



Something to Try: Here Comes the Sun

Before you tell me you can't do yoga because you're not flexible, let me reassure you that as long as you are breathing, you can do yoga. Yoga is completely modifiable. It meets you wherever you are. Saying you can't do yoga because you're not flexible is like saying you can't eat because you're hungry. Yoga is how you get flexible.

A Sun Salutation is a great place to start as a beginner to yoga, so here are the basic instructions and some photos of me doing the postures to get you started. (Please talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine, just to make sure you're good to go.) Just a couple of these Sun Salutations in the morning is a lovely way to wake up.

1. Stand with your feet about hip's width distance apart, your hands at your heart, palms together. Inhale, stand tall, reach up to the sky.
2. Exhale and bring your hands through the midline of your body and fold forward (bend your knees as you go down).
3. Inhale as you lift half-way up with a flat back, bring your hands to your shins or thighs.
4. Exhale to fold all the way down again, bending your knees if the backs of your legs feel tight.
5. Inhale, put your hands on the floor and step your feet back to a plank position.
6. Exhale and drop your knees, lowering yourself into a low push-up (6a). If you want a little more challenge, don't drop the knees as you move into a low push up with your elbows tucked in close to your body. Make sure you are being kind to your shoulders (6b).
7. Inhale, pulling your chest through and lifting your upper body into a slight back bend, pushing the tops of your feet into the floor. This is called Upward Facing Dog (7a). You can also keep both legs firmly pressed into the floor and just lift your chest a little, which is called Baby Cobra (7b). In either pose, pull your shoulders away from your ears and keep your neck long.
8. Tuck your toes under and lift your hips up with an inhale, into Downward Facing Dog.
9. On a smooth, long exhale, walk your feet to your hands in a forward fold, bending the knees as you approach the front of your mat.
10. Inhale, half-way lift with a flat back, again bringing hands to shins or thighs.
11. Exhale and fold down again.
12. Then inhale and reach all the way up to the sky. You can either lift in a reverse swan-dive with a flat back, or slowly roll up through the spine, imagining each vertebra stacking one on top of the other. When you exhale, release your arms down by your sides. Look! I brought you right back to the beginning because I'm tricky like that. Do the whole thing over three to ten times.

(If the inhale and exhale cues feel a little too fast for you, feel free to slow the whole thing down and take a few breaths in each posture. The cues are just there to get you thinking about coordinating the breath with the movement.)

While a home practice is great, if you have the time and resources, I highly recommend going to a yoga studio. A yoga teacher can offer personalized instruction so you don't injure yourself, and it's great to connect with a community. There are a billion kinds of yoga classes and teachers, so give yourself the chance to experiment and find what works for you.