



my favourite yoga

YOGA IS A VITAL PART OF MY LIFE,

I've been practising yoga for the past 10 years and I'm truly passionate about it. Not only does it make my body feel strong and supple, it centres me, so I can connect with my true self and live in the present moment.

My private yoga instructor, Charlotte Dodson (pictured, right) shows you my favourite workout, incorporated into a dynamic hatha class. For more information about Charlotte's yoga style, visit www.charlottedodson.com.

Begin with a quiet moment

Sit cross-legged, eyes closed and hands in prayer. Breathe in through your nostrils, lips closed, allowing your 'inhale' to expand and your 'exhale' to contract your body. Keep an even flow of inhalation and exhalation, focusing on the sound of each breath. Sit quietly for five breaths and build to a few minutes or longer.

■ If you're new to yoga, start with the beginner's poses. Ask your yoga instructor for guidance if you want to try the more advanced poses.

TREE POSE (Vrikshasana)

Symbolising the steady, rooted stance of a tree, this pose strengthens your legs, opens the hips and stabilises your sacrum (large triangle-shaped bone at the base of the vertebrae).

Yogic lesson:

To be balanced, stable and grounded.

■ Start by standing with your feet slightly apart and hands together as if in prayer. Raise your right leg, and place the foot against the inner thigh of the left leg – either below or above the kneecap, depending on your flexibility.

■ Spread the toes on your left foot wide and move the knee of the raised leg out to the side to open the hip area. Gaze directly ahead, focusing on one point.

■ Legs active, breathe deeply and naturally for five breaths and build to a minute. With each inhalation, feel the top of the head reach to the sky and on exhalation, press the grounded foot deeper into the earth.

■ Lower right leg to starting position and repeat with left leg.



Tip:

Try closing your eyes to find your inner balance.

workout

SO I'VE ASKED MY YOGA INSTRUCTOR TO DEMONSTRATE MY FAVOURITE POSES

Tip:

Focus on releasing a situation, emotion or tension in a body part while exhaling.



REVOLVING LUNGE (*Parivritta parsvakonasana*)

This twisting lunge strengthens the legs and feet, releases the ankles, mobilises the pelvis and helps relieve back and neck tension.

Yogic lesson: To be centred and see life from every angle.

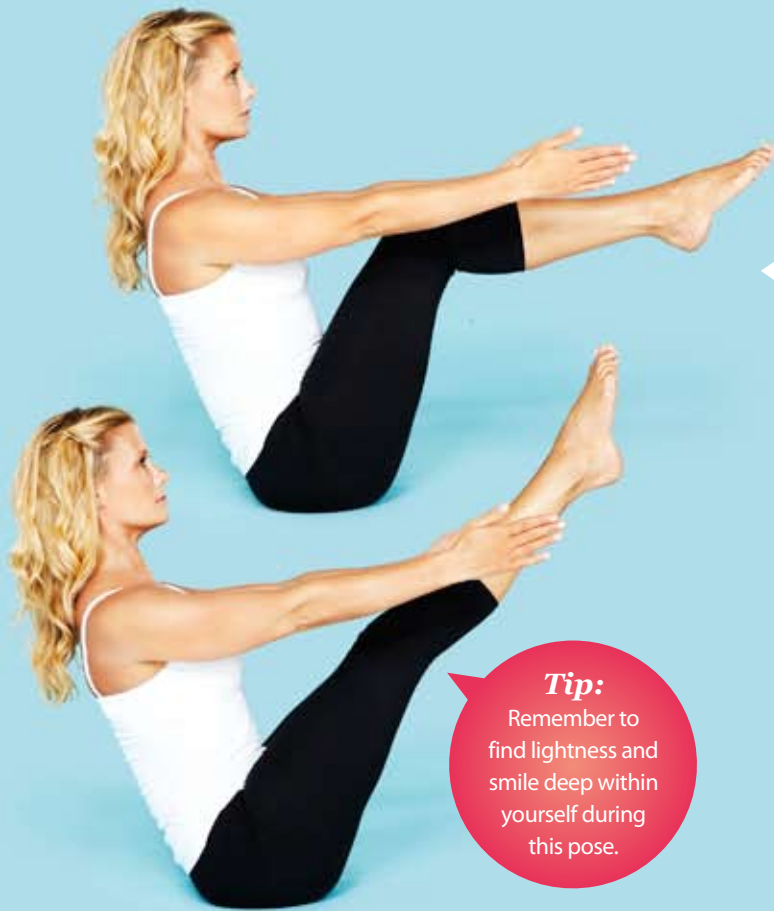
- Begin by lunging forward, before dropping the knee of the back leg onto the floor so that

your feet are about a metre apart. Hold your hands together as if in prayer at your heart centre.

