

# Paschimottanasana: The Forward Bend

Paschima means “the West”, referring to the back of the body. This asana stretches from the heels to the top of the spine and encourages the life force energy to flow to every part of the body.

## Step by Step

1. Sit upright with your legs straight and feet together. Stretch your heels and pull the flesh of your buttocks out from beneath you, so that you are directly on the sitting bones.
2. Take a few deep breaths
3. Stretch your arms above your head with the palms facing each other. Lengthen your spine and lift up out of your hips.
4. Exhale and stretch your arms towards your feet. Fold forward from the pelvis, leading with the chest and keeping your back straight.
5. Bring your chest towards your thighs, taking care not to bend from the middle of your spine.
6. Hold on to whatever part of the legs you can comfortably reach without bending your knees or rounding your back. If possible grip the big toes of the feet with the first two fingers and thumbs of both hands. Bring your elbows to the floor.
7. To release, exhale and slowly return to the starting position.

**Practice Tips:** Don't try to force your head to your knees as this will curve the spine. Instead, aim to bring the torso as far forward as possible, while keeping knees and spine straight.



**A Few Benefits:** Stretches hamstrings and increases flexibility in the hips, tones and massages abdominal organs, removes fat, invigorates nervous system

**Caution:** Respect your body's limitations and inner wisdom, if something feels wrong, please do not do it. Avoid during pregnancy or if you have a slipped disc.



*“This is the most excellent of all asanas... stimulates the gastric fire, makes the loins lean and removes all the diseases of men”  
- Hatha Yoga Pradipika*

The Complete Illustrated Book of Yoga by Swami Vishnudevendanda comes highly recommended for deeper study. For details on Lila's yoga classes and retreats, go to [www.yogaprema.org](http://www.yogaprema.org)