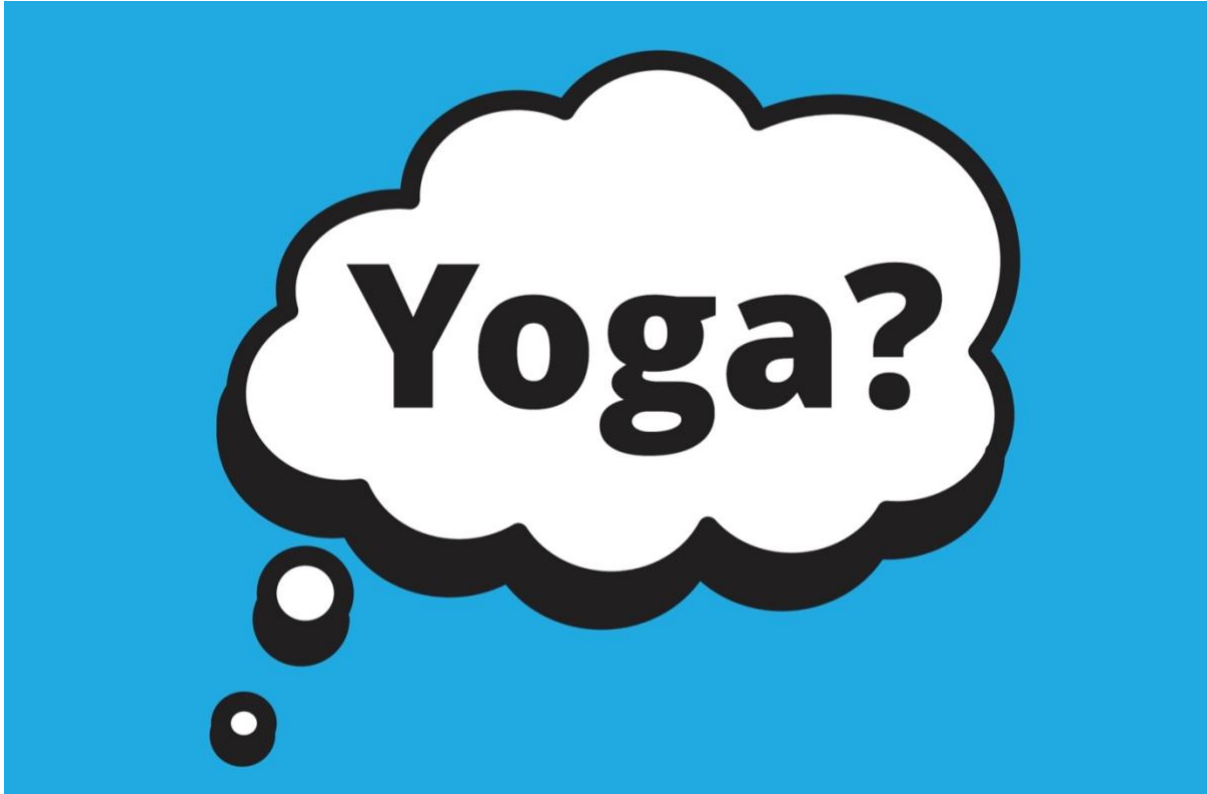


# A Beginner's Guide to Yoga

How to Choose the Right Class for You



If you're new to yoga, the variety of class names, lingo, and styles on offer can be confusing and even intimidating. Some classes involve chanting and spirituality; while others, like those we teach at YOGABODY, are fitness-focused and agnostic. Some offer challenging workouts, while others are more like intense stretching routines.

This guide will help you find a yoga style that suits your needs. Most yoga in your area will fall into just a handful of categories that we'll explore here, but we'll inevitably overlook some styles you might stumble upon on your travels. You should also be aware that some of the founding teachers profiled have ethically and legally transgressed, taking advantage of their positions of power. This document looks at the schools of yoga they founded only, and we encourage you to do your own research on individual teachers past and present.



## Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga

FOUNDER: Sri K. Pattabhi Jois (Mysore, India)

SPIRITUALITY / RELIGION? There is an opening and closing Sanskrit mantra, and oms in some traditional classes. Modern derivative classes – power, flow, vinyasa – are often taught without chants.

WHAT TO EXPECT? A dynamic practice, based on a consistent, fixed sequence of poses.

