



Is there an ideal body position for meditation?

Most people think you can only be meditating if you're sitting cross-legged (probably in full lotus) with eyes closed, incense burning & maybe some music or chanting going on. Yet, not so. You can meditate in 4 positions – sitting, standing, walking, lying down – basically all the positions our body is in during the course of our life.

So, while you can basically meditate in any position, and ultimately you'll be able to implement these techniques & strategies as you go about your daily life, we're going to start with the sitting position, which is the most commonly employed position for formal practice as it is especially conducive to the development of concentration. It possesses two qualities: alertness & repose.

You are alert because you are upright, but you are also with the possibility to relax into the position, settling in, as it is a stable and non-moving non striving position. Mostly it is a position that we can remind ourselves of the quality of dignity.. whilst sitting.

Let's begin with a few sitting positions, from which you can choose one that feels the best for you. The best for now is one that you will be able to stay in for ten minutes, without much a need to change. If you'd like to try out different positions, you're invited to try one for one meditation session, and then another for another session.

What is important in all positions is being able to sit with a straight back, so that the breath and life energy can travel freely along the middle of your body and the middle of your back.

1. **CHAIR** (regular) Body may be placed on front edge of chair seat, or with pelvis against back of chair, and spine straightened away from the chair. Extra pillows may be helpful to support the posture for longer periods. It will be helpful to have your feet flat on the floor, and aligned with the hips & knees (and if you're shorter, you may want a pillow under your feet to keep them flat.) You may also want a pillow underneath you to elevate your hips so that they are higher than your knees (which promotes a straight spine.)



2. **LOTUS** A cross-legged seated position is commonly called a 'lotus' position:
QUARTER LOTUS (Legs crossed with both feet below the opposite thigh or knee. This is commonly called "Indian Style.")

HALF LOTUS (Legs crossed with one foot resting on the opposite thigh and the other foot underneath.)



FULL LOTUS (Legs crossed with both feet resting on opposite thighs.)



For any lotus position, usually a pillow is placed towards the back of the bottom of the body, with the bottom of the torso placed on the front part of the pillow, so that a base triangle of support is created with the legs & torso to foster physical stability.

Your knees are invited to form an angle going downward from hips to the floor/rug/mat. If that is not happening, try putting a higher pillow underneath the torso, it will help with feeling stable.

You may have to experiment with different positions until you find the one that suits you.

You may also alternate between positions for different length sits. Remember, for the beginning weeks; try one position for one meditation session.

Our motto is to “Be Kind” to your body. There are naturally going to be some aches & pains when you begin a sitting practice as you start holding the body in positions it’s not used to, but if you can create ease & less discomfort – while maintaining a posture that helps keep you alert – you’re doing good.

IMPORTANT PHYSICAL CONSIDERATIONS WITH ANY SITTING POSITION:

1. SPINE STRAIGHT & BALANCED. Potential Pitfalls: Arching, Slouching, Efforting Head.
2. Hips Higher Than the Knees
3. Let the whole body RELAX INTO THE POSTURE

You want the body to be BALANCED with the weight evenly distributed on the pelvic bones, shoulders balanced over hips, elbows under shoulders, head resting over torso & pelvis.

If your elbows are out a bit, arms a bit separated from the body, that will better allow room for the breath than if they are tight against your body. Notice if there is tension in the shoulders and see if you can deliberately let the shoulders relax back & down. We’re aiming at support & relaxation at the same time – i.e. less tension & more ease.

Relax the Jaw. Letting the jaw relax will have a ‘trickle down’ effect on the rest of the body. The jaw often/usually gets engaged when we are trying to ‘control’ and by letting the JAW DROP (even just a 1/2 centimeter) will help promote release in other parts of the body. Your teeth ideally should be slightly apart, like when you make an “N”. Lifting of the back of the head, thinking of a long neck, and tilting the chin down slightly should help the jaw relax & the head rest comfortably on top of the spine.

Hips higher than knees, this puts the PELVIS in a position to naturally support a straight, balanced spine. (And we suggest, even when sitting in a chair, to actually put a cushion underneath you if the knees aren’t lower than the pelvis.) This way it is easier to maintain that lovely straight spine that will help us stay alert.

Remember Alert, Relaxed, and dignified ☺

