



# A Guide on Developing your Home Yoga Practice

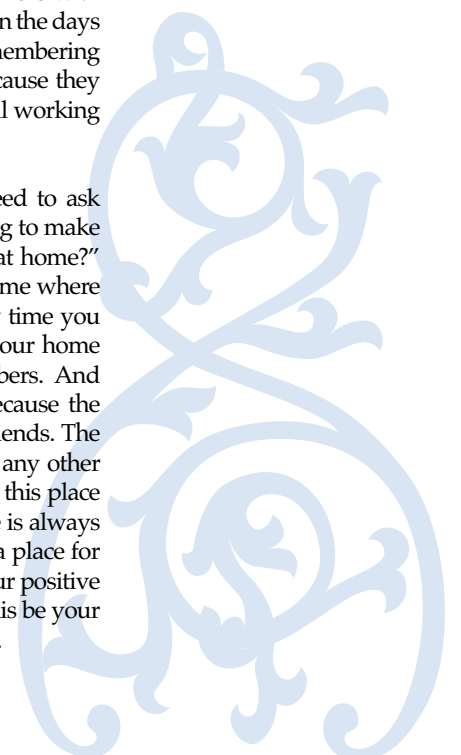
Pearl Tan

Today, there are so many techniques available in making the practice of yoga more accessible. With instructional videos, self-development books and instructional charts everywhere, yoga can now be practiced at home at any time. Many of these instructional charts and videos however, cater for specific categories of practitioners or even for targeted areas of healing, like diabetes and weight loss for example.

The guide below is one that is common to all and one that caters for a yoga practitioner of any level and who wants the optimum in health whether for strength boosting or for maintaining calm.

Many people want to continue their practice of yoga but sometimes find themselves unable to make it to their yoga classes owing to circumstances that interfere with their exercise regime. And yet, they would like to stay in touch with the practice even on the days they are at home. Most often, they tend to practice some of the poses, without remembering some of the techniques used in some poses while some just lack the motivation because they require the encouragement from a teacher or from being among a group of people all working towards the wellness goal.

When planning a place for yoga especially, there are a few questions that you need to ask yourself, before you place your mats and pose away. The first thing is, "Are you going to make your yoga place sacred to you and you only or is it a place where it is open to all at home?" Should you have answered 'yes' to the first, then you need to find a place at your home where it is going to be your circle of excellence, where you bring out your very best every time you practice yoga. Should you have answered 'yes' to the second, then find a spot in your home somewhere where you can share your yoga experience with your family members. And remember when practicing yoga with your family, always keep to the regime, because the tendency to be distracted is far greater when practicing with family than it is with friends. The next question you need to ask yourself is, "Is your yoga place going to be used for any other activity in the home, or is it solely for your yoga practice?" If you are going to share this place with other family activities, then you would have to ensure that the aura of the space is always cleansed before going into your next practice. However should you make it strictly a place for yoga practice, then this space becomes your sanctuary, where you can emanate all your positive energies and keep recharging for more every time you come back to this place. Let this be your centre of focus or your temple, where you can let go and renew your journeys ahead.



Then your next question should be, "How often are you going to practice and what to practice?" Remember though that the only right practice is regular practice. Don't let your desire for perfectionism get in the way of progress. Just show up at your mat and practice. Yoga is a life-long journey which begins with you being committed to your practice.

When planning your home yoga practice, take into consideration the factors below to help you with your planning process.

### Creating the Yoga Environment

Unlike any other form of exercise where the environment does not really play much of a role, with yoga, the environment should epitomize peace and serenity. The space should be quiet and used only for the practice of yoga. This place may be a spot solely for yoga or even a room that is dedicated for your practice. Place non-slip carpets on the floor and your yoga mat over it for maximum protection. Choose colours of carpets that are warm. Anything from the shades of brown to the shades of warm reds would send pleasing sights to the eye.

Make sure that the space around you is not cluttered – keep it open and properly ventilated with warm colours on the walls. You can place yoga charts on the walls or even throw a warm coloured cloth to hang from the wall, to create the ambience.

The temperature of this place should be moderate and the air should be clean. This means, that there should not be any odours that would interfere with the breathing process. Do not spray air-refreshners or fragrances in this area, as this artificial smells may cause irritation in the lungs. You can burn incense to purify the air and choose smells that are mild like sandalwood for this place.

