

7-DAY YOGA PLAN

Welcome!

Firstly, well done for taking the steps that brought you here. Yoga can be life-changing when practised enough! We are going to start the programme with simple poses, but that in no way means less effective.

"The idea of yoga is to explore your limits, not strive for some pretzel-like perfection." - Dr Nevins, American Osteopathic Organisation

Let's get started!

MONDAY

Today's pose is called **Shavasana (Sha-vah-sa-na)**.



This pose is one of the most prominent in de-stressing the whole body, releasing tension, improving concentration and boosting creativity. The focus on the nervous system also benefits your breathing, the heartbeat, and digestion. Due to the powerful calming nature, Shavasana has also been shown to improve many areas of mental health.

Step 1:

Lay flat on your back, legs slightly separated. Keeping your arms at your side and palms facing up.

Step 2:

Close your eyes and empty your mind, concentrate solely on breathing through your nose, making sure it is deep and slow.

Step 3:

Try the 3-4-5 technique. Breath in for 3, hold for 4 and breath out for 5. Relax your entire body making sure no part is tense.

Step 4:

People often don't realise that their shoulders are really tight, so when laying down, think about dropping them with every breath. Feel how your body, especially your core, is grounded to the floor and how you have settled.

Step 5:

Hold Shavasana for as long as it takes for you to feel completely at ease with your body, this should not be rushed and takes at least 4 minutes to complete.

TUESDAY: DOWNWARD DOG

Today's pose is called **Downward Dog**.

Now that you've been acquainted with some major yoga principles and practises, you're ready for the downward-facing dog, otherwise known as '**Adho Mukha Svanasana**'. This classic triangular pose enables you to practice your flexibility whilst stimulating your organs, calming the brain and relieving stress.

Downward dog is also a great way of decompressing and elongating the spine, by stretching and gaining a feeling of spaciousness throughout your body. It is also brilliant for strengthening your posture, arms and legs!

Once again, the health benefits are very extensive, but most notably the downwards dog has been shown to get the organs going, improve digestion and relieve menstrual discomfort.



Step 1:

In a comfortable space on the floor, sit on your hands and knees.

Step 2:

Make sure your knees are directly below your hips and your hands are slightly in front of your shoulders, tuck your toes inwards.

Step 3:

Lift your knees away from the floor, keeping them slightly bent at first. The aim is to lift your bottom towards to ceiling. You should feel a deep stretch in your shoulders and calves.

Note: Do not over stretch, if you cannot straighten your legs at first, do not worry, it will come in time.

Step 4:

Focus on your breathing and maintain this position for 1-3 minutes. For a deeper stretch in your back, shoulders and hamstrings you can try lifting each leg, one at a time, slowly towards the ceiling.

The downward-facing dog is a great transition pose to do in between other poses as it helps the body recover.

WEDNESDAY: Warrior Poses and Transitions

Today's pose is called **Warrior II**.

We will also be exploring the power of **transitions** between poses.

It's normal to feel slightly nervous when first beginning yoga. As a qualified teacher, I've noticed many new students feel they aren't flexible or strong enough for certain moves, especially the downward-facing dog. However, with time you will develop strength and flexibility - I promise! There are other moves that you can try in the meantime to help you strive towards these poses, whilst gaining some confidence in your own yoga capabilities. Warrior II pose is one of my personal favourites!

This is a full body pose that can lead on from the downwards dog, when you feel comfortable.

It is excellent for working multiple muscles at the same time - namely the legs, core, chest, and arms. As an excellent recovery post, Warrior II is also useful for regaining strength and mental stability.



Step 1:

If you would like to begin in the downward dog position this is absolutely fine. To transition, slightly bend one leg from your downward dog and bring it forward into a low lunge.

Step 2:

From here, slowly begin to rise and find yourself in a wide-leg standing position, one placed in front of another. Now we can begin the Warrior II.

Note: This does not have to be a transition from downward dog and can be started directly from standing.

Step 3:

Begin with your wide leg stance, with one knee slightly more bent than the other. Bring your arms up level with your shoulders. Turn the foot of your more bent leg so that it is turned outwards.

Step 4:

Look to the side of the more bent leg and try to lengthen the other leg. The aim is to look to the side of the leg which is bent, and to have the other leg extended behind you. This becomes a form of lengthened, sideways-lunge.

Step 5:

When balanced and composed, repeat on the other leg.

Whilst doing the pose, it is important to keep thinking about your alignment, stability and integrity within the pose as it is all about holding and balancing, to help develop endurance. You may start

to notice tension in parts of your body, but as you continue to hold the pose, these will release and your body will begin to settle.

Warrior II is all about finding peace in the moment, use the stability of this move to stabilise your own thoughts, but make sure not to become complacent or resistant. Just keep focusing on the lengthening the pose and feeling grounded in your feet.

When you feel ready, you can transition into Sun Warrior. This pose feels so wonderfully open and is a fantastic stretch for the ribs!

THURSDAY: Triangle leading on from warrior

Today's pose is **Triangle**.

Having practised with transitions yesterday, we will try to lead into **Triangle** from **Warrior II**.

Having practised for a few days, we are now ready to transition into the triangle. This position will give you a deeper stretch in the shoulders and will enable you to open out the chest. The aim is to allow exposure of the body. This helps it become stronger, stimulating your core and abdominal organs. You will get so much out of this pose if you perform it correctly, so let's get stuck in with the triangle!



Step 1:

Start off in your warrior II pose and gently extend both legs until they neither of them are bent. Lift both of your arms above your head and reach up for a few seconds. This will extend your back and help you in the next few steps.

Step 2:

Now bring one arm all the way down to one of your ankles. Keep the other arm vertical and straighten your legs.

