YOGA PROP TO AID IN PERFORMING BACKBENDS AND OTHER EXERCISES AND METHOD FOR USING SAME

Abstract

A yoga prop to assist a yoga practitioner in performing a backbend includes a gripping platform having a notch for the practitioner’s head, a first side attached to the gripping platform, and a second side attached to the gripping platform, wherein the first and second sides provide a height and a depth for the yoga prop. Slits can be placed in the gripping platform for performing exercises using straps or rubber bands. The yoga prop can also have a back piece and additional features. A plurality of yoga props can form a multitier yoga prop to assist yoga practitioners in performing backbends. A plurality of brackets can be used to support the plurality of yoga props in the multitier prop.
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BACKGROUND

[0002] 1. Technical Field

[0003] Embodiments of the present invention are directed to a yoga prop. More specifically, embodiments are directed to a yoga prop for assisting yoga practitioners in performing a backbend.

[0004] 2. Background

[0005] A basic position in yoga is the backbend. In essence a yoga practitioner bends their back such that they end up in a position where their back is bent backward using their hands and feet for support. The position is performed to strengthen and stretch the practitioner’s back.

[0006] However, a backbend can be difficult for beginners and even experienced practitioners. For that reason, props have been developed to assist the yoga practitioner in performing a backbend. To date, however, such props are large and expensive, generally costing hundreds of dollars. For example, they are often large enough and contoured such that a person can actually lay on them facing upward to perform the backbend. Further, they are usually too large to be easily transported, for example, between a home and a yoga studio.

SUMMARY

[0007] In an embodiment, a yoga prop assists a yoga practitioner in performing a backbend, comprising. According to the embodiment, the yoga prop has a gripping platform having a notch for the practitioner’s head, a first side attached to the gripping platform, and a second side attached to the gripping platform, wherein the first and second sides provide a height and a depth for the yoga prop. The yoga prop can also have a back piece and additional features.

[0008] In another embodiment, yoga prop has a gripping platform having a notch for the practitioner’s head and one or more slits into which straps or rubber bands can be inserted and anchored, a first side attached to the gripping platform; and a second side attached to the gripping platform, wherein the first and second sides provide a height and a depth for the yoga prop. The yoga prop can also have a back piece and additional features.

[0009] In another embodiment, a multiter yoga prop includes a plurality of yoga props to assist a yoga practitioner to perform a backbend. A plurality of brackets can be added to support the plurality of yoga props.

[0010] Additional features and advantages of a yoga prop according to embodiments of the present invention will be apparent from the following specification, drawings, and claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] FIGS. 1A-1G illustrate a yoga prop according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0012] FIG. 2 illustrates a yoga prop according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0013] FIGS. 3A-3C illustrate a method for using a yoga prop according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0014] FIGS. 4A-4B illustrate a multi-tier yoga prop according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0015] FIG. 5 illustrates a yoga prop according to another embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0016] Embodiments are used as a yoga aid or "prop" to facilitate executing a “from-the-floor” or floor-based backbend. A yoga prop according to an embodiment is designed to help keep proper alignment in the hands, arms, hips, elbows, core and feet when executing a backbend. A prop according to an embodiment alleviates the normal twisting, back crunching and adjusting that typically occurs when preparing to perform a yoga backbend, i.e., to “get into position.”

[0017] A yoga prop according to an embodiment allows a user to simply place the user’s hands on the top platform of the prop and from a comfortable grip position push up into a backbend using the proper muscles and alignment in the user’s hands, wrists, arms, shoulders, feet and core. A unique grip design alleviates the stress and hyperextension on the wrist joints and the often uncomfortable pressure applied to shoulders, fingers, forearms and elbows that would typically be felt by a user without using a yoga prop according to an embodiment.

[0018] Additionally, the natural alignment that happens when in the proper gripping position allows a beginner to execute a backbend without overuse of the hip and lower back muscles that is often required to overcome the initial leverage issue inherent in backbending for beginners and those with lesser body strength. Overuse of the lower back often occurs to compensate for weak upper arms, shoulders and/or abdominal muscles and odd hand and wrist placement. A prop according to an embodiment allows a user to use proper hand, arm, shoulder and core strength without overusing and improperly using the user’s lower back to rise into a backbend.

