

Side Crow Tutorial-Style Practice

Working toward Side Crow, or Parsva Bakasana? This sequence is designed to prepare the body for this challenging arm balance with various stages. We'll even use some approaches that are "wrist-free," so if you have an injury or sensitive wrists/shoulders, you can still practice the actions of this posture.

Basic Components:

- Twist from the belly
- Chaturanga arms
- See-saw lean
- Wrist stretches
- Engaged feet

Wanna be guided? Practice along with the [VIDEO!](#) This free 20-minute practice will take you through the sequence. Let's get started!!



Parsva Balasana (Child's Pose)

Walk your hands over the right in Childs.

Refine:

- Lift your right belly up and shift your whole torso over the right so your torso lays more over your right thigh
- Come up onto fingertips on your right hand, press your right fingertips down and lift your right shoulder up
- Turn your belly from the left to the right

{Switch Sides}



Core Roll Down

Start to turn on the core by rolling down to your back with you knees down. Try to go S L O W. Take 5 counts to come down, and try to keep your big toes anchored down as you lower. Think of the strength you're building!



Jathara Parivarttonasana (Turn the Stomach Pose)
This is a really important one!!! Since Side Crow is a big twist, getting the body ready to twist will help a lot.

On your back, bring the shins parallel to the ground, knees together and feet flexed. Bring your arms out to a T. Anchor your right shoulder to the ground. On an exhale, hover your knees halfway to the left, keep squeezing your knees together.

Refine:

- Turn your belly from the left to the right.
- Think about pointing your belly button straight up to the sky...it will want to lean to the left...turn it BACK to the right!
- Want more of a challenge?
 - When you hover the knees, then tuck your knees up toward your elbow, coming into a little ball.
 - Extra challenge: straighten your legs!!
- Optional: have a friend stand on your right side and hold onto their ankle with your right hand so you get hover your knees further to the left and really turn the belly. It should feel like a really deep twist! (You could also hold onto a sturdy table or bolted down umbrella stand! ☺)

{Switch Sides}



Parivrtta Utkatasana (Revolved Chair Pose)

Use a wall to lean your seat against so you can really get into this twist deeply! (You could also do this sitting in an actual chair.)

Bend your knees deeply and twist, hooking your right elbow outside the left thigh. Hands in prayer, aim your thumbs for the center of your heart and lean back.

Refine:

- Use your left hand as LEVERAGE for the twist by pushing your left hand down against your left thigh, and dig deeper into the twist.

- Remember that work from Jathara Parivarttonasana above: turn the belly from the right to the left.
- Keep your knees in a line...your right knee will probably creep forward, so steer your right hip back so both sitbones are anchored to the wall.
- Once you bring your hands to your heart again, lift your chin out of chest and lean back. Think about trying to align the base of your pelvis with the crown of your head in one straight line.

{Switch Sides}



Chatturanga Variation

Side Crow's first stage uses the bent-arm shelf shape of Chatturanga, so we'll practice that next.

This is my new favorite way to work on the form and placement of the arms (and legs!!) in Chatturanga, or Low Pushup.

Come down to your belly. Then tuck your toes behind you and strengthen your knees away from the floor so your legs are completely engaged. Then find a Chaturanga shape with the arms. Hold here for 3-5 breaths.

Refine:

- Most of us will need to move our hands back a bit so that your wrists are right below your elbows.
- Roll your shoulders up away from the floor and lift your chest so your shoulders are more in line with your elbows.



Warm Up Wrists and Forearms

Rock forward and back with fingers pointing forward (3-5x)



Turn fingers out and rock from side to side (3-5x)



Turn fingers back toward knees and rock forward and back, maybe try to bend the elbows at little (3-5x)

Note: Do one hand at a time if it's too much!



Sit back on your heels and turn the backs your hands to the ground to stretch the wrists.



Make a fist with one hand and place it in the palm of the other hand. Then stretch your arms forward to stretch the forearms. Switch sides.



Chatturanga Pushups on Knees

Come to hands and knees, spread your fingers wide, and draw your front body toward your back body so you feel strong and integrated. On an exhale:

1x – bend your elbows straight back 1”

1x – bend your elbows straight back 2”

5x – bend your elbows straight back to a square



Supine Side Crow

This is the first stage of Side Crow!

**Great option if you have wrist issues and need to stay off hand balancing.

Lie on your back, bend knees to a square, then hover your knees halfway to the left. Lift your chest and shoulders and twist your upper body to the right, extending your arms straight. Then

hook your right elbow outside the left thigh, release your hands, and come into “pretend Chaturanga arms,” and hold here.

