

Handstand Tips for all Levels



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Hand Placement and Tactics that Eliminate Wrist/ Hand Cramps

One of the biggest concerns I am contacted about is wrist pain and hand cramping from practicing handstands. I went through a period of about a year where I had wrist pain and hand cramps from practicing the handstand so much. I had to go back to the drawing board and analyze what I was doing wrong. What was I doing wrong? What are you doing wrong?

The first thing one should do is make sure you are properly hydrated and have ensure you have the proper amount of potassium throughout the day. If you fail to be properly nourished for handstands this can possibly be an ongoing issue for you. Alcohol consumption leads to your body not being hydrated, as well as not in taking enough water during the day. I use the natural remedy of water and taking a few bananas in every day. Doing this eliminates cramping in my body, wrists, and hands.

The second thing one should do is warm up and stretch the hands/wrists properly before going straight into handstands. At the beginning of my handstand journey I was so eager to get straight to it, I would always skip warming up. This lead to me to have many injuries with my hands and wrists. At one point I even sat out for a few weeks to let my hands and wrist heal back. Wrist wraps cannot take the place of the rest you will need, so just know that it is okay to sit out if you need to. You have to learn to listen to your body or you can do pretty harmful damage to your body in the long run.

Here are some stretches and warmups I do before getting into my handstands.

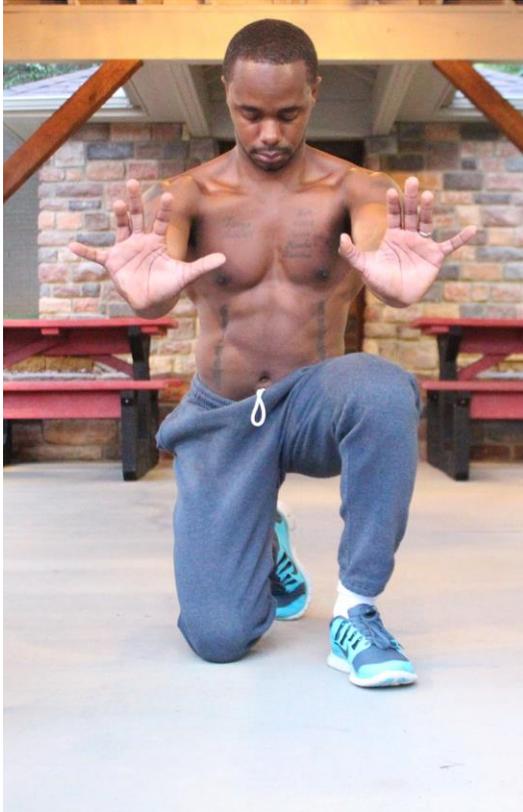
Wrist rotations – rotate your wrists in a circular motion going clock wise for about 30 seconds. Once you are done rotating them clockwise

begin to rotate them counter clockwise for 30 seconds.



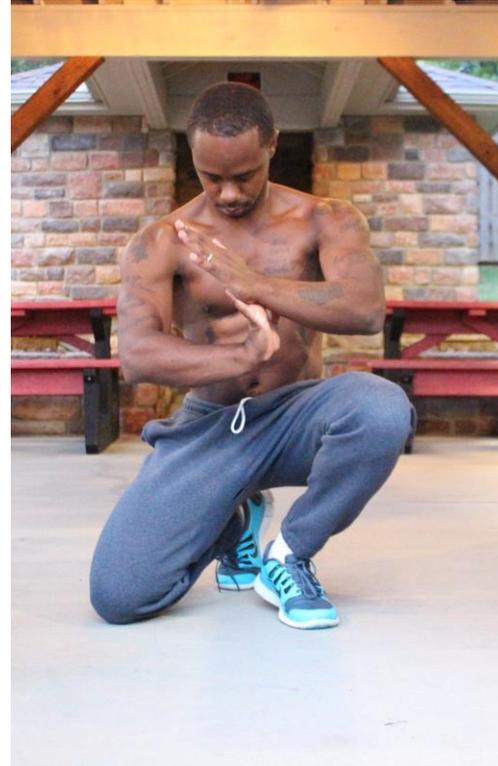
Wrist Rotations Image

Wrist flaps – slowly straighten the arms out in front of you. Lift your hands up all the way and down all way. You want to keep this motion going in a vertical line. Do this until you feel the wrists get a little tired?



