

Your practice is your Guru!

~ B.K.S. Iyengar



How to Begin a Hatha Yoga Home Practice

- Start with a small commitment of 15 – 20 minutes per day
- Choose a clean, quiet place just for Yoga
- Place a meaningful item in this space to inspire your practice
- Practice at the same time each day, if possible
- Begin with an empty stomach
- It is advisable to bathe or shower before practice
- Do a short pranayama early in the morning. Practice Ujjayi several times with complete observation then sit or lie down quietly for a few minutes

What to Practice

- Practice what you need
- Practice what you like
- Practice what you don't like
- Develop a base routine just for you
- Practice what you learned in class this week
- Refer to sequences from *Light on Yoga & The Path to Holistic Health* by BKS Iyengar, *Yoga a Gem for Women* by Geeta Iyengar, and *Yoga the Iyengar Way* by Silva, Mira & Shyam Mehta
- Always do Savasana at the end of any practice lasting more than 30 minutes

Practice Guidelines

- Keep major groups of poses together (eg. Practice series forward bends together) Do not split them, except in the case of Sirsasana (head balance) and Sarvangasana (shoulderstand)
- Within a group of poses work from easier poses to harder ones
- Once learned correctly Sirsasana and/or Sarvangasana should be practiced every day, with at least Adho Mukha Svanasana. Viparita Dandasana in the chair will prepare you for safe back bending or use it just as your back bend that day
- Sarvangasana and variations generally should be practiced for the same duration as Sirsasana
- Do Savasana regularly. Do Savasana in every practice longer than 30 minutes
- Do restorative poses toward the end of your practice during morning practices
- If time is short do two rounds of Adho Mukha Svanasana with a lunge in between and Sarvangasana and variations or just Sarvangasana and variations
- End your practice with a symmetrical pose before Savasana
- Finish twists with a symmetrical pose
- With the standing pose group, begin with the open standing poses. Continue with the revolved ones. Then do the twisting ones. Finish with the head down ones.
- You may split up your practice and do your inversions later in the day

Groups of Poses

- Standing
- Backbends
- Rotations
- Seated Forward Bends
- Arm Balances
- Inversions
- Sitting Poses
- Abdominal Poses
- Restorative

Practice Order

- Standing Poses
- Sirsasana (can also come just before Sarvangasana)
- Backbends
- Abdominals
- Rotations
- Seated Forward Bends
- Sarvangasana
- Halasana
- Restorative

You can divide your practice in quarters. First quarter is openers such as Adho Mukha Virasana, Adho Mukha Svanasana, Uttanasana, Supta Padangustasana. Second Quarter is Standing Poses of your choice for that day (such as all the rotations). Third quarter is more floor work and fourth quarter restorative

Awareness

Create awareness throughout the practice by working from the ground up. Serve the spine early in the pose to ensure alignment and then position of other parts from this foundation. Make sure you then create *Action* of the parts as learned in class.

Final Thoughts

If you are new to yoga do not get overwhelmed.

Try to remember at least one thing you loved about class and try it at least once that week.

Take with you concepts from your teacher and apply it to your life.

Find a few really great books to inspire you. Perhaps one that looks deeper at the poses and one that is more inspirational.

Try not to treat your practice like a job. Go to it for self nurturing.

Don't think you have to be perfect, just feel your practice. Practicing mindfully, paying attention, going slow will help you follow your inner teacher. This is how BKS Iyengar and other great yogis developed such acute knowledge of the poses and themselves.

We pay so much attention to our outer world, everything going on outside and around us, Yoga is a time to explore and enjoy our inner world.