

The background of the entire image is a photograph of an ancient Indian temple interior. It features a series of ornate pillars and a ceiling with complex carvings. The lighting is warm, highlighting the textures of the stone. The architecture is a blend of traditional Indian styles, possibly from the Vijayanagara or Chola periods.

Adarsh Williams

WELCOME TO MYSORE

Traditional Ashtanga Yoga

What is Mysore?

Mysore is a city located in the southern state of Karnataka, India. It is known for its rich cultural heritage, historical significance, and association with yoga.

In the 1930s, Sri T. Krishnamacharya was invited to Mysore by the then Maharaja, Sri Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV. The Maharaja was a patron of arts, culture, and yoga and had a keen interest in reviving ancient Indian traditions. He appointed Krishnamacharya as the yoga instructor for the royal family and made significant contributions to support Krishnamacharya's work.

During his time in Mysore, Krishnamacharya taught yoga to members of the royal family, including the Maharaja himself. He also established the Mysore Yoga Mandiram, a yoga school where he trained students from various backgrounds.

Krishnamacharya's approach to yoga was eclectic and adaptable, drawing from his extensive knowledge of various yoga styles, including Hatha yoga, Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, and Tantra. He tailored his teachings to meet the specific needs and abilities of each student, emphasizing breath control, alignment, and the therapeutic applications of yoga.

Krishnamacharya's teachings had a profound influence on the modern yoga landscape. His emphasis on individualized instruction, breath-centric practice, and the therapeutic benefits of yoga laid the foundation for various yoga styles, including Iyengar yoga, Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga, and Viniyoga.

Among Krishnamacharya's notable students in Mysore were Indra Devi, who gained fame for introducing yoga to the West, BKS Iyengar (Iyengar Yoga) and Pattabhi Jois (Ashtanga Yoga), and his son T.K.V. Desikachar (Viniyoga).

What Happens in Mysore Class?

In a Mysore class, students practice the Ashtanga yoga sequence at their own pace, under the guidance of an experienced teacher. Unlike a traditional led class, where the entire class moves together in a synchronized manner, Mysore class allows each student to practice independently, following their own breath and rhythm.

The class typically takes place in a quiet and focused environment. When students arrive, they set up their mats and begin their practice by performing a series of Sun Salutations (Surya Namaskar A and B). Afterward, they continue with a set sequence of yoga asanas (postures) that includes standing poses, seated poses, twists, forward folds, and inversions.

The teacher moves around the room, providing individualized adjustments, corrections, and guidance to each student based on their specific needs and abilities. New students may receive more detailed instructions and assistance, while more experienced practitioners may require minimal guidance.

The Mysore class format allows students to gradually memorize the Ashtanga sequence over time, building a self-guided practice that becomes ingrained in their body and mind. As students progress, they may learn new postures and variations, and the teacher will introduce them into their personal practice.

Mysore class is suitable for practitioners of all levels, from beginners to advanced students. It offers an opportunity for practitioners to cultivate discipline, focus, and mindfulness while developing strength, flexibility, and balance. It also fosters a sense of community as students practice side by side, each on their own unique yoga journey.

What is Ashtanga Yoga?

Ashtanga is the classic "Eight Limbs" of yoga. These include a code of ethics and behavior, yoga postures and breath, and successive states of meditation. In yoga classes, we follow a sequence of yoga postures synchronized with breathing as a moving meditation.

Ashtanga Yoga includes the three key components of vinyasa, mula bandha, and drishti to cultivate the meditative mood of Trishtana.

1 Vinyasa consists of breath and movement synchronicity. In Led classes, the vinyasa is counted in Sanskrit numbers with cues for specific breath and postures are called.

2 Drishti is the "looking place" for your yoga posture. Each position has a specific drishti to help maintain focus and develop concentration, which is followed by meditation and integration.

3 Mula Bandha refers to the activation of your midsection and pelvis muscles. Attention is given to strengthening these foundation muscles so you may have greater strength and lightness in your practice.

