

yoga vocab

Sanskrit is the ancient (over 6000 years old) language associated with India. In a yoga class, it's common for instructors to use both Sanskrit words and their English translations when guiding a class. We make a conscious effort to use more English than Sanskrit terms, because we feel the focus in yoga should be on how you feel and move, not the words we use. That said, here are a few VERY common Sanskrit terms, their definitions, and phonetic pronunciations.

1. **Asana (ahs-uh-nah):** An asana is a yoga posture or pose. In your yoga practice, you'll move through a series of asanas.
2. **Mudra (moo-drah):** This term refers to the hand gestures used in yoga. This word is often combined with other words in order to create a full image of the desired hand gesture. For example, anjali mudra, is the term used to indicate the gesture of placing the palms together and at your heart.
3. **Namaste (Nah-mah-stay):** This word is a greeting, or salutation, in the Hindu language. Many instructors may begin and end a class with Namaste as it is considered a sign of respect. Translated, it most closely means "the divine essence in me recognizes the divine essence in you." It is common to hold the hands together in front of the heart (anjali mudra) while saying this greeting. It is pronounced Num-ah-stay.
4. **Om (AUM):** Om is a mantra, which means it is often repeated during meditation. Historically, this mantra is used to center the mind. The sound of Om is commonly used to open or close a class.
5. **Prana (Prah-nah):** Prana means energy, or life force, and is similar to what the Chinese culture refers to as chi. At times it may also refer to the breath.
6. **Mantra (Mahn-tra):** Possibly older than even language, Mantras are not unique to the yoga culture. Words, sounds or syllables intended to protect the mind through repetition and are intended to be uplifting and/or spiritual.
7. **Savasana (Sah-vah-sahnah):** Savasana, or corpse pose, is the final posture in most classes. It's a resting pose that provides space for the mind and body to relax and integrate the efforts of practice.
8. **Ujjayi (ooo-jai-ee):** Ujjayi is a breathing technique. To create Ujjayi breath, slightly constrict the back of your throat during the inhalation and exhalation. This gives the breath an audible, oceanic sounding quality. Ujjayi breath is very calming (stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system).
9. **Vinyasa (Vin-yah-sah):** Vinyasa literally means to place in a special way. In a yoga class, it refers to the linking of movement with breath through a series of postures.
10. **Yogi or Yogini (Yo-gee or Yo-gee-nee):** A yogi refers to a male practitioner while yogini refers to a female practitioner.

If you are interested in learning more about yoga philosophy, join our 8 limbs workshop!