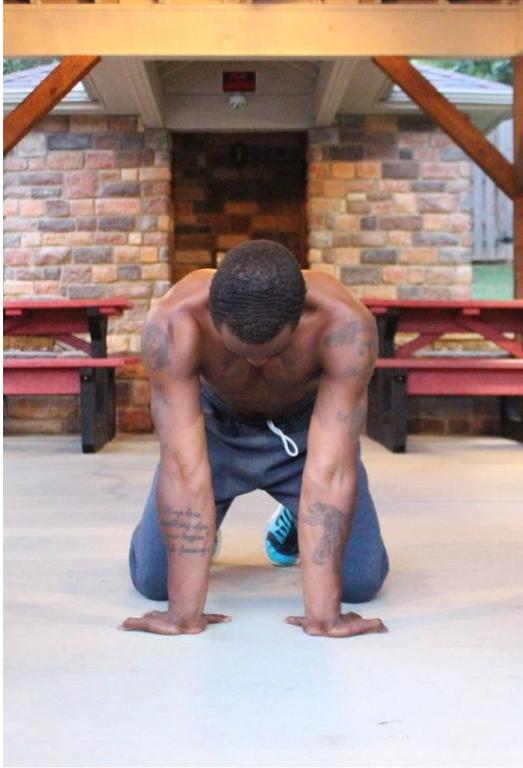
Wrist Flaps Image

Hand to Hand Stretch – A great way to stretch the hands and wrists is by using the hand to hand stretch. Begin by placing the fingertips of one hand into the middle of the palm into the other. The hand that is on top will act as the stretcher to the other hand. Use the top hand to press pressure onto the bottom hand. This creates a great stretch for the hand on the bottom. Hold this stretch as long as you feel necessary and be sure to repeat this stretch to the opposite side.



Hand to Hand Stretch Image

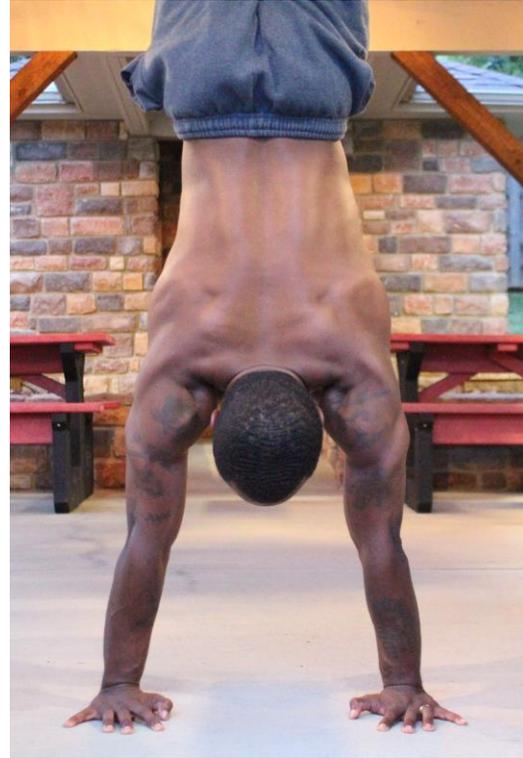
Reversed Palms to the Floor – Begin in a neutral position (4 points). Hands and knees are to be on the floor for this position. Rotate your wrist to where your fingertips are facing your body. Hold this position for as long as you feel the need to hold the stretch.



Reversed Palms to Floor Stretch Image

Hand placement can cause pain for the hands and wrists as well. One of the reasons many yoga practitioners have pain is because their fingers are spread far apart. I am not here to tell you if this is wrong or not, but I know how to fix the issue. What one must do is begin to bring the fingers closer together. Do not bring the fingers all the way together, but bring them about midway from being completely far apart. Also leave a little room from your palms being completely pressed against the ground.

Please see the diagram for an example.

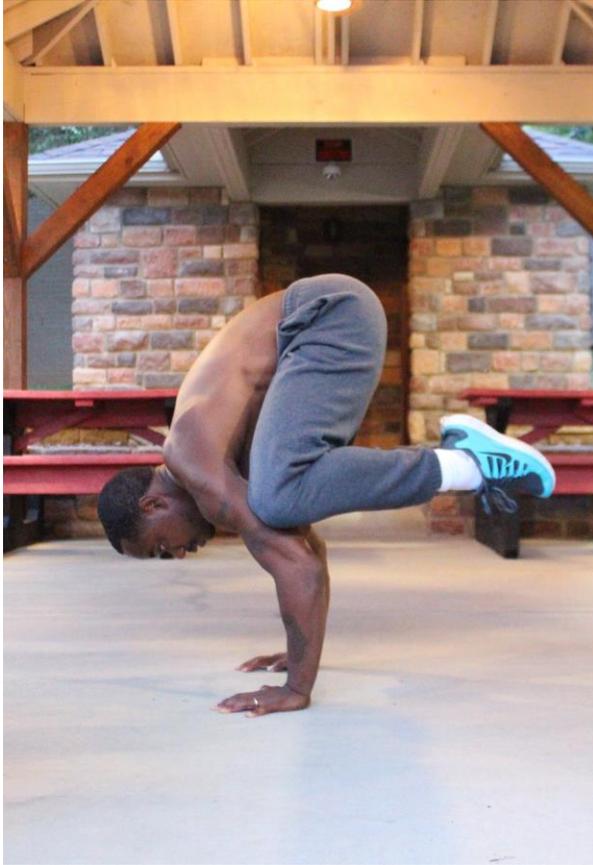


Closer Hand Placement Image

Keep in mind this will take a little getting used to, so be patient with this process. What does this mean? It means you will have to adjust because it will be something new for you. Along with this does come with adjusting your balance a little more, but you will be a lot easier on your hands and wrists.

