

RANJANA YOGA CLASS

Kriya Yoga

A Beginner's Practice Guide

What it is, how to prepare, gentle breathing and meditation foundations, a four-week plan, and safety notes

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General education only. Not medical advice. Speak with your doctor before starting a new practice.

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1. What Kriya yoga is

Kriya yoga is a meditation-centred path from the Indian yoga tradition. The Sanskrit word kriya means "action", and in this context it points to practices done with full awareness: working with the breath, the attention and stillness of the mind. It is not a posture routine like many modern yoga classes. Most of the time you are sitting quietly, breathing, and watching what happens inside.

The idea behind it is simple. The breath and the mind are closely linked. When the breath becomes slow, even and quiet, the mind tends to settle too. Kriya yoga traditions use that link on purpose, in a structured way, with the aim of steady attention and inner calm.

The short answer

Kriya yoga is a path of breath awareness and meditation. This guide teaches the gentle, safe foundations that anyone healthy can practise at home. It is a starting point, not a complete teaching.

Many people search for a "Kriya yoga book PDF" hoping for a full set of advanced techniques. It is worth knowing early: in the traditional lineages, the advanced Kriya techniques are taught in person by an authorised teacher, usually after initiation. A document cannot replace that, and this guide does not try to. What a guide can do is give you clear preparation and safe foundations, so that your first weeks of practice are calm, steady and free of strain.

What you will get from this guide

- A clear picture of what Kriya yoga is, and what it is not.
- Five gentle practices: easy breathing, alternate nostril breathing, soft ocean breath, a spine awareness breath, and simple seated meditation.
- A 15-minute daily routine you can follow without a teacher.
- A four-week plan that builds slowly, with a practice log.
- Plain safety notes, so you know when to stop and when to ask a doctor.

2. A short history, told honestly

Kriya yoga as taught today is usually traced to the nineteenth-century teacher Lahiri Mahasaya, who taught householders in India. His lineage is the source of most modern Kriya traditions. In the twentieth century, Paramahansa Yogananda carried the teaching to a worldwide audience, and his Autobiography of a Yogi introduced many readers to the word "Kriya" for the first time.

Older yoga texts also use the word. The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali describe "kriya yoga" as a short list of three disciplines: tapas (steady effort), svadhyaya (self-study) and ishvara pranidhana (surrender to something larger than the ego). So the term has more than one meaning, depending on the tradition you read. That is why it helps to ask any source: which Kriya do you mean?

Different schools teach different sequences and use different names. This guide does not claim to represent any one lineage. It teaches common, widely shared foundations: posture, breath awareness and meditation. If you later feel drawn to a particular tradition, look for an experienced, accountable teacher and ask plain questions about what is taught and what is expected of you.

A note on claims

You may read that Kriya yoga can "cure" illness or give dramatic results in a short time. No breathing or meditation practice should be used as a replacement for medical care, and results vary between people. Treat strong promises with caution.

3. Before you begin: safety first

Gentle breathing and quiet sitting are suitable for most healthy adults. Even so, breath practices change how you feel, and a few people need to take extra care. Please read this page before the practices.

Check with your doctor first if you:

- are pregnant, or have recently given birth;
- have high or low blood pressure, a heart condition, or have had a stroke;
- have asthma, a lung condition, or a recent chest or abdominal surgery;
- live with epilepsy, panic disorder, trauma history, or a mental health condition that can be affected by breath work;
- have eye conditions such as glaucoma, or a recent head or neck injury;
- feel unsure for any other health reason.

If your doctor says it is fine, tell them what you plan to do: slow, gentle breathing without breath holding, for ten to twenty minutes a day. That is a clear description they can respond to.

Stop and rest if you notice:

- dizziness, light-headedness, or tingling in the hands or face;
- chest pain, a racing heart, or breathlessness that does not settle;
- sudden anxiety, strong emotion, or a feeling of panic;
- pain, pressure in the head, or any sharp discomfort.

Return to normal, easy breathing. If symptoms continue, stop the practice and seek medical advice. Do not push through discomfort. In breath work, doing less is almost always safer and more useful than doing more.

Three rules for the whole guide

1. Never strain the breath. It should feel easy. 2. Do not hold your breath in these foundations. 3. Practise on an empty or light stomach, never right after a heavy meal.

4. Setting up your space and body

Space

Choose a quiet corner where you will not be interrupted for fifteen minutes. A little natural light is helpful. Switch off notifications. You do not need incense, music or special clothes. Loose, comfortable clothing is enough.

