



Sun Salutation

Your Full Guide to
Master the Age-old
Yoga Sequence



Written By:

Sejal Shah, ERYT 500, C-IAYT

© Sri Sri School of Yoga

srisrischoolofyoga.org/na

Index



03. INTRODUCTION

04. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SUN

05. THE YOGIC SCIENCE BEHIND SURYA NAMASKARA

06. SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH ON SURYA NAMASKARA

08. 12 REASONS TO DO SURYA NAMASKARA EVERYDAY

09. SUN SALUTATION: KNOW-HOW

16. SUN SALUTATION CHART

18. SUN SALUTATION FOLLOWED BY SUN MEDITATION (VIDEO)

20. SUN SALUTATION MANTRA (AUDIO)

19. SUN SALUTATION AT A GLANCE

20. 12 TIPS TO BETTER YOUR SUN SALUTATION

22. 5 MISTAKES BEGINNERS MAKE DURING SUN SALUTATION

23. 12 BENEFITS OF SUN SALUTATION

24. PRECAUTIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS

25. AYURVEDA'S TAKE ON SUN SALUTATION

26. SUN SALUTATION CALORIMETER

27. SACRED NUMBER 108!

28. TAKE THE 108 SUN SALUTATION CHALLENGE

31. LEARN SUN SALUTATION WITH CERTIFIED INSTRUCTORS

© Copyright Statement: All rights reserved. No part of this e-book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form without the written consent from the writer and the Sri Sri School of Yoga.

Surya Namaskar: Introduction to Sun Salutation

If you're looking for a simple, enjoyable way to start your day that provides a diverse range of health benefits, consider practicing Surya Namaskar.

It is a special sequence of yoga postures, breathing and chants that together comprises the traditional Sun Salutation.

It is a wonderful gift of yoga to the whole world having all kind of physical, mental, spiritual benefits - stimulating and rejuvenating every system of the body relaxing and calming the overworked mind and renewing spirits.

For people with limited time, this is the best wholesome workout!

Sun Salutation (Surya Namaskar- pronounced Sur-yah- Namah-skar) is a sequence of 12 powerful yoga poses with profound benefits that have been written about for thousands of years. At the physical level, the practice of Sun Salutation stimulates the metabolism and the digestive, respiratory, circulatory and reproductive systems. It provides a good cardiovascular workout, stretches every part of the body, lubricates and strengthens joints and muscles. This sequence takes your spine through almost every possible range of motion and when integrated with the breath (the pattern in which we inhale and exhale with each pose), it encourages deep and rhythmic breathing, increasing blood to the brain and bringing mental clarity.



Significance of the Sun

Ancient scriptures of India mention many shlokas (rhymes) about the Sun.

Surya (sun) is the Soul, both of the moving and unmoving beings.

-The Rig Veda

From the Sun arise all beings.
The Sun sustains them all.
Into the Sun they all vanish.
What the Sun is, that I am.

- Surya Upanishad

Remember those school lessons on how the sun makes life possible on this planet? As a kid, we all learned about the indispensable role the sun plays in our lives - casting away darkness, breathing life into the whole of creation. Nothing is more important to us on Earth than the Sun. Without the Sun's heat and light, the Earth would be a lifeless ball of ice-coated rock. The Sun warms our seas, stirs our atmosphere, generates our weather patterns, maintains day-night cycles, and gives energy to the growing green plants that provide the food and oxygen for life on Earth. The Earth's relationship with the sun also maintains day-night cycles, and thanks to it we go into the cycle of rest and activity. The sun also affects our mood and emotional well-being. Research shows that too little exposure to sunlight can lead to so-called seasonal affective disorder (SAD) - a type of winter depression. Sunlight also helps our bodies to form vitamin D underneath the skin. This vitamin helps us to build and maintain teeth and bones and helps the body to absorb calcium.

Just imagine life without the Sun!!! If the sun never existed, nothing in this world would have existed either. Primitive people and our ancestors worshiped the sun as a symbol of the core of the universe, source of life, and health. Many traditions still continue to honor the sun in various ways.

Besides good health, the practice of Sun Salutation provides an opportunity to express our gratitude towards the Sun that sustains life on the Earth. As we perform Sun Salutations to honor the sun, we also celebrate and honor life, our inner light and our connection with the universe.

The Yogic Science behind Surya Namaskar



It has been said that the different parts of the body are governed by different Devas (deity or divine light). The Solar plexus (located behind the navel, which is the central point of the human body) is said to be connected with the Sun, that is why it is called solar plexus. When the first rays of the sun fall on the solar plexus, it is very good for your body. This is why it is good to do Surya Namaskar (sun salutations) in the early morning. This is the main reason why the ancient Rishis recommended the practice of Surya Namaskar because the regular practice of this sequence expands the solar plexus, which increases one's creative and intuitive abilities. The contemporary sequence we know has its origins in the ancient Vedic period in India when the Sun was worshipped as a powerful symbol of health and immortal life.

The solar plexus has a profound impact on the central nervous system, optic nerves, stomach, and what we usually call our "gut feeling". It is the second brain in our body. When the solar plexus contracts, one feels horrible, sad, depressed, all the negative feelings come. When the solar plexus expands, the intuitive mind awakens, the mind becomes clear and focused.



MANIPURA
SOLAR PLEXUS CHAKRA

All our emotions get stored in the solar plexus, and it is also the point where one's gut feelings arise. The size of the solar plexus is the size of a small gooseberry. However, for those who do yoga, meditation, and Sudarshan Kriya breathwork, it becomes much bigger - almost three to four times bigger than the normal size. The more expanded your solar plexus, the greater is your mental stability and your intuition.

- Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

Scientific Research

on Surya Namaskar (Sun Salutation)



Even though the Sun Salutation sequence has existed for centuries, the research community has recently started paying attention to it. Though many studies have been successfully carried out, they are not enough. A lot more research is required to fully grasp, understand, and utilize the full potential of Surya Namaskar. Here are some studies that will help you to gauge the scientific bases of this powerful yoga sequence.

1. This [article](#) from Dr. John Douillard, a globally recognized leader in the fields of natural health, Ayurveda and sports medicine, very well explains the lesser known facts about this sequence with a lot of scientific perspectives.
2. In one study published in the [International Journal of Yoga](#), 42 school children in the age group of 12–16 years were randomly divided into two groups of 21 each. Group I and Group II received 6 months training in performance of slow suryanamaskar (SSN) and fast suryanamaskar (FSN), respectively. The study showed positive physiological benefits as evidenced by improvement of pulmonary function, respiratory pressures, hand grip strength and endurance, and resting cardiovascular parameters. It also demonstrates the differences between SN training when performed in a slow and fast manner, concluding that the effects of FSN are similar to physical aerobic exercises, whereas the effects of SSN are similar to those of yoga training.
3. A [research](#) was done on a group of 419 college students (age 17-22 years) with high stress to study the effects of suryanamaskar for relaxation. It was concluded that surya namaskar is effective in promoting physical and mental relaxation, feelings of joy and peace, and increased levels of awareness. It also reduces sleepiness, somatic stress, worry, and negative emotion.

