

How to Become a Yoga Teacher: A Beginner's Guide

Are you a novice yogi or even a total beginner thinking about how to become a yoga teacher?

It doesn't matter whether you have years of practice behind you or have just experienced your first practice. Whatever your situation is, if you are looking to make the leap to teaching yoga, then you have come to the right place.

We know you must have a lot of questions about training as a yoga teacher. Can anyone become a yoga instructor? What qualifications does a yoga teacher require? Where can I study yoga? Can I become a yoga teacher online? How long does it take to become a teacher? How much does it cost? Do I need to be able to touch my toes? Do I need to know Sanskrit?

And so on. That's why to try and answer all your queries, we have created the ultimate guide on how to be a yoga teacher. We hope to help complete beginner yogis find your feet. Even if you are brand new to practising yoga, no doubt you've heard plenty of talk about yoga teacher training courses - more commonly known as a YTT. But you probably don't know much about exactly what they entail.

Yoga is pretty addictive, we know that all too well ourselves here at Yoga Teacher Land. We're sure that anyone who takes a single yoga class has at least one fleeting fantasy about training up as a teacher. I mean, surely that must be everyone's dream job?

Well, if you've found your way here looking for how to become a yoga instructor - let's run through all you need to know.

How to become a yoga teacher

Now, before you book a YTT, you should ask yourself some questions about precisely why you wish to become a yoga teacher.

Training to become a yoga instructor is, without a doubt, one of the most magnificent experiences you will ever have the pleasure of encountering. However, it is certainly no walk in the park. The journey is challenging and intense - there is a lot to learn. We're talking asana, meditation, yoga philosophy, anatomy and even some science. After all, you can't teach yoga if you don't understand human anatomy! You'll even cover the very business of yoga and how to go about marketing your services and finding work. It's a big undertaking so it's ideal to do your research before you jump on a flight to India and pack in your 9-5.

Studying yoga can be costly as well, so you'll want to make sure you're doing it for the right reasons. First things first, before you sign up, you should address the following questions.

Do you know yoga?

Before you undertake any yoga training, ask yourself what you know about yoga. Do you really know what yoga is? We're not saying that you need to have mastered crow pose and be a headstand pro. Nor do you need to recite all the asanas in flawless Sanskrit as you glide through a vinyasa. But you do need to have a connection with yoga and understand the mindset. And be sure you address, what exactly does the practice mean to you personally?

For many people, yoga is a fitness class. That's perfectly reasonable - yoga does strengthen and tone our physique and make us glow with good health. But yoga is much more than a workout, it's a holistic practice which flexes much more than our muscles. The training you undertake on a YTT weaves much deeper than a simple work-out.

In its truest form, yoga fosters balance and harmony throughout your entire body. It revitalises your soul and rejuvenates your mind. In ancient Sanskrit, yoga means to harness, to yoke. It represents the union of mind, body and soul. When put into practice, yoga connects your breath, movements and your mind.

And, once you become a yoga teacher you have a responsibility to your students to educate them on the various layers of yoga.

Yoga draws together science and spirituality. You don't need to know the ins and outs of this before you study a YTT, but you do need to be open to exploring the scientific and anatomical side of yoga.

Feeling intrigued? Right, next question.

Why do you want to become a yoga teacher?

Before you commit to studying a YTT, you should ask yourself what your own personal motivation is. The two main reasons why most yogis elect to train as a yoga teacher are:

- To become a yoga instructor: if you are curious or committed to making a career out of teaching yoga, then you will need to study a YTT. Although there is technically no law against teaching yoga without certification, it is much harder to get work without qualifying.

- To deepen your own practice: that's right - you can study a YTT purely for your own benefit. You don't actually have to become a yoga teacher! Studying a 200-hour YTT provides a comprehensive foundation for the practice of yoga. In addition to practising asanas, you will undertake training to develop your own meditation and pranayama skills.

It's true! Many candidates who enrol on a yoga teacher training course do not intend to become a yoga teacher upon completion. So whilst you might be curious about making the leap to being a full-time yoga instructor, there's no obligation.

Other reasons for studying a YTT

Everyone has their own motivations but here are a few other common reasons for studying to become a yoga teacher:

- To relieve anxiety: Yoga is known to reduce the symptoms of anxiety and depression. Undertaking a YTT weaves so deeply into the principles of yoga that it has the power to help you manage your symptoms.
- To boost your mindfulness: Practising yoga relieves tension in the body and inspires us to improve our posture and control our breathing. Studying the philosophies behind the Eight Limbs of Yoga strengthens the mind and increases mindfulness. All of this can have a massive impact on your self-confidence and aid you at work or in relationships.
- To meet other yogis: As much as studying to become a yoga teacher is a learning curve, it is also a very social affair. Studying at a retreat or in your home town will connect you from other yogi enthusiasts from all walks of life. You can make friends and harness a new community to share your love of yoga with.

