

EASY YOGA

A beginner's yoga
guide for the girl on
the move

Adithi Mathews



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An Introduction: Yoga, as a practice



If you ask a few people ‘What is the most important thing in their life?’, you are most likely to get a range of answers – like love, family, financial security and a good job. But if we look a bit deeper into the true theme that weaves together these answers, it is happiness. Immaterial and material things that are important to people, are important mostly because it provides them - happiness. And it is exactly this quest for happiness that led ancient sages and yogis of India to discover Yoga.

Yoga is an ancient mind-body science which was developed 5000 years ago and has its foundations in ancient India. In Sanskrit, an ancient Indian language, the word ‘Yoga’ means ‘to yoke or to unite’. This refers to merging the individual consciousness with the universal consciousness, which is the ultimate aim of Yoga. To achieve this unity, the ancient yogis developed an eight fold path which includes – rules to adhere by, breathing techniques, physical postures and meditation. The yogis believed that we find true happiness and enlightenment when we are in union with the divine consciousness and the secret of yoga was the key to that union.

Today when we use the word 'Yoga' we are mostly referring to one of the limbs of yoga – Asana or the physical practice involving postures. We have to understand and also distinguish, that the postures are just the tip of the iceberg and the entire concept is much deeper. Also, Yoga is not a religion, it is a practice, a way of life to harmonize your body, mind and soul.

There are plenty of reasons to start a yoga practice today and these answers are backed and proven by science. Yoga improves concentration, mental focus and boosts creativity. It is most effective in combating stress, depression, anxiety and a host of other mental disorders. Time and again, regular practice of Yoga has helped people lose weight, tone their body, rehabilitate themselves after injury and gain self-confidence. Unlike other physical sports which sap your energy, an hour of yoga will leave you feeling energized and fresh. In short, the practice of Yoga postures will make you feel better. Yoga is effortless, easy and convenient, and is the perfect answer for a busy schedule.

To practise yoga, one does not need gadgets, expensive memberships or be dependent on the weather or space. All one needs is simple yoga mat, your own body and breath and a little bit of time and you can practise Yoga any time and any place.

If you have promised yourself a healthy and fit body, and lack the time to devote to going regularly to the gym or if you're feeling sapped of energy in the mornings for a run, then yoga is your simplified answer. Just spend an hour a day on stretching, breathing and practising the postures. Not only will you notice the changes physically, you will find a balance in your mind and a better sense of awareness.

Welcome to the world of Yoga, it's a promise that you will learn to love yourself.



Guidelines for your practice

A very renowned Yoga teacher from India Sri K, Pattabi Jois often said, 'Practise and all is coming.' The reason we refer to Yoga as a practice is because it is constantly evolving and ever changing. It is advised that new yoga practitioners spend some time perfecting the basic postures before moving towards an intermediate level. Most basic postures outlined in this book are for beginners.

Sometimes a simple forward fold may seem daunting, but allow yourself to practise the pose even if it is for a few breaths every day. Over a few weeks you will notice how your body has adapted and changed and how you have made progress. It's called a practice for a reason and practising yoga makes you perfect. To help you enjoy your practice, listed below are a few general guidelines.



Time – Set aside a time for your Yoga practise depending on your daily schedule. Practising at a regular time every day syncs your body to the practise a bit more effectively. Although, many argue that a morning practise is most beneficial, there is no hard and fast rule about the precise time of day one needs practise Yoga. It is advisable not to practise strenuous postures right before your bedtime, as it will leave you feeling energised making it difficult to fall asleep. Practise at a time that is suits your lifestyle.

Duration – An hour a day for six days a week is recommended to notice the benefits of the practice. But, this guideline either isn't set in stone. If you are short of time a 15 minute practice involving about 3-4 poses is enough. The length of your practice is irrelevant, what is important is that you practise regularly.

Location – Create a small practice space at your home. Ensure this place is clean, free from clutter, is well ventilated and heated depending on the weather. Practising in nature is also a great way to be outdoors and feel more connected to your practice.

Food – Avoid eating a heavy meal or drinking too much liquids before your practice. It is always best to practise Yoga on an empty stomach. But if you have eaten, ensure that leave a gap of 2-3 hrs before you practise. Liquids are okay an hour before your practise. As much as possible, avoid drinking water in between your practice.

Clothing – Wear loose comfortable clothes that in no way restrict movement. Also, yoga is best practised bare foot.

Tools – The only accessory to practising Yoga is a good quality yoga mat, so invest in a mat that is slip resistant. Keep a blanket or a cushion nearby if you need some padding for a few postures.

Health – Yoga can be practised by anyone and everyone irrespective of age or body composition. But there are a few precautions one needs to keep in mind when it comes to health concerns. If you have a few serious health issues, kindly seek medical advice from a doctor before starting your practice. Also, under each pose listed in this book, is a section called precautions which mentions when to avoid certain postures.



Starting your practice



When it comes to your own personal practice, try and incorporate the yoga tenet of Ahimsa which translates to non-violence in Sanskrit. This means, be gentle with your body while practising Yoga and also be being aware of your body's capabilities and limitations. Listen to your body, if a pose does not feel right, guide your way out of the posture and attempt it on another day.

The longer you hold a posture, the more benefits you can reap from your Yoga practice. As a beginner, start by holding the posture for a few breaths. As you advance in your practice, set little goals to practise longer – for e.g. holding the pose up to half a minute or a minute. Be patient and allow your body to sink into a posture fully. Don't attempt a posture for the sake of attempting it in a hurry. Savour the pose, breathe deeply and be aware.

Every pose comprises of a few steps, as a beginner learn the steps of moving into a pose and releasing the pose. Once you get familiar, use breath cues mentioned in the book while entering and leaving a pose. While you are in a pose, remember it is important to relax your body. Tensing your body can block the subtle flow of energy, and could leave you drained after a practise.

In the practice of yoga, breath is not only essential, it is crucial. While staying in a pose, focus on deep rhythmic breathing. This not only calms the body, but also relaxed the mind.

Always begin and end your practise with Shavasana or corpse pose. Remember to at least spend 5 minutes in this pose.

Maintain a small diary about your practice. Jot down points you have noticed about yourself while you practise, or write about your progress. A yoga diary, is a great way to stay motivated and on track.

Most importantly learn to have fun with your practise. Play, breathe, enjoy and appreciate all the things your body can do. It is a wonderful gift.