Scatter some cushions for you to use in case you require them to rest or to prop up your back. Make sure to use soft, cotton cushions for these purposes.

Most important of all, when selecting the area in your home for your practice, make sure to choose the area where there is proper sunlight. Then coincide your practice either at sunrise or at sunset, although you can choose to practice any other time.

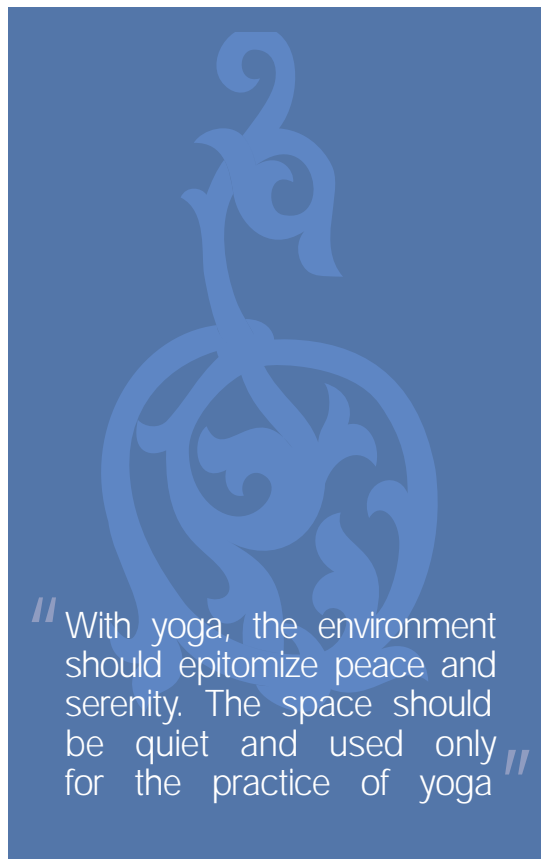
### What to Include in your Yoga Place

- Warm lightings, of soft tones that will help with calming you down;
- Meditative or calming yoga music to help you wind down into your practice;
- Tea candles for your moment of quiet and calm;
- Blankets for when you feel the chills;
- A foldable chair to use as props for times when you need it; and
- Most definitely, your yoga mat.

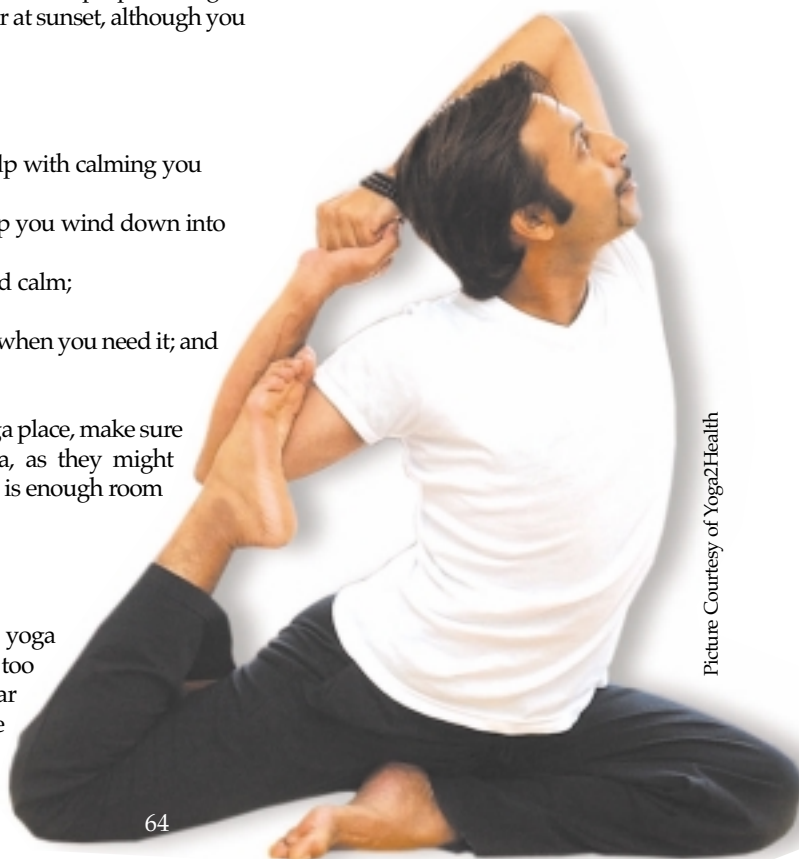
Although you have all these items in your yoga place, make sure that they are away from your practice area, as they might clutter up the area. Also, make sure that there is enough room for you to practice your yoga.

