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WHAT IS YOGA

“Yoga is the journey of the self, through the self to the self.”

- Bhagavad Gita



Yoga needs no introduction. It is an ancient Indian practice that in the span of a few decades has spread to every corner of the world. From the high flying lifestyle in US and Europe to remote corners of the globe, yoga seems to be everywhere.

It has emerged as a potent solution to many health woes of the 21st Century and offers a real remedy and prevention for multiple physical, emotional and mental problems.

Yoga is not just a form of exercise but also a meditative tool which is said to bring peace of mind and body and give you oodles of positivity in your life.

Yoga has taken the modern world by storm. Today around 300 million people worldwide are said to practice yoga.

From Tokyo to Vancouver, people are turning to yoga in pursuit of a vast range of goals from spiritual wellbeing to good health and physical fitness. For reasons that make it so popular these days, yoga has enticed a growing number of practitioners across nations, age, religions and economic strata.

Yoga is sweeping our contemporary existence at an amazing speed and its reach is enough testament to the power of this ancient practice. As our lives become more stressful, fast-paced and filled with distractions, the practice of yoga has provided the necessary balance to the daily lives of many.

Yoga is not just a physical activity, and this attribute alone may prove yoga's mass appeal. Even those who feel like they are in a perpetual state of physical tiredness can actually stick to regular yoga practice and experience the ultimate energy renewal.

Yoga is broadly defined as a system of mental, physical and spiritual practices that aim to transform the body and mind.

At the heart of yoga is the recognition that humans are multi-dimensional beings who must strive towards the attainment of the highest union of their physical, mental and emotional states of being.

As human beings cultivate this union, they will experience peace, mental clarity and elevated consciousness, as well as enhanced health, happiness, wisdom, and sense of community.

“ Sharon Gannon

You cannot do yoga. Yoga is your natural state. What you can do are yoga exercises, which may reveal to you where you are resisting your natural state. ”

In a fast paced and hectic world, where people's busy lives often effect their health, inner peace and happiness, Yoga can be an all-in one solution.

How Yoga Works

To achieve this harmony of mind, body and spirit, the practice of yoga encompasses a system of interlinked techniques based on three main structures:

- *Physical exercises*
- *Breathing techniques*
- *Meditation*

Yoga exercises are hinged on the core yogic belief that the body should be respected and treated mindfully because it is the main instrument for growth and exertion.

Exercises or yoga poses are thus designed to stimulate blood circulation, glandular and abdominal processes, muscle flexibility and even skeletal strength.

Breathing, meanwhile, is believed to be the source of life and yoga teaches breathing control to enhance the body's capacity to breathe and generate life.

Yoga exercises and breathing techniques thus enable yogis to meditate properly and connect with the deepest part of their mind.

Through these core structures, yoga methodically develops discipline to achieve harmony of the body, mind and breathing to develop overall health, inner peace and clarity of mind.

At a more spiritual and philosophical level, yoga as a way of life teaches us the power and potential of the human being.

What Yoga IS NOT

Yoga is NOT your typical calisthenics.

Yoga is NOT a system of meditation or a religion, though meditation exercises are a part of yoga that allow practitioners to gain enlightenment into the spiritual realm.

What Yoga IS

- *Yoga is a science, and is referred to as a science across the world, and as a science its cause and effect is verified through objective observations and experiments.*

In fact, to become a yogic master who has any credibility, one must be highly educated in the sciences, which, include, physics and biology. Yoga is as empirical and pragmatic as kinesiology, the science of exercise.

- *Yoga is a fitness routine that goes beyond simple movement by integrating essential breathing and poses that yield results beyond that usually achieved with the typical cardio and muscle toning workouts.*

- *Yoga is fun and with a little help, you can be on your way towards mastering this art form and leading a really healthy physical and emotional life.*

Who Is Doing Yoga?

- 15 Million Americans Practice Yoga
- 72.2% Female
- 27.8% Male
- 40.6% Age 18-34
- 41% Age 35-54
- 18.4% Age 55 and older

Reasons People Cite For Doing Yoga

- 78.3% Flexibility
- 62.2% General Conditioning
- 59.6% Stress Relief
- 58.5% Improve General Health
- 55.1% Physical Fitness

“

Tao Te Ching

Do you have the patience to wait till your mud settles and the water is clear? Can you remain unmoving till the right action arises by itself?

”





THE HISTORY OF YOGA

Do you have the patience to wait till your mud
settles and the water is clear? Can you remain
unmoving till the right action arises by itself?
- Tao Te Ching



The benefits of yoga have indeed given it a rightful place in the development of society. Yoga may be a relatively new practice and way of life to the Western World, but it has been a practice most familiar with the East, where it originated. Dating back some 5,000 years ago in India, yoga is perhaps as ancient as the human desire for peace and wellbeing.

The exact origin of yoga is still a matter of debate as pre-historical archaeological reference to yoga are said to be inconclusive. Some historians claim that the practice developed during the Vedic Period between 500 to 200 B.C.E. when Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism as philosophy and religion were still taking form.

Still, other historians believe that yoga in fact existed even long before that, owing to archaeological discoveries showing that the teachings and community practices of Shamanism during the Stone Age bear a striking resemblance to yoga.

Four Main Periods In Yoga History

Vedic Period (1500 to 500 B.C.E.)

The earliest known textual reference to yogic teachings was inscribed in the Vedas, the sacred text of Brahmanism, which form the basis of contemporary Hinduism.

The mantras, or individual verses contained in the Rig Veda, the first canonical collection of the Vedas, relate to the earliest yogic teachings

characterized by the performance of ceremonies and rituals in order to exceed the confines of the mind. During this time, the hotar (priest) leads the Vedic people in performing rituals and also teaches them how to live in divine harmony.

It is generally believed that ascetic practices, meditation and bodily poses or postures performed by Vedic priests during the fire sacrifice ritual introduced what we now know as the yoga practice.

Vedic texts are rich in descriptions of performing contemplation, breathing control, stimulation of vital body energies and specific bodily positions, which may have evolved into the yogic asana (the mastery of sitting still for extended periods). These yogic practices to attain a certain state of body, mind and spirit are considered fundamentally important in being able to chant sacred hymns during Vedic rituals.

Pre-Classical Era (500 to 200 B.C.E.)

The Pre-Classical Era is marked by the emergence of the Upanishads, a collection of 200 texts revealing truths on the nature of ultimate reality and human salvation through a devotion to the Hindu god Brahman. The Upanishads is also known as the end of the Vedas.

The Katha Upanishad offers the first known definition of the term “yoga,” which is said to be the exercise of control over the senses, including ending mental activity, to reach a supreme state of being or the transcendental Self.

Other Upanishads, meanwhile, refer to yogic teachings of meditation, the five vital energies (prana), the relationship between thought and breath, control of mind, breath channels, Om meditation and the hierarchies of chakras. For this reason, the Upanishads are considered to be the earliest text outlining the fundamental principles and techniques of yoga.

Several hundreds of years later, the Bhagavad Gita, a 700-verse Hindu scripture, was written as part of the epic Mahabharata. The Bhagavad Gita is known as the oldest scripture written entirely on the practice of yoga, thus confirming that yoga has been an ancient practice.

Written as a conversation between the God-man Khrisna and Prince Arjuna, the verses describe traditional yoga practice and the essence of yoga as a way of life.

The Bhagavad Gita built on the yoga teachings of the Vedas and the Upanishads and introduced the unity of three practices that must be integrated in daily life:

- *Bhakti yoga (devotion or love)*
- *Jnana yoga (knowledge or contemplation)*
- *Karma yoga (selfless actions to be)*

Yoga can be found not only in ancient Hindu practice but also in Buddhism. While Buddhism teaches meditation and bodily positions similar to the Hinduist strand of yoga, Buddhism also offers some crucial deviation.

One such key departure from the teachings of

the Upanishads is Buddhism's teaching that the end objective of yoga is not reaching a meditative state where thought has completely ceased but rather achieving a state of meditation where there is also a liberating cognition based on heightened consciousness.

Classical Period (200 B.C.E to 500 C.E.)

This period in yoga's history is marked by the creation of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali in the second century. The text is an attempt to outline a standardized and formal teaching of Classical Yoga.

Patanjali believed that each human being is composed of two elements, matter (prakriti) and spirit (purusha), which must be separated to purify the spirit, a belief that diverges from Vedic and Pre-Classical Yoga's teachings on the unity of body and spirit.