Pattabhi Jois believed that yoga is 99% practice and 1% theory, so traditional Ashtanga classes are light on anatomy, injury management, and spirituality. Contemporary, derivative styles are often called Power Yoga, Flow Yoga, and Vinyasa Yoga. Expect a fast-paced, physically demanding practice, where breathing and poses flow together smoothly.

BEST FOR? Fitness seekers, looking for a dynamic, physical challenge.



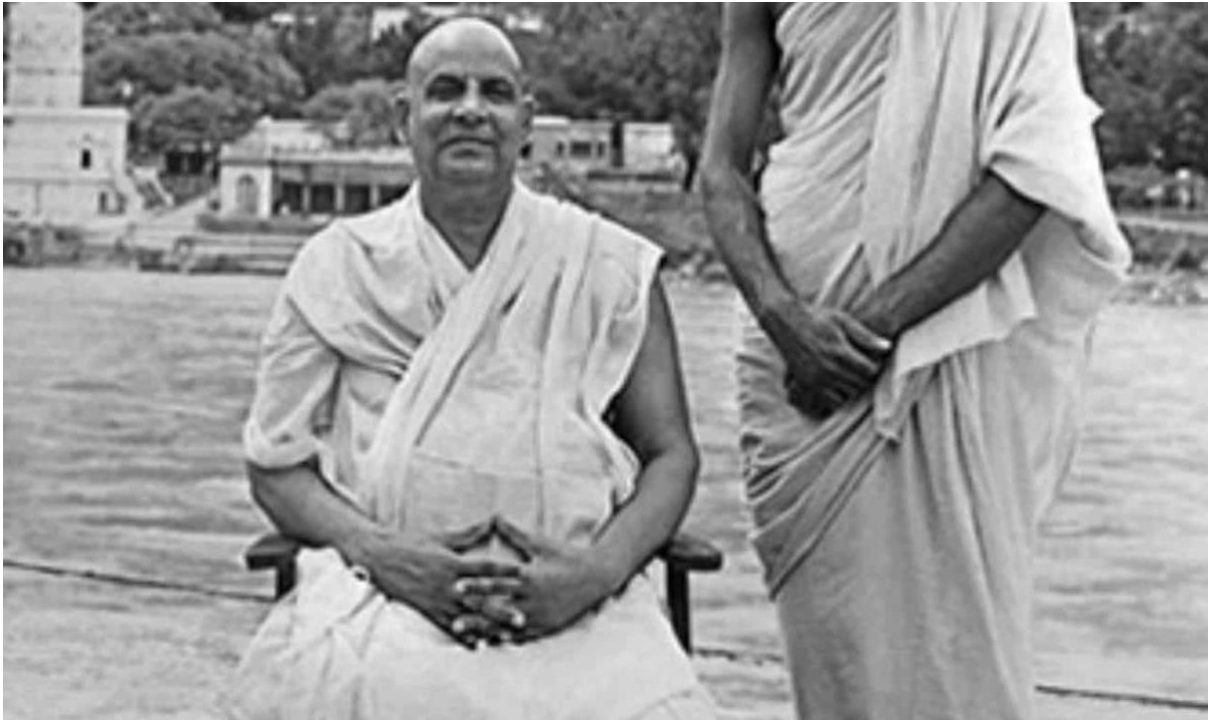
## Iyengar Yoga

FOUNDER: BKS Iyengar (Pune, India)

SPIRITUALITY / RELIGION? Little or none in classes.

WHAT TO EXPECT? Slow, detail-oriented practice. Iyengar was one of the most celebrated yoga teachers of the 20th century. His style of yoga is extremely strict, like the ballet of the yoga world, and often involves props like yoga chairs, rope walls, blocks, and straps. Classes focus on precision alignment and are very detailed and slow paced. You might practice five poses in a one-hour class.

BEST FOR? Detail-orientated, alignment-focused students. If you are looking to understand poses inside and out, Iyengar classes can be a safe way to explore.



## Traditional Hatha Yoga

**FOUNDER:** Swami Sivananda (Rishikesh, India). Notable 2<sup>nd</sup> generation teachers: Swami Satchidananda, Vishnudevananda Saraswati

**SPIRITUALITY / RELIGION?** Chanting, oms, and mantra are almost always included in this practice, including devotional chants to Sivananda himself and his main teachers. Some people refer to this as a neo-Hindu practice. You should expect devotional chanting, singing, and oms.

