

# Yoga Basics – A Short Primer for Beginners

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**W**elcome to Yoga. Thanks for coming, we're glad you're here. If you're brand new to Yoga, this short primer is intended to help introduce you to the practice of Yoga. There is background on Yoga, the equipment you'll need to practice, a standard class format, tips & customs, and a few basic poses to help you get started. There is also a Digital Toolkit at the end of this Primer to help you research more on those Yoga topics or poses you may be curious about.



Yoga means “union; to join; connect”. In Yoga practice, we connect the body, mind and spirit. Yoga combines the practice of physical poses (“Asanas”), with controlled breathing (“Pranayama”) and meditation. Yoga is a physical and mental exercise. The benefits include flexibility, balance, mental focus and strength. There are many types of Yoga; the links in the Toolkit section can introduce you to several types of Yoga.

My practice is rooted in breath-based Hatha Yoga. It is a gentler type of Yoga and very suitable for beginners. Hatha is derived from the Sanskrit words meaning sun and moon. Hatha Yoga combines the Asanas with breathwork – inhaling and exhaling – with certain movement or stillness in the posture. You may decide you enjoy a faster or more intense type of Yoga (e.g. Vinyasa or Ashtanga), and it is always suggested for you to explore and find the Yoga that suits you best. In my practice there is never judgement or competition. Everyone's body is different in makeup and capability and everyone finds their own perfect Yoga practice in their own perfect way.

## Equipment for Yoga Practice:

- You! A sense of curiosity, openness and humor is helpful too.
- The most essential equipment is your Yoga mat. I recommend one that is 5mm thick for beginners. Standard size is 24 inches wide and 68 inches long. I like the Gaiam brand for beginners; Gaiam is cost effective (\$18-\$30) and holds up well in my experience. If your knees are sensitive you may opt to go to a 6mm or greater thickness. I have had positive experience with both PVC and TPE material although TPE is considered a higher standard. Some Yoga brands are listed in the Digital Toolkit.
- Often essential are 2 blocks and 1 strap. Many studios and gyms provide these to students. Blocks are typically 9x4x6” and made of sturdy foam. Blocks are used for sitting, alignment and support in more difficult poses. Straps are either 6 ft or 10 ft (I recommend 10ft, double D rings). Straps are used for stretching, for pose modifications, and deepening. If you are planning on doing Yoga at home then I definitely recommend obtaining blocks and straps.
- Comfortable, loose clothing. Sweats are fine, as are Yoga pants or shorts.
- Depending on the style of Yoga practiced, some studios provide bolsters, blankets and meditation pillows. I recommend waiting on these items until you move further into your practice.



A typical studio/gym Hatha based Yoga practice consists of these general elements:

- Opening - Centering/Intention: Arriving on the mat, settling, mindful breathing, intention
- Warm-ups/Stretches: Slowly opening & expanding the body, warming the main muscle groups
- Asanas (Postures): In a 60-minute class, usually 10-15 breath-based Asanas of varying types
- Savasana: A focused relaxation, meditation, sometimes guided, often with silence
- Closing – a recognition of our work in Yoga practice, gratitude, revisiting intention

### Customs & Etiquette in Yoga

- **Minimize eating or drinking 2 hours before practice, use the restroom before practice, and if you are unwell refrain from practice.**
- **Get there early.** Arrive 10 minutes early. This gives you time to set up your mat, gather blocks and strap, say hello to others, and *mindfully ease into practice*. Everyone runs late sometimes; If late, it is most important to be super quiet as you enter and set up, then join in the energy flow gracefully.
- **Turn off your cell phone and other devices before you enter the studio. Water is fine, please be mindful not to spill the water or clang the water containers.**
- **Let the instructor know if you have injuries or if you are new to Yoga or this class.** This is primarily to allow the instructor to suggest modifications to you for certain poses.
- **Stay for Savasana.** It is an important part of Yoga and is a learned meditative practice.
- **Be patient & compassionate with your self.** Find depth in your practice, journey at your own pace. Enjoy the work in your Yoga. Surrender to the practice, not the outcome. Breath in, Breathe out.

A few common poses in Yoga. You can Google any pose and find out more about it!

**Down Dog Pose**



**Child's Pose**



**Table Top Pose**



**Forward Fold**



**Tree Pose**



### Digital Toolkit for Yoga Basics

Different Types of Yoga: <https://yogamedicine.com/guide-types-yoga-styles/>

Discussion of many Yoga Asanas: <https://myyogateacher.com/yoga-asana>

Review of Basic Asanas: <https://www.verywellfit.com/essential-yoga-poses-for-beginners-3566747>

Chris' Yoga Page: <https://guidepathyoga.com>

12 Basic Yoga Poses: <https://www.webmd.com/fitness-exercise/ss/slideshow-yoga-pose-basics>

Sample Brands of Yoga Equipment: Gaiam, Manduka, Liforme, Jade, Ewedoos, Everyday Yoga



*~The Light in me honors the Light in you~*

