



BUILDING THE FOUNDATION OF YOUR YOGA PRACTICE ... ONE BLOCK AT A TIME

BY TRISH STRATUS

I used yoga to rehabilitate a back injury I suffered during my wrestling career, and was able to make a full comeback to the ring. I went from using yoga to fix my back to using it to get yoga booty, then eventually I realized that I was using yoga and its principles in every facet of my life.

Following my retirement from World Wrestling Entertainment, I delved into my yoga practice. I studied with various teachers around the country and eventually pursued my certification in the Ashtanga discipline. After studying in Canada and around the US, it occurred to me that such a little thing like adding a practice to your daily routine can make a huge difference. That's when I decided to open Stratusphere to provide a place

for people to experience the many positive benefits of yoga.

Last year, I developed my own line of yoga products. One of the very first products that I made sure to include was the yoga block; it is by far one of the most useful tools in a yoga practice. As a beginner, it will literally act as a building block to help advance your practice. An experienced yogi, however, can use it to advance their practice by using it to go deeper into poses. It was one of the first props I was introduced to while I was using yoga to rehabilitate my back injury, and it is something I incorporate currently as a preventative measure to maintain my back health.

Here are few poses that showcase the diversity of the yoga block, an essential part of any yoga kit.



TARGETS:

- Targets the triceps
- Make this less intense by bending your knees
- A simple yet challenging exercise

- Come into sitting position with legs extended.
- Position your blocks slightly behind your body and place your palms on top, fingertips facing forward.
- Press into the ground with your heels, press palms into the block and lift your body off the ground by straightening elbows.
- Keep your thighs contracted and be sure not to slouch into your shoulders (keep a distance between ears and shoulders).
- Bending at the elbows, lower your body until your glutes touches the ground.
- Then lift your body up again by straightening your elbows.
- Do 5-10 reps, depending on your strength and as long as you maintain proper form.



TARGETS:

- Relieves tension in the back
- Refreshes blood supply to the legs
- A calming pose that is great first thing in the morning or before bed

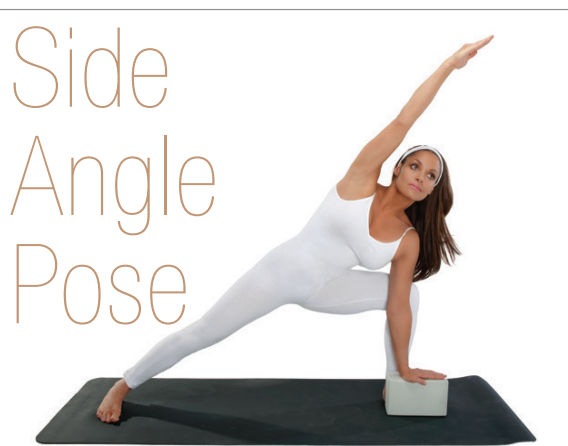
- This can be done either against the wall, or freestyle with legs straight up into the air.
- Place the block under your sacrum. If you are against a wall, slide right up against the wall and raise your legs up so you are in an L-shape.
- This is not an active pose, but a passive pose - release any tension by bending your knees.
- As you exhale, let your sacrum 'drip' over the block and relax your arms, shoulders and back gently into the ground.
- Stay in this pose for at least 5 minutes.



TARGETS:

- Stretches hamstrings and shoulders
- Lengthens the spine
- A calming pose that requires focus and patience

- Place the block under your sit bones and make sure you are equally grounded on the block.
- Extend one leg straight out in front of you.
- Fold the other leg so your foot is alongside your hip with the top of your foot on the ground.
- Keeping your back flat, hinge at the waist lifting up and out – nose towards your toes.
- Hold for 5 breaths. Repeat on other side.
- Newbie tip: Use of the block alleviates tension on the hamstring of the straight leg and lessens the tension of the bent leg by lifting the sit bones. The intention is to move towards grabbing your toes, but you may rest hands on shins and using your breath move closer towards your feet.



TARGETS:

- Stretches the waist, spine, chest and shoulders
- Strengthens the legs, knees and ankles
- A pose that engages the whole body, improves stamina

- Standing with a wide-stance, turn your right foot out 90 degrees and your left toes in slightly to align your heels.
- Raise your arms to shoulder height, parallel to the ground with your palms facing down.
- Bend your right knee to 90 degrees making sure your knee doesn't go past your toes.
- Bring your torso towards your lunging thigh.
- Reach with your right fingertips towards the ground in front of your foot and extend with your left arm, over your ear reaching towards the ceiling.
- Hold for 5 breaths. Repeat on other side.
- Newbie tip: Instead of sacrificing form by trying to reach for the ground before you are able to, use the block to support your hand. This will allow you to stretch fully from your left heel straight through to your left fingertips.