**WHAT TO EXPECT?** The term “hatha yoga” is a category of practices that includes all the styles of yoga poses, breathing exercises, and kriya (cleansing exercises), but the term has been co-opted in the vernacular to refer to the Sivananda lineage of practice. Traditionally, classes contain slow, long-hold poses, perhaps 12 poses in total with rest in between postures. Pranayama (breathing exercises) are taught in every class.

**BEST FOR?** Students looking for a slow, accessible class, with spirituality and breathing as an integral element to the experience.



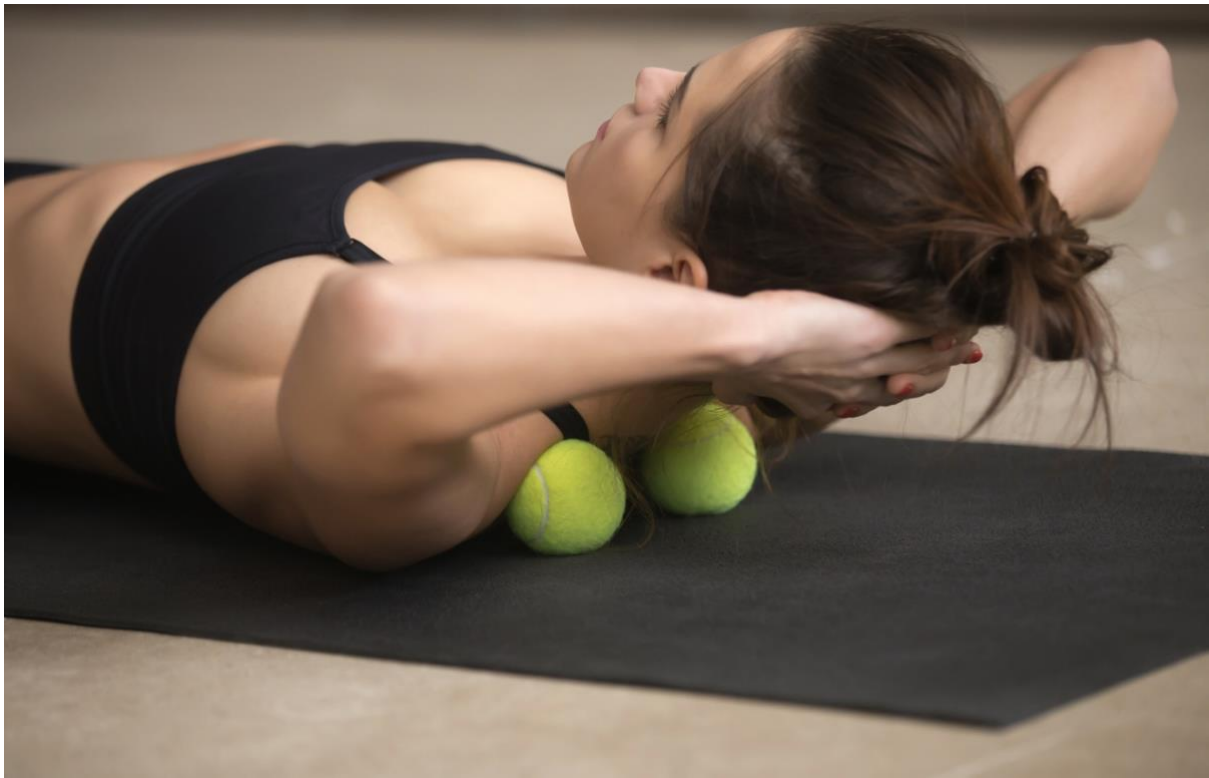
## Bikram Yoga / Hot Yoga

FOUNDER: Bikram Choudhury (California, USA)

SPIRITUALITY / RELIGION? None

WHAT TO EXPECT? An intense mental and physical challenge. Classes typically consist of a series of 26 poses, bookended by two breathing exercises taught in a room heated to 100 degrees Fahrenheit or hotter. Some contemporary styles of hot yoga include more poses, and you'll even find some classes taught in a more dynamic style. Light clothing, a bottle of water, and a sweat towel are essential. The traditional, pose-by-pose, static class structure is like a classic hatha class, but the heat ups the intensity level significantly. Prepare to sweat!

