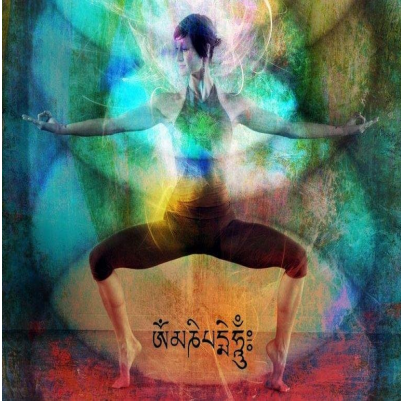




Sequencing & Pacing to Balance Energy

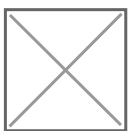
Description

How Yoga Affects Energy



Please see [Energy & Subtle Body Anatomy](#). Scroll down to “How Yoga Affects Energy.”

Sequencing Principles



Introduction

Here we focus on energy in particular. This material presumes you are familiar with [Sequencing Fundamentals & Guidelines](#) and [Choosing & Arranging Poses](#).

A fundamental goal of [sequencing](#) is to bring energetic balance. Balancing energy may refer to an individual student need and/or it may be referring to a general approach such as balancing the effects of a season.

1. It’s recommended to “meet” the energy of students and then endeavor to bring about a balanced state.



2. Considering the energetic effects of various yogic techniques (*langhana*, *bramana* and *samana*) can guide your choices for bringing balance.
3. Use mindful pacing to achieve your goals.

Begin with Energy of Students

This principle advises that if students are exhibiting lethargy, introversion or low energy, then begin slowly and gently build intensity. In contrast, if students appear anxious, hyper or busy, begin with more vigorous or stimulating practices to meet the students where they are.

Balance Energy of Season or Situation

In this approach drawn from fundamental [Ayurvedic principles](#), the focus is on balancing the effects of the season or specific situation (e.g. bringing warmth when there is cold, cooling when there is excess heat, etc.). Go deep on this topic: [Seasonal Yoga Hub](#).

Determine Dominant Nadi

Before beginning to practice, observe the breath and determine which nostril (and, therefore, which [nadi](#)) is dominant. If it isn't obvious, practice [Nadi Shodhana](#) to learn which side is flowing more freely and which feels more inhibited.

If the left nostril dominates, *ida* is in charge, and you might consider focusing your attention on invigorating *asanas* — such as backbends, standing poses, inversions, and twists — to engage the pingala nadi. If the right nostril dominates, the cooling, calming energy of seated poses and forward bends might be most beneficial. — **James Bailey**

Sequence for Natural Dualities

Another way to view the purpose of sequencing can be to mindfully address the natural dualities of bodily life, endeavoring to bring balance to the cycles of expansion and contraction.

DYNAMIC BALANCING OF OPPOSITES

Life is full of alternating opposites, such as inhaling and exhaling, sleeping versus waking, and fight or flight versus rest and digest. Each of these dualities demonstrates a dynamic balancing of opposites. Sequencing in yoga can be used to exaggerate a cycle of expansion and contraction. We begin with poses that open the front of the body and close with poses that draw the energy inward. — **Ray Long**

Pacing

The topic of "pacing" refers to the rate at which the class moves and progresses from the beginning state through the middle or peak of class, and ultimately reaching the end.

The pace or "arc" of a yoga class may be to begin slowly, for example, and then speed up to a peak, followed by a progressive downshifting and ending in silence and stillness.

Pacing is closely related to some of the [Sequencing Fundamentals](#), including Move From Simple to Complex and Build Mindfully & Gradually. The energetic effects of practices provided below are also closely related to how a teacher brings about a particular pace. For example, you'll see that *langhana* is associated with slow movements. Slower movement is the same as saying a slower pace.

Practice Effects



Overview

Knowing the energetic effects of yogic practices can assist you in creating a smooth arc of intensity, finishing in an optimum, balanced state.

The effects of practices may be categorized as follows:

1. **Langhana** — Meaning —reduction— or —light— (weight) in Sanskrit, *langhana* refers to quieting, soothing, cooling practices intended to calm, lower and ground energy.
2. **Brahmana** — Meaning —expansion— in Sanskrit, *brahmana* refers to stimulating, strengthening, challenging, heating practices. The intention is to build, nourish and raise energy.
3. **Samana** — *Samana* means —equal— or —balanced— in Sanskrit and is the result of most well-rounded practices. In addition, some specific practices are particularly focused on creating mental and physical balance.

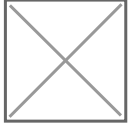
Considerations

- The Yoga Journal article [Sequencing Principles for Energizing and Relaxing](#) makes the important point that some poses combine effects of energizing and relaxing, such as how [Bakasana \(Crane / Crow Pose\)](#) is both an arm balance (energizing) and a forward bend (cooling).
- The Yoga for Healthy Aging article, [Practice for All Seasons](#), also addresses this topic and includes additional considerations. For example, while for many people, a heating, vigorous practice helps to balance the effects of winter, for an active skier, her needs could be different.

