

RANJANA YOGA CLASS

Roots and Ethics

A Beginner's Guide to Respect

Where yoga comes from, and how to practise
with respect and cultural awareness

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

Contents

#	Section
1	What the cultural roots of yoga is
2	Before you begin: safety first
3	Ways to practise with respect
4	Questions to ask yourself
5	A 15-minute reflection
6	Your four-week plan
7	Choosing a class or teacher
8	Practising at home
9	Honest expectations
10	Common mistakes and fixes
11	Questions people ask
12	A pre-session checklist
13	Your first week, day by day
14	Glossary
15	Practice log

1. What the cultural roots of yoga is

Yoga began in India as a spiritual and philosophical tradition. Over many centuries it grew into many paths, including meditation, devotion, action and postures.

Today it is practised worldwide, often as exercise. Some people feel that parts of the tradition are lost or misused when yoga is treated only as fitness or as a product.

The short answer

Respect means learning where practices come from, crediting teachers and traditions, and avoiding careless use of sacred symbols and words. There is no single view on every question, so listen and keep learning.

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.

Doctor first

This guide is about culture and ethics, not medical advice. If you have a health condition, check with your doctor before practising, and choose teachers who respect your limits.

Stop and get medical advice if you notice:

- pressure to adopt beliefs you do not share;
- a teacher who ignores your safety or consent;
- claims that yoga cures serious disease.

3. Ways to practise with respect

Area	What to do	Why
Learn the origins	Read about the tradition	Understand context.
Credit sources	Name teachers and lineages	Honour them.
Treat symbols with care	Do not use sacred symbols as decoration	Avoid trivialising.
Support teachers from the tradition	Where you can	Keep it sustainable.

4. Questions to ask yourself

Question	Reflection
Where does this practice come from?	Look it up and read.
Am I using terms correctly?	Learn what they mean.
Who profits from this?	Consider who benefits.
Am I listening?	Hear people from the tradition.

The aim is thoughtful practice, not guilt.

5. A 15-minute reflection

Time	Practice	Notes
5 min	Read about one practice you use	Origins.
5 min	Write what you learned	Notes.
3 min	Sit quietly with one idea	Reflect.
2 min	Choose one respectful action	Small.

6. Your four-week plan

Week	Focus	Length	What to notice
1	Read a short introduction to yoga history	15 min	What surprised you?
2	Learn the meaning of terms you use	10 min	Are you using them well?
3	Seek teachers connected to the tradition	Research	Whose voice is missing?
4	Share what you learn kindly	Chat	Keep it open.

7. Choosing a class or teacher

Choose teachers who explain origins honestly, welcome questions and do not treat the tradition as a trend.

- Tell the teacher about your condition, medicines, injuries and pregnancy before class.
- Ask about their training for your situation.
- Avoid anyone who says yoga can replace your treatment.

8. Practising at home

At home, read, listen and reflect. Avoid using sacred symbols as mere decoration.

9. Honest expectations

Cultural awareness helps practice feel more grounded. Views differ, so keep an open mind.

10. Common mistakes and fixes

Mistake	Fix
Treating yoga only as exercise	Learn the wider tradition.
Using sacred words casually	Learn the meaning first.
Claiming expertise early	Stay humble.
Dismissing concerns	Listen.
Over-correcting with guilt	Aim for care.

11. Questions people ask

What is cultural appropriation in yoga?

Using elements of the tradition without understanding, credit or respect. Views on where the line sits vary.

Do I have to be religious to practise?

No. Many people practise for health and calm. Do respect the tradition.

Where did yoga come from?

From India, over many centuries.

How can I practise respectfully?

Learn the origins, credit teachers and ask questions.

12. 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.

13. 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.

14. Glossary

Term	Plain meaning
Lineage	A line of teachers passing on a tradition.
Appropriation	Taking from a culture without respect or credit.
Context	The background that gives something meaning.

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