Scientific Research on Surya Namaskar (Sun Salutation)

4. As per a research article published in the International Journal of Yoga and Allied sciences, Surya Namaskar has shown its effect on emotional maturity and psychological well being. 30 students between 18 – 24 years of age were involved in the study. After the successful completion of the experiment, it was revealed that practicing Sun Salutation had a positive effect on their psychological mindset and improved their concentration abilities. Along with that, it also showed maturity in the students' emotional state.

5. A study was done to know the “Effects of Surya Namaskar on Sustained Attention in School Children” with a group of 64 students aged between 12-14 from both genders. It was discovered that after performing this yoga sequence for a month, the children showed considerable improvement in their attention spans.

6. Another article that focused on the effects of Surya Namaskar on children's cardiovascular and respiratory systems pointed out that the regular practice of the yoga technique led to a decrease in the children's heart rate, blood pressure and respiratory rate. A significant increase in the vital capacity and peak expiratory flow rate were also discovered.

7. Surya Namaskar stretches and activates every part of your body. According to a research paper, Sun Salutation has positive effects on muscle strength and body endurance. Its regular practice helps to develop a strong upper body, in males as well as in females. Along with that, it also improves your lower body muscle strength and back muscle strength.

The same paper also highlights that practicing Surya Namaskar leads to a significant decrease in female body weight, but not so much in males. In the modern world, obesity has become a serious issue. Sun Salutation provides a natural method to attain a healthy Body Mass Index (BMI) in comparison to medicines, gym exercises, and strict diets that many women use to lose weight.

8. An article published in the [International Journal of Pharmacological Research](#) suggests that the continuous practice of the sun salutations enhances the functioning of the endocrine system. It primarily focuses on pancreas, thyroid, adrenal, and pituitary glands. This article reveals that Sun Salutation can strengthen your Peripheral and Autonomic Nervous Systems, which can be beneficial to individuals suffering from neuronal issues, Metabolism Syndrome, and menstrual disorder.

The study also shows that if people having diabetes practice Surya Namaskar, it will reduce their blood sugar level significantly. Furthermore, this yoga technique also reduces the oxidative stress in the body, which plays an essential role in insulin resistance and is the leading cause of complications in diabetes patients.

12 Reasons to do Sun Salutation Everyday

There are many many reasons to practice Surya Namaskara everyday. Here are my top 12:

1. Revering the Sun:

The Sun represents the physical and spiritual heart of the world. In our hustle and bustle of life, many of us tend to take the sun and the role it plays for granted. Surya Namaskar is a great way to exercise the whole body with gratitude to our revered life force, the Sun, for giving a new day filled with life-giving light and sustenance.

2. Invoking the Inner Sun:

The Sun Salutation sequence awakens the energy of the Inner Sun that lays dormant in our navel center. It warms the body and cultivates inner fire

3. Wholesome practice:

The Sun Salutation is a complete practice for body, mind and spirit. It is a scientifically designed yogic sequence containing asana, pranayama and meditation, thereby working not only on the physical level but also at deeper, subtle levels.

4. They're fun!

Sun Salutations offer the opportunity to move playfully in the practice. In just one sequence, you get backbends, forward bends, hip openers, inversions and even something like an arm balance with plank (position 5) or twisting on the right and left side in cobra pose (position 7).

5. Full of Benefits:

The poses lengthen and strengthen, flex and extend many of the main muscles of the body. It keeps the spine supple and flexible, opens up many tight joints, stretches and tones numerous muscles, improves circulation, respiration and digestion, tones the nerves, clears up the skin, makes the body leaner and feeling younger!

6. A quick workout:

Being a complete workout, it is a great solution for hectic days when a full yoga routine is a challenge - six rounds of Sun Salutations can be your 10 minute quick maintenance dose on such days. Follow that up with pranayama breathwork and meditation and you're ready to go!

7. Meditation in motion:

When done with the powerful chants and complete awareness of body, breath and mind, Sun Salutations serve as meditation in movement, reducing depression, anxiety and stress while bringing peace, mental focus and concentration.

8. Gratitude in action:

The Sun Salutation gives a platform for being centered and grateful. Although it is about being grateful to the Sun, it can spread to all areas of your life. Dedicate each round to one thing you are grateful for, no matter how small or big, and soon after, your mood and spirit will be uplifted! Being grateful will become your nature.

9. Bowing to the higher power:

When Sun Salutations are done with inward attention, it makes us realize the changing nature of everything and there is a higher power who governs this whole creation.

10. Harness the dormant energy:

The twelve individual postures of the Sun Salutation are systematically woven together in a manner to generate and distribute prana, dormant energy, in a way which purifies and rejuvenates.

11. Can be varied as per one's needs and abilities:

You can make the sequence easy to suit your physical limitations or you could build in more challenging variations to some of the individual postures depending upon your body's strength and flexibility. This will ensure that your friendship with this beautiful sequence remains vibrant and deeply satisfying over the years.

12. Bestow blessings:

Sun Salutations "bestow upon us the good fortune of having only good thoughts, of hearing and speaking only good words, and of attaining a sound and strong body, so that we may have a long life and, one day, achieve oneness with God."
– Sri K. Pattabhi Jois

Happy Sun Saluting!!!!

The Sun Salutation

Know-How

Surya Namaskar is a graceful sequence of twelve poses linked by a continuous flowing motion and accompanied by deep breaths. Each pose counteracts the one before, stretching the body in a different way and alternately expanding and contracting the chest to regulate and harmonize the breathing. One round of Sun Salutation consists of two sets/sequences, the first leading with the right leg, and the second leading with the left in the 4th and 9th positions. Start by doing two to four rounds and gradually build up to 12 rounds.

This sequence of movements and asana can be practiced on varying levels of awareness, ranging from that of physical exercise in various styles to a complete sadhana (spiritual practice) which incorporates asana, breathwork, mantra and chakra awareness. The latter form is practiced slowly, gracefully, gently, rhythmically, with a lot of involvement and conscious breathing by focusing on a particular chakra for each posture and a chanting particular mantra that consists of a Sanskrit name of the sun for each pose, as per details given in the chart below. When done as physical exercise with more number of rounds at a faster pace, it serves as excellent cardio work out with physical benefits like weight reduction.

The Sun Salutation can be completed as a stand alone practice or it can be practiced to limber up or warm up the whole body in preparation for the full-fledged asana practice. Traditionally, it is recommended that you complete 3 sets of Surya Namaskar in order to warm the body prior to moving into deeper postures.

For the best benefits, perform it on an empty stomach, in the open air or in a well-ventilated room, facing the sun, or at sunrise and sunset. Embrace feelings of gratitude to the sun while doing so.

