



# ABSOLUTE YOGA

*Checklist*

# Absolute Yoga Checklist

Yoga is something different to most people. It's quite diverse, and practitioners have different expectations when they start. That's perfectly okay. Whether your goal is greater enlightenment, a more toned and muscular body, or relief from disease, there's a yoga for you. This checklist will run you through the simple tips and techniques to become the better version of yourself.

## Chapter 1: The Science of Yoga and its Health Benefits

People have been practicing yoga for thousands of years. While the original purpose was to elevate to a greater spiritual level, it became clear that yoga benefits the person as a whole. Modern scientific research has shown that the tremendous overall health benefits of a yoga lifestyle.

Research conducted throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century has found a myriad of physical benefits to practicing yoga.

1. Relief from Stress
2. Yoga and Pain Relief
3. Yoga and Breathing
4. Yoga and Flexibility
5. Yoga and Weight Management
6. Yoga and Circulation
7. Yoga and Cardio Health

## Chapter 2: Yoga History

Yoga first appeared around 1500 BC in Hindu literature. The first writings, in traditional Sanskrit, the term yoga, which means yoke, frequently refers to a dying warrior rising to heaven and reaching a higher power. The original concept of yoga was clearly to elevate those who deserved it to a higher level, to connect the individual to the universe as a whole.

For ancient Buddhists, yoga wasn't even a specific discipline. It grew out of the desire to attain spiritual goals and controlling both the mind and the body to achieve this.

These spiritual leaders recognized that man is fallible, but always capable of improvement by changing dysfunctional thinking. They recognized the power of the mind to bring about inner peace and alleviate suffering by broadening individual consciousness and becoming open to new ideas. They already understood the basics of the mind/body connection. Yoga, including meditation, was and still is a quest for knowledge.

## Modern Yoga

Yoga, the old spiritual quest of Buddhism, didn't reach the West until the last 19<sup>th</sup> century. This coincided with an interest in Indian culture as a whole due to the burgeoning spice trade.

Western culture became intrigued by the writings of Swami Vivekananda, a monk who traveled to Europe and introduced the intelligentsia to Buddhist spiritual writings, especially the 4<sup>th</sup> century Yoga Sutras, which involve clearing the mind of unwanted thoughts and learning to focus on one thing.

Yoga, as we know it today, became popular in the U.S. in the 1940s, when young Americans began to take yoga classes. By the 1980s, the known health benefits of yoga increased its popularity, although the practice was seen as more physical than spiritual by the majority of practitioners.

By the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the devotees of American yoga have increased from 4 million at the turn of the century to 20 million by 2011. This increase in popularity is mainly due to the increased scientific studies of the numerous benefits of yoga, especially the alleviation of stress. Whether spiritual or not, people want to increase their health. Many people, however, still seek both mental *and* physical elevation. Yoga offers both.

## **Chapter 3: Emotions and the Mind/Body Connection**

The purpose of yoga has always been to connect the mind to the body. That is what the Buddhists had in mind thousands of years ago. Even then, it was clear that when the mind and body work as one, the self becomes healthier, more aware, and is able function at a higher level.

So, where does yoga come into play?

As yoga increases our mental awareness, we become more aware of underlying emotions and thoughts. That allows us to express and acknowledge them rather than keeping them buried and allowing them to fester. Appropriately expressing negative emotions allows us to deal with them and put them behind us.

## Chapter 4: Yoga, Strength, and Flexibility

Strength training, usually in the form of lifting weights or Cross Fit, has been gaining popularity. Women especially are appreciating a more toned, muscled and strong body.

It depends on the type of yoga you practice. Certain types of yoga are deliberately gentle. Restorative Yoga falls into that category. This doesn't make them any less effective; it merely means more people, especially older ones, can enjoy yoga's benefits. As we've discussed, yoga is for everyone.

However, there are yoga exercises that are demanding and challenging and would be difficult for even a strong male. Poses such as Planks and Warrior require support of the entire body and will certainly develop muscles and strength. These poses strengthen the entire body, not just specific muscles that would get a workout during weightlifting. The poses can be done with

small hand weights for maximum results. Thus, yoga can be better at building strength than some other forms of exercises. Ashtanga and Vinyasas Yoga can increase strength through greater repetition of poses, especially in the upper body region and legs. In addition, holding poses for a longer period of time, such as up to two minutes per pose, is a terrific muscle enhancer. Just keep in mind it takes time to build that type of stamina.

