



Your understanding and practice of yoga:

This packet of information has been created to give you a better understanding of yoga and deepen your practice.

Always remember to honor your capabilities on any given day!

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TIPS and TECHNIQUES

PREPARATION

Clothing

Wear comfortable clothing which is either loose fitting or made from a stretch fabric. Please be sure that it covers necessary anatomy.

Equipment

I recommend using a sticky mat. You may also choose to use other props such as a block, strap, blanket or bolster. Use equipment that is designed specifically for yoga practice use.

Food

It is best to practice when you have an empty stomach. After you eat, I recommend you wait 2-3 hours before beginning your practice. Snacks such as crackers or a piece of fruit are okay to have before you practice. If you practice yoga on a full stomach, you might experience cramps, nausea, or vomiting, especially in twists, deep forward bends, and inversions. Digesting food also takes energy that can make you lethargic. **No gum in class.**

Time & Place

The best time to practice is either early in the morning or later in the evening. In the morning you are alert, but your body may be stiff. In the evening you may not be as alert, but your body may be more open. You decide what time is best for you and you will move more easily as you practice over time, no matter what time you practice! Remember to adjust your practice schedule for the occurrence of new and full moon phases - moon days.

Your practice environment should be quiet, pleasant, and warm. You will be using deep breathing during practice, so the air should be clear. Minimize drafts so that as you build your internal heat through practice you can retain it. Practicing outside can be quite enjoyable, however, be sure it is warm and there is little breeze.



Yoga Class Etiquette

DO arrive early. Getting to class about 10 minutes early can help you settle in and align your attitude with the purpose of the class. While you're waiting you can practice a pose, do a few stretches, or just sit or lie quietly, breathe, and get centered. Please keep talking to a minimum and in hushed tones as we are all seeking a gentle escape from reality:)

DO place shoes on the shoe shelves so that we can keep our tag line: A barefoot kind of place! Thank you!! Please hang coats and bags in the 'closet' before entering the studio.

DON'T eat for two or three hours before class. If you practice yoga on a full stomach, you might experience cramps, nausea, or vomiting, especially in twists, deep forward bends, and inversions. Digesting food also takes energy that can make you lethargic. No gum in class. Eat a light snack 30 minutes prior to class.

DO let your teacher know about injuries or conditions that might affect your practice. If you are injured or tired, skip poses you can't or shouldn't do, or try a modified version.

DO create an intention. To help you focus, you might find it helpful to dedicate your practice to a certain intention. This might be to become more aware and understanding, more loving and compassionate, or healthier, stronger, and more skillful. Or it might be for the benefit of a friend, a cause—or even yourself.

DON'T bring pagers or cell phones to class. Leave socializing and business outside the studio, so the peace of the practice is not disturbed.

DO be quiet. It's great to share a class with people you know, but it can be distracting to yourself and others to have an extended or loud conversation, especially in our amazing high ceiling/hardwood floored studio!

DO arrive clean and free of scents that might distract or offend others.

DO place your mats where you like them, but please leave the back of the room by the entrance available for those who may arrive after you.

DON'T push it. Instead of trying to go as deeply or completely into a pose as others might be able to do, do what you can without straining or injuring yourself. You'll go farther faster if you take a loving attitude toward yourself and work from where you are, not from where you think you should be.

DO pick up and neatly put away any props you use.



DON'T enter class late or leave early; it's disruptive to others. Classes begin and end on time and in a prompt manner. If you are running behind, please enter the closet area quietly and listen to see if we are moving through asanas. If we are still centering, then hold of on entering until you hear movement. Please do not enter if you are more than 10 minutes late--instead go treat yourself to a trip to the bookstore or a cup of hot tea--take in some breaths and remember to just BE. You allowed yourself this time to BE so you should still honor that even if you are not within the studio :).

DO take time afterwards to think about what you did in class, so you can retain what you learned. Review the poses you practiced, and note any instructions that particularly made sense. Even if you remember just one thing from each class, you'll soon have a lot of information that can deepen your own personal practice.

Don't lose the joy in life and celebrate it every chance you get!

*Cheers,
Trish*



PRECAUTIONS

Asana Transitions

It is important to move in and out of poses gracefully as this transition period is often the time when injuries occur. Be aware of your alignment as you transition. You use control coming into poses so please, please, please use control when coming out of them rather than collapsing/releasing out of them!

Medical Advice

You should seek advice from a qualified yoga instructor and your doctor before you begin your practice, especially if you have any known medical problems.

Pain

Do not overstretch or force yourself into a pose. There should be no pain of injury. Your face and eyes should be soft and not strained. You should be mindful of how deep you can go based on your own capacity at the moment. You may experience mild, temporary pain from growth in your practice, but this feels different from the pain of injury. Be comfortable. Nothing electric.

