

RANJANA YOGA CLASS

Twists and Backbends

Plus Balancing Poses: A Beginner's Guide

Gentle versions of three pose families, with safe alignment cues and a 20-minute sequence

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General education only. Not medical advice. Speak with your doctor before starting any new practice.

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1. What these three pose families is

Twists turn the spine, backbends open the front of the body, and balancing poses train steadiness. Each asks something different of the spine, hips and attention.

Beginners do best with gentle versions, held for a few breaths. Depth matters less than keeping the spine long, the breath smooth and the movement even.

The short answer

Start with seated and supine twists, small backbends such as cobra and bridge, and supported balances near a wall. Lengthen before you twist or bend, and stop at a mild stretch.

2. Before you begin: safety first

General education only. Check with your doctor first if you are pregnant, have high blood pressure, a heart, lung, joint or spine condition, osteoporosis, an eye condition such as glaucoma, or have had recent surgery or injury.

Stop and rest if you feel:

- sharp, pinching or burning pain (a mild stretch is fine, pain is a stop sign);
- dizziness, nausea or breathlessness;
- numbness or tingling, or pressure in the head or neck.

Move within comfort

Do not push into pain, numbness, tingling or dizziness. If you are pregnant, have an injury, joint or spine problem, high or low blood pressure, osteoporosis, glaucoma or any other condition, check with your doctor before starting, and tell your teacher. Be extra careful with deep twists and backbends if you have a disc or spine condition, or are pregnant.

3. Gentle versions to learn

Family	Pose	Key points
Twist	Seated twist	Sit tall, turn from the middle back, hand on the opposite knee.
Twist	Supine twist	Lie back, drop both knees to one side, shoulders resting.
Backbend	Cobra (low)	Elbows bent, lift the chest a little, keep the neck long.
Backbend	Bridge	Feet hip-width, lift the hips, press into the feet.
Balance	Tree	Foot on calf or thigh, never on the knee; a wall helps.
Balance	Eagle legs, easy	Cross the legs lightly; toes on the floor if needed.

Lengthen on the inhale and deepen only slightly on the exhale. Come out of each pose slowly.

4. A 20-minute sequence

Time	Practice	Notes
3 min	Cat and cow, easy seated breathing	Warm the spine.
4 min	Seated twist, both sides	Turn gently.
4 min	Low cobra, 3 rounds	Short holds.
4 min	Bridge, 3 rounds	Lower with control.
3 min	Tree, both sides, near a wall	Fix the gaze.
2 min	Supine twist and rest	Let go.

5. Your four-week plan

Week	Focus	Length	What to notice
1	Seated and supine twists	10 min	Is the movement smooth?
2	Add low cobra and bridge	15 min	Is the lower back comfortable?
3	Add tree near a wall	18 min	Are you steady?
4	Full sequence	20 min	Practise 2-3 times a week.

6. Choosing a class or teacher

In class, the teacher should explain how to prepare for a twist or backbend and offer easier options. Ask about alternatives if a pose pinches the back or knee.

- Tell the teacher about any injury, surgery, pregnancy or health condition before class.
- Ask which poses are optional; a good teacher says most are.
- If a teacher dismisses pain as part of the process, find another class.

7. Practising at home

At home, practise near a wall or chair for balance and on a non-slip surface. Twist from the whole spine, not the neck or knees.

8. Honest expectations

These poses can help with mobility and balance for many people. They do not treat spine conditions, and claims that twists detoxify the body are not supported. See your doctor for back or balance problems.

9. Common mistakes and fixes

Mistake	Fix
Twisting from the lower back	Lengthen first and turn from the middle back.
Crunching the neck in backbends	Keep the neck long.
Placing the foot on the knee in tree	Use calf or thigh.
Forcing depth	Mild stretch only.
Holding the breath	Keep breathing.

10. Questions people ask

Are backbends safe for beginners?

Small, gentle versions are suitable for many people. Check with your doctor if you have back problems.

Do twists detoxify?

No. There is no good evidence for that. They are a spinal movement.

How do I improve balance?

Practise near a wall, fix your gaze on a point, and build up slowly.

How long should I hold?

3 to 5 breaths is enough.

11. A pre-session checklist

- Have I eaten lightly, at least two hours ago, and had some water?
- Is my space clear, warm and free from interruptions?
- Do I know what I will practise, and how long I have?
- Is there anything in my body today (pain, tiredness, illness) that means I should do less?

- Do I know my stop signs: sharp pain, dizziness, breathlessness?

Running through these five questions takes less than a minute and prevents most beginner problems.

12. Your first week, day by day

Day	Suggestion
1	Read this guide. Try just the warm-up and the final rest.
2	Rest, or a five-minute walk.
3	Repeat day 1 and add one new pose or step.
4	Rest.
5	Practise a short version. Notice how you feel afterwards.
6	Write a few lines in the practice log.
7	Rest. Plan next week from what you noticed.

Three short sessions a week are a good start. Regular, gentle practice builds confidence, and rest days let the body adapt.

13. Glossary

Term	Plain meaning
Spinal extension	Arching the back.
Rotation	Turning the spine.
Drishti	A steady gaze point.

Reminder

This guide is general education and not medical advice. It does not diagnose, treat or cure any condition. If you have a health concern, speak with your doctor before starting a new practice.

Practice log

Print this page and keep a short record. Notes help you see patterns over time.

Day	Minutes	Poses done	How it felt	Notes
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				