



MIND BODY MANDALA

YOGA GUIDELINES

Preparing for Yoga

FOOD

It is best to practice on an empty stomach (two hours after your last meal). If you do eat something within two hours of practicing, try to keep it light and easy to digest (examples: fruit, yogurt). If you have eaten something more substantial it can help to warm up with some twists. Eating heavy foods before practicing can lead to nausea and/or discomfort.

DRINK

Come to class well hydrated. Drinking water prior to class prevents dehydration and increases flexibility. Drinking enough water well in advance decreases the likelihood that you'll have to interrupt your practice by going to the restroom. Drinking water while practicing interferes with the energetic benefits of Yoga.

Caffeine

Be aware of your sensitivity to caffeine before practicing. If your nervous system is reacting to caffeine you may have a difficult time meditating or practicing with safety awareness.

CLOTHING

Yoga attire should be comfortable and allow for easy movement. Yoga is practiced with bare feet. Shoes are not worn in studios for sanitary reasons and to protect the floor. In addition, removing one's shoes is also a symbolic gesture of leaving the outside world (and all associated thought processes) at the door.



MATS

Studios will usually provide mats but you may choose to bring your own. Things to consider when purchasing or selecting a mat: traction, weight and thickness.

Traction

Brand new mats tend to have a film on them that makes them slippery. This can be remedied by washing the mat with a mild soap and washcloth and letting it hang dry completely before the first use. If you are using a studio mat that is slippery, place a towel on your mat underneath your hands for added grip.

Weight

When considering mat weight, ask yourself if you plan to travel with your mat or keep it at home. Lightweight mats and mat bags make for easier transportation.

Thickness

Some poses involve pressing one's knees on the ground. People with sensitive knees may prefer using a thicker mat. Another option is to use two mats, one stacked on top of the other. Many studios provide blankets that can be used for added cushioning.

PERSONAL ITEMS

If the studio provides lockers use them for storing your backpacks, bags, purses, etc. Otherwise, you can bring your belongings into the studio but set them off to the side where they will be out of the way.

Cell Phones

If you bring your cell phone into the studio, make sure that it is on silent before the class begins. This is considered to be good yoga etiquette. If you are a medical practitioner and are on call, set your phone to low volume or vibrate and notify the teacher in advance that your cell may go off.



SCENTS

Strong scents (perfumes, cologne, essential oils, body odor, etc.) can be disturbing to some students. If you are likely to sweat, please wear deodorant. Avoid wearing body lotion as it can make contact with the mats slippery and unsafe.

ARRIVING

Plan to arrive on time out of courtesy to your classmates and teacher, and to maximize the benefits from your yoga practice. If possible, arrive ten minutes early to secure a spot, check in with the teacher, and quiet your mind. You are welcome to do your own warm ups or meditation before the class starts.

Being Late

If you arrive late and an opening meditation is in process, either wait outside or sit quietly by the door until the meditation is over. If you are more than 10 minutes late and the class is well underway, it's best to come back at another time. Being late puts you at a disadvantage as you may miss preliminary instructions and/or risk injuring yourself.



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Safety Precautions

SKILL LEVELS

To ensure a safe and enjoyable experience, check the skill requirements for each level before attending a class. If you are uncertain ask the teacher. Basics level classes are beneficial for every student, regardless of how long they have been practicing or their level of proficiency in other movement forms (dance, sports). It is the student's responsibility to inform the teacher if they experience any unusual pain during class. If you are pregnant, have injuries, recent surgeries, or medical conditions tell the teacher before the class begins.

Regularity

Yoga teaches us to do things regularly and with awareness. Be mindful of how often you are practicing when selecting which classes you attend. If you have been attending upper level classes but take some time off, consider attending a lower level class to help regain your foundation. A daily home practice is highly recommended for safety prevention and maintaining skill level. For progressive benefits, the recommended quota of classes per week is 2-3.

HEATED ROOMS

Before attending hot yoga, here are some things to consider. Hot yoga a fad that developed in the last decade and artificially replicates the climate of South India. Dramatic temperature swings are very taxing on the body. As with caffeine use, it can be difficult to assess what's actually happening in your body when there is an added stimulus. Heated studios should be approached with a great deal of caution, especially if you are a novice practitioner.



PAIN

Yoga teaches us to be aware of our body's messages. There are two types of pain: good pain and bad pain:

Good pain is a generalized discomfort that results from increasing your performance level. Good pain is an indicator that you are progressing with proper alignment and awareness of your personal limitations. Good pain will decrease with regularity - the best remedy for good pain is a consistent Yoga practice.

Bad pain is sharp, shooting and localized. It is a red flag that your body communicates to say STOP what you are doing immediately. Listen to your body before, during and after class. Low back pain is a common occurrence that can result from back bending without proper alignment. Speak with your teacher about any bad pain you experience.

RESTING

Child's pose is an option at any point in a practice. You are your own best teacher and know your body better than anyone else. Yoga is non-competitive and teaches us how to challenge ourselves in safe and healthy ways.

VARIATIONS

In mixed-level group classes the teacher will sometimes offer variations on a pose. If you know a variation to a pose but the teacher hasn't offered it as an option, here are some things to consider. Some teachers encourage students to customize their practices while other teachers do not. Unannounced variations can be distracting to other students and detract from the unified group experience. It is best to find out the teacher's preference beforehand. If you are in a class that invites independent variations, make sure that you are confident in your ability to execute the pose correctly. Group classes (excepting Mysore) are not a time to do your own practice. Talk with the teacher if you have difficulty adapting to the class sequence.



DIZZINESS

If you feel lightheaded or disoriented in an unpleasant way, move carefully into a low squat or child's pose. This will restore the balance of blood flow in your body. Being closer to the ground makes you less likely to incur an injury in the event you pass out.

TOUCH

Teachers may offer hands-on adjustments or lead partner yoga exercises. Adjustments are a gift and honor the teacher-student connection. Partner exercises help to build community in a class setting. **Touch is completely optional.** If you ever feel uncomfortable about receiving or giving touch, tell the teacher as soon as possible.

DEPARTURE

Leaving early creates a disruption to the class dynamic. If you must leave early then notify the teacher before the class begins. If you are using studio props, find out if they should be left on the floor or returned to their storage areas. Set your mat near the door and give yourself five minutes to do the final meditation (savasana) before leaving. Arriving late and leaving early is an indicator that the class time does not fit with your schedule. Plan to attend classes in their entirety in order to reap the benefits of the science of Yoga.

Savasana

When resting in a state of deep relaxation, unexpected noises are jarring to the nervous system. In consideration of your fellow students, do not leave the class during savasana unless you have an emergency situation.

AFTER CLASS

Be sure to drink plenty of water after the class ends and throughout the rest of your day. Some Yoga classes can create a sense of euphoria or pleasant disorientation. Should you experience this, give yourself plenty of time to acclimate before driving.