



# WHAT'S YOUR YOGA TYPE?

Baffled by Bikram, confused by Kundalini? Here's how to find your perfect yoga fit

Whether you're a newbie or a mat-toting member of the bendy club, the slew of yoga styles out there can make choosing one overwhelming. But it can pay to try something new. "While all yoga is based on the same poses, to enjoy its benefits it pays to customise," says Yoga Australia's Shyamala Benakovic. We've done the homework for you to help you find a yoga style you'll love.

## YOU'D DESCRIBE YOURSELF AS ...



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## YOUR YOGA TYPE IS ...

1

**ANUSARA**

If you want to work your mind as much as your body, this holistic practice is for you. The focus is on proper alignment – yoga blocks are used to help with this – along with spiritual balance and a life lived well. Sessions start and end with chanting and meditation, with participants encouraged to take the lessons they learn into their daily lives. “A key element of Anusara yoga is ‘kula’, or community of heart and spirit,” says Camilla Maling, an Anusara teacher from Melbourne. This makes it one of the more sociable forms of yoga.

4

**YOGALATES**

Both Cameron Diaz and Heidi Klum are said to be fans of this multi-tasking workout. The mat-based class combines the disciplines of yoga and Pilates, so you get the emotional and mental wellbeing associated with yoga, plus the body-toning effects of Pilates. Elizabeth Wilson, director of The Perth Pilates Studio, is a big fan. “This style of yoga is the perfect antidote to today’s sedentary lifestyles,” she enthuses. “Yogalates combines the strength, stamina and flexibility benefits of yoga with the core strengthening of Pilates.”

7

**JIVAMUKTI**

Jivamukti, meaning “liberation while living”, is one of the more intense forms of yoga. Not only will you find yourself unwinding, but you’ll also be encouraged to push your inhibitions to one side and indulge in some group bonding. The up-beat classes can include chanting and philosophical readings to go alongside the vigorous yoga exercises, which are often performed to music, from global chants to rock. It’s the perfect class for clearing your mind and getting a decent workout.

2

**HATHA**

All forms of yoga are derived from hatha, but for people who just want to learn the basics and enjoy a calm mind as well as a supple body, pure hatha classes will do the trick. This simple style will guide you through the basic poses (asanas) – which are scientifically designed to stretch and strengthen your muscles, joints and ligaments – as well as teach you breath work (pranayama) and meditations. Once you’ve mastered the moves, you’ll have the groundwork and understanding that are necessary to take up a new yoga challenge.

5

**ZEN KI YOGA**

This Japanese form of yoga is based on the principles of shiatsu and, according to Janie Larmour from Sydney’s The Centre of Yoga, “it will work your internal organs – there are specific exercises just to strengthen your bladder and other poses to strengthen your intestines”. Zen Ki yoga routines change with the seasons, so you’ll need to engage your brain for this one, too. Want to lose a few kilos? “It’s the only exercise system I know of that you can use to target specific areas for weight loss,” claims Larmour.

8

**BIKRAM**

Prepare to get hot and sweaty – Bikram yoga is performed in a room that is deliberately heated to 37°C, and you’ll be working through a demanding series of postures for up to 90 minutes. Less “om” and more oomph characterises this class, which devotees say works your muscles more deeply. The heat will certainly help loosen them up, making Bikram perfect if you’re feeling stiff. Don’t forget your water bottle and a towel. ■

3

**IYENGAR**

If your main reason for taking up yoga is to improve your health, then Iyengar can help. Its focus is the development of strength and stability by holding postures and developing controlled breathing. You’ll be encouraged to use a range of props, like pillows, chairs and blocks, to help you achieve the precise movements necessary. You’re unlikely to work up a sweat, but studies have revealed that Iyengar can help ease lower back pain and arthritis symptoms.

6

**KUNDALINI**

Kundalini yoga is heavy on the spiritual side of things, and it also incorporates rapid movements. So while you’ll have the chance to Zen out, you’ll also work your body. You’ll need to leave your inhibitions at the door to get the most from this class – it focuses on awakening your Kundalini energy, an approach that is also used in Tantric sex. You’ll perform the same postures in the same order each class, so it’s easy for newcomers to pick up.

