

foldaway backbender users' guide

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- Safe use
- Poses and assembly configurations

The backbender and Iyengar Yoga

The Foldaway Backbender is a new adaptation of BKS Iyengar's classic 'backbend bench' design.

BKS Iyengar is widely regarded as the foremost contemporary teacher of yoga asana (posture). His technique emphasises precise alignment and deep absorption in each pose. Based at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Puna, India, Mr Iyengar's inspirational teaching has spawned hundreds of Iyengar Yoga schools around the world.

Now in his late eighties, he maintains an active interest in the teaching program at the Institute.

Fundamental to Mr Iyengar's approach is the notion of practicing each pose in a way which is appropriate to the experience and fitness of the practitioner. For that purpose he has developed and systematised the use of a number of yoga props.

Props assist the practice of those unable to achieve the deepest version of a pose. Props also enable practitioners to stay in a pose for a longer time than would otherwise be possible, especially during a 'restorative' practice.

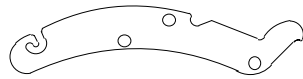
Mr Iyengar developed the backbend bench to assist with the practice of back bends or poses involving spinal extension (arching the spine backwards)

The Foldaway Backbender

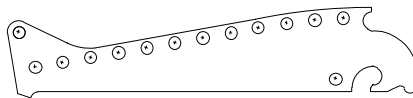
was designed by Peter Harley. Peter is an Iyengar Yoga teacher and industrial designer, from Melbourne, Australia. It adapts Mr Iyengar's original design, enabling more versatile use and space-saving, foldaway storage. This more recent model also includes an attachment for the practice of supported Kapotasana.

Basic handling

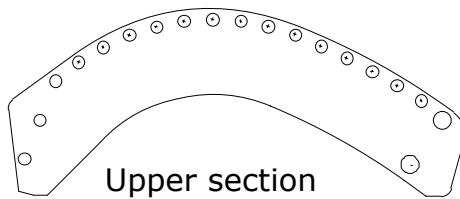
The Foldaway Backbender is made in 3 parts plus a removable foot bar.



Kapotasana extension



Lower section



Upper section

Take a little time to study the mechanism to see how the bench is folded, assembled and disassembled. The diagrams left and right show the parts in the stored or folded form.

The Foldaway Backbender (FAB) should only be carried in the folded form and gripped by one of the large diameter bars at the top (Figure 1). Please note that carrying the bench in the unfolded form



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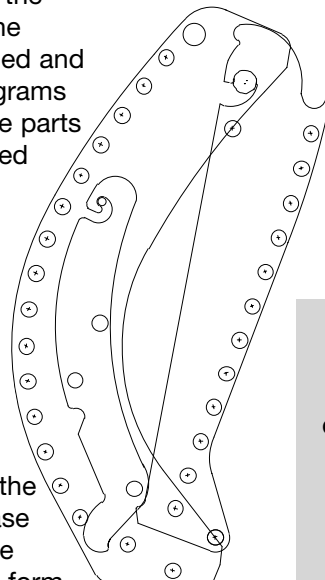
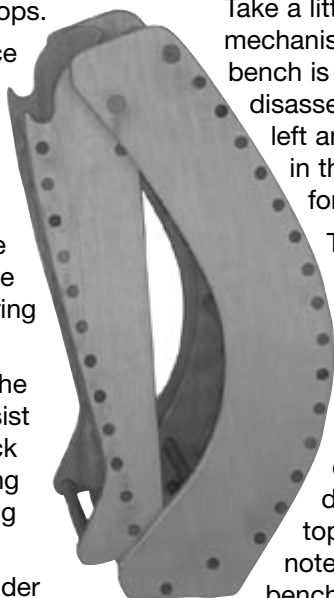
may result in its unexpected folding and jamming your fingers (Figure 2 overleaf).

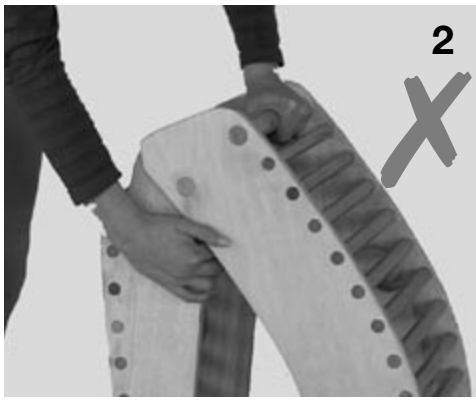
To fold the bench from its extended form simply lift it by the large bar at the centre. If it resists folding,

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Thank you.





