

# BEND & STRETCH

Incorporating yoga into your dryland routine will make you a better open water swimmer, says **Julie Bradshaw**. Use these five poses to improve your swimming both mentally and physically



## 1. UJJAYI BREATH

To enhance and empower

### Technique:

- Starting in seated pose with spine straight and head straight (use a block or cushion to sit on if hips are tight).
- Start to breathe, slightly constricting the back of the throat as if you were whispering or making the sound of the ocean. Allow the breath to flow in and out gently through the nose.
- Engage the breath for two to five minutes.

## 2. CAT-SUPERMAN-DOG

Improve your flexibility, strength and endurance

### Technique:

- 1 Start on hands and knees and ensure the body parts are all in alignment.
- Breathe in.
- 2 Exhale; arch back and looks towards navel.
- 3 Extend leg; inhale.
- 4 Exhale; move head towards knee.
- 5 Add breath in, extend right arm and left leg.
- Exhale, and return to position 1.

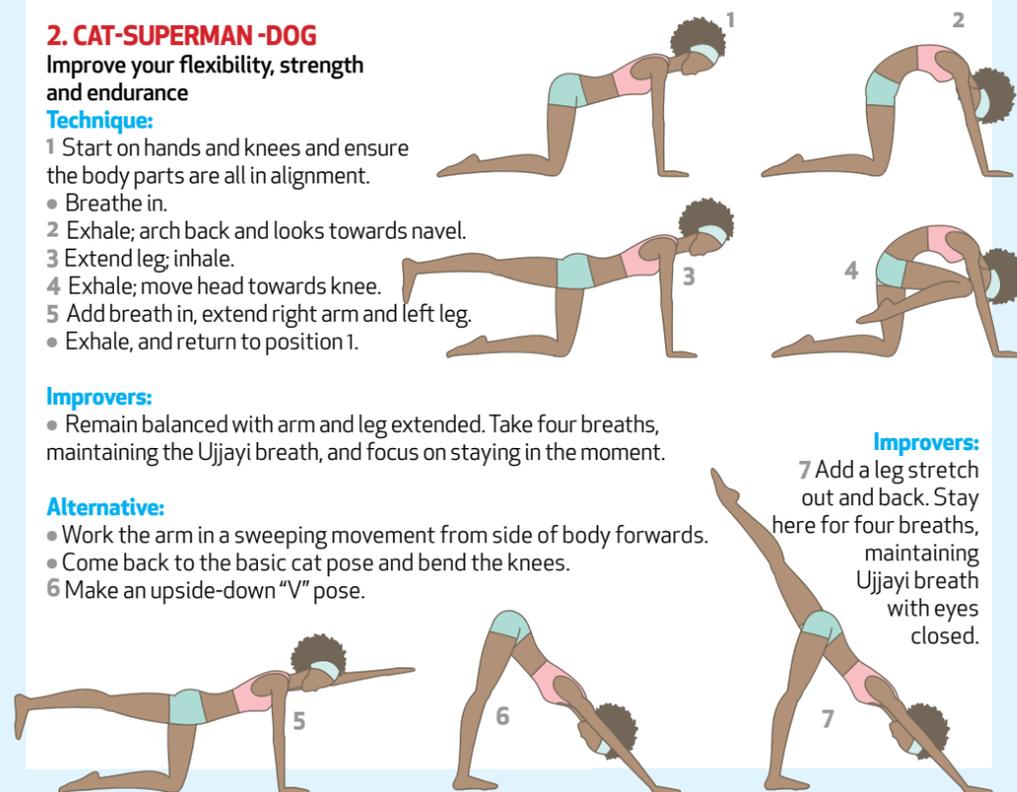
### Improvers:

- Remain balanced with arm and leg extended. Take four breaths, maintaining the Ujjayi breath, and focus on staying in the moment.

### Alternative:

- Work the arm in a sweeping movement from side of body forwards.
- Come back to the basic cat pose and bend the knees.

- 6 Make an upside-down "V" pose.



### Improvers:

- 7 Add a leg stretch out and back. Stay here for four breaths, maintaining Ujjayi breath with eyes closed.

## 3. COBRA

Increase flexibility in your pelvis and lumbar spine

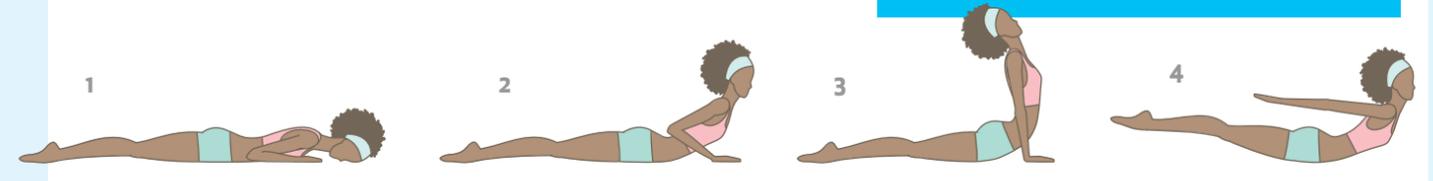
- 1 Roll over to the prone position with your face on the mat.
- 2 Bring the arms forwards, elbows bent and tucked into the sides. Keep hands in line with shoulders.
- 3 Breathe in and allow the body to lift up to a back bend. Keep the hips on the floor.
- 4 Come up to just the navel and exhale. Float down.
  - Practise a few times. Stay in the pose and focus on the breath and power of the navel.
  - Allow the shoulders to relax. Keep pelvis relaxed.

### Improvers:

- Bring the arms by the side of the chest, then to by the side of waist.

### Locust addition:

- This can be added to the cobra. As you lift the body the legs can lift off the mat with the same breath pattern. This is an Improver's pose and will increase flexibility.



Dr Julie Bradshaw MBE has been achieving records in long distance, English Channel and marathon swimming since 1978. In 1979, she first swam the English Channel, aged only 15. She holds the record for the fastest butterfly crossing of the English Channel and has also swum butterfly around Manhattan Island. She is Secretary of the Channel Swimming Association. Julie has been an open water swimming coach for more than 35 years and runs a variety of swim camps and clinics, which include yoga, throughout the year around the UK.

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## 4. WARRIOR

To open the chest and allow the breath to flow, improve circulation to the upper chest and open the pelvis and bring a sense of earth focus

- 1 Stand with feet slightly apart, pelvis facing forwards and arms by the sides.
  - Step the right foot back so that the toes are facing forwards and try to keep the heel towards the mat (the heel may not come to the floor). Encourage this throughout the practice.

- 2 Breathe in and bring arms forwards and upwards, fingers towards the ceiling.
  - Allow the chest to open and keep shoulders relaxed.
  - Stay here and breathe.

### Modification:

- As you breathe in, move the arms towards each other, keeping elbows and wrists together.
- Exhale and return to the start.
- Repeat.

## 5. TREE

For stability, improved balance/focus, ground earth energy

- Standing with feet together raise the right leg and bend it (foot to touch the lower inside leg, inner thigh).
- 1 Focus on the breath and then add arms circling around above the head.
- Concentrate on the breath and keep eyes forward.

### Advanced:

- 2 Move forwards, bending at the hips, and try to bring fingers to the floor. Take the head to the knee. Come out slowly, maintaining balance.

