



CURVY YOGA EXPLORATION



SUN SALUTATIONS - CURVIFIED



Sun Salutations - Curvified



Sun Salutations are often the cornerstone of yoga classes – something used as a warmup, to get a “flow” going, as a transition between poses, etc.

What to Be on the Lookout For

If this is the case for your class, there are 2 main challenges to keep in mind that curvy students may face:

- **Flesh getting in the way:** One of the biggest challenges of sun salutations is all the ways the flesh of a student’s body might inhibit their movement. Here are a few examples:
 - Uttanasana (Standing Forward Bend): Belly compression
 - Bringing hands to floor to step back: Belly
 - Chaturanga: Belly smush on the floor
 - Lowering all the way down to the ground: belly smush & minor boob suffocation
 - Down Dog: boob strangulation
 - Down Dog → Lunge: Knee running into belly



- **Struggle to get up/down:** Because the curves of some students' bodies make moving through sun salutations with ease difficult, they can sometimes get tired easily from all the up/down. In addition, if your curvy student has any struggle with getting up/down off the floor, sun salutations will present a challenge if not modified.

Modifications for Sun Salutations A & B

Here are a few go-to options to offer your students who are practicing traditional sun salutations A & B.

- **Step the feet wider:** it's amazing how many things this helps – especially giving more space for the belly in Uttanasana
- **Bend the knees:** When stepping back from Uttanasana, it's helpful to offer the option of bent knees. This will help curvy students get their hands to the floor safely.
- **Chaturanga:** Offer students to lower their knees, chest then chin to the ground instead of Chaturanga.
- **Lowering down to the ground:** Suggest that students briefly tuck their toes and walk their legs back for a moment before proceeding into Baby Cobra/Cobra/Up Dog. This lengthens the legs and gives some space around the thighs/belly.
- **Down Dog:** If a student's breasts are strangling her a bit, there are a few options: (1) If you feel comfortable mentioning it after class, you might recommend a very secure sports bra, perhaps even layering two sports bras; (2) You can offer her the breast bind with a strap; (3) suggest the student tucks her chin a bit to her chest. This actually puts the breasts in even closer contact to the neck/chin, but it allows the student to bring their neck more into alignment.
- **Stepping Foot Forward from Down Dog to Lunge:** There are a few options here. Please do watch the videos on the membership page to see this in action. In short, though, here are the choices:
 - Drop the opposite knee to the floor then swing the foot forward. The knee on the ground creates a lever for the other knee to move.
 - Step the foot wide: stepping the foot between the hands is almost never going to work for curvy students – there's too much boob and belly in the way to make that happen safely. Instead, encourage students to step the foot behind their hand or even outside it.



- Take multiple steps: rather than one big step, encourage students to take as many steps forward as they need
- Take this out altogether by encouraging students to walk their hands back to their feet, coming into Uttanasana at the back of their mat. After coming up into Tadasana, you can simply invite students to walk to the front of their mat to do another round of Sun Salutations or whatever you're doing next.

Also, check out these resources I've compiled for more information about how to make them accessible for curvy folks:

- [Sun Salutations – the Curvy Way](#)
- [Curvy Sun Salutations: Widen, Align and Ground](#)
- [Curvy Sun Salutations](#) (video)
- [Curvy Flow](#) (45-min. video practice from YogaVibes. You can watch for free for 15 days. I include several different salutation options in this video).

Other Sun Salutation Options

Another option, either instead of or in addition to, modifying traditional sun salutations is to teach different salutations.

When considering alternate ways to link poses together, I like to ask myself, "What is the benefit of a traditional sun salutation?" I will then consider how I can help my students achieve that benefit in a way that works for them. Here are some options to consider:

For a General, Mixed-Level Class

- Begin with 2 blocks at the top of the mat (having everyone start with blocks but then letting students know they can remove them if/when appropriate), on either side of the mat. Tadasana → Urdvha Hastasana → Uttanasana → Half-way up on blocks → Uttanasana → Bring block to center & twist both sides, by bringing hand to hip → Bring both blocks back to sides of mat/step R foot back into lunge → Bend/straighten L leg a few times → Step R foot forward & L foot back → Bend/straighten R leg a few times → Step L foot Forward into Uttanasana → Rise up
- Begin at the back of the mat. Tadasana → Urdvha Hastasana → Uttanasana → Half-Uttanasana → Uttanasana → Come up to standing w/hands on hips → R foot steps fwd to WI → Come up



w/hands on hips → Inhale arms overhead/Exhale by sides x2 → Step other foot forward, folding down into Uttanasana -- > Urdvha Hastasana → Tadasana. Walk to back of mat to begin again.

- Tadasana → Urdvha Hastasana → Crescent to the R → Urdvha Hastasana → Crescent to the L → Urdvha Hastasana → Uttanasana → Half-Uttanasana → Uttanasana → Urdvha Hastasana → Tadasana
- Tadasana → Urdvha Hastasana → Utkatasana → Uttanasana → Utkatasana (sometimes I also throw in a twisted Utkatasana here) → Urdvha Hastasana → Tadasana
- Wall Salutations: see video in Permission to CURVE

For a Class Where You Know No One Has Any Knee Issues

- Tadasana → Urdvha Hastasana → Uttanasana → R foot steps back to low lunge. Hands come to thigh & arms reach overhead → Twisted lunge → Plank on feet/knees → Knees/chest/chin → Cobra → Tabletop → Cat/cow → R foot steps fwd to low lunge → Hands on thigh & overhead → L foot steps fwd to Uttanasana → Tadasana
- Floor Salutations: see video in Permission to CURVE