

THIS NEW SECTION OF THE CRAIC LOOKS AT HEALTHY ALTERNATIVES WHICH CAN MAKE US BETTER SURFERS AND PROLONG OUR TIME PURSUING THE SPORT WE LOVE. HERE POPULAR CORK YOGA TEACHER THERESE TIERNEY EXPLAINS HER DISCIPLINE OF YOGA BEFORE SHE AND JOHNNY BUGLER DEMONSTRATE SOME MOVES THAT ARE BENEFICIAL FOR SURFERS.

“The flexibility from my yoga routine had simply made me a better surfer.” There is little need for further testimony on the benefits of yoga to your surfing than this from Hawaiian legend Gerry Lopez. He spoke of his surfing heyday at Pipeline in the '70s and today, at 58, he maintains that the key to staying active is maintaining a flexible spine through practising yoga. Nowadays, with pro surfers like Taylor Knox and Rochelle Ballard appearing in yoga DVDs, it is becoming generally accepted that one practice can deeply enhance the experience of the other.

Yoga is not a religion and it is not a sport. It is an ancient Indian tradition passed through many generations as a means to remain connected to one's inner self. The word yoga comes from the ancient Sanskrit word 'yug', which translated means 'union' or 'to join'; the practice of joining mind, body and spirit. The idea of practising yoga is not about perfecting really difficult postures or becoming really flexible, it is about developing the ability to know your body and to be fully present in every moment. Anyone

who has experienced both yoga and surfing does not take long to realise that they share common threads, both physically and spiritually. The physical and mental benefits of practising yoga are vast and are a great preparation for surfing, so whether you are new to surfing or a seasoned pro, yoga can help take you to your full potential.

Both yoga and surfing are personal practices, not team sports. They are similar, in that you are often surrounded by others either in a class or in the water, but the practice itself is very personal. So whether you are looking for a warm-up before a surf, trying to recover from a surf injury or looking for a way to relieve the feeling of restlessness when the ocean is flat, yoga has the answers. With yogic breathing you can develop your lung capacity and strengthen your cardiovascular system. You can surf for longer and shorten recovery time between sessions. Creating a regular yoga practice will improve your surfing, sharpen your mental focus, improve balance and increase your strength and flexibility. Here are some basic poses to get you started.

POSES:



TREE POSE

Stand with feet together. Focus on a point three feet in front of you. Shift the weight to the right leg. Slowly raise left leg to rest either on calf muscle or thigh. Find your balance. Hold. Repeat on the other side.

Benefits of Tree Pose:

Improves balance and develops focus. Strengthens thighs, calves, ankles, and spine. Stretches the groins and inner thighs, chest and shoulders. Relieves sciatica and reduces flat feet.

WARRIOR POSE

Stand with feet together, step feet three and a half to four feet apart. Raise arms parallel to the floor, shoulder blades wide, and palms down. Turn your left foot in slightly to the right and your right foot out to the right 90 degrees. Align the right heel with the left heel. Firm your thighs and turn your right thigh outward, so that the centre of the kneecap is in line with the centre of the right ankle. Bend your right knee over the right ankle, so that the shin is perpendicular to the floor. Gaze in direction of right hand. Breathe deeply. Stay for 30 seconds to one minute. Repeat to left.

Benefits of Warrior:

Strengthens and stretches the legs and ankles. Stretches the groins, chest and lungs, shoulders. Increases stamina. Relieves backaches. Therapeutic for flat feet, osteoporosis, and sciatica.

COBRA

Lie prone on the floor, stretch your legs back, tops of the feet on the floor. Spread your hands on the floor under your shoulders. On an inhalation, begin to straighten the arms to lift the chest off the floor, going only to the height at which you can maintain a connection through your hips. Firm shoulder blades against the back. Distribute the backbend evenly throughout the entire spine. Hold the pose from 15 to 30 seconds, breathing easily.



Benefits of Cobra pose:

Strengthens the spine. Stretches chest and lungs, shoulders, and abdomen. Stimulates abdominal organs. Helps relieve stress and fatigue. Therapeutic for asthma. Opens the heart and lungs. Soothes sciatica.