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gently stretch it longer, then fold (Figure 3).

The upper and lower sections can only be disassembled and reassembled in the folded form (Figure 4).

Removal and replacement of the kapotasana extension from its storage position in the upper section of the bench (Figure 5) should only be done with the big diameter bars at the top. The kapotasana extension will simply fall out if the bench is held upside down.

To remove the foot bar, simply twist and lift out (Figure 6).

Care

The FAB is supplied with a durable laquer finish. Keepout of bright sun and weather.

Safe use

- Read these instructions carefully
- At all times:
 - avoid any use which causes undue pressure or pain in any part of the spine or neck, especially the lumbar spine (the lower section of the spine between the rib cage and the pelvis).
 - never sit upright from the FAB; always slide onto the floor and roll onto your side before sitting up except when practicing Kapotasana.
- We strongly recommend that before using the FAB, especially in the case of spinal injury, that you seek the instruction and advice of a qualified Iyengar Yoga teacher. To find your nearest teacher go to www.bksiyengar.com. In the case of injury you should seek medical advice.

Intelligent practice of back bends can be very beneficial to the health of the spine, but must be approached with caution. The teaching of Iyengar yoga emphasises this cautious approach. Particular care is given in back bends to the state of the lumbar spine and neck.

Viparita Dandasana

The principle pose for which the Iyengar back bender was designed is Viparita Dandasana (Figure 12 and top of page 1). The safe practice of this pose is described here. These principles can be applied to the other poses.

- 1 Lay a blanket on the FAB (optional).
- 2 Sit on the FAB close to the bottom end (Figure 7).



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3 Lay back and observe the sensation in your spine. If uncomfortable move even closer to the bottom of the FAB so that your spine including your neck becomes relatively flat (Fig 8).

4 If this position feels comfortable and you are able to extend your spine (arch your back) further then use your feet and legs to push yourself higher onto the bench. It may be necessary to support your head with a cushion (Figure 9) when your neck is near the top of the bench to avoid over extending the neck (Figure 10).

5 If the spine still feels comfortable you can continue to move further over the bench until your head nears or touches the floor (Figure 11).

6 When well over the bench you can grasp your elbows above your head (Figure 12). If this induces pain, support the elbows and/or head (Figure 13) or clasp the hands over the abdomen (Figure 11).

7 You may use a strap around the thighs to prevent the legs from rolling out (Figure 14).

8 Depending on your height and how far over the bench you are able to go, you may be able to press your feet into the foot bar (Figure 12). Taller people may find it more comfortable to remove the foot bar. (Figure 15)

9 Beginners should stay for only a short time (up to 2 minutes) but with practice you may stay for longer periods, provided that no pain is experienced.

Dismounting from the FAB

10 Do not sit up from the back bend position.

11 Those whose shoulders are on the foot side of the top (Figure 9) can simply slide down toward the feet, pause for several breaths before using the arms to carefully sit up (Figure 16).

Those who are well over the bench (Figure 12) can dismount by sliding down onto the floor and resting for several breaths before rolling onto the side and carefully sitting up (Figure 17).

Other techniques for minimising discomfort

With practice, those who are susceptible to lower back discomfort may be able to move a little deeper over the bench by supporting the knees with a bolster or firm cushion. Alternatively you may practice using the half bench (Figure 23).