But building muscles is an individual goal. How much muscle is enough? For maximum muscle-building, weights can certainly help bring about quicker results. Many people use both yoga and weightlifting for some dramatic bulking up.

## Chapter 5: Yoga and Cardio and Weight Loss

While there are quicker ways to lose weight, yoga can help you shed a few pounds. Yoga doesn't burn the same number of calories as aerobic exercise. You'll burn around 150 calories doing an hour of yoga, which you'll burn over 300 doing an hour of walking.

But there's more to weight loss than burning calories, even if yoga does provide a healthy workout. There is another, subtler, influence, however. Yoga increases awareness of our bodies and the food we use to fuel it. If your diet consists of burgers and chips, the enhanced mind/body connection will reinforce the toxicity of certain foods and make you reach for healthier, more life-affirming choices. Toxic food simply becomes less appealing. This means that most people will reach for a salad instead of a burger.

If you want to lose weight on your yoga regime, opt for the more strenuous types of yoga, such as Kundalini Yoga and Yin Yoga.

# Chapter 6: Types of Yoga

There are so many different types of yoga disciplines, it can be confusing to pick one. Don't let the variety stop you from diving into the yoga pool. There are certain yoga types that are geared toward beginners, and these are your best option when learning about the movements.

1. Hatha Yoga
2. Vinyasa Yoga
3. Iyengar Yoga
4. Ashtanga Yoga
5. Bikram Yoga
6. Hot Yoga
7. Kundalini Yoga
8. Yin Yoga
9. Restorative Yoga
10. Camel Pose for Bronchitis

# Chapter 7: Yoga Poses & Better Immunity

A healthy immune system is the body's first defense against inflammation and diseases, from cancer to the flu. To function properly, your immune system needs to be in balance. That means that cells, organs, and tissues function together as an army, ready to defend the body against invaders, such as germs and other impurities. The immune system produces antibodies to help heal infections and rid the body of toxins.

- Mountain Pose
- Cat Pose
- Downward Dog
- Warrior I Pose
- Extended Puppy Pose
- Triangle
- Cobra
- Tree Pose
- Plank Pose

# Chapter 8: How To Get Started

## Doing Yoga

For a beginner, it can be very confusing. Just picking out the right yoga outfit can be a headache! Then, how do you decide which yoga practice is the best one for you?

So, start by relaxing and consider the following your roadmap to successful yoga practice:

- Rid Yourself of Expectations
- Find the Right Teacher
- It's the Yoga, Not the Outfit
- Yoga Classes
- The Best Time to Practice Yoga
- Yoga Intentions
- Before You Begin, Talk To Your Doctor
- Slow and Easy Does It
- Begin at Your Own Starting Point

## Chapter 9: Preventing Injuries

Practicing yoga is as safe as walking. That being said, injuries are still possible, and you should take care to avoid them.

Start by following a few basic rules. Don't practice yoga on a full stomach and avoid alcohol. Remain hydrated at all times.

Every yoga class should begin with warm-up exercises. If yours does not, look into another class. As we've discussed, the right teacher makes a tremendous difference and can reduce your chances of injury. Certified teachers undergo up to 500 hours of training to qualify for certification. Make sure you are dealing with a qualified teacher.

# Chapter 10: Yoga and Meditation

Yoga is the bridge between meditation and spirituality. The original Buddhists used yoga as a means to prepare for meditation. Meditation, like yoga itself, is secular. It can be practiced by anyone. The purpose is to quiet loud mental chatter and calm the mind.

## Benefits of Meditation

1. Meditation allows you to become more aware of your inner and outer life. You start to notice emotions and thoughts that you may have previously denied.
2. It provides insight to improve your relationships.
3. Being aware helps you act in the moment instead of acting out of habit. Negative emotions can have you act in ways that are harmful, even when you are unaware of the reason for your behavior. When you become aware of these feelings, you can deal with them in a positive way.
4. Meditation allows you to be less critical of yourself and others.
5. Meditation keeps you from acting on random emotions and lets you analyze facts before taking action.

6. Meditation reduces stress and anxiety.
7. Meditation helps you adapt to changing circumstances.