

STRENGTH, SENSITIVITY, SUPPORT:

OUR FEET IN YOGA PRACTICE

THE FEET AND LOWER LEGS

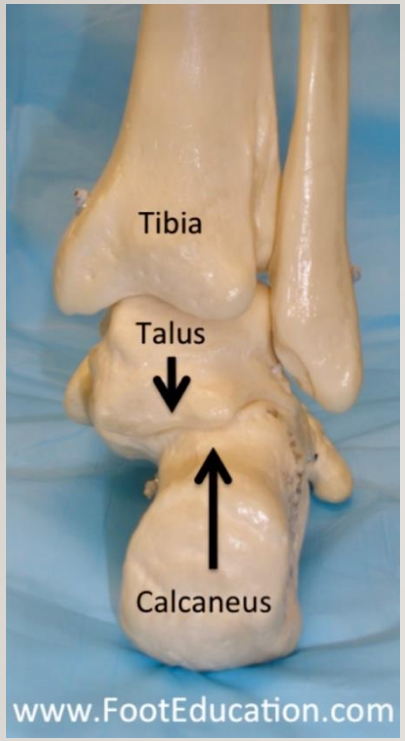
Engineering: each foot contains 26 bones, 33 joints, and over 100 muscles, tendons, and ligaments, working together to provide balance, shock absorption, and movement. That's almost a quarter of all the bones in your body packed into your feet.

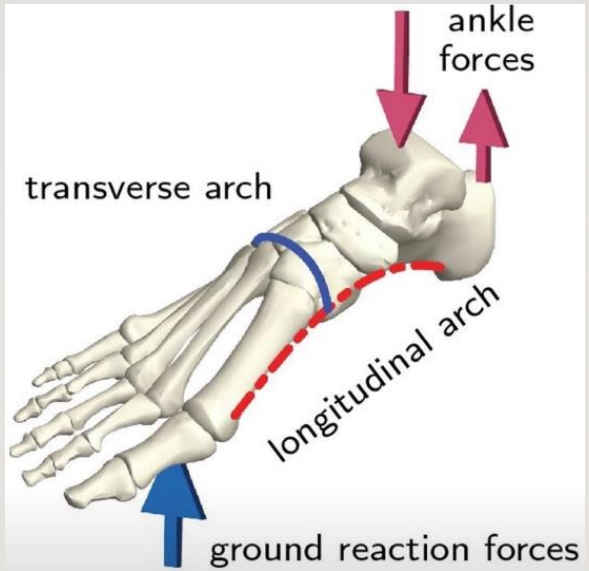
Load bearing: bear up to three to four times your body weight when running or jumping. Over an average lifetime, a person may walk the equivalent of four times around the Earth on their feet.

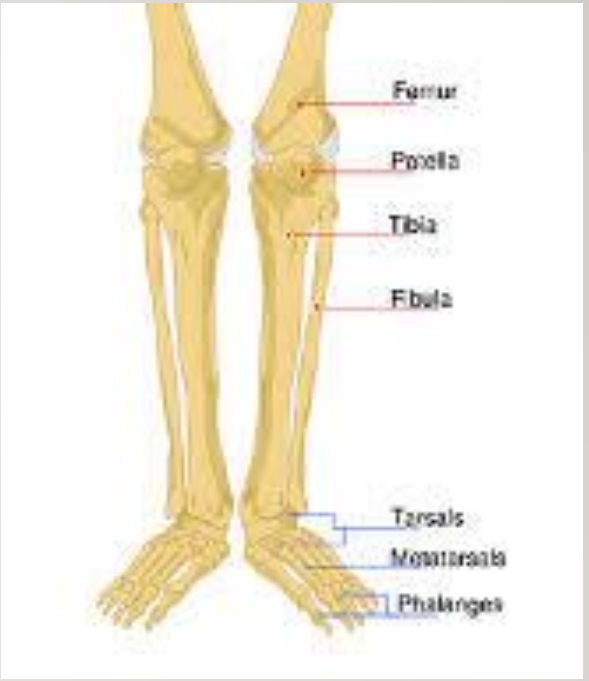
Rich with nerves: soles are among the most sensitive parts of the body, packed with nerve endings.

