

RANJANA YOGA CLASS

# Yoga Anatomy

## Muscles, Joints and Fascia

Plain-language basics of bones, joints, muscles and fascia, and how they relate to poses

---

By Ranjana Sinha | [ranjanayogaclass.com](http://ranjanayogaclass.com)

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

# Contents

| #  | Section                            |
|----|------------------------------------|
| 1  | What the musculoskeletal system is |
| 2  | Before you begin: safety first     |
| 3  | The parts and why they matter      |
| 4  | Common areas                       |
| 5  | Your four-week plan                |
| 6  | Choosing a class or teacher        |
| 7  | Practising at home                 |
| 8  | Honest expectations                |
| 9  | Common mistakes and fixes          |
| 10 | Questions people ask               |
| 11 | A pre-session checklist            |
| 12 | Your first week, day by day        |
| 13 | Glossary                           |
| 14 | Practice log                       |

## 1. What the musculoskeletal system is

The musculoskeletal system includes bones, joints, muscles, tendons, ligaments and the connective tissue called fascia. Together they let you move and hold posture.

Knowing a little anatomy helps you understand why poses feel the way they do, and why bodies differ. Bone shape varies between people, so some poses will never look the same for everyone.

### The short answer

Bones give structure, joints allow movement, muscles create it, and fascia wraps and connects them. Yoga works these systems gently. Bodies differ, so follow your own range, not a picture.

## 2. Before you begin: safety first

General education only. Check with your doctor first if you are pregnant, have high blood pressure, a heart, lung, joint or spine condition, osteoporosis, an eye condition such as glaucoma, or have had recent surgery or injury.

### Stop and rest if you feel:

- sharp, pinching or burning pain (a mild stretch is fine, pain is a stop sign);
- dizziness, nausea or breathlessness;
- numbness or tingling, or pressure in the head or neck.

#### Move within comfort

Do not push into pain, numbness, tingling or dizziness. If you are pregnant, have an injury, joint or spine problem, high or low blood pressure, osteoporosis, glaucoma or any other condition, check with your doctor before starting, and tell your teacher.

## 3. The parts and why they matter

| Part      | What it does                       | Yoga note                                              |
|-----------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Bones     | Give structure and protect organs. | Bone shape limits some ranges. That is normal.         |
| Joints    | Allow movement.                    | Avoid locking knees and elbows.                        |
| Muscles   | Produce movement and stability.    | Balanced strength supports joints.                     |
| Tendons   | Attach muscle to bone.             | Warm up before stretching.                             |
| Ligaments | Connect bone to bone.              | They do not stretch back easily; avoid overstretching. |
| Fascia    | Connective tissue around muscles.  | Gentle, regular movement keeps it comfortable.         |

## 4. Common areas

| Area      | Tip                                             |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Spine     | Move in all directions, gently. Lengthen first. |
| Hips      | Rotate slowly. Props help.                      |
| Knees     | Keep them over the ankles; never twist them.    |
| Shoulders | Do not hang on the joint in plank or dog.       |
| Wrists    | Spread the hand and warm up.                    |

## 5. Your four-week plan

| Week | Focus                                      | Length | What to notice                       |
|------|--------------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------------|
| 1    | Notice the movement of one joint at a time | 10 min | Where do you feel limits?            |
| 2    | Warm up hips and shoulders                 | 12 min | Which feel tight?                    |
| 3    | Try three poses with mindful alignment     | 15 min | What changes with small adjustments? |
| 4    | Read one anatomy resource                  | 15 min | Pick one reputable source.           |

## 6. Choosing a class or teacher

A teacher with anatomy training should explain that bodies differ and that there is no single correct shape. Be wary of strong claims about fascia release or detox.

- Tell the teacher about any injury, surgery, pregnancy or health condition before class.
- Ask which poses are optional; a good teacher says most are.
- If a teacher dismisses pain as part of the process, find another class.

## 7. Practising at home

At home, use a mirror or a recording to notice alignment, and use props. Stretch when warm, not cold.

## 8. Honest expectations

Gentle stretching improves comfort for many people. Claims that yoga releases trauma from fascia or repairs joints are not supported. If you have joint pain or injury, see a physiotherapist or doctor.

## 9. Common mistakes and fixes

| Mistake                | Fix                       |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Forcing flexibility    | Stop at a mild stretch.   |
| Locking joints         | Keep a soft bend.         |
| Ignoring pain          | Pain is a signal to stop. |
| Copying a pose exactly | Bone shape differs.       |
| Stretching cold        | Warm up first.            |

## 10. Questions people ask

### Why am I not as flexible as others?

Bone shape, genetics, age and habits differ. Flexibility is not a measure of progress.

### What is fascia?

A web of connective tissue around muscles and organs. Research is ongoing.

### Can yoga damage joints?

Overstretching and forcing can. Gentle, mindful practice is usually fine.

### Should I stretch before a workout?

A gentle warm-up is better than deep static stretches.

## 11. A pre-session checklist

- Have I eaten lightly, at least two hours ago, and had some water?
- Is my space clear, warm and free from interruptions?
- Do I know what I will practise, and how long I have?
- Is there anything in my body today (pain, tiredness, illness) that means I should do less?
- Do I know my stop signs: sharp pain, dizziness, breathlessness?

Running through these five questions takes less than a minute and prevents most beginner problems.

## 12. Your first week, day by day

| Day | Suggestion                                                |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Read this guide. Try just the warm-up and the final rest. |
| 2   | Rest, or a five-minute walk.                              |
| 3   | Repeat day 1 and add one new pose or step.                |
| 4   | Rest.                                                     |
| 5   | Practise a short version. Notice how you feel afterwards. |
| 6   | Write a few lines in the practice log.                    |
| 7   | Rest. Plan next week from what you noticed.               |

Three short sessions a week are a good start. Regular, gentle practice builds confidence, and rest days let the body adapt.

## 13. Glossary

| Term            | Plain meaning            |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Ligament        | Connects bone to bone.   |
| Tendon          | Connects muscle to bone. |
| Fascia          | Connective tissue.       |
| Range of motion | How far a joint moves.   |

### 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 | Notes made | How it felt | Notes |
|-----|---------|------------|-------------|-------|
| 1   |         |            |             |       |
| 2   |         |            |             |       |
| 3   |         |            |             |       |
| 4   |         |            |             |       |
| 5   |         |            |             |       |
| 6   |         |            |             |       |
| 7   |         |            |             |       |
| 8   |         |            |             |       |
| 9   |         |            |             |       |
| 10  |         |            |             |       |
| 11  |         |            |             |       |
| 12  |         |            |             |       |
| 13  |         |            |             |       |
| 14  |         |            |             |       |