

Sample #1:

Yoga Love for Your Wrists

Wrist pain is becoming more prevalent as more and more of us spend ungodly amounts of working hours in front of a computer. For yoga practitioners, who rely on their wrists and lower arms to support them during many poses, weak wrists are a hindrance. I use a laptop for work, and I quickly found that keeping my wrists in one position for a prolonged amount of time put some strain on them.

You can discover if you have a strong foundation for poses with a simple exercise. Put your hands on a wall. Spread your fingers out as wide as possible. Press the pads of each finger into the wall, then your palms. Maintain equal pressure in as much of your hands as possible. Use these cues when you practice weight-bearing yoga poses.

Wrist pain can be due to a variety of causes, from tightness of the muscles and tendons of the wrist, especially the flexor muscles of the forearm, to specific syndromes, such as carpal tunnel syndrome to anatomical changes at the wrist, resulting from significant trauma or growth of ganglion cysts in the joint.

Not all wrists problems start with the wrists, however; shoulder misalignment are often the culprit, too. The first thing to do is to open and balance the shoulders through a variety of poses performed with good alignment.

The next step is to strengthen the flexor muscles of the forearms (the muscles on the underside, or palm side, of the forearm). Do this through isometric actions in basic positions, while bearing light weight on your hands. It is essential to place the hands on a firm surface, shoulder-width apart; and make sure the creases of the two wrists (where the back of each hand meets the forearm) form a straight line. The fingers and thumbs should be evenly spread. The four corners of each palm (the index finger mound, mound of the thumb, little finger mound, and outer heel of the palm) should be evenly anchored on the firm surface.

To build strength in the flexor muscles, make a claw on a firm surface so that the tips of the fingers and the four corners of the palms press down and draw back toward the shoulders. Keeping the finger pads down, bend the fingers slightly and lift the center of the palms up without lifting the four corners of the palms. The flexor muscles should firm as you attempt to move the head of the arm bone backward in relationship to the torso.

Keep in mind that wrist problems will be aggravated if:

- Your weight falls to the outside of your hands.
- Your index finger knuckle lifts away from the foundation.
- Your weight collapses to the heel of the palm.

It's important to find an instructor who is experienced in finding variations to the poses that will be kind to your wrists. Blocks and foam wedges are an easy way to modify poses. Sometimes the hardest part of modifying a pose is a student's reluctance to do anything less than a 100% full version of a pose.

Yoga pose variations for weak wrists:

- You can also try Half Downward-Facing Dog or Right Angle Pose at the wall, with the arms and torso parallel to the floor.
- Foam wedges can help reduce the severe angle of extension of the wrist in poses such as Upward-Facing Dog, Handstand, and many of the arm balances.
- For Upward Facing Dog, Cat Cow, and Downward Facing Dog, instead of spreading the palm on your mat, use fists instead.
- Use your knuckle pads and finger pads like frogs feet, suctioning onto and into the mat. At the same time, create what feels like a pocket of air at the point where the radius and ulna meet the bones of the wrist. Send breath under your palm, push the heel of your thumb and knuckle into the mat. The same way you create space in your shoulders in down dog, create the same space in your wrists, lift out of them. A great deal of pressure is released
- Wrap tape 1-2 inches below the elbow across the entire arm.
- To avoid all pressure on the wrists, substitute dolphin pose for downward facing dog. Keep your shoulders neutral and open during poses to help take pressure off of the wrists.

If you aren't experiencing any limitation in your wrists, many of the basic poses are excellent for building wrist strength as well as general upper body strength.

Poses to strengthen wrists:

Downward Facing Dog

Upward Facing Dog

Arm balancing poses (such as handstand, crow, scale and plank that require the arms, along with core strength, to hold the body off of the ground)

Wrist strengthening exercises.

When I had pain in my wrists, I found the exercises on Ergocise to be the most helpful.

In my own yoga practice, I've found that I've had the most success in using yoga and stretch DVDs that focus on the wrists or the upper body. Gaim's AM/ PM stretch—which is my go to stretch yoga DVD-- has a PM stretch program where the instructor has you to move your hand palm down, fingers pointing towards your feet. You then push your hips ever so slightly back towards your feet in order to give your wrists a slight stretch.

Jillian Michael's Yoga Meltdown focuses on developing upper body strength for through her programs. Jillian isn't to everyone's tastes, and I certainly don't recommend her for an absolutely newbie exerciser.

Sample #2

5 Signs you Should be Self-Employed

We all have different reasons for moving towards self employment. For some, it's a family situation (I envy all of you who are able to have a child and have that epiphany of "Dogonnit- I'm staying home with my child!"), for some of us, a sudden layoff means we have to completely change directions, and for others being in a small town means that meaningful jobs are few and far between.

At the same time, there's an internal need to leap out of the so-called safety boat called full time employment in favor of being self employed. And those internal reasons are just as important to express.

1. You want more control over your time and your life.

It's incredibly frustrating to work in an environment where you have little say over when you can take time off. Scheduling a dentist appointment around a very important meeting that may or may not happen next week can turn into a complete nightmare.

I once had a boss who was so self absorbed and irresponsible that she would schedule meetings during the Employee Assistance Program's free yoga classes. Guess whose employees needed the yoga classes the most?