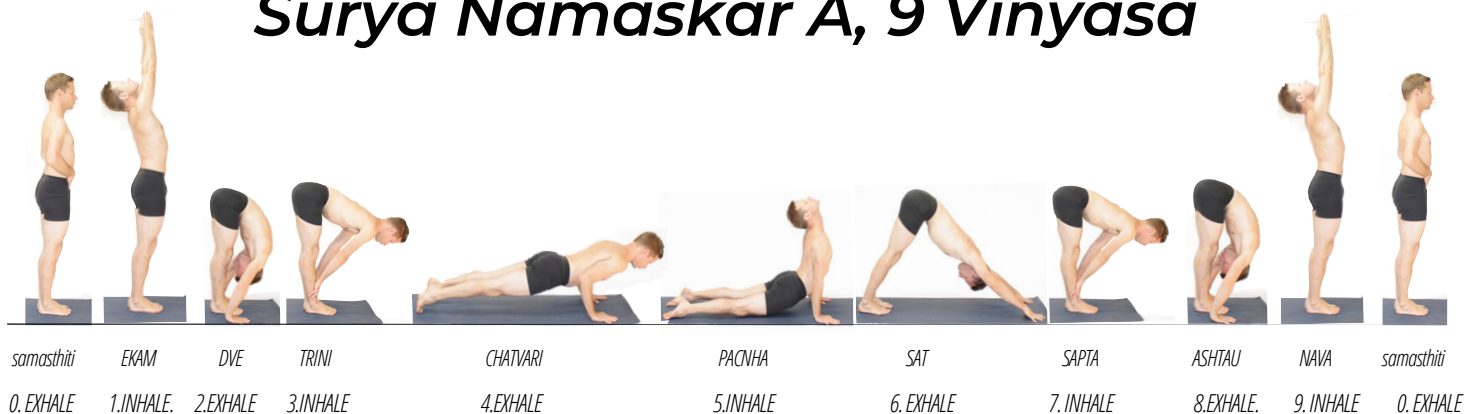


Getting Started

Ashtanga Yoga is based on the Vinyasa Krama method.

Vinyasa Krama (literally, "moving by numbers," is the meditative method of connecting breath and movement. In Ashtanga, each pose and sequence has an assigned number. For example, the familiar Surya Namaskar sequence has 9 vinyasas. The sequence begins at "zero" or Samasthiti flows through movements 1-9, then finishes again at the zero position.

Surya Namaskar A, 9 Vinyasa



What is the purpose of following such an exact count?

Meditation of course! The idea is that the mind is very active, so we give it something to focus on, counting. Breath counting is one of the most common forms of meditation. When breath, attention, and movement synchronize, we experience a moving meditation.

*"Vina vinyasa yogena asanadin na karayet"
(O yogi, do not do asana without vinyasa)*

-Vamana Rishi

Drishti

In Sanskrit, "Drishti" means "sight" or "vision." It involves directing and concentrating the gaze in a deliberate manner to help control and direct the mind's attention. By fixing the eyes on a specific point, the practitioner aims to calm the mind, enhance concentration, and cultivate a deeper sense of awareness and connection within the practice. In Ashtanga Yoga, there are nine prescribed Drishti points, each associated with a specific asana or movement. These Drishti points are intended to guide the practitioner's focus and aid in the alignment of the body, energy, and breath. The Drishti points are as follows:

1. Nasagrai Drishti: Gazing at the tip of the nose. This is typically used in postures with the head in a neutral position.
2. Angusta Ma Dyai Drishti: Gazing at the thumbs. This is used in postures with the arms extended overhead.
3. Urdhva Drishti: Gazing upward. This is used in postures where the backbend is involved.
4. Hastagrai Drishti: Gazing at the hands. This is used in postures where the hands are placed on the floor.
5. Pahayoragrai Drishti: Gazing at the toes. This is used in postures involving forward folds.
6. Parshva Drishti: Gazing to the right side. This is used in postures involving twisting to the right.
7. Parshva Drishti: Gazing to the left side. This is used in postures involving twisting to the left.
8. Nabi Chakra Drishti: Gazing at the navel. This is used in postures involving bandhas (energy locks) or abdominal engagement.
9. Broomadyai Drishti: Gazing at the third eye point between the eyebrows. This is used in postures involving balance.