[0019] Once a beginner user executes an aligned backbend, the beginner user is able to graduate more safely and quickly into an unassisted backbend with proper alignment. Furthermore, because of its unique design and ability to aid in proper alignment, a prop according to an embodiment is also recommended for advanced users as it aids in deeper and more aligned backbends.

[0020] FIG. 1A-1G illustrate an exemplary prop 100 according to an embodiment. FIG. 1A is a top view of prop 100 according to an embodiment. FIG. 1B is a front view of prop 100 according to an embodiment. FIG. 1C is a bottom view of prop 100 according to an embodiment. FIG. 1D is a back view of prop 100 according to an embodiment. FIG. 1E is a top iso view of prop 100 according to an embodiment. FIG. 1F is a bottom iso view of prop 100 according to an embodiment. FIG. 1G is a side view of prop 100 according to an embodiment.

[0021] As shown in FIGS. 1A-1G, prop 100 includes a gripping platform 104 and sides 106a and 106b. Sides 106a and 106b give height and depth to prop 100, and provide sufficient room for a user to properly grip prop 100. A back piece 108 can also be provided in embodiments. Back piece 108 provides additional structural support as well as cosmetic completeness. Sides 106a and 106b and optional back piece 108 are affixed to gripping platform 104 to make prop 100. For example, the sides can be affixed using any technique to
securely affix sides 106a and 106b and optionally back piece 108 to gripping platform 104. Such affixing techniques include nailing, screwing, gluing, and combinations thereof. These and other techniques for affixing the sides to gripping platform 104 would be known to those skilled in the art.

[0022] In an embodiment a non-slip surface is affixed to base 112 of prop 100. The non-slip surface may be of any non-slip material including, for example, rubber, neoprene, or any other non-skid material. In an alternative embodiment, gripping platform 104 and sides 106a and 106b, and optionally back piece 108 are made in a unitary fashion such that no affixing is required. Such a unitary design could be made using an injection mold process.

[0023] Gripping platform 104 and sides 106a and 106b, and back piece 108 can be made from a number of materials including, for example, plastic, recycled plastic, wood, recycled wood, any number of metals, aluminum, and any other material that will serve the purposes described herein.

[0024] Grips 110 are affixed to gripping platform 104. Grips 110 provide a more secure area for a user to grip gripping platform 104 than simply using the material of the gripping platform. Grips 110 can be any material that provides a more secure, non-slip area for a user to grip including, for example rubber, neoprene, or textured materials, such as textured plastic. Other grip materials for grips 110 would be known to those having skill in the art. In an embodiment, grips 110 are not separate materials but are areas of the material of platform 110 that have texture to provide a gripping area for the user. Techniques for forming grips 110 would be known to those having skill in the art. Grips 110 can be affixed using any technique to securely affix sides 110 to gripping platform 104. Such affixing techniques include adhesive, sewing, stapling. These and other techniques for affixing grips 110 to gripping platform 104 would be known to those skilled in the art.

[0025] In another embodiment, grips 110 are handles that the user can grab. For example, in an embodiment, grips 110 are rods or other handles a user can grab. In an embodiment, additional cutouts can be used to provide easier access to grips 110 that are handles.

[0026] A prop 100 according to an embodiment can be sized to accomplish the purpose described herein of assisting a user in performing a yoga backbend. In an embodiment, a prop according to an embodiment can be sized to fit on a small or a large yoga mat. Dimensions for an exemplary prop 200 according to an embodiment are illustrated in FIG. 2. In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. 2, the width of prop 200 from side 206a to side 206b ranges from 23-26 inches. In an embodiment as illustrated by height line 212, prop 200 is 3-4 inches high and, as indicated by depth line 218, prop 200 is 5 to 7 inches deep. The height and depth provide sufficient clearance for a user’s head. Prop 200 includes a gripping platform 204. The thickness of the gripping platform 204 is based on weight bearing per square inch. For example, depending on the material used to fabricate prop 200, a thickness of 1.5 inches (indicated by line 214) is expected to support up to 350 pounds. Other thicknesses can be used depending on the intended use of an embodiment. Gripping platform 204 has a cutout 202 for the user’s head. In embodiment, cutout 202 is 8 inches, which is the average size of a human head. Cutout 202 can be larger to accommodate a head of unusual size or smaller for a child’s device. Any shape can be used for cutout 202. For example, in an embodiment, cutout 202 is rounded. Further, the edges can of cutout 202 can be rounded for comfort.

