

Script for *Savasana* from *Light on Pranayama*

These instructions for *Savasana* are a modified version of Chapter 30 in *Light on Pranayama*. This script uses Mr. Iyengar's words, but turns some of the descriptive passages into instructions so that, if you wanted to, you could read this to your students and give them an experience of Mr. Iyengar's words leading them into *Savasana*. When I have shared it with my students, I've asked them not to follow their habitual patterns but to stay alert to the instructions. So that they know what to expect, I tell students that the instructions will take about 10-12 minutes and that I will give them another five minutes of silence after.

Enjoy!

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Key:

Parenthetical #s = page number and instruction number from *Light on Pranayama*

Bracketed info = where I've rearranged words or added transitional words

Italicized font = Mr. Iyengar's words that offer explanations or alternatives.

In many cases, these instructions use "your" where Mr. Iyengar used "the."

1. Spread a blanket on the floor.
2. Before starting, remove constricting garments, belts, glasses, contact lenses, hearing aids, and so on. (234 #3)
3. [Remember, *Savasana*] means relaxation, and therefore recuperation. It is not simply lying on one's back with a vacant mind and gazing, nor does it end in snoring. It is the most difficult of yogic asanas to perfect, but it is also the most refreshing and rewarding. (232 #1)
4. [To get started, visualize a straight line through the center of the blanket], and sit on the line with your knees drawn up with your feet together. Gradually lower your back along the [imaginary] line. Place your body accurately so that the middle of your spine lies exactly on the straight line drawn on the floor or blanket. (235-236 #5)
5. Press your feet on the floor, lift your hips as well as the sacroiliac region, and with your hands, move the flesh and the skin from the back of the waist down towards the buttocks. (236 #6)
6. First adjust the back of the body. Then adjust the head from the front. *The reason for adjusting the head from the front is that from birth the back of the head becomes uneven, because babies lean to one side, with the result that one side of the head gets more compressed than the other.*

Hence it is important to adjust the head from the front and feel it from the back. (236 #7)

Make sure that your head is straight and parallel to the ceiling. *If it tilts up the mind dwells in the future. If down, it broods in the past. If it leans to one side, the inner ear follows. This affects the midbrain, and one tends to fall asleep and lose awareness.* Learn to keep the head level with the floor so that your mind remains always in the present. (249 #23)

7. Extend first one leg and then the other fully. Join both the heels and knees. The joined heels, knees, crotch, center of the coccyx, the spinal column and the base of the skull should rest exactly on the straight line. Then adjust the front of your body, keeping the center of the eyebrows, the bridge of the nose, chin, sternum, navel, and center of the pubis in line. (236 #7)
8. [Keep your body] straight and level. [To keep it straight,] draw an imaginary line straight along the centre of your forehead, eyebrows, root of the nose, middle of the lips, chin, throat and sternum, centre of the diaphragm, navel and pubis, and then through the space between the inner sides of the thighs, knees, calves, ankles and heels. Then check that your body is level, starting with the head, keeping your ears, the outer corners of the eyes, the lips and the base of the jaw bone parallel to the floor. Stretch and adjust the back of the neck, so that it is centrally placed on the floor. (239 #8)
9. Pin the [inner point] of each shoulder blade to the floor. Roll the skin of the top chest from the collar bones towards the shoulder blades and adjust your back to rest perfectly on the blanket. See that the dorsal and lumbar areas of your spine rest evenly on either side and that your ribs spread out uniformly. Rest evenly on both buttocks. Rest the center of the sacrum on the floor so that the buttocks relax evenly. Draw a line between the nipples, the floating ribs and pelvic bones to keep them parallel to the floor. (239 #9)
10. Keep your feet together and stretch the outer edges of your heels; then let the feet fall outwards evenly. Let your big toes feel weightless and non-resistant. . . . *Persons with stiff legs may keep their feet about a yard apart, as this will enable them to keep the back rested on the floor.*

Keep the back outer corner of your knees touching the floor. *If [the legs] cannot rest use a folded blanket or pillow behind them. If the legs do not feel relaxed, place weights on the upper thighs (25-50 lbs). This removes tension or hardness in the muscles and keeps the legs quiet. (241 #10)*

11. Keep your hands away from your body, forming an angle of fifteen to 20 degrees at the armpits. Bend the arms at the elbows, [and touch] the shoulder tops with your fingers. Extend the triceps at the back portion of your upper arms and take your elbows as far as you can towards your feet. Keep your whole upper arm, with the outer edges of the shoulders and elbows, on the floor. Do not disturb the elbow points. Lower your forearms. Extend your hands from the wrists to the knuckles, palms facing upwards. Keep your fingers passive and relaxed, with the backs of the middle fingers touching the floor up to the first knuckles. See that the median plane of the arms, elbows, wrists and palms are in contact with the floor.

