The Sun Salutation, or Surya Namaskar, is central to many systems of Hatha Yoga. A flowing sequence of postures linked by the breath, it is an elaborate form of calisthenics that can tone and strengthen the body and warm it up in preparation for other poses. Some systems of yoga, such as the various Vinyasa forms, place great emphasis on the sun salute, either in whole or in part, to link different categories of pose to each other, whereas in other systems, such as the Iyengar method, it is used only occasionally, either to stir up the energy of a flagging class or as a preparation for poses that require upper body strength, such as inversions.

**Approach with Caution**

It is extremely easy to get carried away with the sun salutation. Moving quickly from pose to pose often means sacrificing attention to detail. Sometimes the idea is presented that as long as you are present and breathing properly, you cannot injure yourself. I would dispute this notion strongly. The major difficulty with the repetitious nature of the sequence is a dulling of awareness and a falling into habit. Better to move slowly and deliberately as you make the complicated transitions from pose to pose, staying mindful and engaged with your body at all times. Be especially careful at the beginning of the practice, when the body is not fully warmed up and the mind not quite awakened to the body’s needs. Step forward and back whenever necessary, especially if the shoulders or back become challenged.

**Modify as Necessary**

Apply the knowledge of your own body you have acquired in class learning other poses to the sequence.

If the back is tight or sore, or the hamstrings are tight, do Tadasana (Mountain Pose) and Uttanasana (Intense Stretch Pose) with the feet hip width apart. Go forward from on to the other with the hands on the hips and bend the legs slightly.

If there is any problem with the shoulders, avoid Chaturanga Dandasana (Four Limbed Staff Pose) completely and substitute Plank Pose. If the wrists or back are tight, Plank Pose might work as a substitute for Urdhva Mukha Shvanasana (Upward Facing Dog Pose) as well.

It in doubt, never feel you have to begin with the Sun Salutation. Perhaps beginning with a softer, or even restorative, pose would be more appropriate.

That said, Surya Namaskar is a fun and energizing sequence worth practicing whenever a burst of energy is needed.
Simple Sun Salutation 1
Level: Fundamentals

1. Tadasana (Mountain Pose)
2. INHALE
3. Urdhva Hastasana (Upward Hands Pose)
4. EXHALE
5. Uttanasana (Intense Stretch Pose)
6. INHALE
7. Lunge (Right Leg back)
8. EXHALE
9. Adho Mukha Shvanasana (Downward Facing Dog Pose)
10. EXHALE
11. Urdhva Mukha Shvanasana (Upward Facing Dog Pose)
12. INHALE
13. Adho Mukha Shvanasana (Downward Facing Dog Pose)
14. INHALE
15. Lunge (Left Leg back)
16. EXHALE
17. Uttanasana (Intense Stretch Pose)
18. INHALE
19. Urdhva Hastasana (Upward Hands Pose)
20. EXHALE
21. Tadasana (Mountain Pose)
Simple Sun Salutation 2
Jump Back
Level: Fundamentals

INHALE

Tadasana (Mountain Pose)

Urdhva Hastasana (Upward Hands Pose)

Uttanasana (Intense Stretch Pose)

EXHALE

Adho Mukha Shvanasana (Downward Facing Dog Pose)

Urdhva Mukha Shvanasana (Upward Facing Dog Pose)

Adho Mukha Shvanasana (Downward Facing Dog Pose)

INHALE

EXHALE

Uttanasana (Intense Stretch Pose)

Ur dhv a H astasana (Upward Hands Pose)

Tadasana (Mountain Pose)
"Light on Yoga" Sun Salutation
Level: Intermediate/Advanced

1. **Tadasana** (Mountain Pose)
   - INHALE
   - EXHALE

2. **Uttanasana** (Intense Stretch Pose)
   - INHALE
   - EXHALE

3. **Chaturanga Dandasana** (Four Limbed Staff Pose)
   - INHALE
   - EXHALE

4. **Adho Mukha Shvanasana** (Downward Facing Dog Pose)
   - INHALE
   - EXHALE

5. **Chaturanga Dandasana** (Four Limbed Staff Pose)
   - EXHALE
   - INHALE

6. **Urdhva Mukha Shvanasana** (Upward Facing Dog Pose)
   - INHALE
   - EXHALE

7. **Uttanasana** (Intense Stretch Pose)
   - INHALE
   - EXHALE

8. **Tadasana** (Mountain Pose)
   - INHALE
Ashtanga Vinyasa Sun Salutation (A)
Level: Intermediate/Advanced

INHALE → EXHALE

Tadasana (Mountain Pose)
Urdhva Hastasana (Upward Hands Pose)
Uttanasana (Intense Stretch Pose)

INHALE → EXHALE

Adho Mukha Shvanasana (Downward Facing Dog Pose)
Urdhva Mukha Shvanasana (Upward Facing Dog Pose)
Chaturanga Dandasana (Four Limbed Staff Pose)

STAY HERE FOR 5 BREATHS

INHALE → EXHALE

Uttanasana (Intense Stretch Pose)
Urdhva Hastasana (Upward Hands Pose)
Tadasana (Mountain Pose)