Refine:

Turn the belly from the left to the right.

{Switch Sides}



Navasana Side Crow

Another way to work on Side Crow, in a seated position.

**Great option if you have wrist issues and need to stay off hand balancing.

Balance on your sitbones and lift your shins so they are parallel to the floor. Then twist your upper body to the right, and sneak your left

elbow outside the right thigh. Bring your hands into “floating Chaturanga arms,” and hold here.

Refine:

Turn the belly from the left to the right.

{Switch Sides}

Parsva Bakasana (Side Crow) – Stage 1: Twisted Toe Squat, Set Up Connection Points

Come into a toe squat with your feet together, heels lifted, fingertips on the floor in front of you. Then twist your knees to the left.

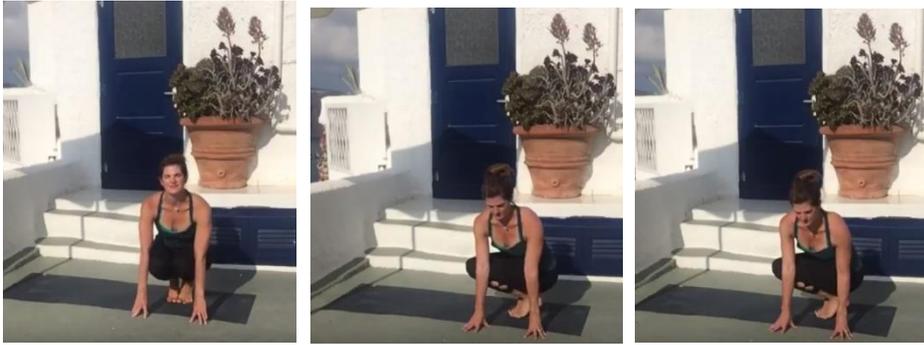
Practice making the connection points with your upper body and lower body by:

- Hooking the left elbow outside the right thigh
- Bend your right elbow and connect it to your outer right hip (bend and straighten 3x)

Refine:

- Turn your belly from the left to the right
- Extend your spine long, aiming your heart right between your arms, gaze in a line between your hands

{Switch Sides}



Parsva Bakasana (Side Crow) – Stage 2: Weight on Both Arms

Note: Grab a pillow or bolster to serve as a crash pad (or confidence booster) and place it so if you do lose your balance, you'll have something soft under your head! Follow these steps:



Start in twisted toe squat with your knees to the left. Snuggle deeper into the twist, getting your left elbow as far down your right thigh as you can.



Place the left hand down, fingers spread wide.



Place your right hand down shoulder width apart from your left hand, so hands are even.



Bend your right elbow and make a connection between your right elbow and your outer right hip.

If you're using a bolster/pillow, the pillow should be placed in front of your hands about 6-8" or so, here.



Lean forward with a long spine, heart forward, gaze forward, right between your two hands. Bend your elbows into that Chaturanga shelf.

Don't look back toward your feet! Keep looking forward!!



As you lean your upper body forward, think about lifting your left hip UP, so your body acts like a see-saw. Head and chest moves down, feet might lift UP!

Refine:

- Shoulders up away from the floor!
- Keep your feet flexed, inner edges of the feet together...don't let the feet go to sleep!
- Turn your belly from the left to the right, aiming navel toward the floor.

{Switch Sides}



Padahasthasana (Foot to Hand Pose) – Wrist Stretch Break

Fold forward, bend your knees as much as you need to, and step your feet onto your hands to stretch your wrists. Ahhhh....

Parsva Bakasana (Side Crow) – Stage 3: No Weight on Back Arms

Follow the same steps as Stage 2, except this is a bigger twist!



Use your right hand on the right thigh to push down and get leverage to twist your belly more from the left to the right. Sneak the left elbow down to the middle of your right thigh.



Place your left hand down so that you line your pinky finger on your left hand up with the pinky toe of your right foot. It's a BIG twist!



Place your right hand down shoulder-width apart from there.



Look forward past your hands, lean the heart forward. Lift your hips and twist around your left arm.



Balance with your right thigh resting on your left upper arm, NO weight on the right arm (but use that right hand to stay strong, lift both shoulders up). Turn the belly from the left to the right, and keep your feet flexed, toes spread and active.

{Switch sides}

That's it! Enjoy a forward fold with the palms turned up to the sky to relax through the wrists, drop your head, and breathe.

Take at least 1-2 minutes in Savasana to relax and integrate your practice.

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