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Yoga For You

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Malasana

(Garland Pose) » Beginning Stage: "Mala" means garland or a lei. In the final stage of this pose, the yogi squats and the arms form a garland as they wrap around the thighs. We will present the pose in stages so that you can work incrementally towards the final posture.

This first stage of Malasana brings flexibility to the ankles, knees and increases the range of motion of the hip joints. The sacrum is spread and given space, relieving pain or stiffness in that area.

- 1) Stand on an even surface with your back to a wall. Bring the feet and legs together about 6 to 12 inches away from the wall.
- 2) Keep the feet in place together and bring your back and head against the wall.
- 3) Now slowly slide your back down the wall as you bend the knees. Keep the back and sacrum (the flat triangular bone above the buttocks and between the hips) against the wall.
- 4) Allow the knees to bend until the calf and hamstring muscles are in contact with each other. Do not force the body, but work with the body so that a sense of quiet determination infuses your efforts.



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Raghu Srinivasan demonstrates the beginning stage of Malasana with his back against a wall.

- 5) With this first attempt, observe the position of the sacrum. If the feet are too far from the wall, then the lower part of the sacrum will curl off the wall, the buttocks will be slung under off the wall, and the lower back will round and push into the wall. The pose will feel compressed and slumped. If you are too close to the wall, the heels will lift off the floor and you will not be able to squat completely, as just the buttocks will be pressed against the wall.
- 6) Come up and adjust the feet according to your observations. Try again. Work to keep the feet together with the heels down. Squat until the hamstrings and calf muscles are in contact, but keep the entire back and sacrum against the wall.
- 7) Rest your hands on the thighs as you lift the abdomen up and spread the back and sacrum against the wall. Lift and expand the chest.
- 8) Maintain the position for up to a minute with quiet breathing.
- 9) To come out of the pose, push your hands against the wall and slide up.

In the beginning, the knees and hips might be stiff. With regular, calm and attentive practice, the position is achieved with some ease and one is ready for the next stage.

Ray Madigan and **Shelley Choy** are certified Iyengar Yoga teachers and co-direct the Manoa Yoga Center at Manoa Marketplace. Visit www.manoayoga.com or call 382-3910. Manoa Yoga Center, the authors and the Star-Bulletin take no responsibility for any injury arising from the practice of these yoga postures. Readers should seek a doctor's approval before commencing this yoga practice.

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