

## Setting yourself up for meditation at home

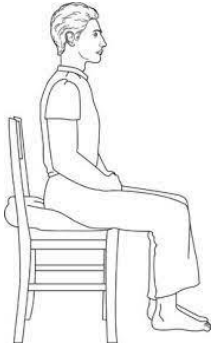

You might want to try out a few different seating options at the centre before buying any special meditation gear (you might even find you don't need any gear).



At home, you can simply use a reasonably straight-backed chair to sit on. You could also use a stack of well-sized books to support you in a kneeling posture (in place of a meditation stool or cushions). Or you could try sitting cross-legged. Full or half lotus is not necessary.

Don't waste time in the beginning fighting unnecessary pain by sitting in a posture that is uncomfortable or unsustainable for you.

The principles of meditation posture are:

- The height of your hips should be slightly higher than your knees. A folded blanket or cushion on a chair can help here.
- Your feet should comfortably touch the ground. A cushion or books under your feet can help here.
- You don't want to be tipping forwards, backwards or sideways. So you want a well-centered, balanced posture as much as possible.
- Natural alignment in the spine. Head well balanced on top of the spine.
- Your hands should feel well enough supported so your shoulders can relax, and not be pulled forward over time. It might be enough to simply place your hands on your thighs. Sometimes a cushion under your hands can be helpful.

	<p>A cushion on a chair can help elevate your hips slightly above the height of your knees. This will support your pelvic and back alignment, and help with circulation. This is often helpful for people with longer legs. But you may well find the height of the chair is fine without any additional cushions.</p> <p>If your chair at home is bucket-style (with a dip at the back of the seat), it can help to simply sit forward, towards the front of the chair.</p>
	<p>Sometimes it's helpful to tip the angle of the chair forward (by putting a mat, books or piece of wood under the back legs). Again, this can help elevate the hip height above the knees. But be careful to keep the chair stable!</p> <p>Depending on the chair, your leg length and what feels most comfortable and supportive for you, you might like to try a cushion behind your back, under your hands and / or under your feet (if your feet don't comfortably rest on the floor otherwise).</p>

	<p>You can kneel on cushions or even a stack of books (make sure you feel stable!). The principles remain the same – you want your hips higher than your knees. The seat should be high enough so your knees are comfortable, and your ankles should feel comfortable.</p> <p>You also need to have a sense of central alignment – that you’re not tipping forwards or backwards, even a little.</p> <p>If you can’t get comfortable, switch to a chair.</p>
	<p>If you want to try sitting cross-legged, it can help to use folded blankets or cushions to support your knees, if they don’t naturally fall to the floor. To support your back, and particularly to ensure you don’t start to slump in your lower back, it may help to sit on a cushion.</p> <p>If you can’t get comfortable cross legged, simply switch to a chair.</p>

## Timing your own meditation / meditating without audio guidance

It can be really useful to practice meditation without an audio guide.

You don’t need anything special for this – you can just use a watch or clock. Decide how many minutes you want to sit for in total. Then decide what meditation practice you want to do. Divide the total amount of time you want to sit for, by the number of stages the meditation practice has.

So if you want to sit for 20 minutes in total and do the mindfulness of breathing (which has 4 stages), you’ll have 5 minutes for each of the four stages ( $20 / 4 = 5$ ).

Simply keep an eye on your watch or clock from time to time, so you know when to move to the next stage. You get a feel for it after a while.

Depending on your tech skills, an even easier option may be to use something like the ***Insight Timer app*** (available for free in the App Store or Google Play Store). This is a widely used app, which includes the ability to set up a meditation timer with bells ringing at appropriate intervals.

- Select the Timer option in the app.
- Set the total duration of your session (in the example above, 20 minutes).
- Set interval bells. You need to set up the first bell after the meditation begins (in the example above, 5 minutes).
- Then tick “Repeat” and move the slider to 5 minutes to get a bell every 5 minutes until the total duration is up. (Leave the “number of repeating bells” option set to the default infinity icon that looks like a sideways 8 – that way it calculates the number of bells for you).

You can also select the type of bell sound you like, or just leave the default option.