Handstands for Beginners

Before starting on any handstands you should learn a little about your body. One of the best ways to prepare for a free handing handstand is by working on the crow. If you cannot do the crow or have not worked up the strength and endurance to hold for 30 seconds then you have work to do. Build up to a 30 second hold by holding the pose as long as you can for several rounds every other day, as a part of your practice. Many of you want to skip pass this pose and go straight into the handstand.



Crow Pose Image

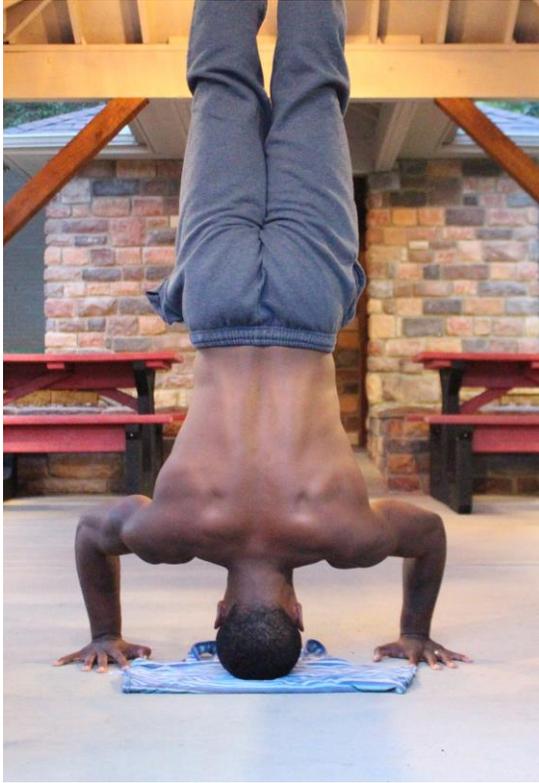
Here are some great reasons why you should master the crow first:

- You will learn the basics of controlling your own bodyweight
- You will learn how to breathe before attempting handstands
- You will learn how to balance on your hands with no wall
- The wall handicaps you from being free
- The wall does not prepare you to be free
- Your wrists and hands are prepared when building a hold for 30 seconds

- Your body builds strength and stamina need to sustain a handstand

Another great prerequisite to tackle before learning the handstand is build a solid headstand foundation. To this day I still work on headstands, despite all the handstands I do. You should always build a solid foundation and constantly build off of that foundation. Here are some good reasons why you should learn the headstand before going into learning the handstand:

- You will get used to having the blood rush to your head
- You will learn the basic principles of balancing upside down
- You will start to learn how to breathe while upside down
- You learn how to use your core and other body parts used to balance



Headstand Image

Please keep in mind that it takes some time to get used to being upside down. Everything mentioned above will affect you in some sort of way if you are completely new to this. I do recommend placing your head on something soft, such as a pillow while balancing on your head. DO NOT start off using the wall. If you start with the wall you will handicap yourself, which will decrease your progression time.

Maintaining Balance While in a Handstand

Once you have built yourself up to a nice headstand and crow hold it is time to start working on the handstand. The most frustrating part for people who start learning the handstand is actually trying to figure out what will be the best way to get into the handstand. There are many ways to get into a handstand, which I am sure you have done your research. The most common ways into a handstand are kicking into handstand, hopping

into a tucked handstand from downward dog, and pressing into handstand from crow. Whatever method you decide to work with, the same principals apply, which are:

- Point your toes
- Flex your quads and hamstrings
- Tighten your gluteus and lower back
- Tighten your core, control the balance through the center (your core)
- Keep your feet in line from your feet to your toes
- Lock your arms out
- Keep a stiff shoulder girdle
- Breathe for longevity



Non- Banana Back Handstand Image

More tips in regards to maintaining balance is avoiding the banana back in handstand. Why?

Because the banana back causes for you to arch your back, which more than likely will make you fall over. Typically, when one gets tired they will naturally start to bend the back to distribute the weight from being directly above them. The more banana back you are the less control you have. Just remember to keep everything tight and straight.

What Using Your Time Wisely Does to You Mentally

I always hear people give excuses about the time they don't have for a lot in their lives; handstand being one of them. I don't care if I have 5 minutes to practice, I will use the time. If you don't use that time you just come up with

the excuse, "I don't have time" or "5 minutes is not enough time". What I like to do with new moves that I work on is try it with whatever time I have, which more than likely will be 5 minutes in a lot of cases.

Now that you have my no excuse mindset I am going to show you what the 5 minutes can do. Chances are when you try anything for the first time you are not going to get it on the first try. Let's say you want to try a new move and you have 5 minutes. You try and try the move over and over in this 5 minutes. What this does is get you eager, hungry, excited, and will open your mind to finding ways to practice with whatever time you have. Personally, I am a busy person and I am grateful for any little time I get.