*"Wherever the eyes focus,
there the mind goes."
- Frederick Lenz*

What's a Bandha?

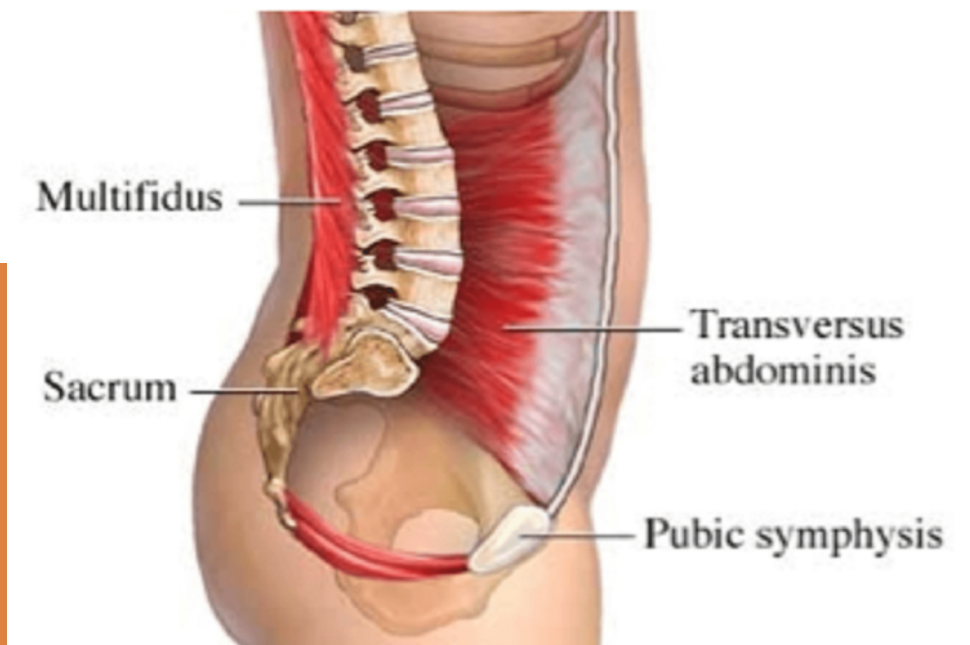
"Mula Bandha is the energetic seal that helps to channel and direct our vital energy upwards, leading to a state of balance and harmony."

- Richard Freeman

In Ashtanga Yoga, bandhas refer to energetic locks or seals that are engaged during the practice to regulate the flow of energy within the body. There are two main bandhas practiced in Ashtanga Yoga: Mula Bandha (root lock), and Uddiyana Bandha (abdominal lock):

- Mula Bandha involves the contraction of the muscles of the pelvic floor, specifically the area between the anus and the genitals. It is considered the primary and foundational bandha in Ashtanga Yoga. Engaging Mula Bandha helps to draw energy upward, stabilize the spine, and create a sense of strength.
- Uddiyana Bandha is the lifting and drawing in of the lower abdomen and diaphragm towards the spine. Uddiyana Bandha helps to activate the abdominals, stimulate the digestive organs, and increase the flow of energy through the central channel (Sushumna)

The bandha consists of the respiratory diaphragm, transversus abdominis, pelvic floor, and multifidus.



Yoga Chikitsa: The Primary Series

The primary series of Ashtanga Yoga, also known as Yoga Chikitsa (Yoga Therapy), is a foundational sequence of postures that forms the basis of the Ashtanga Yoga system. The primary series is designed to purify and strengthen the body, cultivate focus and discipline, and prepare the practitioner for deeper levels of practice. Here are some benefits of practicing the Ashtanga Yoga primary series:

1 **Strength and Flexibility:** The primary series includes a wide range of standing, seated, and balancing postures that work on building strength, flexibility, and endurance in the muscles, joints, and connective tissues. Regular practice helps to tone and strengthen the entire body, including the core, arms, legs, and back.

