

CHRIS LOESACK & JENNIFER MILLER

ASHTANGA *101* *INTRODUCTION* *TO THE* *PRIMARY SERIES*

8 WEEK SERIES



#FOUNDATIONSOFFLOW

2022

Ashtanga 101: Introduction to the Primary Series Info

8 Week Adventure

w/ Jennifer Miller assisted by Chris Loeb sack

Tuesdays 7-8:15 pm

April 5-May 24

#FoundationsofFlow

Description:

The primary series of Ashtanga yoga is a precise sequence of postures, linked together in the vinyasa style (Flow). As well as the postures, it includes a specific breathing technique (ujjayi) , use of bandhas (Locks- specific muscular engagements) , drishti (gaze points) and coordinated movement with the breath. The Primary Series is one of the 6 series of the Ashtanga Yoga System. It offers a full body conditioning and release.

The series is longer and takes time to learn. We will use the first month to break it down in sections and refine the individual postures. Next month we will practice the full flow.

Modifications and variations will be given for all levels.

Prerequisites:

This is for ambulatory (can easily get up and down off of the floor) students who like to move.

Syllabus:

April 5th W1: Salutations- Learn, break down and refine the postures of sun salutations A and B.

April 12th W2: Standing Postures and Balance

April 19th W3: Primary Seated Posture

April 26th W4: Inversions and Finishing Postures

May 3-24 W5-8: The Full Lead Flow

Table of Contents

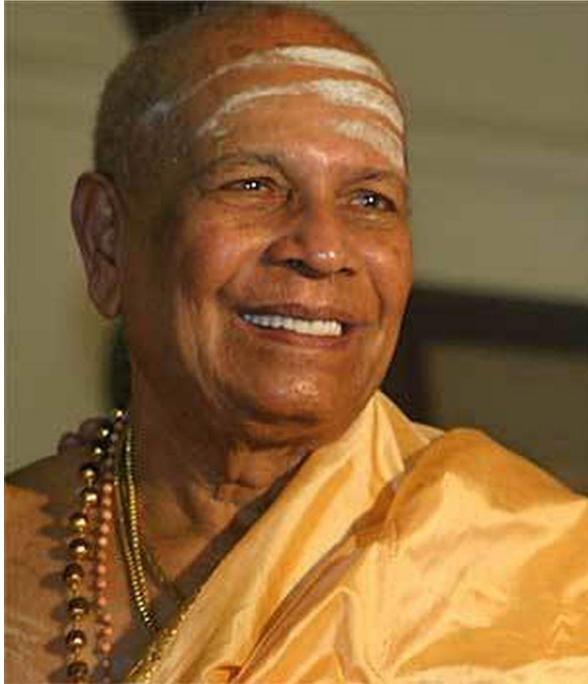
Ashtanga 101: Introduction to the Primary Series Info	2
Syllabus:	2
Table of Contents	3
Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga	5
Lineage	5
What is Vinyasa Yoga?	6
What is Ashtanga Yoga?	6
What is the purpose of Ashtanga Yoga and Vinyasa Yoga as yoga styles?	6
3 Pillars of the Ashtanga Yoga Practice	7
1. Breath	7
Ujjayi	7
Kapalabhati	7
2. Bandhas	8
Mulabandha: The Root Lock मूल बंध (moo-luh bun-duh)	8
Uddiyana Bandha: The Abdominal Lock उड्डियान बंध (OO-de-yun-nuh bun-duh)	9
Jalandhara Bandha: The Throat Lock जालन्धर बंध (ju-lun-duh-ruh bun-duh)	9
Maha Bandha: The Great Lock महा बंध (muh-huh bun-duh)	9
3. Drishti	10
9 Drishti of Ashtanga Yoga	10
Angusthamadhye (En-gust humud je) look to the thumb	10
Bhrumadhye (Bhruh medh je) looks at the eyebrows (middle of the brow or third eye). To achieve this mudra the eyes are soft and partially closed.	11
Nasagre (Nah-suh gree) look at the tip of the nose.	11
Parshva (Parshh -vuh) looking to the left or right side.	11
Urdhv (Oordh-wa) looking upwards, eyes looking to the sky	12
Nābhicakr (Knob-He-Chu-kra) look to the navel center	12
Padayoragre (Padah-your-gree) look to the tips of the feet or to gaze to the toes.	12
The Ashtanga Yoga Sequences	13
Ashtanga Yoga Sun Salutation A (5 rounds)	15
Ashtanga Yoga Sun Salutation B (5 rounds)	16
Standing Sequence	17
Primary Series	18
Primary Series Continued	19
Finishing Series	20
Ashtanga Opening Invocation	21
Sanskrit	21

