

Ardha Uttanasana (Half Intense stretch) aka “halfway lift” or “throwaway” pose

Part of the Surya Namaskar (Sun Salutation) sequence, *Ardha Uttanasana* is often executed as an inconsequential movement rather than yoga posture. For this reason, I call it the “throwaway” pose and I am on a mission to change that.

This presentation includes two images. The first image (Image 1) is a pretty good depiction of proper alignment which requires muscular engagement to achieve a safe and strong posture. The second image (Image 2) is just awful (actually makes me nauseous).

Image 1



What I like about this image is illustrated with the four arrows:

- The forward fold coming from the hips with the chest lifted forward and broad
- Shoulder blades firmly on the back body
- Shoulder heads are drawn away from the ears for a loooong neck
- Gaze forward to bring the back of the neck into its natural extension (curve).

The core muscles must engage to create this version. So must the legs and feet. That’s what we want!

What I don’t like about this image is found in the vertical red line. Ideally, the hips should be mostly OVER the ankles, not behind as shown here. To achieve this alignment, knees are bent (as shown) and the body weight is shifted forward while

maintaining full contact of the heel to the ground. Increased muscle engagement is required to hold the standing balance (lift that low belly!). Remember, the bend in the knees is necessary to protect and deepen the stretch in the hamstrings and low back.

Image 2 (yikes!!!)



Now, here's an accurate depiction of the "throwaway" version that makes me CRINGE!!!! Note the gaze down, rounded low back and locked knees. The forward fold is coming from the waist and not the hips. **Forward folding is always from the hip joint.** Bending at the waist puts the spine at risk, especially because there's very little core engagement and the weight of the torso is literally pulling on the everything associated with the low back. Further, with the knees locked, there is likely extreme stress placed on the hamstrings. Remember, this pose is part of a common sequence that, when practised incorrectly over and over again, can cause real harm.

Please don't do this. EVER. Please ask for help. ALWAYS. Don't be shy.