

RANJANA YOGA CLASS

Yoga Nidra

A Beginner's Guide to Guided Rest

How to practise, a full body-scan script you can follow, a four-week plan, and safety notes

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

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1. What yoga nidra is

Yoga nidra means "yogic sleep". It is a guided relaxation practised lying down. You stay awake and follow a voice or a script that moves your attention through the body, the breath, and a few simple images. The aim is deep rest while the mind stays quietly aware.

It is not sleep, and it is not hypnosis. It is also not a replacement for a good night's sleep. Many people use it as a calm pause in the day or as a way to unwind in the evening.

The short answer

Yoga nidra is a guided, lying-down relaxation that moves your attention through the body and breath. A session takes 10 to 30 minutes, needs no flexibility and no experience, and is general relaxation, not a medical treatment.

What this guide gives you

- A clear, jargon-free explanation of how a session works.
- A full 15-minute script you can read, record in your own voice, or follow from the page.

- A four-week plan and a practice log.
- Safety notes and answers to common questions.

2. Before you begin: safety first

Yoga nidra is gentle and suitable for most healthy adults. A few points are worth knowing before you start.

Speak with your doctor or a qualified professional first if you:

- are pregnant (lying flat on the back for long can be uncomfortable; use a side-lying position and ask your doctor);
- have a history of trauma, panic attacks, or a mental health condition, since quiet attention on the body can bring up strong feelings for some people;
- have chronic pain, a heart condition, or low blood pressure and feel unwell when lying down or getting up;
- are on medication for sleep or mood and are thinking of changing anything.

Stop and open your eyes if you:

- feel anxious, upset, or panicky;
- feel dizzy or unwell;
- feel pain in any part of the body.

You are always free to open your eyes, move, and end the session. Feeling in control matters more than finishing.

Come back slowly

Always finish with a few deep breaths and a slow stretch. When you get up, roll to one side first and rise gradually, especially if you tend to feel light-headed.

3. What you need

Item	Notes
A quiet spot	Somewhere you will not be disturbed for 20 minutes. Switch off notifications.
A mat or firm bed	Lying flat on your back on a mat is traditional. A bed works too.
A light blanket	Body temperature often drops when you rest. Keep warm.
A pillow or folded blanket	Under the head, and under the knees if your lower back is sensitive.
An eye cover (optional)	A soft cloth is fine. Closing the eyes is enough.
Your voice or a recording (optional)	You can read the script slowly, or record it and play it back.

4. The stages of a session

Sessions vary by teacher, but most follow a similar shape. Knowing the shape helps you relax into it.

Stage	What happens
Settling	You lie down, get comfortable and make a short, simple intention.
Rotation of attention	Your attention travels around the body, part by part, without moving.
Breath awareness	You notice the natural breath, perhaps counting it.
Opposites and images	Some versions invite simple sensations (heavy and light) or calm images.
Return	You deepen the breath, move the fingers and toes, and slowly open your eyes.

Intention in this context means a short positive phrase, for example "I am resting". Keep it simple, true and in the present tense. You do not need to believe anything for the practice to work as relaxation.

5. A 15-minute practice script

Read this slowly, pausing at each line, or record it in a calm voice and play it back. Allow about 15 minutes.

Settle (2 minutes)

Lie on your back with your arms a little away from the body, palms up. Let your feet fall open. Close your eyes. Take three slow breaths and let each one carry away a little tension. Quietly say to yourself: "For the next few minutes, I am resting. I will stay awake."

Body scan (7 minutes)

Bring your attention to the right hand. The thumb, the first finger, the second, third and fourth fingers. The palm, the back of the hand, the wrist. The forearm, the elbow, the upper arm, the shoulder. Now the left hand, in the same way, thumb to shoulder.

Right foot: the big toe, the second, third, fourth and fifth toes. The sole, the heel, the ankle. The calf, the knee, the thigh, the hip. Now the left leg, toes to hip.

The lower back, the belly, the chest, the upper back. The neck, the throat. The jaw, the lips, the tongue. The cheeks, the nose, the eyes, the forehead. The top of the head. Feel the whole body lying here, resting.

Breath (3 minutes)

Notice the breath moving without any effort. Feel the belly rise and fall. Count backwards from nine to one, one number on each out-breath. If you lose your place, start again at nine. There is no right or wrong.

Rest and return (3 minutes)

Stay in quiet awareness for a minute. Then take a deeper breath. Gently move your fingers and toes. Stretch your arms overhead if you like. Roll to your right side and rest there for three breaths. Slowly sit up. Open your eyes.

6. Staying awake and other common challenges

Challenge	What to try
I fall asleep	Normal at first, especially if you are tired. Practise earlier in the day, slightly raise the head, or keep your eyes open softly.
My mind keeps wandering	Expected. Return to the body part you were on. Treat each return as the practice itself.
I feel itchy or restless	Move if you need to. Then settle again. Stillness is not a test.
I feel emotional	Open your eyes, take a few slow breaths, and sit up. If it keeps happening, talk to a qualified professional.
My back is uncomfortable	Place a cushion under the knees, or lie with your feet flat on the floor and knees bent.
I cannot lie on my back	Lie on your side, or sit in a supported chair. Both are fine.

7. Variations: short and seated versions

A five-minute version

Lie down, take three slow breaths, scan the body in large blocks (arms, legs, trunk, head), notice the breath for a minute, then return. This is useful on busy days.

A seated version

If lying down is not possible, sit in a supported chair with your feet flat and your hands on your thighs. Follow the same script. Keep your eyes closed or softly lowered.

8. Your four-week plan

Week	Focus	Length	What to notice
1	Short body scan only	5-8 min	Can you follow the body parts in order?
2	Body scan plus breath counting	10-12 min	Does counting help your attention settle?
3	Full 15-minute script	15 min	How do you feel five minutes afterwards?
4	Choose your favourite length and time	10-20 min	Which time of day suits you best?

Try for four to five sessions a week. Use the practice log to notice patterns.

9. What to expect, honestly

Many people feel calmer or more rested after a session. Some feel little at first. Both are normal. Yoga nidra is a relaxation skill, and like any skill it improves with regular, gentle practice.

It is sometimes described online as a cure for insomnia, anxiety or other conditions. It is not a treatment for any medical or mental health condition. If you have trouble sleeping or feel anxious or low for long periods, please speak with a doctor.

10. Questions people ask

Is yoga nidra the same as sleeping?

No. In yoga nidra you aim to stay awake and aware while the body rests deeply. If you fall asleep, you are probably tired, and that is fine.

How long should a session be?

Ten to thirty minutes. Fifteen is a good starting point.

When is the best time to practise?

Many people like early afternoon or evening. If you want to avoid falling asleep, do not practise right after a large meal.

Can I do it every day?

Yes, for most healthy people. Short daily sessions are better than occasional long ones.

Do I need a teacher or recording?

Not necessarily. You can read the script in this guide. A recorded or live guide can be easier because you do not have to remember the steps.

11. Glossary

Term	Plain meaning
Yoga nidra	"Yogic sleep". A guided rest practised lying down.
Sankalpa	A short intention, said quietly to oneself.
Savasana	Corpse pose. The lying-down resting posture.
Body scan	Moving attention through the body part by part.
Pratyahara	Turning attention inward, away from outside distractions.

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.

Practice log

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

Day	Minutes	Length / script used	How it felt	Notes
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				