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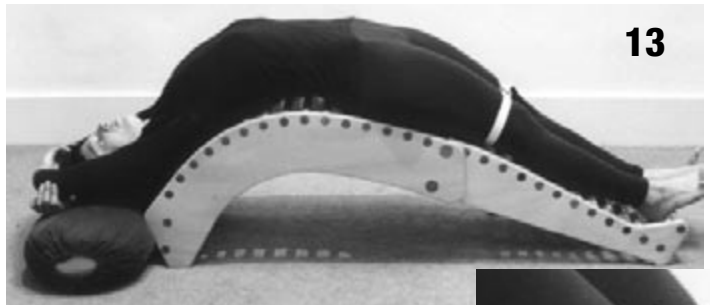
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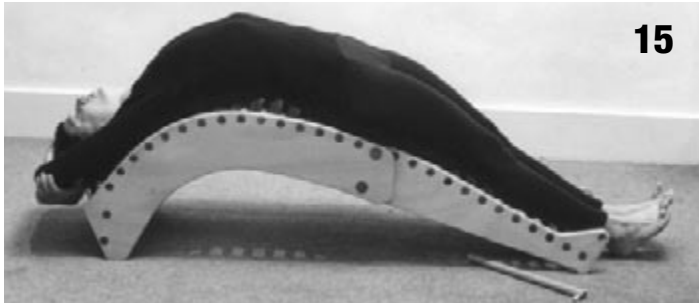
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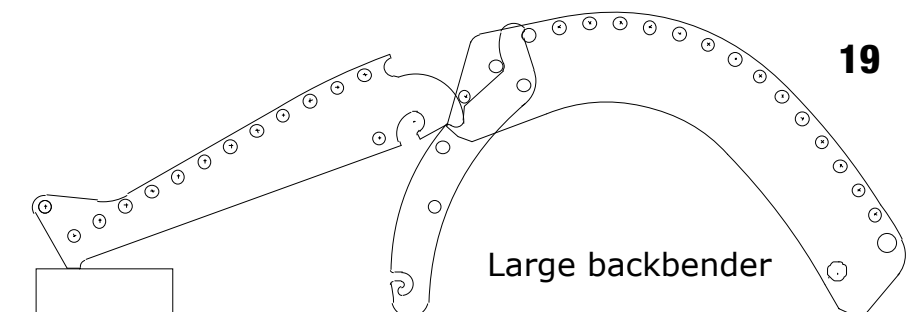
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Asanas (poses)

The principles of safe use described above should be observed at all times. A number of poses are illustrated here, but experienced yoga practitioners may find the Foldaway Backbender useful for other poses.

Backbending (spinal extension) poses

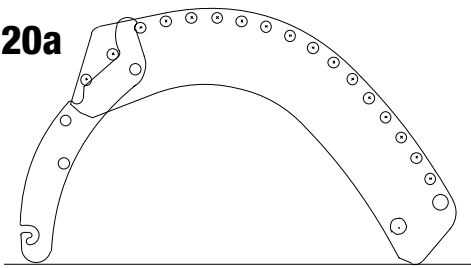
Viparita Dandasana (supported inverted staff pose) (Figure 12). Viparita Dandasana (full shoulder extension, grasping the bottom bar). This pose may also be practiced using the big backbender configuration especially for taller people (Figure 19).



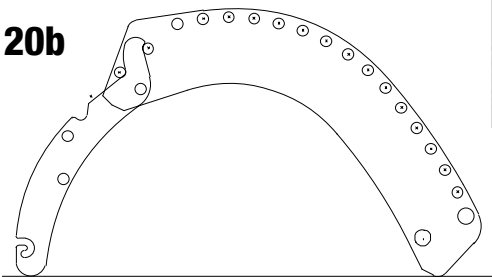
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Large backbender

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20b

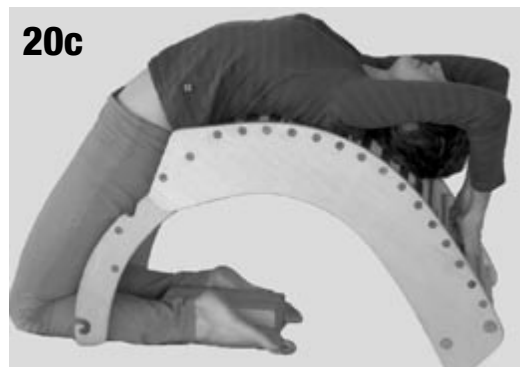


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Foldaway Backbender is protected by international patents and design registrations.



20c



Kapotasana (pigeon pose) The apparatus can be set at 2 heights (Figure 20 a/b). The intensity of the pose can be further regulated by varying the distance of the knees from the bench. Practice with a block between the feet. (Figure 20c).

Ustrasana (camel pose) (Figure 21)

Setu Bandha Sarvangasana (supported bridge pose) (Figures 22a/b). Remove foot bar for this asana.

Vrschikasana (scorpion pose) Advanced practitioners (Figure 23).

Reclining poses

Supta Virasana (supine hero pose). Buttocks and bench elevated on bolster or blankets, head supported (Figure 24).

Matsyasana (fish pose) (Figure 25).

Legs in simple cross leg pose (not illustrated).

Legs straight (not illustrated).

Seated forward bends

Do not overflex lower back. The head end of the FAB may also be used for a more upright position. Use for poses such as:

Paschimottasana (intense west stretch) (Figure 26).

Janu Sirsasana (head to knee pose) (Figure 27).

Other poses

Adho Mukha Svanasana (down-facing dog pose) (Figure 28).

Urdhva Mukha Svanasana (up-facing dog pose) (Figure 29).



21



22a



22b

