Navasana

*Boat Pose*

nəh-VAHS-ənə

*nava* = boat

**Classification and Level**

Basic seated balance—abdominal strengthener

**Joint Actions**

Spine neutral extension, resisting flexion; sacroiliac joint neutral, resisting counternutation; hip flexion, adduction, internal rotation; knee extension; ankle neutral extension; scapula neutral (if arms extended to shoulder height); glenohumeral joint flexion, lateral adduction, slight external rotation; forearm neutral rotation.

**Working**

**Spine:** The psoas major and spinal extensors work to maintain neutral alignment against the pull of gravity; the abdominal muscles work eccentrically to resist the hyperextension of the lumbar spine. The abdominal muscles also resist the bulging forward of the abdominal organs, which bear the weight of the thorax and arms.
**Legs:** The psoas major and iliacus flex the hips; the rectus femoris flexes the hips and extends the knees; the vastii extend the knees; the gracilis and pectineus adduct and flex the hip joints; the tensor fascia latae support flexion and internal rotation; the sartorius supports flexion at the hip joints.

**Arms:** The serratus anterior and rhomboids hold the scapulae on the rib cage; the infraspinatus and teres minor externally rotate the head of the humerus; the coracobrachialis and anterior deltoids flex and laterally adduct at the gleno-humeral joints; the triceps and anconeus extend the elbows.

**Lengthening**

Hamstrings.

**Obstacles and Notes**

In this pose the challenge is not the position itself, so much as its relationship to gravity. If it were rotated 45 degrees, it would just be the work of sitting vertically in dandasana (which can certainly present its own challenges).

Ideally, the weight in this pose is distributed between the sitting bones and the tailbone. All the weight should not be borne on the sacrum, because that would create a destabilizing counternutation in the sacroiliac joints.

If dandasana is a challenge because of tight hamstrings, that tightness will make it impossible to support this pose correctly with the legs straight. In this case, bending the knees so the spine can remain neutral is a good option.

It is an interesting challenge to have to work hard to maintain a neutral spine, as opposed to working to get the spine into flexion, extension, or rotation.

This asana is often described as working the abdominal muscles. This is true; however, the abdominal muscles do not hold the weight of the pose. Rather, they are modulators of the action of creating hip flexion, which is mainly performed by the psoas major and iliacus. If the psoas is difficult to access, it is possible to overwork the rectus femoris or tensor fascia latae in this pose.

Just as bending the knees makes this pose easier by shortening the length of the lower lever arm, stretching the arms overhead would make it more difficult by lengthening the upper lever arm.

**Breathing**

To maintain the stability and balance of this pose, the breath must be very restrained and focused. To illustrate how vital this is, attempt to do navasana while taking deep belly breaths.