Before you start, you may choose to prepare yourself with this imagination: You are amongst the mountains just before the dawn. There is a soothing wind, birds are chirping, it is a magical moment - the glowing sun opens its eyes on the eastern horizon, filling the sky and the mountains with the golden rays. You are bathing into soft rays of the rising sun. Stand straight with eyes gently closed and smile on the face (which is a reflection of a relaxed state of mind) and with a lot of gratitude towards the Sun in your heart. Breathe gently, slowly, and effortlessly. Once you feel as if your whole body is filled with the light of the Sun, start the poses one by one.

Depending on your preferred style of yoga, you may be familiar with one of the many versions of sun salutes. Vinyasa-style salutes, for example, incorporate chaturangas (low plank) and focus more on upper-body strength. Or you may be familiar with the Sun Salutation A or Sun Salutation B or Sun Salutation C sequences that incorporate some variations taught by some yoga schools. The Art of Living and Sri Sri School of Yoga teach the below-mentioned sequence of the Sun Salutation that is the most traditional version of the Sun Salute and actively engages all parts of the body.

It is recommended that you systematically learn the Surya Namaskara under the supervision and guidance of a certified yoga teacher. In the meantime, the following instructions could help you understand the sequence in much detail.

1. Pranamasana (prayer pose)



Stand at the edge of your yoga mat, keep your feet together, and balance your weight equally on both the feet.

Expand your chest and relax your shoulders.

As you inhale, lift both arms up from the sides and as you exhale, bring your palms together in front of the chest in prayer position.

Benefits: Establishes a state of humility, gratitude, concentration and calmness. Helps maintain the balance of the body. Relaxes the nervous system

2. Hasta Uttanasana (Raised Arms Pose)



As you inhale, lift the arms up and back, keeping the biceps close to the ears. In this pose, the effort is to stretch the whole body up from the heels to the tips of the fingers.

To deepen the stretch, push the pelvis forward a little bit. Ensure that you are reaching up with the fingers rather than trying to bend backward.

Benefits: Stretches abdominal and intestinal muscles, arms and spinal cord. Expands the chest resulting in the full intake of oxygen.

3. Hasta Padasana (Hand to Foot Pose)

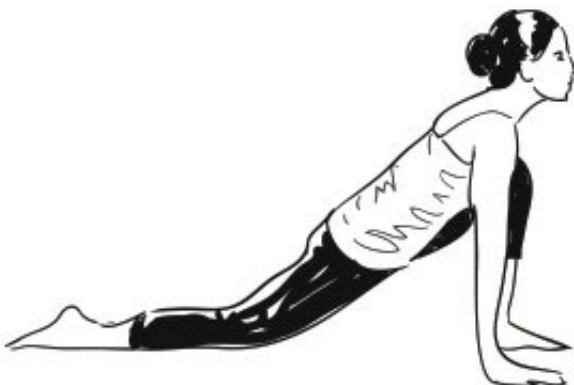


Breathing out, stretch forward, and bend downwards from the waist, keeping the spine erect.

As you exhale completely, bring the hands down to the floor beside the feet. You may bend the knees, if necessary, to bring the palms down to the floor. To deepen the stretch, straighten the knees.

Benefits: Tones abdomen, muscles of thighs and legs. Stretches spine and back muscles. Opens the hips and shoulders.

4. Ashwa Sanchalanasana (Equestrian Pose)



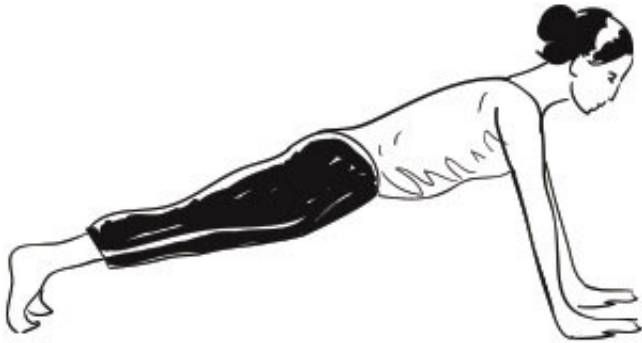
Breathing in, push your right leg back as far as possible.

Bring the right knee to the floor and look up. The left foot is in between the palms.

Benefits: Tones abdomen, muscles of thighs and legs. Makes the spine and neck flexible.

Good for indigestion, constipation, and sciatica.

5. Dandasana/ Phalakasana (Plank Pose)



As you breathe in, take the left leg back and bring the whole body in a straight line.

Keep your arms perpendicular to the floor.

Benefits: Strengthens arm, back and abdominal muscles. It also helps in curing certain problems of the spinal column and cord. Improves posture. Calms the mind.

6. Ashtanga Namaskara (Eight Points Salute)



Gently bring your knees down to the floor and exhale. Take the hips back slightly as in child's pose, then slide forward, and rest your chest and chin on the floor. Raise your posterior slightly.

The two hands, two feet, two knees, and chest and chin should touch the floor. Abdomen remains off the floor.

Benefits: Strengthen nerves and muscles of shoulders, arms, back and chest. Enhances the flexibility of the back and spine. Reduces tension and anxiety.

7. Bhujangasana (Cobra Pose)



Slide forward and raise the chest up into the Cobra posture. You may keep your elbows bent in this pose with the shoulders away from the ears. Look up. As you inhale, make a gentle effort to push the chest forward. As you exhale, make a gentle effort to push the navel down. Keep the toes flat on the floor.

Benefits: Benefits the adrenal glands and kidneys sending them a richer supply of blood. Tones ovaries, uterus and liver. Muscles of the back, abdomen and entire upper body are strengthened. Aids in relief and elimination of menstrual irregularities. Relieves constipation. Elevates mood. Invigorates the heart.

8. Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward Facing Dog)

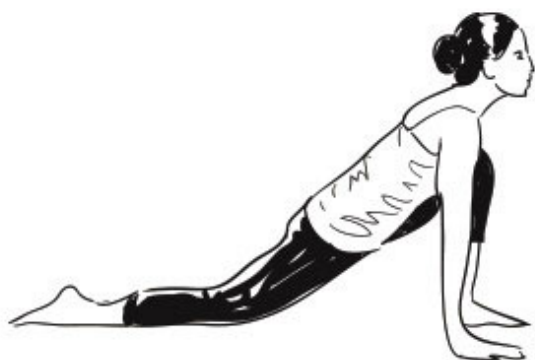


Breathing out, lift the hips and the tail bone up, chest downwards in an 'inverted V' (∇) posture.

How to deepen this yoga stretch? If possible, try and keep the heels on the ground and make a gentle effort to lift the tailbone up, going deeper into the stretch.

Benefits: Stretches arm, back and abdominal muscles. It also helps in curing certain problems of the spinal column and cord. Increases blood flow to the brain and head region.