BREATH & MOVEMENT

Alignment

I recommend finding a qualified teacher as alignment instruction can be very detailed. Pictures and text should only be used for reference. Learn from a qualified teacher the important positioning of the body as there is no substitute for a good teacher. Our muscles have memory and it is just as important to intellectually understand the alignment as well as **FEEL** the appropriate alignment.

Breath

When I refer to breath I am referring to one complete inhale and exhale cycle. You should breathe through your nostrils and not your mouth. Sometimes, when you are trying to do something new or extending beyond your comfort zone, you may have a tendency to hold your breath during an asana. Be mindful and do not hold your breath. If you are not breathing, you are not doing yoga!

Ujjayi Breathing

Ujjayi breathing is victorious breathing. It is a very important aspect of Ashtanga Yoga. The rhythmic dance of Ujjayi breath and movement creates a moving meditation that lights your internal fire and aids the cleansing of your body. It



calms the mind and helps you to focus on the present moment of your practice by bringing awareness to your breath. It is very audible and hearing others breathe this way will help you to remember to breathe, help you to regain the rhythmic quality of your own breath if and when you lose it, and provides a very soothing and peaceful sound to practice to.

You can accomplish Ujjayi breathing by placing your tongue on the soft palate, drawing a slow breath in through your nose and exhaling slowly through your nose. You should work towards your inhale and exhale being the same count in and out. This will create a hissing sound at the back of your throat and it sounds like the inside of the seashell or the ocean. You may sound a little bit like Darth Vader! Remember to 'share your ocean' with your fellow classmates!

Vinyasa

Vinyasa is the union of breath and movement. It is the transition when you exit one asana and start another. This transition allows your body to clear the energy from the asana you are exiting and prepare for the asana you are going to start.

In the Ashtanga Primary series, transitioning between asanas with vinyasa begins after Paschimottasana D. A vinyasa traditionally occurs after every seated asana and after each side of an asana. Our transition indicated is after the asana. You may choose to practice vinyasa traditionally. We have also provided vinyasa options in the Ashtanga Reference yoga type. There are various options for vinyasa which can help you build strength. The options shown are: lolasana, utpluthih, and vinyasa. You may also choose to do a "sit it out" asana by sitting in any cross-legged position with your spine straight.



BANDHAS

What Are Bandhas?

The bandhas are the internal energy locks. When we engage our bandhas we lock certain areas of our body in a specific way to prevent our energy from "leaking" (flowing outward or dissipating). This is a redirection of energy which activates healing energy centers within our body and mind. Bandhas help hold our core energy, which gives us strength and helps prevent injury.

- * Mula Bandha
- * Uddiyana Bandha
- * Jalandhara Bandha
- * Mahabandha

Mula Bandha

This is the 'root' lock. It is located at the base of your spinal column in the perineal muscle. This is a deep muscle in the region between your anus and genitals. If you are familiar with the Keigal exercise recommended for women in preparation for childbirth, then you are familiar with contracting the perineal muscle. Another way to think about it is by imagining you have to stop the flow of urine mid-stream while going to the toilet. The contracting of the perineal muscle is subtle, you do not need to contract your buttocks, but rather focus on contracting only the perineal muscle. Mula Bandha is a key lock in stabilizing the pelvic region during your practice.

Uddiyana Bandha

This lock is located in the area two inches below your navel to your diaphragm and it means 'flying upward'. To engage Uddiyana Bandha, exhale fully and pull your belly inward and upward while lifting your diaphragm. During practice this intensity will not be maintainable, because to inhale fully, Uddiyana Bandha cannot be completely engaged. Imagine keeping the area between your navel and two inches below your navel still while drawing your navel upward towards your spine. This is a more subtle contraction than fully engaging Uddiyana Bandha.

Perform fully engaging Uddiyana Bandha to get in touch with the muscles involved and working your diaphragm. Then, while you are practicing asanas, work at developing the more subtle engagement.



Jalandhara Bandha

This is the 'throat' lock. To engage Jalandhara Bandha, lengthen the back of your neck as if the crown of your head were being pulled by a string and bring your chin back and down towards the space between where your two clavicle bones meet (this is the area just below your Adam's apple). *This lock is not engaged throughout the practice but is used on specific asanas as indicated.*

Mahabandha

When you have Mula Bandha, Uddiyana Bandha and Jalandhara Bandha engaged it is referred to as Mahabandha, the great lock.

MODIFICATIONS

Asana Modifications

I will provide you with many variations for each asana. There are many more ways to adjust each asana based on your physical capacity. I recommend you work with your teacher to create the practice that suits you and to make a path for personal progress. Remember, if anything does not feel quite right then please DO NOT hesitate in asking me for better alignment instruction or further modification. We are all unique in our genetic makeup and of course our life experience. No two bodies are alike! Celebrate and honor your own!

Bend Your Knees

Do not compromise alignment because of tight hamstrings, ***bend your knees.***



INTRODUCTION TO YOGA

What is yoga?

