

the A-Z of Yoga

Discover alphabetical insight into a world built on karma and calmness

Affirmations

Repeat after us: "I am breathing deeply. I trust my body. My body feels at ease... My breath carries me from one pose into the next, from one moment into the next. I allow every yoga posture to teach me about myself and come into deeper union with the Universe."

Breathwork

Dedicate five to ten minutes a day to breath awareness and begin to approach your life with mindfulness and calm anew. Sit with your legs crossed or lie down with your knees bent. Place one hand on your heart and the other over your stomach. Close your eyes and inhale through your nose, filling the lungs and abdomen. Exhale through your mouth, completely emptying your lungs, and repeat. Focus on the rising and falling of the body and observe this through the movement of your hands. Allow your mind to settle and become calm.

Cobra pose

1 Lie flat on your front. Stretch your legs back, with the tops of your feet on the floor and spread your hands underneath your shoulders facing forwards. Hug the elbows back into your body. Press the tops of your feet, thighs and front of pelvis firmly into the floor.

2 Inhale, and begin to straighten your arms to lift your chest off the floor, ensuring you only go to a comfortable height. Keep your buttocks firm.

3 Tighten your shoulder blades and press your ribs forwards.

4 Hold the position for between 15-30 seconds, breathing easily and regularly throughout. Release back to the floor with an exhale.



D

Doga

Doggy yoga is a fantastic way to stretch and enter new-found mindfulness with the added bonus of playing with your pet or with puppies at your fave yoga studio! It rolls together our two best pastimes – yoga and cuddles. Your pet might even want to join in with the fun, especially with their namesake pose, Downward-facing Dog!



F

Emotion

Meghan Hutcheon, a Scottish yoga and breathwork teacher (Instagram and TikTok @yogamegs) authentically incorporates Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) within her yoga teachings. She says, "One of the approaches I teach to release blocks is breathwork is with EFT – a simple process which, through rating their vibration score before and after the process, results in an increase in the score each time and after only a few minutes of practice! In my yoga classes and workshops, we work with a belief we want to shift, and as we repeat the belief to ourselves (out loud or in our minds), we tap on various meridian/acupressure points on the body (side of the hand, inner eyebrow, side of the eye, under the eye, under the nose, chin, inner collarbone, under arm and crown of the head). Fears are learned and then engrain themselves into the subconscious mind, but by tapping on the belief that we want to release, we send a signal to the brain to tell it 'I'm safe'. From there, we begin to heal from whatever is holding us back, consequently aligning our energy with whatever we desire to manifest into our lives." Try it today!



READER OFFER!

Fashion

Karai Yoga is offering a discount of 70% off all its yogawear especially for readers of *Soul & Spirit!* Just use code **SOUL&SPIRIT70** at **karaiyoga.com** and pick up your next fabulous outfit. Offer closes end of May 2022.



Gita

The Bhagavad Gita was written in Sanskrit 3000 years ago and is a very important work for yogi teaching. Krishna, a Hindu god, explains the principles of yoga to Prince Arjuna as a philosophy in action, a lifestyle requiring active participation. He speaks of yoga as a way of offering the actions of one's senses and of one's life breath and as a way to being calm and still.



G

H

Hanumanasana

Hanumanasana is also known as Monkey pose or the splits. The origin of the name comes from a monkey named Hanuman, who was believed to have leapt from India to Sri Lanka with

his legs in the splits position! The pose requires a high level of flexibility, especially in your hips, quads and glutes. The easiest way to practise Hanumanasana is to slowly lower yourself down, using blocks under your hands for support. Ensure you breathe slowly and stop lowering into the pose if you experience any unnatural pain. Alternatively, you can try this variation for fun using a wall. *Sarah Highfield, a leading international Yoga Teacher and Writer (yogagise.com).*



I

Intention

Karen Kirkness, founder of Meadowlark Yoga

(meadowlarkyoga.com) suggests merging the idea of yoga 'practice' with 'intention'. She says, "We often refer to the act of rolling out our mats and doing yoga as 'practice'. The term reminds us that we are always in the process of learning, and that we will never reach an end goal or final posture. We are teaching ourselves that we approach this beautiful practice without expectation or ambition; we are just here to witness the experience – mindfulness, meditation and contentment. Indeed, yoga practice extends off the mat into our daily lives where we learn to apply the teachings to our ethical, moral and social lives."