9. Ashwa Sanchalanasana (Equestrian Pose)



Breathing in, bring the right foot forward in between the two hands, left knee down to the floor, press the hips down, and look up.

Place the right foot exactly between the two hands and the right calf perpendicular to the floor. In this position, make a gentle effort to push the hips down towards the floor, to deepen the stretch.

Benefits: Tones abdomen, muscles of thighs and legs. Makes the spine and neck flexible. Good for indigestion, constipation, and sciatica.

10. Hasta Padasana (Hand to Foot Pose)



Breathing out, bring the left foot forward. Keep the palms on the floor. You may bend the knees, if necessary.

Gently straighten the knees and if you can, try and touch your nose to the knees. Keep breathing.

Benefits: Tones abdomen, muscles of thighs and legs. Stretches spine and back muscles. Opens the hips and shoulders.

11. Hasta Uttanasana (Raised Arms Pose)



12. Tadasana (Mountain Pose)



Breathing in, roll the spine up, hands go up and bend backward a little bit, pushing the hips slightly outward.

Ensure that your biceps are beside your ears. The idea is to stretch up more rather than stretching backward.

Benefits: Tones abdomen, muscles of thighs and legs. Stretches spine and back muscles. Opens the hips and shoulders.

On your next exhalation, first, straighten your body, then bring the arms down. Relax in this position, observe the sensations in your body.

Benefits: Helps maintain the balance of the body. Relaxes the nervous system.

Next get ready for prayer position for the other half of the sequence leading with the left leg in positions 4 and 9.

Browse our [yoga poses library](#) to find more details of the above poses.

Sun Salutation (Surya)



Namaskarasana (Prayer pose)

Exhale

Om Mitraya Namah

(Salutations to Mitra, the bestower of universal friendship)
Anahata Chakra (heart center)

Stand facing the direction of the sun with both feet touching each other near the front edge of your yoga mat. While exhaling, bring the hands together, palm-to-palm, at the heart with a feeling of gratitude.

Establishes a state of humility, gratitude, concentration and calmness. Helps maintain the balance of the body. Relaxes the nervous system.



Hasta Uttanasana (Upward arm stretch)

Inhale

Om Ravaye Namah

(Salutations to Ravi, the bestower of radiance and light)
Vishuddhi Chakra (throat center)

While inhaling, raise the arms upward. Slowly pushing the chest forward, go back, stretching arms parallel to the ears besides the head.

Stretches abdominal and intestinal muscles, arms and spinal cord. Expands the chest resulting in the full intake of oxygen.



Hastapadasana (Standing head to knee)

Exhale

Om Suryaya Namah

(Salutations to Surya, the dispeller of darkness and who induces activity)
Swadishtana Chakra (sacral center)

While inhaling, raise the arms upward. Slowly pushing the chest forward, go back, stretching arms parallel to the ears besides the head.

Tones abdomen, muscles of thighs and legs. Stretches spine and back muscles.

Opens the hips and shoulders.



Ashwa Sanchalanasana (Equestrian pose)

Inhale

Om Bhaanve Namah

(Salutations to Bhaanu, the shining principle, who illumines)
Ajna Chakra (eyebrows center)

While inhaling, raise the arms upward. Slowly pushing the chest forward, go back, stretching arms parallel to the ears besides the head.

Tones abdomen, muscles of thighs and legs. Makes the spine and neck flexible.

Good for indigestion, constipation, and sciatica.



Phalakasana (Plank pose)

Exhale or retain

Om Khagaya Namah

(Salutations to Khaga - the all-pervading who moves through the sky)
Vishuddhi Chakra (throat center)

While exhaling, bring the left foot together with the right. Keep arms straight, and align the legs, hips, back, shoulders, and head in a straight line to form a plank.

Strengthens arm, back and abdominal muscles. It also helps in curing certain problems of the spinal column and cord. Improves posture. Calms the mind.



Ashtanga Namaskara (Eight Points Salute)

Retain or Exhale

Om Pooshney Namah

(Salutations to the mystic fire - the giver of strength and nourishment)
Manipura Chakra (navel center)

Curl your toes. Retaining the breath, lower your knees, your chest and then your forehead, keeping your hips and tummy up.

Strengthen nerves and muscles of shoulders, arms, back and chest. Enhances the flexibility of the back and spine. Reduces tension and anxiety.

Namaskar) Chart

Bhujangasana or Sarpasana (Cobra pose)

Inhale



Om Hiranayagarbhay Namah
(Salutations to the Golden Cosmic Self- who brings healing)
Swadishtana Chakra (sacral center)

Flatten your toes, hips and tummy. Inhaling slowly raise the head and chest to bend backward as much as possible, bending the spine to the maximum keeping both the feet together.

Improves blood supply to adrenal glands and kidneys. Tones ovaries, uterus and liver. Strengthens muscles of the back, abdomen and upper body. Helps with menstrual irregularities. Relieves constipation. Elevates mood. Invigorates the heart.

Adhomukhashwanasana (Downward facing dog)

Exhale



Om Marichaye Namah
(Salutations to the Rays of the Sun)
Vishuddhi Chakra (throat center)

While exhaling, lift the knees, bring both feet together. Keep arms straight, raise the hips and align the head with the arms, forming an upward arch. Gently push the back backwards so that both the feet touch the ground.

Stretches arm, back and abdominal muscles. It also helps in curing certain problems of the spinal column and cord. Increases blood flow to the brain and head region.

Ashwa Sanchalanasana (Equestrian pose)

Inhale



Om Adityaya Namah
(Salutations to Son of Aditi - the Cosmic Mother)
Ajna Chakra (eyebrow center)

Inhaling, move the right leg to front in a wide forward step. Keep the hands and feet firmly on the ground, with the right foot between the hands. Raise the head.

Tones abdomen, muscles of thighs and legs. Makes the spine and neck flexible. Good for indigestion, constipation, and sciatica.

Hastapadasana (Standing head to knee pose)

Exhale



Om Savitre Namah
(Salutations to the Stimulating power of the Sun)
Swadishtana Chakra (sacral center)

Exhaling slowly bend forward, touching the earth with respect until the hands are in line with the feet, head touching knees.

Tones abdomen, muscles of thighs and legs. Stretches spine and back muscles. Opens the hips and shoulders

Hasta Uttanasana (Upward arm stretch)

Inhale



Om Arkaya Namah
(Salutations to Arka, the remover of afflictions, who is fit to be praised)
Vishuddi Chakra (throat center)

While inhaling raise the arms upward. Slowly bend backward, stretching arms above the head.

Stretches abdominal and intestinal muscles, arms and spinal cord. Expands the chest resulting in the full intake of oxygen.

Tadasana (Mountain Pose)

Exhale



Om Bhaskaraya Namah
(Salutations to the to Bhaskara, the cosmic brilliance one who leads to enlightenment)
Anahata Chakra (heart center)

While exhaling, straighten your body gently, bring the arms down from the sides, palms near your thighs. Relax in this position and observe the sensations in your body and mind.

