

# Yoga: What is it?

## Om, What's Yoga All About?

By: Angela L.

Yoga might be all the rage among teens today, but it's actually an ancient art that began thousands of years ago in India. The positions in yoga require physical discipline, but yoga also is a mental mindset that requires your mind and spirit to be focused. Yoga is for just about everyone – teens especially. The earlier one starts, the longer the benefits can last (like a lifetime) and the more valuable it will be.

### Benefits of Yoga

Everyone from Madonna to your best friend seems to be doing yoga! That's probably because:

- Yoga increases flexibility and physical awareness.
- Yoga incorporates stretching and strength training at the same time.
- Yoga can lower risk to joints and muscles, which lowers your chances of becoming injured. Yoga incorporates a lot of stretching, which loosens muscles in the process.
- Good posture can be improved through yoga.
- Yoga emphasizes steady breathing, which pushes oxygen through blood and calms a busy mind.
- Yoga brings a sense of peace and is great for managing stress. It also improves mental focus.

### Yoga Styles

If you are new to yoga, pick a style that matches your personality and physical ability. Choosing the wrong kind of yoga can be a turn-off, but you can always try a few different kinds if you're unsure! And, of course, as with any form of new exercise, consult a health professional before starting yoga.

- **Hatha:** A slow-paced, gentle type of yoga, good for an introduction to basic yoga poses.
- **Vinyasa:** Consists of a series of movements synchronized to breathing; more vigorous than Hatha.
- **Ashtanga and Power Yoga:** Fast-paced and intense, and they include sets of poses performed in the same order (sun and moon salutations). They can be physically challenging because of constant movement from one pose to the next. Some forms are conducted in high temperature studios (90-100°F). Not recommended for yoga beginners.

- **Iyengar:** Focuses on body alignment. Poses are held for long periods of time instead of moving quickly from one pose to the next, as in Ashtanga and Power Yoga.

## Yoga Attire

Wear comfortable, breathable clothes that are easy to move around in. Form-fitting clothes are helpful, since some yoga poses can cause garments to slide up or down. Yoga is mostly done barefoot, and make sure to put your hair up!

## What to Bring



**Pranayama:** the science of breath control, or breathing. Yoga practitioners like to focus on their breathing as a way of meditating.

During yoga classes, students are positioned on a yoga mat to prevent the hands and feet from slipping. The mat also cushions the bodies from the hard floor. Many gyms and yoga studios offer rental mats for free or a small fee or you can purchase one on your own. It's also smart to bring water and towels, especially if you're doing Ashtanga and Power Yoga since they can make you sweat more.

## Tips for New-To-Yoga Teens

- The best time for yoga is in the morning before breakfast or later in the evening when your mind tends to be less cluttered and you won't be too full from eating.
- Practice yoga in a place that is clean and free from distraction.
- Avoid eating (except for a light snack if needed) for two hours before class to avoid feeling tired or bloated.
- Master easy poses before moving onto more difficult ones.
- Stop and relax when you feel tired.

Yoga is a fun, highly beneficial practice that can whip your body and mind into shape. So grab a mat and some friends and dive into your own yoga journey.

*This article was reviewed by BodiMojo expert Deborah Rohm Young, Ph.D.*