



# STRIKE A POSE

Yoga is designed to calm the mind and make the body strong and flexible. **Lisa Doust** explores five variations of this age-old exercise and discovers why everyone is doing it.

Inner strength and greater flexibility  
can be achieved through yoga.

Over the past decade an increasing number of yoga schools have opened up all around the country, with stressed-out men and women flocking to classes in order to calm their minds and tone their bodies. Believed to have first been established in India's Indus Valley around 3000 years ago, yoga means 'to unite', and its chief aim is to bring mind and body back into balance.

"Yoga ultimately creates a feeling of confidence and wellbeing," explains Wendy Adnam, an Iyengar Level 2 Certified teacher at the Australian School of Yoga, in Sydney's Bondi Junction. "On a mental level, it quietens the mind, reduces stress and provides relaxation. On a physical level it increases flexibility, agility and coordination, and it tones, firms and strengthens the muscles."

Adding further weight to the pro-yoga movement are the numerous celebrities that swear by it – singer Sting and his wife Trudy Styler are long-time fans, actresses Drew Barrymore, Demi Moore and Uma Thurman are said to be regular practitioners, and supermodel Christy Turlington was so inspired upon taking it up that she created Nuala, a range of yoga-inspired activewear for women.

There are many different forms of yoga available – It's just a matter of finding the right type for your individual needs and a teacher that inspires you to practise regularly.

## ASHTANGA

Ashtanga is perhaps the most physically demanding of all yoga forms and its distinguishing feature is that the various asanas (yoga postures) are performed one after the other. The fluid motion is synchronised with the breath to create an aerobic effect and build strength, flexibility and stamina.

"Ashtanga yoga is a powerful system of practice designed to purify the body, nervous system and mind," says Dr Jean Byrne, an authorised Ashtanga yoga teacher and co-owner of The Yoga Space in Perth. "It is important to study with an authorised or certified Ashtanga teacher so you know you are in good hands."

Mysore, in India, is the home of Ashtanga yoga. To become a teacher it is necessary to travel to Mysore and study under Sharath Rangeswamy, who is continuing the legacy of his grandfather, Pattabhi Jois, a revered yogi who worked over many decades to refine this yoga form.

Dr Byrne says that in its traditional format, as taught in Mysore, Ashtanga yoga is suitable for everyone and each person moves through the sequence at their own pace, with individual assistance from the teacher.

"To reap the benefits of yoga, you should find a teacher you respect, trust and resonate with, as this relationship is primary to how much any student will enjoy yoga," she adds. "I would also suggest that yoga students set a manageable weekly yoga schedule and stick to it – the more you practice yoga, the greater the rewards!"

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## ADDRESS BOOK

### Oki-do

Julia Reeve teaches at various locations in the Blue Mountains of New South Wales.  
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Email: quanyin@tpg.com.au

### OM YOGA STUDIO

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Nightcliff  
Darwin NT 0810  
Ph: (08) 8985 1024  
Email: omyoga@mac.com

### The Australian School of Yoga

117 Oxford Street  
Bondi Junction  
Sydney NSW 2021  
Ph: (02) 9389 4694  
www.australianschoolofyoga.com.au

### The Yoga Space

Shop 6, 1251 Hay Street  
West Perth WA 6005  
Ph: (08) 9243 5114 or 0413 244 217  
www.yogaspacespace.com.au

### Yogalates™ Training Academy

72 Byron Street  
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## HATHA

Considered to be the oldest form of yoga as we know it today, Hatha was introduced to India in the 15th century to prepare the body for long periods of meditation. Hatha classes focus on regulating the inflow of breath to improve mental and physical health.

"All modern yoga derives from Hatha, and although the practise has been diversified into different forms, the philosophy and postures are the same," says Sanjit Kumar Das, a traditional Hatha yoga teacher and owner of OM YOGA STUDIO in the Darwin suburb of Nightcliff.

Sanjit has been practicing yoga for 30 years. "I was inspired by my grandfather, who was a spiritual teacher and regularly practised yoga," he recalls. "I studied yoga in my home town of Puri, on the east coast of India, and was taught by a revered guru named Yogacharya Pundit Ramakanta Kar."

Sanjit describes yoga as a gift. "It brings mental peace, physical wellbeing and good functioning of your internal organs," he says. "I taught yoga at the Institute of Sports in Darwin for two years and am pleased that many elite sportspeople and coaches now recognise that yoga can help to reduce the risk of injury, as well as releasing tension and stress. It should be incorporated into everyone's daily life!"

## IYENGAR

B.K.S. Iyengar, founder of this yoga form, was one of the first teachers to look at how yoga affects the anatomy and physiology of the body. Iyengar relies on the use of props (benches, bolsters, wooden blocks, chairs, straps) to realign the skeletal and muscular system. It is ideal for people who spend hours each day at a desk or those with sedentary lifestyles.

"Iyengar is a dynamic and scientific fitness system that builds flexibility, stamina, endurance, balance, aerobic capacity, concentration and mental clarity," says Wendy Adnam. "It focuses on precision, alignment of the body, clarity of instruction, use of props and the sequencing and timing of asanas."

According to Wendy, yoga – in its many forms – can be taken up at any age. "The practice is, of course, very popular with young and middle-age people, but it's not age-related," she says. "Mr Iyengar himself is 90, and I know a woman aged 83 who still goes to classes."

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IT REALLY IS FOR  
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## OKI-DO

Founded in Japan by Dr Masahiro Oki, this form is a synthesis of yoga, Taoism, Zen Buddhism, Aikido and Oriental medicine. "Dr Oki had a profound understanding of how to obtain a healthy body, mind and heart, and was a specialist in corrective exercise," explains Julia Reeve, an Oki-do teacher who conducts classes in the Blue Mountains, west of Sydney.

After starting her training in Sydney, Julia travelled to Japan in 1984 to participate in a 10-week seminar at the Oki-do Yoga Institute and began teaching soon after. "I really loved the holistic nature of Oki-do yoga, which incorporates asanas, chanting, pranayama [breathing], Shiatsu [Japanese massage], meditation, corrective exercise and macrobiotic food," she says. "Within each class I aim for a mix of strong and gentle stimulation to create balance, encourage maximum effort and bring consciousness into the body and breath."

Julia points out that as well as strengthening the nervous system and releasing mental and physical tension, yoga gives us a stronger relationship with ourselves. "As Dr Oki stated, 'dis-ease of mind and body is created through habitual patterns of movement and thinking,'" she explains.

"Yoga can be adjusted to any body condition," concludes Julia. "It really is for everyone."

Men and women of all ages can  
physically and mentally benefit  
from regular yoga practise.



## YOGALATES™

A fusion of yoga and Pilates, the Solomon Yogalates™ Method was formulated by Louise Solomon in the early 1990s. "I was initially studying yoga but, after sustaining an injury, I discovered Pilates and completed an apprenticeship in this method," she says. "When I began teaching Pilates I really missed the ambience and spirituality of yoga. I went on to do a teacher-training course in Ashtanga yoga and then began fusing the two methods together."

Louise has since developed a Government-accredited course to train other teachers in the method. "One of the aims of a Yogalates™ class is to provide participants with a practise that, on a physical level, enhances functional movement patterns through the efficient recruitment of muscles and stretching areas that inhibit this," she explains. "With this foundation established, we draw upon the full repertoire of yoga techniques – from the use of breath to relaxation to overall health and wellbeing."

Louise says she has clients starting Yogalates™ at all ages and with a range of injuries. "When you think you've found the class for you, communicate your previous experience of yoga to the teacher and let them know about your injuries," she advises. "Above all else, listen to your body."

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