

SURFERS AND yoga

If you're suffering from aches, pains and niggles give yoga a try. It rebalances your body and increases your spiritual awareness. All these things are good at bringing balance to your surfing and to your life...

Words AIMEE STAPLEFORD / Photos MIKE SEARLE

Why Should Surfers Do Yoga?

Surfers should try out a yoga class to help with their physical performance and to achieve better mental clarity. All of these benefits develop over time with a regular routine practice.

So, what's it all about?

We start with the physical, helping to achieve better flexibility and strength and improve on balance, co-ordination and ultimately better endurance, power and stamina in the water. Slowly, through practice, surfers begin to focus more on the breath and on channelling their concentration, noticing the calm and relaxed state of mind and a sense of feeling centred, even in bigger surf or waiting in a crowded line-up, deepening their connection with the ocean, their awareness and their own spiritual growth. Here we look at a few poses which – through regular practice – will help to strengthen your body, focus your mind and increase your lung capacity.

PLANK POSE

Start in Adho Mukha Svanasana/Downward Facing Dog pose. Bring the torso to a parallel plane with the floor by drawing the weight forward as you inhale, stacking the wrists directly below the shoulders. Broaden the collarbones and roll the shoulder blades down the back. Lengthen the tailbone towards



the heels whilst simultaneously lifting the thighs towards the sky. To avoid slumping in the hips, contract the lower abdominals, think pulling in from the navel and scooping up towards the ribcage with the internal lock, this will support the lower back. To connect

with the back of the legs, press the heels to the wall behind you and create a continual line from heel to head. Lift the base of the skull away from the back of the neck and look straight down at the floor, keeping the throat and eyes soft.

Hold for several breaths to build strength and tone or transition into Chaturanga (low plank) on your exhale.

CHATURANGA

With the elbows skimming the sides of the ribcage slowly lower on an exhalation keeping a strong body down towards the floor, keeping the abdominals toned and the legs fired up. Hover there



a couple of inches above the ground and hold. Create space in the back by separating the shoulder blades. There's a tendency in this pose for the lower back to sway toward the floor and the tailbone to poke

up toward the ceiling. Draw the pubic bone toward the navel to keep control of the alignment of the torso. Do not allow the hips to sag forwards as this will cause strain on the back. If you get tired drop the knees and rest in Balasana/child's pose before continuing through the stages to repeat. Hold for three deep breaths to begin with and build from there.

VIRABHADASANA 3 - WARRIOR 3

Start with the feet together in Mountain Pose and arms extended along the sides of the body. Inhale, root the left foot down as you bring the right knee to ninety degrees in front. Exhale, allow the right foot to float back whilst simultaneously allowing the arms to extend forwards, palms facing in and looking down to the front of the mat. Drop the right hip to square through the pelvis. Use the internal locks as mentioned in Vrksasana Tree pose for stability and to support the back.

Repeat three times. On third full extension intensify by interlacing fingers, index fingers pointing straight ahead and looking to the front of the room. Build strength by planti-flexing through the foot for three breaths then dorsi-flex for three breaths before lowering the leg on an exhale and repeating the technique to the other side.



BAKASANA - CROW POSE

Come into a deep squat from Tadasana, with the feet together sitting onto the balls of the feet and toes. Allow the hands to rest in front of the body, separate the knees wide apart and take the hands to shoulder distance width in front of you, spread through the fingers making sure the middle finger and central wrist point straight ahead. Now transfer your weight gently forward as you lift through the hips taking the weight of the torso onto the backs of the upper arms and pointing the toes, keeping the heels as close to the sitting bones as possible.

As confidence builds begin to bring more weight forwards on an exhale until you are on the tip of the toes. As a beginner you may want to stay here for now, but if you feel ready to take flight squeeze the legs against the arms and begin to lift one foot away from the floor at a time. Lengthen through the spine by lightly lifting the head to look to the front of the mat.



Aimee runs Synergy Yoga classes in Newquay, so if you are looking for an activity to support your surfing through the winter chill, why not try yoga to help keep the body supple and avoid the winter blues! To find out more go www.facebook.com/synergyyogastudio