2 **Cleansing and Detoxification:** The primary series incorporates a series of dynamic movements and breath synchronized with movement (vinyasa) that generates internal heat, promoting sweating and detoxification. This process helps to purify the body by eliminating toxins and impurities, improving overall health and vitality.

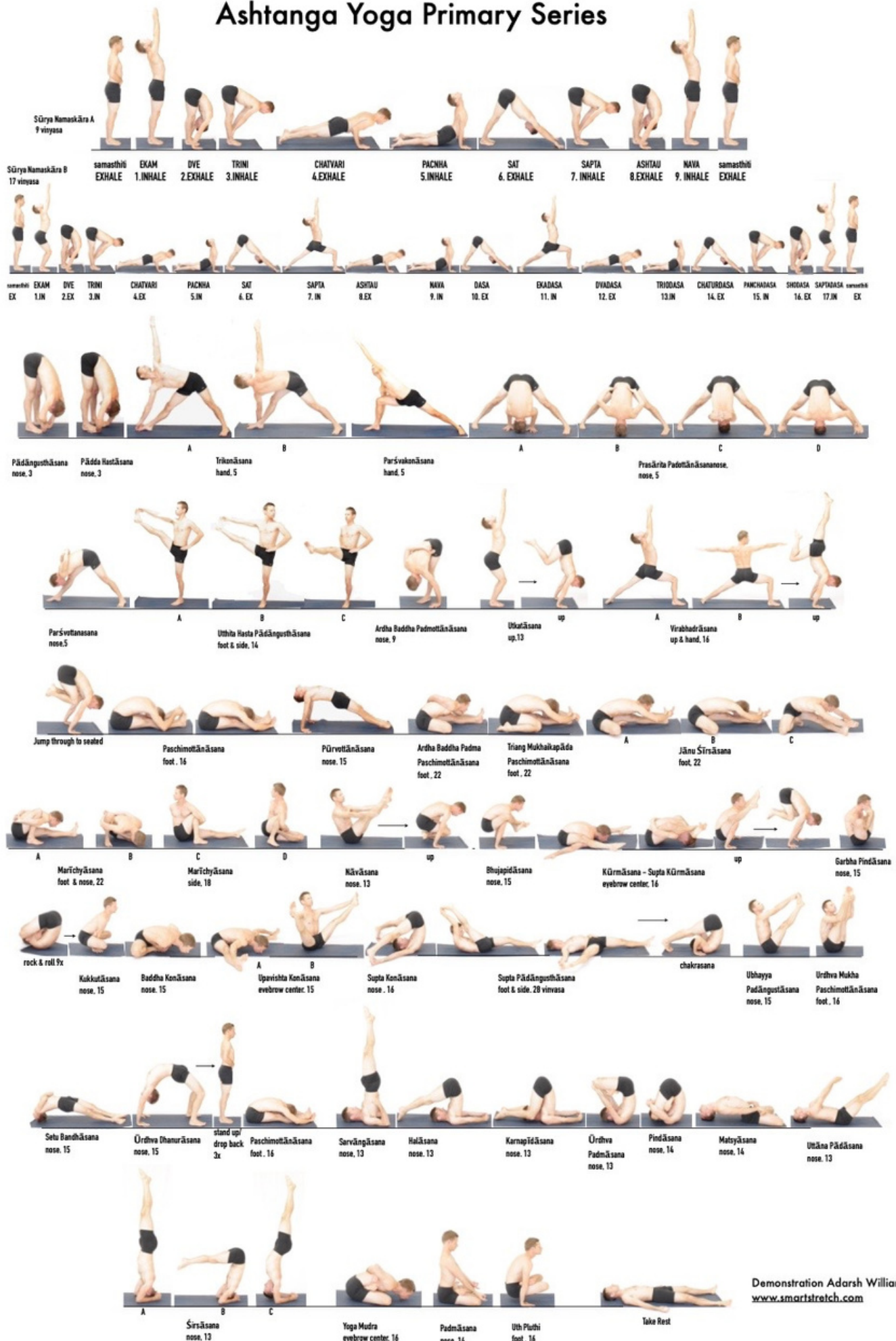
3 **Increased Focus and Concentration:** Ashtanga Yoga emphasizes the coordination of breath, movement, and gaze (drishti), which cultivates focused attention and concentration. The rhythmic flow of the practice helps to quiet the mind, reduce mental chatter, and enhance mindfulness.