[0027] As mentioned above in an embodiment, sides 206a and 206b of prop 200 are 3 to 4 inches tall and 5 to 7 inches deep to provide the height and depth of prop 200. Sides 206 provide clearance for a user’s hands and head and structural support for the gripping platform 204. In an embodiment, there is a minimum of 2 inches between the floor and gripping platform 204 for hand and head clearance. In an embodiment, there can be an additional side 208. In an embodiment, brackets can be added to provide additional structural support when affixing the sides 206 and optional side 208 to gripping platform 204. A yoga prop according to embodiments should accommodate both men and women’s shoulder sizes. However, overall measurements can be adjusted if we ever desire to create a unique version for women, men or children only. It should be noted that the dimensions provided herein are not to be limiting, and different dimension may be used within the scope and spirit of embodiments described herein.

[0028] FIGS. 3A-3C illustrate three steps in using a prop 100 according to an embodiment. As shown in FIGS. 3A-3C, in use a prop 100 according to an embodiment is set against a wall. As shown in FIG. 3A, in step 1, a user lies on his or her back with prop 100 at the user’s head with a hand cutout 102 facing the user. For comfort, the user preferably lies on a yoga mat, with prop 100 placed at top of the mat. The user’s head rests on the mat within head cutout 102 the prop 100. The user takes both hands and reaches directly over his or her shoulders to grasp the platform (in an embodiment, for example, on nonslip material) with his or her palms facing down as flat as possible with fingers facing shoulders, gripping the platform and elbows pointing up toward the ceiling in direct alignment with shoulders. The thumbs should be positioned along the front edge of the platform. As shown in FIGS. 3A-3C, to use prop 100, the user grips the platform, and in steps 2 and 3, pushes down with his or her hands, arms and shoulders while simultaneously lifting his or her core up into a backbend with elbows, hands and feet remaining in alignment with shoulders as shown in FIGS. 3B and 3C.

[0029] In an embodiment, a prop according to an embodiment has multiple levels or tiers. Providing a prop with multiple levels or tiers can be used to facilitate backbends from a standing position. In such a case, a user starting in a standing position, bends back and grips the multi-tier prop at the highest level. The user then proceeds to work his or her way down the levels of the multi-prop prop until the user has achieved a backbend position with his or her hands on the floor. In time, the user will learn how to perform a backbend from a standing position without requiring the multi-tier prop. In an embodiment, the multi-level prop is fabricated by stacking props such as prop 100 or 200 on top of one another. The stacked props can be affixed to one another to prevent movement of the component props with respect to one another. The sides may have different heights depending on the number of levels desired and the amount of space that a user will have to navigate as the user moves down the levels. In an embodiment, various levels of the multi-level prop may have different sized or offset cutouts to account for the motion of the user’s head as the user traverses the various levels of the multi-level prop.

[0030] Another embodiment of a multi-tier prop is illustrated in FIG. 4A and FIG. 4B showing front and side views, respectively, of a multi-tier prop according to an embodiment.
A multi-tier prop 400 includes a plurality of props 402 on a prop support structure 412. Prop support structure 412 has two legs 406a and 406b, and a top 408. Support structure 412 can also have supporting members 410a and 410b that provide structural support, for example, like a conventional step ladder.

[0031] In an embodiment, each prop 402 is a prop such as prop 100 or prop 200 described above. Multi-tier prop 400 is configured with a plurality of brackets 404 for holding props, such as prop 402. In an embodiment, the bottoms of the sides of prop 402 rest on oppositely positioned brackets 404. In an alternate, embodiment brackets 404 extend between legs 406a and 406b and provide a platform for prop 402. Multi-tier prop 400 can be made from a number of materials including plastic, polymer, metal, other materials, and combinations thereof and can be a unitary or non-unitary construction.