Yoga is the ability to restrain the modifications of the mind-stuff.
Yoga Sutra 1.2

So, yoga is a state in which we are highly aware of our personal affairs and those of the world without being disturbed.

Yoga is a philosophy, a science and an art, which unites the body, mind, and spirit for health and harmony in everyday life. It does not belong to any religion, but it exemplifies some ideas which are common to all religions. Yoga is a spiritual practice, with no preference for religion. As you continue to practice this state called yoga, you will only deepen your understanding of what you truly believe. The only requirements are to act and be attentive to your actions. You will find that yoga not only provides physical benefits, but it can calm your mind, increase your concentration, and give you the ability to cope with stress. It promotes physical and spiritual well-being through a system of personal development.

Yoga has been practiced in India from as early as 6,000 BC. There is a great amount of information written about yoga. A brief list of some of the writings follows.

- The **Vedas** are the books of spiritual knowledge.
- The **Upanisads** and commentaries are the philosophical speculations.
- The **Puranas** tell of the ancient cosmologies.
- The **Ramayana** and **Mahabharata** are two epics.
- The **Bhagavad Gita** is contained in the Mahabharata.
- The **Yoga Sutras of Patanjali** are a set of instructions on how to achieve the state of Yoga.

Eight Limbs of Yoga

Yoga has eight clearly defined components which can be thought of as eight limbs of a tree. These limbs are essential components to the development of your yoga practice. They are:

- **Yama**, ethical disciplines - our attitudes toward our environment.
- **Niyama**, self observation - our attitudes toward ourselves.
- **Asana**, posture - the practice of body exercises.
- **Pranayama**, breath control - the practice of breathing exercises.



- **Pratyahara**, sense withdrawal - the restraint of our senses.
- **Dhyana**, meditation - the ability to develop interactions with what we seek to understand.
- **Dharana**, concentration - the ability to direct our minds.
- **Samadhi**, a state of joy and peace - complete integration with the object to be understood.

There are many different schools of yoga practicing different components of yoga; they all have a common union which we call yoga.

You must begin yoga where you are every day, for your point of departure will always be different:

- Set your starting point based on your condition at the present moment.
- Make your yoga practice sensible and well structured.
- Construct a gradual and intelligent course for your practice.

Remember, there is no competition; there is only where you are, where you are going, and where you will be! Honor and authentically accept:

- Who and what are.
- Our bodies :their size, shape, strength, & flexibility.
- Our phase in life.
- Our surrounding circumstance.



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Asana

The practice of body exercises, yoga poses, or postures

Ashtanga Yoga

Historically, Ashtanga yoga refers to the eight limbed system of practice which was presented by the sage Patanjali in the Yoga Sutras about how to achieve the state of Yoga.

An ancient text thought to be more than 2,000 years old called the Yoga Korunta, was discovered by Krishnamacharya, a famous yogi and philosopher. A system of linked yoga poses are described in detail within this text. Krishnamacharya has handed down this system of yoga to his students, including Sri K. Pattabhi Jois, the director and founder of the Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute in Mysore, India.

Ashtanga Vinyasa yoga is a system of yoga which is taught by Sri K. Pattabhi Jois. He has handed down this system of yoga to thousands of students worldwide. Ashtanga Vinyasa yoga consists of six progressive series of yoga poses. Each series can take between 1 1/2 - 3 hours to complete and is designed to open a particular aspect of the body and mind. Each series is a dynamic flow of poses practiced in a prescribed sequence.

Bandha

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Chakra

Your body's energy centers (vortexes) which are responsible for regulating prana through your body.

Dharana

The ability to direct our minds, concentration

Dhyana

The ability to develop interactions with what we seek to understand, meditation



Eight Limbs of Yoga

Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, Samadhi
Hatha Yoga

A branch of yoga which uses asanas, breath, and meditation to achieve self-transformation and self-transcendence. The translation of the two syllables in the word Hatha are *ha* meaning "sun" and *tha* meaning "moon." The reference to the sun and the moon relates to the balance of masculine aspects—active, hot, sun—and feminine aspects—receptive, cool, moon—within all of us.

Iyengar Yoga

B.K.S. Iyengar, a student of Shri Krishnamacharya, developed this method of Hatha yoga. It is a popular system of yoga in the western world.

Jalandhara Bandha

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Niyama

Our attitudes toward ourselves, self observation

Prana

Your life force.

Pranayama

The practice of breathing exercises, breath control



Pratyahara

The restraint of our senses, sense withdrawal

Samadhi

Complete integration with the object to be understood, a state of joy and peace

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Yama

Our attitudes toward our environment, ethical disciplines

Yoga

Yoga is the ability to restrain the modifications of the mind-stuff. Yoga means 'union'. *Yoga Sutra 1.2. It is a union of the body with the mind and the mind with the soul.*

Yoga Sutras

The Yoga Sutras are a set of instructions on how to achieve the state of Yoga, but do not specifically detail how to do asanas.