The Yoga Sutras

The Yoga Sutras are composed of 195 aphorisms (sutras) and outlines Patanjali's Eight Limbs of Yoga, which are:

1. Yama – Abstaining from violence, lying, stealing, sexual indecency and possessiveness
2. Niyama – Personal observance of purity, contentment, austerity, study and surrender to God
3. Asana – Keeping to a seated position and performing physical exercises
4. Pranayama – Suspending breath and

controlling the life force

5. Pratyahara – Withdrawal of senses
6. Dharana – Strong concentration
7. Dhyana – Meditation
8. Samadhi – Liberation
9. Patanjali's Eight Limbs will form the basis of what is now known as Ashtanga Yoga and Raja Yoga.

Post-Classical Period (500 C.E. to the present)

This period in yoga history saw the development of several schools of yoga which were based on earlier teachings but also integrated unique practices that cater to specific periods and milieu. During this period, however, yoga schools deviated from liberating people from reality but taught them how to embrace it and live freely.

In the centuries immediately following the Classic Period, satellite yoga traditions and schools emerged following both Hinduist and Buddhist strands of yoga, such as the Bhakti, Vajrayana and Hatha Yoga.

It was not until the 20th century when Yoga was brought to the West initially as a subsection of the study of Eastern Philosophy. In the 1930s, yoga was introduced as a social practice, particularly as a movement for healthy lifestyle and vegetarianism.

Beginning in the 1960s, however, yoga was introduced by expatriates and yoga gurus from India as a practice of meditation, exercise and breathing techniques and has since gained a steady stream of followers in the West.

Among the most prominent Western yoga schools are Maharishi Mahesh's Transcendental Meditation, the Sivananda Yoga and Bhajan's Kundalini Yoga.

Several other schools of yoga, each offering specific techniques and goals, have gained equal or even greater popularity in the West and throughout the world.

The proven benefits of yoga have indeed helped this ancient practice grow in popularity in leaps and bounds especially in today's society where hazardous lifestyles and stress levels are hitting the roof.

More and more people are striving to breathe, strike a pose, contemplate and feel balanced. And yoga is simply making that a reality.





HEALTH BENEFITS OF YOGA

“Yoga is a balancing factor, a substratum across all of your life, so you do not get shifted in one direction or another. It gives you freshness, gives you light, recharges your batteries. You become a stable person. You realize what balance is, what sukha is, what contentment is, what joy is.”

- Birjoo Mehta



Internal

Yoga has numerous benefits on the internal functions of the body.

- *Decreases blood pressure through improved blood circulation and oxygenation.*
- *Lowers pulse rate, which, means the heart is more efficient at pumping blood to the body with fewer beats.*
- *Improved blood circulation for healthier organs, skin, and brain.*
- *Lowers respiratory rate that results in healthier lungs.*
- *Cardiovascular endurance through a lower heart rate and much improved oxygenation to the body.*
- *The massaging of internal organs, which, improves the body's ability to prevent disease.*
 - *Gastrointestinal function improvement.*
 - *A stronger immune system.*
 - *Higher pain tolerance.*
 - *Pain management, including, chronic varieties, such as back pain, Fibromyalgia and Arthritis.*
- *Increases metabolism for weight loss and healthy weight management.*

External

- *Yoga stimulates the detoxification process in the body, which, delays the effects of aging.*
 - *Improves posture.*
 - *Builds strength.*
 - *Engaging in Yoga regularly provides a lot of energy for life.*
 - *Weight loss and healthy weight management.*
 - *Reduction in cellulite from the stretching of the muscles.*



- *Improves sleep.*
- *Improved balance and body control.*
- *Improved body awareness and comfort.*
- *Stronger core, which, has many health benefits on its own.*
 - *Better body control, relaxation, and self-confidence which increases libido and sexual comfort and performance.*

“

Baxter Bell

“Yoga has a sly, clever way of short circuiting the mental patterns that cause anxiety.”

”

Emotional

With Yoga's unique mind and body connection, Yoga provides numerous emotional and mental benefits as well.

- Since Yoga creates a strong mind-body connection, a healthy body and allows one to focus inward the inevitable side effect is better mood.
- The use of controlled movements required in yoga provide people with much better self-control in all aspects of their lives.
- Unlike other workouts, yoga offers a unique mind-body connection facilitated by the matching of controlled breathing with various body movements, this translates into a profound feeling of internal calm and peace.
- Scientific research shows that only 8 weeks of yoga can improve concentration and motivation.
- As yoga improves blood circulation to the brain, it in effect improves the mind's ability to focus and its memory skills.
- Yoga has been proven to reduce stress exponentially.
- The controlled breathing practiced during yoga results in a marked reduction of anxiety.
- Yoga facilitates the release of internal negative energy, which, when done regularly can have great benefit for reducing depression and its symptoms.
- It takes a lot of attention and focus to maintain structured breathing while doing the Yoga poses, this in turn strengthens the ability to focus and concentrate throughout all other parts of your life.

- Calmness is one of the greatest benefits of yoga and is facilitated by intense concentration on the body during the workout and the meditative components involved.

- The strong mind body connection that results from yoga improves one's ability to be in tune and connected to what the body needs, this helps in many ways, including, with controlling food cravings, overall eating habits and emotional eating.

Body Chemistry

Yoga also has profound effects on body chemistry.

- Yoga lowers cholesterol through increased blood circulation and fat burning.
- The specific movements used in yoga support the building of a strong lymphatic system, which, boosts immunity and eliminates toxins from the body.
- Evidence has shown that yoga can lower blood glucose levels.
- Yoga reduces sodium levels in the body.
- Regularly engaging in Yoga helps to control the secretion of hormones which helps to balance and improve overall physical and emotional health.
- Studies have shown that regular Yoga can lower Triglycerides in the bloodstream, which, lowers the risks for heart disease and high blood pressure.

Disease Prevention

And, if all of the above were not enough, Yoga also has a profound effect on several predatory conditions and diseases and their symptoms.

- *Heart disease risk is reduced through yoga due to its ability to reduce body weight and improve cardiovascular health.*

- *Osteoporosis risks are reduced by yoga because it strengthens bones and lowers levels of cortisol in the body that preserves calcium levels in the bones.*

- *One study showed that yoga elevates levels of gamma-aminobutyric (GABA) in the brain, which, helps reduce the risk of Alzheimer's. Also, meditation that is used in Yoga routines helps to slow the progression of Alzheimer's.*

- *Yoga also helps in preventing Type 2 diabetes, by reducing glucose levels in the bloodstream and by encouraging insulin production in the pancreas.*



Conditions/Diseases Helped By Yoga

Conditions/Diseases Helped By Yoga

- *Carpal tunnel syndrome*
- *Allergies*
- *Menopause*
- *Back pain*
- *Asthma*
- *Arthritis*
- *Multiple sclerosis*
- *Cancer*
- *Muscular dystrophy*
- *Migraines*
- *Scoliosis*
- *Chronic bronchitis*
- *Epilepsy*
- *Sciatica*
- *Obsessive Compulsive Disorder*
- *Constipation*





FITNESS BENEFITS OF YOGA

“In True Meditation, we’re in the body as a means to transcend it. It is paradoxical that the greatest doorway to the transcendence of form is through form itself.”

- Adyashanti



Yoga is one of the best exercises and provides numerous distinct and unique benefits that other workouts simply cannot achieve.

- *Yoga has a much lower risk of injury as compared to other forms of exercise.*

- *Yoga is a workout routine that offers cardio, strength training, muscle toning and many other benefits that are seen in other workouts, but, unlike those forms that stimulate the Sympathetic Nervous System by inducing a “fight or flight” response, Yoga works through the Parasympathetic nervous system, which, lowers blood pressure and slows breathing, yielding a feeling of healing and relaxation.*

- *Yoga helps develop lean muscle tone.*

- *Most workouts dominate the cortex part of the brain, but, Yoga dominates the sub cortex, which, is associated with well-being.*

- *The body works more efficiently in Yoga because there is less oxygen consumption, especially, as compared with other types of exercises.*

- *Yoga yields higher energy levels as compared to other workouts, due to the controlled breathing, which, gives you more energy post workout and much less fatigue.*

- *Yoga provides balance between opposing muscle groups and that gives a more efficient total body workout.*

- *Engaging in regular yoga workouts has been shown through a study at the University Of Pennsylvania School Of Medicine to improve range of motion.*

- *It improves eye-hand coordination due to the intricate poses and postures performed.*

- *Yoga greatly improves dexterity through its unique poses and postures and so it provides a lot of flexibility to the body.*

- *Since yoga works the entire body it markedly improves endurance. It is often an effective part of the overall training routine of professional athletes.*

- *No other exercise provides depth perception like Yoga because it involves totally body awareness.*

- *Effective for weight loss on both an emotional and physical level.*





17 SCHOOLS OF YOGA

“When the breath wanders the mind also is unsteady. But when the breath is calmed the mind too will be still, and the yogi achieves long life. Therefore, one should learn to control the breath.”

