

# HOW TO BUILD A HABIT OF CONSISTENT AND MEANINGFUL HOME YOGA PRACTICE

We are creatures of habit and will always revert to the path of least resistance returning to our ingrained habitual behaviors (even if they are not the best behaviors). The only way to change an existing behavior (not practicing yoga regularly) is to create a new behavior that will replace the old one. Here is how you can do it.

Do not rely on willpower – it's a limited resource and it runs out quickly. Replace willpower with why-power. What motivates you right now and connects to your highest values, to your desires and dreams, or has a sense of urgency? Take a moment to articulate why you want to do your home yoga practice regularly. Write it down on a post-it and stick it somewhere where you will see it often (on a refrigerator, or your computer, or the bathroom mirror, etc.)

Then make some decisions about your practice ahead of time so that it requires much less mental and physical effort to get going:

**1. Pick a specific time slot when you will do your home yoga practice and for how long.**

It is best to “hook it” to an activity that you are already doing – right after you get up, after shower, right before lunch, right after work, right before bed, etc. *After* activity generally works better than *before*. It is good to have a backup slot, too, for days when your primary slot doesn't work.

**2. Set up your space ahead of time.** If you want to practice right when you get out of bed, roll out the mat next to your bed, so that all you have to do is step down on it. If you want to practice at some other time, roll out your mat in a place where you can see it, to serve as a visual reminder. Put the mat in your way so that it's easier to step on it and practice than to avoid it.

**3. Put your yoga clothes on ahead of time.** Depending on your work arrangements and other commitments, you can either put on your yoga clothes first thing in the morning, or change into them at lunch, or put them on before you leave work, or first thing when you get home – this is just another reminder for you to get moving.

**4. Have a plan for what you will do for your practice.** That plan doesn't have to be rigid, but it needs to be connected to your why-power. What will you do? Will you come up with a practice on the spot or will you use a pre-designed sequence? Create your own practice ahead of time, get one from your teacher or use any other practice resource you like to pick a targeted yoga practice that relates to your why-power. Keep your practice next to your yoga mat.

**5. Minimize distractions.** Identify activities that get in the way of your practice and put intentional barriers to those habitual behaviors. Just make it harder for yourself to do it. Turn off your phone, hide your iPad, take the batteries out of your TV remote, etc. The barrier doesn't need to be huge. If it takes 20 seconds longer to go find the iPad that you tucked away than it does to sit down on your mat, you are more likely to get to your mat.

**6. Make conscious choices.** If you catch yourself being occupied with other things and leaning toward skipping your practice on any given day, close your eyes for a moment and ask yourself – what is more important right now? Should I watch another 15 minutes on Netflix (or whatever) or should I do 15 minutes of yoga? Which one will bring me closer to my why-power intention? Then make a conscious choice. Do it every time you find yourself reverting to your old habits.

Here is a simple home yoga practice worksheet that you can use to help yourself establish a consistent and meaningful home yoga practice.

# Home yoga practice worksheet

Why do I want to practice yoga regularly?

(This is your why-power; how does it connect to who you are as a person?)

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When will I practice it? For how long?

(Which activity will you hook it to?)

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How will I prepare?

(put on yoga clothes, rearrange schedule, set a timer, etc.)

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Where will I practice?

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What will I do? Does it reflect my intention?

(create on the spot, pre-designed sequence (which one?), etc.)

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Which activities are likely to get in the way? How will I deal with them?

(What kind of barriers do you need to place to minimize the distractions?)

1.

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2.

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3.

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When will I start?

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