Yoga at Your Desk

The most important part of yoga is focusing on your breath. Yogis like to call it a ‘moving meditation’. This is why yoga at your desk can be as simple as taking a few moments to focus on you and to take a few concentrated inhalations and exhalations. Breathing comes so naturally to us, thank goodness, that we often don’t give it a second thought. But when we do and we concentrate on nice, deep, full inhalations and exhalations, it’s pretty amazing how much our body instantly relaxes, our mind instantly calms and stressful situations or problems seem to become much more manageable.

Along with forgetting to breathe, we often find ourselves hunched over a keyboard or our phones and sitting at our desk for long periods of time without even moving anything but our fingers. It’s important for blood circulation, energy levels and overall mental health to insert some movement periodically throughout the day. That said, here’s a quick and easy guide to Yoga at Your Desk...Namaste!

Focus on Your Breath

- Sit in your chair so that you can lengthen and straighten your back, sitting up tall.
- Shoulders should be out of the ears and down the back (to get here you can first shrug the shoulders to the ears and then relax them down the back).
- Your feet should be flat on the ground, legs at a 90 degree angle.
- Close your eyes and take a deep, steady breathe in, imagining a wave of air filling up your stomach then lungs. Now exhale all of that air out of the stomach then the lungs. Repeat 3-5x at your own pace.
Neck Roll

- **Works:** Back and Front of the Neck
- Stay in the same seated position with eyes open or closed.
- Right ear to right shoulder rolling the head down, chin down, and across the front of the body to the left and back again to the right. REMEMBER: do this slowly, you never want to go too fast when stretching out the neck. Repeat 3-5x.
- Then switch, left ear to left shoulder rolling the head back, chin comes up, and across the back of the body from right to left and back again to the left. Repeat 3-5x.

Neck Opener

- **Works:** Back and Front of the Neck (Opening up the Front of the Neck is GREAT for Your Thyroid)
- Come back to center then tilt the head forward with the chin toward the chest and pause for a couple breathes. Then, tilt the head back looking up at the sky and opening up the front of the neck for a couple breaths. Repeat 3x.
Shoulder Roll
- **Works:** Shoulders and Shoulder Blades
- Stay in the same seated position, sitting up tall, with eyes open or closed.
- Shrug the shoulders up to the ears and then down the front of the body and back up to the ears. Repeat this 3-5x.
- Reverse by shrugging the shoulders up to the ears and down the back of the body and back up to the ears. Repeat 3-5x.

Twist
- **Works:** Upper Back
- Open your eyes if they weren’t already and stay in the same seated position, sitting up tall.
- Take your left hand and either put it on your right knee or lightly grab your desk, reaching to the right side.
- Grab the back of your chair with the right hand.
- Inhale as you straighten the back and exhale as you twist. This may be slight but the point is to just feel a nice stretch in the spine, particularly the upper back. Take a few breaths and then do the same thing on the left side.
Seated Side Stretch
- **Works:** Sides of the Body Including the Torso and Arm
- Stay in the same seated position, sitting up tall with feet on the floor.
- Gently grab the left side of your chair with the left hand.
- Inhale as you extend your right arm in the air.
- Exhale as you bring your right arm over the right ear and bend to the left feeling a stretch in your right side.
- For a deeper stretch you can take your right wrist in your left hand and give it a light tug to the left and/or put a slight or big bend in the arm that’s holding onto the chair.
- You can either look up or look to the side, whichever feels best for your neck.
- Take a few breaths here and then repeat on the left side.

Wrist Exercises
- **Works:** Wrists and Forearms
- Stay in the same seated position, sitting up tall with feet on the floor.
- Extend your right arm out straight.
- With the left hand, pull back lightly on the fingers on the right hand. You should feel a stretch in the wrist and bottom of the forearm. Take a couple breaths and then stretch the left wrist.
- Now extend the right arm again, but this time bending the wrist and pointing the fingers downward. With the left hand gently press against the outside of the right hand to feel a stretch in the wrist and the top of the forearm. Take a couple breaths and then do the left wrist.
Seated Cat/Cow
- **Works:** Upper Back, Lower Back, Shoulder Blades and Chest
- Sit with a straight back, feet flat on the floor and legs at a 90 degree angle.
- Gently grab the tops of your thighs with your hands.
- As you inhale, puff the chest out, shoulders back (slightly squeezed together) and the head will slightly move up.
- As you exhale, arch the upper back and look down, the shoulders will come forward.
- Repeat 3-5x each way, initiating the movement with your breath.

Seated Humble Warrior
- **Works:** Shoulders, Neck, Arms and Wrists
- Sit toward the end of your chair, feet flat on the floor and legs at a 90 degree angle.
- Exhale as you clasp your hands behind you.
- Inhale as you puff the chest out.
- Exhale as you fold forward with the arms extending up, hands still clasped.
- Take a couple breaths then come up to a seated position. Repeat a couple more times if you’d like to...this is a BIG shoulder stretch so it may be a little uncomfortable at first.
Goddess Arms

- **Works**: Shoulders, Upper Back and Chest
- Sit with a straight back, feet flat on the floor and legs at a 90 degree angle.
- Raise your arms up high then bring the elbows down so that the elbows are bent and the forearms and upper arm are at a 90 degree angle (this is also called ‘Goal Post Arms’ if that visual helps better than the description).
- Like Cat/Cow you’ll inhale as you puff the chest out, the arms go back and shoulder blades squeeze together.
- Exhale as you bring the arms together in front of you, keeping them at a 90 degree angle, and arch the upper back.
- Repeat 3-5x each way.
- NOTE: You can do the neck exercise we did earlier by looking up as you draw the arms back and looking down as you draw the arms forward.
Figure Four

- **Works:** Hips, IT Band and Glutes
- Sit back in your chair.
- Start to bring your right leg up, crossing the right ankle over the left knee (the left foot should still be on the floor with the knee bent).
- Start to pick up the heel on the left foot. The higher you pick it up, the more you should feel a stretch in the outside of the right leg. You may also push lightly on your right knee to get a deeper stretch but don’t push it too far.
- Take a few breaths and then switch and do the same thing on the left side.

Standing Arm, Back and Hammy Stretch

- **Works:** Shoulders, Arms, Back and Hammys
- Stand behind your chair so that your just far enough away that you can still reach forward and grab the back of the chair and your feet should be about hips distance apart.
- Raise your arms straight overhead and start to hinge forward from the waist with a flat back, until you can grab the back of your chair.
- You may need to step back a little further but you want to feel a stretch in the shoulders and even a little in the upper back.
- **EXTRA CREDIT (Not Pictured):** After you’re done, release your hands from the back of the chair and fold forward. Just let yourself hang, maybe grabbing opposite elbows with opposite hands. This will stretch your hammys and give your vertebrae a break from being compressed all day while sitting and/or standing.
Focus on Your Breath

- Come back to a simple seated position with feet on the floor, hands in the lap or gently on the thighs, straight spine, shoulders down the back and eyes closed.
- Take at least one minute to completely focus on deep inhalations and exhalations again, feeling the wave of air entering and filling up then flowing out.
- Smile big, open your eyes and conquer your day! Namaste!