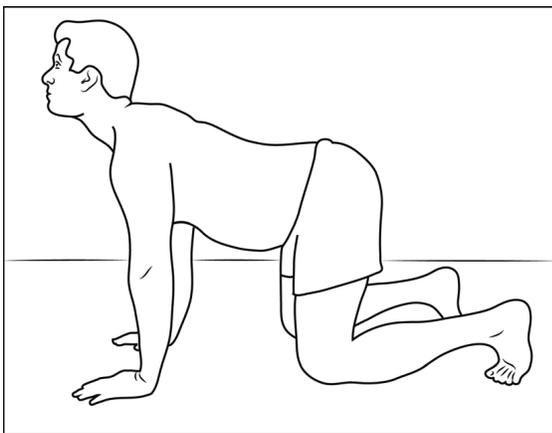


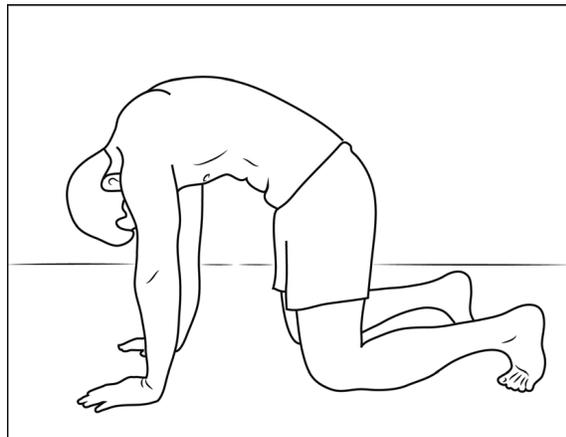


CAT AND COW

Cow Pose- Inhale-drop the belly



Cat Pose- Exhale-pull belly in



Cat and Cow is a great exercise to feel the movement of the ribs and the pelvic floor while breathing in an anatomical way. Make sure you are going in the right direction.

HOW:

- Start on all fours in Table Top position **hands under shoulders/knees under hips*
- Inhale as you reach your head up and relax belly down toward the floor (*arch your back*)
- Exhale as you pull your belly in toward your spine and drop your head down to gaze at your belly
- Inhale, expand and arch your back (*relax your shoulders and belly*)

- Exhale, pull your belly button in, and round your back
- Inhale, expand your belly on my arm
- Exhale, narrow your belly toward the spine
- Repeat 20x
- When finished come back to Table Top (*neutral spine*)

Now, exhale audibly and round your back up into Cat. Then exhale more, simultaneously hollowing out your belly and blowing air out toward your belly button. Make sure your head is dropped completely, and you're stretching the back of your neck. Your tailbone should be tipped under. On the inhale, drop your body, relaxing your belly and letting it expand downward toward the floor. Let gravity help. Your tailbone should now be tipped out. Swivel your head upward as if you're looking toward the sky.

Do this 10 times right now, synchronizing the movement until it "flows" and you can easily rotate back and forth with each inhale and exhale.

Note of clarification: Your tailbone is your coccyx (it's where your tail would be if you had one); it should be "tipped out" when you inhale and "tipped under" when you exhale. See if any of the following helps you understand what "tipped under" on the exhale means:

- When you're sitting slumped on a sofa
- When you're in the Cat pose portion (exhale) of Cat and Cow
- When you're "flattening your butt," squeezing your glutes gently

If it still doesn't make sense to you, lie on the floor and press your lower back into the floor. Notice the rotation in your hips: you're tipping your tailbone under!

Your tailbone "tipped out" is the opposite:

- It's "bumping your butt back" ("selfie butt").
- It's the arch in your lower back when you're squatting at the gym.

- It's the curve in your lower back away from the chair seat on a Rock and Roll inhale.

DO THIS: When you're lying on the floor, create space between the floor and your lower back on the inhale. You should be able to slip your hand in between your lower back and the floor on the inhale.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I “let go” of my belly?

Make sure you relax your hips, glutes, and thighs. Really focus on “softening” them. This will trigger your abs to relax so that you can expand better. (You might also try these exercises in a pool or hot tub: holding the side of the pool with your belly pointed downward, use gravity and the weight of the water to help you relax and expand your middle on the inhale.) Now, from Cat and Cow, sit back on your feet for a second and do Rock and Roll seated upright. Notice how the movement is similar!

What does “bumping your butt back” mean?

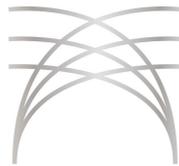
When you tip your tailbone out on the inhale, make sure you're releasing your belly and expanding it at the same time. Often folks will “bump their butt back” and simultaneously suck in their gut—which is *not* what I want you to be doing. Inhale, pop your butt back, and let your belly go.

When on the inhale I focus on really letting go of my stomach, down to the lowest muscles between my hip bones, it doesn't feel natural and I don't feel the two extremes. Am I doing something wrong?

Check your Cat and Cow position: Your hands should be right under your

shoulders; arms (especially elbows) and legs stay at perpendicular stable positions. You should not move back and forth; rather, you should move up and down. Let your head drop on the exhale—really relaxing and stretching the muscles on the back of your neck. On the inhale, stretch the front of your neck up, sipping air above and in front of you (air from the sky). It will take some concentration and practice until you can completely feel the two extremes—a total relaxing on the inhale and a squeeze and emptying out on the exhale. Not only is this a good stretch, but you get a lot of joint rotation that helps keep the joints in your hips and back lubricated and healthy. When you get more advanced, you might add Kegels and Reverse Kegels to this movement.

All exercises were developed by [Dr. Belisa Vranich](#), author of **BREATHE: The Simple, Revolutionary 14-Day Program to Improve Your Mental and Physical Health** and creator of [The Breathing Class](#). For more information about the mechanics and psychology of breathing, check out her [book](#)! If you are looking to improve athletic performance, check out [Breathing for Warriors: Master Your Breath to Unlock More Strength, Greater Endurance, Sharper Precision, Faster Recovery, and an Unshakable Inner Game](#).



THE BREATHING CLASS