

Breathing Techniques You Should Know for Different Activities

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Many of us take breathing for granted — yet how we breathe can significantly affect our physical performance, mental focus and recovery. According to experts, purposeful breathing techniques help regulate the nervous system, improve oxygen delivery and calm the mind.

Thus, whether you're working at a desk, training for a run or winding down for sleep, knowing the *right* technique for the moment can make a real difference.

During Work or Study: Focus & Calm

When you're engaged in mentally demanding tasks — meetings, deadlines or studying — you'll benefit from breathing that promotes clarity and calm. For example:

- Try **box breathing** (inhale-hold-exhale-hold in equal counts) to reset your nervous system and regain focus.
- Another option: use **alternate nostril breathing** to steady the mind and reduce anxiety.
By shifting your breath pattern you can reduce stress and sharpen attention — a helpful tool when work piles up.

During Exercise: Enhance Performance & Control

Physical activity demands a different breathing strategy: you need airflow, coordination and rhythm.

- Use **diaphragmatic (belly) breathing** to engage your core and maximise oxygen delivery, improving endurance.
- Incorporate **rhythmic breathing**, matching inhales and exhales with your movement (e.g., three steps inhale, two steps exhale) to stabilise breathing when running or cycling.
- For high-intensity bursts, breathe through your mouth if needed — but practise nose breathing at lower intensity to build control and capacity.
This kind of intentional breathing helps prevent breathlessness, side stitches and fatigue — and helps you push further with ease.

After Activity & Before Bed: Recovery Mode

After exertion or during winding-down time, the goal is relaxation and repair. That means slower, deeper breathing.

- Use the **4-7-8 technique**: inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 7, exhale for 8. This can reduce heart rate and evoke the parasympathetic (“rest and digest”) state.
- You can also return to **diaphragmatic breathing**, lying down and allowing your body to relax fully — letting the breath naturally deepen and slow.

These practices support better sleep, quicker recovery, lower stress levels and improved overall wellbeing.

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