This sensitivity helps with balance and proprioception (your body's awareness of where it is in space), but it also explains why most people are ticklish on their feet.







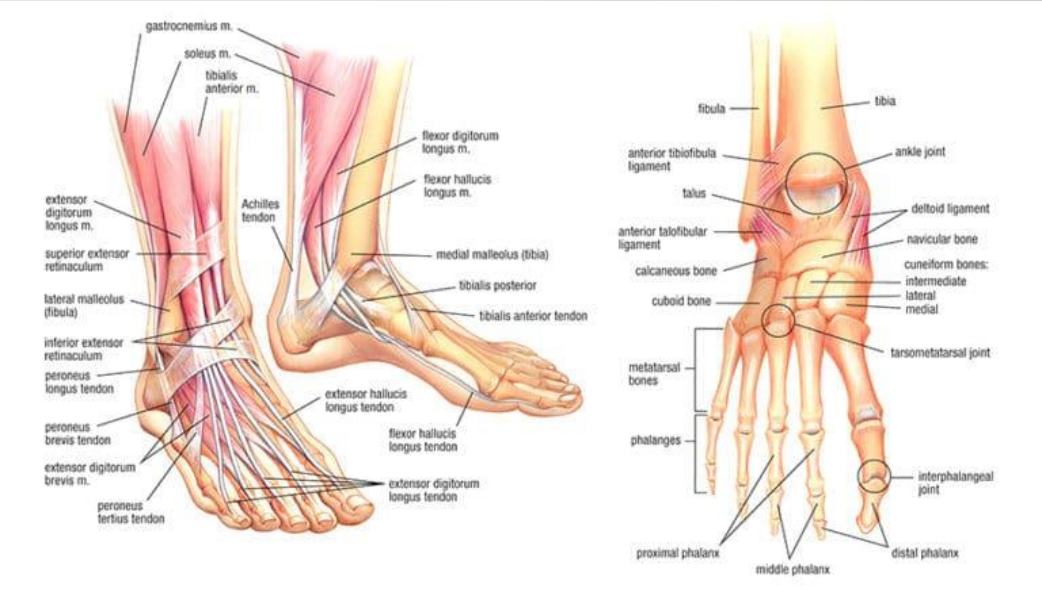


BONY LANDMARKS AND CONNECTIONS

MAJOR MUSCLE GROUPS OF THE LOWER LEG AND FOOT

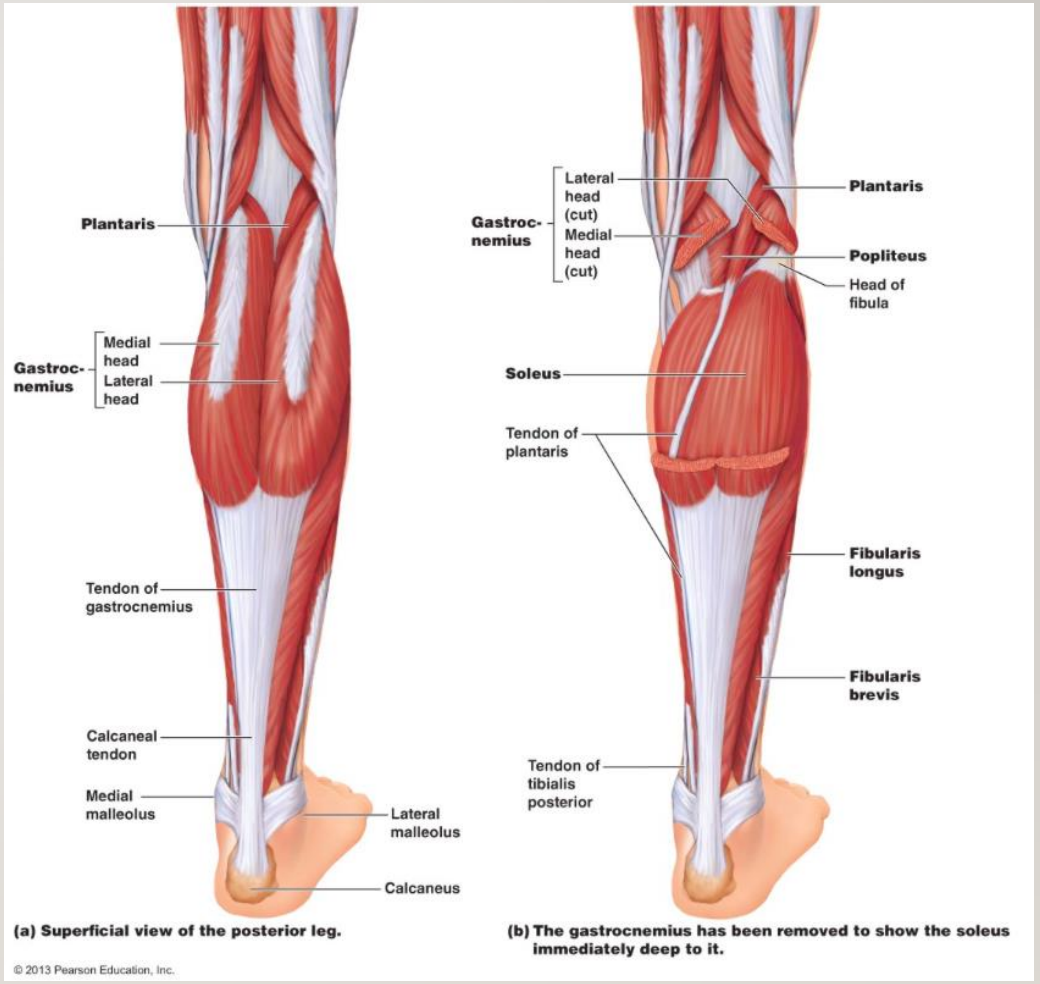
Try these movements:

- 1. Front (Anterior compartment) – lifting the foot
- Tibialis anterior – lifts (dorsiflexes) and inverts the foot.
- Extensor hallucis longus – lifts the big toe.
- Extensor digitorum longus – lifts the other toes.
- Peroneus tertius – helps lift and evert the foot.
- Important for walking, stepping, and preventing "foot drop."
- 2. Outer side (Lateral compartment) – stabilising the arch
- Peroneus longus & brevis (fibularis muscles) – evert the foot (roll it outward) and support the arch. Help with balance, especially on uneven ground or in single-leg poses.



