How to Start a Meditation Practice (Step by Step)

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A fully illustrated 28-step guide to starting a meditation practice that actually sticks: choose one method and a fixed time, learn the basic seated technique, build the daily habit, then deepen and troubleshoot it.

Phase 1 — Choose a Method and Set the Conditions

1. **Write one honest reason for practising**
   Write one honest reason for practising.
2. **Pick a single technique to begin with**
   Pick a single technique to begin with.
3. **Set a realistically short starting duration**
   Set a realistically short starting duration.
4. **Choose the same time every day**
   Choose the same time every day.
5. **Pick a quiet, consistent spot**
   Pick a quiet, consistent spot.
6. **Set a cushion so the hips sit level**
   Set a cushion so the hips sit level.
7. **Set a gentle timer**
   Set a gentle timer.

Phase 2 — Learn the Basic Sit

8. **Sit with a tall but relaxed spine**
   Sit with a tall but relaxed spine.
9. **Rest your hands and soften your jaw**
   Rest your hands and soften your jaw.
10. **Take three slow breaths**
    Take three slow breaths.
11. **Choose one place to rest attention**
    Choose one place to rest attention.
12. **Notice when the mind has drifted**
    Notice when the mind has drifted.
13. **Label the distraction gently**
    Label the distraction gently.
14. **Return to the anchor without judgement**
    Return to the anchor without judgement.

Phase 3 — Make the Habit Stick

15. Attach the sit to an existing habit

Attach the sit to an existing habit.

16. Keep the first week to five minutes

Keep the first week to five minutes.

17. Practise at the same clock time daily

Practise at the same clock time daily.

18. Track sessions on a simple calendar

Track sessions on a simple calendar.

19. Plan a one-minute version for busy days

Plan a one-minute version for busy days.

20. Forgive a missed day and resume

Forgive a missed day and resume.

21. Tell one person about your goal

Tell one person about your goal.

Phase 4 — Deepen the Practice and Solve Problems

22. Add one minute each week

Add one minute each week.

23. Add a short body scan

Add a short body scan.

24. Bring attention into daily moments

Bring attention into daily moments.

25. Try a short walking practice

Try a short walking practice.

26. Shorten the sit when you feel restless

Shorten the sit when you feel restless.

27. Sit earlier when you keep getting sleepy

Sit earlier when you keep getting sleepy.

28. Know when to seek guidance

Know when to seek guidance.

Sources

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Written as a checklist from https://www.howcompass.com/how-to/How-to-Start-a-Meditation-Practice. Corrections: https://www.howcompass.com