English Translation	21
Counting in Sanskrit	22
One- Ten	22
Eleven- Twenty	23

Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga

Lineage

Guru: **Sri K Pattabhi Jois**- 26 July 1915- 18 May 2009



A student of the father of modern yoga, **Krishnamacharya, Pattabhi Jois** was the Indian guru who developed and established the Ashtanga Vinyasa style of Yoga. The Ashtanga System is known for its vigorous flowing sets of postures. His famous primary series set the foundation for many modern styles of vinyasa practice such as power flow.

Pattabhi taught many master students and teachers around the world, expanding the knowledge and practice of vinyasa style yoga. Some of his famous students include: Manju Jois (his son), Saratha Jois (his grandson), and Brothers Doug and David Swenson (David is the author of *Ashtanga Yoga: the practice manual* 1999).

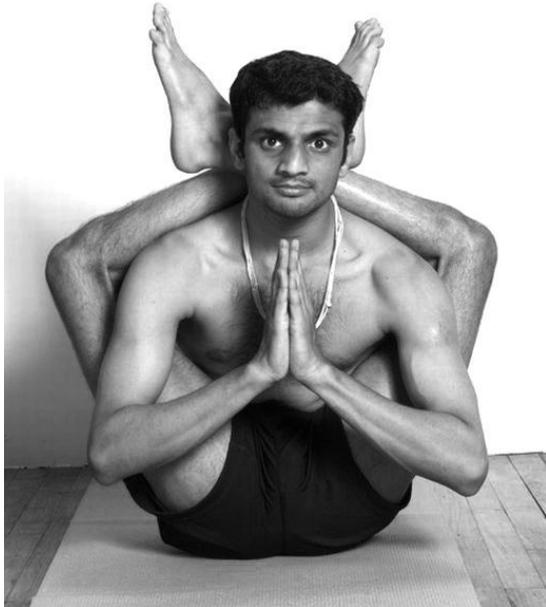
Founder of the **Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute** (established in 1948)

Towards the end of his time in his earthly body it became well known that he had sexually abused many of his students with improper and non-consensual adjustments. It was claimed that he would often grope his students under the banner of a hands on assist.

His grandson **Sharath Jois** (born 29 September 1971) has apologized for his grandfather's behavior and taken steps to ensure safety for students and transparency for the organization. At the

time of this writing, he is the current lineage holder (paramaguru) of Ashtanga Yoga. He continues to teach as well as directs the **Sharath Yoga Center** in India.

Guru- Sharatha Jois



What is Vinyasa Yoga?

The word *vinyasa* means “to place with intention”. The vinyasa style of yoga, often translated as “flow” yoga, links the postures together with the movement of the breath to create a flowing set of sequences of poses.

What is Ashtanga Yoga?

Ashtanga yoga is a type of vinyasa yoga. The poses are set in motion and in tune with the breath. Ashtanga yoga maintains a set series of postures that do not change. Vinyasa yoga continually varies the sequences according to the teacher's personal style and preferences.

What is the purpose of Ashtanga Yoga and Vinyasa Yoga as yoga styles?

The purpose of Ashtanga and Vinyasa Style yoga is to purify the body and the mind. The sequences will tone the muscles, increase range of motion in the physical body. The focus and breathing aid in the clearing, centering, and expanding the mental and emotional bodies.