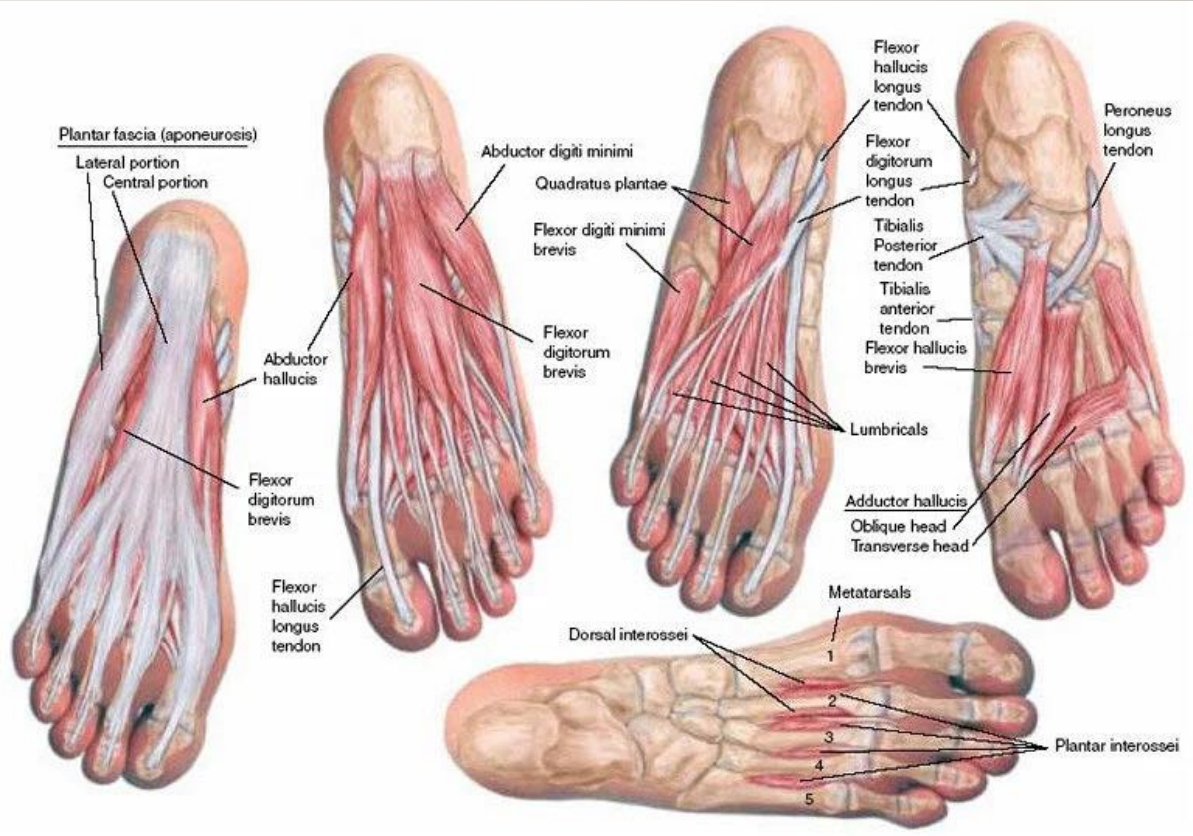
3. BACK (POSTERIOR COMPARTMENT)

- Pushing off and pointing the toes
- Superficial group:
- Gastrocnemius (big calf muscle, two heads) – jumping, running, rising onto toes.
- Soleus – deeper, endurance muscle for standing and walking.
- Together form the Achilles tendon attaching to the heel bone (calcaneus).
- Deep group:
- Tibialis posterior – supports the arch, inverts the foot.
- Flexor hallucis longus – flexes the big toe (very strong in push-off).
- Flexor digitorum longus – flexes the other toes.
- Popliteus (behind the knee) – unlocks the knee for walking.
- Essential for balance, propulsion, and the integrity of the foot's arches.



