



as a cross-training alternative

by Meagan Satinsky

If you're an athlete or a fitness enthusiast and have ever been curious about a new way to get in your resistance work, you might be surprised to find that yoga makes a perfect companion for athletes of all sports. Yoga can help you develop better a breathing technique while it improves your balance, flexibility, core strength, and endurance.

Yoga, which translates to mean “union”, is a centuries old practice that has gained tremendous popularity in recent years. It is the most rapidly growing health movement of today with more than thirty million devotees estimated to practice on a regular basis. In recent years, people's attitude towards health, spirituality, one's way of life and their place in society have changed dramatically as they search for answers to their everyday problems. Although we cannot always control these developments, yoga becomes a useful tool in learning to face them.

A regular yoga practice offers vast benefits: it helps to maintain energy and strength, increases flexibility and range of motion, improves balance, stimulates circulation and hormonal systems, relaxes tight and sore muscles, flushes out toxins and impurities, lifts depression, improves sleeping patterns and cognitive function, counteracts fatigue and lethargy, oxygenates the body and gives the mind and body a rejuvenating break. These benefits, which have been

familiar to yoga teachers and practitioners for years, are now supported by research.

Yoga is also a great low-impact way to cross train. Cross training is a necessary approach for athletes who do the same sport or exercise routine year-round. Adding new exercises can help reduce injury, relieve training boredom, add variety and help recover from hard aerobic or strength workouts. Yoga can be done at a high or low intensity and there are hundreds of postures that can provide a workout for any athletic need. A multitude of Yoga classes is being offered today. With so many choices, including Hatha, Vinyasa, Ashtanga, Power, Viniyoga and Bikram, it can be easy to get confused.

Hatha Yoga (translates to “sun”/“moon”) is a general term that encompasses many of the physical types of yoga. Most Hatha yoga classes are slow-paced and gentle, and are a good starting point for beginners. Its aim is to unite the mind, body, and spirit.

Vinyasa Yoga means breath-synchronized movement and is generally more vigorous, with an emphasis on breathing. A practice typically begins with sun salutations and moves on to more intense stretching. Throughout the practice, each pose is balanced with a counter pose.



Ashtanga Yoga translates to “eight-limbs” in Sanskrit. It is a fast moving, intense style of yoga practice, and is based on a progressive set of sequenced poses, synchronized with breath. Ashtanga Yoga can be quite physically demanding because of the constant movement from one pose to the next.

Power Yoga is a western interpretation of yoga and is based loosely on Ashtanga Yoga, as it moves through a series of poses without starting and stopping.

Viniyoga is a style of yoga that was created in the 1970’s and emphasizes the breath. It has a relaxed approach to placement of the body and a less vigorous pace than Ashtanga or Power Yoga. Often times, poses are modified to meet the needs of the individual using props such as blocks, blankets and straps.

Bikram/Hot Yoga is practiced in a 95-105 degree room, which helps loosen tight muscles. Due to the high temperature, many people sweat a lot during the class, which is thought to help cleanse the body of toxins.

Since there are so many types of yoga to choose from, it is recommended that you try different classes and teachers until you find one that best suits you and your needs. It is also important to find a well-trained and qualified teacher to guide you through your practice. Visit the website of a professional organization like the Yoga Alliance, which provides the names of certified teachers, or ask at your local health/ fitness club or yoga studio for a schedule of class times and descriptions. Always be sure to make your teacher aware of any physical limitations prior to practicing.

Yoga is truly a practice you can adopt for life. You may soon find yourself practicing breathing techniques outside of a yoga class. In fact, yoga is most beneficial when incorporated into your daily routine, even if only five or ten minutes a day. As you start to feel these benefits, you will naturally want to add a little more time to your practice. That is the beautiful thing about yoga...it can be anything you want it to be. Namaste!



Meagen Satinsky is a registered vinyasa flow yoga teacher and licensed physical therapist. She is an avid runner, having completed four marathons since 2003. Her athletic experiences combined with her knowledge of human anatomy and physical therapy makes her sensitive and well attuned to flexibility issues that many individuals and athletes encounter. You can contact her at Meagen@phillyfitmagazine.com.



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