Ujjayi: Ocean Breath

Before you practice

These guides are general fitness and mindfulness content written by BLKMAT. They are not medical advice, therapy, or treatment, and they are not a substitute for a qualified yoga teacher or health professional.

- Check with a doctor or physical therapist before starting a new exercise routine, especially if you are pregnant, recovering from an injury or surgery, or managing a heart, blood-pressure, joint, or balance condition.
- Move within a comfortable range. Mild stretching sensation is fine; sharp, pinching, or electric pain, numbness, or dizziness means stop.
- If you feel faint, dizzy, short of breath, or unwell at any point, stop and rest. Get medical help if it doesn't pass quickly.
- Breathe through your nose if you can, and never hold your breath to force a pose.
- Use a wall, chair, folded blanket, or pillow for support whenever it helps. Props are not "cheating."
- Practice on a dry mat on a flat, non-slip floor. BLKMAT mats have a natural rubber base, which contains latex.

Zodiac and chakra themes in these guides are cultural and creative frameworks for choosing what to practice and what to pay attention to. They are not scientific or health claims.

A BLKMAT guide to Ujjayi, the ocean breath. Used through a whole flow, or seated for 3–5 minutes. Read the safety note first.

What it is

Ujjayi is a slow nasal breath with a slight constriction at the back of the throat, which makes a soft, audible hiss — often compared to ocean waves, or to fogging a mirror with the mouth closed. The sound is the point: it gives the mind something steady to listen to, and it sets the pace of a practice.

When to use it

During flowing (vinyasa) practice, to keep the breath even from the first pose to the last. Seated, for a few minutes, to settle before meditation. Whenever the breath needs slowing down without counting.

How to practice

1. Sit tall, or come into any pose. Breathe in and out through your nose.
2. On an exhale, whisper “haaa” with your mouth open. Feel where the sound is made — at the back of the throat.
3. Close your mouth and make the same soft sound on the exhale, breathing out through your nose.
4. Add the same gentle narrowing to the inhale. Both directions should sound like quiet surf: audible to you, barely audible to anyone next to you.
5. Keep the breath long and even. The face, jaw, and shoulders stay relaxed; only the throat narrows, slightly.

Timing and counts

Pace	Session	Sound
4–6 counts in, 4–6 counts out	A whole flow, or 3–5 minutes seated	Quiet — if it is raspy or loud, ease off

Why people practice it

The sound works as a metronome and as an anchor for attention. In a flowing practice it is also a gauge: if you cannot keep the breath smooth, the pose is too much today.

Take care

- The constriction is slight. A sore, dry, or irritated throat means stop.
- Do not combine Ujjayi with long breath holds until you have read the Kumbhaka guide and can keep the breath completely smooth.
- If you have a throat or respiratory condition, check with your doctor first.

Related glossary terms

Ujjayi

Part of the Breathing Techniques category in the Practice Library.

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