Seat

Sit in whatever way lets your spine be tall without effort. Cross-legged on a folded blanket works for some people. A chair with both feet flat on the floor works just as well, and it is often the better choice if your knees or hips complain. The aim is a steady, upright, relaxed seat.

Check	What to look for
Spine	Tall and natural, not stiff. Imagine a string lightly lifting the crown of your head.
Shoulders	Soft and dropped away from the ears.
Hands	Resting on the thighs or in the lap, palms up or down, whichever is comfortable.
Face	Jaw loose, tongue resting, eyes closed or softly lowered.
Hips	Slightly higher than the knees if on the floor. Use a cushion to help.

Timing

Early morning or the quiet hour before bed suit most people. The best time is the one you can keep. A short practice every day does far more than a long practice once a week.

5. Foundation 1: easy, even breathing

Every other practice rests on this one. Spend your first week mostly here.

- Sit comfortably and close your eyes.
- Let the breath move through the nose without controlling it. Just notice it for a minute.
- Now guide each breath to be slightly slower and smoother. Breathe in for a comfortable count, and breathe out for the same count. Three or four counts is plenty for most beginners.
- Feel the belly rise a little as you inhale, and settle as you exhale. The chest stays quiet.
- If the mind wanders, and it will, simply return to the breath. That return is the practice.

Do this for five minutes. It should feel like the breath is breathing you, not the other way round. If you feel strained, shorten the count.

6. Foundation 2: alternate nostril breathing

Alternate nostril breathing (nadi shodhana) is a classic, calming practice found in many yoga traditions. Keep it light and slow, and do not hold the breath.

- Rest your left hand on your left thigh. Raise your right hand and fold the first two fingers toward the palm.
- Close the right nostril with the right thumb. Breathe in slowly through the left nostril.
- Close the left nostril with the ring finger, release the right nostril, and breathe out slowly through the right.
- Breathe in through the right nostril, close it, and breathe out through the left. That is one round.
- Begin with five rounds. Add a round or two over the weeks, up to about ten.

If you feel blocked or dizzy

Skip the nostril closing and go back to easy breathing. A blocked nose is common. Never force air through a closed nostril.

7. Foundation 3: soft ocean breath

Ocean breath (ujjayi) adds a faint, steady sound to the breath, like distant waves. The sound gives your attention something to follow.

- Breathe in through the nose. As you breathe out, slightly narrow the back of the throat, as if you were gently fogging a mirror, but with the mouth closed.
- Keep the sound soft. If your neighbour could hear it, it is too loud.
- Keep the inhale and exhale equal in length and the breath smooth.
- Practise for three to five minutes at a time, then return to normal breathing.

If your throat feels tight or dry, relax the effort. This is a quiet technique, not a forceful one.

8. Foundation 4: spine awareness breath

This is a gentle, imagination-based practice that many beginners find helpful. It is a visualisation, not a physical manoeuvre, and it should never involve straining or breath holding.

- Sit tall and breathe easily for a minute.

- As you breathe in, imagine the breath rising slowly along the spine, from the base toward the top of the head.
- As you breathe out, imagine the breath flowing back down the same path.
- Keep the breath natural and unforced. Let the attention, not the effort, do the moving.
- Continue for ten to twenty slow breaths, then rest in stillness for a minute.

Some traditions describe this movement of attention in more detail and attach special names and steps to it. Those teachings are best received in person. For now, the plain version above builds exactly the skill you need: following the breath along the length of the spine with a calm mind.

9. Foundation 5: simple seated meditation

After the breathing practices, let the breath return to normal and stay seated. You do not need to do anything special. The breathing has already prepared the ground.

- **Rest your attention.** With eyes closed, gently notice the space between the eyebrows, or simply the feeling of the breath at the nostrils. Choose one and stay with it.
- **Let thoughts pass.** Thoughts will come. Do not fight them or follow them. Notice, and come back.
- **Optional silent word.** Some people like to repeat a short word, such as "Om" or "calm", silently on the exhale. If it feels natural, use it. If not, leave it.
- **Finish slowly.** Take a few deeper breaths, open your eyes, and sit for a moment before you stand.

Start with three minutes and let it grow. Quiet minutes in which nothing seems to happen are not wasted. They are the practice.

