.

Between **3** and **4**, take right leg down first time and left leg down second time (once you have worked on each side you have completed 1 round). Note that the illustration for **no. 4** shows the arching the spine down position. Ensure there isn't an overarching and that head stays in line with spine, making a gentle concave shape.

Ref. **no. 7** - * If you find the Cobra pose easy, you can have the hands adjacent to the chest but be aware that as you are in the pose for a short time, good arm and hand positioning is needed. It can be more comfortable to keep the hands spread open and place at each side at the front end of the mat before returning to face down pose. This ensures the spine is supported evenly.





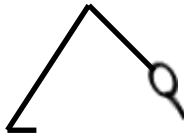


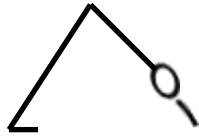




Ref **no. 8** ** As you prepare to push back to extended child pose, you move your hands into position so that they are back next to chest ready to push back as you inhale and continue to take the buttocks to the heels as you exhale.

Between **9** and **10** step forwards with right leg first time and left leg second time.

Ref. **no. 10** to return from forward bend to standing, soften knees a little and lead with the chest and once half way up ensure that the upper body and pelvis move together to return to the standing position.

Surya Namaskar - Salute the Sun

Breathing pattern is detailed above each pose and in the explanations.

1	2 IN	3 OUT	4 IN	5 OUT	6 IN AND OUT
			As you take right leg back into lunge, lower leg on mat. 		Drop knees as you breathe In; into face down pose as you breathe Out. 
7 IN	8 OUT	9 IN	10 OUT	11 IN	12 OUT
Breathe In to Cobra and Out to face down pose and on next In breath move hands next to chest and → 	on Out breath roll over toes, tops of feet down to push up to down dog. 	Come back with opposite leg to the one you took back in 4. 			

No. 2 Gentle lean back with knees staying straight and head staying in line with spine.

No. 4, take right leg back in the lunge first time (knee down) and left leg down second time (once you have worked on each side you have completed 1 round).

No. 7. Note that it is safer for your back to come out of cobra pose into face down pose (on an exhalation) and as you breathe in to then position the hands next to the chest. On the next exhalation, you can roll over the toes and push back to down dog pose.

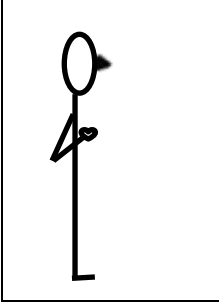
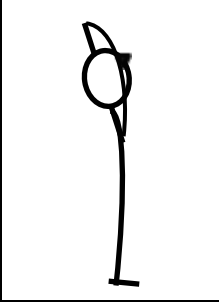
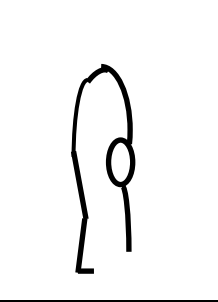
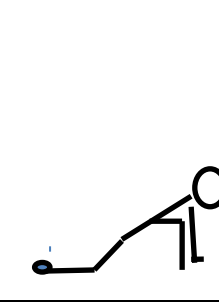
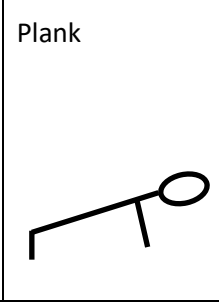
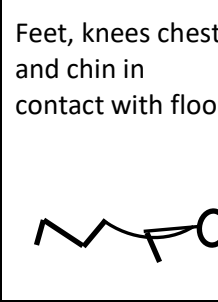
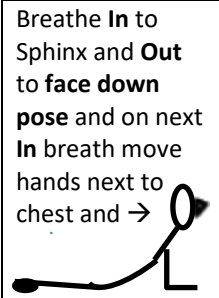
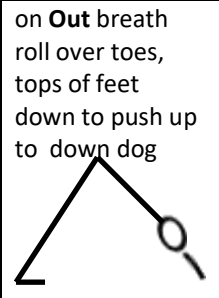
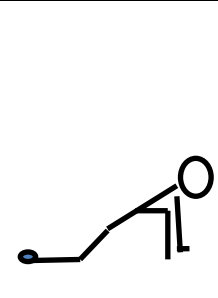
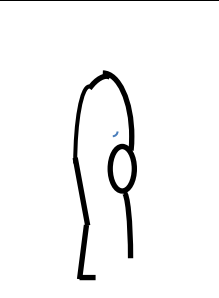
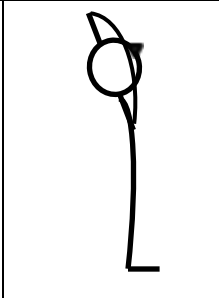
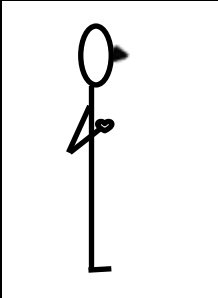
Before **no. 9** is explained, it is worth mentioning that traditionally right leg goes back into the lunge at no. **4** and at **no. 9** the right leg returns to the front. Next time, the left leg is the active leg stepping back at **4** and returning at **9**.

Help for **no. 9** To move from down dog pose and back to lunge pose, either:

- a) Look forwards to where you want your foot to go and slightly move the corresponding hand in order to place the travelling forward foot in between the hands to be back in lunge.
- b) It is easier to drop the knee of the leg that is going to stay back (in the lunge) and then **step** forward the leg that is to come between the hands.

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A version for advanced practitioners including plank pose. However, there is a break at **7**.

1	2 IN	3 OUT	4 IN	5 OUT	6 IN AND OUT
				Plank 	Feet, knees chest and chin in contact with floor 
7 IN	8 OUT	9 IN	10 OUT	11 IN	12 OUT
Breathe In to Sphinx and Out to face down pose and on next In breath move hands next to chest and → 	on Out breath roll over toes, tops of feet down to push up to down dog 				

Note: don't try to move from cobra pose to down dog pose

Re **No. 7** Hold Sphinx pose **for 8 breaths**. Then move into face down
On your next inhalation, move the hands back nearer to the chest and on
over the toes to push back to down dog position.



pose on an exhalation.
the exhalation roll

Benefits of sphinx pose (*source: Yoga journal*):

- Strengthens the spine
- Stretches chest and lungs, shoulders, and abdomen
- Firms the buttocks
- Stimulates abdominal organs
- Helps relieve stress

Cobra pose is an advanced pose, best practised statically rather than in a flow practice. In recent times, safety in yoga has prevailed over the need to stay with tradition. Therefore, cobra pose is often practised using an exhalation to come up into the pose in order to engage the deeper abdominal muscles and give support to the spine. Only supple practitioners are able to lift into cobra pose on an inhalation and these such people have the strength to hold the upper body up even with bent arms placed next to the chest. If this is the case for you, then you can substitute cobra pose for sphinx.

Flows are most effective if executed gracefully and with comfort. The cardio-vascular element comes in with the repetition e.g. practising 6 rounds in succession.