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WORLD OF WONDER

Exploring the realms of history, science, nature and technology

YOGA

Yoga is not a religion, but a spiritual discipline that encourages harmony between the mind and body. Hatha yoga is a popular aspect of yoga that includes physical postures (asanas) designed to purify the body and provide the physical strength and stamina needed for meditation.

Bharadvaja's twist, also known as the **sage's twist** or the **seated spinal twist**, promotes good digestion and spinal mobility. Twisting postures may help tone the belly, massage internal organs and relieve lower back pain.

Natarajasana, or **Lord of the Dance pose**, is a more advanced yoga asana that requires strength, flexibility and coordination. It improves posture and balance, while stretching and strengthening chest, ankles, hips and legs.

In a word

The word **yoga** is derived from the Sanskrit word *yuj*, which means "to join" or "to yoke" or "to unite." A male who practices yoga is called a **yogi**; a female practitioner is a **yogini**.

It can be fun to learn the many yoga poses (**asanas**) and their different Sanskrit names.

A bit of history

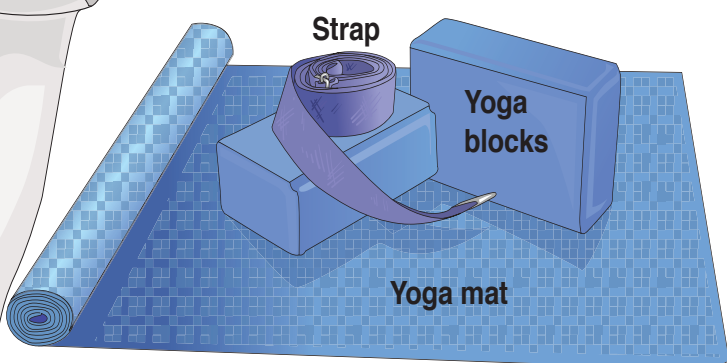
Yoga is an ancient discipline from India. The Indian sage **Patanjali** was a pioneer of classical yoga, but yoga existed at least 3,000 years before he did. About 2,000 years ago, Patanjali gathered the practice of yoga into the **Yoga Sutra**, a collection of 195 philosophical statements that serves as a kind of yoga guidebook.

Types of yoga

There are more than 100 schools, or types, of yoga. They include tradition hatha and tantra, in addition to ashtanga, sivananda, rocket yoga, hot yoga, aerial yoga, equine yoga and paddleboard yoga.

Just do it!

Just like you do not have to be in great physical shape to join a gym or begin an exercise routine, you don't have to be in great shape to begin to practice yoga.



You don't need much equipment to practice yoga, but a **mat** can provide cushion. **Yoga blocks** may help with poses that require the hands to reach the floor. **Straps** or **belts** are useful for poses where you need help to reach your feet.



Vinay Kumar, a yoga master, practices his Prana Vashya yoga method.

This is an extreme version of **chakrasana**, or **wheel pose**. It is a very advanced pose that requires hyper-mobility. This extreme back bend puts enormous pressure on the chest and back of the neck. It is a dangerous pose that should not be attempted by anyone except a master.

Did you know?

To avoid injury, yoga should be practiced correctly with the guidance of a teacher.

One important part of practicing yoga poses is to respect your body. **Only do what you can comfortably**. If you push past your own personal comfort level, you could hurt yourself.

There is a lot more to yoga than most people realize. Yoga has eight levels: yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. The third branch, asana, refers to postures and poses that most people think of when they think of yoga.

In addition to the asanas, yoga also features different breathing exercises. Deep breathing helps deliver oxygen to the blood and helps relaxation. While a person focuses on breathing, the mind becomes focused and clearer.

Om is a **mantra**, or vibration, that is traditionally chanted at the beginning and end of yoga sessions. It is said to be the sound of the universe.

Yoga is a practice that encourages self-awareness, love and connection with the world.

Yoga isn't intended to be a workout in the traditional sense. Its true goal is to move your body, connect your breath and be in the present moment.

The **sun salutation** contains 12 poses or asanas, one after the other.

About 70% of yoga practitioners are women.

More than 15% of North Americans have practiced yoga over the last six months.

Namaste is a traditional Hindu greeting and a common way to end a yoga session. It can be translated as "I bow to you" or "I salute your inner light." This expression is accompanied by the gesture of joining two palms together, placing them at the heart level and bowing one's head.

SOURCES: World Book Encyclopedia, World Book Inc.; <https://www.yogajournal.com>; <https://yogainternational.com>; <https://www.thegoodbody.com>; Harvard Medical School;

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