10. A 15-minute daily routine

Time	Practice	Notes
2 min	Settle and sit	Posture check. Three slow breaths. Let the body go soft.
3 min	Easy, even breathing	Equal inhale and exhale. No strain.
4 min	Alternate nostril breathing	Five to eight gentle rounds.
2 min	Soft ocean breath	Quiet sound. Smooth, equal breaths.
1 min	Spine awareness breath	Ten to twenty slow breaths.
3 min	Seated meditation	Rest attention. Let thoughts pass.

This adds up to fifteen minutes. On busy days, do only the easy breathing and a short meditation. A five-minute practice that happens beats a perfect practice that does not.

11. Your four-week plan

Build slowly. Moving up too fast is the most common reason beginners lose interest or feel uncomfortable.

Week	Focus	Daily length	What to notice
1	Easy, even breathing and posture	5-8 min	Can you keep the breath smooth for a few minutes? Where does the body hold tension?
2	Add alternate nostril breathing	8-12 min	Does the mind feel calmer after the practice? Keep the breath light.
3	Add soft ocean breath and the spine awareness breath	12-15 min	Is the breath getting quieter? Avoid forcing the sound.
4	Full 15-minute routine with seated meditation	15 min	How is your attention at the end? Note any change in how you feel during the day.

After week four, repeat the routine for a few more weeks before adding anything. If you want to go deeper into a particular tradition, this is a good moment to look for a qualified teacher.

12. Common mistakes and how to fix them

Mistake	What happens	Fix
Breathing too hard	Dizziness, tension, unrest	Halve the count. Make the breath smaller and slower.
Holding the breath	Strain in the chest and head	Do not hold. Keep inhale and exhale flowing into each other.
Slumping or stiff sitting	Back pain, sleepiness or tension	Sit on a cushion or chair. Lift the crown of the head.
Judging the session	Frustration, giving up	A wandering mind is normal. Each return to the breath counts.
Skiping days, then doing too much	Fatigue and lost routine	Choose a short, fixed daily time. Five minutes is enough.
Practising after a heavy meal	Discomfort and heaviness	Wait a few hours, or practise before a meal.
Chasing experiences	Restlessness and doubt	Let experiences come and go. Calm, regular practice matters more.

13. Questions people ask

Is there one single Kriya yoga book or PDF that teaches everything?

No. Different lineages teach different techniques, and the advanced ones are traditionally passed on in person. A good beginner guide, like this one, gives preparation and safe foundations. Be careful of any file that promises complete secret techniques.

Can I practise Kriya yoga at home without a teacher?

You can practise the gentle foundations in this guide on your own. Advanced techniques are best learnt from a qualified teacher who can see how you are doing and adjust the practice for you.

How long should I practise each day?

Start with five minutes and build to about fifteen. Regular short practice is better than occasional long practice.

When will I notice results?

People differ. Some feel a little calmer within a few sessions. Others need weeks. Treat it as a skill that develops with steady practice, and avoid expecting dramatic change.

Is Kriya yoga a religion?

It comes from a spiritual tradition, but the foundations here are simply breath and attention practices. You can use them without changing your beliefs.

Can I do this with a health condition?

Please talk to your doctor first, especially for heart, blood pressure, breathing, pregnancy, or mental health conditions. See section 3.

14. Glossary

Term	Plain meaning
Kriya	"Action". Practice done with awareness.
Pranayama	Breath practices. "Prana" is life energy, "ayama" is extension or regulation.
Nadi shodhana	Alternate nostril breathing.
Ujjayi	Ocean breath. A soft, steady throat sound on the breath.
Asana	A yoga posture. Also the seat for meditation.
Dhyana	Meditation. Steady, quiet attention.
Tapas	Steady effort or discipline.
Svadyaya	Self-study.
Samadhi	A deeply absorbed state of meditation described in the yoga texts.

15. Where to go next

- Read our related articles at ranjanayogaclass.com: how to meditate correctly, Kriya yoga vs pranayama, Kriya yoga at home without a guru, and is Kriya yoga safe.
- If you would like a teacher, look for someone with a long track record who is open about what they teach, who answers questions plainly, and who does not pressure you.
- Keep your daily practice short and steady. A simple routine you keep is worth more than an advanced one you drop.

Questions about a class or a session? Write to us through the contact page on the website, and our admin team will get in touch.

Reminder

This guide is general education and not medical advice. It does not diagnose, treat or cure any condition. If you have a health concern, speak with your doctor before starting a new practice.

16. Practice log

Print this page and keep a short record. Notes help you see patterns over time.

Day	Minutes	Practices done	Breath felt (easy / strained)	Notes
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				