



CURVY YOGA EXPLORATION



TIPS FOR SEATED, PRONE AND SUPINE POSES



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Here are some lovely curvy accessible suggestions for seated, prone and supine poses. I first start with areas of the body and then move to pose tips:

Body

Booty

- *Lack of alignment/comfort:* This shows up most often in Savasana. When people have a little more to love in the booty department, it can make it difficult for them to lie on their back comfortably (especially with legs extended). It often causes their upper back and neck to get crunched. There are many different options here. You can play with one or more of these depending on what seems like it would work best for the person's body: (1) Have them take Savasana in a different pose that they find more comfortable, (2) Place a blanket under their head, (3) put a bolster under their knees to release their lower back, (4) encourage them to take Legs-Up-the-Wall or a similar version with their calves on a chair, (5) Ask them to take the pose with their knees bent to see if that relieves their back; (6) Place a blanket under their torso – folded like it usually is at the studio, in a rectangle; (7) Ask them to gently lift their hips, tuck their tailbone to lengthen their spine & lower back down. They can stay with knees bent here or extend the legs on at a time; (8) Ask them to gently tuck their chin toward their chest, lengthening their neck.

Belly

- *Compression:* I think the belly is the area that makes curvy people most uncomfortable -- physically but also emotionally.
 - *Standing forward folds:* when doing Uttanasana, people can often get stopped by their belly. If this happens, encourage them to take their feet wider. Taking hands to blocks or a chair is also a great option, especially if their hamstrings aren't as open as they might like. The same thing applies for Prasarita Padottanasana, although it is usually less of an issue in that pose since the legs are wide.
 - *Seated forward folds:* Tucking the belly skin is very helpful here (see the eBook and videos). But so are a few other options -- especially if your students aren't yet comfortable with touching and moving their belly skin. For example, in Dandasana, take the feet wide -- not as wide as Upavistha Konasana, but maybe a foot or two apart -- to make a little space for the thighs and the belly. You could also instruct with a strap around the feet, which helps to lengthen the side body when students are folding down.



- *Twists:* Same thing here; tucking the belly skin here is great. But so is using your detective cap and offering your students accessible twists. They can get the same effect without feeling like crap because their belly is preventing them from going further. For example, I tend to favor the gentle seated twist over the Marichyasana series. But if I do teach a Marichyasana pose, I instruct it with hand to knee, not with the arm in front of thigh. In my opinion, it's too compressed that way, and the benefits do not outweigh the discomfort created on any level.

Thighs

- *Smooshing when seated:* When seated, thigh skin (inner or outer, but especially inner) can smush together and make it challenging to move. In seated poses, there are a few options you can offer to make this more comfortable for your students: (1) When coming into seated, ask everyone to move the skin of their buttocks out/back a bit. I usually say this: "Rock a little onto your L sitting bone, take your R hand under your R hip and move the skin out. Come back to center and do the other side – rock onto your R and take your L hand under your L hip and move the skin out. (2) Internally rotate the thighs: students may/may not know what "internally rotate" means, so I usually say this: "Take your R hand to the outside of your R thigh and take your L hand to the inside of your R thigh. Holding the skin of your thigh in your hands, gently tuck/roll the skin under and out – to the R. Repeat on the other side."
- *Smooshing when lying on the belly:* The other place the inner thighs get a little smushed is when lying on the belly. They can feel crowded and like they're now allowing you to lie down as fully as you'd like. To address this, I like to ask students to tuck their toes and walk their feet back an inch or so. Doing this allows the thighs to get a little more space, thus making everything more comfortable, especially the lower back.

Boobs

- *Suffocation:* Ah, the dreaded death-by-boob-smush. This shows up most often in inversions, and it can happen for both men and women. I find binding with a strap most helpful for this. ([Here's a link to a post about how to do that.](#)) In addition, I encourage you again to investigate what inversions you're offering and why. For example, will anyone not be a "true yogi" if, instead of Plow, they practice Bridge? I think not. This doesn't mean, of course, that you can't find safe ways to teach Plow (if, in a class of students who have been practicing awhile and have solid experience with Shoulderstand, you begin with feet to the wall or a chair, for example) but rather that you should continually ask yourself "why?" when wanting to teach a pose. If the answer is, because it's what everyone does, then that's worth investigating further and seeing if that's because it has really great benefits that you want your students to experience or if it's more about tradition and you could offer something else with similar, if not better (because students will be safer and more comfortable) options.