- Hatha Yoga Pradipika



With its growing popularity, several schools of yoga practice have emerged and so it may be difficult for yoga beginners to discern one from the other. Not all yoga is created equal, and some are more physically demanding than the others. Also they each target different goals and have specific benefits.

It may be difficult to distinguish one type of yoga from another because many of them bear striking resemblances in techniques and patterns. Aside from this crossover, it is also worth noting that even if they belong to the same yoga school, different yoga gurus may teach different techniques and sequence of poses.

Given both the similarities and differences within the various types of yoga, it would be helpful to understand the core differences in the nature, techniques and target benefits of the most popular types of yoga in practice today.

Raja Yoga

Literally meaning the “King of Yoga,” Raja Yoga is considered to be the “royal road” to attaining self-realization or spiritual liberation. The main practice of Raja Yoga is mastering the method of meditation. This is achieved by methodically controlling consciousness and turning mental and physical energy into spiritual energy.

Raja Yoga follows the Ashtanga or the Eight Limbs of Raja Yoga, which was outlined in Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras. Raja Yoga follows eight progressive stages of purifying the body and mind

to achieve a state of enlightenment and mental control. These eight stages, or eight paths of Raja Yoga, are Yamas, Niyamas, Asanas, Prayanama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi.

These eight paths are the core teachings of Raja Yoga, which is why it is also often called as Ashtanga Yoga.

Raja Yoga is considered to be one of the oldest types of yoga and is considered as the most superior path of yoga because of its ability to lead practitioners into absolute control of the mind, which is considered as the king of all organs of the body. For this reason, Raja Yoga is also called Mental Yoga.

Because meditation is at the core of Raja Yoga, practitioners of this type of yoga are said to achieve a calm mind and body.

The benefits of Raja Yoga are experienced in both short-term and long-term changes in one’s body and mind, such as:

- *Feeling of lightness*
- *Freedom from fears and anxiety*
- *Self-confidence*
- *Mental clarity*
- *Spiritual wellbeing and improved health.*
- *Raja Yoga practitioners also claim to develop better attitudes to life, inner strength and inner peace.*

Bikram Yoga

If you want a marriage of yoga and sauna, Bikram Yoga may prove to be just the right fit for you.

Bikram Yoga is most known for being literally a hot yoga, with yoga routines performed in a room that is heated to 105 degrees Fahrenheit and kept at a humidity level of 40%.

Bikram Yoga was created by and named after its founder, Bikram Choudhury, a 1963 Olympic weightlifting gold medalist, who introduced and popularized this type of yoga in the United States in the 1970s. Choudhury developed Bikram Yoga from the general principles and techniques of the Hatha Yoga discipline, creating a sequence of 26 asana poses and two breathing exercises that systematically works every part of the body.

- *What is probably unique to Bikram Yoga is the performance of these poses in a heated environment to make the body more flexible and agile, thus allowing it to perform poses effectively and optimally.*

- *Because of this, Bikram Yoga is able to maximize yoga's cleansing benefits by opening up sweat glands to further flush out toxins.*

- *It also trains the body to increase its oxygen supply and use it properly.*

Bikram Yoga is a complete workout that incorporates four fitness components, namely:

- *Cardiovascular flexibility*
- *Muscle strength*
- *Endurance*
- *Weight loss*

Uses And Goals

- *It is best for those who seek effective weight loss (a total of 500 calories can be burned when doing a Bikram Yoga session), improved flexibility and muscle tone, enhanced stamina and proper detoxification.*

- *Those recovering from injuries will also find Bikram Yoga useful due to its deep stretching techniques.*

Hot Yoga

Like Bikram Yoga, Hot Yoga is performed in a temperature controlled environment to maintain a healthy level of heat (usually at 95 to 105 degrees Fahrenheit) and humidity (usually at 40%) as yoga practitioners perform their routines.

Unlike Bikram Yoga, however, Hot Yoga does not necessarily follow a series of 26 asana successions and four breathing techniques.

The general name of Hot Yoga as a reference to yoga styles that use heat and humidity in order to assist the flexibility of practitioners in performing difficult yoga poses is said to have evolved from the introduction of this particular yoga style by Bikram Choudhury in the 1970s.

Owing to its avowed benefits, many yoga gurus and schools began designing their own hot yoga routines but were barred from calling them Bikram Yoga due to legal copyright issues raised by Choudhury.

Today, the practice of Hot Yoga has grown to include sub-types such as:

- *Bikram Yoga*
- *Forrest Yoga (yoga poses mixed with Native American spirituality)*
- *TriBalance Yoga (performed in a heated but slightly less humid room)*
- *Power Yoga (derived from Ashtanga Yoga but tweaked as a power workout)*
- *Moshka Yoga (a succession of 40 asana poses)*

Hatha Yoga

Generally considered as the foundation of all popular yoga styles in the West, Hatha Yoga is the discipline from where other popular types of yoga were derived, namely Bikram Yoga, Ashtanga Yoga, Power Yoga and Kundalini Yoga.

Hatha Yoga involves practicing asana poses in a serene and meditative mood, which makes it an ideal type of yoga for beginners who want to learn the basics of yoga.

Hatha Yoga derives its name literally from the sun (ha) and moon (tha), and for this reason it is often considered as the yoga that brings the union of two opposites, or the positive and negative elements of the body to achieve a calm, relaxed and peaceful state.

Hatha Yoga strives to achieve a balance between the mind and body and attempts to liberate the more subtle spiritual channels through a series of physical asanas, breathing techniques and meditation.

It concentrates on the third and fourth stages of the Eight Limbs of Yoga, namely the Asana

and the Pranayama.

The physical exercises in Hatha Yoga concentrate on two vital objectives:

- *To enable meditation by finding the asana or pose where one is most comfortable with.*
- *To bring energy to the mind and body by opening up the nadis or the spiritual channel.*

Uses And Goals

- *Because Hatha Yoga is slower paced and gentler as compared to Bikram Yoga or Power Yoga, it is best for those who want to de-stress, calm down and relax at the end of a long and difficult day.*

- *Through some of its poses, Hatha Yoga also enables toning of internal organs in order to prevent diseases such as hypertension, arthritis and diabetes.*

- *The breathing exercises in Hatha Yoga, meanwhile, can help manage with bronchitis and asthma.*

Kundalini Yoga

Kundalini Yoga focuses on awakening the powerful energy residing untapped at the base of the spine. This energy is said to take the form of a snake, hence the name Kundalini, the Sanskrit word for “coiled up”.

Kundalini Yoga strives to awaken this “snake” energy and draw it upward through the seven chakras (energy centers) of the spine all the way to the crown chakra of the brain in order to achieve a state of sublime ecstasy and self-awareness.

Because of the power of Kundalini Yoga, it is said that only a small few were secretly practicing it until 3HO (Healthy, Happy, Holy Organization) founder Yogi Bhaijan introduced it to a broader audience in the West in 1969.

The practice of Kundalini Yoga is governed by kriyas, or Kundalini sequences of poses (asanas) and breathing (pranayama), consisting of fast and repetitive movements aimed at freeing the chakras.

- *This type of yoga involves more sitting poses compared to other types, and also a lot of core work on the abs and around the spinal cord.*

- *Kundalini Yoga is typically done with the assistance of a yoga guru, with purists prescribing that awakening the Kundalini without a guru could be dangerous and bring forth negative physical and mental effects due to an incorrect awakening the Kundalini by force.*

- *A typical Kundalini class involves chanting, playing of gongs, meditation and singing.*

- *Kundalini Yoga requires strenuous physical exercises and a more spiritual yoga experience, thus appealing to those who are up for challenges that are both physical and mental in nature.*

Ashtanga Yoga

What is generally known today as Ashtanga Yoga is the yoga style developed and introduced to the West by Sri K. Pattabhi Jois in 1975.

