

Basic Deep Breathing Exercises

In the midst of academic pressures, extracurricular commitments, and the whirlwind of university life, finding moments of calm and clarity can be challenging. It is during such times that regularly integrating controlled breathing exercises into your daily routine can reduce stress and enhance your overall wellness. Whether you're facing exam stress, grappling with deadlines, or simply seeking balance amidst your busy schedule, these practices can help revitalize your energy and improve focus. In the following sections, you will explore an array of various breathing exercises to help you thrive amidst the challenges of student life.

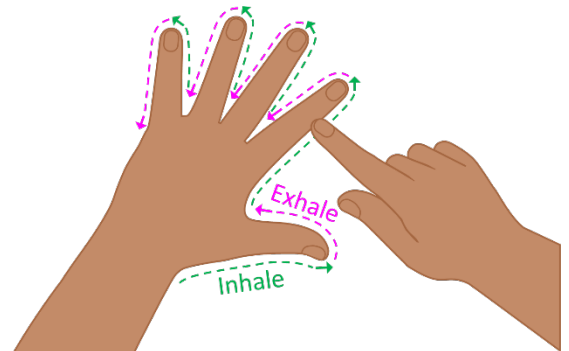
For all breathing exercises, find a comfortable seated position, either on the floor with your legs crossed or in a chair with your feet flat on the ground and your back tall. Unless otherwise noted, rest your hands on in your lap and settle into a relaxed position. For all of the exercises, when you inhale, focus on filling your lungs completely with air, allowing your abdomen to expand gently as you breathe in. Likewise, when you exhale, empty your lungs completely and imagine that you are releasing any tension, stress, or negativity from your body and mind.



Five Finger Breathing

Spread open the fingers of your left hand. Use the index finger of your right hand to trace each finger on your left hand.

- **Begin with the thumb:** As you inhale slowly and deeply through your nose, gently trace the outline of your left thumb with the index finger of your right hand. Follow the curve of your thumb from the base to the tip, moving up as you inhale.
- **Hold:** When you reach the top of your thumb, pause briefly and hold your breath. Feel the sensation of the breath filling your lungs and the gentle pressure of your finger against your skin.
- **Exhale:** As you exhale slowly and steadily through your nose, trace the outline of your thumb back down to the base with your index finger. Follow the curve of your thumb downward, releasing the breath as you move down.
- **Repeat with Each Finger:** Continue this process with each finger of your left hand, tracing the outline of your index finger, middle finger, ring finger, and pinky finger in sequence. Inhale as you move up each finger, hold briefly at the top, and exhale as you move back down.
- **Switch Hands:** Once you've completed tracing the fingers of your left hand, switch to your right hand and repeat the process.

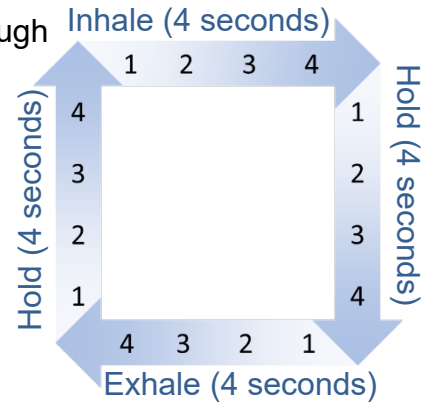


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Box Breathing (also known as Four Square Breathing)

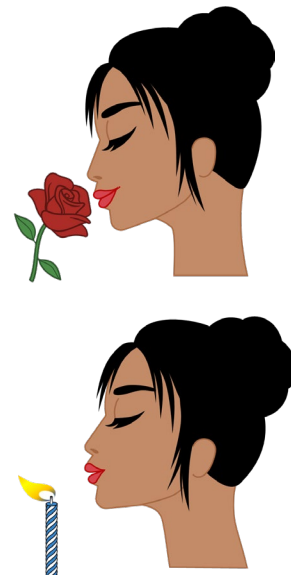
This technique is a structured pattern of inhaling, holding the breath, exhaling, and holding again, each for an equal duration, typically counted in seconds. Here's how it works:

- **Inhale (4 seconds):** Begin by taking a slow, deep breath through your nose for a count of four seconds.
- **Hold (4 seconds):** Once you've reached the peak of your inhalation, pause and hold your breath for another four seconds.
- **Exhale (4 seconds):** Slowly release the breath through your mouth for a count of four seconds.
- **Hold (4 seconds):** After you've fully exhaled, pause and hold your breath for another four seconds before beginning the cycle again.
- Repeat this pattern for several rounds, focusing on the steady rhythm of your breath.



Smell the Rose, Blow out the Candle

- Begin by taking a slow, deep breath in through your nose, imagining that you are gently smelling a fragrant rose. As you inhale, visualize the sweet scent of the rose filling your senses, bringing a sense of calmness and relaxation.
- Next, exhale slowly and steadily through your mouth, as if you are gently blowing out a candle. As you exhale, visualize the breath flowing out smoothly and evenly, carrying away any burdens or worries with it.
- Continue to alternate between these two phases of breathing, allowing each inhale to be as deep and full as the last, and each exhale to be slow and controlled. Focus on the sensations of the breath as it moves in and out of your body, and the visual imagery of smelling the rose and blowing out the candle.



Finally

These breathing exercises can help you relax and be more focused. You can use them any time and pretty much anywhere to help yourself decrease stress.

References

- Zaccaro *et. al.* 2018. How Breath-Control Can Change Your Life: A Systematic Review on Psycho-Physiological Correlates of Slow Breathing. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 1:1-16. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2018.00353>
- Myerholtz L. 2023. Take a Deep Breath. *Family Medicine* 55(4): 284-285. <https://doi:10.22454/FamMed.2023.731271>