- As a yoga holiday: Studying a YTT at a retreat is *technically* a holiday! Well, despite all the time spent in lessons. If you opt to train at a retreat you will have long days of study but you will also get to explore a new destination. Many retreats organise fun excursions and city tours. What's more, they serve nourishing vegetarian meals which will boost your health and wellness.

Essentially, there are lots of reasons why an individual would like to become a yoga teacher. If your own reason isn't on the list, it doesn't matter.

Can anyone be a yoga teacher?

Absolutely. Now, as we've already said, training to become a yoga teacher is physical and mentally exhausting. On the other hand, it's extremely empowering. Yoga is not a competitive sport. A yoga mat is a safe place - the practice welcomes people of all shapes, sizes, backgrounds, genders and fitness levels.

The trick is to undertake the studies at the most opportune moment for yourself - when you have space in your life.

If you're worried that your health isn't up to scratch, or maybe that a weak lower back will hold you back, don't let it. The rule of thumb in yoga is that we each learn our limits and we adapt yoga asana to complement our own body. That goes for yoga teachers as well.

That being said, if you do have a chronic illness or injury, or a troublesome area, you must inform your yoga instructor!

Equally, there is a lot of theory to learn so you will require a degree of mental stamina to complete your YTT.

How long does it take to become a yoga teacher?

Actually, one of the great things about becoming a yoga teacher is that you can take as long as you need.

It is very popular for aspiring yoga teachers to undertake a 200-hour YTT at a retreat. This may be in your home country or overseas. The fastest way to get qualified is to take a 15-day retreat. However, this is extremely intense and will not suit everyone's learning style. The most popular YTT retreats span three to four weeks. The schedule is packed, and usually, you will rise early for pre-breakfast meditation and /or yoga. During the day you will study all manner of philosophy, anatomy, science and teaching methodology.

If you are unable to invest your time in a full-time yoga teacher training retreat you have two other options:

- You can study part-time at a school in your neighbourhood. On average, part-time study will take three to five months to complete. But, it might take up to one year.
- Alternatively, you can become a yoga teacher online by studying a remote YTT.

More on that later!

Be realistic about how much time you can invest in your studies. It is better to spend longer on the studies but be truly committed to the practice. In contrast, trying to cram it in too fast may result in you not fully digesting your learnings.

How much does it cost to become a yoga instructor?

How long is a piece of string? The cost to become a yoga teacher really does vary considerably.

The lowest figure you should expect to pay for a 200-hour YTT is \$1,000.

If you decide to become a yoga teacher online you can find courses around this ballpark. By comparison, overseas 200-hour YTTs in India, the birthplace of yoga, generally start at \$1,000 as well. This will provide you with a humble experience in an ashram where, usually, all meals are provided. But don't forget, you'll need to cover your flights, visa costs and travel insurance.

On the other hand, if you want to study in Bali, Thailand, Europe, Costa Rica or the US, you will be looking at an inflated cost. Luxury yoga retreats overseas can charge several thousand dollars for a month-long stay which will include all your tuition plus lodging and meals. Even humble retreats will be at least a few thousand.

Once you have completed your 200-hour yoga teacher training you may wish to continue your yoga education. You can further broaden your study in an advanced 300-hour course (upon completion of this you will reach the coveted 500-hour level). Other yoga teachers choose instead to specialise and take shorter courses in a nice technique. For example, you could study a 50 or 100-hour course in your preferred yoga style. Courses can be found across ashtanga yoga, yin yoga, yoga nidra, or even aerial yoga. All of these courses will vary depending on the individual school.

It's worth shopping around.

How to become a yoga instructor

Now that you've considered your intentions and motivations, it's time to start putting a plan in action. To make this easy, we've compiled a step by step guide on exactly how to become a yoga teacher.

1. Step 1: Study and practice yoga

Some YTT schools (partially overseas retreats) do accept students who have no previous experience in yoga. On the other hand, others will ask for a minimum amount of experience. This may be six months of regular practice, or even just a few classes to cover the basics. It varies depending on the school.

Either way, we do recommend that all aspiring yoga teachers invest some time in the practice prior to taking a course. It's handy to get your head around the fundamental asanas and breath work before undertaking the intense study of a YTT. By establishing a regular practice of say, 2-3 hours a week, you are already halfway there.