3 Pillars of the Ashtanga Yoga Practice

The Ashtanga system has three pillars of practice that support the asana and meditative aspects of the practice. They include the breath, the bandhas aka locks, and the drishti, focal points.

1. Breath

Pranayama (Mastery of the breath)

Vinyasa literally means to move with intention. The depth of awareness and cultivation of the breath technique helps focus the mind and open the body. An unbroken focus on the breath, along with repetition, while moving turns the practice into a moving meditation.

The primary breathing technique used in Ashtanga is the ujjayi, the victorious breath. *Kapalabhati*, skull shining breath is also used at the end of the finishing postures.

Ujjayi

The victorious breath, also referred to as the oceanic breath.

Ujjayi breathing is a form of pranayama that produces a soft and subtle sound by creating friction in the throat. The inner throat is constricted by gently tightening the inner muscles at the glottis; the narrow opening forces the air to compress at a different rate and cultivates the friction needed to produce an internal heat. The external muscles of the throat should be relaxed. It is not a "Darth Vader" breath. Ujjayi can be practiced with belly breathing or with the belly engaged.

Kapalabhati

The skull shining breath.

****Contraindicated for Pregnancy, Hernias, and Other Abdominal Tears**

Kapalabhati is performed as an active and vigorous exhalation followed by a passive inhalation. Kapalabhati sharply engages the transversus abdominus with each exhale. The inhale is passive, resulting in a relaxation of the diaphragm. The exhalation, through the nose, is vigorous. The inhalation is passive.

Generally Kapalabhati should be engaged for at least one minute to feel the effects. When a round Kapalabhati is completed the practitioner should remain for a moment in a kumbhaka (breath retention), experiencing the suspended state of the breath. When the need for oxygen returns to the body one should inhale, allowing the breath to touch deeply within the expanse of the lungs and then fully exhale relaxing into the body. .

2. Bandhas

The locks.

The bandhas or Locks are a series of subtle constrictions of diaphragms within the physical body used to regulate both the volume and rate of breathing and assist in the regulation of energy flow. The term lock refers to the image of a canal lock that opens and closes to varying degrees to allocate the amount of water flow. Similarly the directed contraction of one or more of the three diaphragms in the pelvis, abdomen and thorax, and/ or throat allows for an adjustment to the flow of prana (life force energy) and apana (energy of elimination) within the ethereal energy channels called nadis.

The three individual bandhas mulabandha (the root lock), uddiyana bandha (the abdominal lock), and jalandhara bandha (the throat lock) coordinated with ujjayi pranayama (victory breathing) during asana (posture) practice help to maintain support in the body and create internal heat. The bandhas are engaged when the body requires more stability (sthira) and released when the body needs relaxation and ease (sukha). The involvement of the locks allows us to tap into our center of gravity with more structural awareness and acts as a rebound force during jumps and lifts. The disengagement of the bandhas during prone and supine postures grants energetic permission to relax and creates an opportunity for balance in the nervous system of the body.

Mulabandha: The Root Lock मूल बंध (moo-luh bun-duh)

Mulabandha is the root lock. It is a physical engagement of the pelvic diaphragm which is the collection of muscles crossing the pelvic floor. The body is engaged at the perineal muscle located in front of the anus and behind the genitals. In women the location is higher toward the top of the cervix. The full contraction of mulabandha will also involve the anal sphincter muscles and the area a few inches below the navel.

This might be difficult to imagine at first. A good way to access these muscles is to think of the muscles you use when you have to go to the bathroom but do not have access to the bathroom. The mulabandha contraction is subtle, not a tight squeeze. Another way to approach the root lock is through the application of the Kegel technique. The Kegel exercise stimulates the muscles of the pelvic floor to stop the flow of urine. This is often practiced by women who wish to tone the pelvic floor after childbirth. Maintaining the contraction of mulabandha for the duration of a yoga session is quite challenging for beginners. It takes consistent practice to build the endurance necessary for prolonged engagement.

