

RANJANA YOGA CLASS

Hatha Yoga

A Beginner's Practice Guide

What it is, a safe 20-minute sequence of ten poses, a four-week plan, and safety notes

By Ranjana Sinha | ranjanayogaclass.com

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

Contents

#	Section
1	What Hatha yoga is
2	Before you begin: safety first
3	What you need
4	How to move: five simple principles
5	Warm-up
6	Ten foundation poses
7	A 20-minute sequence
8	Your four-week plan
9	Hatha compared with other styles
10	Common mistakes and fixes
11	Questions people ask
12	Glossary
13	Practice log

1. What Hatha yoga is

Hatha yoga is the broad family of yoga that works through physical postures (asana), breath control (pranayama) and relaxation. In many modern classes, "Hatha" simply means a slower-paced, posture-based class with time to hold each pose and focus on the breath.

That makes it a good place to start. Poses are usually held for several breaths, instructions are clear, and there is time to rest. Nothing is rushed.

The short answer

Hatha yoga is a slow, posture-based style that combines poses, breathing and relaxation. It suits beginners because you hold each pose for several breaths and move at your own pace.

What this guide gives you

- Ten foundation poses with plain-language steps and safety tips.
- A balanced 20-minute sequence you can repeat at home.
- A four-week plan and a practice log.

- A clear comparison with other common yoga styles.

2. Before you begin: safety first

Hatha yoga is generally gentle, but any physical practice carries some risk. Move within your comfort, never into pain.

Check with your doctor first if you:

- are pregnant or have recently given birth;
- have high blood pressure, a heart condition, osteoporosis or a joint or spine condition;
- have had recent surgery or an injury;
- have glaucoma or an eye condition (avoid head-below-heart poses until cleared);
- have a medical condition you are unsure about.

Stop and rest if you feel:

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

Three rules

1. Never push into pain.
2. Keep breathing; if you cannot breathe easily, ease off.
3. Come out of a pose as slowly as you went in.

3. What you need

Item	Notes
Mat	A non-slip mat or a firm carpet.
Clothes	Anything you can stretch in comfortably.
Two blocks or books	To bring the floor closer. Thick books work well.
A strap or scarf	For tight hamstrings and shoulders.
A wall and a chair	Support for balance poses.
Time	Twenty quiet minutes, ideally on an empty stomach.

4. How to move: five simple principles

- **Breathe through the nose.** Slow, even breaths. If you gasp, you are going too far.
- **Hold, do not bounce.** Ease into the pose, then stay for 3 to 5 breaths.
- **Stretch, do not strain.** A mild, even stretch is the target.
- **Balance both sides.** Whatever you do on the right, do on the left.
- **Rest when you need to.** Child's pose is always available.

5. Warm-up

Spend three minutes preparing the joints before the main poses.

- Neck: drop the right ear toward the right shoulder, hold for two breaths, switch sides. Do not roll the head in full circles.
- Shoulders: roll them backwards slowly, five times.
- Cat and cow: on hands and knees, breathe in as the belly drops and chest lifts, breathe out as the back rounds. Repeat eight times.
- Hips: still on hands and knees, draw small slow circles with your hips.

