

# What is yoga?

## What to expect at a yoga class

The meaning of the word YOGA is joining of mind and body. A very apt meaning as yoga is a total work-out for the whole body and mind.

Quite a lot of thought is required to get into the poses which at first will be unfamiliar; your teacher should guide you with the appropriate instructions on breathing and alignment and adjustments.

Being mindful about the breathing is also essential, enabling the muscles to stretch and strengthen. Effort will become effortless by breathing out with intent. Appropriate guidance will be given to achieve this.

Practising yoga is like a journey; you start at the beginning of the path and continue. From time to time there will be diversions but you always return to the main path. You will observe there is progress from week to week right from the beginning. You will be surprised what you can do.

Everyone in a class would be at different levels depending on how long they have been practising so older hands will be holding poses for longer or taking them to a different level of challenge and newer hands will be trying out the basic pose and getting used to using the breathing. People will progress at different rates. Some poses will continue to challenge us even after years of practise other poses will come easy. If you do not feel comfortable with a pose or if you feel pain you don't have to do the pose; adjustments can be made according to ability and need.

Yoga is not a competitive sport but sometimes we do celebrate when a challenging pose is achieved for the first time.

Focussing purely on the instructions for the poses and the breathing leaves little opportunity to be thinking about the 'to do' list waiting for you at home. In this way yoga becomes a form of meditation in action; quietening the mind and completely losing yourself in what you are doing at that moment in time. The mat becomes your island.

A yoga practise will end with between 10-15 minutes of breathing and relaxation.

You do not need expensive kit to do yoga. You would need to wear stretchy clothes. Mats are usually available to borrow but if you attended class regularly you may want to buy your own mat.

The most difficult part of yoga is taking that first step and going to a class.