From an energetic perspective, the root lock keeps the prana contained and slows the release of prana and apana from the base of the body. The apana often associated with a downward flow is forced upward to unite with prana.

Uddiyana Bandha: The Abdominal Lock उड्डियान बंध (OO-de-yun-nuh bun-duh)

Uddiyana bandha is referred to as the abdominal lock. Uddiyana is Sanskrit means "flying upward". The lift of this lock can only be fully expressed on a complete exhale or bahya kumbhaka (a retention of the exhale) followed by a "false inhale". The vacuum created by bahya kumbhaka allows the abdominals to fly upward compressing the internal organs under the abdominal wall and exposing the depth of the anterior thorax. The lesser engagement of uddiyana bandha that can be held during practice is much more subtle. Instead of sucking the belly in on an exhale we simply maintain an impressionable abdominal engagement, particularly of the transverse abdominal muscle and lower fibers of the rectus abdominis, just below the navel. We do not want to constrict the diaphragm during practice as continuous constraint would inhibit breathing and strain the body.

Attention to this lock is needed for later work in jump troughs' and inversions. A beautifully integrated feeling centers in the body when this lock is adequately obtained. Acrobats will often use the phrase, "tight is light" referencing the buoyancy they feel upon the lifting of uddiyana bandha. The locks can take years to master so do not be frustrated if you do not feel it right away.

Jalandhara Bandha: The Throat Lock जालन्धर बंध (ju-lun-duh-ruh bun-duh)

Jalandhara Bandha is the throat lock, also known as the chin lock. This lock is not used in the same consistent fashion as mulabandha and uddiyana bandha. You will naturally explore the chin lock in various asanas such as halasana (plow pose), sarvangasana (shoulder stand), setu bandha sarvangasana (bridge pose), and dandasana (staff pose). Jalandhara bandha is often applied during pranayama techniques. To initiate jalandhara bandha lift the skull from the occipital ridge causing the chin to retract as if you were making a "double chin" and slightly tilt the head forward. This aids in the gentle restriction of the vocal diaphragm. The internal constriction of the epiglottis (the same engagement for whispered speech or a sigh) produces the hollow sound and additional breath regulation via ujjayi pranayama. *more on this in the Pranayama Section

Maha Bandha: The Great Lock महा बंध (muh-huh bun-duh)

Maha Bandha is known as the great lock. It is the simultaneous contraction of all three bandhas. This great lock is often applied in pranayama practice during breath retention.

3. Drishti

The focus or gaze.

Drishti is a focal point that is applied during *Dhyana* (meditation) or while holding a yoga *Asana* (Posture).

Drishti is associated with limbs number 5, 6 and 7 of the 8 limbs of yoga; *Pratyahara* (Withdrawal of Senses); *Dharana* (Concentration); *Dhyana* (Meditation). The ancient text, The *Maitri Upanishad*, describes the process of turning one's attention inward (*antara*) to "center" the body and mind so that one can avoid the suffering caused by the distraction of the objects around us. This process of concentration and withdrawal of the senses is described again in the philosophical text, The *Yoga Sutra*, as part of the eight limbs of yoga. The 6th limb *Dharana* the practice of maintaining a *drishti* during a yoga practice as a tool of concentration is described as a way to channel the concentration and achieve meditation (*Dhyana*-a one pointed focus). Exactly where to gaze for external (*bahya*) focal points may vary from style to style. The most specific drishti can be found as part of the Ashtanga Yoga system.

Where our attention goes our energy flows! We humans are by nature visual creatures. Overstimulation of our vision keeps us continually distracted and off balance physically, mentally and emotionally. Keeping our focus on a non moving point can greatly aid our ability to find physical stability within our posture. This is clearly noticeable in postures such as handstands and other inversions. Try closing your eyes in tree pose and the importance of our vision becomes clearly evident.

When using a drishti it is extremely important to keep the eyes soft to avoid strain.

