

Artha Yoga Studios by Marguerite Ramlow - Creating a Yoga Practice at Home

Perhaps you are interested in making yoga a bigger part of your life. A weekly yoga class and a home practice can be of great benefit: toning, strengthening and lengthening the muscles of the body while creating a sense of peace and stability in the mind and spirit. But it can be challenging to figure out how to begin a home practice. Even if you spend just a few minutes a day you should see immediate benefits. Keep your expectations reasonable. If you plan to practice an hour a day it may become a burden and you will become frustrated and resist practicing. Instead, start by doing two or three of your favorite poses each day. I prefer to practice as soon as I get up in the morning, before the day begins and I get carried away by chores and obligations. Try setting your alarm just 5 or 10 minutes earlier than usual and spend those extra minutes practicing yoga. Or you may prefer to practice just before going to bed in the evening. Experiment and see what time of day works for you.

Making plans for practice allows us to actually accomplish our goals. Over time you may want to add more poses to your daily sequence. Once you have established a working home practice you may find you can build the time you spend practicing to 30 – 60 minutes, four times per week, with one day a week for yoga class and two days a week for resting the body. Or you may find 5 to 10 minutes a day is just what you need and are able to consistently achieve. Remember, it's most important to start with reasonable expectations.

How to begin and what poses to include in a home practice? The time of day and how you feel will influence what poses you choose. If you are stiff in the morning a gentle warm up sequence may be just the thing. Try coming on to your hands and knees to the table position and

moving from the sway back horse  to the cat pose,  moving slowly and

breathing deeply. Or lie on your back and do the knee down twist.  If you are anxious to get moving and want a more vigorous stretch try a few Sun Salutations to wake up and vitalize the body.

You might start with a few standing poses such as:

Warrior One and  Two  followed by the Triangle Pose . A common progression for the floor poses is to begin with back bends, such as Boat – Navasana



then forward bends such as Head to Knee –Janu Shirshasana  on each side

followed by a Spinal Twist such as Bharadvajasana  on each side and ending with Cobbler

Pose – Badda Konasana . Or you can choose to concentrate on Backbends only one day, Forward Bends the next and the following day Spinal Twists. The best way to approach a home practice is to make it simple and easy to do, so that you don't feel overwhelmed. Decide ahead of time how many poses you will do and how much time you would like to spend. You can pick the poses or just let it "flow" from one pose to another. Take the time to notice how each pose feels as you move into it. It is always a good idea to end your practice with a few moments of relaxation. Keep in mind the most important thing is to enjoy yourself.

This article can be found online at <http://www.arthayoga.com/html%20files/Links.htm>