Poses

Seated Poses

- When coming down to seated, when possible, I ask my students to start near a wall. It is nice for students to build their core and back strength by not using the wall. However, some students may need it, so if they do, this is a nice way to give them the ability to do that without drawing attention to themselves.
- When coming into a seated pose, I like to begin by inviting my students to rock a little onto their L hip, bring their R hand under their R hip, move the skin out and go to the other side. This helps students to better feel their sit bones and come into alignment.
- When doing seated poses, I encourage my students to find a comfortable position for them. I usually offer choices (and show them): crossed legged, legs in front of you (like Dandasana) or legs wide (like Upavistha Konasana). This allows students to accommodate their body in a way that feels good for them.
- In Paschimottanasana, I usually have legs at least hip bones' distance apart, and sometimes mat distance. Belly and boobs can make this pose quite difficult without at least a little bit of space. I also like to use dynamic movement to come into this pose: inhale, reach arms overhead; exhale, arms come down wherever they come on legs. You can continue this as many times as you'd like, encouraging students to lengthen through their side body and torso as they come down. This way, by the time you get to a hold, students are already comfortable with bringing themselves forward in a way that works for them and are also comfortable with their hands being on their shins instead of their feet (if that's what works best for their body).
- Another thing that works nicely in Dandasana or Paschimottanasana is tucking the thigh skin. To do this on the R leg, bring the L hand to the R inner thigh. Then bend your R knee just enough to slide your R hand underneath your leg – about to the center of the hamstring. Using your hands together, roll the thigh skin down and in (towards the outside of the R leg). Repeat on the other leg.
- Belly skin tucking can also be very useful for this pose. To tuck the belly skin, ask students to bring their hands to either side of their lower belly. In one downward motion, they can tuck it in toward their pelvis, giving them a little more space to come forward. Another option is to lift the skin up to make movement more accessible. I personally prefer the downward motion as I find it gives me more room in my body, but both are good options to have available.
- In simple seated twist, belly tucking is also extremely useful. In addition, if students carry their weight in their hips/butt, their arm may not easily come to the ground. If we're twisting to the R, I often like to have students bring their R hand to their R hip to start the pose, bringing it down to a block



(nice to start everyone with a block behind them in case they need it) or the ground if possible. If a student's belly is prohibiting them from bringing the L hand to the R leg, ask them to bring a block in front of them (to their lap or the ground, depending on what would work) and place their hand there. They could also place their hand on their belly, but some people may not be comfortable with that. This is when you will use your intuition and expertise to figure out what would work best.

- In a Marichyasana version of the pose, instead of bringing the L arm outside the R leg, I ask students to wrap their L hand around their R knee. It can also be helpful here to step the foot a bit wide, so long as they can keep the knee and foot in alignment, a wider stance may make the pose more comfortable. If their base of support is too narrow, they won't be able to twist safely and well.

Prone Poses

- I'm not a huge fan of belly poses for curvy yogis. I think they make many people uncomfortable between boob/belly compression, thigh smush and lower back crankiness. However, it can add some variety to your sequences to include them from time-to-time.
- When asking students to come down onto their belly, give them some time to get situated. One helpful tip to let the thigh skin settle down is to tuck the toes and walk the feet back a bit. Each student can feel on his/her body when the thighs feel comfortable.
- If people's boobs are uncomfortable and/or in the way, they can use their hands to manually separate them and tuck them down/in a bit.
- In poses like Salabhasana where the head traditionally starts down, you may need to make another option available. It can be very helpful for students to have a blanket nearby in case (as often happens) their belly and/or boobs prevents them from bringing their head down without cranking it down in an unhealthy position. A blanket under the head is often enough to lift the head in a comfortable way, bringing the body into alignment.
- When coming out of these poses, offer an accessible way to do so. Some curvy students may struggle to know how to come up because they're worried about looking more awkward than other students in the class. If it's okay for people's knees, coming onto hands/knees would be a nice option before transitioning to another pose.

Supine Poses

- When having students come to lie down on their back, it's also nice to give them an opportunity to adjust. Asking students to make any shifts or adjustments side to side can help the lower back settle down more comfortably; this is especially helpful for folks who carry their weight in their hips/booty.
- I typically like to start students with their knees bent and then go from there. I find that beginning with a little gentle knee rocking side-to-side here (like a windshield wiper) can help with that scrunchy low back issue.