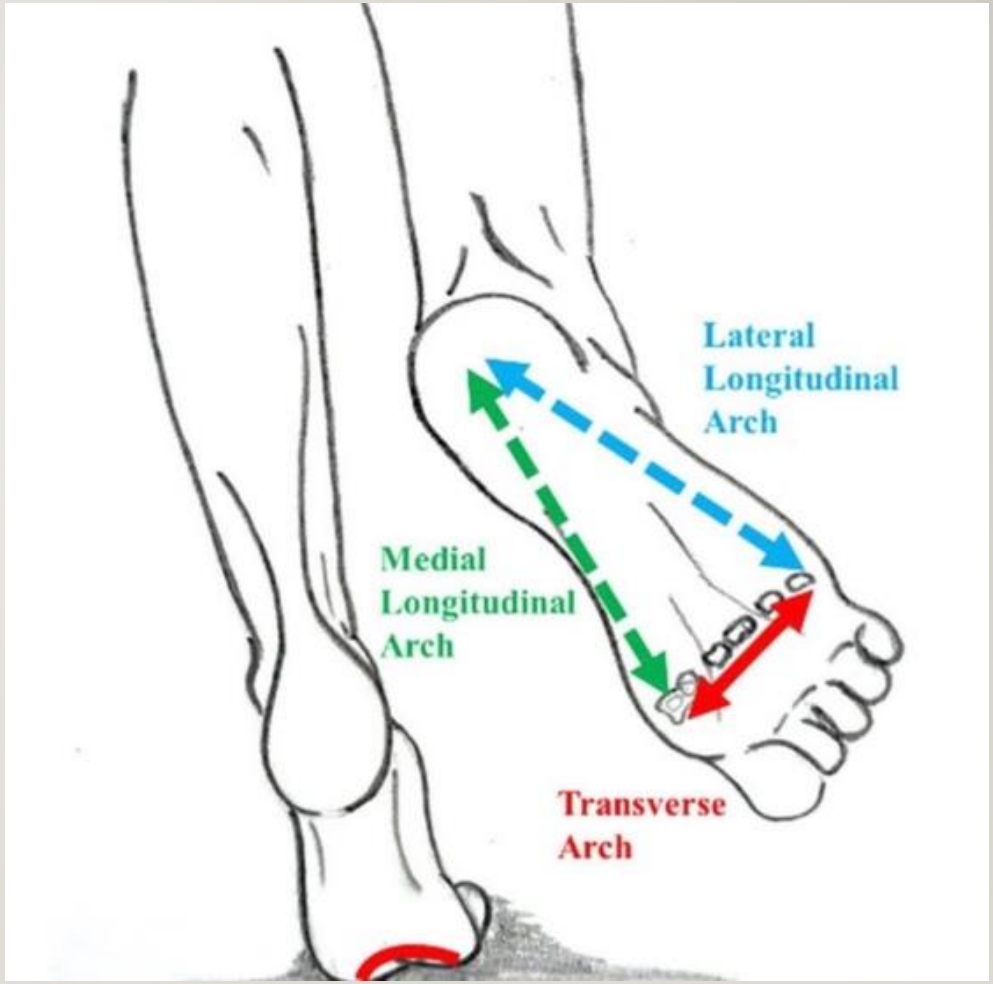
KEY TENDONS

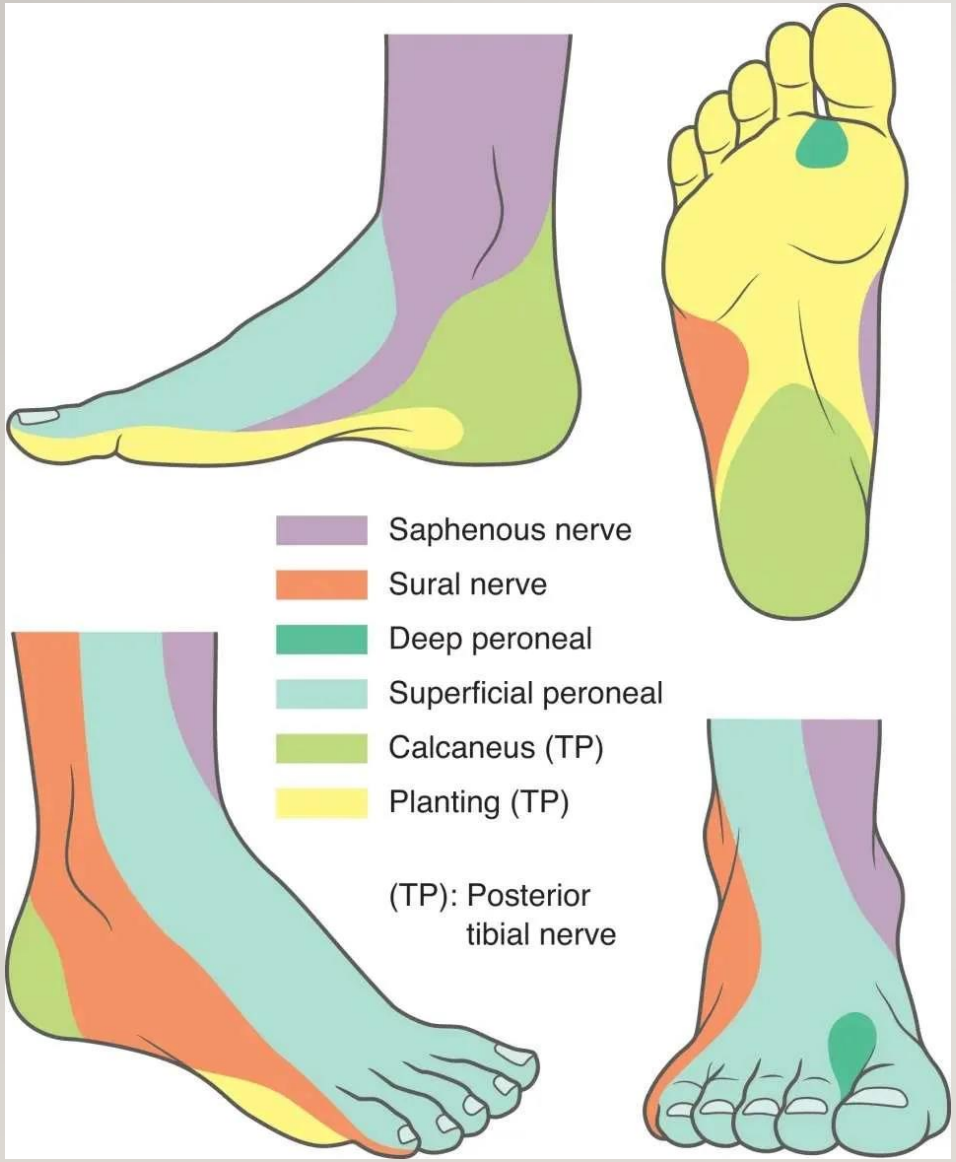
- Achilles tendon – connects calf muscles to heel; strongest tendon in the body.
- Plantar fascia - thick band of connective tissue from heel to toes, supporting the arch.
- Extensor tendons – across the top of the foot, lifting toes.
- Peroneal tendons – running behind the ankle bone on the outside, stabilising the foot.
- Posterior tibial tendon – runs behind the inner ankle, supports the arch.
- In yoga terms:
- Front muscles help lift the toes in Utkatasana or keep balance in Vrksasana.
- Calf–Achilles complex works in Adho Mukha Svanasana and Urdhva Pras Eka Padasana.
- Intrinsic foot muscles engage in Tadasana, subtly lifting arches, drawing energy upward.



THE ARCHES: SHOCK ABSORPTION, WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION, LEVERAGE.

- The Arches – **look at the drawing** and explore on your own feet – look at each other's too.
- When we start, we often spread the toes, lengthen the foot forwards from the heel, backwards from the toes. All these actions prepare the whole leg and hip for movement.





MOTOR AND SENSORY NERVES OF THE FEET

- Motor nerves (movement)
- Motor nerves carry signals from the brain and spinal cord to the muscles in the feet.
- They tell the small intrinsic foot muscles (like the interossei and lumbricals) and larger muscles that act on the foot (like tibialis anterior or gastrocnemius) when to contract.
- These signals control movement, strength, and stability: lifting the arch, spreading the toes, pointing or flexing the foot, and adjusting balance in standing poses.
- Sensory nerves (feeling)
- Sensory nerves carry information from the skin, muscles, and joints of the feet back to the brain.
- They detect touch, pressure, pain, temperature, vibration, and proprioception (the sense of where your foot is in space).
- This feedback helps you know whether you're standing evenly, if the ground is smooth or rough, or if you're overstretching in a pose. It also develops proprioception, the awareness of position and movement of the body.
- Working together
- When you jump or step into Tadasana, sensory nerves tell your brain whether weight is balanced across the four corners of the feet. Your brain then sends signals through motor nerves to adjust tiny muscle contractions until balance is achieved.
- It's a constant loop: feel → adjust → feel again. This is what makes yoga practice such a powerful training ground for awareness and stability.



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