

Types of yoga

This is a short guide to some of the more popular styles of yoga available in the UK. It is not meant to be comprehensive or prescriptive. It is merely a glossary to begin helping you with terms you may come across.

Ashtanga

This is a method in which a set series of poses is linked by vinyasa (flowing movement) and synchronised with the breath, which produces intense internal heat and purifying sweat.

Students begin with the primary series and then move on once the poses have been mastered. There are six series in all. Classes are vigorous and challenging.

Ashtanga means 'eight-limbed yoga' and refers to the eightfold path outlined by the sage Patanjali.

See: www.ashtanga.com

Bikram – hot yoga

A series of 26 poses and breathing exercises repeated twice in a room heated to 40°C. The purpose is to warm up the muscles quickly and promote detoxification via sweat.

Most classes do not include inversions. Students need to wear clothes that will let them perspire freely and you need to bring water and a towel with you.

See: www.bikramyoga.com and www.bikramyogabelfast.co.uk

Hatha Yoga

This is a holistic yogic path, including moral disciplines, physical postures (asana), purification procedures (shatkriya), poses (mudra), yogic breathing (pranayama), and meditation. The Hatha yoga predominantly practiced in the West consists mostly of asana work. It is also recognised as a stress-reducing practice

Iyengar

This is a method that teaches awareness through attention to anatomical precision and alignment in poses. There is an emphasis on healing physical ailments.

Poses are held longer than in other styles. Most classes include standing, seated and twisting poses; backbends and inversions whilst props are used as learning tools. Expect detailed instruction.

See: www.iyengaryoga.org.uk

Kundalini

An energetic style of yoga composed of repetitive movements (like waving the arms) that differ from those in other styles and promote the release of Kundalini energy (Kundalini means 'serpent power' which is believed to reside in the base of the spine).

Classes focus on kiyas, or sequences, designed for a therapeutic purpose and include relaxation, chanting and the repetition of mantras.

See: www.kundaliniyoga.org.uk

Power

An American adaptation of Ashtanga Yoga, Power Yoga is a rigorous, dynamic practice.

It is one of the most physically challenging forms of yoga where poses can be advanced and held for long durations. Classes can also be spiritually intense, in a non preachy way.

See: www.poweryoga.com

Sivananda

This is a spiritually focused practice emphasising Vedanta philosophy and the recitation of mantras. It incorporates techniques from all the yoga paths – karma (selfless service), bhakti (devotion), raja (cultivation of the mind), and jnana (knowledge) yoga.

See: www.sivananda.org

Viniyoga

This is a method which emphasises the unique needs of each individual. It gives practitioners the tools to individualise and actualise the process of self discovery and transformation. It is a gentle therapeutic, healing practice placing less emphasis on vigorous movement. This practice is often taught one-on-one and is highly suitable for those with health problems.

See www.ays.org.uk and www.viniyoga.com

Vinyasa

This is a derivative of Ashtanga Yoga. It is a flowing sequence of asanas co-ordinated with the breath. Classes can be vigorous or meditative, depending on the teacher.

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