



Plow Pose - Halasana

Step 1

From Salamba Sarvangasana, exhale and bend from the hip joints to slowly lower your toes to the floor above and beyond your head. As much as possible, keep your torso perpendicular to the floor and your legs fully extended

Step 2

With your toes on the floor, lift your top thighs and tailbone toward the ceiling and draw your inner groins deep into the pelvis. Imagine that your torso is hanging from the height of your groins. Continue to draw your chin away from your sternum and soften your throat.

Step 3

You can continue to press your hands against the back torso, pushing the back up toward the ceiling as you press the backs of the upper arms down, onto your support. Or you can release your hands away from your back and stretch the arms out behind you on the floor, opposite the legs. Clasp the hands and press the arms actively down on the support as you lift the thighs toward the ceiling.

Step 4

Halasana is usually performed after Sarvangasana for anywhere from 1 to 5 minutes. To

exit the pose bring your hands onto your back again, lift back into Sarvangasana with an exhalation, then roll down onto your back, or simply roll out of the pose on an exhalation.

Contra indications and Cautions

Diarrhea

Menstruation

Neck injury

Asthma & high blood pressure: Practice Halasana with the legs supported on props.

Pregnancy: If you are experienced with this pose, you can continue to practice it late into pregnancy. However, don't take up the practice of Halasana after you become pregnant.

With the feet on the floor, this pose is considered to be intermediate to advanced. It is not advisable to perform the pose in this way without sufficient prior experience or unless you have the supervision of an experienced instructor.

Modifications and Props

Most beginning students can't comfortably rest their feet on the floor (nor is it advisable for the neck). But you can still practice this pose with an appropriate prop. Brace the back of a metal folding chair against a wall (if you like, cover the seat with a folded sticky mat), and set one long edge of your support a foot or so away from the front edge of the seat. The exact distance between the chair and support will depend on your height (taller students will be farther away, shorter students closer). Lie down on the support with your head on the floor between the blanket support and the chair. Roll up with an exhalation, rest your feet on the seat (and check to see that you are neither too close nor too far from the chair), then lift into Salamba Sarvangasana first before moving into Halasana.

Deepen the Pose

When coming into this pose (and its companion, Salamba Sarvangasana) you can squeeze the shoulder blades together to help yourself lift up onto the tops of the shoulders. But once situated in the position, broaden the shoulder blades across the back, into the resistance of the outer upper arms.

Preparatory Poses

Salamba Sarvangasana

Setu Bandha Sarvangasana

Follow-up Poses

Adho Mukha Svanasana

Paschimottanasana

Beginner's Tip

In this pose (and its companion, Salamba Sarvangasana) there's a tendency to overstretch the neck by pulling the shoulders too far away from the ears. While the tops of the shoulders should push down into the support, they should be lifted slightly toward the ears to keep the back of the neck and throat soft. Open the sternum by firming the shoulder blades against the back.

Benefits

Calms the brain

Stimulates the abdominal organs and the thyroid gland

Stretches the shoulders and spine

Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause

Reduces stress and fatigue

Therapeutic for backache, headache, infertility, insomnia, sinusitis

Partnering

A partner can help you learn about the lift of the front thighs in this pose. Perform Halasana, either with your feet on the floor or a chair. Then have your partner straddle your legs, facing your torso. Loop a strap around your top thighs in the creases of the groins. Your partner can pull straight up on the strap, perpendicular to the line of your legs, and lift your top thighs toward the ceiling. Extend strongly through the heels and move your scapulas firmly into your back.

Variations

Parsva Halasana

This pose can only be performed with the feet on the floor. Perform Halasana, keeping your hands on your back. With an exhalation walk your feet to the left as far as you comfortably can. One hip or the other may sink toward the floor, so try to keep the pelvis in a relatively neutral position, hips parallel to the floor. Hold for 30 seconds to 1 minute, then inhale the feet back to center. Take 2 or 3 breaths, then exhale the feet to the right for the same length of time, come back to center, and release Halasana.

References - Yoga Journal Asanas