

Gate Pose

Parighasana

(par-ee-GOSS-anna)

parigha = an iron bar or beam used for locking or shutting a gate

This is an invigorating side bend that allows us to stretch the side body, expand the intercostal muscles, and deepen the breath. Considered an intermediate pose, the body resembles a cross beam used for locking a gate.



The blueprint

The yogi kneels on one knee with the other leg extended to the side, bending to the side toward the extended leg with the opposite arm extended and reaching for the extended leg.

How to do it:

If you aren't ready for the full pose, you can start with this simpler version. The full pose follows.

1. Kneel on the floor with ankles and legs together.
2. Stretch the right leg out to the right, keeping it in line with the torso and left knee. Turn the right foot sideways to right, keeping the right leg stiff at the knee. Try to keep your foot flat on the floor.
3. Inhale, extending the arms and raising them to shoulder height, palms down.
4. Exhale, bending the torso to the right and your right arm down toward the extended right leg. Rest the forearm and wrist on the right shin and ankle respectively, right palm facing up. The right ear will rest on the upper right arm.
5. Inhale, sweeping the left arm over the back of the left ear.
6. If you're a beginner, stay in this position 30-60 seconds. When you're ready to come out of the pose, inhale, reaching through the top arm to raise your torso upright. Exhale, dropping your arms to your sides and bring the right knee back to beside the left. Repeat on the left side.

If you're more advanced, continue into the full posture.

From Step 4, sweep the left arm over the head until it meets the right palm and the left ear touches the upper left arm. Hold the posture for 30-60 seconds, breathing normally. To come out of the pose, inhale, raise your torso back up and exhale, bringing the arms down

Do:

- Make sure the kneecap of the straight leg is pointing toward the ceiling]
- Keep your left knee directly below your left hip

Don't:

- Let the left arm block your sight; rather stretch it past your ear and overhead.

Benefits:

- Stretches the sides of the torso and spine
- Stretches the hamstrings
- Opens the shoulders
- Stimulates abdominal organs and lungs
- Stretches the pelvic region

Contraindications:

- see modification below if you have knee pain

Modifications

If there are knee issues that make kneeling impossible or difficult, perform the pose sitting on a chair. Arrange your legs either in front of your torso, with knees at right angles, or stretch one leg out to the side, mimicking the full pose.

If you can't press your foot of the straight leg flat onto the floor, you have two options: either raise the ball of the foot on a thickly folded blanket, or work against a wall, with the ball of the foot pressed against the wall.