CLASS DISCUSSION & LESSON PLAN

What the Hammock Makes Possible

A free AIReal Yoga® flow for strength, space, and balance



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Founder of AIReal Yoga®

Before you begin

Length Approximately 20 minutes

Setup Use a single-point hammock with a professionally assessed rigging setup, a mat, and clear space to swing.

This is your practice. You're in charge of your safety. If a wrap feels unfamiliar, skip it. If a movement doesn't feel good, come out slowly and rejoin me when you're ready. Choose a range where you can breathe easily and come back with control.

New to the hammock? My Foundation to AIReal Yoga classes walk you through fabric placement, wraps, entries, and exits. For this flow, follow the video and use the step-by-step plan on pages 3–6 to revisit a cue or modification. Web addresses are listed on page 6.

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EDUCATIONAL DISCUSSION

What the hammock adds to mat yoga

A direction to pull. Plank and Downward-Facing Dog give your hands a surface to push against. The hammock gives you resistance overhead. In Chair, drawing your elbows toward your ribs asks the arms and back to lift some of your weight. Lowering slowly trains control in the same muscles. Both directions belong in a well-rounded practice.

Room to hinge. With one foot supported, you can change your knee bend and torso angle independently. If your hips feel tight, a small hinge in standing Pigeon may be enough to feel the outer hip. If your hamstrings feel tight, bend the lifted knee in Pike so your pelvis can tip and your spine can stay long. If you already have plenty of range, pause sooner and see if you can reverse the hinge smoothly.

Time to refine alignment. In Warrior III, support at the hands gives you time to notice a hip lifting. Both sides of the fabric meet at one point, so the hammock can sway as your weight shifts. Your standing foot, hip, and trunk still make small corrections. For healthy aging, pay attention to the exit. Shifting your weight and placing your foot deliberately are skills you use when you step off a curb.

A chance to settle. At the end, the mat supports your back and the hammock carries your feet. Your legs can release some of the effort they used for standing balance. Stillness and a few easy breaths can give your nervous system a chance to settle. Notice whether your jaw softens or your exhale becomes easier.

For all standing balances. Root down through the standing foot and keep a slight bend in that knee. Bend it more if that helps you balance. Keep the pelvis supported over the leg and notice if the standing hip drifts sideways. This is especially useful if your knees tend to hyperextend.

Sequence at a glance

01–04 Cross Position Chair swing, mini pull-ups, Cat–Cow, Layback, then Chair to Mountain. p. 3

05–06 Wrist Wrap Shoulder Stretch and standing Cat–Cow. p. 4

07–08 One Foot In Standing Pigeon, optional forward shift, and Pike on both sides. pp. 4–5

09 Front Assist Low Warrior III and knee-in exit on both sides. p. 5

10–11 Feet in the hammock to seated Supported rest and seated Easy Pose. p. 6

Continue to the step-by-step lesson plan

Turn to page 3 to begin in Chair. Pages 3–6 give the setup, alignment cues, teaching notes, and variations for each pose.

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CROSS POSITION / STEPS 01–04

Step-by-step lesson plan

01 Chair with a gentle swing

In Cross Position, place the hammock across the back of your upper rib cage. Ground your feet hip-distance apart. Bend your knees and soften your hips down into Chair. Draw your shoulders down, away from your ears.

Add the swing Let gravity offer gentle traction as your hips settle. Keep the swing small. Allow your heels to lift gently as you swing forward and lower as you return. You can also stay in still Chair.

02 Swinging mini pull-ups

Keep the shoulders down, elbows hugged in toward your ribs, core active, and neck neutral. Draw down on the hammock for a small lift. Lower slowly, keeping the swing gentle.

Adjust the effort If your shoulders rise toward your ears or momentum lifts you, make the swing smaller and keep more weight in your feet. Feel the arms and back control both the lift and the return.

03 Cat–Cow from Chair

Let the swing settle. Center your hips directly under the hammock's rigging point. Place your feet hip-distance apart in front of that point, knees bent. Draw your shoulders away from your ears. Inhale, tip the pelvis forward, and lift the breastbone into Cow. Exhale, tuck the pelvis, and round into Cat. Keep your neck neutral.

Why the hammock helps The fabric supports your upper ribs so you can keep length through your spine as you move into extension in Cow and flexion in Cat. Let the pelvis start each curve and keep the movement comfortable.

04 Modified Layback and exit through Chair

Root down through both feet with knees bent. Reach your toes forward and keep both front hip points facing forward. Interlace your fingers behind your head. Lengthen through your spine and let your elbows open wide as your breastbone lifts.

Exit through Chair Keep your knees bent. Lower your hips back down as you bring your torso to neutral, returning to Chair in Cross Position. From Chair, press through both feet to stand in Mountain Pose.



Modified Layback. Cradle your head and breathe into your ribs. Use a smaller arc if your low back feels compressed.

