

DOWNWARD FACING DOG

- Set up by kneeling on the ground and sitting on your heels - keeping your buttocks down, reach your hands as far forward as possible keeping your arms in line with your shoulders - you have now measured your set-up.
- Come up onto your knees keeping your hands and feet fixed - spread your palms, index fingers parallel, rotate your arms outwards and turn your toes under.
- Imagine a string attached to your tail bone, exhale and raise that area as your arms and legs begin to straighten - move towards creating the shape of an upside down 'V'.
- Focus on keeping your arms aligned, with index fingers facing forwards and biceps rotating up - keep your head between the upper arms and allow your neck to be soft.
- Tilt your hips upwards, open the back of your knees to the sky, and finally work your heels towards the ground.
- Aim for a number of breaths in that pose before reversing that process with patience and deliberation as you come back to the ground.

Benefits

- Lengthens the entire back of the body including calves, hamstrings, spine and shoulders.
- Strengthens arms and legs and stabilises body.
- Calms the mind.
- Un-weights the internal organs.

Beginners Advice

- Keep knees bent to relieve tension in your spine and focus on straightening arms, shoulders and spine.
- Use blocks or similar to raise your arms off the floor to more easily access the posture.
- Practice for a shorter duration but maintain the time taken to set the posture up and enter it with composure and skill.

Challenge

- Work towards your heels being able to rest on the floor while maintaining the other important aspects of the posture such as long, straight spine, soft neck and straight arms and shoulders.
- Increase the length of time in the posture beyond what your current practice is.
- Move in and out of the posture a number of times with the intention of improving your shape each attempt.
- Acknowledge the sometimes uncomfortable nature of the posture and focus your mind on the smoothness and depth of your breath.

Adjustments / What to look for

- Check that the distance between your hands and feet (the base) is not too close or too far apart - point #1 of the set-up should ensure the appropriate distance.
- Check that your feet and hands are all facing forwards and not rotating inwards/outwards.
- Check that your head is between the shoulders, with your neck soft and eyes looking toward the ground/feet.
- Have the intention of lengthening the spine and also widening it creating a feeling of space and ease in the posture.