J



Janu Sirsasana

Janu Sirsasana is also known as Head-to-knee pose. This pose is a more comfortable way to stretch your hamstrings compared to when both legs are extended out in front of you (Paschimottanasana). When coming into Janu Sirsasana, ensure you keep a long spine. Each time you inhale, feel your body lengthen and expand, and each time you exhale, fold forward a little more. If you can't hold onto your foot comfortably with a straight leg, then place a belt across your foot to hold onto.

Another tip is to try and lead with your chest so that your back doesn't round too much. *Sarah Highfield, a leading international Yoga Teacher and Writer (yogagise.com).*

L

Living the yogic way

"Life is not boring to one who believes in adventure" Sri Chinmoy believed.

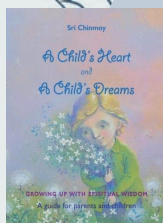
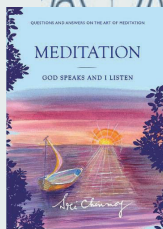
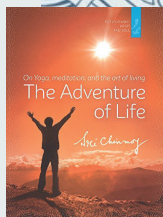
The Adventure of Life: On Yoga, Meditation, and The Art of Living by Sri Chinmoy (£13.99, The

Golden Shore) is a modern-day spiritual guide that encourages the reader to embrace new ideas, adding a deeper, spiritual dimension to your life.

Over the decades that Sri Chinmoy spent in the West, he was approached for specific guidance on meditation. His answers inside *Meditation: God Speaks and I Listen by Sri Chinmoy (£10.95, Blue Beyond Books)* have helped people from all backgrounds learn how to meditate and make a regular meditation practice a part of their lifestyle.

"On today's child depends tomorrow's future. We talk about perfection, but this perfection that we speak of will come only from children – from a child's heart and a child's dreams." *A Child's Heart and a Child's Dreams by Sri Chinmoy (£10.95, Blue Beyond Books)* offers practical advice on a subject that concerns many parents: fostering their child's spiritual life.

All available at bluebeyondbooks.co.uk.



K



Kundalini

Beth Morgan, a Manchester-based Kundalini Teacher (Facebook @kundaliniyogawithbethmorgan), says, "Kundalini Yoga is over 5000 years old and is often called the yoga of awareness. It is a dynamic blend of postures, pranayama (breathing), mantra and meditation, which teach you the art of relaxation, self-healing and mental elevation. It is regarded as one of the fastest working yogas in bringing about change in the body, mind and spirit. Kundalini Yoga is for everybody regardless of their age or physical ability – you don't have to be particularly flexible or fit. It is a perfect form of yoga for beginners, right through to the more advanced. All you need is an open mind, a desire to improve your life – to become the bigger, brighter YOU. If you are interested in self-development, would like to improve your physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing, or if you would like to learn how to connect to your soul, how to increase or develop your intuition, then it is definitely something for you. Kundalini Yoga is done with your eyes closed, so you are focusing within, so no one will be looking at what you are doing. We use chants and sing sometimes too. If you are inhibited by singing, don't worry about that, the music in the class will be loud enough so that no one will hear you. Alternatively, you can just listen to the mantra rather than sing – it is still very effective." Why not try it soon?

M

Men

Jack Strange is the owner of spiritual brand Son of Saturn (sonofsaturnco.com and Instagram

@sonofsaturnco) and loves yoga. "It took me a while to shake the feeling I was an imposter in a woman's space. When you see yoga, you might see a flexible woman in athletic yoga gear, while the high intensity exercises show ripped men that don't look like me. This misses the point of yoga entirely – it's about the mind, body, spirit connection." We at *Soul & Spirit* would love to see more men in the studios, so why not bring your partner, friend or brother along to your next session?