### Preparing to Practice

Always wear light comfortable clothing for yoga practice. Make sure that your attire is not too loose, as it may hinder your movements. Wear something that will allow your skin to breathe and perspire with the practice.



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Picture Courtesy of Yoga2Health

Try and have a shower/bath before your practice as this will provide limberness in the joints, to help you deepen in your bends and twists. After practice, allow the body to cool down for at least twenty minutes before taking the next bath/shower.

When practicing in the morning, be sure to move your bowels and cleanse yourself thoroughly before your practice. Always try to practice before breakfast for optimum results or wait two hours for the food to digest before you practice. Remember that every body has different digestion levels, so what may take two hours for some, may take longer for others. The better thing to do is to eat in small amounts and then wait two hours for your practice.

### Practicing Asanas

As with all exercises, always warm up your limbs before the actual practice. You cannot force your body to perform without first introducing it to some physical activity. Entering into practice without a warm up is dangerous and may cause serious injuries to the body. Take time to spend at least ten to fifteen minutes stretching and warming up, before your practice. If you are not mentally ready for your practice at that moment, spend more time stretching until you are ready.

Never exercise or practice yoga if you have a fever, or are feeling under the weather. This is also the case with when you have any wounds and other physical injuries. The trick is to listen to your body. And no matter how eager you are to practice to heal faster, you are actually doing yourself worse rather than any good.

When practicing the poses, it is not necessary that you be able to perfect the pose in the first few attempts. Take your time and go slowly into your practice. Do not force yourself and your body to perform poses that are difficult. Breathe and let your body do all the receiving and in time, you would be able to open your body to bigger possibilities.

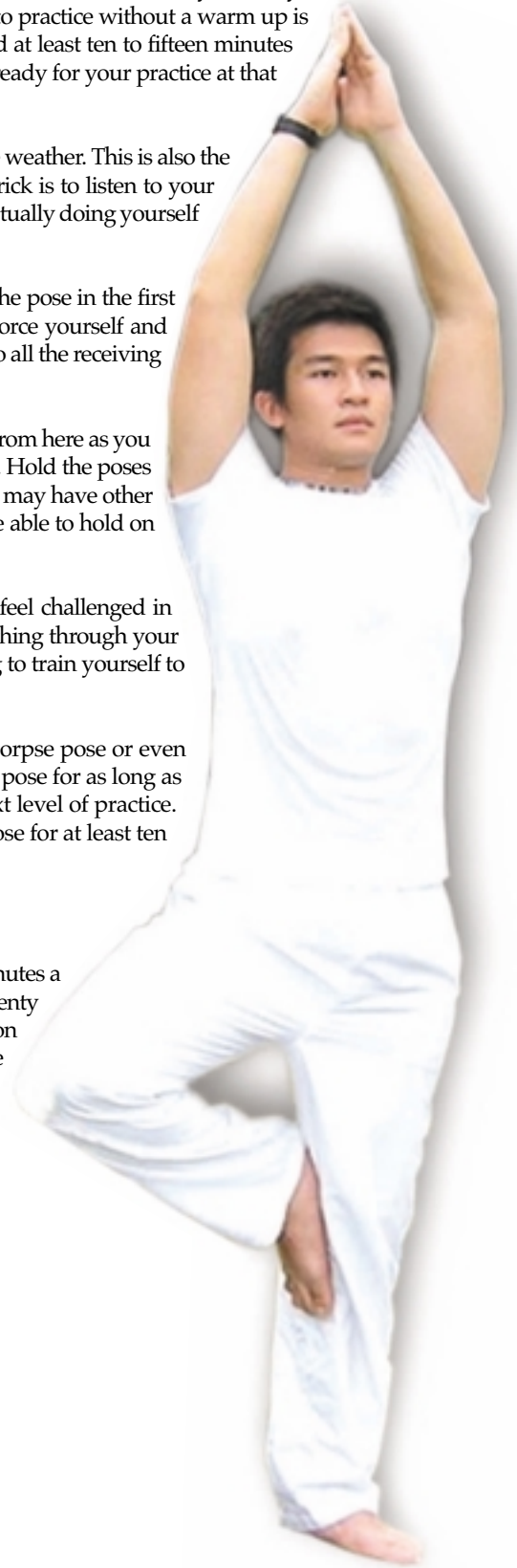
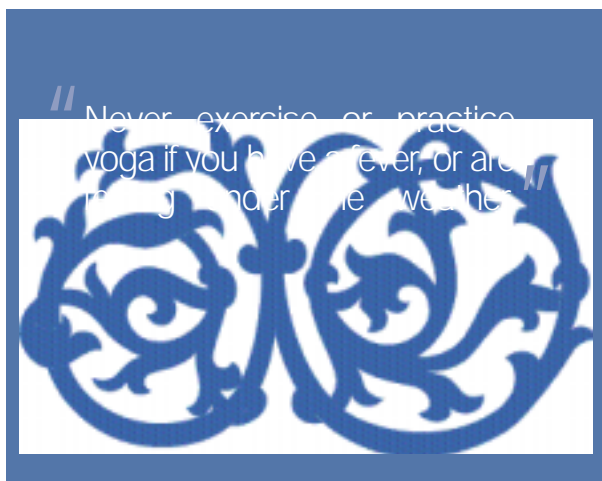
Whilst in poses, try and hold each pose for at least 5 breaths and progress from here as you master the poses slowly. But go only so far as your body allows you to go. Hold the poses for as long as your body can. You may want to hold longer, but your body may have other plans. Let your body decide for you and as you gain strength, you will be able to hold on longer.