BEST FOR? Those looking for a safe, slow class, with a huge challenge added by the heat.



## Targeted Yoga

FOUNDER: 1000s of teachers

SPIRITUALITY / RELIGION? None

WHAT TO EXPECT? A class focused on solving a particular health challenge. Think yoga for back pain, yoga for anxiety, chair yoga. Classes vary from full workshops to super short 10-15 minute practices and range from extremely physical to extremely metaphysical and everything in between. This is the modern use of yoga poses and yoga techniques, often as a supplemental practice, similar to physical therapy as way to rehab and prehab the body.

BEST FOR? Students exploring yoga as a solution to a specific health challenge.



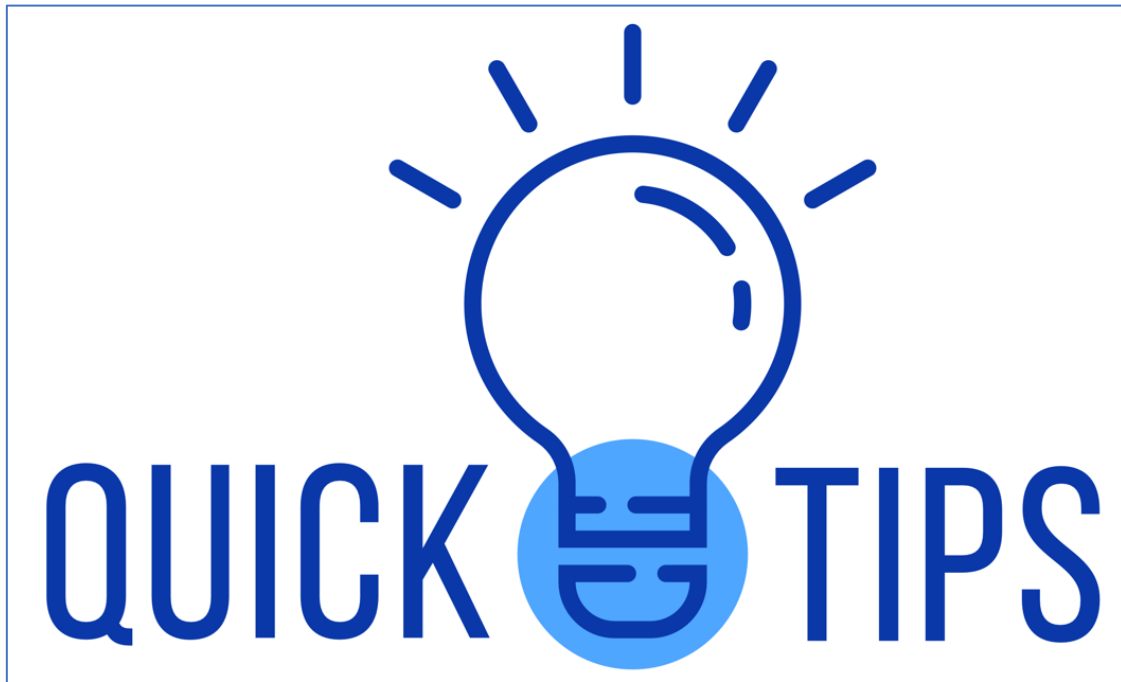
## Fusion Yoga

FOUNDER: 1000s of teachers

SPIRITUALITY / RELIGION? None

WHAT TO EXPECT? Yoga and Pilates, yoga and dance, yoga and acrobatics are all common fusions you'll typically find on offer. Some look and feel very similar to a yoga class, while some are very different and often contain very few traditional yoga poses. Almost all are physically challenging if not advanced.

BEST FOR? Non-traditional types, looking for a fun workout to challenge their body in different ways.



**New students are welcome.** Most yoga studios welcome beginner students to class every day.

**Rent / borrow a mat at first.** Most studios offer mat rental, but you'll want to buy your own eventually. Just be sure to choose a yoga-specific mat, as exercise mats tend to be too short and too soft to practice yoga on.

**Wear lightweight, form-fitting clothing.** Loose clothing will fall off or cling to your body with sweat during practice. Lightweight, form-fitting clothing is the most comfortable.

**Take care of your wrists, knees, and lower back.** Injuries in yoga are rare, but when starting out keep it slow and give yourself permission to sit out any difficult poses.



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