

Child's Pose Balasana

(bah-LAHS-anna)
bala = child

This rejuvenating pose completely relaxes the back and neck and stretches the spine. It's a counterpose to backbends.



The blueprint

The yogi kneels with forehead resting on the floor, arms extended behind, palms up.

How to do it

1. Kneel and sit back on your heels with your legs slightly apart, your chest lifted and your shoulders relaxed.
2. Allow your arms to hang by your sides and lengthen your spine.
3. Breathe in and as you exhale, fold forward, hinging from the hips until your forehead rests on the floor.
4. Allow the weight of your arms to pull your shoulders down.
5. Place your arms on the floor next to your legs, palms up.
6. You can stay in this position 30 seconds or longer, depending on how comfortable you are.
7. To come out of the pose, bring your hands to the floor and begin to push up slowly. Gradually come back up to kneeling, arms by your side, back straight.

Do:

1. Let your shoulders round
2. Breath deeply and relax

Don't:

Practice this pose if you have a knee injury unless you have an experienced teacher assisting you.

Benefits

- Opens the upper back
- Stretches the ankles, knees and hips
- Opens the pelvic floor, hips and low back
- Alleviates head, neck and chest pain
- Calms the mind
- Lessens fatigue

Contraindications

- Pregnancy (keep your knees apart and don't place pressure on your abdomen)
- Ankle, knee or hip injury
- Diarrhea
- High blood pressure, detached retina or glaucoma - rest your head on the seat of a chair.

Beginners tips and modifications

- If you can't comfortably sit on your heels in this pose, put a folded blanket or mat between your back thighs and calves.
- If you can't reach your forehead to the floor, rest it on your fists.

Advanced practitioner variations

- Bring your arms forward and walk your fingertips forward and away from your shoulders to lengthen your arms and increase the stretch. Place your forearms on the floor.