Breathe in and out through your nostrils as far as possible. Should you feel challenged in your poses, you can breathe through your mouth but try to practice breathing through your nose. Keep that commitment in your mind somewhere that you are going to train yourself to breathe slow, deep and smooth breaths through your nose.

If you feel shortness of breath or feel tired in your practice, go into the corpse pose or even the child pose and renew yourself there. Take your time and stay in that pose for as long as you want. And when you are ready, come out of it and go into your next level of practice. Be sure to finish your practice with the corpse pose, letting go into the pose for at least ten minutes.

### Regularity of Practice

The best way to keep in top shape is to practice in short durations of 20 minutes a time two times a day rather than to practice for an hour once a week. Twenty minutes is all you need to keep your body in shape and to keep a check on your agility. This ensures that your practice is committed to be done immaterial of how rushed your day may be rather than setting aside time



and planning for your regime for that hour. When you have become accustomed to practicing 20 minutes a time twice a day, you will notice that you will have time for so many more affairs in your life, than when you practice for hours on end.

Commit to practicing every day for 20 minutes, even if that means once a day. This is the ideal formula for a great journey to come. And the good news is, you get to practice even on days when you have other activities to attend to.

To optimize your time, draw out a few charts which you are going to practice for the day. It may be a series of yoga moves like the vinyasas or even the sun salutation. Choose one and paste it on the wall that you are facing and keep a mental check on the moves so that you know you are going to get the fullest benefits of the sun salutation poses or even from the back bend poses rather than stop at intervals to think of which pose to do next.

Structure or plan out your chart with your yoga teacher and custom make your own yoga chart. Select any range of poses that will make you feel comfortable and choose poses that are going to give you what you require from your yoga practice.

### A Sample Routine for your Yoga Practice

Begin your practice with warm-ups, moving into easy poses and then venturing into some challenging ones. Finish this with the corpse pose and after that bring your body to sitting position where you can focus inward for a few seconds, keeping your mind blank, listening to your breath and your heart beat. When you are ready to come out of this position, slowly open your eyes, and briskly rub your palms together and put them on your eyes and repeat this for a couple of times. Then gently massage your facial muscles, the back of your ears, the nape of your neck, your underarms, your chest, the stomach area and the arms and finish off with the legs.

Begin your practice with easy movements and when your body is warmed-up enough, move towards difficult poses and end with a cool down. Try the downward facing dog for one of your cool down poses, followed by the corpse pose.

### What Pose to Practice

Since it is commonly said that, 'in yoga you are both the scientist and the experiment', the poses selected for your home practice should be deciphered only by you and your comfort levels.

Be creative and decide one regime that will last you for a month or two and ask your teacher's help to design a regime with you. Take your time when designing this regime; it should be one that completes you as a yoga practitioner and as a person seeking the fullest benefits of yoga.

When you have finally decided on a chart or a regime that is going to work for you, spend a day in your yoga place, before you begin your journey in this spot, area or place and when you have soaked in all the goodness of this home practice, embark on your journey forward. YL