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STEP-BY-STEP LESSON PLAN / STEPS 05–07

Wrist Wrap and standing Pigeon

05 Shoulder Stretch

In Wrist Wrap, place your hands shoulder-distance apart, palms facing down. Keep a slight bend in your elbows. Hinge at the hips with your core active and shoulders plugged in. Gently press into the fabric so the muscles around your shoulders support you. Keep the ribs from dropping as your chest lowers.

Adjust the stretch For less stretch, shift your weight back into your feet. To progress, shift a little weight forward into your hands. Keep the elbows bent, especially with hypermobility. Choose the angle where you feel the stretch at your shoulders and your low back stays comfortable.

06 Standing Cat–Cow

Stay in Wrist Wrap with hands shoulder-distance apart, feet hip-distance apart, and hips square. Actively draw your shoulders down, away from your ears. Inhale to tip your pelvis forward and broaden your chest. Exhale to tuck your pelvis and round your back. Roll up slowly to standing, then release the wrap.

Teaching note Keep light, even pressure in both hands as the pelvis and ribs move. Check that the hip points face forward and the shoulders stay level.

07 Standing Pigeon and optional forward shift

Hold the hammock and place the gathered fabric under the arch of the lifted foot. Bend that knee to 90°. Flex the ankle and draw the toes back. Actively press the outside edge of the foot down into the fabric. Root through the standing foot with a slight bend in the knee. Hinge at the hips with a long spine, neutral neck, and shoulders softening away from the ears.

Active ankle Pressing the outer edge down gives the muscles that steady the ankle resistance to work against. Keep that pressure as you hinge, especially with weak or hypermobile ankles. For a progression, shift your weight gently forward. Ease out if you feel strain in the lifted knee.



Standing Pigeon. Keep the lifted knee at 90° and press the outer edge of the flexed foot into the fabric.



Forward shift. Keep the foot active and the spine long as your weight moves slightly forward.

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STEP-BY-STEP LESSON PLAN / STEPS 08–09

From Pike to low Warrior III

08 Standing Pike and change of sides

From Pigeon, turn the lifted leg to face forward and lengthen it as far as comfortable. Keep a bend in the standing knee. The leg in the hammock can stay bent, too. Hinge at the hip creases, keeping the spine long. Come upright, bend the lifted knee, and guide the foot down. Repeat Pigeon and Pike on the other side.

Adjust the hinge If tight hamstrings pull the pelvis backward or the back starts to round, bend the lifted knee more and bring the chest higher. A deeper bend in the standing leg can help you balance.

09 Warrior III Front Assist



Low Warrior III Front Assist. The back foot stays close to the floor in this variation.

Hold the hammock with palms facing each other, hands shoulder-distance apart, and elbows soft. Root down through the standing foot, keeping the standing hip directly over the ankle and the knee slightly bent. Engage your core and hinge with both front hip points facing the mat. Reach the back heel away, foot flexed and toes facing down. Keep the back leg low to start.

How much weight in the hands? Use light pressure for balance. Keep most of your weight in the standing leg. If the standing hip drifts out to the side or the knee locks back, shorten the hinge and re-bend the knee. If the lifted hip rolls open, lower the back leg until the hips are square.

Exit on each side

Press through the standing foot. As you rise, bend the back leg and draw the knee up and in toward your chest. Pause where you feel steady, then set the foot down quietly. Repeat on the other side. For a steadier exit, lift the knee only as high as you can pause and lower the foot quietly.

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STEP-BY-STEP LESSON PLAN / STEPS 10–11

Supported rest and a seated close

10 Legs Up the Wall variation and supported rest

Lie on your back with your head and pelvis on the mat and your feet in the hammock. Bend and extend the knees, sway side to side, then trace small circles. Let the motion settle. Rest with knees bent and arms open in cactus or at your sides.

Why pause here Bent knees ease the hamstring stretch and let knees that tend to hyperextend rest short of locking. With the feet elevated, gravity helps blood return from the legs. Offer a few quiet breaths so students can notice the shift from effort to rest. Stillness or feet on the mat are options.



Legs Up the Wall variation. Let your feet be heavy in the fabric and your knees bend comfortably.

11 Seated Easy Pose

When the hammock is still, release your feet to the mat. Follow the slow transition into a comfortable seat and take an easy breath. Thank you for practicing with me.

After class

Where did support help you find alignment? If you teach, which cue would you offer to someone who needs more space, and which to someone who needs more control?

Continue learning with Carmen

Class membership Explore foundational classes and printable plans.
airealyoga.com/aerial-yoga-online-class-subscription/

Online teacher training Study hammock placement, alignment, and adaptations.
airealyoga.com/teacher-training/

Additional teacher reading

CDC · Strength and balance www.cdc.gov/physical-activity-basics/adding-older-adults/index.html
The Ehlers-Danlos Society · Movement control www.ehlers-danlos.com/physical-therapy/
Cleveland Clinic · Leg elevation health.clevelandclinic.org/benefits-of-legs-up-the-wall
NCCIH · Relaxation techniques www.nccih.nih.gov/health/relaxation-techniques-what-you-need-to-know

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