Breathe & flow

N

Namasté

My soul honours your soul. I honour the place in you where the entire Universe resides. I honour the light, love, truth, beauty and peace within you, because it is also within me. In sharing these things we are united, we are the same. *We are one.*

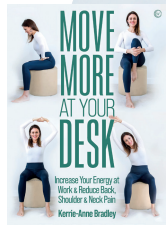
O



Openers

Editor Ros says, “I discovered my love for heart and hip opener poses in the pandemic. While on Zoom yoga with our wonderful writer Rosie Underwood in one of the lockdowns – I’ve lost track which one – I felt a sudden wave of emotional release, getting stronger the longer I stayed and breathed into the uncomfortable hip joint space. I was just grateful I was in my parents’ spare room at the time, as I know I wouldn’t have experienced the same ‘aha!’ moment in a class surrounded by other people’s energies. My favourite is Pigeon, which really helps release emotions we store in our hips, and Tree pose – foot on opposite calf or thigh, hip opened wide like a flag pole, in prayer hands. With heart-opener poses, the chest is open and vulnerable, where our normal instinct is to slouch and cave in. Here, with proud chest, you have nowhere to hide. My favourite is Wild Thing (done from downward dog then ‘flipping the dog’ to have your chest up to the sky, both feet on the floor, propped up on one arm) or Fish, one of my teacher Chris’ favourite inversion asanas, which means any pose where your heart is higher off the ground than your head. Even Cobra or Cow poses count as heart openers, as your heart is forward and out. Try it and see what emotions rise up for you.”

P



Pilates

Kerrie-Anne Bradley is the owner of Pilates at your Desk (pilatesatyourdesk.com) and author of *Move More At Your Desk* (£14.99, Watkins) amazon.co.uk. She says, “Pilates is a wonderful system of movements focusing on flexibility and strength that bring better balance to your body. My philosophy is simple, all movement counts and each day it should be varied and frequent. We want to be ‘moving when not moving’ – when we are working. Slot in movement breaks wherever you can or diarise it just like you would any other meeting. Try squatting up and down from your seat three times every time you get up to go somewhere. Or perhaps you could stretch your spine in some way every time you come off a phone call. Or lift your heels at the photocopier, or when waiting for the kettle to boil.”



Q

Qi

Qi or *chi* is the life force energy of a living being. It is a close relation to ‘prana’

in yogic teachings, and also means breath. Pranayama is a form of controlled breathing, which can empower and re-energise.

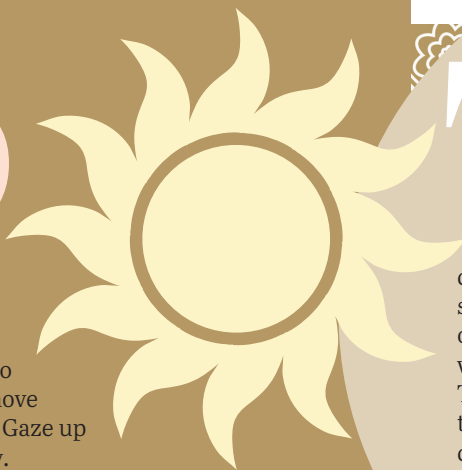
R

Retreat

Book yourself or a loved one onto a yoga retreat with Red Letter Days for a life-changing, third eye-opening experience. Choose from several retreats, including a ‘Yoga Day Retreat with Brighton Yoga for Two,’ for £56, where you will reconnect to the mind, body and spirit on a four-hour yoga retreat. There are three to choose from, including hiking and yoga, yoga and forest bathing and yoga and mindfulness. Head to redletterdays.co.uk and just search ‘yoga’!



S



Sun salutation

1 Inhale. Raise your arms out to the sides and move them upwards. Gaze up towards the sky.

2 Exhale. Bring your arms down to the floor. Keep your back straight. Inhale and lift your head to look at the ground.

3 Exhale. Plant your palms on the floor and step your feet back so your body is lengthened. Then inhale.

4 Lower your body down onto your knees, then chest, then chin. Keep your bum raised and elbows tucked in.

5 Inhale. Rest your pelvis, legs and tops of your feet onto the floor. Keep your palms flat on the floor and lift your upper body so you are looking forwards.