4 **Energy and Vitality:** The dynamic nature of the primary series, combined with deep breathing, helps to stimulate the flow of prana (life force energy) throughout the body. This leads to an increased sense of energy, vitality, and overall well-being.

5 **Improved Balance and Stability:** The primary series includes various balancing postures that challenge and improve balance, coordination, and proprioception. Practicing these postures enhances stability and body awareness.

6 **Discipline and Self-Commitment:** The primary series follows a set sequence that is traditionally practiced six days a week. This regular commitment to practice cultivates discipline, perseverance, and self-motivation. It encourages the practitioner to develop a consistent and dedicated yoga practice.

Ashtanga Yoga Primary Series



Can I use props or modify my poses?

*"Yoga must be adapted to the individual, not the individual to yoga."
-Tirumalai Krishnamacharya*

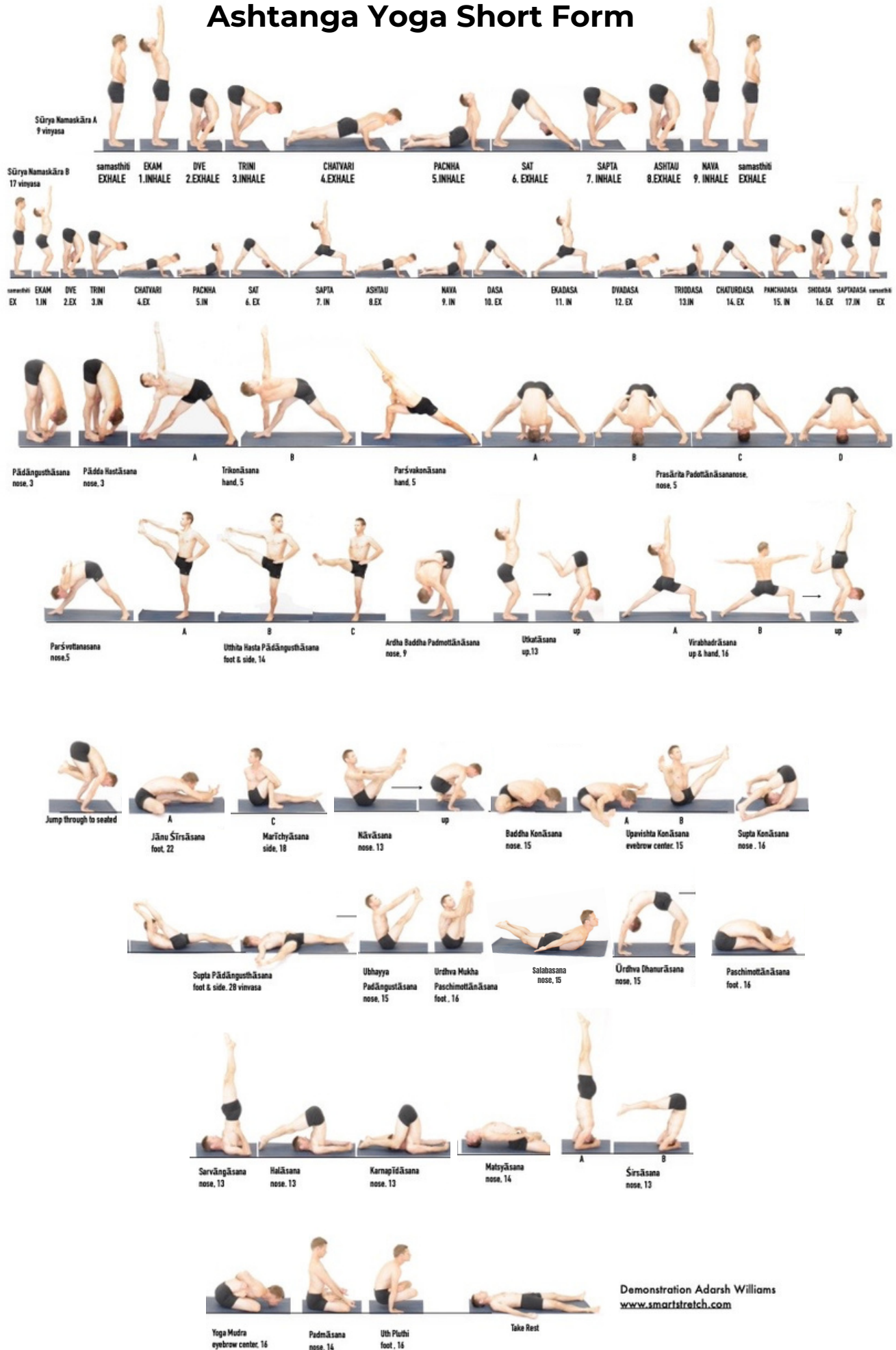
Yes! In the Ashtanga tradition, yoga practices are adapted to suit the individual's needs. Your teacher will help tailor the yoga practice to the specific requirements, abilities, and limitations of each individual, including circumstances, physical conditions, and goals.