9 Drishti of Ashtanga Yoga

Angusthamadhye (*En-gust humud je*) *look to the thumb*

Examples: Sūrya Namaskāra, Vinyasas; Ūrdhva Vṛkṣāsana, Utkaṭāsana, and Vīrabhadṛāsana

Benefits:

- Lengthens the front of the throat
- Strengthens the back of the neck
- Lifts the internal energy upwards

(Do not use with clients who have vertigo or posterior cervical spine trauma)

Bhrumadhye (*Bhruh medh je*) looks at the eyebrows (middle of the brow or third eye). To achieve this mudra the eyes are soft and partially closed.

Benefits:

- Aids Concentration
- Stimulates the Optic Nerves

(It is advised that caution be taken as prolonged or incorrect practice may cause problems for the eye muscles or nervous system. Initial practice is often done for only minutes at a time, but is gradually increased to up to ten minute intervals.)

Examples: Certain Styles of Meditation; There are some Sūrya Namaskāratraditions that apply Bhrūmadhye drishti on Uttānāsana, Ūrdhva Mukha Śvānāsana, Adho Mukha Svānāsana.

Nasagre (*Nah-suh gree*) look at the tip of the nose.

Benefits:

- Strengthens the eye muscles

Examples: Tadasana, Ardha Uttānāsana and Caturāṅga Daṇḍāsana

Hastagrah (*Hus-stah-grah*) look to the tip of the hand or the palm

Benefits:

- Continues the rotation of the spine all the way through the neck in twists
- Turns the energy of the pose upward

(Caution: Do not turn the head upwards if there are herniated discs in the neck or other neck discomforts. Turning the gaze downward is easier on the cervical spine and can help with balance in newer students.)

Examples: Utthita Trikonasana, and its twisted partner Parivṛtta Trikonasana

Parshva (*Parshh -vuh*) looking to the **left or right** side.

Benefits:

- Stretches and strengthens the neck muscles

(Caution: Do not turn the head to the side if there are herniated discs in the neck or other neck discomforts. Keeping the gaze neutral is easier on the cervical spine and can help with balance in newer students.)

Examples: Utthita Pārśvasahita, Marīcyāsana C, and Marīcyāsana D

Urdhv (*Oordh-wa*) looking upwards, eyes looking to the sky

Benefits:

Lifts the energy upwards without straining the neck

(Students may confuse looking with the eyes with tilting the whole head upward.)

Examples: Upaviṣṭha Koṇāsana and Ubhaya Pādānguṣṭhāsana

Nābhicakr (*Knob-He-Chu-kra*) look to the navel center

Benefits:

- Creates length in the back of the neck
- Can add posterior stretch to various forward folds

Example: Adho-Mukha-Śvānāsana, Jānu Śīrṣāsana (in some traditions)

Padayoragre (*Padah-your-gree*) look to the tips of the feet or to gaze to the toes.

Benefits:

- helps to elongate the spine (lengthening the belly and engaging the muscles of the back)

Examples: Paścimottānāsa and Jānu Śīrṣāsana

Remember: **Where our attention goes our energy flows!**

The Ashtanga Yoga Sequences

There are six series of sequences in the Astanga Yoga System as taught by Pattabhi.

1. 1st Series aka Primary- Seated Postures
2. 2nd Series aka Intermediate- Binds and Back Bends
3. 3rd Series Advanced - Arm Balances and Standing Balance
4. 4th Series - Extreme binds and spinal movements
5. 5th Series- Only a handful of students in the world can do this series
6. 6th Series- Only a handful of students in the world can do this series

The most common series practiced in a western yoga studio is the primary series. Some schools will introduce second series. It is unlikely to find the other series in a standard yoga studio unless it is dedicated only to the Ashtanga Yoga Practice.

All of the series would do the same warm up which would include 5 Sun Salutation A's and 5 Sun Salutation B's plus the standing poses. Next would insert the series being practiced for that day and they would all end with the finishing postures.

