

## Student Information

The following information is provided for students to give you some idea about an Iyengar Yoga class:

1. **What to wear.** Yoga is best practiced in clothes that aren't too baggy or restrictive. Hence shorts, leggings or tracksuits and a tee shirt or singlet are best. We work on non-slip mats so bare feet are essential.

2. **What to bring.** If you have a yoga mat, yoga block and strap, bring them along. The Yoga teacher will provide these if you don't have them. You can bring a water bottle but you won't need it during class as we encourage students not to overwork to the point of overheating nor to fill your stomach with water when doing Yoga.

3. **What to eat.** Yoga is best practiced on an empty stomach so if you do need to eat please only eat something light about 1 hour before the class. You can eat straight after class. Yoga asanas move the complete body with movements that stretch the arms and legs as well as turn the spine, stretch and massage the abdominal organs. These movements aid digestion, stimulate the body's metabolic processes and aid circulation.

4. **What to expect.** Classes are framed around a balance of **Mobility and stability** (more on this on p.2 of this handout). You will coordinate your movements and your breath in the asanas (postures), which over time will help you develop stamina and balance. Each hour long class will finish with a guided relaxation (savasana) so stay for the whole class. A teacher from your school will attend each class.

5. **Classroom etiquette.** Please be on time for class. No phones in class so please put them on silent and keep them away before you enter the classroom. Don't miss classes if you can help it. Learning the detail in the postures (asanas) and their names comes with regular attendance. Yoga is often described as meditation in action so chatting with your friends is discouraged. We encourage you to focus on yourself for the class. A good parallel is to consider playing a musical instrument with other musicians. Each musician focuses on what they are doing and yet the overall effect of working together in the room when everyone focuses together is much greater than the individual.

6. **Let us know.** If you have injuries or medical conditions that may affect what you do in class you should inform the teacher. Iyengar Yoga is renowned for its modifications and adjustments to the practice to respond to the needs of individuals. If you are tired or feel fatigued, we can adjust the asanas you practice that day and possibly give restorative asanas. Learning to adapt the practice to your situation is part of Iyengar Yoga.

7. **Working with injuries.** Fill in a copy of the Injury Information Form if you have anything you would like the teacher to know.

## Mobility and stability

Most of us think that life is stressful. The demands of study and work, keeping up with friends and all the things we want to achieve in our week can often leave us exhausted and with little time for ourselves. We are told that life is becoming faster than ever before. We are inclined to think that things were simpler in the past and that people had it easier when they lived simple lives in villages or as farmers. Maybe they didn't have to deal with stress as we do today!

Yoga tells a different story. Yoga grew out of India. It is thousands of years old and if you read the Yoga Sutras you will find Patanjali (the author) talking about stress and suffering. So even that long ago people were struggling with how to find a balance in their lives. How to live harmoniously with others and with themselves. What Yoga is involved with is working with the mind and body to achieve calmness and peace of mind.

The Yogis discovered that working the body has an effect on the mind. When the mind gets tense the body does too and that removing the stresses from the body can help alleviate stress in the mind. In much the same way as swimming laps at a pool might leave us feeling refreshed or playing an instrument makes us feel peaceful, the Yogis found that coordinating the mind and body calmly and watchfully as we do yoga postures (asanas) has the same effect. Yoga is described as meditation in action. Stretching the body removes the tensions that build up in us; but working with the fine details of alignment in each of the asanas has a meditative effect too.

In Iyengar Yoga each asana is taught with detail and alignment but practiced with calmness and observation.

Over the 10 week term we will be working with a range of asanas that can be practiced at home also. We use a high degree of repetition week to week so we will consolidate asanas learned each week to define, and refine their presentation. Every time you stretch one muscle, another muscle (on the other side of the joint) is contracted. If your muscles are tight, it can cause discomfort. When muscles on both sides of the joint are even, the body feels balanced and at ease. Iyengar Yoga uses alignment to establish this balance in the muscles. Over the term you will find the asanas become easier to perform and your alignment will improve. At the end of the term we hope you will present a 20 minute sequence, not dissimilar to a music recital or a dance routine.

Sitting at a desk for long periods studying or working on a computer can generate tension and imbalance in the muscles and tension in the joints. Iyengar Yoga seeks to mobilise the body using flowing sequence of asanas. As students studying in your final years of school curriculum you will develop a range of asanas that focus on stiffness of the arms and shoulders as well as stretch your legs, hips and spine. Yoga is a complete practice delivering **mobility** to all areas of the body as well as bringing calmness and **stability** to the mind. Yoga is described as a balanced state within.

Each class will finish with a 10 minute guided relaxation.