

# Forward Bending & Hip Stretching

Assessment



## Vocabulary Mix-and-Match

1. SUPTA PADANGUSTHASANA
  2. YOGANIDRASANA
  3. UPAVISTHA KONASANA
  4. JANU SIRSASANA
  5. AGNISTHAMBHASANA
  6. PARIVRTTA JANU SIRSASANA
  7. TIRIANG MUKHA EKA PADA PASCHIMOTTANASNA
  8. PASCHIMOTTANASANA
  9. APANASANA
  10. BALASANA
  11. BADDHA KONASANA
- A. Fire Log Pose / Double Pigeon / Square Pose
  - B. Intense Stretch of the West / Seated Forward Bend
  - C. Yogic Sleep Pose
  - D. Wind-Relieving Pose / Knees to Chest
  - E. Bound Angle / Cobblers Pose
  - F. Seated Angle Pose
  - G. Revolved Head to Knee Pose
  - H. Head to Knee Pose
  - I. Three-Limbed Forward Bend
  - J. Child's Pose
  - K. Reclined Hand to Toe Pose

1. What is forward bending?
2. What is a common effect of all types of forward bends?
3. What is the anatomical term for forward bending?
4. Name four types of forward bends. Explain the effect and provide examples for each.
5. For what conditions are forward bends contraindicated?
6. What are the general physical effects of forward bends?
7. What are the energetic effects?
8. What is meant by the terms “anterior tilt” and “posterior tilt” of the pelvis?
9. Describe a generally advisable alignment practice for forward bending, in terms of anterior and posterior tilt of the pelvis.
10. Give two examples of ways to direct students that will encourage a balance of effort and ease in forward bending.
11. How can you use *Dandasana* (Staff Pose) to learn about an individual student and advise them in forward bending?
12. Name some forward bending poses that are safest for tight hamstrings and/or back issues such as disk injuries.
13. How can moving into *Uttanasana* (Standing Forward Bend) with a “swan dive” be risky for flexible practitioners?
14. How can you sequence to prepare for deep forward bends?
15. What counterposes are recommended after forward bending?
16. The Viniyoga tradition calls forward bends the “hub of the wheel” in sequencing. What is meant by this?

## Vocabulary Mix-and-Match

SUPTA PADANGUSTHASANA	(1)	→	(K)	Reclined Hand to Toe Pose
YOGANIDRASANA	(2)	→	(C)	Yogic Sleep Pose
UPAVISTHA KONASANA	(3)	→	(F)	Seated Angle Pose
JANU SIRSASANA	(4)	→	(H)	Head to Knee Pose
AGNISTHAMBHASANA	(5)	→	(A)	Fire Log Pose / Double Pigeon / Square Pose
PARIVRTTA JANU SIRSASANA	(6)	→	(G)	Revolved Head to Knee Pose
TIRIANG MUKHA EKA PADA PASCHIMOTTANASANA	(7)	→	(I)	Three-Limbed Forward Bend
PASCHIMOTTANASANA	(8)	→	(B)	Intense Stretch of the West / Seated Forward Bend
APANASANA	(9)	→	(D)	Wind-Relieving Pose / Knees to Chest
BALASANA	(10)	→	(J)	Child's Pose
BADDHA KONASANA	(11)	→	(E)	Bound Angle / Cobblers Pose

- What is forward bending?
  - Forward bending is the act of moving the chest and thighs toward one another.
- What is a common effect of all types of forward bends?
  - Forward bends stretch the back of the body.
- What is the anatomical term for forward bending?
  - Spinal flexion" is the anatomical term for forward bending.
- Name four types of forward bends. Explain the effect and provide examples for each.
  - Knees Bent: Safely stretch low back. Ex: Apanasana (Knees to Chest)
  - Legs Extended: Stretch low back, upper back, neck and hamstrings (plus potentially inner legs and/or calves). Ex: Paschimottanasana (Seated Forward Bend)
  - Asymmetrical Legs: Identify and address asymmetries. Ex: Janu Sirsasana (Head to Knee Pose)
  - Chest Raised Away From Hips: Strengthen upper and lower back. Ex: Ardha Uttanasana (Halfway Lift)

5. For what conditions are forward bends contraindicated?

Strenuous forward bends are typically not advised in these cases:

- Recent spinal surgery
- Recent or acute disc injury
- Any case where pain is experienced during forward bending, including degenerative discs, low back strain or any acute injury
- Osteoporosis of the thoracic spine
- Herniated discs anywhere along the spine
- Spinal stenosis, when instructed by healthcare provider to minimize forward bends
- Second and third trimester of pregnancy
- Abdominal hernias or abdominal wall separation if increased bulging in those areas is created by forward bending
- Hamstring tendonitis, when there is pain in hamstrings during forward bending

6. What are the general physical effects of forward bends?

- Stretch, lengthen, “open” back side of body
- Increase space and circulation between vertebrae
- Release tension and improve circulation in ankles, feet, legs, knees, hips, back and neck
- “Stimulate” or “massage” abdominal organs, which then stimulates digestion, elimination and reproduction
- “Restful for the heart” (Donna Farhi)

7. What are the energetic effects?

- “Cooling,” calming, quieting
- Restores nervous system
- Turns senses inward
- Draws focus to present moment
- Associated with first three chakras: muladhara, svadhisthana and manipura
- Forward bends may reveal emotions hidden in the body. Holding forward bends and hip opening poses for longer periods (while refining the flow of breath) may “allow students to safely explore these feelings.” (Mark Stephens)

8. What is meant by the terms “anterior tilt” and “posterior tilt” of the pelvis?

- When the pelvis tilts forward, it is in anterior tilt.
- When it tilts back it is in posterior tilt.
- Using the image of the pelvis as a bowl of water: In anterior tilt, the pubic bone moves toward the earth and we pour the water out along the front line of the body.
- In a posterior tilt, the pubic bones moves toward the navel to pour the water out along the back body.

9. Describe a generally advisable alignment practice for forward bending, in terms of anterior and posterior tilt of the pelvis.
  - A key teaching for safe and effective forward bending has been to teach students to enter forward bends with an anterior tilt of the pelvis. This is a critical teaching to counter the common tendency of folding from the low back, which places too much pressure on the lumbar spine.
  - Experts now typically advise that forward bends begin with an anterior tilt followed by allowing the pelvis to move into posterior tilt.
  
10. Give two examples of ways to direct students that will encourage a balance of effort and ease in forward bending.
  - An instructional tool can be to guide students in terms of their maximum effort. For example, "Find 50% of your maximum forward bend and breathe there."
  - Bending knees and using props are key tools for many to find proper alignment and ease in forward bends.
  
11. How can you use *Dandasana* (Staff Pose) to learn about an individual student and advise them in forward bending?
  - In seated forward bends, a fundamental starting point is sitting upright as opposed to sitting back on the sit bones.
  - Assess student in Dandasana (Staff Pose). Is she able to attain pelvic neutrality with the sacrum tilted slightly forward? Or is she rocking back with low back rounding? Add props under pelvis until an upright seat is achieved. Have student work there to elongate spine.
  
12. Name some forward bending poses that are safest for tight hamstrings and/or back issues such as disk injuries.
  - Supine forward bends such as Apanasana (Knees to Chest) and Supta Padangusthasana (Reclined Hand to Foot Pose) are the safest type of forward bends for tight hamstrings and/or back issues such as disk injuries.
  
13. How can moving into *Uttanasana* (Standing Forward Bend) with a "swan dive" be risky for flexible practitioners?
  - Moving into Uttanasana (Standing Forward Bend) with a "swan dive" can prompt flexible practitioners to create excessive lumbar arch and putting them at risk. Instead, "we want pelvis and upper body moving as a unit."
  
14. How can you sequence to prepare for deep forward bends?
  - It is often advised to sequence standing poses prior to deep seated forward bends because of the hip opening and mobility required to enter these poses safely.
  - Hip stretching helps prepare for forward bends.

15. What counterposes are recommended after forward bending?

- Restorative backbends and poses that activate the hamstrings serve as excellent counterposes to deep forward bends. For example, if teaching an intensive forward bending series, countering with a gentle backbend such as Setu Bandhasana (Bridge Pose) can reintegrate hamstrings.

16. The Viniyoga tradition calls forward bends the “hub of the wheel” in sequencing. What is meant by this?

The viniyoga tradition views forward bends as universal neutralizers for all other directional movements of the spine. The forward bends are considered “the hub of the wheel”, with back bends, lateral bends and twists forming the spokes of the wheel. It means that we would never place a backbend and lateral bend next to each other, or a backbend next to a twist – there always will be a forward bend of some sort in between. — **Olga Kabel, Sequence Wiz**