The practice is said to be best practiced first thing in the morning between 4:30 am and 6:30 am 6 days a week. It is important to keep in mind that this practice would have been given to the students a little bit at a time. Trying to do too much too soon can and will lead to injury. This is best practiced under the guide of an experienced teacher.

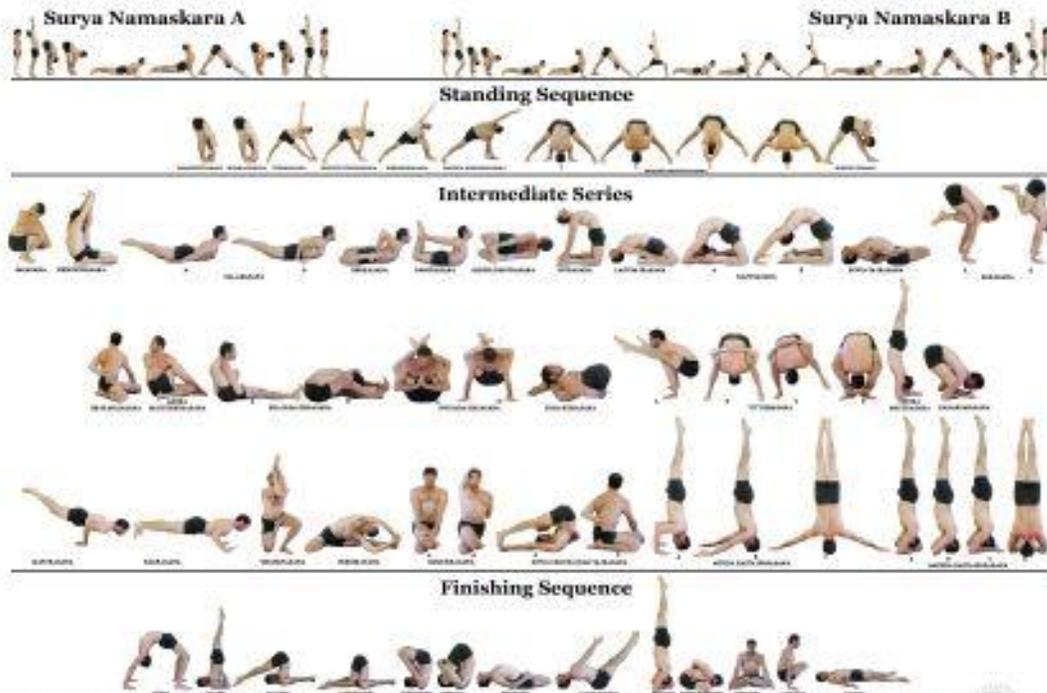
Ashtanga Yoga Primary Series



The practice should only be undertaken with the guidance of an experienced teacher.

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May this practice bring you insight and joy

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Ashtanga Yoga Sun Salutation A (5 rounds)

Breath Call	Posture	Notes
Begin Ujjayi Breathing	Samastithi - Same and Equal Standing aka (Tadasana) Mountain Pose	1st one, take a few moments to connect to the breath.
Inhale	Urdhva Hasta Tadasana	
Exhale	Uttanasana	
Inhale	Ardha Uttanasana	
Exhale	Chaturanga Dandasana	
Inhale	Urdhva Mukha Svanasana	
Exhale	Adho Mukha Svanasana	Take 3-5 breaths in this pose
Inhale	Gaze forward	
Exhale	Jump forward	
Inhale	Ardha Uttanasana	
Exhale	Uttanasana	
Inhale	Urdhva Hasta Tadasana	
Exhale	Tadasana	Repeat 5 rounds

Beginner's Options:

Step forward and back instead of a jump or float (press).

Add a plank before chaturanga (this will require a shift to the breath call to get it back on track).

Work with a half plank or half chaturanga as needed until strength builds.