HIGH LUNGE

Stand straight. Bend forward, bend knees and bring hands to ground along side feet. Step back right leg as far as possible, bent knee forms right angle. Lay torso on front thigh and lengthen forward. Deep breathing. Hold and repeat on left side.

Benefits of Lunge:

Stretches the groins. Strengthens the legs and arms.



SIDE ANGLE POSE

Begin in Warrior pose. Then slowly bring your right forearm to rest on your thigh. Extend your left arm straight up toward the ceiling, reach the arm over the back of your left ear, palm facing the floor. Stretch from your left heel through your left fingertips, lengthening the entire left side of your body. Breathe deeply. Stay for 30 seconds to one minute. Repeat to left.



Benefits of Side Angle Pose:

Increases stamina. Improves balance.

Strengthens and stretches the legs, knees, and ankles. Stretches the groins, spine, waist, chest and lungs, and shoulders. Stimulates abdominal organs.

CHILD'S POSE

Kneel on the floor. Touch your big toes together and sit on your heels, separate knees about as wide as your hips, lay your torso down between your thighs. Broaden your sacrum, lengthen your tailbone away from the back of the pelvis, bring forehead to floor in front of you. Lay your hands on the floor alongside your torso, palms up.

Benefits of Child's Pose:

Gently stretches the hips, thighs, and ankles. Calms the brain and helps relieve stress and fatigue. Relieves back and neck pain when done with head and torso supported.

HALF SPINAL TWIST

Sit on the floor with your legs straight out in front of you. Step the right foot over the left leg and stand it on the floor outside your left thigh.

The right knee will point directly up at the ceiling. Exhale and twist toward the inside of the right thigh. Press the right hand against the floor just behind your right buttock, and set your left upper arm on the outside of your right thigh near the knee. Pull your front torso and inner right thigh together. Lengthen spine. Turn to right, looking over right shoulder. Breathe deeply. Twist more around with every exhalation. Hold and repeat to left side.



Benefits of Half Spinal Twist:

Massages abdominal organs, including the liver and kidneys. Stretches the shoulders. Stimulates the brain. Relieves mild backache and hip pain. Strengthens and stretches the spine.

DOWNWARD FACING DOG

Come onto all fours on the floor. Set your knees directly below your hips and your hands slightly forward of your shoulders. Spread your palms and turn your toes under. Exhale and lift your knees away from the floor. At first keep the knees slightly bent and the heels lifted away from the floor. Then with an exhalation, push your top thighs back and stretch your heels onto or down toward the floor. Straighten your knees but do not to lock them. Keep the head between the upper arms; don't let it hang. Stay in this pose from one to three minutes. Then bend knees to the floor, exhale and rest in child's pose.



Benefits of Downward Facing Dog Pose:

Energises the body. Stretches the shoulders, hamstrings, calves, arches, and hands. Strengthens the arms and legs. Relieves headache, insomnia, back pain, and fatigue. Therapeutic for high blood pressure, asthma, flat feet, sciatica, sinusitis. Calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild depression.

A little more difficult:

CROW POSE

Squat down from standing pose with feet a few inches apart. Separate knees wider than your hips, lean the torso forward, between the inner thighs. Stretch your arms forward, then bend elbows, place your hands on the floor and the backs of the upper arms against the shins. Snuggle your inner thighs against the sides of your torso, and your shins into your armpits, and slide the upper arms down as low onto the shins as possible. Lift up onto the balls of your feet and lean forward even more, taking the weight of your torso onto the backs of the upper arms. With an exhalation, lean forward even more onto the backs of your upper arms, to the point where the balls of your feet leave the floor. Now your torso and legs are balanced on the backs of your upper arms. Stay in the pose from 20 seconds to one minute. To release, exhale and slowly lower your feet to the floor, back into a squat.



Benefits of Crow Pose:

Strengthens arms and wrists. Stretches the upper back. Strengthens the abdominal muscles. Opens the groins. Tones the abdominal organs.