

# Basic Awareness Meditation

You may sit either in a well-supported chair or on the floor; if on the floor, consider sitting on the edge of a cushion or pillow, to more easily align your spine vertically and create a stable three-point stance (tailbone, and the outside of each knee joint). Sit erect, to maximize your breathing - a **“dignified” posture**. Some wish to put a blanket or rug under the pillow, for further comfort. Here is the most common set of instructions on the physical aspect of “sitting”:

- Your back, neck and hips should be aligned, spine vertical
- Your shoulders should be relaxed
- Eyes? Better slightly open, resting your gaze gently on a spot on the floor or wall 4-6 feet in front of you
- Mouth? Closed, tongue touching your upper palate or back of your front teeth
- Your hands should be at rest, either resting on your thighs or loosely folded in your lap

Start by taking a couple of deep, full breaths. Then, let your breath settle to whatever feels ok in the moment.

Place the **focus of your attention on your breath**. It is most common to focus your attention (your “mind’s eye”, so to speak) to how your body feels at a spot inside- such as just below your navel, in your windpipe, or at your nostrils. This is often referred to as one’s **“anchor”**; a “home base” to go back to when your mind wanders.

Feel the sensation of your breath going in and out... observe it without judgment or analysis. Just be there and witness it.

Really, one can select any physical sensation, emotion, or thought as an “anchor”; but the breath is commonly the easiest to start with in beginning meditative practice. After all, every one breathes.

Your mind will inevitably wander... what to do? Without judgment, turn it back around. Bring your attention back on your breathing... **gently but firmly bring it back to the breath, the rising and falling of your belly and chest.**

At first you may note your thoughts wander off time after time after time - **just calmly bring it back to the breath as soon as you become aware of having strayed.** No beating up on yourself, just come back to your intention.

As you start getting the hang of it, you’ll get better at recognizing you’ve wandered off into thought, and more able to stay in “bare attention” for longer and longer periods of time. But this fluctuates with the ups and downs of daily life; even very experienced meditators can have trouble with keeping focus in periods of higher stress.