

Boat (*Navasana*)

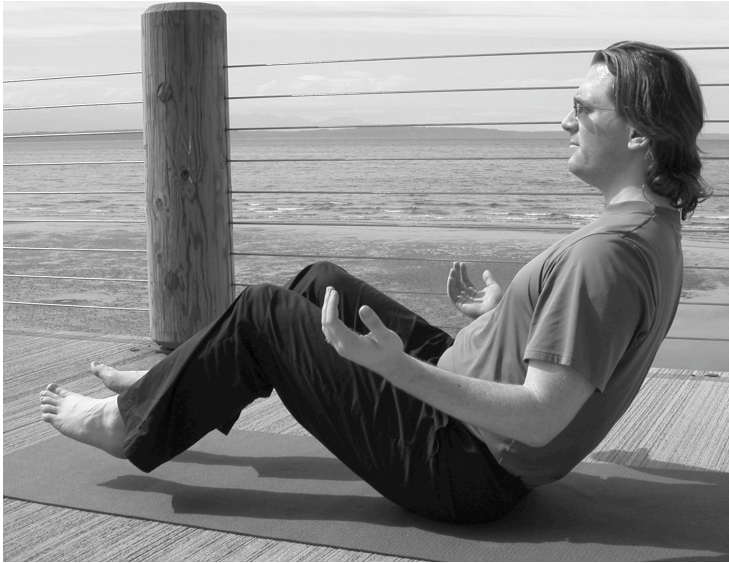
Enter from sitting. Draw your knees together and grab the backs of your thighs. Lift your chest and focus on lengthening the spine. Lift your feet an inch or two off the floor, keeping the knees bent at first. Begin to lift the feet and straighten the knees, as long as you can do so without rounding the back. Imagine your spine is like the mast of a sailboat; you want to keep it tall and lifted. You can keep your hands on the floor, or grab the back of the calves, or reach your arms out to the side. Find the hand placement that allows you to hold the pose for several breaths without rounding the spine.



Note that your abdominal muscles may quiver in this pose because they are holding a strong isometric contraction while lengthening the muscle. Typically when you contract the rectus abdominus you shorten the muscle by rounding the spine, as in a stomach crunch. Boat pose asks it to maintain both length and strength simultaneously, which makes it challenging.



Boat continued



Pose Benefits: Boat is wonderful abdominal strengthener. It strengthens virtually all the muscles in the abdomen as well as lower back muscles. It also strengthens the hip flexors—the muscles used to draw your foot downward while finning. Strong abdominal muscles are essential to divers as they help the back carry a tank and extra weights. Strong abdominal muscles also help stabilize your spine so you avoid overarching your back while finning.

