

## Box Breathing

### Introduction / Definition

Box breathing, sometimes called *square breathing*, is a structured breathing technique often used by athletes, health professionals, and even the military to stay calm and focused under pressure. It involves four equal parts of the breath: inhaling, holding, exhaling, and holding again. Each phase is done for the same length of time, forming the shape of a “box.” This steady rhythm helps regulate the nervous system and brings both body and mind into balance.

### Why it helps

When stressed or anxious, our breathing becomes shallow and erratic, which can signal danger to the brain and increase tension. Box breathing interrupts this cycle by slowing the breath and creating a predictable rhythm. This activates the parasympathetic nervous system (the body’s “rest and digest” mode). Regular practice can:

- Reduce stress and anxiety
- Improve focus and clarity
- Lower heart rate and blood pressure
- Promote a sense of calm and control

### Guided Instructions

1. Find a comfortable seated position with your feet flat on the floor and your hands resting on your lap.
2. Close your eyes if comfortable, or soften your gaze.
3. Take one natural breath to settle.
4. Imagine a square in your mind. Each side of the square is one step of your breath.
  - **Inhale** slowly through your nose to the count of 4 (1...2...3...4).
  - **Hold** your breath gently for 4 seconds (1...2...3...4).
  - **Exhale** slowly through your mouth for 4 seconds (1...2...3...4).
  - **Hold** again for 4 seconds (1...2...3...4).
5. Continue for 4–6 rounds, tracing the box in your imagination with each step
6. After completing the cycles, return to normal breathing and notice how you feel.

### Reflection / Notes

How did your body feel before and after? Did your mind feel calmer or more focused?

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