

5 THINGS THAT EVERY BEGINNER SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOGA

Soon after beginning a yoga practice you might find yourself wondering why you did not do this sooner. By developing a solid foundation it is possible to remain free from injury and reap the benefits in every area of your life. Yoga is a fantastic tool and has something to offer everyone.

1 What does the word Yoga mean?

The word yoga comes from the Sanskrit word 'yuj' which means 'to yoke' or 'join'. Sanskrit is the ancient eastern language in which yoga has its roots. All physical forms of yoga come under the Hatha umbrella. 'Ha' means 'sun' and 'tha' means 'moon'. Hatha yoga literally translates to mean the joining of the sun and the moon. It is through yoga that we work to balance opposites and experience a sense of union between mind, body, soul and universe.

2 What to expect in your first yoga class

Students usually arrive a few minutes early to take a moment to relax prior to the class. A yoga class starts either lying on your back or sitting crossed legged (those who have practised for a while might be in Lotus). The teacher will talk you through breathing and techniques to help prepare both body and mind. Many classes start by chanting Om three times.

You will then move through a sequence of postures whilst breathing slowly, including floor-based postures, standing postures and balancing postures. Class structures will vary from teacher to teacher. The practice always concludes with a relaxation in the Corpse pose known as Savasana.



3 How to practise
When you practise yoga the most important thing to do is listen to your body. Do not worry about what anyone else is doing. Breathe slowly, you don't need to make a big sound with your breath, just let the breath flow in and out through your nose, the rest will come. Never force your body into postures or positions that are uncomfortable, regardless of what might be happening around you.

If the class chant 'Om', listen and just let the sound pass through you, join in the chant when you feel comfortable.

Take your time, move slowly and mindfully and do not rush to progress, the more you focus on alignment and basic postures the greater the benefits, there is no point adding additional stresses by trying to do too much too soon. Practise regularly and safely. This is why it is called a yoga practice.

4 What to wear
Practise with bare feet. A long singlet/ vest or a t-shirt with a waistband and yoga pants or leggings with a high waist are great additions to your yoga wardrobe. It is important to feel comfortable so you can perform postures that fold, twist or even invert the body confidently and not spend your time adjusting your clothing. Don't forget socks and something warm for the final relaxation.

A non-slip yoga mat is essential, but many classes do supply them. However, a mat that is just for your use is a good investment.

FEATURED POSTURE

Gentle Spinal Twist (Jathara Parvrittasana)
This posture is extremely nurturing, it gently stretches the lower back, chest, shoulder girdle and abdomen.

HOW TO PERFORM

Begin lying on your back with your knees bent, your arms out level with your shoulders and your palms facing up. Inhale and as you exhale let your knees fall to the right and turn your head to the left. Hold it here and breathe slowly in and out through your nose for at least ten complete breaths and then repeat on the other side.

5 Why Savasana?
Savasana (the Corpse pose) is the most important part of the class, please make sure that you stay and enjoy this experience. Savasana allows the body and mind to recover and integrate the yoga practices into your daily life. Yoga encourages good habits and new neurological pathways to form during Savasana and this information can be processed.



WRITTEN BY

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