The Ashtanga Yoga was derived from the core teachings of Raja Yoga, particularly the recognition of the Ashtanga or the Eight Limbs of

Raja Yoga as a path to enlightenment and mental control, but, focuses more on the performance of a non-changing sequence of challenging and physically demanding poses coupled with proper breathing techniques.

Ashtanga Yoga's belief is that it is impossible to practice the Eight Limbs of Yoga when the body is weak.

- *Specific asanas or yoga poses are thus necessary to improve the body's strength and state of health.*

- *To achieve a stronger body, a series of six related asana sequences are performed in a flowing and rapid succession.*

- *The poses are linked to each other by corresponding vinyasas, or breathing techniques involving precise inhalation and exhalation sequences.*

Uses And Goals

- *Because of strenuous poses and breathing techniques in Ashtanga Yoga, the temperature of the body is raised and profuse sweat is produced even without the assistance of external heat, as in the case of Bikram Yoga. Because of this, Ashtanga Yoga is a great way to cleanse the body of toxins, lose weight, and build cardiovascular strength.*

- *It is also good for athletes or those who want to tone their muscles and build core strength.*

Vinyasa Yoga

Vinyasa bears a striking resemblance to Ashtanga Yoga and is sometimes used as a term interchangeably with the latter.

Vinyasa Yoga focuses on the coordination of breathing and movement or positions to achieve a host of benefits including a sense of balance, fitness, cleansing and overall wellbeing.

Literally meaning “breath synchronized movement,” Vinyasa Yoga uses a smoothly flowing and succession of poses that resembles a dance sequence.

Unlike Ashtanga Yoga that follows a strict and never-changing sequence of poses, each session of Vinyasa Yoga can be organized differently depending on the yogi’s preference.

Vinyasa Yoga is said to be created by the yogi Sri Tirumala Krishnamacharya, who later taught Ashtanga Yoga’s founder K. Parrabhi Jois the power of breathing. Vinyasa Yoga is hinged on the practice of even and consistent length and intensity of alternating inhalation (puraka) and exhalation (rechaka) synchronized with the performance of asana poses or movements.

Uses And Goals

Vinyasa Yoga focuses on the coordination of breathing and movement or positions to achieve a host of benefits including a sense of balance, fitness, cleansing and overall wellbeing.

Iyengar Yoga

Developed and popularized by yogi master B.K.S. Iyengar more than half a century ago.

This type of yoga is derived from Hatha Yoga and uses a variety of yoga props such as belts, chairs, cushions, blankets, ropes and blocks to assist practitioners in performing asanas or poses.

Iyengar developed this type of yoga by creating more than 200 poses and 14 breathing techniques developed and sequenced systematically based on the Eight Limbs of Yoga to allow a yoga beginner to progress in a safe and effective manner.

The practice of Iyengar Yoga is composed of three elements that make it unique from other yoga styles:

- *Technique*
- *Sequence*
- *Timing*

How To Works

• *A meticulous style of yoga, Iyengar Yoga emphasizes proper and precise body alignment in performing the different poses.*

• *Each pose is generally sustained for longer periods of time compared to other yoga types.*

• *Practitioners move slowly into a pose until, aim for its proper execution and sustain it for about a minute or so. They then rest for a few breathing cycles before moving on to another position.*

Iyengar Yoga does not feature the humping and jumping poses and pace of more strenuous yoga styles but it is nevertheless a physically and mentally challenging style to perform.

Its use of yoga props to help less flexible and physically challenged practitioners also revolutionized the practice of yoga.

Uses And Goals

- With Iyengar Yoga, even older people or those recovering from physical injuries can practice yoga and reap its benefits, such building flexibility, stamina, coordination, balance and strength.

- It also enhances circulation, relieves stress, strengthens leg muscles, improves body posture and eases body aches and chronic pains.

Power Yoga

Generally considered as the American version of the Kundalini Yoga, Power Yoga can be described simply as forceful yoga.

It offers a vigorous and fitness-based approach to yoga and is thus often called “gym yoga.”

The creation of Power Yoga is credited to two American students of yoga, master K. Pattabhi Jois, namely Beryl Bender Birch from New York and Bryan Krest from Los Angeles.

Power Yoga's development in the 1990s made yoga more interesting and accessible to the American public, who were looking for a way to be fit but were turned off by the rather gentle and meditative practice offered by existing yoga schools.

- Power Yoga uses the same breathing and movement coordination introduced by Vinyasa and Ashtanga Yoga, but also incorporates poses derived from calisthenics, such as toe-touches, push-ups, side bends and headstands.

- The key to Power Yoga is actually its fast pace, which enables to practitioners to build muscle power and generate a lot of sweat.

- Each pose also moves into the next in a speedy and almost instantaneous pace, which makes Power Yoga an intense workout.

Uses And Goals

- Although the practice of Power Yoga varies from one class to another, this type of yoga is best suited to those who want maximum fitness benefits and those who want to do yoga sans the chanting and spiritual meditation.

- Ideal for weight loss.

Pure Yoga

Pure Yoga is a type of Hot Yoga that has grown popular in urban centers of the US, Canada and Asia.

Although more of a branding for specific schools of yoga and the yoga routines that they perform, Pure Yoga can be considered a type of its own due to its adherence to the principle that yoga must be done in a series of successive classes incorporating various types and techniques of yoga and done in an artificially heated room or environment.

Pure yoga integrates various yoga styles from Ashtanga to Hatha, Iyengar to Vinyasa, and promotes yoga as a lifestyle of finding peace,

relaxation and a fusion of physical and mental wellbeing especially to those in urban centers where stress levels are high.

Some schools of Pure Yoga even offer on-demand yoga classes whenever and wherever students require an experience of relaxation and peace.

Core Power Yoga

Core Power is a style of yoga developed beginning in year 2002 by a chain of yoga studios in the US that offers yoga sessions specifically targeting the development of core body strength.

- *Core Power Yoga is considered as a more contemporary, less traditional way of doing yoga. It incorporates traditional yoga sequences with abdominal movements, breathing and meditation techniques.*

- *Core Power yogis are also encouraged to build a sense of community by volunteering in non-profit initiatives, wellness detox and boot camps.*

- *Some Core Power Yoga classes are done in heated rooms, while others are not.*

- *Core Power Yoga courses are developed as a progressing yoga experience in which practicing yogis can experience various yoga styles, techniques and routines.*

Uses And Goals

- *Yoga routines target building core strength, achieving proper body alignment, increasing flexibility, strengthening focus, detoxifying the body of toxins and achieving physical fitness.*



Moksha Yoga

- *Moksha Yoga is a type of hot yoga that originated from Canadian yogis and yoga studios.*

- *It is done as a series of cardiovascular yoga poses that stretch, strengthen and tone the body while pacifying the mind.*

- *Moksha Yoga builds deep concentration among practitioners and encourages teachers and students to infuse variety into every session or yoga class.*

- *Moshka routines gives greater focus on the upper part of the body but also incorporates downward flows and movements that seek to open the hips to either alleviate or prevent pain on the lower back and the knees.*

Moshka also offers an experience that is different from other types of yoga by providing an opportunity to slow down the thought process through stress reduction, proper and essential breathing techniques and freedom from chronic pain, self-judgment and other restrictions.

Besides being a yoga style, Moshka Yoga is also considered a lifestyle hinged on a set of philosophies called the 7 Pillars of Moshka, namely:

- *Be Healthy*
- *Be Accessible*
- *Live Green*
- *Sangha (community) Support*
- *Reach Out,*
- *Live to Learn*
- *Be at Peace*

Pranayama Yoga

- *Literally meaning “extension of the life force” Pranayama is a type of yoga that focuses on performing routines and techniques that enhances a yoga practitioner’s capacity to breathe.*

- *Breathing is considered in yoga teachings as the life force, hence developing the ability to breathe is akin to extending the life force of the body.*

Proper breathing is so central to yogic teachings and practice that Pranayama is actually considered as one of five core principles of yoga and often referred to as The Art of Yoga Breathing.