Helps maintain the balance of the body. Relaxes the nervous system.

Sun Salutation followed by Sun Meditation (video)

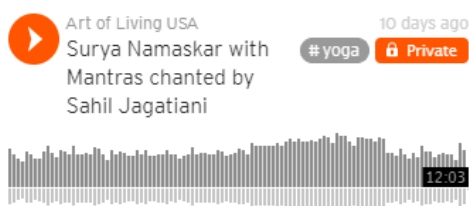
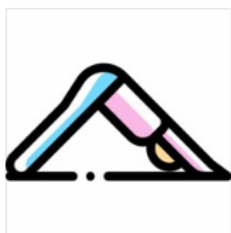


Watch this video to learn and practice along followed by a beautiful Sun Meditation guided by Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar.

[Watch the Video](#)

Sun Salutation Mantras to Go Deeper In Your Practice

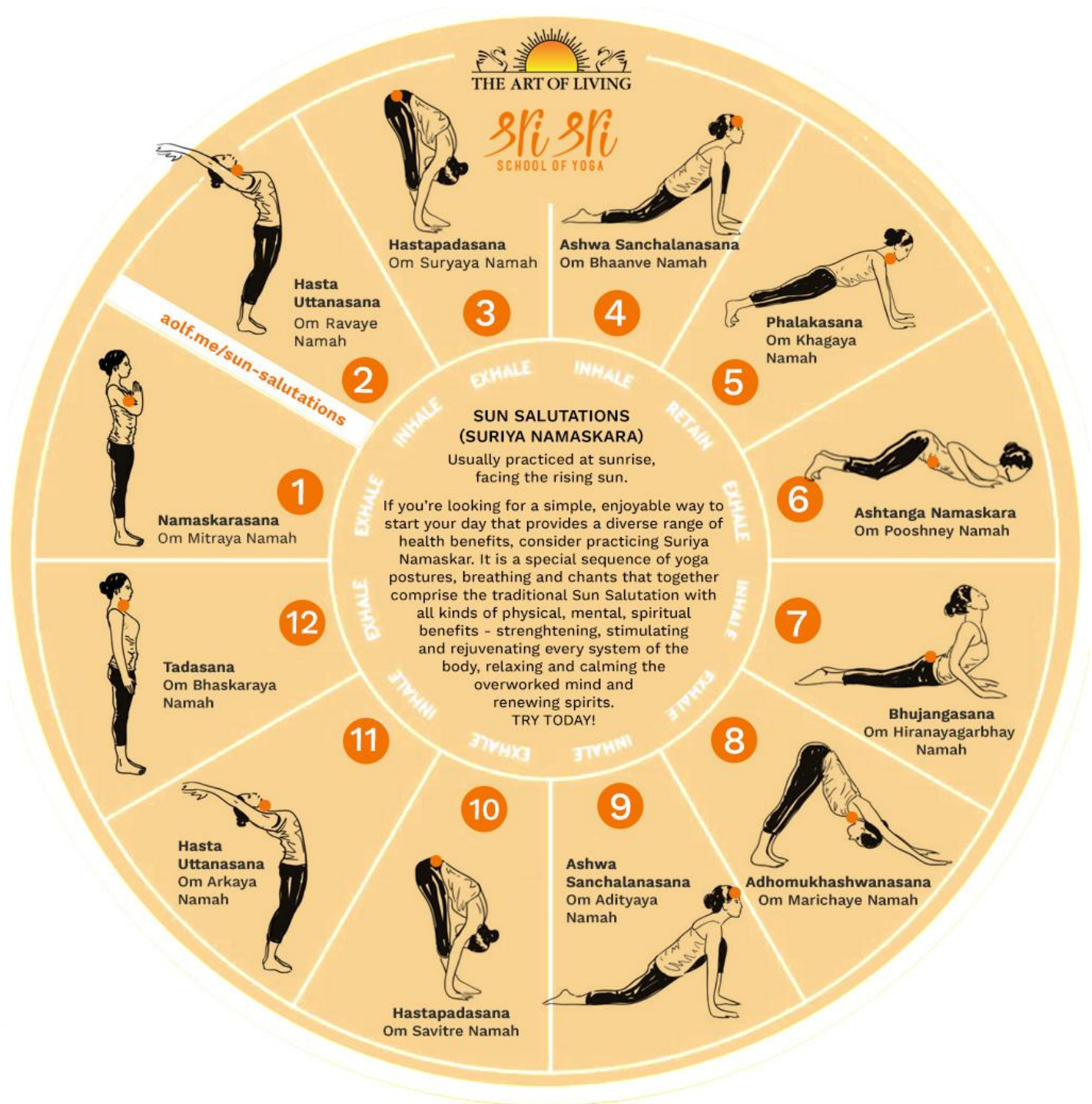
Enjoy your practice and make it even more deeper with Surya Namaskara mantras chanted beautifully by Sahil Jagatiani. Either you chant one mantra at the beginning of each round or one mantra with each step of the sequence, both options are great ways to incorporate these powerful mantras into your practice. I personally enjoy chanting one mantra with each step. Each morning as the Sun rises, play this audio and practice 6 sets (12 rounds) of Sun Salutations facing the Sun. Enjoy a perfect start to your day!



[Play the audio](#)

Sun Salutation

At a Glance



12 Tips

To Better Your Sun Salutation

1 Warm Up The Body

Before You Start Surya Namaskar

It is a good idea to do some Sukshma Vyayama or gentle warm-ups before you start with the Surya Namaskar rounds. This helps remove inertia or tightness in the body and prepares it for Surya Namaskar yoga postures.

2 East Or West?

Where to face while doing Surya Namaskar? Do it facing the East direction if you are doing Sun Salutation in the morning and the West direction if you are doing it in the evening.

3 Make Yamas and Niyamas Part of your Surya Namaskar a practice

The practice of Sun Salutations like any other asana practice, gives you a beautiful opportunity to integrate the 5 yamas and niyamas while you move from one pose to another in this sequence. This can bring so much depth to your practice with its rich benefits. Read [here](#) on suggestions and recommendations to imbibe yamas and niyama into your practice.

4 Do Your Surya Namaskars Gracefully, with gratitude and smile

This is the essence of Surya Namaskara! And anything done with a sense of gratefulness makes it even more enjoyable and nourishing. The smile can keep the energy going!

This becomes even more important when you strive to achieve a higher target of Surya Namaskar rounds. Even when you pick up pace, don't do the poses with a jerk or with force. Allow the postures to flow gently and gracefully one into the other.

5 Listen To Your Body and Enjoy Your Journey

A daily practice of Sun Salutations gives us the perfect place to observe our body. It is a great way to know your body and its limits. We are different every day, and the practice should reflect this. Some days the body feels supple and capable, and on other days it may feel stiff and tired. Listen and respect your body everyday as it is. Watch it grow with your daily practice, and modify the sequence as needed. Try not to let your ego or comparison dictate the practice—you don't need to go faster or deeper, as there are no end goals or requirements in yoga. It's just you and your body, slowly moving and enjoying the journey.