[0032] In an embodiment, the locations of brackets 404 can be adjusted to provide different heights for props 402 and different distances between props 402 as desired by a particular user. In an embodiment, such height adjustment is provided for by providing a number of oppositely positioned slots, for example, hole 414, in legs 406a and 406b in which to insert brackets 404.

[0033] In embodiment, the length of legs 406a and 406b, as shown by line 416 is 40-50 inches, and their width as shown by line 418 is 3-6 inches. These dimensions are provided for an exemplary embodiment of multi-tier prop 400. However, the dimensions are not limiting and can be modified as required for a particular application.

[0034] FIG. 5 illustrates a prop according to another embodiment that provides a foundation for other exercises other than yoga backbends. For example, prop 500 is a prop such as props 100 and 200 described above, but configured with a plurality of slits 502. Straps or rubber bands can be inserted through slits 502 and anchored by slits 502 to be used in exercises using straps or bands. To anchor a band or strap, a knot can be tied in the end of the band or strap not inserted into the slit such that when the band or strap is pulled through the slit, the knot will block the band or strap from being pulled completely through the slit, and thereby provide an anchor for the band or strap. Other ways of anchoring the band or strap are available, including, pulling one end of the band or strap through two slits 502 and tying the ends of the band or strap to form a loop that includes the slits.

[0035] The foregoing disclosure of the preferred embodiments of the present invention has been presented for the purposes of illustration and description. It is not intended to be exhaustive or to limit the invention to the precise forms disclosed. Many variations and modifications of the embodiments described herein will be apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art in light of the above disclosure. The scope of the invention is to be defined only by the claims appended hereto, and by their equivalents.

[0036] Further, in describing representative embodiments of the present invention, the specification may have presented the method and/or process of the present invention as a particular sequence of steps. However, to the extent that the method or process does not rely on the particular order of steps set forth herein, the method or process should not be limited to the particular sequence of steps described. As one of ordinary skill in the art would appreciate, other sequences of steps may be possible. Therefore, the particular order of the steps set forth in the specification should not be construed as limitations on the claims. In addition, the claims directed to the method and/or process of the present invention should not be limited to the performance of their steps in the order written, and one skilled in the art can readily appreciate that the sequences may vary and still remain within the spirit and scope of the present invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A yoga prop to assist a yoga practitioner in performing a backbend, comprising:
   - a gripping platform having a notch for the practitioner’s head;
   - a first side attached to the gripping platform; and
   - a second side attached to the gripping platform, wherein the first and second sides provide a height and a depth for the yoga prop.

2. The yoga prop recited in claim 1, wherein the gripping platform comprises at least one grip that allows the practitioner to better grip the gripping platform.

3. The yoga prop recited in claim 2, wherein the at least one grip is textured.

4. The yoga prop recited in claim 2, wherein the at least one grip includes a non-slip material.

5. The yoga prop recited in claim 1, further comprising a back piece.

6. The yoga prop recited in claim 1, wherein a base of the yoga prop is covered with a non-slip material.

7. A yoga prop, comprising:
   - a gripping platform having a notch for the practitioner’s head and one or more slits into which straps or rubber bands can be inserted and anchored;
   - a first side attached to the gripping platform; and
   - a second side attached to the gripping platform, wherein the first and second sides provide a height and a depth for the yoga prop.

8. The yoga prop recited in claim 7, wherein the gripping platform comprises at least one grip that allows the practitioner to better grip the gripping platform.

9. The yoga prop recited in claim 8, wherein the at least one grip is textured.

10. The yoga prop recited in claim 8, wherein the at least one grip includes a non-slip material.

11. The yoga prop recited in claim 7, further comprising a back piece.

12. The yoga prop recited in claim 7, wherein a base of the yoga prop is covered with a non-slip material.

13. A multitier yoga prop comprising a plurality of yoga props as recited in claim 1.

14. The multitier yoga prop of claim 14, further comprising a plurality of brackets to hold the plurality of yoga props.

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