When Pranayama is united with the Asanas (physical positions that open up the body), the highest form of self-discipline and purification of both mind and body is thus achieved.

While practices of Pranayama are often integrated in various types of yoga, some schools also offer specific Pranayama Yoga classes.

These are structured around training the

student to breathe properly and powerfully by following a succession of breathing exercises that help control and balance inhalation and exhalation.

Yin Yoga

- *Yin yoga involves the carrying out of yoga poses for longer periods of time, typically five minutes or longer for every asana pose.*

- *Designed as a slow-paced yoga, Yin Yoga is designed to work the deeper joints and connective tissues of the body rather the superficial tissues of the muscles that other types of yoga target.*

For this reason, Yin Yoga is also referred to as Yoga for the Joints.

Yin Yoga is considered as a marriage of Hindu yoga and Chinese medicine in that it works to improve the flow of qi, which is the subtle energy said to run through the meridian passages of the body.

Improving the flow of qi is said to bring benefits of improved organ health, immunity to diseases and a generally healthy emotional state.

There are specific sub-schools of Yin Yoga, however, that incorporate more dynamic and active asanas or poses that stimulate the “yang” to stretch the muscles and generate heat.

Uses And Goals

- *The asanas performed in Yin Yoga are designed to apply moderate pressure to the tendons, ligaments and fascia, otherwise known as the connective tissues of the body, in order to*

increase circulation in the joints and build greater flexibility.

- With its slow pace, Yin Yoga is also considered as a more meditative type of yoga aimed at developing awareness of a person's inner silence to achieve a universally interconnecting quality of being.

Nidra Yoga

Sometimes called Dream Yoga, Nidra is a powerful and ancient yoga technique that traces its roots from the Tantra Yoga tradition.

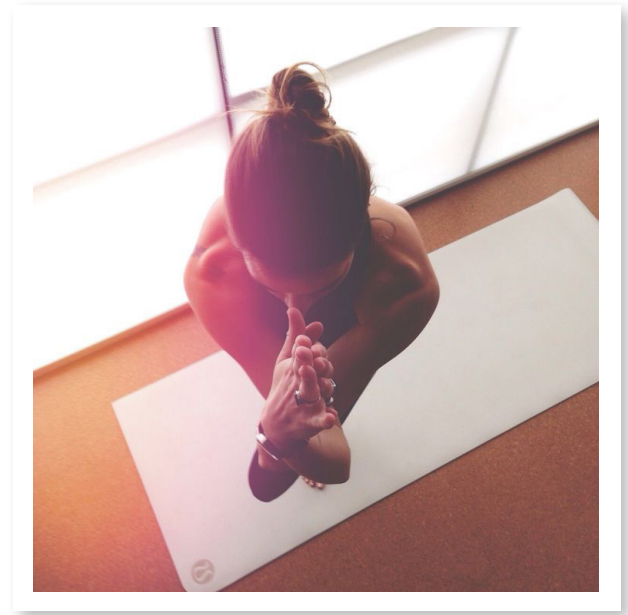
- Nidra Yoga literally means “sleep yoga” in the Sanskrit language, hence practicing Nidra Yoga enables a yogi to reach an altered state of consciousness in order to relax and heal.

Although Nidra Yoga is Tantric in origin, it is also strongly connected to Raja Yoga due to its adherence to the principles of the Eight Limbs of Yoga. Specifically, three of these eight principles are practiced in Nidra Yoga, namely control of breathing (Pranayama), deep concentration (Dharana), and control of the senses (Pratyaharya).

Uses And Goals

- Nidra Yoga enables yogis to achieve deep relaxation of the nervous system, restorative sleep and sedation without having to resort to chemical agents.

- Those who practice Nidra Yoga are also said to develop a higher level of imagination and enlightenment.



Kriya Yoga

- Kriya Yoga is a meditative yoga style first introduced by yoga master Paramhansa Yogananda.

- It is a yoga technique that promises an accelerated spiritual growth to achieve a state of union with the Divine.

Kriya Yoga is a highly meditative yoga style derived from the yogic teachings of the Bhagavad Gita, particularly detachment from worldly actions (Karma Yoga), mental discipline (Jnana Yoga) and unconditional love (Bhakti Yoga).

Uses And Goals

- While promoting meditation, this type of yoga also focuses on mastering breathing techniques to skillfully control the mind.

Namaste Yoga

Namaste Yoga is a modified branch of Hatha Yoga introduced by Canadian therapist and yoga instructor Kate Potter in 2005 through a yoga television series featuring choreographed yoga routines performed against a backdrop of calm scenery and music.

The local success of the hit television series paved the way for its international television broadcast and home video release, thus earning international popularity for the Namaste style of yoga.

- *Namaste Yoga is a comprehensive practice that offers a path to becoming healthier, fitter and happier by following a series of recorded yoga routines.*

- *It enables people to practice yoga in the comfort of their own homes all the while aided by striking visuals, relaxing music and a unique sequence of asana poses that promote mental peace, body strength and soulful meditation.*

- *Namaste Yoga poses are crafted as graceful and flowing movements that promote learning through repetition.*

Owing to the success of Potter's franchise, other schools of Namaste Yoga also emerged both as video series and as performed in yoga studios using multimedia tools to create a space that is highly conducive to practicing yoga.





BREATHING



Breathing goes beyond sustaining life, and according to yoga principles it is integral to both emotional and physical health when proper breathing techniques are used.

Yoga and science promote proper breathing methods in order to bring oxygen to the blood and to the brain. This type of calculated breathing brings the highest form of purification and self-discipline for both the mind and the body.

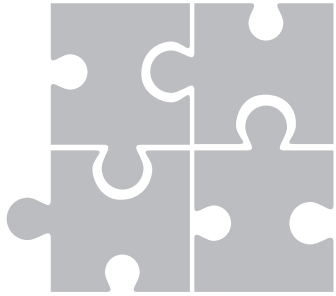
Breathing With Yoga And Meditation

The primary goal of perfecting yoga breathing is to prepare the person for the meditation phase in both body and mind.

In general, many people do not understand the importance of, nor how to breathe properly. Most of us breathe with short and shallow breaths, which doesn't carry adequate amounts of oxygen to the brain or the blood stream for optimal health.

In yoga, breathing is an art where deep breaths are taken to fill the lungs to their entirety with deep concentration on the process.





REASONS TO DO YOGA

“Yoga is the bringing together of that which was
never separate.”

- Richard Miller, Yoga Teacher



Yoga has many purposes and health benefits, and the goals for which people engage in Yoga are plentiful, and some even overlap. Here are some of the most popular.

- *Strength*
- *Flexibility*
- *Inner Peace*
- *Emotional Well Being*
- *Energy*
- *Heart Health*
- *Enlightenment*
- *Focus and Concentration*
- *Improved Memory*
- *Relaxation*
- *Weight Loss*
- *Pregnancy Health*
- *Fertility*
- *Disease Prevention*
- *Better Sex Life*



BEST YOGA FOR BEGINNERS

“Meditation brings wisdom; lack of mediation leaves ignorance. Know well what leads you forward and what holds you back, and choose the path that leads to wisdom.”

- Buddha Quotes



Yoga has been proven as a simple, powerful and effective practice to achieve mental clarity, body strength, physical fitness and inner peace. The diversity in currently practiced yoga styles, however, may also prove difficult for beginners to decide on the yoga style that best suits them, or even choose which specific yoga class to attend.

When choosing which yoga type is best to start with, it is important to bear in mind that different yoga styles cater to different abilities pertaining to agility, flexibility, strength and discipline.

While practicing yoga generally develops these abilities progressively as a matter of principle, the right style will simply fit the right body and those new to yoga may find it more rewarding to start on a yoga style that are less physically demanding just in case they fall short of the physical capabilities required by tougher routines and styles.

It is also important to consider that certain types of yoga offer a path to specific goals and objectives. Those wanting to try yoga as an alternative exercise regimen may, for example, be disappointed with the more meditative types of yoga, while those who seek the path of yoga to slow down and achieve peace and relaxation may feel unnecessarily challenged by yoga styles that require tons of energy and buckets of sweat.

