



## Four step bedtime yoga practice for better sleep

So many people in the modern world suffer from insomnia or poor sleep quality. Our minds race all day long, we use screens right up until the moment we try to fall asleep...and then we can't! Certain yoga postures can be very effective in preparing the body for deep, restful sleep and even a really short practice before bed can be really helpful. By focussing on deep breathing to calm your mind and release physical tension, this combination of breath and movement activates your parasympathetic nervous system, which helps counteract stress and aids deep relaxation.

These four postures will help you to unplug and unwind, calming the body and the mind ready for a good nights sleep. Before you begin turn off all your electronic devices and phones, brush your teeth, prepare for bed and dim the lights. You can practice on a mat, or on your bed (making the transition to sleep even easier). The practice should take you anywhere from 10 to 20 minutes, depending on how long you spend with each posture. Breathe with long, full, deep breaths in all the postures. Sweet dreams!



### 1. Bedtime Breathing

Lie in a comfortable position, knees bent and feet flat. Close your eyes and start to notice your breath. Without tensing begin to simply slow down your breath until you can count to 4 on your inhale and 4 on your exhale. When you feel comfortable doing this, progress by slowly lengthening each exhale by 1–2 counts each breath, until you inhale for a count of 4 and exhale for a count of 8. Staying relaxed is key - only increase each exhale as much as you can while staying relaxed. With each exhale release any tensions or stress and relax more and more into the mat/bed.

Continue for 3–5 minutes. You can build up 10 minutes over time if it feels relaxing.



### 2. Child's Pose variation

Sit back on your heels in a comfortable position then walk your hands forward and place your forehead on one or two pillows.

Stay for 2–5 minutes, breathe slowly, and visualize all thoughts gently flowing out of your brain as you allow your mind to empty here.



### 3. Reclined Bound Angle

Lie on your back placing one or two pillows under your back, shoulders and head. Place the soles of your feet together, then let your knees fall open, forming a diamond shape with your legs. Support your head with an additional folded blanket if you like, so that your head is above your heart. Rest your arms on the bed, palm upwards. If the knees don't feel relaxed here, you can a pillow under each one to support them.

Stay here for 2-5 minutes, continuing the slow steady breathing.



### 4. Legs Up The Wall

Sit on a pillow facing the headboard or wall, with your bottom about 6 inches away from it. Lie back and extend your legs up the wall. Adjust your bottom to find the most comfortable distance from the wall for you, especially for your hamstrings. Rest your arms away from your body, with your palms facing upwards.

When you're comfortable, begin to come back to the Bedtime Breathing in step 1, slowly lengthening your exhales to allow your nervous system to drop in even deeper this time. Make sure you are able to let the breath be easy, as you rest in the exhales so that with each breath you relax deeper into the bed/mat. Do 10 rounds of the 4-count inhale, 8-count exhale. Then let go of the breathing practice and let the breath be natural for around 5 minutes. When you are finished, gently roll your legs to the side and slowly make your way into your bed.