Do I have to stay for the entire 90 minutes class?

No, your individual practice time depends on your experience and individual goals for your practice. Check out the Ashtanga Yoga Short Form on the next page. This sequence is designed to include a full range of Functional movements that can be completed in 45 minutes.



Ashtanga Yoga Short Form



Demonstration Adarsh Williams
www.smartstretch.com

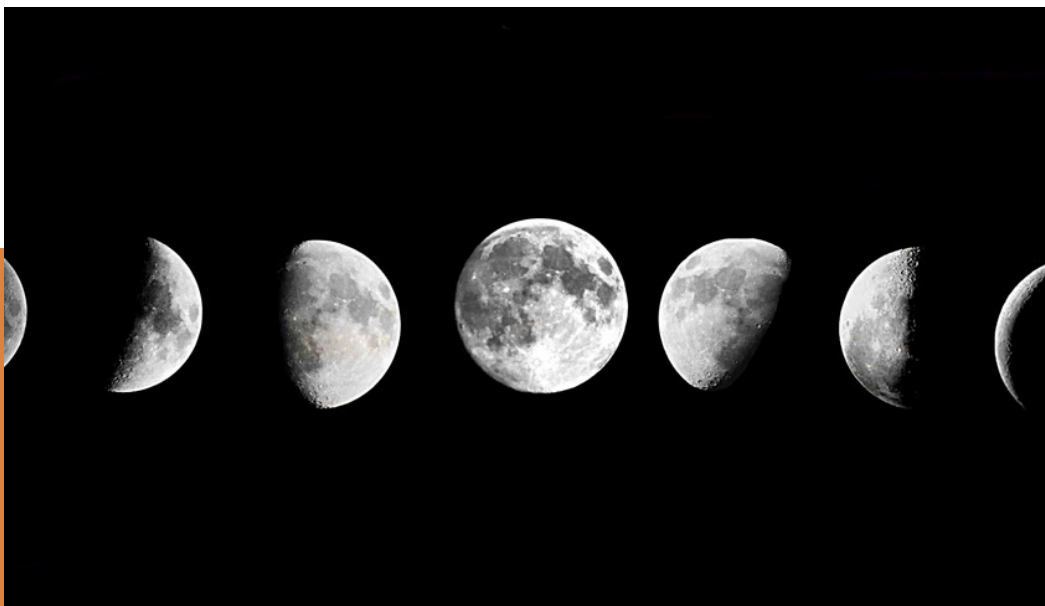
Moon Days

In traditional Ashtanga Yoga, it is recommended to take rest on both New Moon (Amavasya) and Full Moon (Purnima) days. These rest days are known as "moon days" or "lunar days." The practice of observing rest on these particular days has its roots in the ancient yogic tradition and is influenced by the belief in the energetic influence of the moon on the human body and mind.