6 Exhale. Keep palms and soles of your feet on the floor and raise your bum into the air so your body makes an upside-down V.

7 Exhale. Step forward and inhale. Move into the flat back position again. Exhale as you raise your head to face forward. Inhale as you come into a standing position and exhale to finish, as you reach your arms up into the air and into prayer.

T

Trikonasana

Trikonasana is also known as Triangle pose and offers your body a full and deep stretch. If needed, Trikonasana can be done with your bottom hand resting on a block for added support and stability. When coming into this pose, ensure that you lengthen your spine and through both sides of your torso, extend out through the top of your head and reach your arms wide, broadening through your chest.

Try to look up towards your top thumb, but if you feel wobbly, you can look down towards the floor.

Sarah Highfield, a leading international Yoga Teacher and Writer (yogagise.com).



V

Vajrasana

Vajrasana is also known as Kneeling pose. While it doesn't look as 'exciting' or 'challenging' as some other yoga poses, it is an important pose with many benefits, and one that you can actually do

straight after eating. Through practising Vajrasana, you will calm and rebalance your mind and stretch your thighs and ankles. It's a good pose to do before meditation as it's incredibly calming and grounding. When coming into the

pose, try to keep your knees and ankles together, and remember to breathe

slowly in and out of your nose. *Sarah Highfield, a leading international Yoga Teacher and Writer (yogagise.com).*



U



Janu Sirsasana

Will and Katy from Yoga Union (yogaunion.life) capture the true meaning of yoga as union with Love. They say, "Yoga means union, but union with what? Union with the one true force behind all creation – Love. Yoga is an

ancient technology designed to bring up all the fear-based beliefs that separate us from Love in order to heal them. As we come into union with our true beliefs of abundance and peace and drop our self-created illusions of scarcity and worry, our reality transforms to reflect this

connection we feel within. This is what the twin flame experience is all about – being so 'in union' with yourself that you attract the same quality of love from without. So yoga is more than a way to get fit – it is a logic-based system that can change your life: 'As within, so without'."

W

Women

Celebrate your divine feminine with Yoga Teacher and Meditation Guide, Emma Louise (emmalouisewellbeing.com). She says, "It's my pleasure to introduce supported Fish with Butterfly Legs

pose. This is the ultimate yoga pose for self-love and nurturing, something every woman needs!

"Lie back on the floor with a cushion or bolster so your spine is supported and chest elevated, bring the legs up in towards the body, press soles of the feet together, allow the knees to open up wide.

"Fish pose is an amazing heart opener to embrace all that love and compassion and harness your feminine power.

Butterfly is a gentle soothing hip opener which allows us to own our inner goddess and let go of negativity. Namaste, goddesses."



X

eXtreme

You've probably heard about hot yoga or Bikram yoga as it's formally known – practised in an environment of extreme heat! A yoga studio can be heated to a temperature of 40 degrees and high humidity, and students sweat it out with vigorous poses and flows. Not for the faint-hearted – literally!

Y

Yin yang

Honour your yin and yang energies to manifest the life you desire, with yoga goddess Rosie Underwood (rosieunderwood.com). She says, "Yin and yang are universal energies. We're all born with both energies and often hold dynamic combinations of the two. At different times in our lives, we lean more towards the yin (the feminine) or the yang (the masculine). We use these energies as a powerful tool when following our goals and visions and manifesting the life we dream of. Our feminine energy inspires inner transformation, unbridled possibilities and creativity, while our masculine energy helps us take the necessary action steps towards our inspired desires. Activate your yin with a Sun Salutation (see S) as the sun goes down and energise your yang by practising the flow as the sun rises!"



Z

Zen

It's said that when the yogi finds the right posture, the state of mind they reach is of enlightenment. This state of calm attentiveness is known as zen in Buddhist meditation and also nirvana.