



# New Year's Resolutions

It's a new year! According to online statistics, 40-45% of you readers will be making a new years resolution this year. Among the top resolutions? Weight loss and exercise. Statistics show that after six months, fewer than half have stuck with it. Studies show that setting small, achievable goals, as well as sharing our resolution with friends, make our goals more likely to "stick" for the long run.

Weight loss and exercise, as most of us know, are inextricably linked. The problem is, when we feel heavy and uncomfortable in our bodies, it can be difficult to begin an exercise program. Exercise classes are great for accountability, but not great for folks who may be self-conscious. A home yoga routine might just be the way to start.

A yoga routine designed specifically for weight loss and exercise is possible! The key ingredients for creating such a routine are to get the heart rate up, and to work the large muscle groups. This will increase metabolism over time. In order to get the heart rate up, the idea is to flow through a series of sequenced poses in a fluid motion in sync with the breath and to continue for a series of "rounds". This will heat the body, flush your system (increasing blood flow, lymphatic drainage and the like), and clear your mind. After the body is warm, taking a series of holds using the large muscles of the body (legs/buttocks/back) will keep the heart active and begin to strengthen the largest fat burning muscles in the body.

Following is a basic variation of what we call a sun salutation. Traditionally done in the morning, as the sun is rising, facing the sun:

1. Stand tall, hands by your sides, feet hip width apart and parallel to one another. Take a moment before you begin to move your body to notice your breath.
2. On an inhale, lift your arms overhead
3. On an exhale, keeping your knees slightly bent to relieve pressure in the spine, sweep the arms and fold forward
4. On an inhale, bring the spine up half way so that it is parallel to the floor. The hands can rest on a chair or on your knees. Squeeze your shoulder blades to keep the spine active.
5. On an exhale, draw your left leg back into a long lunge.



6. As you inhale, keep the legs just as they are, and lift your arms skyward.
7. Exhale, draw the back leg forward, bend your knees, and take a forward fold as in #3.
8. Inhale the arms skyward as you stand up (as in #2)
9. Exhale and stand tall, arms by your side (as in #1)
10. Rest if needed then repeat #1-9 on the other side (right leg)

Notice that each movement is accompanied by the breath: either an inhale or an exhale. Try not to hold your breath, or to move without either an inflow or an outflow. Do as many repetitions of the sun salutation as you'd like, making sure to do both sides an equal number of times.

Variation to try: In each of the above poses, hold for one breath. For example, on an inhale lift your arms up. Stay with the arms lifted as you exhale, inhale and reach higher with your arms before exhaling to bend forward. Stay forward as you inhale, bend deeper as you exhale, then lift on the next inhale. Continue through the series like this, and then do the other side. Then, repeat the salute with a stay in each pose for 2 breaths. Next, repeat with a stay of 3 breaths in each pose, and continue like this with a 4 and a 5 breath hold on each side. This is sure to get your heart rate up, and your big muscles working!

Whatever your resolution this new year, I wish you the best of luck!!

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