If you want to begin practicing yoga but are not quite sure which style suits you, this summarized list featuring six of the most commonly practiced

yoga styles may prove helpful especially if you consider your specific needs and abilities:

Ashtanga Yoga

- *In a nutshell:* Intense and fast-paced yoga built on a sequence of strenuous poses linked by precise breathing techniques
- *Benefits:* Builds cardiovascular strength, improves circulation, develops flexibility, gets rid of toxins through profuse sweating, increases mental focus
- *Best for:* Physically fit individuals who want to enhance their strength, stamina and flexibility while also developing mental clarity; Individuals who want to learn a set of techniques and poses that they can do alone at home
- *Avoid if:* You want a gentle and slow yoga style; You have a shoulder injury (this style involves a lot of low push-ups)

Bikram Yoga

- *In a nutshell:* Comprehensive yoga involving a rigid succession of 26 poses and two breathing exercises performed in a room heated to 105 degrees Fahrenheit and kept at a 40% humidity level
- *Benefits:* Builds cardiovascular flexibility, muscle strength and endurance; Promotes weight loss
- *Best for:* Individuals who want to lose weight through yoga or want to recover fast from an injury; Those who really want to sweat it out and cannot be bothered by a hot environment
- *Avoid if:* You are pregnant or have high blood pressure; You don't like to sweat buckets and prefer yoga classes with relaxing music

Hatha Yoga

- *In a nutshell:* A slow-paced and gentle yoga that focuses on breathing and meditation
- *Benefits:* Relieves stress, tones the organs to prevent diseases such as hypertension, arthritis and diabetes, helps manage asthma and bronchitis
- *Best for:* Those who want to de-stress, calm down and relax at the end of a long and difficult day; Individuals with mobility issues; Older people; Those who want to learn the basics of yoga
- *Avoid if:* You are looking for a more rigorous yoga experience and cannot bear listening to slow music

Iyengar Yoga

- *In a nutshell:* Meticulous and patiently slow yoga that emphasizes proper body alignment and uses yoga props such as blankets, cushions, blocks and straps
- *Benefits:* Improves balance, coordination, strength, flexibility and posture
- *Best for:* Beginners who want challenge and are not bothered by keeping still for long periods of time; Older people or those recovering from injuries
- *Avoid if:* You prefer fast-paced routines, a lighter yoga atmosphere or a more meditative experience

Power Yoga

- *In a nutshell:* Intense and athletic yoga that offers a vigorous and fitness-based approach to yoga by merging breathing and movement coordination poses with calisthenics
- *Benefits:* Helps build muscle power, core

strength and agility

- *Best for:* Individuals who shy away from chanting and meditation and want an Ashtanga in steroids
- *Avoid if:* You have limited mobility, prefer a more quiet and contemplative yoga experience or have an aversion to gym workouts

Vinyasa Yoga

- *In a nutshell:* Fast-paced but smoothly flowing yoga that focus on synchronizing movements with breathing via a series of 12 poses called the Sun Salutation
- *Benefits:* Improves strength and balance, tones the muscles and energizes the body; Reduces the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease or diabetes
- *Best for:* Those who want their yoga routines to be fast and diverse
- *Avoid if:* You want a gentle and slow yoga experience, have mobility issues or are nursing a shoulder injury

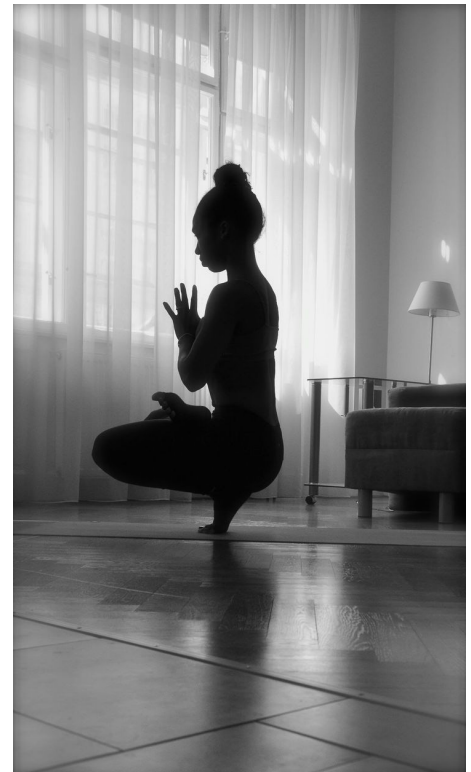
Studying the different schools and styles of yoga will enable you to get more acquainted with this ancient yet constantly developing practice and assist you in finding the right type of yoga that fits your needs and preferences.

Choosing A Yoga Style

You have probably heard that there is a yoga fad among celebrities. You have probably seen flyers in your community inviting you to a yoga class. You're convinced that yoga will do wonders for your health so you decide to try yoga.

The first thing that confronts you when you do an internet search on the term "yoga" is that there are so many different kinds of yoga. You wonder which type of yoga will work best for you.

There are so many types and styles of yoga to choose from: there's Ashtanga, Bikram, Hatha, Iyengar, Kripalu, Kundalini and even Power Yoga to name a few.



What Is The Best Fit For You

The type of yoga that will work best for you depends upon your purpose and your overall health condition. Some people want to do yoga so that they can relax; others intend to practice yoga to break out in sweat as a physical workout; others want yoga as part of a physical fitness regime; others simply want to increase their strength and flexibility. Still, others want to do yoga in order to gain an overall feeling of well-being.

The first person you should ask about choosing one type of yoga is your doctor – your GP. If you are seeing a cardiologist, then it will be best to ask your cardiologist which one will work best

for you. Some doctors are more informed about the benefits of yoga than others so it might be best to gather information on several types of yoga before you talk to your doctor about it.

Some yoga types are more strenuous and vigorous than others. If exertion is not recommended for you, then perhaps the gentler types of yoga will better fit you. Among the more strenuous types of yoga are Astanga and Bikram. They involve many complicated poses that are not suitable for beginners. Bikram yoga is conducted in a room heated to about 100 degrees and is not generally recommended for people with diabetes or hypertension.

Gentler yoga styles which are recommended for beginners include Hatha yoga which combines different yoga styles to create simple basic poses; Iyengar Yoga which is slower paced and uses interesting props like belts and bolsters. Kripalu yoga is known for slow movements.

The difference between the more challenging and vigorous types of yoga and the gentler types of yoga is not the level of difficulty of the poses. Yoga does not correspond to the Western idea of physical exercise along the lines of “no-pain-no-gain.” Yoga promotes relaxation and greater awareness of your mind and your body.

Thus, in choosing a type of yoga, you must also consider that yoga is a philosophy – a way of looking at the world and functioning in it. The physical exercise afforded by yoga is just one component of the yoga philosophy. There is also the component of disciplined slow breathing. Some say that it is actually the slow breathing that gives a feeling of inner quiet and control over one’s emotions. The poses only help you learn how to control your breathing so that you can make your body obey. If you really think about it, it is learning how to breathe deeply and slowly that gives the feeling of well-being.

For yoga to work for you, you must adopt the Eastern perspective about the connections between the mind and the body. Eastern thinking emphasizes that one’s state of mind dictates the body’s state of wellbeing. If one does not learn how to control the mind (that is, the responses to stress and adversity in the daily life) the body

weakens and becomes more susceptible to wear and tear.

Perhaps the more vigorous yoga is for you if you want a thorough physical workout that increases strength as well as agility of your muscles. Choose the gentler yoga types if you are a beginner and if your desire is to gain control of your emotions and your thoughts by controlling your breathing.



YOGA POSES AND POSTURES

“Without the Yamas, known as the ethical rules,
there is no success in Yoga”

- Sri Dharma Mittra, Master Yoga Teacher



Yoga is comprised of various poses, known as Asanas that are performed with a particular posture.

These postures create the poses, which facilitate the perfect union between mind and body. There are numerous Yoga poses that range from the very basic to the very complex and advanced reserved for those who have practiced for some time.

There are some that stretch the body, build flexibility, others that aid in weight loss, while many just help in stamina building and are a tool for staying physically fit. There are also plenty of poses that reduce aches and pains in various body parts.

At advance levels of yoga, one finds a mix of some poses which together forms a single exercise.

Relaxation Poses

The relaxation poses used in Yoga are known as Savasanas, and facilitate meditation, a deep relaxation state. These poses are typically performed at the end of a class.

4 Basic Asanas

Standing Yoga Poses

These poses are done while standing, and there are various postures that are included under this category.

