

## Guidelines For Establishing An Asana Practice

- Establish a daily routine of practice, if possible at the same time and in the same place. Most benefits come with regular practice.
- Commit to doing at least something every day, even if it is just one pose or technique. If that's all you do, you have achieved your goal, anything more is a bonus.
- Choose a clean, airy, warm space and make it as pleasant and special as possible. Place something there to represent your goals and inspire you.
- Use a sticky mat on a firm even floor (some sticky mats need to be washed when they are new for the grip surface to work).
- Wear loose, comfortable and seasonable clothing and avoid anything tight or restrictive.
- Practice after bowel opening and before eating (or at least 2 hours after if practising later in the day).
- During menstruation women are advised to do gentle passive poses, no inversions, strong abdominal work or back bend stretches.
- During pregnancy it is advisable to do only restorative yoga during the first 3 months, avoid any strong stretch or pressure on the belly throughout and in the final trimester do relaxation lying on the left side.
- Avoid practice during illness, only relaxation is recommended.
- Inhale and exhale rhythmically **via the nose** throughout the practice. Slow down or pause if your breathing becomes laboured.
- Never hold the breath, if you become breathless, pause and relax to regain the rhythm.
- Develop mindful awareness of how your body is responding, take pauses between poses / sequences to relax and observe the effects.
- Never hurry during the practice, if time is short, do less poses. It's better to do 1 pose with full awareness than 10 with your mind elsewhere.
- Practice according to your capacity, never strain or compete with yourself or others or strive to achieve an ideal.
- The asanas should be painless, no more than a pleasant stretch and sensation of mild effort.
- Strong stretch sensations mean the muscles are actually contracting to protect themselves. Stiffness after practice is an indication of micro tears in the muscle filaments.
- If the practice is correct for you, you will feel relaxed and revitalised for several hours after the final relaxation. Feeling exhausted or stiff are indications that the practice is wrong for you and you must stop and consult your teacher.
- ALWAYS do a relaxation, even if it is just the length of a slow count backwards from 10 to 1. We all need relaxation as much if not more than exercises. Relaxation will bring you more energy.