6 Do With Awareness

This is a very essential element in the entire practice. Surya Namaskara could be very energizing (believe it or not!) if done with gratitude, grace, at a slow pace and with awareness of the breath. For example, in the Ashtanga Namaskara (6th pose), the solar plexus corresponding to the navel chakra, the reservoir of energy, gets activated, releasing a lot of energy in the body, making us feel very energetic. If done with proper awareness, one can feel the flow of energy starting from the Navel chakra to the entire body.

7 Breathe Naturally

While doing Sun Salutation, breathe normally (or in easy Ujjayi) through your nose. Also, breathing should not be forceful. Breathe slowly, gently and effortlessly, with awareness on each inhale and exhale. Try and keep the breath in harmony with every change in the posture.

8 Best To Do With Mantra Chanting

Through their power of vibration, the Sun Salutation mantras have a subtle yet powerful and penetrating effect on the mind and body. Each of the 12 Surya Namaskara poses have 12 corresponding mantras recited in honor of the Sun. Further, as you do each posture, take your attention to the particular chakra as detailed in the chart. Doing your Sun Salutations with mantra chants and awareness on chakras, adding a feeling of gratitude, adds a profound spiritual and meditative aspect to your practice.

9 Relax After Finishing Surya Namaskar

As you finish your last round of Surya Namaskar, lie down and relax your entire body. For best results, it is advisable to lie down in Yoga Nidra, giving the body enough time to assimilate the effects of the stretches. However, if you are short on time, you can relax for a few minutes in Corpse Pose, giving complete rest to the mind and body. Sometimes lying down in Shavasana (Corpse Pose) after Surya Namaskar becomes next to impossible due to so much energy in the body, but yet it is important to have a short relaxation especially if you have done 12 or more rounds of sun salutation.

10 The Secret Is In Putting Effort And Then Letting Go

Last, but surely not the least, this is the most important tip to enhance your Surya Namaskara experience. Like every yoga posture, when you start doing Surya Namaskaras in the beginning, you will need to put in a little effort. That effort is required, as it helps channelize the inertia (tamas) or restlessness (rajas) in the body and then what remains is simple harmony or Sattva that leads you to a meditative state – the feeling of letting go.

11 Do With Awareness

This is a very essential element in the entire practice. Surya Namaskara could be very energizing (believe it or not!) if done with gratitude, grace, at a slow pace and with awareness of the breath. For example, in the Ashtanga Namaskara (6th pose), the solar plexus corresponding to the navel chakra, the reservoir of energy, gets activated, releasing a lot of energy in the body, making us feel very energetic. If done with proper awareness, one can feel the flow of energy starting from the Navel chakra to the entire body.

12 Be Regular and Committed to your practice

To achieve best results, ensure that you practice Sun Salutation regularly. Only then would you be able to experience its deeper and greater benefits. It is better to practice daily for 20 minutes than to practice for an hour occasionally.

You could choose the regime - As Warm-Up or as Stand-Alone Exercise. The latter works best for those who are pressed for time. A few rounds of Sun Salutation can provide a comprehensive body workout in a span of 10-15 minutes! As a routine practice, 6 rounds or 12 sets of Sun Salutation are sufficient.

You can also do it as a warm-up exercise followed by other intense yoga postures. If you are practicing Surya Namaskars as part of your warm-up, you can do them at a somewhat faster speed. When you practice them as part of the yoga posture practice, you can keep slow to medium speed. After a few rounds, the body feels light and flexible and the stretches in the active yoga postures become deeper. If you have backache, avoid practicing Sun Salutations at a fast pace.

5 Mistakes

Beginners make During Surya Namaskar



1 Not synchronizing breathing with the movements

As in any yoga practice during Sun Salutations too you must synchronize your body moves with your breathing to get the best benefits. When breathing is compromised or not paid attention to, you may not get desired results.

2 Incorrect alignments

Each pose or step of the Sun Salutation requires your full attention to perform correctly. If you make alignment errors, the practice of Sun Salutation can hurt your joints, cause muscle strains, and trigger or intensify back pains. So, while practicing, be aware, stay in the present and pay attention to your alignments at every step.

At the same time alignments can be tricky sometimes as they also depend upon your body's structure and flexibility. So do your best to get the right alignment without forcing too much. If your body is not flexible enough, learn the modifications with correct alignment from your yoga teacher. If required, you may also adjust the asanas as per your needs so that they are more beneficial.

3 Not warming up and cooling down properly

Instead of performing light sukshma vyayam or subtle yoga or warm-up exercises, many beginners tend to jump right into their Surya Namaskar routine. This can lead to muscle injuries, especially if your body is not flexible.

Apart from warming up, cooling down is also equally crucial after a vigorous practice of Sun Salutation. So before practicing Sun Salutation, start with some light stretches and joint rotation. After completing the sequence, end it with some relaxing stretches.

4 Performing too many number of sets to begin with

For starters, it is recommended to perform 3-4 sets of Surya Namaskar daily and then slowly increase the number of rounds. This will give you enough time to understand each of the movement and alignment involved correctly as you transition into one yoga pose to another.

5 Do Just Sun Salutations

Many tend to include only sun salutation in their yoga routine. Yes, when you are short of time, sun salutation can be your savior. But don't make that as your habit. Keep varying your routine to include different poses to give different kinds of stretches and movements to the muscles and joints.

12 Benefits of Surya Namaskar

The practice of Sun Salutations provides various health benefits. Here are some:

