



1) Stand up slowly. Have your feet slightly apart, toes pointing forward. Let your arms hang by your sides and, with your head well out of your shoulders, look steadily at some object that is level with your eyes.

2) Become aware of the breath, allowing yourself to be breathed. As the breath begins to flow in, bring your arms out from your sides and up above your head, holding your shoulders well back all the while. Have your hands together with arms straight above your head when your lungs have completely filled up.

3) Then, as the breath flows out, lean forward, bringing your out-stretched arms towards the floor. Make sure that you do not bend your knees. Clasp your feet or, if that is not possible, your legs as far down as you can. Hold the position and breathe normally for a few moments.

4) Then, on an in-breath begin to raise your arms, holding them together and well out in front of your body, palms facing upwards in a lifting movement.

5) Again have your arms directly overhead when your lungs are full..

6) As the breath again flows out bring your arms in an outward, backward, downward movement until, at the end of your exhalation, your arms are back by your sides.

In the beginning you may find it difficult to get your movements to follow the flow of the breath. With a little practice, you will find that this will happen naturally almost without thinking about it.

Again, as you practice, be aware of where your body is exerting itself and being stretched. Pay particular attention to the back of the shoulders and upper arms, backs of legs and lower back.

This is a good loosening-up routine for early in the morning.

A simple 'morning offering' prayer can easily be integrated with the forward bend.

As you raise your arms (breathing in) think of the words 'O my God'.

Bend forward and down to the words 'I bow down before you'. Think of the words 'I offer my life to you' as you come up with your hands in front of you in a lifting movement.

Finally, lower your arms to 'Amen'.

Do this slowly and feel free to use your imagination as you pray with your body. Raising your hands, you might picture something that represents you, your work or your life for example, food that you will prepare during the day, money that you will earn, or some person that you have difficulty relating with.

Then, as your hands have reached their highest point, you might imagine God receiving your gift, accepting your sorrow and joy. Should you be fortunate enough to have the rising sun shining in your window as you are getting up, then the above sequence can be performed facing it. The sun marks the beginning of a new day. It is also a symbol of Christ, who brings us the new life of His Resurrection. If however, you have to manage without the sun, you may stand in front of any religious image that reminds you of God and do your forward bend.

