

Prasarita Padottanasana means “spread apart feet intense stretch”. This pose tones the legs, spine, and abdomen. Progressive refinement of its symmetrical shape improves balance and whole-body awareness. Combining the active work of standing with the repose of an inversion and forward bend, prasarita padottanasana provides a study of the twin pillars of yoga, practice (abhyasa) and detachment (vairagya).

Props and techniques:

- *Light on Yoga* by B.K.S. Iyengar, plates 29-36 provide photographs of each stage of the pose. Refer also to the descriptions, techniques, and effects for Prasarita Padottanasana I and II.
- Begin with concave back (LOY plate 32) to fully extend the legs and elongate the spine.
- While menstruating or pregnant, practice only concave back with hands on blocks or chair.
- In the full pose: If head does not rest on the floor, use blankets or block as head support.
- Broaden and lift shoulders away from the floor to maintain passive length in the neck. If necessary, place hands on blocks.
- Relax the eyes and facial muscles.

Sutra study: Patanjali’s Yoga Sutra I.12 states that “practice and detachment are the means to still the fluctuations of consciousness.” B.K.S. Iyengar has said that “activity and passivity must go together in asana.” Read B.K.S. Iyengar’s commentary of Sutra I.12 in *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* for further study.

Practice: Prasarita padottanasana can be effectively linked to virtually all categories of poses. For examples of placement within a beginner’s sequence, see *Light on Yoga* by B.K.S. Iyengar, Appendix 1, Weeks 3-12. Experienced students may compose personal practice sequences, placing prasarita padottanasana:

- Before, after, or interspersed with lateral standing poses
- Grouped with other standing forward bends
- Before seated poses and seated forward bends
- Before or after abdominal strengthening poses
- Before or after a sequence of twists
- Before inversions. Or as a substitute for sirsasana (see LOY plates 33-36)
- Before backbends, emphasizing concave extension (see LOY plates 29-32)
- After backbends, to broaden and lengthen back hips and back waist