- 1 It revitalizes your body and refreshes your mind.
- 2 Your whole body becomes toned and flexible. It stretches and strengthens your spine, hamstrings and the entire body in both the anterior and posterior planes of the body.
- 3 It gives a great cardiovascular workout when done at a fast pace.
- 4 It helps increase your blood circulation in the body revitalizing all the systems of your body. As a result, the natural glow of your skin returns. Along with that, it also prevents the occurrence of wrinkles, hair loss, and greying of hair. This gives you a youthful and radiant look.
- 5 Regular practice of Sun Salutations helps to increase the size of your solar plexus which is the seat of intuitive power. Thus helps in building your intuition - the sixth sense.
- 6 Prepares the body for full-fledged and higher practice of yoga. The ashtanga pranam pose can invoke a sense of surrender to the higher power (Ishwara Pranidhana). In fact the whole practice when done with mantra chanting, it beckons and awakens the spiritual aspects in us.
- 7 Helps in harmonizing the pranic flow and awakens the hidden energy. So after a good practice of Sun Salutations, you feel more energized and refreshed.
- 8 The regular practice of Sun Salutations boosts your metabolism, which helps to reduce weight. It also stretches your abdominal muscles, strengthens your skeletal muscles, and prevents unwanted fat deposition in the belly region.
- 9 The integrated breath and body movement involved in the practice of Sun Salutations, has positive effects on your nervous system releasing any stress thus relaxes your body and mind, induces better sleep, increases your emotional stability, sharpens your intellect, enhances your creative and mental capabilities.
- 10 The breathing component also helps in proper functioning of your lungs, increasing oxygen-carbon dioxide exchange at the cellular level and it thus detoxifies your body.
- 11 By performing Surya Namaskar daily, you can boost your digestive system and prevent many diseases from occurring. Enhanced digestion makes it easier for the body to absorb nutrients. Better nutrient absorption regulates hormones and enables the body to perform vital functions smoothly. Thus your overall health improves. In addition to that, practicing Surya Namaskar improves the functioning of your endocrine system, especially your thyroid glands. This causes a decrease in anxiety and mood swings. It also induces a calming effect which enables you to concentrate and allows you to think clearly.
- 12 The lack of Vitamin D weakens an individual's bones causing skeletal deformities, can also increase risk of heart diseases and premature death. Since Surya Namaskar is performed while facing the sun, if done for sufficient amount of time, it can help your body to absorb the required amount of Vitamin D. This ensures that both your bones and body remain healthy.

Precautions and Contraindications

for Surya Namaskar



It is best to learn any yoga posture, including Surya Namaskar, under the supervision of an in-person certified Yoga teacher. This way, the teacher can help correct alignments and monitor your progress. Please consult a physician before you begin any exercise practice, including Yoga.

If you have chronic or acute back pain or high blood pressure or heart conditions, hernia, or recent surgeries or procedures, please consult a physician before you practice Surya Namaskar. Women during pregnancy and monthly cycles can avoid the practice of Sun Salutations.

Ayurveda's Take

On Sun Salutations



This flowing series is beneficial for all three doshas as classified by Ayurveda namely Vata, Pitta and Kapha; yet, each dosha should approach sun salutations with a unique set of guidelines in mind.

Vata

It is best for vata types or people experiencing excess vata to move slowly through Surya Namaskar with awareness of the strength of the physical body as well as experiencing the grounding quality of the breath. Since vata tends to increase mobility, to counterbalance this, take an extra cycle of breath or two in each posture in order to slow down and connect with oneself.

Pitta

Due to the heating quality of Surya Namaskar, pitta types or people experiencing excess pitta, should move slowly with inward attention to a smooth and calm breath. Sun salutations have the ability to expel excess heat from the body as its movements massage the digestive organs. In short, the purifying aspect of this series is beneficial for balancing pitta dosha. We recommend the practitioner move slowly and calmly through the series, letting go of self-judgement and releasing the need to compete with oneself or anyone else who may be practicing in the room. A maximum of three sets of Surya Namaskar is recommended for a pitta pacifying practice.

Kapha

Quite the opposite of vata and pitta style sun salutations, kapha types or people working to balance excess kapha, should move swiftly and efficiently through Surya Namaskar. Allow one breath per movement and encourage the cardiovascular component of the series in order to break up congestion and move stagnant kapha out of your system. Sun salutes are one of the best ways to get kapha moving and uplift the senses; thus, these are highly recommended for balancing kapha dosha. Consistency of practice is the key.

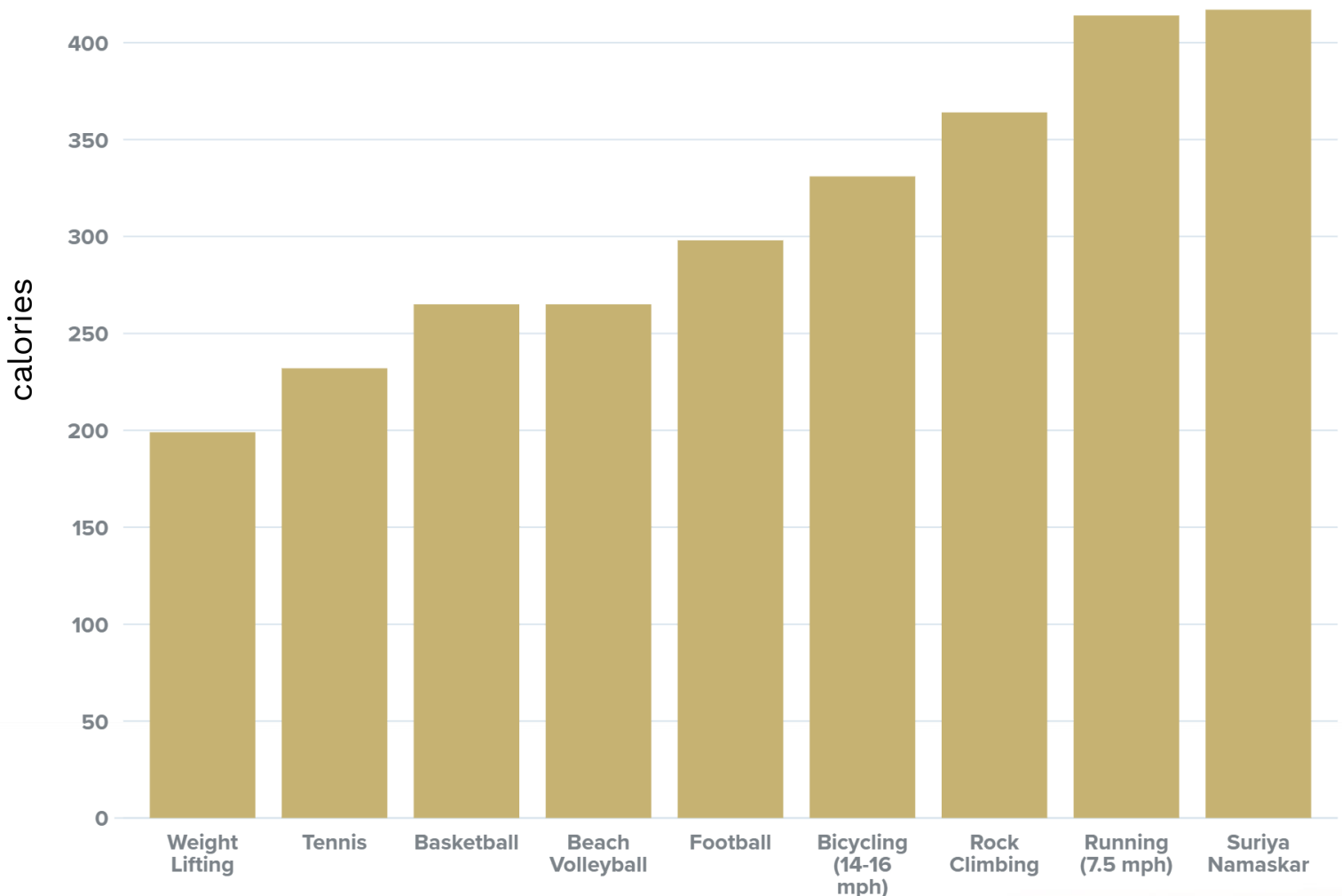
To determine, whether you are vata or pitta or kapha, take this [online dosha quiz](#) now.

