LAILIN YOGA

DAY 7 - GREET THE NEW YEAR - STANDING AND FLOOR POSES

Transcript

It's Day 7 of *The 12 Days of Yoga*. Happy New Year!

And what better way to greet the New Year than with a sun salutation.
Nearly every yoga tradition has its own sun salutation sequence. Sun salutations are almost a whole practice in themselves as they contain nearly every type of yoga pose. The sequence can be practised slowly, holding and experiencing each pose to create a relaxing, meditative experience. Or the sequence can be performed rhythmically to provide a stimulating, dynamic practice.
This recording is for those who are comfortable coming down onto the floor and moving between standing and floor poses. If you prefer a sun salutation for the chair, then refer to my other recording for Day 7.
This sun salutation is a sequence of 12 poses that are performed twice – the first time with one leg in front for the lunges, the second with the other leg in front. In this session, the first round (technically, a half round) will be performed slowly, giving you time to become familiar with the poses, before moving into the second half round at a slightly faster pace.

(1:40) PREPARING FOR THE SUN SALUTATION

Stand at the front of your mat, feet together or apart, but no more than hip width (it varies with different traditions).
Let your hands relax by your sides. Close the eyes, or if that's not comfortable for you, looking down.

Take the awareness to the crown of the head, and slowly scan your body from your head down to your toes. With each out breath, feel any tensions trickling down through the body and into the ground.
Move the awareness to the feet, and become aware of the ground beneath your feet, the earth that provides us with support and nutrients. Feel this vital force emerging from the earth, rising through the body, like an internal sun, warming and waking up every cell.
Bring the hands together in prayer position at the heart, open the eyes and prepare to move.

(3:20) FIRST HALF ROUND – LEFT FOOT IN FRONT

1. Breathing in, raise your arms overhead, separating the hands so they're shoulder width apart.

   If this is uncomfortable for you, bring the arms by the side and turn the palms out.
   Look up without taking the neck back too far, and then, open the chest for a little upper back bend.
   Hold this position for a couple of breaths.

2. Breathing out, bring the hands to the hips and bend forward from your hips placing your finger tips or palms on either side of your feet.

   If you like something a bit stronger, keep the arms extended beside the head as you bend forward, and then let them relax towards the ground.
   Bend the knees to protect your back.
   If you have high blood pressure, vertigo, any conditions where you don't want any pressure in the head, keep the head up.
   If the forward bend does not feel right for you, bend the knees and come into a squat with the hands in prayer position at the heart. Ensure that the knees are stacked over the ankles and not falling in or coming out wide.

3. On an inhalation, step back with the right foot into a lunge.

   Place padding under the right knee if needed.
   Ensure that the left knee is stacked above or is slightly behind the left ankle, and if it isn't, draw the left foot forward a little.
   Keep the hands or fingertips close the ground and look up, being careful not to over-extend the neck.
   Breathe.

4. Exhale and step the left foot back so the feet are hip width apart.

   Turn the toes under and push the buttocks to the sky, coming into downward dog, making an upside-down V-shape with your body.
   If downward dog is not for you, come onto your hands and knees for cat. Tuck the tail bone under, round up through the back, and if it's OK for you, drop the head.
   Hold this position.

5. Bring your weight forward and drop your knees, chest and chin to the floor, elbows close to the body, shoulders down, coming into caterpillar.

   An alternative pose that works the core is plank or half plank, where you bring the body forward so the shoulders are stacked over the wrists and the body is in a straight line from the head to the toes for plank, or the head to the knees for half plank.
   If caterpillar, plank or half plank is not suitable for you, stay on your hands and knees, let the tail bone extend up, the chest come forward, and raise the head.

6. Breathing in, bring the body forward, lower it, and raise the torso up into sphinx or cobra.

   So from a position where you're laying down on your abdomen, you have your hands beside your head, thumbs about level with the eyes for sphinx; or for cobra, the hands are placed under the shoulder.
   Bring your nose along the floor, and raise the nose, the chin, the chest off the floor.
   Bring the elbows in, let the shoulders come back, and come to resting on your forearms if you're in sphinx; on your hands if you're in cobra.
   Draw the chest forward and extend through the neck. If there is any pinching in the lower back, come down, you've gone too far.
   If these poses are not for you, and then move into another round of cat, dropping the tailbone, rounding the back, dropping the head.
   Close the eyes, hold the position and breathe.

7. Lower back to the floor, and on an exhalation, push back into down dog, feet hip width apart, arms at shoulder width.

   Or alternatively, come onto the hands and knees for cat with the tailbone up, opening through the chest.

8. On your next inhalation, step forward with the left foot back into the lunge (and yes, that is correct. In this salutation it is the left foot.

   Place padding under the right knee if needed. Ensure that the left knee is stacked above or behind the left ankle, and if it isn't, draw that left foot forward again.

9. Breathing out, step forward into the forward bend.

   Bend the knees, if needed, to protect the lower back, or come into a squat with the hands together in prayer position at the heart.

10. On your next inhalation, slowly raise the torso, bring the arms overhead or let them open to the sides. Open the chest - little upper back bend.
11. And on the exhalation, bring the hands together at prayer position at the heart.

(11:19) SECOND HALF ROUND – RIGHT FOOT IN FRONT

So that's half a round. Ready to do the other side?
Remember:

- For the lunges the right foot will be forward and the left foot back.
- If the forward bend is uncomfortable for you, try a squat.
- And if downward dog, caterpillar or cobra is not suitable, come onto your hands and knees and do cat.

Don't worry if you're having problems moving with the breath. This will come with practice. For now, focus on the movements and ensure that you're breathing, **not** holding the breath!

Moving to the second side …

1. Stand at the front of your mat, hands together in prayer position.
2. Inhale. Raise the arms above the head or let them relax, opening the palms sides. Open up the chest.
3. Exhale. Gently come forward from the hips. Bring the hands on either side of the feet.

   Or come into a squat, hands at prayer position at the heart.

4. Inhale. Step back with the left foot into a lunge.
5. Exhale. Step the right foot back so the feet are hip width apart, and push up into down dog.

   Or come onto your hands and knees, round your back in cat.

6. Keeping the breath out, move into caterpillar, plank or half plank, or arch the back in cat.
7. … and then on an inhalation, flow into cobra or sphinx, or round the back in cat.
8. Exhale. Push back up into down dog, or arch the back in cat.
9. Inhale. Step forward with the right foot into a lunge.
10. Exhale. Step the left foot forward coming into the forward bend, or into the squat with the hands in prayer position at the heart.
11. Inhale. Raise the torso, bring the arms overhead or let them relax opening the palms to the sides - upper back bend.
12. Exhale. Bring the hands together at prayer position at the heart.

Close the eyes, and let the effects of the practice settle in the body.

If you have time, do a couple more rounds of the sun salutation at your own pace.
Otherwise, come down now into *shavasana*, laying on your back, feet hip width apart, arms by the side.
Rest here for a couple of minutes (or even longer) and then, when you are ready, sit up and continue with your day.

Aum shanti!