Practice Examples

Following are practices associated with each energetic effect. We have researched many sources to make the lists as comprehensive as possible.

Langhana



Meaning â??reductionâ?• or â??lightâ?• (weight) in Sanskrit, *langhana* refers to quieting, soothing, cooling practices intended to calm, lower and ground energy. Examples of such practices include:

1. Slow movements
2. Rest between poses
3. Longer stays in gentle poses
4. Supported and resting poses
5. Simple seated, prone and supine poses
6. Forward Bends
7. Restoratives
8. Gentle Twists*
9. Simple Flows with the breath
10. Supported Inversions
11. â??Almost all poses with a *Jalandhara Bandha*-type chin lock (e.g. *Sarvangasana*, *Halasana*, *Setu Bandha*, and *Viparita Karani*) are cooling to the brain and body.â?• (Brad Priddy)
12. Closed eyes
13. Refraining from talking
14. Seated Meditation
15. Guided Visualizations
16. Breath Practices: deep, slow breathing and/or focus on exhale, pause after exhale
17. *Pranayama*: Inhale left, exhale right
18. Chanting softly or in a lower pitch

Brahmana



Meaning â??expansionâ?• in Sanskrit, *brahmana* refers to stimulating, strengthening, challenging, heating practices. The intention is to build, nourish and raise energy. Examples of such practices include:

1. Fast movements such as Sun Salutations & Vinyasa Flow
2. Longer stays in challenging poses
3. Faster pace
4. Less pause between poses
5. Standing Poses
6. Backbends
7. Spinal Extension
8. Lateral Bends

9. Headstand
10. Active Twists*
11. Arm Balances
12. Core Strengthening
13. Long holds
14. Open eyes
15. Breath Practice: focus on inhale, pause after inhale
16. *Pranayama*: Inhale right, exhale left
17. Chanting loudly or in a higher pitch
18. [Affirmations](#)

Samana



Samana means “equal” or “balanced” in Sanskrit and is the result of most well-rounded practices. Some specific practices are particularly focused on creating mental and physical balance such as the following:

1. Balance Poses
2. Twists*
3. Asymmetrical Poses
4. [Nadi Shodhana](#) (Alternate Nostril Breathing)

* Note on Twists: There is inconsistency in how twists are categorized among sources. We resonate with the perspective that twists can be active or gentle and can be generally balancing to the nervous system (calming when agitated and stimulating when lethargic).

NOT JUST WHICH PRACTICES, BUT HOW YOU DO THEM

Neither *brahmana* nor *langhana* practices are substitutes for good sleep and regular stress-management activities, but they complement them. Since the *brhmana*–*langhana* model is about energy management, breath is the most important part of the equation; all other elements enhance the effect. Oftentimes it is not just about *which* practices you choose, but also *how* you do them. Here is a quick outline of specific practices that can help you achieve *brhmana* and *langhana* effect. — **Olga Kabel**

Prana Vayus



The five movements or functions of *prana* are called *prana vayus* (*vayu* = wind).

A well-rounded *asana* practice works all the *prana vayus*.

Prana Vayu

- Not the same as the general term of *prana*
- Governs intake, forward momentum
- Energizing

Vyana Vayu

- Governs circulation
- Expansion

Samana Vayu

- Governs assimilation, absorption
- Contraction

Udana Vayu

- Governs growth, expression
- Upward movement

Apana Vayu

- Governs elimination
- Downward movement

WORK ALL PRANAS

One should consider the role of all five *pranas* in *asana* practice. An integral *asana* practice should work all the *pranas*. It requires energization (*prana*), expansion (*vyana*), contraction (*samana*), upward movement (*udana*) and downward movement (*apana*) in the right proportion and balance. But the degree of these *pranic* movements will vary by condition and by *dosha*. Dr. David Frawley & Sandra Summerfield Kozak

See Also

- [Energy & Subtle Body Anatomy](#)



Addressing Imbalance

The following information is drawn from the excellent and clearly written book, *Yoga for Your Type* 2001 by Dr. David Frawley and Sandra Summerfield Kozak.

Apana Excess

Low or Depressed Energy

1. Choose *asana* to raise energy (increase *udana*)
2. Upward moving poses
3. Standing poses
4. Chanting
5. Affirmations

Udana Excess

Manic Energy or Spaced Out

1. Choose *asana* to lower and ground energy (increase *apana*)
2. Prone poses
3. Inverted poses
4. Deep, slow breathing
5. Refrain from talking

Samana Excess

Energy Too Introverted

1. Choose *asana* to expand and release energy (increase *vyana*)
2. Movement-oriented poses such as *vinyasa*
3. Poses with extension

Vyana Excess

Energy Fragmented, Diffused or Too Expanded

1. Choose *asana* to center, contract, consolidate energy (increase *samana*)
2. Seated meditation

See Also

- [Energy & Subtle Body Hub](#)

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