

Styles of yoga: Theory, features, and level of exertion

Style	Theory and key features	Level of exertion
Anusara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lighthearted, style of yoga ▪ Derived from Iyengar yoga with elements of Hindu spirituality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gentle to moderate
Ashtanga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Synchronizes breathing with progressive and continuous series of postures ▪ Less emphasis on alignment of specific postures than other styles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vigorous, fast-paced, demanding ▪ Practitioners should be healthy and comfortable with athletic difficulty
Bikram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 26-posture series that begins and ends with controlled breathing ▪ Each floor posture followed by brief relaxation period ▪ Classroom heated to 100-110°F with 30-40% humidity ▪ Taught exactly the same way in every studio, making acquisition easier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vigorous ▪ Practitioners should be healthy, able to tolerate heat, humidity, and high level of athletic difficulty
Hatha or Integrated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Generic terms for a combination of different styles of yoga, including postures, controlled breathing, meditation, relaxation techniques, and sometimes chanting and devotional practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Depends on the instructor's choice of components
Iyengar (www.iyngaus.org)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Analytical with constant attention to correct alignment ▪ Anatomically sophisticated and therapeutically oriented ▪ Props (belts, blocks, and pillow-like bolsters) to guide beginners into correct postures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gentle to moderate
Kirtan Kriya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A form of chanting meditation from Kundalini yoga ▪ Chanting accompanied by performing ritual finger movements (mudras) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gentle
Kripalu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Posture sequences not standardized, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gentle to

www.kripalu.org	<p>so every class is different</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Less strict emphasis on physical alignment 	<p>moderate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Beginning practitioners, healthy adults, and those with chronic conditions
Kundalini www.kundalinresearchinstitute.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Combines meditation, mantra, physical exercises, and breath control ▪ More emphasis on spiritual and philosophical aspects, but includes postures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gentle to moderate
Therapeutic yoga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For those recovering from, or living with, injury or illness ▪ Blends restorative yoga (supported postures), gentle yoga, regulated breathing, hands-on healing, and guided meditation techniques 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gentle
Silver yoga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Created so seniors could safely practice yoga, by combining the principles of hatha yoga and gerontology ▪ Distinct in that it takes into consideration the limitations of the participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gentle ▪ Seniors
Sudarshan Kriya (SKY) www.artofliving.org/sudarshan-kriya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Breathing and chanting with minimal attention to posture ▪ Four breathing techniques used together believed to change emotional states <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victorious or Ujjayi breath: Slow controlled breathing technique accomplished by partially closing the glottis leading to increased airway resistance • Bellows breath: Rapid inhalation and forceful exhalation (30 breaths per minute) • Chanting: "Om" chanted three times with very prolonged expiration • Sudarshan Kriya: Rhythmic, cyclical breathing with slow, medium, and fast cycles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gentle
Viniyoga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How breathing affects postures, rather than precise execution of posture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gentle ▪ Beginners, and those who want to

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Individualized approach to each practitioner's unique stage of life, health, goals, and limitations 	<p>focus on flexibility, injury recovery, body awareness, and relaxation</p>
Vital@Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Worksite lifestyle program designed to improve mental and physical functioning ▪ Includes weekly yoga classes, workout sessions, unsupervised aerobic exercise, and visits to a trained personal coach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Moderate ▪ All practitioners free of serious underlying disease
Yoga Nidra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Awareness and relaxation of each part of the body ▪ Focus on positive statements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gentle

Adapted from:

1. Broad WJ. *Styles of yoga*. In: *The Science of Yoga: The Risks and the Rewards*. Simon & Schuster, New York 2012. p.xxii.
2. Strijk JE, Proper KI, van der Beek AJ, van MW. *The Vital@Work Study. The systematic development of a lifestyle intervention to improve older workers' vitality and the design of a randomised controlled trial evaluating this intervention*. *BMC Public Health* 2009; 9:408.
3. Cook, J. *Not all yoga is created equal*. <http://www.yogajournal.com/basics/165> (Accessed on August 14, 2013).
4. *Yoga disciplines - different types of yoga*. <http://www.matsmatsmats.com/yoga/yoga-disciplines.html> (Accessed on August 14, 2013).

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