

4 Easy Steps to Start Meditating

Amy Maclin

Forget heading to a monastery; you can meditate anytime, anywhere, for as little as ten minutes a day.

Step 1: Sit comfortably upright on a chair, feet on the floor, hands resting on your thighs. (If you prefer, you can sit on the floor). Take two or three deep breaths, then close your eyes.

Step 2: Starting from the top of the head and moving down, mentally scan your body, noticing any tension in your muscles, places of comfort or discomfort, the feel of the floor beneath your feet. Begin to pay attention to the natural rhythm of your breath.

Step 3: As you become more aware of your breath, follow the rising and falling sensation without changing it in any way, silently counting breaths. Inevitably, your mind will wander. This is one of the first lessons of meditation. When you notice that a thought has distracted you, let go of it and gently return your attention to your breath. Over time, you'll learn to step back and just observe the thoughts. The same goes for sounds: Rather than trying to block them out, let them come and go.

Step 4: Take a few seconds to allow your mind to do whatever it wants. (You may find your mind is very quiet.) Noticing the sounds around you and bringing your attention back to the body, gently open your eyes.

When to do it: Many people meditate first thing in the morning, to start the day with a clear head—but everybody's different, so find what works for you.

How often: The more you practice, the more quickly you'll see benefits—but quality matters more than quantity, so focus on "little and often," taking the time to build a strong foundation. If every day feels like too much at first, start with three to five times a week.

How long: For beginners, just ten minutes a day will suffice. (Use a timer or an app so you won't have to watch the clock). For some people, that will always be enough, but eventually you may decide to sit for longer periods.

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