

SAMPLE YOGA CLASS PLAN FOR PROFESSIONAL SITTERS

Many people spend a large proportion of their life sitting down behind a desk. The following class plan for ‘professional sitters’ provides the asanas/poses they need to mobilise joints and lengthen tight muscles, breathe deeply and relax the mind.

POSTURE	BREATHING	KEY CUES	OPTIONS	REPS/TIME	BENEFIT
Supine or Semi Supine breathing	Focused inhalation & exhalation	Subtly draw in lower abdomen on the exhalation. Aim for a complete inhalation & exhalation	Legs can be bent or straight	2-4 mins	Slows down the mind, allows connection of mind to body, establishes rapport
Supine or Semi Supine Arm Raises	Inhale as you take the arms behind the head, exhale on lowering back beside the body	Allow the movement to be natural, do not force the arms down on to the floor	Bend the elbows as much as necessary	6-8 reps	Simple movement that mobilises the shoulders and extends the upper back
Semi Supine Knees to Chest Appanasana	Inhale as legs move away, exhale as knees come toward the chest	Use the arms to guide the legs, allow the lower back to gently stretch into the floor	Hold onto the legs at the side of the knees or underneath	6-8 reps	Mobilises the lumbar spine and stretches the lower back
Dynamic hamstring release	Breathe naturally	Keep the lumbar spine in neutral alignment and support the weight of the legs with the hands	If really tight in the back and hamstrings, put one foot on the floor and stretch one leg at a time	Alternate R & L 4-6 reps each leg	Releases the hamstrings and lower back
Semi-Supine Hip Extension 2 Legged Desk Dvipada pitham	Inhale on lift, exhale on lowering	Do not force the spine into hyperextension. Aim to feel a release in the front of the hips	Offer the option of raising the arms overhead as the hips lift	6-8 reps	Mobilises the spine and releases the hip flexors
Balancing Position Knees to Chest or Supine Full Extension	Natural breathing	Listen to what your body is asking you to do	Knees to chest or extend legs at hips out along the floor	30 secs to 1 min	Provides rest
Side Lying Spinal Rotation	Breathe in as you open the arm, breathe out as you return to the starting position	Keep the elbow slightly bent, and try to keep the knees together	Only open to the side as far as is comfortable	6-8 reps	Dynamic release for the chest and lower back

POSTURE	BREATHING	KEY CUES	OPTIONS	REPS/TIME	BENEFIT
All 4's Butt to heels Chakravakasana	Exhale as the spine flexes, inhale on extension	Draw in the lower abdomen on exhale to feel a stronger stretch in the back	If your feet are uncomfortable try turning the toes inward	6-8 reps	Mobilises the spine and stretches the back
Kneeling Lunge Kneeling Hamstring Stretch Ardha Mandalasana	Inhale deeply and exhale completely, as you move from one position to the other	Aim for at least a 90-degree angle at the front knee. Minimal pressure into the back knee. When in the hamstring stretch, try to keep the spine lengthened	Come up on to the knuckles if your wrists are uncomfortable	Move gently forward into the lunge and hamstring stretch, then hold each position for 60 seconds	Dynamic release and static stretch for hip flexors, quads and hamstrings
Downward Dog Adho Mukha Svanasana	Exhale as you lift into the pose, inhale on way down	Take the backside towards the ceiling, press back from the hands, keep ears in line with the arms	Press one heel at a time towards the floor. Knees can be bent	Move in and out of the pose 4-6 times and then hold for up to 60 seconds	A strong stretch for the calves, hamstrings, latissimus dorsi
Balancing Position Butt to heels Downward Facing Thunderbolt Vajrasana	Breathe naturally with a focused mind	Relax and take smooth deep breaths, let your arms bend, encourage your backside to go towards the heels	Arms can be as close to the body as you need. Move your hands and wrists to relieve discomfort	Hold for 4-6 breaths	Allows strain to be removed from the wrists and shoulders and encourages rest
Prone Upper Back Extension Dynamic Cobra Bhujangasana	Breathe in on extension, breathe out as you lower	Place the hands slightly forward of the shoulders, and the elbows lower than the shoulders. Subtly activate the rear of the shoulders and middle back	Only come up as far as is comfortable for your back. Encourage the movement to be felt in the upper part of your spine	6-8 reps	Mobilises the upper and thoracic spine
Dynamic Butt to Heels Chakravakasana	Breathe out as you take the backside back to the heels. Inhale as you come forward	Place your hands underneath the shoulders and the knees under the hips. Allow the spine to flex and the elbows to bend	Allow the toes to point inward if necessary and only go back as far as is comfortable for your knees	6-8 reps	Moves the spine into flexion so alleviates any discomfort from the spinal extension

