

Basic Yoga Tips

Every person should know

by Drew Higgins

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A note to yoga enthusiasts:

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Work on your Yoga style

Choose to pick and practice a much gentler form of yoga, such as [Kripalu](#), [Viniyoga](#), or also consider Integral Yoga. There are styles of yoga that are too vigorous for beginners and inflexible people, like [Bikram](#), [Ashtanga](#) and [Power Yoga](#).

Picking and Instructor that suits you

Find an instructor who is experienced, certified and really cares about your physical imitations and is not wanting to push you further than you can go at first. He or she can modify the pace, maybe offer alternative poses to meet your needs specifically. Never let an instructor try to force your body into any pose. A hands off approach should be imposed.

Warming up before starting

Get in ten minutes of warming up. Try easy movements to increase circulation, lubricate joints and ready your body to stretch. Go from simple to more difficult movements, you will feel much more comfortable if you could take these extra minutes before starting, rushing into a yoga session so quickly could be extremely harmful.

Avoid certain poses.

Poses like: [The plow](#), full shoulder stand, headstand and [full lotus](#) should be avoided, this could only be attempted by experts.. These poses can place tremendous strain on joints and disks, which could lead to very serious lesions.

Protect your back.

Try to keep your knees, slightly bent and hinge from your hips when you bend forward from any standing position. Concentrate on opening the front (for arching backwards) of the body by lengthening from the navel to the sternum. Be very careful not to over-arch your lower back, as this will compress the lumbar disks a lot

Protect Your knees.

Avoid locking your knees when in a standing posture/position. If any strain occurs while doing sitting or kneeling postures, place a cushion or folded blanket under your bottom to ease the pressure and to protect your knees.

Protect your neck.

Be sure you keep your neck in alignment. Also keep it aligned with the rest of your spine at all times, especially when arching backwards. Do not allow your neck to drop back or down.

Use comfortable clothing.

Comfortable, breathable clothes are highly recommended for yoga. You probably want to wear a shirt that is a little bit form-fitting, since in many yoga poses your head comes below your hips and your shirt can slide down. Exercise pants or shorts will also do, although it's best not to have super slick Lycra-type pants since in some poses this may cause you to slip.

Forget about shoes

Yoga is most often done barefoot, great news for those of us tired of carrying a bulky pair of athletic shoes around for after work trips to the gym. Yoga studios will often request that you leave your shoes near the entrance.

Yoga Mats are a must.

In gyms and yoga studios, it's commonplace to use a [yoga mat](#), also called a sticky mat. The mat helps define your personal space, but more importantly, it creates traction for your hands and feet so you don't slip, especially as you get a little sweaty, providing a bit of cushioning on a hard floor. Yoga studios will rent you mats per each class, but usually they had been overused and have sweat in them. It is highly advised that you buy one, they go for as low as \$20, yoga studios will let you store yours gladly (if you become a regular).

Optional Yoga equipment

There are yoga props come out of the Iyengar style of yoga it teaches that having the proper alignment in the poses is the most important thing, and until the body becomes open enough, students should use props to bring the body into alignment to achieve maximum benefit and avoid injury. Iyengar's use of props has been adopted by many other styles of yoga. If you are begging a home practice, it is highly advised that you purchase them.

Blankets: Grab yourself one or two blankets at the beginning of class. The folded blankets are props to sit and lie on during class. For instance, when sitting in a cross-legged position, it's nice to put a blanket under your sitting bones or elevate the hips above the knees. They come in handy for all sorts of things during class, and if it's chilly you can use them to cover yourself during final relaxation at the end of class.

Blocks: Like blankets, blocks are props to make yourself more comfortable and improve your alignment. Blocks are great for standing poses in which your hand doesn't reach the floor.

Straps: Particularly useful for bound poses if your hands do not reach each other, straps are incredibly helpful. Poses where you need to hold onto your feet but cannot reach them.

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