Note: As I have mentioned before, if this is too hard, do not complete this move all at once. You can alter it by putting your elbow on your knee instead of reaching all the way down to the ankle, or you can slightly bend your legs.

Step 3:

Lift and extend your vertical arm, reaching for the sky, make sure your head is also lifted and looking upwards. You can move your hips a bit to find your most comfortable position, or widen your legs or bring them in closer together. Yoga is about finding what makes you comfortable and working on the positions in your own time.

Step 4:

Whilst you hold this pose, keep breathing slowly and deeply. Push your hips slightly forward and the vertical arm back a bit (squeezing your bum will help with this!), this will increase exposure and help your abdomen stabilise you.

Again, do not forget to perform this exercise in the other direction as well as it is not good to stretch one side and not the other.

FRIDAY: Child's Pose

Today's post is **Child's Pose**.

Most of the yoga positions that we have been learning can be strenuous and require time to master, but now we will look at the Child's pose, the ultimate relaxation position. For any of you who already practice yoga, you will understand the joy one feels when your yoga teacher asks you to move to this comfy pose. Be careful as it is very easy to fall asleep whilst doing Child's pose, as although it provides a nice arm, back and leg stretch, it just feels so good!

Ultimately, this is a resting pose meant for recalibrating your breathing and resting between transitions. As your forehead moves down onto the mat, it soothes the brain allowing you to recollect your thoughts. This position is also great for digestion, as your knees give your belly a slight massage when tucked beneath you.



Step 1:

Begin this position from the downwards dog or you can begin on all fours. Before you move into the child's pose, steady your breathing, you will want to exhale as you move into it.

Step 2:

Spread your knees wide apart while keeping your big toes touching, lower your bottom onto your heels. On the exhalation, bow

forward with your belly between your thighs and your on top of your thighs.

Step 3:

Allow your forehead to come to the floor. Have your arms out long in front of you and extend your fingertips. Try to concentrate your awareness to within the body and ensure every part of you is completely relaxed, especially your elbows. Allow all tension in your shoulders, arms, and neck to dissipate. Try closing your eyes and breathe deeply when in this pose.

Step 4:

Hold it for as long as you want, I tend to hold it for at least 4-6 minutes. When you want to release from the pose, gently use your hands to walk your torso upright and sit back on your heels. This pose really helps me relax as I find it such a natural position to lay in.

SATURDAY: Tree and Mountain Pose

Today we will be reconnecting with nature, with the **Tree and Mountain poses**.

Let's begin with the mountain pose, which is simply the following:



Step 1:

Stand feet hip distance apart and reach your arms up to the sky.

Step 2:

Look up and feel your back elongate, you can even stand on your tip-toes to get an extra stretch.

This pose is so simple but so essential. It helps you concentrate on your breathing whilst strengthening your legs, ankles, and spine.

By moving into the Tree pose, you will start to work on your balance.

Step 1:

First bring your arms out to your side and horizontal to the ground.

Step 2:

Lift your knee up to your chest and press it in for a couple of breaths. Then bring that knee out to the side and tuck your foot into your thigh.



Step 3:

Try and maintain your stability for a couple more breaths before bringing your hands together into the chest. Do not close your eyes for this move as you will lose your balance.

Think about how your grounded leg feels and the muscles you are working. This yoga position is meant more for toning than de-stressing, but if you concentrate on your breathing whilst looking straight ahead, you will naturally become empty minded.

Sunday: Seated and Seated Twist & Meditation.

Congratulations on completing your introductory yoga course!

To finish this week, we will be learning the **seated pose** known as **Sukhasana (Suk-has-ah-nah)**.

Sukhasana is essential for cleansing and detoxifying. This is brilliant for starting and ending a yoga session and for transitioning into meditation.

Meditation is wonderful for calming your body and recollecting your thoughts, it is very often used in conjunction with yoga. Many find it difficult to sit and empty their thoughts, but through perseverance (e.g. 10 minutes of it a day) you will begin to reap the benefits.





Step 1:

Try sitting with your knees bent, have one foot in front of the other or slightly crossed. Try pulling your buttocks backwards to gain a more upright pose and extend the back upwards.

Step 2:

Place your hands on your knees with your arms bent. Close your eyes and focus on your composure, posture and thoughts.

You can sit in this position for as long as you want, many begin yoga with this position to calm their brain and ready themselves for the class. Others end in this position to remember what they have learnt throughout the yoga class, and use this time to prepare the mind for what is ahead. If you choose to cross the legs, make sure to alternate the cross if you are sitting for over 6 minutes.

If you feel like getting an extra stretch from this pose, try Matsyendra, commonly known as the seated twist pose, brilliant for stretching the back. Cross your right leg over the left. Exhale and twist toward the left and press your right arm into the inside of the right thigh. Press the left hand against the floor just behind your left buttock, and set your right arm on the outside of your right thigh near the knee. You can turn your head in either directions, feeling the different stretches as you do so.

In terms of **meditation**, do try to practice this intimate routine in a quiet environment, one you feel comfortable in. It is easier to focus on what your body feels like, and through this you will forget the other buzzing ideas in your head. The mind will become more and more empty the more you focus your attention internally.

Some additional poses to experiment:

1. The shoulder stand
2. Hamstring stretch
3. Inner thigh stretch





These are three additional poses that I do in addition to my yoga routine. I find that all three are great stretch positions rather than relaxation positions. Use them as and when you feel you need to stretch a particular part of your body, or as a pre or post stretch from your yoga session.

Again, a true congratulations for completing this seven day introduction, but don't forget to keep practising. Yoga has endless benefits to discover along your journey.

But for now, you can call yourself a proud yogi!

If you have any questions about the poses (or just want to brag about how great you've gotten!), do not hesitate to send me an email. As a qualified teacher I can certainly help you with both mental and physical aspects of yoga.

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