

What is square breathing?

Also known as box breathing, 4x4 breathing or four-part breath, square breathing is a type of diaphragmatic breath work—aka deep breathing using your diaphragm, which fills your lungs with oxygenated air more fully than shallow chest breathing. According to [Harvard Health Publishing](#), “Deep abdominal breathing encourages full oxygen exchange—that is, the beneficial trade of incoming oxygen for outgoing carbon dioxide. Not surprisingly, it can slow the heartbeat and lower or stabilize blood pressure.”

Long story short, this type of breathwork has been scientifically proved to help [increase calm and focus and decrease stress, depression and anxiety](#)—even the military teaches it to aid in stress-related emotional disorders. It’s also a great way to practice mindfulness.

How do I practice square breathing?

First, breathe normally (that’s easy—if you’re reading this you are probably doing it already!). Then inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth. Make sure your belly expands as you inhale and constricts as you exhale; this is diaphragmatic breathing because you’re using your diaphragm! Take a moment to think about each cycle of breath. As you simply stay aware of your breathing, you’re already practicing mindfulness. On your next cycle, start square breathing:

1. Inhale through your nose for a count of four (1, 2, 3, 4)
2. Hold your breath for a count of four (1, 2, 3, 4)
3. Exhale through your mouth for a count of four (1, 2, 3, 4)
4. Pause and hold for a count of four (1, 2, 3, 4)
5. Repeat

When can I practice square breathing?

On a walk, before bed, in the shower, sitting at your desk—anywhere! Practicing square breathing when you’re not in a stressful situation is just as important for mindfulness, and it will prepare you to do it when you *are* in a tense situation. 😊