2. My work is no longer challenging. It's time to do something creative.

Look, just because you spent years training or in school for something it doesn't mean you're obligated to do it for the rest of you life. I spent four years trying to get myself and other people all fired up over records management. Nobody was falling for it.

I even tried to get creative with how we presented our training sessions. I got shot down every time. This was a big red flag that kept slapping me in the face.

3. I spent X number of years helping other people realize their dreams. Now I want to pursue mine.

I spent several years working to get some amazing organizations grant funding so they could carry out their programs and missions. And I deserved the same consideration for my own life mission as well.

4. I'm tired of working with negative people.

An atmosphere of negativity can not only use up your energy, it can destroy your self esteem. If everyone around you hates their job, complains all of the time, and does virtually nothing to make things better, then you're only learning to survive and wait for a paycheck to show up.

In my case, I was the negative person. I hated my job, hated my boss, hated the government agency I worked for (and worried incessantly that we were going to get sanctioned by the Feds for poor stewardship of our federal money). Not only was I surrounded by negative, fearful and downright angry people--I was one of them.

5. My job pays me a good salary, but I'm miserable doing it.

These days, if you even breathe the fact that you hate your job, you've quickly reminded that you should be happy just having a job. That's right- be happy that you're miserable. And all that attitude does is add to your frustration and guilt of being unhappy doing something you hate. And that just prolongs the inevitable wall you'll hit when you just can't go on any longer.

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Sample #3

Online Resources for Learning a Foreign Language

The internet is a godsend for those of us who have few in person methods for learning a foreign language. You can drop lots of money on courses and apps to help you on the road to fluency. But more and more, free online resources are becoming a viable (if not superior) alternative to putting down money to learn a language.

Courses:

You do have some free options for a traditional course online. My experience has been that with the free ones, you get what you pay for. That's especially true for the Foreign Service courses. The MP3 files were so useless that I just deleted them from iTunes.

If you're looking to get your feet wet in a particular language and you want a starting point for LOTS of links, check out Omniglot and Internet Polygot. You'll also learn some basic phrases from the BBC and About.com.

The key here is "basic." You can find loads of "beginner" and "basic" websites that can teach you how to say hello and the words for house, father and brother. There are far less resources online for intermediate or advanced level learners. That's mostly because the demand is flooded by beginners. Very few people stick with a language long enough to get to even the intermediate level.

Online Dictionaries: occasionally boring but a necessary evil:

Confession time- I still prefer to use a small paperback dictionary when I'm working in another language. I once made the mistake of buying an e book dictionary on my Kindle Fire. It takes so long to look up an entry that I quickly ran back to my old trusty paperback.

No, I am not going to include Google Translate. Even I have my standards, low as they are.

I have to include Lexigolos because it includes Swedish. No one can subsist on royal gossip alone.

Word reference includes more popular languages including Spanish, French and Portuguese. Less common languages are available, but the support is not as strong for those languages.

For specialized dictionaries, look to:

Proz term search, which includes specialized glossaries for medical, legal and technical terms.

Interactive Terminology for Europe is a great source for non-Europeans.

MyMemory solicits user comments for shorter translations.

These three sources are great when you're just starting out and you're faced with an industry specific term that you can't find in a standard dictionary.

Read content in your target language:

Another confession- I read a Swedish gossip magazine every day, and it's helped my Swedish tremendously. I also know every minute detail of Princess Victoria's public life. But here are some more respectable sources for reading in your target language.

Although it has a limited amount of languages, Lingocracy is worth checking out.

Gloss includes the most popular European languages plus some exotic ones.

Euronews has a drop down at the top of the page that allows you to read news in thirteen languages.

It's a good idea to fill up your RSS feed with websites with your target language. Check out the Alexa ratings for the top websites in each country. Or set Stumbleupon to find sites in a particular language.

Speaking of setting, if you're anywhere as addicted to reading random Wikipedia pages as I am, you have the option of changing the default language settings and reading the articles in your target language.

To help your auditory skills, choose radio Tunein provides streaming radio from across the globe, in your target language.

I've had little luck so far installing and running Learning With Texts. If you want an easier version of the program, head over to

Take advantage of native speakers:

If you're serious about reducing your accent, find ways to interact with native speakers. There are a few places online where you can listen to them for free:

For Spanish tutorials, Lingo Live Spanish has an active channel featuring different native speakers.

If you're looking for Spanish, French, Italian or Portuguese tutorials, check out French Spanish Online.

Not my favorite, but if you're willing to throw yourself out there for criticism, there's Judge My Accent via Reddit.

Is there an oddball or technical term that you have to learn the proper pronunciation of? Take advantage of the database over at Forvo.

I haven't used RhinoSpike personally, but it promises on demand audio translation.

Translators, are you worried that you may not be writing your piece in the most grammatically correct or "readable" way? Lang8 has some free options to have your work looked over by a native speaker.

Fixoodle bills itself as "social tools for language learners." I'm also new to this site, but it looks like a smaller competitor to Lang8.

Don't count out social bookmarking sites:

Reddit has some good resources for finding articles about language learning and about individual languages.

That's all for today. Keep your eyes on this post as I'll be updating it with more and more resources.

Remember- when fluency is your goal, it's best to combine several different formats and methods for learning a new language.