Ashtanga Yoga Sun Salutation B (5 rounds)

Breath Call	Posture	Notes
Begin Ujjayi Breathing	Samastithi - Same and Equal Standing aka (Tadasana) Mountain Pose	1st one, take a few moments to connect to the breath.
Inhale	Utkatasana	
Exhale	Uttanasana	
Inhale	Ardha Uttanasana	
Exhale	Chaturanga Dandasana	
Inhale	Urdhva Mukha Svanasana	
Exhale	Adho Mukha Svanasana	
Inhale	Rt ft forward Virabhadrasana A	
Exhale	Chaturanga Dandasana	
Inhale	Urdhva Mukha Svanasana	
Exhale	Adho Mukha Svanasana	
Inhale	Lft ft forward Virabhadrasana A	
Exhale	Chaturanga Dandasana	
Inhale	Urdhva Mukha Svanasana	
Exhale	Adho Mukha Svanasana	Take 3-5 breaths in this pose
Inhale	Gaze forward	
Exhale	Jump forward	
Inhale	Ardha Uttanasana	
Exhale	Uttanasana	
Inhale / exhale	Utkatasana	
Inhale	Urdhva Hasta Tadasana	
Exhale	Tadasana	Repeat 5 Rounds

Beginner's Options:
Same as Sun Salutation A

Standing Sequence

Breath	Posture	Notes
5 breath hold	Padangusthasana	
5 breath hold	Padahasthasana	
5 breath hold	Utthita Trikonasana	
5 breath hold	Parivrtta Trikonasana	
5 breath hold	Parsvakonasana	
5 breath hold	Parivrtta Parsvakonasana	
5 breath hold	Prasarita Padottanasana A	
5 breath hold	Prasarita Padottanasana B	
5 breath hold	Prasarita Padottanasana C	
5 breath hold	Prasarita Padottanasana D	
5 breath hold	Parsvottanasana	
5 breath hold	Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana A	
5 breath hold	Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana B	
5 breath hold	Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana C	
5 breath hold	Ardha Baddha Padmottanasana	
	Vinyasa	Jump back Chaturanga > Up dog> DD> Jump thru to next pose
5 breath hold	Utkatasana	
	Vinyasa	
5 breath hold	Virabhadrasana A	Start facing front then turn back
5 breath hold	Virabhadrasana B	Facing back then turn front
Vinyasa	Move on to the series specific portion of the practice	

Note: Traditionally there is a little hop of the feet together to meet in samastitih between the sets of postures and a jump out to set the feet for the next posture.

Primary Series

Breath	Posture	Notes
5 breath hold	Dandasana	
5 breath hold	Paschimottanasana A	
5 breath hold	Paschimottanasana B	
5 breath hold	Paschimottanasana C	
5 breath hold	Purvottanasana	
	Vinyasa	
5 breath hold	Ardha Baddha Paschimottanasana	Vinyasa between sides or Block Lift
	Vinyasa	
5 breath hold	Triang Mukha Eka Pada Paschimottanasana	Vinyasa between sides or Block Lift
	Vinyasa	
5 breath hold	Janu Sirsasana A	Vinyasa between sides or Block Lift
	Vinyasa	
5 breath hold	Janu Sirsasana B	Vinyasa between sides
	Vinyasa	
5 breath hold	Janu Sirsasana C	Vinyasa between sides
	Vinyasa	
5 breath hold	Marichyasana A	Vinyasa between sides
	Vinyasa	
5 breath hold	Marichyasana B	Vinyasa between sides
	Vinyasa	
5 breath hold	Marichyasana C	Vinyasa between sides
	Vinyasa	
5 breath hold	Marichyasana D	Vinyasa between sides

