

Yoga for Scuba Divers



By Kimberlee Jensen Stedl and Todd Stedl, Ph.D.

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For everyone working to keep our oceans vibrant.

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Table of Contents

Disclaimer	xi
Introduction	1
What is yoga?	2
How can yoga help scuba diving?	3
The importance of breath	4
Anatomy of a scuba diver	7
Preparing to practice	13
Basic guidelines	14
Yoga poses for divers	17
Sun Salutation (<i>Surya Namaskara</i>)	19
Mountain (<i>Tadasana</i>)	20
Upward Reach (<i>Hastasana</i>)	21
Forward Dive	22
Forward Fold (<i>Uttanasana</i>)	23
Monkey (<i>Urdhva Mukha Uttasana</i>)	24
Lunge (<i>Anjaneyasana</i>)	26
Downward Facing Dog (<i>Adho Mukha Svanasana</i>)	28
Plank (<i>Dandasana</i>)	30
Hover (<i>Chatturanga Dandasana</i>)	32
Upward Facing Dog (<i>Urdva Mukha Svanasana</i>)	34
Cobra (<i>Bhujangasana</i>)	35
Three Legged Dog (<i>Eka Pada Adho Mukha Svanasana</i>)	37
Leg Swing	38
Chair (<i>Utkatasana</i>)	41
Sun Salutation benefits	44
Other standing poses	45
Warrior 1 (<i>Virabhadrasana 1</i>)	46
Warrior 2 (<i>Virabhadrasana 2</i>)	48
Extended Angle (<i>Utthita Parsvakonasana</i>)	50
Triangle (<i>Trikonasana</i>)	52

Standing Straddle (<i>Prasarita Padottanasana</i>)	54
Eagle (<i>Garudasana</i>)	56
Tree (<i>Vrkasana</i>)	58
Dancer (<i>Natarajasana</i>)	60
Floor poses	62
Cat/Cow (<i>Bidalasana/Marjaryasana</i>)	63
Spinal Balance	65
Boat (<i>Navasana</i>)	66
Camel (<i>Ustrasana</i>)	68
Child's Pose (<i>Balasana</i>)	70
Seated Twist (<i>Bharadvajasana</i>)	72
Locust (<i>Salabasana</i>)	74
Pigeon (<i>Eka Pada Rajakapotasana</i>)	75
Cobbler's Pose (<i>Baddha Konasana</i>)	79
Staff (<i>Dandasana</i>)	80
Seated Forward Fold (<i>Pashimottanasana</i>)	81
Neck Stretch	83
Lying Spinal Twist (<i>Jathara Parivartanasana</i>)	84
Corpse (<i>Savasana</i>)	85
Time and place for poses	87
Poses to do on a regular basis as regular conditioning	87
Good pre-dive warm up poses	88
Good post-dive recovery poses	88
Fin technique exercise	89
Visualizations, meditation, and deep rhythmic breathing	91
Deep rhythmic breathing	92
Buddy breathing exercise	93
Visualization practice	95
Visualization 1: Enjoying a smooth dive	95
Visualization 2: Overcoming a difficulty	97
Create your own visualization practice	100
Meditation practice	101

Yoga philosophy and application to diving	103
Restraints (<i>Yamas</i>)	104
Non-violence (<i>Ahimsa</i>)	104
Truthfulness (<i>Satya</i>)	105
Non-stealing (<i>Asteya</i>)	105
Continence (<i>Brahmacharya</i>)	105
Non-greed (<i>Aparigraha</i>)	106
Actions (<i>Niyamas</i>)	106
Purity (<i>Saucha</i>)	106
Contentment (<i>Santosha</i>)	107
Commitment (<i>Tapas</i>)	107
Spiritual study (<i>Svadyaya</i>)	107
Surrender to the divine (<i>Ishtar Pranidhanam</i>)	108
Go practice	111
Resources	113
About the authors	115

Disclaimer

This book is for self-knowledge and is not a substitute for consulting with a physician or physical therapist. Please consult your physician before beginning a new physical conditioning program, especially if you have a pre-existing condition for which you are being treated or you have been inactive for a long period of time. All the poses in this book assume the reader is physically capable of these poses; however, they do carry risks and only you and your health care providers can say what poses work and do not work for your body at this point in time.

Women who are pregnant must consult with their physician before practicing yoga poses and are advised to take a pre-natal yoga class instead of doing a general yoga practice. Pregnant women are also strongly advised not to scuba dive.

People recovering from injuries should consult with their doctor or their physical therapist as certain poses may aggravate an injury and delay healing. We strongly advise taking this book with you to your physicians and asking them to select the appropriate poses for you, especially if you see a physician or take medication regularly for a known condition, or if you have previously suffered from decompression sickness (DCS—“the bends”).

None of the poses in this book should be performed while wearing scuba gear. All of the poses are intended to be performed on land, not under water. Performing yoga under water eliminates the strength benefits of the poses because of the weightless environment, and dealing with buoyancy issues while trying to perform some poses under water can be strenuous, which increases the risk of getting DCS.

Strenuous exercise before or after scuba diving has also been linked to an increased risk of getting DCS. This is especially true if a diver has previously suffered from DCS. All of the poses in this book can be performed non-strenuously, assuming the reader is physically capable of these poses. As an extra measure of caution, we recommend buffering your dives with a few minutes of quiet time on each end: do some pre-dive warm-up poses, get geared up, and then spend a few minutes visualizing a smooth dive before entering the water; immediately after the dive, spend a few minutes meditating about your underwater experience, and then finish with some post-dive recovery poses after stowing your dive gear.

Basketball is an endurance sport, and you have to learn to control your breath. That's the essence of yoga, too. So I consciously began to use yoga techniques in my practice and playing.

—Kareem Abdul-Jabbar



Introduction

When we first met, Todd had just fallen in love with scuba diving and Kimberlee was beginning her yoga teacher-training program. Todd managed to convince Kimberlee to jump into the waters of Puget Sound, which rarely heat up past 50° Fahrenheit. In exchange, Todd agreed to turn himself upside down and twist like a pretzel. As we exchanged knowledge, we discovered the synchronicity of yoga and scuba diving, such as the emphasis on breath. In both yoga and scuba diving classes, instructors tell students that if they remember just one thing, they must remember to keep breathing.

The more Todd learned various yoga poses and developed his personal practice, the more comfortable and efficient he felt under water with both his breathing and his movement. As we began to construct our workshops, Kimberlee analyzed the mechanics of scuba diving and developed a functional fitness program for divers based on yoga poses. Since we both personally had wonderful experiences with meditation techniques, we incorporated guided meditation and visualizations into our workshops. Finally, as we contemplated writing *Yoga for Scuba Divers*, we realized how yoga principles coincided with conservation movements in scuba diving. For example, the more divers that practice principles such as non-greed, the more we can preserve the reefs for all divers to enjoy.

We hope you benefit from both the physical practices and the philosophical practices we introduce you to in this book. *Yoga for Scuba Divers* is not a comprehensive resource on everything yoga has to offer, and we encourage you to continue your studies if yoga has peaked your interest. *Yoga for Scuba Divers* is, however, a wonderful introduction to yoga that can enhance your experience as a scuba diver.