Examples:

- *Standing sideways while bending one arm*
- *Sideways bend using both arms*
- *Spinal Twist*
- *Bending forward while standing*
- *Tree Pose*
- *Chair Pose*

Sitting Yoga Poses

These poses are done in a sitting position.

Examples:

- *Inclined plane posture*
- *Half Spinal Twist posture*
- *The Butterfly*
- *The Cat Stretch*
- *The Child pose*

Lying On Back Yoga Poses

These poses are done while lying on the back, and include:

- *The Superman pose*
- *The Fish pose*
- *The Locust pose*
- *The Bridge*

Lying On Stomach Yoga Poses

These poses are performed while lying on the stomach, and include various postures.

Examples:

- *The Shoulder Stand*
- *Wind-Relieving pose*
- *The Plow pose*
- *The Corpse pose*

Best Practices For Yoga Poses

- Yoga is best done on an empty stomach to avoid constipation.
- Force or pressure should not be used when executing the poses.
- The body needs to be stable and not trembling completely avoided.
- The head and heels need to be lowered slowly to avoid any physical injury.
- Breathing needs to be well controlled at all times.
- Also important is to never speed up the exercises, but, instead to have full control of your muscles and regulate the breathing.
- It is important to learn Yoga in the proper way, and that includes, all elements: the poses, breathing, meditative and relaxation.



BEGINNER POSES IMAGES

Many of the poses in yoga look deceptively simple, but in reality, they are not. They require the utmost concentration and one has to do them perfectly for the best results.



