

# Pull Up a Chair

## 5 Poses for Balance and Flexibility

By Kelsey Weaver, RYT-500

**F**or many people, traditional yoga can be difficult due to the range of motion required to get on and off a yoga mat. If mobility isn't an issue, sometimes there's just not enough space for a regular mat practice. If you find yourself with restrictions, whether from physical limitations or simply being seated at a desk all day, you may benefit from a regular yoga practice using a chair.

Using a chair essentially brings the floor up to you. This means that even at the lowest level, you're still higher than you'd be if you were using a yoga block or blanket for support. The chair also adds structure and support for standing poses. Chair yoga is great for beginners, and the only prop needed is a chair. Almost any chair will do. But be sure you don't grab one with wheels because it can easily throw you off balance! Putting a mat or carpet underneath the chair helps make sure it doesn't slide—especially during standing balance poses.

The benefits of chair yoga include: reducing stress, decreasing aches and pains in the body, increasing muscle flexibility and joint mobility,



Kelsey Weaver, registered yoga teacher, helps relax the shoulders of Ronette Wenberg, TOPS member, during a chair yoga session.

and improved breath capacity. Best of all, chair yoga enables people with a wide variety of physical abilities to reap these rewards!

### Take a Seat

Ready to get started? Find a chair (no wheels!) and take a few minutes out of your day for the following five poses. Try holding each pose for 3–5 full breaths to begin, increasing the number of breaths as you get used to the poses. While in each pose, try to avoid using the seat back. It's important to maintain good posture with your shoulders open and above the hips so your lungs have plenty of breathing room.



## Seated Mountain Pose With Breathwork

*This position is helpful for posture and for relaxing the body and mind.*

- A.** Sit in the chair. Keep your back away from the chair by keeping your seat slightly forward. Keep both your feet on the ground about hip-width apart and keep your spine upright.
- B.** Release your hands to your sides with your palms forward. Close your eyes. Take a full breath in through your nose and an open-mouth breath out. If you can, try counting to 4 on your breath in and 4 on your breath out.

## Featuring

Ronette Wenberg  
TOPS IL 0986 Rockford

## Seated Half Pigeon

*This pose helps to open hips and release tension in your low back.*

- A.** Sit in the chair and cross one ankle over the opposite thigh, directly behind the knee. Keep the foot slightly flexed. This helps the knee stay in proper alignment. You may stay here if you wish or go to B.
- B.** Keeping your spine straight, gently hinge forward. This helps to open the hip more if needed.

Sit back up and switch sides by crossing the other ankle to its opposite thigh.



*The information presented is educational and may not suit an individual's particular health situation. Always check with a licensed healthcare professional before beginning a new exercise program.*

## Featuring

Kimberly Greene  
TOPS WI 1535 Milwaukee

### Seated Eagle Pose

*This is a wonderful pose to help open shoulders and hips.*

- A.** While seated with your back away from the chair, cross your right knee directly above your left knee. Outstretch your arms.
- B.** Start with wrapping the right elbow under the left and grab opposite shoulders in a hug. Try to lift elbows in line with shoulders to open the shoulder blades.
- C.** Based on your mobility, you can start to bring the backs of your forearms together and reach your fingers up toward the ceiling.

Once you've held this first side for 3–5 breaths, switch to the second side with your left elbow under your right arm and your left knee crossed over the right.



**Remember:**  
Yoga should never hurt.  
Back off if you need to.



#### Make It Easier:

If eagle arms are too difficult, you can always bring your right hand to your left shoulder and your left hand to your right knee. To modify further, you can do upper and lower bodies separately.

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## Seated Cat/Cow

*This is the perfect pairing pose meant to open the chest, neck and shoulders.*

- A.** While seated with your feet on the floor, place your palms face down on your knees, while keeping your back away from the chair. Keeping your arms straight, tuck your chin to your chest and round your spine for cat pose (envisioning a cat arching its back).
- B.** Still keeping arms straight, move your heart forward, curving your spine as you look up slightly for cow (envisioning the sway back of a cow).



Move between cat and cow a few times. Try to do one breath per pose, exhaling for cat as you're tucked in and inhaling for cow as the lungs are forward.

## Standing Tree Pose

*This pose helps improve balance and ankle stability—crucial to avoiding trips and falls.*

- A.** Stand next to your chair with the chair back closest to your right side. Place your right hand on the top of the chair back and make sure the chair is stable!
- B.** With your right foot on the floor, bend the left knee and open it away from your body. Start by keeping your left toes on the ground and left heel on your right ankle in a kickstand shape. If you feel stable, you can lift the left toes off the ground and work the foot up your right calf. Try not to put any pressure on your standing knee!



Switch sides, making sure you move your left hand to the back of the chair with your left leg closest to it.

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*Kelsey Weaver, RYT-500, is an international yoga teacher and yoga studio owner. As a former runner and overall fitness enthusiast, Kelsey discovered the benefits of yoga more than 10 years ago as a way to stay flexible for her other activities. Yoga quickly took center stage in her life, and she has been teaching since 2012, subsequently opening her Milwaukee studio, Urban Om, in 2015. Kelsey recently completed her 500-hour Advanced Teacher Certification in New York.*