Calm, Cool, Collected

Balance a high-energy Vinyasa practice with this cooling sequence.
SEANE CORN is a vinyasa teacher with a mission: to make flow yoga a safe and smart practice for all. After years of teaching and practicing this dynamic style of yoga, Corn discovered that in order to avoid injury and exhaustion, she needed to balance the powerful, vigorous portion of her practice with more restorative poses. “This is the style of yoga that keeps me inspired, and many people are drawn to its athleticism,” she says. “But you can easily get swept up in the intensity. The older I get, the more I’m aware that vinyasa practice can be depleting when not practiced properly.”

To create balance, Corn recommends a slow sequence of twists, seated poses, and forward bends, like the one that follows. “When you finish your practice, you should feel energized but not hyper. You should feel grounded and never depleted,” Corn says.

Because it’s often challenging for flow teachers to pause and give a detailed breakdown of the poses, Corn also suggests trying other styles of yoga that emphasize alignment. “My hope is that people will approach vinyasa in a mindful way,” she says. “You don’t have to lose the flow, but you can maintain integrity in your poses and balance your energy.”

Balance your sweaty vinyasa practice with this cooling finishing sequence.

before you begin

The sequence that follows can be done after a vinyasa routine or as a stand-alone practice. Although the post-vinyasa practice is relatively passive, be sure not to lie in the poses and zone out or you’ll risk over-stretching and straining your joints.
1 Active Reclined Twist
Twists reset and stabilize the spine after a standing or backbending series. Lifting the shins off the ground in this pose keeps the spine active and requires more breathwork. Lie back and squeeze both knees toward your chest. Flex your feet, lengthen your tailbone away from your body, and rest your left arm on the floor, with your palm facing up. Drop your knees to the floor on your right as you lift your shins off the floor for 5 deep breaths. Repeat on the second side.

2 Cross-legged Twist
Cross your right thigh over your left thigh. Drop your legs to the right and reach your left arm away from you. Allow your body to completely relax as you take up to 20 deep, rich breaths, and then switch sides.

3 Eye-of-the-Needle Pose (Sucirandhrasana)
Hug both knees toward your chest, open your right knee to the right, and rest your right ankle on your left knee. Bring your right arm through the space between your legs and clasp your hands around your shin (or behind the thigh if you are less flexible). Flex both feet, gently pulling the left knee in closer to your chest as you press your right knee away from you. Hold for up to 3 minutes on each side.
4 Simple Seated Twist
Hug your knees into your chest and rock up to a seated position. Place both feet flat on the floor. Sit up tall on top of your sitting bones, reaching the crown of your head toward the sky. Cross your left forearm in front of your shins and bring your right fingertips to the floor behind you. Press your right hip gently forward to keep your hips level and your lower back stable. Initiate this twist from the middle and upper back, not the lower back. Look over your right shoulder as you take 5 breaths. Repeat on the other side.

5 Marichyasana C (Marichi’s Twist C), variation
Extend your left leg forward and hook your left elbow outside the right leg. Again, to stabilize your lower back, rock your right hip forward, and then turn from above the lumbar spine. Repeat on the opposite side, holding for 5 breaths.

6 Janu Sirsasana (Head-to-Knee Pose)
Extend both legs forward, then bend the right knee and place the sole of the right foot against the inner left thigh. Flex the left foot and exhale as you fold forward about halfway. Inhale deeply and twist the right rib cage gently toward the left leg. Walk your hands forward and hold the shin, ankle, or foot. Stay for 20 breaths unless this strains your hamstrings. Repeat the pose on the other side.
7 Baddha Konasana  
(Bound Angle Pose)
Your knees should be pain free in this pose. If you notice even the slightest strain, sit up on a blanket and place blankets underneath each thigh for support. Press the soles of your feet together and let the knees fall open. Hold on to your feet and open them up like a book. Exhale and lengthen your spine as you fold forward. Stay for 20 breaths.

8 Agnistambhasana  
(Fire Log Pose)
From Baddha Konasana, stack your right shin on top of your left and flex both feet. If you’re more flexible, dangle your right foot beyond the left knee. If you’re less flexible, bring your foot onto your calf and place a folded blanket under your right knee. Keep your spine long and your sitting bones on the floor as you lengthen and fold forward. If you experience any knee pain, come into a simple cross-legged position. After 5 deep breaths, do the other side.

9 Upavistha Konasana  
(Wide-Angle Seated Forward Bend), variation
Spread your legs wide apart and flex your feet. Fold forward between your legs for 5 breaths. Inhale as you come up and press both thighs firmly down. Bring your right arm to the floor inside your right leg with your palm facing up. As you exhale, fold all the way to the right and either keep your right arm there, or grab the sole of your right foot. Reach your left arm all the way over your left ear, holding your right foot. Stay for 5 to 10 breaths, and then switch sides.
10 Paschimottanasana
(Seated Forward Bend)
Extend both legs forward. Flex your
feet and press your thighs down.
Inhale and reach your arms over
your head. Exhale and lengthen
forward. Grab your shins, ankles,
or feet, and relax into the pose
for 3 minutes.

after you finish

REST
Lie on your back in Savasana (Corpse Pose). Rest for 5 minutes or longer.

MEDITATE
Sit in a simple cross-legged position with both sitting bones grounded and your spine
erect. Place your hands on your lap with palms facing up. Close your eyes and take
10 deep breaths. Then breathe normally and meditate for 5 minutes.

GIVE THANKS
With your hands in Anjali Mudra (the Salutation Seal) in front of your heart, take
a moment and offer a prayer of gratitude for your practice and your life.

Photos: Marty Sconduto; model: Seane Corn; stylist: Lyn Heineken; hair/makeup: Chris McDonald;
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