

Utthitta Trikonasana

(Triangle Pose)

Benefits:

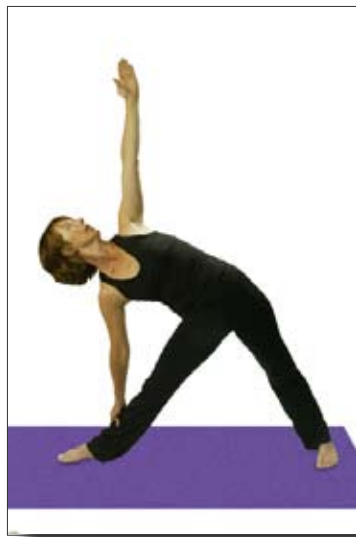
- Strengthens the legs.
- Opens the hip joints.
- Extends and strengthens the spine
- included the neck.

Contraindications/Cautions:

Acute knee injury/hyper extended knee joints, lower spinal injury, vertigo

Utthitta Trikonasa is one of the most commonly performed standing postures in yoga. It is classified in a group of postures known as asymmetrical poses. These postures are important, because they help us define and recognize the imbalances in the strength and flexibility of the muscles on each side of our body. The posture is performed first to the right and then to the left side. You will quickly discover that each side of your body offers you a different experience.

A major part of yoga is the mind/body connection and performing this posture gives you a wonderful opportunity in which to experience this connection, because we fast realize that in order to know symmetry we must first know asymmetry. This lesson can be easily applied to your body, your job, your relationships and your life. Pay attention to all of the messages your body is sending to you as you perform this posture.



1. Begin in Tadasana (Mountain Pose). Step or jump your feet one leg's length apart. Make your feet parallel with each other, with the sides of your feet parallel to the yoga mat. Put your hands on your hips and stand tall! Imagine that you are the "Jolly Green Giant." Raise up from the waist and press down from the pelvis. Don't let your torso "slump" – lift your torso out of the pelvis by imagining there is string attached to the top of your head and someone is pulling you up to the sky. Don't thrust the pelvis forward, however. Keep the tailbone tucked in.
2. Extend your arms out to the sides, reaching out from the center of your spine through your middle fingers. Look forward into the room, chin level with the floor.

3. Press the left heel hard into the floor and lift the front of the left foot in about 15 degrees. Turn your right foot out 90 degrees. Note that the heel of your right foot should be aligned with the arch of your left foot. Firm your thigh muscles and concentrate on externally rotating the muscles so that the knee on your right leg is looking out over your toes. Rotate your left thigh to the left. Do not let the left hip swing into the room. Keep the hips square in the room. The "swinging out" of the hips is a common problem with the posture and can be difficult to achieve. Your intention and focus will help to prevent this from happening.
4. While you push the outer edge of your left foot hard into the floor, press the ball of your big toe on your right foot hard into the floor. Inhale fully. Looking forward into the room, Exhale and reach your right arm out over your right leg, reaching out while doing a side bend...almost like a windmill. Try hard not to lean forward. Imagine that you are a stick figure on a piece of paper. All the action takes place in one geometric plane.
5. Take your right hand down and lightly hold onto whatever part of leg it happens to land on – your knee, shin or ankle. Raise your left arm and reach up, palm facing forward.
6. Keeping your neck in line with the rest of your spine turn your head and look up at your left thumb. It helps to tuck your chin in order to achieve this. Bring your right chest around trying to show your heart to the sky. This twisting action is a wonderful way to "wring out" the internal organs and cleanse them, refreshing them with blood.
7. Maintain this posture for one minute. Don't forget to breathe! Breathe deeply into the stretch and hold it as you exhale deeply. Mentally, travel around your body and assess the position of your legs, arms and torso. Take some mental notes on where the asymmetry might be occurring. Then, keeping your left leg strong, return to the upright position on the exhalation. Bring your feet to face forward. Jump or step your feet together.
8. Repeat the posture to the left.