

Yoga Briefs

The Wedge

Because of pain in my right wrist, I used to shy away from poses that required my hands to bear weight. While I struggled with an uncomfortable Downward Dog (*Adho Mukha Svanasana*) in a drop-in class one day, Iyengar yoga teacher, Devorah Blum, saw my plight. She slid a triangular piece of firm foam under my palms. Suddenly I was pain free and stable in the pose! Blum's insight has made all the difference. Armed with the wedge, I'm enjoying the benefits of all the asanas again.

The wedge is a versatile prop, offering more ease in a variety of poses. During prenatal classes, Blum encourages moms-to-be to place the wedge under foot, promoting balance and stability when it's time to squat in Garland Pose (*Malasana*) and count kegels.

In arm balances, like Side Plank Pose (*Vasisthasana*) and "pushup" asanas like Cobra Pose (*Bhujangasana*), the wedge alleviates pressure on the wrists, and reduces the angle to which they must extend. While anyone with wrist problems should seek personal



Finding the Wedge

It is also known as "yoga wedge," "slantboard" and "wrist wedge."

Iyengar-style yoga is very pro-prop, so you're likely to find the wedge for sale at most Iyengar studios, or check out these retailers on the web:

Hugger Mugger

\$12.95 per 2" x 6" x 20" dense foam wedge.
(www.huggermugger.com)

Yoga Props

\$13.00 per pair. Sets of shorter wedges let you place your supports at the ideal angle for each hand, especially helpful in asanas like Crane Pose. (www.yogaprops.com)

Tools for Yoga

Offers a variety of dense foam and wooden wedges.
(www.toolsforyoga.net)

medical advice, those with weak or tight wrists might find that the wedge gives just enough support to make practice a healthy challenge, instead of a painful ordeal. Blum says the dense foam wedge aids the wrists enough to make it possible to hold full backbends, such as Upward Bow (*Urdhva Dhanurasana*), much longer.

In seated forward bends like Head-to-Knee Pose (*Janu Sirsasana*) or Staff Pose (*Dandasana*), tuck the wedge

under the sit bones to tilt the pelvis forward a little, for more lower-back comfort and a gentler hamstring stretch. Sitting cross-legged on the wedge in this way makes for a great meditation posture, too.

When it's time for Corpse Pose (*Savasana*), one of Blum's students likes to use the wedge under her head (with the "fat" part under her neck), claiming it's better than any neck pillow!

So when I'm dashing across the parking lot, a little late for class, I grope around in my yoga tote to confirm my readiness. Mat? Check. Water bottle? Check. Cell phone off? Check. Wedge? Got it! I'm all set for a great practice session.

Niika Quistgard DeVivo