
Yoga at Your Desk

Bringing Practice into Your Daily Life

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Introduction

You might think of yoga as something that happens on a mat—in a studio, or in a quiet, dedicated space. And while that’s certainly one way to practice, it’s not the only way.

What makes yoga so valuable is its portability. The postures, the breath, and the focused attention that define the practice are not confined to a specific place or time. They can move with you into your everyday life—out in nature, in your living room, or even in an airport while waiting for a flight.

For many of us, one of the most meaningful places to bring this practice is somewhere far less idealized, but far more consistent: right at a desk. Because the reality is, many of us spend a significant portion of our day there. When we begin to integrate small moments of movement, breath, and awareness into that space, the practice becomes not something we have to get to, but something that supports us throughout the day.

One of the most supportive aspects of this approach is its simplicity. You don’t need to change your clothes or carve out a perfectly quiet environment. You don’t need any special equipment. Everything you need is already available to you—your body, your breath, and a chair.

Before you begin, it’s worth taking a moment to consider your setup. If your chair has wheels, see if they lock, or if there is a more stable option available. A steady base can help you feel more supported and safe as you move. You may also notice whether your chair has armrests. While a chair without arms can offer more freedom of movement, most office chairs do have them, and the practice can be easily adapted to work with what you have.

At its core, this practice is about adaptability. It invites you to meet yourself where you are, using what is available, and responding to what your body, your breath, and your attention need in the moment. There is no need to make it perfect. The intention is simply to make it possible—and in doing so, to make it part of your everyday life.

Practices

These practices are designed to support your body, breath, and attention throughout the day. They can be done all together or in small, meaningful segments depending on what you need.

Upper Body Movement

Shoulders, Wrists, Upper Back & Chest

Begin seated, with your feet grounded and spine upright.

Start with **slow shoulder circles**, going slow, moving in a range of motion that feels good. Repeat this movement several times until the neck, shoulders, upper back, and chest start to feel warm and relaxed.

Move into **Sun Breaths**. Inhale your arms out and up overhead, bring your palms together, exhale, draw your hands down the midline of your body, keeping the heels of the hands connected to create a gentle wrist stretch.

Repeat this for several rounds until the arms and shoulders feel as if they have a little bit more energy coursing through them.

Next, **lace your fingers into a single fist** and slowly circle the wrists in both directions to warm the wrist joints.

Keeping the fingers interlaced, bring your hands to cradle the back of your head. From here, move between **rounding and arching the upper back (Cat & Dog)**, letting the movement ripple through the spine with the breath.

Upper Body Movement

Side Stretch

Place your right hand on the seat of your chair beside your hip, or rest your forearm on an armrest if needed. Inhale your left arm out to the side and up overhead. Exhale, gently arch your spine to the right as your left arm reaches across, creating a side stretch through the left side body. Move in and out of the stretch several times, or pause and sustain it for a few breaths before returning to center and switching sides.

Upper Body Movement

Spinal Twist

Begin with your hands resting on your thighs. As you exhale, slide your left hand forward toward your knee and your right hand back toward your hip as you rotate your ribs, shoulders, and head to the right.

Inhale back to center, then exhale to the other side. Continue moving slowly side to side, or pause and hold the twist on each side for a few breaths.

Standing Movement

Circulation, Strength & Mobility for Legs and Hips

Circulation Shake

Stand behind your chair, using the backrest for support as needed.

Start by **shaking out the body**—one leg at a time, then shimmying and shaking the hips. Let your arms hang and shake, softening through the shoulders and hands. As you shake, take full breaths in through the nose and sigh out through the mouth.

Supported Squats

Stand behind your chair with your feet hip-width apart, place your hand shoulder distance apart on the back rest of the chair for support. Exhale, bend your knees and send your hips back and down into a squat. Inhale press through your feet to come back upright. You can add a lift onto the balls of the feet as you come up to build a bit more strength and work with balance. Repeat this squat sequence several times until you feel more circulation and warmth in the legs and hips.

Supported Lunges

Stand behind your chair with your feet hip-width apart, place your hand shoulder distance apart on the back rest of the chair for support. Inhale, put a slight bend in the knees, shift the weight into your right leg. Exhale, step the left leg back and lower the heel to the ground, as you've been the right knee to stack on top of the heel and lower the hips down. Keep adjusting the left foot until you find a stretch the left calf. Hold this shape and take several long, slow breaths. To transition to a hip flexor stretch, began to slide the left foot back even further, lifting onto the ball of the foot to transition the stretch into the front of the hip and front thigh. This may require you, lowering the hips even further make sure the right knees stays tracking over the right heel. Sustain this position for several breaths before switching sides.

Standing Stretch

Downward Facing Dog at the Chair

Stand facing the back of your chair with your feet hip distance apart and hands resting on the top of the back rest, about shoulder-width apart. Walk your feet back as you hinge at the hips, lowering your torso toward parallel with the floor.

Keep length in your spine, bending your knees if needed. You can stay still or add gentle movement.

To come out, look forward, bend your knees, and slowly walk your feet back in as you rise to standing.

Seated Stretch

Hips

Sit upright with your feet grounded. Cross your right ankle over your left thigh, allowing the right knee to gently drop outward.

Stay upright, or hinge forward from the hips to deepen the stretch while keeping the spine long. Breathe steadily, then return to center and switch sides.

Breathing Practice

Three-Part Breath

Sit tall with one hand on your belly and one on your chest.

Begin breathing in and out through your nose. Gradually deepen the breath so that the inhale fills the belly first, then the ribs, and finally the chest. As you exhale, soften the chest, relax the ribs, and gently draw the belly back.

Continue for several rounds, allowing the breath to become smooth, steady, and easeful.

Meditation

Calming the Mind

Sit comfortably with an upright posture. Your eyes may be open with a soft gaze or gently closed.

Bring your attention to your breath, noticing the natural rhythm of inhaling and exhaling. You might focus on the movement of the belly, the chest, or the sensation of air at the nose.

If the breath doesn't resonate, you can shift your attention to a simple body scan, noticing sensations throughout the body.

When the mind wanders—as it naturally will—gently and patiently guide it back. Even a few minutes of practice can help calm the mind and support clearer, more focused attention.

A Few Things to Keep in Mind

Allow your **breath to guide your movements**. When body and breath move together, the mind more easily follows.

In moments of stillness or stretching, remember that **deeper is not always better**. Finding a sustainable, comfortable edge is often more effective than pushing to a limit. Let the breath remain slow, steady, and relaxed.

All of these practices can be **adapted**. If you are working with an injury, a sensitive area, a medical condition, or general stiffness, adjust as needed so that the experience feels safe and supportive in your body.

Closing Reflection

This practice is meant to fit into your life, not the other way around.

Whether you take a longer break in the middle of your day or weave in a few minutes at a time, the most effective practice is the one you will actually do. Notice what you need—movement, stretching, breath, or stillness—and give yourself just enough time to meet that need.