



## Yoga Styles

- **Ananda: emphasis on meditation**

This gentle yoga combines breath awareness, affirmations, and yoga postures to move from body awareness through energy awareness to, finally, silent, inner awareness. The use of affirmations while in the asanas is a distinct feature of ananda yoga. This yoga style was developed by an American named Donald J. Walters, known as Swami Kriyananda. He devoted 45 years of his life to studying the teachings of Paramhansa Yogananda.

- **Anusara: Heart-oriented**

Founded by John Friend in 1997, anusara yoga integrates the celebration of the heart, universal principles of alignment, and balanced energetic action in the performance of asana. Anusara (pronounced ah-new-SAR-ah) means "following your heart." In this school of yoga, each student's abilities and limitations are deeply respected and honored.

- **Ashtanga: the Power of yoga**

For those who want a serious workout, ashtanga yoga offers a fast-paced series of sequential poses beginning with sun salutations. Students move from one posture to another in a continual flow and link movements to breath. This physically demanding yoga was developed by K. Pattabhi Jois to build strength, flexibility, and stamina. Power yoga, made popular by Beryl Bender Birch, is based on ashtanga.

- **Bikram: Turning up the heat**

Bikram Choudhury, known as the yoga teacher to the stars, developed this hot yoga practice. Be prepared to sweat in this one. The bikram class turns up the room temperature to anywhere from 85 degrees to 100 degrees. In this hot and steamy environment, students perform, always in the same order, 26 poses designed to cleanse the body from the inside out. This is a vigorous workout.

- **Integral: the healing power of relaxation**

This school of yoga is associated with two prominent figures: developer Swami Satchidananda, the man who taught the crowds at Woodstock to chant "om" for peace, and his student, Dr. Dean Ornish, who uses integral yoga as part of his treatment of heart patients. Integral yoga places almost as much emphasis on pranayama (control of breath) and meditation as it does on postures

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- **Iyengar: Symmetry and alignment**

B.K.S. Iyengar developed this yoga style, which stresses understanding the body and how it works. Students focus on symmetry and alignment, using props — such as straps, blankets, wooden blocks, and chairs — to achieve postures. Each pose is held for a longer amount of time than in most other yoga styles. Teachers of this discipline must go through an intense, long, and rigorous training program.

- **Kripalu: the yoga of consciousness**

Kripalu emphasizes proper breath, alignment, coordinating breath and movement, and “honoring the wisdom of the body.” Developed by Yogi Amrit Desai, kripalu takes the student through three stages beginning with the steady practice of postures (stage one), then holding the postures longer and developing concentration and inner awareness (stage two), and finally surrendering to the body’s own wisdom (stage three). Ultimately kripalu leads to the experience of meditation-in-motion — actually doing postures spontaneously and unconsciously.

- **Kundalini: Awakening energy**

Once a guarded secret in India, kundalini yoga arrived in the West in 1969, when Sikh Yogi Bhajan challenged tradition and began to teach it publicly. This practice is designed to awaken kundalini energy, which is stored at the base of the spine and often depicted as a coiled snake. Kundalini mixes chanting, breathing practices, and yoga exercises. The emphasis is not on asana, but rather on chanting and breathing. Kundalini should always be taught by a teacher who practices and understands this powerful yoga.

- **Sivananda: encouraging a Healthy lifestyle**

Sivananda yoga offers a gentle approach, which takes the student through the twelve sun salutation postures and incorporates chanting, meditation, and deep relaxation in each session. Teachers encourage students to embrace a healthy lifestyle that includes a vegetarian diet and positive thinking with meditation. This style of yoga was founded by Swami Vishnu-devananda, who published in 1960 one of the classics of yogic literature, *The Complete Illustrated Book of Yoga*.

- **Tantra: Sensual spirituality**

Perhaps the most misunderstood yoga style, tantra is not about sexual indulgence. Rather, it is about discovering and stimulating sensual spirituality. This yoga works with the highly charged kundalini energy and, therefore, should always be guided and taught by a teacher. Tantra teaches practitioners how to use this energy for sexual pleasure, for bringing joy and wholeness to everyday life, and for aiding in spiritual evolution. Tantra yoga includes visualization, chanting, asana, and strong breathing practices.

- **Viniyoga: Gentle flow**

This gentle form of flow yoga places great emphasis on the breath and coordinating breath with movement. Viniyoga’s flowing movement or vinyasa is similar to ashtanga’s dynamic series of poses, but is performed at a greatly reduced pace and stress level. Poses and flows are chosen to suit the student’s abilities. It teaches the yoga student how to apply the tools of yoga — asana, chanting, pranayama (control of breath), and meditation — in individual practice. Developed by T.K.V. Desikachar, the son of Krishnamacharya (teacher to some of the great yoga instructors including Iyengar and Pattabhi Jois), viniyoga places less stress on joints and knees since postures are done with slightly bent knees. Viniyoga is considered excellent for beginners, and is increasingly being used in therapeutic environments.