The feeling of lying on the floor should be as though the body is sinking into Mother Earth. (242 #11)

12. [Watch for tension in the palms, the fingers, the soles of the feet, and the toes, and] when and where it occurs, drop these parts back to their correct position. (242 #12)
13. . . . Relax the back of your body from the trunk to the neck, arms and legs. Next relax the front of your body from the pubis to the throat, where emotional upheavals take place, and then from the neck to the crown of the head. In this way learn to relax your entire body. (246 #13)
14. Experience the feeling of non-existence or emptiness in the pits of the arms, the inner pits of the groins, diaphragm, lungs, spinal muscles and the abdomen. The body then feels like a discarded stick. In correct Savasana the head feels as if it has shrunk. (247 #14)
15. [Be serene] in all parts of your body. Silence in the body will bring about silence in the mind. (247 #16)
16. Gently move the upper [eye] lids towards the inner corners of the eyes [to] relax the skin just above the eyes and create space between the eyebrows. Treat the eyes gently like petals of a flower. Raise the eyebrows just enough to release any tightness of the skin in the forehead. (248 #18)
17. [Keep your eyes] passive, and [keep your ears] quiet and receptive. (248 #19)
18. Keep the root of your tongue passive as in sleep and resting on the lower palate. . . . Keep the corners of your lips relaxed by stretching them sideways. (248 #20)
19. [Release] tension from your facial muscles, especially around the temples, the cheekbones, and the lower jaw. [Experience] a feeling of quietness between the upper palate and the root of the tongue. [Let the] pores of the skin shrink [so that] your nerves can rest . (248 #21)
20. See that the breath flows evenly on either side of the nostrils.

Start by inhaling normally, but exhale softly, deeply, and longer.

[If you feel] restless, perform deep, slow and prolonged in and out breaths until quietness is attained. The moment quietness is felt . . . stop deep breathing and let the breath flow by itself. (249 #22)

21. When the art of exhalation is perfected, [you may] feel as if the breath is oozing from the pores of the skin on your chest, which is a sign of perfect relaxation. [Let] each out-breath take your mind towards your own self and purge your brain of all its tensions and activities. (249 #22)

22. Let the breath be like a string holding the pearls of a necklace together. The pearls are the ribs which move slowly, very steadily and reverently. . . . When you are in that precise state, your body, breath, mind and brain move towards the real self, Atma, like a spider returning to the centre of its web. At this juncture, a state of equanimity of mind, intellect, and self is felt. (232 #3)
23. [Allow your mind to] dissolve and merge in the self, like a river in the sea . . . (250 #27)
24. [Experience a feeling of] equipoise between the two tides of emptiness of emotion and fullness of intellect. (251 #28)
25. [. . . In this state that some call the “eternal now, beyond space and time,” allow your body to be at rest as if in deep sleep, allow your senses to feel as if in a dream, but keep the intellect alert and aware.] (233 #8)
26. [In this state of discrimination, experience greater clarity and more and more relaxation. In this state, allow your doubts to vanish, feel a sense of illumination, and allow yourself to be merged in the Infinite.] This is the nectar of *Savasana*. (251 #29)

Now give the students five to ten minutes of silence, then bring them back with a chime or some other instructions, and end with more of Mr. Iyengar’s words.

27. Remain a silent observer until normal activity creeps into your brain and body. Gradually and gently open your eyes, which are at first unfocused. Remain in that state for a while. Then bend your knees, turn your head and body to one side and stay for a minute or two in that position. (252 #31)
28. In correct *Savasana* there is a minimum wastage of energy and maximum recuperation. It refreshes your whole being, making you dynamic and creative. It banishes fear (*bhaya*) of death and creates fearlessness (*abhaya*). (254 “Effect”)
29. [Now turn to the other side.]
30. [When you push into the floor to come up,] do not raise your head quickly. (252 #31)
31. [Sit quietly for a moment] and experience a state of serenity and inner oneness. (254 “Effect”)