Primary Series Continued

Breath	Posture	Notes
	Vinyasa	
5 breath hold	Navasana	5 rounds with a tolasana lift or a handstand between each hold
	Vinyasa	
5 breath hold	Bhujapidasana A/B	
	Vinyasa	
5 breath hold	Kurmasana / Supta Kurmasana	
	Vinyasa	
5 breath hold	Garbha Pindasana (opt cross leg hold with balance or ½ lotus hold)	Chakrasana Option or Chakrasana Preps
	Vinyasa	
5 breath hold	Baddha Konasana A	
5 breath hold	Baddha Konasana B	
5 breath hold	Baddha Konasana C	Chakrasana Option
5 breath hold	Upavistha Konasana	
5 breath hold	Supta Konasana	Chakrasana Option
5 breath hold	Supta Padangusthasana A	
5 breath hold	Supta Padangusthasana B	
5 breath hold	Supta Padangusthasana C	
5 breath hold	Urdhaya Padangusthasana	
5 breath hold	Urdhva Mukha Paschimottanasana	
5 Breath Hold	Setu Bandhasana (Bridge Option)	Chakrasana Option

Finishing Series

Breath	Posture	Notes
	Vinyasa	
5 breath hold	Urdhva Dhanurasana	3-5 rounds
8 breath hold	Paschimottanasana	
8 Breath Hold	Salamba Sarvangasana	
8 breath hold	Halasana	
8 breath hold	Karnapidasana	
8 breath hold	Urdhva Padmasana	
8 breath hold	Pindasana	
8 breath hold	Matsyasana	
8 breath hold	Uttana Padasana	
15 breath hold	Sirsasana A	L hold (pike) 5 breaths on way down
8 breath hold	Baddha Padmasana	
8 breath hold	Yoga Mudra	
8 breath hold	Padmasana	
10 breaths	Tolasana	*some teachers add 100 rounds of Kapalabhati- skull shining breath while holding the pose.
10- 15 minutes relaxed breathing	Savasana	

Note: Many teachers will release the vinyasa at this point. There are longer practices where the vinyasa still continues between each posture set in the finishing sequence.

Ashtanga Opening Invocation

Sanskrit

Om Vande Gurunam Charanaravinde

Sandarshita Svatma Sukava Bodhe

Nih Sreyase Jangalikayamane

Samsara Halahala Mohashantyai

Abahu Purushakaram

Shankhacakrsi Dharinam

Sahasra Sirasam Svetam

Pranamami Patanjalin Om

English Translation

Om I bow to the lotus feet of the Supreme Guru

which awaken insight into the happiness of pure Being,

which are the refuge, the jungle physician,

which eliminates the delusion caused by the poisonous herb of Samsara (conditioned existence).

I bow before the sage Patanjali

who has thousands of radiant, white heads (as the divine serpent, Ananta)

and who has, as far as his arms, assumed the form of a man

holding a conch shell (divine sound), a wheel (discus of light or infinite time) and a sword (discrimination). Om

Counting in Sanskrit

It is traditional that the instructor of ashtanga yoga will count during the sequence. In the sun salutations and vinyasas each number corresponds to a movement connected to a breath. The count is also used to monitor the length of each held posture. Most postures are held for 5 counts. The finishing sequence postures are held longer. 8-15 counts or more. In the western world of yoga teaching it is perfectly fine to count in english. You will often find that teachers may switch back and forth between English and Sanskrit.

After the number Ten, you see that the numbers till Nineteen the suffix dasha, in a way similar to the suffix -teen in English!

One- Ten

1. One एकम् (ekam)
2. Two द्वे (dve)
3. Three त्रीणि (treeni)
4. Four चत्वारि (chatvaari)
5. Five पञ्च (pancha)
6. Six षट् (shat)
7. Seven सप्त (sapta)
8. Eight अष्ट (ashta)
9. Nine नव (nava)
10. Ten दश (dasha)

Eleven- Twenty

11. Eleven एकादश (ekaadasha)
12. Twelve द्वादश (dvaadasha)
13. Thirteen त्रयोदश (trayodasha)
14. Fourteen चतुर्दश (chaturdasha)
15. Fifteen पञ्चदश (panchadasha)
16. Sixteen षोडश (shodash)
17. Seventeen सप्तदश (saptadasha)
18. Eighteen अष्टादश (ashtaadasha)
19. Nineteen नवदश (navadasha)
20. Twenty विंशतिः (vimshatihi)