The New Moon is believed to have a calming and grounding effect, while the Full Moon is associated with heightened energy and a sense of expansiveness. Taking rest on these days allows practitioners to align themselves with the natural rhythm of the lunar cycle and harmonize with the prevailing energetic qualities.

The moon days in Ashtanga Yoga also provide an opportunity for self-reflection and introspection. By taking a break from the physical practice, practitioners can delve deeper into the internal aspects of yoga, such as meditation, pranayama (breathing exercises), and self-study. These practices can help cultivate self-awareness, mindfulness, and a deeper connection with oneself.

It's important to note that while observing rest on New and Full Moon days is a traditional recommendation in Ashtanga Yoga, it is not mandatory. Some practitioners may choose to modify their practice or continue with a lighter routine on these days, depending on their individual needs and preferences.



Opening Mantra

om
vande gurūnām caranāravinde
sandarśita svātma sukhāva bodhe
nihśreyase jāṅgalikāyamāne
samsāra hālāhala moha śāntyai
ābāhu purusākāram
śankha cakrāsi dhārinam
sahasra śīrasam śvetam
pranamāmi pantanjalin
om

om
I bow to the two lotus feet of the (plurality of) Gurus, which awaken insight into the happiness of pure Being, which are the complete absorption into joy, the jungle physician, eliminating the delusion caused by the poison of Samsāra (conditioned existence).
I prostrate before the sage Patañjali who has thousands of radiant, white heads (as the divine serpent, Ananta) and who has, as far as his arms, assumed a human form, holding a conch shell (divine sound), a wheel (a discus of light or time) and a sword (discrimination).
om

Closing Mantra

om
svasti prajābhyah paripālayantaām
nyāyena mārgena
mahīm mahīśāh
gobrāhmanebyah śubhamastu nityam
lokāsamastā sukhino bhavantu
om śāntih śāntih śāntih

om
May all of humankind be happy and well.
May the great noble lords protect the earth in every way,
by the path of justice & virtue.
May there be perpetual joy for those who know the real nature of things.
May all the worlds be happy.
om peace, peace, peace

FAQ

Q: What is Ashtanga Yoga?

A: Ashtanga Yoga is a traditional form of yoga that involves a dynamic sequence of postures combined with synchronized breath. It was developed by Sri K. Pattabhi Jois and is often referred to as "Eight-Limbed Yoga," as it encompasses a holistic approach to physical and spiritual well-being.

Q: What are the eight limbs of Ashtanga Yoga?

A: The eight limbs of Ashtanga Yoga, as outlined by the sage Patanjali, are Yama (ethical principles), Niyama (self-discipline), Asana (physical postures), Pranayama (breath control), Pratyahara (withdrawal of senses), Dharana (concentration), Dhyana (meditation), and Samadhi (enlightenment or union with the divine).

Q: What is Mysore Style Ashtanga Yoga?

A: Mysore Style Ashtanga Yoga is a self-paced and individualized approach to practicing Ashtanga Yoga. Students practice the Ashtanga sequence at their own pace while receiving personalized adjustments and guidance from the teacher. It is named after the city of Mysore in India, where Sri K. Pattabhi Jois taught this style for many years.

Q: Do I need to have prior experience to practice Ashtanga Yoga or Mysore Style?

A: While prior yoga experience is helpful, it is not necessary to practice Ashtanga Yoga or Mysore Style. Beginners are welcome, but it is recommended to start with introductory classes or seek guidance from an experienced teacher to learn the fundamental postures and sequence.

Q: How often should I practice Ashtanga Yoga?

A: The traditional recommendation is to practice Ashtanga Yoga six days a week, with one day of rest. However, the frequency can be adjusted according to individual needs and capabilities. Consistency and regularity are key to experiencing the benefits of this practice.

FAQ

Q: Can Ashtanga Yoga be physically demanding?