Optional progressions

3 Legged Dog <i>Tri Pada Adho Mukha Svanasana</i>	Breathe naturally with a little more attention to the exhalation	Keep your weight evenly distributed over the three points of contact. Try not to rotate your torso as you lift the working leg up and bend the knee in towards the backside	Only lift the leg as far as is comfortable. Move out of the pose if your breathing becomes short and sharp	3-6 breaths	Strong release for the hip. Challenges balance and stability
Balancing Position Downward Facing Thunderbolt <i>Vajrasana</i>	Breathe out as you take the backside back to the heels. Inhale as you come forward	Place your hands underneath the shoulders and the knees under the hips. Allow the spine to flex and the elbows to bend	Allow the toes to point inward if necessary and only go back as far as is comfortable for your knees	Hold for 4-6 breaths	Provides a restful position and allows blood pressure to steady
Hip Release Folded Pigeon <i>Eka Pada Rajakapotasana</i>	Breathe deeply, encourage deep abdominal activation on exhalation	Do not rush into the pose, support the weight of the body through the arms and shoulders as you lower down into the end position	Lower the weight of the body onto the outside of the forward leg and bend the back knee as much as needed	Hold 6-8 breaths. Try gently rocking from side to side	Stretches the gluts, sometimes the periformis, of the front leg. Stretches quads and hip flexors of rear leg
Semi Supine Knees to Chest <i>Appanaasana</i>	Exhale as the knees come in toward the chest, inhale as they move away	Keep your heels close to the backside; lightly place your hands on the knees. Keep the upper back and head on the ground	Allow the lower spine to move gently	4-6 reps	Mobilises the lumbar spine to relieve any discomfort from the previous static position
Supine Leg Rotation in hip joint	Breathe deeply	Aim to keep the torso and pelvis still. Isolate the leg in the hip joint and support the weight of the leg with the hands	Bend the supporting leg as much as necessary.	4-6 reps in a clockwise and anti-clockwise direction R & L	Mobilises the hip joint

Supine Lying Twist Belly Twist <i>Jathra Parivrtti or Supta Udkarshanasana</i>	Breathe deeply	Ensure that at least the outside of the foot is touching the floor. If the opposite shoulder is lifting from the floor a lot or if there is discomfort in the elbow, bend the arm placing the hand on the shoulder	Have the knees as bent as you need them to be so that you can sustain the position with smooth deep breaths. Focus on relaxing into the position as you exhale	R & L hold for 6-8 breaths	Stretches the glutes, erector spinae, obliques and chest. If the top leg is extended hamstrings and ITB
Balancing Position <i>Apanasana</i>	Exhale as the knees come in toward the chest, inhale as they move away	Keep your heels close to the backside; lightly place your hands on the knees. Keep the upper back and head on the ground	Allow the lower spine to move gently	4-6 reps	Mobilises the lumbar spine to relieve any discomfort from the previous static position
Supine or Semi Supine Arm Raises	Inhale as you take your arms back behind your head. Exhale as you bring them back by your side	Have your legs either bent or straight	Feel comfortable	4-6 reps	Provides a gentle extension for the upper spine and mobilises the shoulders
Supine or Semi Supine Relaxation Breathing Pranayama	Inhale fully expanding the lungs. Exhale completely emptying the lungs	Focus on the exhalation and count 'and 1, and 2, and 3, and 4'. Inhale without counting. Perform 4 x 4 second exhalations. Increase the length of the exhalation to 6 seconds 4 times. Then try for an 8 second exhalation 4 times. Come back to 4 x 6 second exhalations, then 4 x 4 second exhalations	Only perform the 8-second exhalation if you remain comfortable. Do not create strain in the body. Try to activate the deep abdominals on the exhalation.	4 x 4 sec exhale 4 x 6 sec exhale 4 x 8 sec exhale 4 x 6 sec exhale 4 x 4 sec exhale Total 20 breaths	Requires the mind to be focused. Enhances breathing capacity.
Guided Relaxation	Allow the breathing to be natural	Progressively relax the body, starting at the top of the head, travelling down to the feet	Be in a comfortable position. Do not suppress movement	5-10 mins	Allows the body to adapt to new alignment created by the asanas. Allows a state of relaxation

Source: Lesley Gray & Australian Fitness Network www.fitnessnetwork.com.au