

USTRASANA - The Camel Pose using a bolster *Juli Kagan, CIYT Introductory I & II*

Double your mat or use a blanket to cushion the knees and shins.
A mat will provide more traction whereas the blanket can provide protection of bony shins and/or knees.

Sit on the shins with feet and knees parallel to each other- They become the “feet” of the pose. The shin extends from the knee to the ankle to the toes; including and especially the pinky toes on both feet. Sitting on the feet brings intelligence to the shins and feet.



When you bring your buttocks up, off the calves, the shins must stay extended on the floor.

Bring your thighs all the way to a wall. Use the wall as a reference point to keep the hips directly over the knees.

The knees are hip width apart and buttress the wall.

Importantly, the front of the pelvis is in contact with the wall.

Place your hands on the side of the hips, thumbs at the lower buttocks. Revolve the back inner thighs to the outer thighs by guiding your thumbs laterally/outwardly; this helps create space in the lower back. Compact the outer hips and bring the front hips and pubis bone to the wall.



Lift the back ribs toward the front ribs.

The front of the body lifts. The back trunk lifts off the pelvis.
The side ribs go up as the sitting bones go down.

Lift the chest up to go back. The collar bones spread; the neck lengthens from the nape of the neck to the mid thoracic-between the scapula / shoulder blades.

Lift the chest to reach the arms back, then toward the toes/feet.

Pressing into the feet, lift the side ribs and dorsal spine up- especially the thoracic region.



To come out of the pose: press strongly into the shins; place your hands onto your hips and lift the chest up. Look forward.

Modifications:

If unable to reach the hands all the way to the feet:

Bolster: Horizontally placed on the calves.

Place your hands on your back hips with the thumbs guiding the sacrum in. Keep the lower back extended by drawing the buttocks down; tailbone into the body. Keep the pelvis at the wall and roll the shoulders back.

Lift the back ribs up as you reach your fingertips to the bolster.

Keep looking directly at the wall to keep the head from dropping back. (The chest must be open and lifted before the head can extend.)

Press the fingertips into the bolster to lift the side chest as you continue to press your shins into the floor.

The sacrum is to the wall and the chest is lifting upwards and forward.

The curvature in the back is even and spread out.

Sit on the bolster in between each successive Ustrasana.



Next Stage:

Slide the booster further back toward the heels; resting it on an angle on the soles of the feet.

Position your hands on your hips:

Thumbs aligned with the sacrum. The skin follows the sacrum and tail in and down. Concurrently, bring the sitting bones down.

Use the bolster to press into the feet in the direction of the toes to the heels. While pressing the hands flat into the bolster, reach further back with the hands allowing the chest to open and spread even more than before. The hips stay anchored to the wall. The shins press down and extend back. For further refinement, press the outer shins down.

Lift the ribs as the sitting bones go down. Sacrum to the wall. Tailbone to the wall and down to the floor.

Bring the back ribs up.

Elongate the neck enabling the upper trapezius to draw down the back, especially at C-7/T-1. According to Geeta Iyengar, C-7 should hook into T-1 to bring it in. The head can go back as long as the neck stays long and the chest continues to lift and spread.

The shoulder blades lift the front chest up and toward the wall.

To come out of the pose, press firmly into the shins and lift the chest to the ceiling, release the hands from the bolster and look forward to the wall.



Sit on the bolster for a rest.

