

Dancer (*Natarajasana*)



Enter from Mountain Pose. Bring your right hand over head. Bend your left elbow and turn your left palm up, like a waiter carrying a serving tray. As you bend your left knee, keep your left palm facing up and pivot the left hand back to grab your left foot near the ankle. You should be grabbing the foot from the inside. If you cannot reach your foot, hold a necktie or small towel in your left hand and loop it around your left foot. Point your left knee straight to the ground and keep the left knee close to the body. Draw the left knee backwards and the left hip forwards to spread the stretch through the entire front of the thigh, rather than keep the stretch localized to the knee joint.

You can stand and balance here, and this is a great balance pose for you. If you feel stable, squeeze the back of your left hip and push your left foot into

your left hand, reaching the foot up and away from the body. Keep pushing the foot up and away to create space in the back of the left knee while still pointing the left kneecap towards the floor. For every inch that you raise the foot, drop your right arm and chest down in an equal amount. Dancer is perhaps the most difficult balance pose in this book; if you struggle with the balance, face a wall and place your right hand against the wall for extra stability. You can even practice on a boat by using the cabin walls for stability.



Dancer continued



Pose Benefits: Dancer strengthens the gluteus muscles in the back of the hip, while stretching the hip flexors and the quadriceps. The hip flexors and quadriceps get tight after a dive, which makes Dancer a great post-dive pose that opens up these muscles. Dancer also opens the pectoral muscles in the chest and the anterior deltoid in the front of the shoulder while providing a strong back bend for the spine. During a surface interval, you can practice Dancer for both the stretch of the muscles and the energy of the backbend.