

# Yoga and Pilates

Training methods such as yoga and Pilates emphasise the mind-body connection, improving an individual's general well-being.

## ■ Yoga

**Yoga** is an ancient form of self-discipline born in India thousands of years ago, which began to spread in the Western world in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Yoga develops over five principles which are fully adaptable to modern western society: physical exercise, healthy nutrition (mostly through natural food), breathing, relaxation, and meditation.

The traditional method by which yoga is practiced is **Hata Yoga**, which presents:

- some **defined poses**, which put into operation muscles and joints as well as internal organs;
- **breathing techniques**, which give energy to body and mind;
- **meditation techniques**, which help set the mind free from negative thoughts;
- **relaxation techniques**, which help release muscular tensions and achieve mental tranquillity.

Over the last few centuries, more modern methods of practising yoga were developed. They are:

- **power yoga**, a fitness activity combining cardio training and yoga techniques;
- **piloga**, or Yogalates, which combines yoga and Pilates techniques;

- **woga**, which is yoga practised in water, which proves particularly suitable for old people and pregnant women.

## ■ Pilates

The **Pilates** method gets its name from its inventor, Joseph Hubertus Pilates. He selected elements from various Eastern and Western disciplines to create an innovative training programme which aimed at making the body stronger by focusing on its central core. The Pilates method helps to improve posture, flexibility, coordination, and strength.

The principles of Pilates are:

- **concentration**: body and mind work together to acquire awareness of each movement;
- **control**: movements are always slow and controlled, to strengthen the body and keep its correct alignment;
- **centring**: the body centre is considered the centre of energy;
- **breathing**: breathing should be deep, fluid, and not too superficial;
- **movement fluidity and precision**: there must be a constant control over the central core and a balance between effort and relaxation, breathing in and out;
- **awareness**: the correct execution of the exercises leads to awareness of each part of the body.

## 1 Read the sentences and decide if they refer to yoga (Y), Pilates (P) or both (B).

- |  | Y                        | P                        | B                        |  | Y                        | P                        | B                        |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. It combines disciplines from the Eastern and the Western world. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. It was born in India.                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. One of its variants mixes its techniques with cardio training.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. It presents some defined poses.                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. The body-mind connection is emphasised.                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. One of its aims is the correct alignment of the body. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. The central core is the focus of the training.                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. Breathing is an important part of it.                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Its training also promotes healthy eating habits.               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. Meditation techniques are part of the training.      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

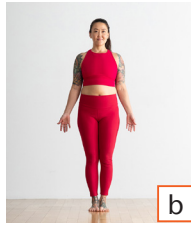
2



Read the text about yoga poses. Match each description with the correct picture.



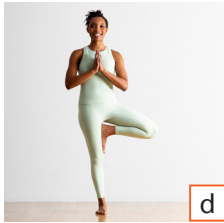
a



b



c



d



e



f

### Understanding the Essence of Yoga Asanas

Yoga poses, or *asanas*, are the main part of yoga practice. They include a range of 84 postures designed to benefit your body, mind, and soul. Here are the most commonly practised poses; each of them has its own particular benefits.

- 1. *Bhujangasana* (cobra pose) is a pose that energises the spine, increasing both strength and flexibility. By lying on your stomach and placing your hands beneath your shoulders, you lift your chest off the ground. This posture not only helps alleviate back pain but also encourages better posture by opening the chest and improving spinal flexibility.
- 2. *Padmasana* (lotus pose) is the most famous meditation posture in yoga. In this pose, you sit with your legs crossed and feet resting on the opposite thighs. *Padmasana* requires flexibility in the hips and knees, and it encourages a straight spine.
- 3. *Sukhasana* (easy pose) is a comfortable seated position, ideal for meditation. Sit cross-legged with your back straight, hands resting on your knees, and palms

facing up or down. It promotes relaxation and eases tension in the hips and lower back.

- 4. *Tadasana* (mountain pose) focuses on stability. By standing tall with feet together, arms relaxed by your sides, and palms facing forward, this pose improves posture by aligning the spine, shoulders, and hips.
- 5. *Adho Mukha Svanasana* (downward-facing dog pose) combines an inverted "V" shape with your body, with palms and feet on the ground. It stretches and strengthens the entire body, making it a pose for building flexibility and increasing muscular endurance.
- 6. *Vrikshasana* (tree pose) is a pose that imitates the strength and grace of a tree. Stand on one leg and place the sole of the other foot on your inner thigh, with hands in a prayer position at your heart. This balancing act requires concentration, helping you cultivate a strong sense of awareness and balance.

Adapted from: <https://www.vivekanandayoga.in/84-yoga-asanas-list/>