Sun Salutation Calorimeter

One round of Sun Salutation consists of a set/sequences of 12 yoga poses. One round of Sun Salutation consists of two sets/sequences, the first leading with the right leg, and the second leading with the left. So, when you do 12 rounds of Sun Salutation, you are completing 12 rounds x 2 sets x 12 yoga poses each = 288 yoga poses in 15 to 20 minutes. One set of Surya Namaskara burns up to 13.90 calories or 12 rounds burns $13.9 \times 2 \times 12 = 333.6$ calories for an average weighing person.

30-minutes workout calorie comparison

How many calories are you burning in your 30 minute workout?



Sacred Number 108!



Yogis all over the world love the sacred number 108. This number also connects the Sun, Moon, and Earth: The average distance of the Sun and the Moon to Earth is 108 times their respective diameters. Also there are 12 constellations and 9 planets when multiplied it comes to 108. This number has a lot of significance in different cultures across the globe. Many yogis perform 108 Surya Namaskar routinely and on special occasions.

Take the 108 Sun Salutation Challenge



Doing 108 Sun Salutations can be challenging and requires stamina, physical fitness and above all mental resolve and discipline. The practice has to build gradually. Here is a recommended routine for four weeks to help you build up to your goal of 108 sets i.e. 54 rounds. By the time you reach this number, you will find a leaner you!!! [If you are completely new to yoga asana practice, for a week or two, prepare your body with [this gentle joint freeing sequence](#).]

Each day prepare yourself with a few rounds of yogic breath, breath of joy and a [gentle joint freeing sequence](#) and warm ups. And then with a feeling of gratitude towards the sun, begin the Surya Namaskara sequence.

A word of caution:

Please enter into this 108 Sun Salutation Challenge only after your health care provider's permission. If you have a backache, or any other conditions mentioned under Precautions and Contraindications, please consult your healthcare provider and stick to their advice.

Prepare for the 108 Challenge

Suggestive progressive training chart for 54 Surya Namaskara sets i.e. 108 Surya Namaskara

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Week 1	4	8	12	12	12	12	Rest
	(at a slow pace)						
Week 2	16	18	20	24	24	24	Rest
	(vary the pace - alternately 4 slow and 4 fast)						
Week 3	36	36	36	36	36	36	Rest
	(vary the pace - alternately 4 slow and 4 fast)						
Week 4	48	48	48	Rest	54	54	54
	(vary the pace - alternately 4 slow & 4 fast)				(vary the pace - alternately 4 slow & 4 fast)		

Once you reach the 108 mark, this is how you can slowly back off:

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Week 1	Take a day off	42 sets	36	30	24	18	12
Week 2	6	6	6	6	6	6	6

Remember these 3 tips:

1. Eat healthy. Keep yourself well hydrated. Drink 3-4 liters of water per day.
2. Rest well. Sleep early and wake up early to practice and prepare for the challenge.
3. Let go and relax your body as you lay down in Yoga Nidra after you finish your Surya Namaskar practice.

Cooling down after the 108 Challenge

How can I relax my body after Surya Namaskara?

Ensure you relax properly after Surya Namaskara practice. Instead of plopping down into a chair or immediately starting your next task, it is better to do some relaxing postures for various parts of the body that are engaged more in doing Sun Salutations. In fact during the relaxation, the effect of all the stretches will percolate to the deeper level giving you the real benefits. Some of the postures that can help are:

1. Gomukhasana (Cow face pose) is a great way to relax the overworked arms.
2. Vajrasana (Hero's pose) - Sit in Vajrasana for 5 minutes to relax your legs.
3. Natrajasana (Dancing Shiva pose) – This pose relaxes your spine and back.
4. Pavanamuktasana (Wind relieving pose) - Roll in this yoga posture to ease the tension in the back. This is an excellent way to massage the back.
5. Yoga Nidra - Lie down on your back for Savasana (Corpse pose) and take your attention to various parts of the body with gentle breaths as per these guided instructions. Yoga nidra cools the body and restores it to normal temperature.

With regular practice, you can easily reach the summit of 108 Surya Namaskara. As soon as you start, you can feel the effects of your practice too – increase energy levels through the day, better digestion, sharpness and focus. Over a few days of practice, you will figure out what rhythm suits you the best. Doing it fast is like an aerobics work out and doing it slow can be meditative.

The latter works best for those who are pressed for time. A few rounds of Sun Salutation can provide a comprehensive body workout in a span of 10-15 minutes! As a routine practice, 6 rounds or 12 sets of Sun Salutation are sufficient.

You can also do it as a warm-up exercise followed by other intense yoga postures. If you are practicing Surya Namaskars as part of your warm-up, you can do them at a somewhat faster speed. When you practice them as part of the yoga posture practice, you can keep slow to medium speed. After a few rounds, the body feels light and flexible and the stretches in the active yoga postures become deeper.

Disclaimer:

Please enter into this 108 Sun Salutation Challenge only after your health care provider's permission. If you have a backache, or any other conditions mentioned under Precautions and Contraindications, please consult your healthcare provider and stick to his/her advice. Please understand and follow all the tips and guidelines mentioned in this e-book. The writer or the Art of Living Foundation is not responsible for any injuries or any other conditions you may incur due to participating in this challenge or otherwise.

Learn the Surya Namaskar with certified instructors at:



Sri Sri Yoga Foundation Program

Authentic yoga in its purest form. 8-10 hours course that teaches the fundamentals of yoga practices like asanas (yoga poses), pranayama (breathwork), dhyana (meditation) along with practical and scripture based yogic wisdom.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Sri Sri School of Yoga - 200H Yoga Teacher Training Program

Sri Sri School of Yoga is a registered school with Yoga Alliance. It offers the most authentic, traditional (scripture-based), and accessible 200-Hour teacher training programs in online, hybrid and in-person set up.

Talk to a Training Advisor to learn more about our Yoga Teacher Training Program offered in North America. **[SCHEDULE YOUR APPOINTMENT NOW](#)**

Sri Sri Yoga Deep Dive Retreat

Go deeper into the realm of yoga and what it means to live like a yogi! Detox, heal, rejuvenate! **[LEARN MORE](#)**



About the Writer

Sejal Shah (ERYT500) is a teacher training faculty with the Sri Sri School of Yoga. She teaches people of all walks of life about yogic ways of living to effectively manage their stress, mind, and emotions, and bring greater peace and joy into their lives. With a background of homeopathy (BHMS), yoga, meditation, and yoga therapy (C-IAYT), she brings together eastern wisdom and modern science of mind-body wellness to support healing and transformation. She can be followed on [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#).