



Utthita Trikonasana

Balance in life sounds simple enough. The word "Yoga" means the transcendence of duality, or the union of opposites. For the balance of opposites to occur, an elusive third element is required. This is a mid point, or Center.

Utthita means extended, or stretched. Trikona (tri - three, kona - angle) is a triangle. This asana is an extended triangle pose. Finding the correct practice of this pose reveals its deeper held message (for all to enjoy)...Yoga.

Why do it?

Within the extended triangle pose, the spine is a wonderful analogy for the balance of both inward centering and extension into the world. It teaches me over and over again the balance to be stable and strong at my core, and to keep enough for myself and offer the extra to my loved ones and my life's work. Nevertheless, like the act of finding balance anywhere in our lives, Utthita Trikonasana can also be an enigma. Therefore, let's get started. Ready?

Here's how: Get set and stable.

Let us start the pose from the beginning. The essential skills that we need to move into, work with, and end with are placement and stability. The beginning structure has to be observed throughout to hold center. The grounding that begins with the placing of the feet establishes a boundary and affirmation of knowing the earth is beneath us and has our back. To form the base of your stance, step lengthwise on your mat with your feet one of your own leg's length apart. Place the outer edge of your back foot at a 15-degree angle forward with your toes turned in. To say it another way, angle your little toe about one inch in front of your back heel. Bring your back leg in closer if you cannot feel all four corners (sides) of your back foot pressing firmly against the ground in this stance.

To find the placement of your front foot, draw a line from just in front of the heel of the back foot parallel with the sides of your yoga mat. The middle of your front heel to second toe or midline of this foot is perfectly straight in line with the sides of your mat.

Bend your front knee slightly and gently turn to align your front knee with your second toe of your front foot. Then slightly bend your back knee and align with the second toe of your back foot.

Make sure that you are not locking into your knee joints. Check each knee to see if it is hyper-extended or packed. This means you have gone beyond straight, and are putting all of the strain on your ligaments and cartilage. Packing into the knee joint will ground your weight into your knee joints; it will not center you into the earth through the knee. If this happens, put the smallest bend into your front and back knees to keep your work in your muscles. This will allow you to ground your feet into your mat and deepen the concentration of the thighbone into your hip socket. Feel that your muscles are hugging around the whole knee and supporting the bones the whole length of your leg. If this is hard to find, try using your muscles to pull your kneecaps up toward the top of your thigh as you support the back of your leg with the calf and hamstring muscles. Wherever your hips are with your knees aligned in this way is your "neutral" starting point for Extended Triangle today. We use this alignment to protect the knee joints, the sacrum, and hip joints throughout the motions of extending the spine sideways.