6. Ten foundation poses

Pose	How to do it	Safety tip
Mountain (Tadasana)	Stand with feet hip-width apart, weight even, arms by your sides. Lengthen the spine, soften the shoulders. Hold 5 breaths.	Gentle for most people. If dizzy, sit.
Standing forward fold (Uttanasana)	From mountain, bend the knees and fold forward from the hips. Let the head hang. Hands on shins, blocks or the floor.	Keep knees soft. Roll up slowly. Skip if you have eye or blood pressure concerns.
Warrior II (Virabhadrasana II)	Step the feet wide. Turn the right foot out, bend the right knee over the ankle, arms out at shoulder height. Gaze over the right hand. Repeat on the left.	Do not let the front knee fall inward. Shorten the stance if the knee is sensitive.
Triangle (Trikonasana)	From a wide stance, reach the right hand toward the right shin, left arm up. Keep the chest open. Repeat on the other side.	Rest the hand on a block or shin, never the knee.
Tree (Vrikshasana)	Stand on the left leg, place the right foot on the left calf or inner thigh (never the knee). Hands at the chest. Switch sides.	Keep a hand on the wall. Toes on the floor are fine.
Cat-cow (Marjaryasana-Bitilasana)	On hands and knees, move between a lifted chest and a rounded back with the breath.	Pad the knees with a folded blanket.
Cobra (Bhujangasana)	Lie on the belly, hands under shoulders. Press gently and lift the chest a little. Keep the elbows bent.	Lift only as far as is comfortable. Skip if pregnant or if the back feels pinched.
Seated forward bend (Paschimotanasana)	Sit with legs stretched. Fold forward from the hips with a long spine. Hold the shins or use a strap.	Bend the knees if the back rounds sharply.
Bridge (Setu Bandhasana)	Lie on the back, knees bent, feet hip-width apart. Press into the feet and lift the hips. Hold 3 to 5 breaths.	Keep the neck relaxed. Do not turn the head.
Relaxation (Savasana)	Lie on the back, arms and legs relaxed. Close the eyes and breathe naturally for 2 to 5 minutes.	Use a blanket and a cushion under the knees if comfortable.

7. A 20-minute sequence

Time	Pose	Breaths
2 min	Mountain and breath awareness	8
3 min	Warm-up (neck, shoulders, cat-cow)	8 each
2 min	Standing forward fold	5
4 min	Warrior II and triangle, both sides	4 to 5 each
1 min	Tree, both sides	5
2 min	Cobra	4
2 min	Seated forward bend	5
2 min	Bridge	4
2 min	Savasana	Natural

On busy days, do just the warm-up and savasana. Short and regular beats long and rare.

8. Your four-week plan

Week	Focus	Length	What to notice
1	Warm-up, mountain, forward fold, savasana	10 min	Can you breathe easily in every pose?
2	Add warrior II and cobra	15 min	Is your front knee tracking over the ankle?
3	Add triangle, tree, seated fold and bridge	20 min	Which poses feel easier than week one?
4	Full 20-minute sequence	20 min	Which side is tighter? Note it in the log.

Aim for three to five sessions a week. A rest day is part of the plan.

9. Hatha compared with other styles

Style	Pace	Best for
Hatha	Slow, poses held several breaths	Beginners, learning alignment
Vinyasa	Flowing, breath-linked movement	Those wanting more movement
Ashtanga	Fixed, athletic series	Experienced, disciplined practitioners
Yin	Very slow, long holds near the floor	Quiet, deep stretching
Restorative	Fully supported rest	Rest and recovery

10. Common mistakes and fixes

Mistake	Fix
Holding the breath	Breathe slowly through the nose. Ease off if you cannot.
Locking the knees	Keep a micro-bend in the standing leg.
Comparing with others	Everyone's body is different. Use blocks and a strap freely.
Skipping the warm-up	Spend at least three minutes on it.
Pushing into pain	Back off. A mild stretch is the aim.

11. Questions people ask

How often should a beginner practise?

Three to five times a week for 15 to 20 minutes is a good start.

Do I need to be flexible?

No. Flexibility develops with regular practice. Props let you start where you are.

Is Hatha yoga good for weight loss?

It is a gentle form of movement that can support an active lifestyle. It is not a weight-loss programme on its own.

Can I practise with back or knee pain?

Talk to your doctor or physiotherapist first. Skip any pose that hurts, and consider learning from a qualified teacher.

12. Glossary

Term	Plain meaning
Asana	A yoga pose.
Pranayama	Breath practice.
Savasana	Final relaxation pose.
Vinyasa	Linking movement with breath.
Prop	A block, strap or blanket that supports a pose.

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	Poses done	How it felt	Notes
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				