Namaste



Tree Pose



Child Pose



Chair Pose



Downward Dog



The Crescent



High Lunge Left And Right



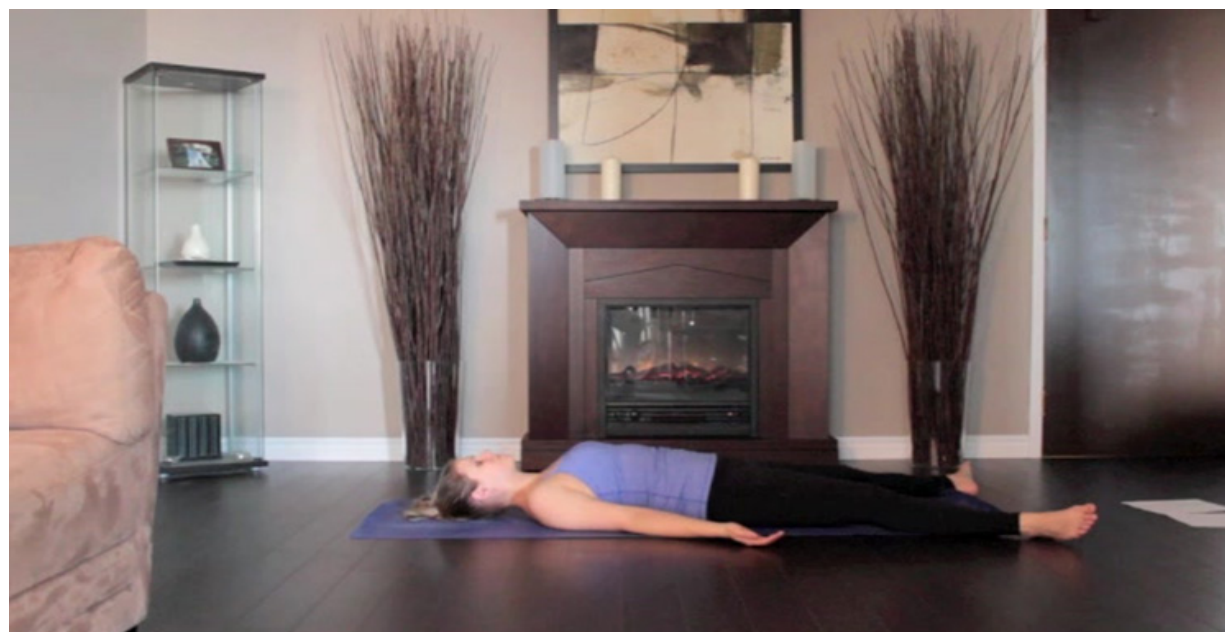
Standing Forward Bend



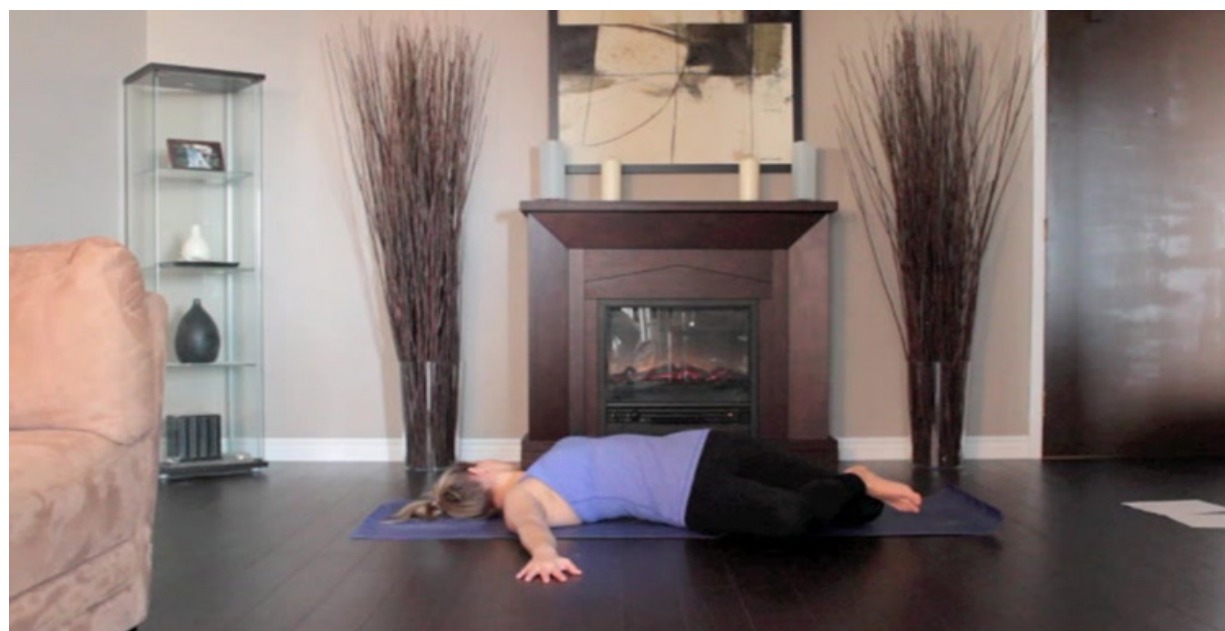
The Bridge



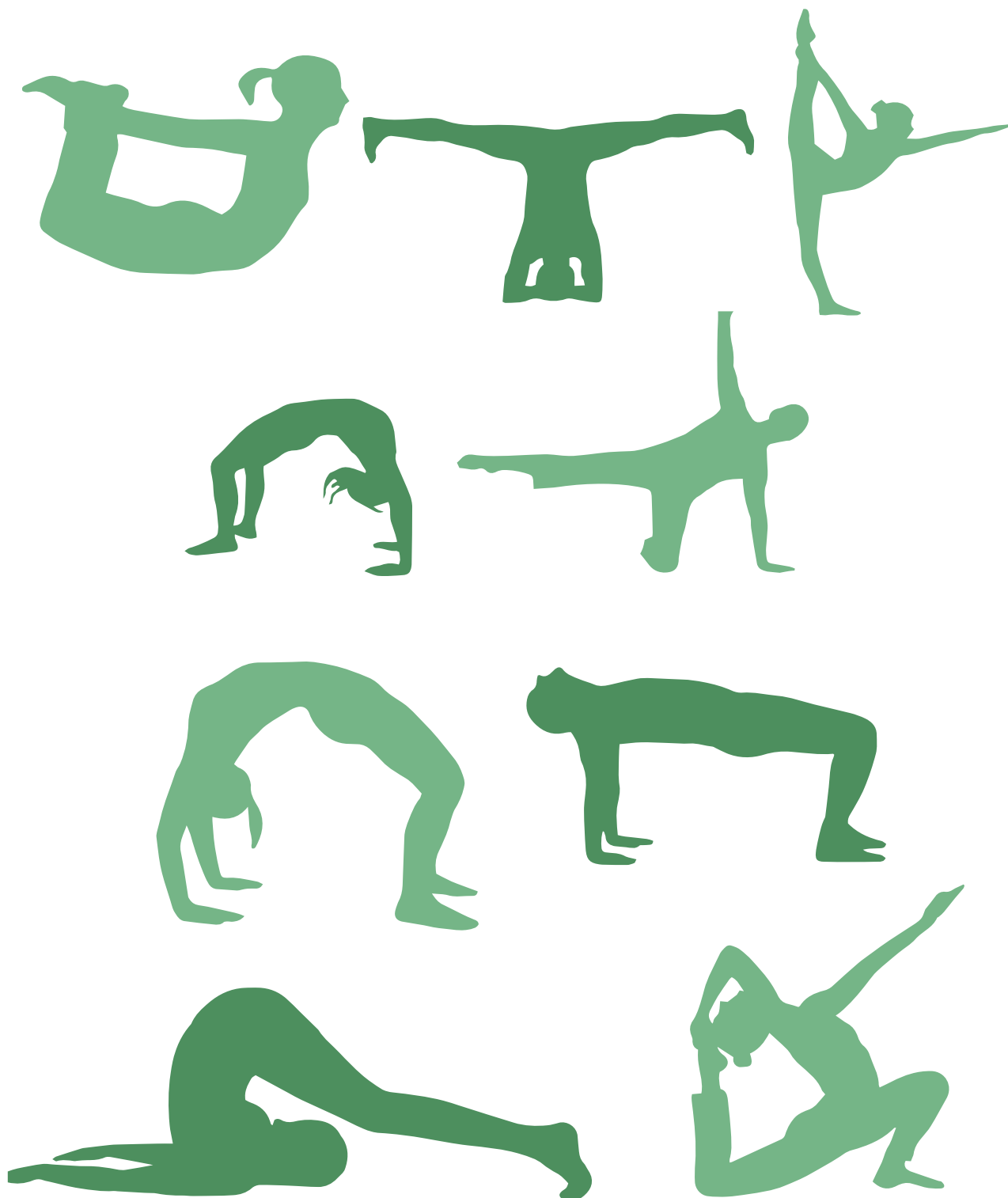
Savasana



Laying Twist (Chakrasana)



Here is a look at some of the more advanced poses



HOW TO LEARN AND DO YOGA

“True yoga is not about the shape of your body, but the shape of your life. Yoga is not to be performed; yoga is to be lived. Yoga doesn’t care about what you have been; yoga cares about the person you are becoming. Yoga is designed for a vast and profound purpose, and for it to be truly called yoga, its essence must be embodied.”

- Aadil Palkhivala



There are two main ways to get started with Yoga, first you can sign up at a formal Yoga studio or even classes given at your local gym or you can do it at home with one of the many excellent Yoga DVD workout programs available for purchase. If finances allow you can also hire a private yogi to be your guide.

Yoga Classes

How To Find Yoga Classes

Yoga classes are readily available all over the country, and you can use www.yogafinder.com to search by zip code and find Yoga classes, retreats, workshops and even training to become teacher.

How Classes Work And What To Expect

Typically a class lasts 75 minutes. 15-20 minutes is spent on breathing, chanting, and warming up, then come the Asanas and it ends with about 15-20 minutes of relaxation poses (Savasanas).

Proper Clothing

Any type of unrestrictive clothing works best. Remember that you will be stretching, bending and twisting. Yoga pants are a good option because they are designed for this, but, really any stretchy clothing will work fine, including, tights, leggings, bicycle shorts, and t-shirts and tank tops.

You won't need socks for the workout, but, they might come in handy during the relaxation Savasana time as your feet might get cold.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR BEGINNERS

“Yoga teaches us to cure what need not be endured
and endure what cannot be cured.”

- B.K.S. Iyengar



Is Yoga Safe?

It's important to consult your physician before starting any fitness regimen, including yoga as some of the poses maybe unsafe for certain individuals.

This is especially important if you have any of the following conditions:

- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Diabetic eye disease (diabetic retinopathy)
- Orthopedic problems

Other than that, yoga is practiced by millions and is known to be a safe, and 100% beneficial workout.

Choosing the Right Instructor

The best yoga instructors will have apprenticed with a skilled guru for many years before becoming teachers themselves.

Those have taken a simple course in yoga, may not be the best option to help you achieve your goals.

It is terribly important that the teacher has reached a certain level of self-development and has mastered the poses, postures, breathing and meditation techniques that are essential for your success and safety from injury.

Beginner's Checklist

- ☐ Here are some questions to ask yourself before starting yoga, as this can help you better prepare for the whole yoga experience. Have I checked with my doctor?
- ☐ What are my goals for and reasons to start yoga? What do I want to achieve?
- ☐ Am I committed to get the most out of my yoga experience?
- ☐ Have I researched all the yoga styles and chosen the right one for me?
- ☐ Do I want to join a class, hire a private teacher or use a Yoga DVD?
- ☐ Have I researched the teachers adequately to be sure they are qualified and have reached the required level of expertise needed to guide me?
- ☐ Since yoga is a path to personal development, are there any people whose negativity I need to watch out for as I begin this journey? Who will I deal with such people?
- ☐ Do I have the proper equipment needed for working out at home, a mat? Props? Yoga DVD?

Remember the goal of yoga is to make you feel happy, healthy, confident and at peace.





EQUIPMENT FOR YOGA

"The mind is everything. What you
think you become."

— Buddha



Yoga Pants

If you have work pants and home pants, and even exercise pants, or party trousers, then why not a yoga pant?

A key to doing yoga is relaxation and comfort and it is of no use if you are constantly thinking about the way you look in the pants or if they restrict your movement in any way.



Yoga Mat

The most important element or equipment in practicing yoga is probably the yoga mat. It ensures that there is a proper cushion for your body. It provides a balance for many exercises and prevents you from getting hurt while you do certain poses.

It also helps in giving you the right posture while you meditate or doing sitting and lying exercises. Most of the newer mats are ergonomic and are a necessity while doing yoga.



Towel

Bring a towel to your first yoga class or have one ready when you are doing Yoga to a workout DVD. A towel will help with sweat, and also can be used to prop your head on the mat as needed.

Blocks and Wedges

Blocks are specially designed brick-sized pieces of foam that assist with specific body alignment that is necessary to do some of the Yoga poses. These are typically supplied at official classes, or you can buy your own, greatly discounted on Amazon.



Straps

These are made from cotton and are useful for stretching and holding poses, especially for those that involve the legs. Available for purchase and most Yoga studios provide them as part of the class.

Yoga Shoes

Along with yoga pants, comes the need of yoga shoes. Why is that important? Well, a lot of yoga exercises require you to be on your feet. And then there are exercises where you need to touch your feet and bring them close to your body.

So for the sake of hygiene as well as for protecting your feet, shoes are important for yoga. Also, there are many exercises that test your balance. Proper shoes will give you a good grip. They are also helpful in navigating some difficult poses much in the way proper running shoes aid in jogging.



Yoga Music

With that we come to yoga music. Yoga music is a part of the setup that helps you in keeping your focus and not being distracted by the outside world.

It also helps in concentrating on the exercise and maintaining counts while doing poses.

Appropriate yoga music also helps to become entranced in meditation.

Music sets the mood, and if spas and massages are better with music, then why not have the same for yoga?

Yoga Journal

Lastly, if you are doing yoga for a particular reason, it is important to maintain a journal about it. Yoga can also satisfy some goals that you have set for yourself.

Setting goals, tracking them and following through will help you in your yoga journey.

And what better way to keep a track and stay motivated than by maintaining a journal?

You can also write down how you feel after doing yoga or how it helped.





FINAL THOUGHTS

“Have wisdom in your actions, and faith
in your merits.”

- Yogi Bhanjan





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 **KAPWING**

At this point you should have some insight into:

- ☑ *What yoga is and isn't and specifically that it is a science and not a religion.*
- ☑ *The history of yoga.*
- ☑ *The main benefits of yoga, including those for external and internal health, those for emotions and cognition, as well as, disease prevention and fitness.*
- ☑ *The best yoga practices for beginners and considerations that are important when beginning a Yoga regimen.*
- ☑ *All the different types of yoga styles and a glimpse into the various poses for both beginners and advanced practitioners.*
- ☑ *How to get started with yoga and the various equipment that is needed and is available to begin your journey.*