- Keeping the knee and ankle of the front leg in line, rotate your upper body from the waist, so the elbow of the left arm sits on the outer side of the front knee.
- Turn your head to look behind you, past the top of your shoulder. If you're finding this difficult to

do, or your neck is feeling tender, look down at the big toe of your front foot.

- To deepen the pose, raise your back leg onto your toes. You should feel a slight pressure on the inner palms as they press towards each other and help you balance.
- Hold the pose for five breaths, then repeat on the opposite leg. ▶



BOAT POSE (*Navasana*)

Good for developing balance, toning the legs, and building back muscles and core strength.

Yogic lesson:

To nurture inner strength and find the courage to follow your dreams.

keeping your chin tipped slightly towards your chest.

- Keep your spine long, chest open, shoulders back and feet soft. Hold onto your legs if you need to and, if your back is tender, lower your feet to the floor.

- Start by sitting with the knees bent and feet on the floor, and reclining slightly. Raise both legs, so the knees are in line with your chest, holding both arms out in front on either side of the legs, and

- To deepen the pose, gradually lift your legs higher, with feet pointing upwards to make a 'V' shape.

- Hold the pose for five breaths, lower your legs into a cross-legged position and repeat twice.

Tip:

Remember to find lightness and smile deep within yourself during this pose.

WHEEL POSE (*Urdhva dhanurasana*)

Great for toning, this pose opens up the chest, lungs and shoulders and strengthens the feet, hands and arms.

Yogic lesson:

To create freedom in your heart and embrace every opportunity.

- Lie on your back with knees bent, feet hip-width apart and palms on the floor. Press feet into the floor.

- As you exhale, roll up slowly from your sit bones (located in the bottom) through to your lower spine until the pelvis is raised upwards. Roll the shoulders under your

body and tuck your chin slightly into the throat. Press down on the big toes to ensure inner and outer thigh muscles are engaged.

- For an advanced pose, inhale, lift your arms over shoulders, pressing hands into the floor. Exhale, roll your body off the floor to form an arch like a rainbow. Keep arms straight and legs engaged. If your back is tender, lift up onto your toes or roll your body back to the floor.

- For the basic and advanced poses hold for five breaths, breathing naturally and deeply. Repeat three times.



Tip:

Hold the pose as still as you can and let your breath flow freely.

SHOULDER STAND (*Sarvangasana*)

The queen of all yoga poses *sarvangasana* has benefits for the whole body, as well as helping to calm the nervous system and promoting sound sleep.

Yogic lesson: To rejuvenate, nourish and find peacefulness within.

■ Start by sitting down, with one side of your body against the wall. Swing both your legs so your buttocks and the heels of both legs are up against the wall, and you're on your back.

■ Bending the knees, so both your feet are on the wall, roll up slowly from your sacrum through to your shoulders – simultaneously rolling the shoulders under – until your knees are in line with the ankle bones. Place your hands either flat on the floor alongside you with the palms facing up, or use them for extra back and spine support.

■ Tuck the chin into your throat and keep the pressure off your neck by taking the weight onto the shoulder

girdle and arms, keeping the feet and legs engaged.

■ Hold this pose, or for a more advanced move raise one leg at a time off the wall. Keep the foundation of the shoulders and elbows strong by pressing your hands against your back. Keep the legs straight and your chest open. Let feet fall back to the wall and roll your body back down at any time.

■ For either the basic or advanced poses, breathe naturally and deeply for five breaths and build to a minute.



Finish with a gratitude prayer

- Finish your practice crossed-legged, your hands in prayer.
- Take a quiet moment to honour all that you are. Be thankful for the practice of yoga – it's a reflection of yourself and teaches us life's journey, which is to cherish every moment. ☺



Tip:
Remember to relax, let go of your day, and trust your life's journey.