A: Yes, Ashtanga Yoga can be physically demanding as it involves a series of dynamic and challenging postures. The primary series, also known as Yoga Chikitsa (Yoga Therapy), focuses on detoxifying and aligning the body. It is important to listen to your body, respect your limits, and gradually progress in the practice to avoid injury.

Q: Is Ashtanga Yoga suitable for beginners or those with physical limitations?

A: Yes, Ashtanga Yoga can be modified to accommodate beginners and individuals with physical limitations. In Mysore Style, the practice is tailored to each student's abilities and modifications are provided accordingly. It is essential to communicate with your teacher about any concerns or limitations you may have.

Q: What are the benefits of practicing Ashtanga Yoga?

A: Ashtanga Yoga offers numerous benefits, including increased strength, flexibility, balance, and stamina. It promotes mental focus, stress reduction, and overall well-being. Regular practice can also cultivate discipline, self-awareness, and a deeper connection to oneself.

Q: Can I practice Ashtanga Yoga during pregnancy?

A: Ashtanga Yoga during pregnancy should be approached with caution and under the guidance of a qualified prenatal yoga teacher. Certain postures and sequences may need to be modified or avoided to ensure the safety and well-being of both the mother and the baby.

Q: Can I practice Ashtanga Yoga during menstruation?

A: In the Ashtanga Yoga tradition, the term "Ladies Holiday" refers to the recommended practice of taking rest or modifying one's practice during menstruation. It is believed that during this time, a woman's energy levels and physical comfort may fluctuate, and it is important to honor the body's natural rhythms and needs.

Hands On Adjustments

Q: What are hands-on adjustments in Ashtanga Yoga?

A: Hands-on adjustments refer to the physical guidance provided by a yoga teacher during a class to help students align their postures more accurately and deepen their experience in the practice.

Q: Are hands-on adjustments common in Ashtanga Yoga classes?

A: Yes, hands-on adjustments are commonly used in Ashtanga Yoga classes. They are considered a valuable tool for facilitating proper alignment, enhancing the student's understanding of the postures, and promoting a safe and effective practice.

Q: How do hands-on adjustments work?

A: During a hands-on adjustment, the teacher will gently and respectfully use their hands to guide and support the student's body in specific postures. This may involve subtle shifts in alignment, providing resistance, or offering gentle cues to deepen the pose.

Q: Are hands-on adjustments optional?

A: Yes, hands-on adjustments are always optional. Every student has the right to decline adjustments if they feel uncomfortable or prefer not to be physically touched. Teachers should always respect and honor the boundaries and preferences of their students.

Q: Can I request not to receive hands-on adjustments?

A: Absolutely. If you prefer not to receive hands-on adjustments during class, it is perfectly acceptable to inform your teacher before the class begins. They will be happy to respect your request and provide alternative verbal cues or demonstrations instead.

Q: Are hands-on adjustments safe?

A: Hands-on adjustments should always be performed by a skilled and experienced teacher who has received proper training. Teachers are trained to approach adjustments with sensitivity and care, prioritizing the safety and comfort of their students. If you have any concerns, it's important to communicate with your teacher and voice any specific limitations or injuries you may have.

About The Teacher

Welcome! I'm Adarsh Williams, and I'm excited that you're here.

Having had the privilege of being a direct student of the revered Pattabhi Jois and Sharath Jois, I was granted Ashtanga Authorization in 2004, with Level 2 achieved in 2009. During my time living in Mysore from 2002 to 2004, I immersed myself in the study of Ashtanga Yoga alongside complementary practices such as meditation, pranayama, and Sanskrit.

Continuing my studies, I have pursued additional training with luminaries including Richard Freeman and John Scott in yoga, as well as Dr. Kelly Starrett in mobility. These invaluable experiences have not only deepened my understanding of yoga but have also revealed the profound interconnectedness between physicality and philosophy.

With over 25 years of experience, I have had the privilege of working with a diverse range of students. My approach is rooted in tailoring methods to suit individual needs and goals, allowing each student to cultivate a personal yoga practice irrespective of their abilities, age, or background.

I am pleased to welcome you to my classes and share the transformative power of yoga with you.



@adarshw



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