

# The Art of Adjustments and Alignment

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Adjustments and alignment are foundational aspects of yoga practice that ensure safety, deepen poses, and enhance the practitioner's overall experience. They help practitioners achieve correct posture, maximise benefits, and minimise the risk of injury. The art lies in using both verbal and physical guidance thoughtfully, respecting the practitioner's boundaries and individual body.

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## Why Are Adjustments and Alignment Important?

### 1. Safety:

- Correct alignment reduces the risk of injury by distributing weight evenly and preventing strain.

### 2. Enhanced Benefits:

- Proper posture ensures optimal engagement of muscles and deeper access to a pose's physical and energetic benefits.

### 3. Individual Adaptation:

- Adjustments help practitioners modify poses according to their body's needs, limitations, and strengths.

### 4. Body Awareness:

- Encourages mindfulness by helping practitioners tune into their alignment and sensations.

### 5. Progression:

- Subtle adjustments can guide practitioners toward achieving more advanced versions of poses over time.
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## Types of Adjustments

### 1. Verbal Adjustments

- Use descriptive language to guide students toward better alignment.

- Example: Instead of saying, “Straighten your spine,” say, “Imagine a string pulling the crown of your head upward while grounding through your sit bones.”

## **2. Demonstration**

- Show the correct alignment yourself or use a model to visually explain adjustments.
- Avoid over-demonstrating to maintain attention on students.

## **3. Physical Adjustments**

- Hands-on guidance to help students move into better alignment or experience the pose more deeply.
- Always seek consent before physical adjustments.

## **4. Energetic Adjustments**

- Subtle adjustments using presence or touch to guide energy flow without altering the structure of the pose.

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## **Principles of Effective Adjustments**

### **1. Ask for Consent:**

- Respect personal boundaries by asking permission before making physical adjustments.
- Use cues like, “Would you like an adjustment for this pose?”

### **2. Observe First:**

- Watch how students naturally approach the pose.
- Assess their alignment, flexibility, and overall posture before intervening.

### **3. Be Gentle and Precise:**

- Use light, intentional touch to guide rather than force movements.
- Avoid sudden or aggressive adjustments that may cause discomfort.

### **4. Focus on the Foundation:**

- Prioritise correcting foundational alignment first (e.g., feet placement in standing poses).

## 5. Adapt to the Practitioner:

- Understand that every body is unique, and what works for one person may not work for another.
- Offer alternatives for students with injuries or limitations.

## 6. Stay Mindful:

- Be present and sensitive to the student's reactions, ensuring adjustments feel supportive and not intrusive.

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## Alignment in Common Poses

### 1. Tadasana (Mountain Pose):

- Feet parallel, hip-width apart.
- Knees slightly soft, not locked.
- Engage the thighs, draw the navel inward and upward.
- Lengthen the spine, shoulders relaxed, and gaze forward.

### 2. Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward-Facing Dog):

- Hands shoulder-width apart, pressing evenly through palms.
- Feet hip-width apart, heels reaching toward the floor.
- Spine lengthened, hips lifted, and chest open.

### 3. Virabhadrasana II (Warrior II):

- Front knee directly above the ankle.
- Back foot angled slightly in, with the arch aligned to the front heel.
- Arms extended parallel to the floor, shoulders relaxed.

### 4. Trikonasana (Triangle Pose):

- Front foot pointing forward, back foot at a 90-degree angle.
- Hips stacked, chest open, and spine elongated.
- Top arm reaching upward, bottom arm resting lightly on the shin or a block.

### 5. Savasana (Corpse Pose):

- Body completely relaxed, arms slightly away from the sides.

- Palms facing upward, feet falling naturally outward.
  - Support the knees or neck with props if necessary for comfort.
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## **Techniques for Physical Adjustments**

### **1. Guiding Rather Than Forcing:**

- Encourage the student to engage muscles actively rather than relying solely on your adjustment.

### **2. Anchor Points:**

- Use one hand to stabilise and the other to guide movement (e.g., stabilising the hip while gently rotating the shoulder in a twist).

### **3. Supportive Touch:**

- Place your hands in areas that feel secure, such as the lower back or shoulders, avoiding sensitive zones.

### **4. Leverage Props:**

- Suggest using blocks, straps, or bolsters to help students achieve proper alignment without strain.

### **5. Encourage Feedback:**

- Ask students how an adjustment feels and modify if they express discomfort.
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## **Common Challenges and Solutions**

### **1. Over-adjusting:**

- Avoid making too many adjustments in one session, as it can overwhelm students.
- Focus on one key alignment point at a time.

### **2. Fear of Injuring Students:**

- Use gentle adjustments and avoid forcing movements beyond their natural range.

### **3. Varied Levels in Class:**

- Offer verbal cues and modifications to cater to both beginners and advanced practitioners.
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## **Building Confidence as a Teacher**

### **1. Practice Adjustments:**

- Work with fellow teachers or friends to refine your skills.
- Attend workshops or training focused on adjustments.

### **2. Observe and Learn:**

- Watch experienced teachers to see how they approach alignment and adjustments.

### **3. Foster Connection:**

- Build trust with students by being approachable and respectful.
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## **Conclusion**

The art of adjustments and alignment is a blend of observation, intuition, and skill. When approached with mindfulness and respect, these techniques can profoundly enhance a student's practice. By prioritising safety, encouraging self-awareness, and adapting to individual needs, you can create a supportive environment where students feel empowered to explore and deepen their yoga journey.