

## THINGS EVERY BEGINNING YOGA STUDENT SHOULD KNOW

- 1. It doesn't matter how flexible or inflexible you are.** Really! Being too flexible is often more painful and difficult to correct than being too tight. And everybody has poses that come naturally and those that don't. Learn to love the body you have! Set an intention to make your greatest weakness your greatest strength.
- 2. There are many styles of yoga.** Yes, some are gentle stretching, some meditative but some are so hard they will kick your butt – even if you're in amazing shape.
- 3. Get a suitable mat!** Get a yoga mat that doesn't make your hands and feet slip, refrain from applying hand cream before class, and opt for a mat that isn't too thick or squishy.
- 4. Wear supportive layers of activewear:** Bring socks, a jumper especially for savasana -deep relaxation and Yin classes. You need to add and remove layers when needed.
- 5. Don't drink or eat food for 2 hours before class.** Don't worry you will only do it once. In yoga, we stretch and squeeze the internal organs to detox and rejuvenate. If you have undigested food in the stomach you can feel nauseous and even throw up. Water can be consumed half an hour before and half an hour after class, not during. We don't want to extinguish the inner fire of change we are building during a class.
- 6. Don't get hung up on how you look in a pose.** Everyone else in class is focusing on their own pose. They don't care how you look (unless you're wearing a thong). Even if they don't say it to you they often tell me how amazing a student looks or how disciplined they looked for a beginner. Lesson to us all, give nice feedback. Remember everyone is fighting some kind of battle and a kind word could be the medicine that is needed.
- 7. It's OK if you don't know what the Sanskrit words mean.** The only people in the room who do are teachers or yoga junkies.
- 8. It's not religious—unless you want it to be.** Your practice should be unique to you. You're allowed to make it as spiritual, religious, fitness-oriented (or not) as you want.
- 9. Yoga is an art form, a science, a lifestyle, and a philosophy.** But more than anything, it's a way to get to know yourself better. Yoga is all about exploration, self-discovery, and finding balance both on and off the mat. Enjoy the process, have fun, and embrace the benefits that yoga can bring to your life.
- 10. The hardest concept in Yoga is Left and Right.** Everyone gets the left and right sides mixed up sometimes. Don't be embarrassed when this happens. If your teacher corrects you, just smile. There's a good chance she'll say "left" when she means "right" later in the class.
- 11. Yes we talk with our hands.** If you've been to a yoga class, you've seen Prayer Pose (Anjali Mudra) to start and end a class or other hand or body mudras. Mudras, seals, and gestures are used during a session to channel your body's energy flow.
- 12. Words have power. "Namaste" & OM (AUM) are an integral part of every class.** In yoga, they say "In the beginning was the word and the word or vibration was A U M. Namaste is a Sanskrit word that means "The Divine in me bows to the Divine in you."

**13. Focus on your breath:** Breath control, known as pranayama, is an integral part of yoga practice. Pay attention to your breath throughout the class, taking deep inhales and long slow exhales. Maintaining a steady breath helps calm the mind and enhances the mind-body connection. “No breath, no life. Know breath, know life”

**14. Listen to your body:** Yoga is all about connecting with your body and honouring its limits. Pleasurable pain is a sign you have moved beyond your current limits and challenged yourself. Sharp pain especially in the neck, and knees is never acceptable. Modify the poses accordingly using props if needed. Each person's yoga journey is unique, and it's important to honour and appreciate your own progress, no matter how small.

**15. Yes we weight-bear in yoga.** Often more than at the gym. Yoga will help you build strength, flexibility, and confidence. Improve your posture, give you better balance and better control of the body /mind and breath.

**16. Your teacher wants you to ask for help.** No one understands the temptation to hide in the back row and pretend to be invisible more than I do. But believe me when I say teachers LOVE to answer your questions. Your teacher really *wants* to help you with your pose, answer your question about philosophy, or explain what that Sanskrit word means. So if you don't understand what's going on, ask!

**17. Keep coming back.** Be patient and consistent: Just like any new skill, progress in yoga takes time and consistency. Don't get discouraged if you can't achieve certain poses right away or if you have days where your practice feels challenging. It can be exhausting—physically, mentally, and emotionally. At times you will want to throw up your hands and quit (or at least curse out your teacher for making you hold that pose you hate). Don't. This is where the healing happens. Breathe into it, and come back tomorrow. You'll be glad you did. Remember “It's not practice makes perfect. It is perfect practice makes perfect.”