

## CLASS LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS

### **Iyengar Basics – Level 1**

Basics is where to start if you are a beginning student. This class introduces you to the fundamental principles of yoga and the Iyengar system. Step by step instruction is given on the fundamentals of body alignment through yoga postures. Students develop their ability to practice yoga safely and to understand its beneficial effects. It is recommended to attend this level for 3-6 months.

### **Iyengar Foundation – Level 1-2**

This class is the perfect choice for new students or students looking to build a stronger foundation to their practice. In this class we work to build strength, stability and ease focusing on classical standing poses, seated poses, and relaxation poses. In these classes students with previous injuries, weaknesses or limitations are supported to develop a strong, steady, intelligent yoga practice. Students can stay at this level for 6 months to 12 months or more.

### **Practice and Refinement – Level 2**

Practice and Refinement is a step up from Basics and Level 1. This faster paced, mixed level class encourages students to cultivate a consistent, personalized, and informed practice enabling the student to benefit from the powerful effects of yoga. This class introduces students to a range of poses including beginning forward and back extensions as well as twisting postures and the beginnings of inversions. This level was formerly known as All Levels.

### **Power of Practice – Level 3**

The Power of Practice deepens the students' awareness and experience of the more subtle and profound aspects and effects of asana. Having attained a level of stability and ease, students hold asanas for longer periods of time and begin the journey to reflection and meditation in asana. At this level students are strongly encouraged to practice at home regularly so that their personal understanding of yogic postures begins to fuel their understanding of refinements taught in class.

### **– Level 4**

This level is for experienced students only; teachers, teachers in training and those who practise Iyengar yoga for 6 years or more. We ask that you get the permission from the instructor to participate in these sessions. It is not always essential to be advanced in performing asana per se, what is most important is that one's practice has the quality of ahimsa (non-violence); it is mindful and sensitive including self-observation and analysis to prevent injury and build greater self-mastery. At this level students are encouraged to read yogic texts including the writings of BKS Iyengar to improve their understanding the broader scope of the system of yoga. Sutra readings are generally incorporated at this level.

### **Restorative – Open Level**

Restorative poses are stress relieving sequences of asanas performed with significant support of props like bolsters, blankets and blocks to support the body. This physical support helps students to stay in postures comfortably without straining. The muscles can relax, heart rate lowers and the nervous system can be soothed. It's ideal for students that prefer a class with a very relaxed pace. Restorative is a powerful antidote to being "stressed out", weakened or

fatigued. Restorative postures help calm the mind and open the body for pranayama.

### **Pranayama - level 2 and up**

Yogic breathing for students practising at level 2 or above. Pranayama helps to control and calm the mind and recharge one's energy.

The word Prāṇāyāma is made up of two Sanskrit words. Prāna means breath, energy, life force and vitality. Ayāma means, control, restraint, extension or expansion. Pranayama is the practice of controlling or conditioning the breath. It consists of techniques designed to gain mastery over the respiratory process while recognising the connection between the breath, the mind, and the emotions. Pranayama is conscious breathing rather than deep breathing. It requires an approach based on self-observation.

Classically, pranayama is said to be the transition between the outer and the inner world — the vehicle through which we internalise, feel the body, and experience our inner life. It is quieter and more subtle work than asana practice.

This class is only suitable for students who are regularly attending Level 2 classes and have a minimum of at least 1-2 years of weekly Iyengar Yoga practice. Although no previous experience of pranayama is needed, attendees should have an established and familiar inversion practice including Sirsasana (headstand) and Sarvangasana (shoulderstand), before practising preparatory postures and basic pranayama techniques. **This class is not suitable for those who currently attend Beginners classes.**

### **When am I ready to start Pranayama?**

The Iyengar tradition takes seriously Patanjali's counsel that pranayama should be introduced only after a student is firmly grounded in asana. This is because the physical postures develop the concentration, strength and stability needed to work with the breath.

In Light on Pranayama BKS Iyengar says that the practitioner needs two essential things: a stable spine and a still and alert mind. Both of these are built up with a strong asana practice. Students should also be able to practise deep relaxation in Savasana with a calm and attentive mind without falling asleep.

### **Pregnancy Yoga Classes**

The Iyengar method is unique in using a variety of props so that both mother and baby get maximum benefit without any strain. The postures exercise the spinal column relieving lower back pain and strengthening the pelvic floor while alleviating tiredness and tension.

The practice helps create space within the uterus ensuring proper blood circulation and adequate room for the baby to move. Pranayama breathing exercises open

the chest, improve the circulation of oxygen to the blood in both mother and baby and calm the nerves.

Regular Yoga classes are not suitable for students with certain medical conditions. Please inform us before starting classes if you have any of the following:

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease or any heart problem
- Epilepsy including Petit Mal
- Cancer or benign tumours
- Diabetes
- Ménière's disease
- Detached retina
- MS (multiple sclerosis)
- ME (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis)
- If you have recently had an operation
- If you are pregnant or are undergoing IVF treatment

Having any of these conditions does not mean that you cannot practise yoga or that it will not be able to help you. We have a special yoga class where experienced teachers give individual tuition to help certain conditions.

If you are in any doubt or have any concerns about your ability to do yoga, please contact the office. The above conditions do not mean that yoga may not be practiced, they require special attention which is not always possible during the group lessons. Under the above conditions we ask you to contact us before class to determine which classes are suitable.