You may also want to work some daily or bi-weekly meditation into your routine. That's because meditation is integral to all YTT courses. Try and mediate for even 5-10 minutes a day to get into the habit.

Any additional reading around yoga you choose to do in your own time will be beneficial, although it isn't essential.

2. Step 2: Enrol in a 200-hour YTT

Once you are confident in your practice and hungry for more yoga, choose the perfect 200-hour YTT for you. This may mean an intensive study over the course of three to four weeks at a retreat. In some cases, you can even complete the course in two weeks! You'll want to be bursting with energy, mind you.

Alternatively, you can study part-time for over six months to one year. You can even become a yoga teacher online if you need more flexibility with your studies.

The vast majority of 200-hour yoga teacher training courses combine traditional yoga styles of hatha, vinyasa and ashtanga. However, it is possible to find curricula that cater to more niche styles. If you have your heart set on, say, yin yoga, you can search for a course that covers this practice in greater depth.

3. Step 3: Register with Yoga Alliance

Before you choose your YTT, you should familiarise yourself with the benefits of studying at a Yoga Alliance accredited school. These are known as Registered Yoga Schools (RYS).

If you chose to study your YTT at an RYS then you may become a Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT). Upon completion, you can visit the Yoga Alliance website and pay the necessary fee online. You will need to familiarise yourself with the rules and regulations to ensure your certification remains valid.

Remember, it is not mandatory to register with Yoga Alliance, even if you study at an RYS. You should weigh up the pros and cons of becoming a RYT prior to studying your training course.

You will find that some schools only hire RYTs whilst others do not specify. As Yoga Alliance is headquartered in the US, aspiring teachers who wish to teach in the US should investigate their options in particular.

4. Step 4: Further your education

Congratulations, you are now officially a yoga teacher!

Once you've received your 200-hour YTT certificate, the journey doesn't end there. This ancient practice has so many layers that you could spend the rest of your life delving even deeper into yoga.

You might choose to complete further studies on your journey whilst you become a yoga instructor. It's entirely down to you. You could enrol in a 300-hour YTT, which is an advanced level of study. Again, it's not essential but having 500-hours under your belt in total will make you stand out when searching for clients.

Your other option is to study specialised courses. For example, you might want to specialise in Bikram, kundalini, restorative or even stand up paddleboard yoga.

5. Step 5: Network and promote yourself

Now that you are a fully-fledged yoga teacher, you might want to start teaching! You can apply to teach classes at your local gym or yoga centre.

Alternatively, you might want to run independent classes within your community. You can register yourself as self-employed and advertise your classes online and via public notice boards. This requires you to market yourself and understand the business of yoga. Your YTT will provide valuable insight but you will be responsible for turning this into a workable venture.

How to become a yoga teacher online?

Sounding great so far? Excellent! But, what about if you want to train as a yoga teacher but can't make it to a school or retreat?

Of course, we know that for some people, studying a YTT isn't practical. The cost of enrolling in a course at an overseas retreat isn't feasible for some. Meanwhile, for others - you might not have convenient access to a good yoga school - or perhaps your schedule doesn't allow it.

But now, thanks to the power harnessed by the internet, you can even become a yoga teacher without stepping out of your home. An online YTT follows the same principles as a YTT at a school or retreat. You will study at a pace determined by yourself. Resources provided will typically include videos and a training manual. In addition to recorded training sessions, you are required to attend live sessions with your instructor. You will complete quizzes and assignments along the way. Most online YTT courses conclude with you performing a demo class with a student.

Before you decide to become a yoga teacher online, you should research online courses in-depth. Many retreats around the world provide an online offering, so you can read reviews of the physical retreat as well as their online equivalent.

Choosing to become a yoga teacher online isn't for everyone. As with all courses, it has its pros and cons.

Pros of studying a YTT online:

- Your schedule is entirely yours. You can arrange your live sessions to suit your own requirements
- Courses follow the typical modules that you will study at a school or a retreat
- Online courses can be significantly more cost-effective
- You can study anywhere that you have an internet connection. In your local park, in your lunch break at work or whilst travelling the world

- They are currently accredited by the Yoga Alliance until the end of 2020 due to COVID19. So if becoming a RYT, online study works as well if you start your course before end of this year

Cons of studying a YTT online:

- Some students prefer having the experience of hands-on tuition and the comradeship of studying with peers
- You will need to be quite motivated to complete the self-study modules

Ultimately, the decision of whether or not to become a yoga teacher online rests with you and your future goals.

Final thoughts

We hope our ultimate guide on how to be a yoga teacher has given you clarity and understanding of the next step. Above all, we hope you feel inspired!

Before you go, why not check out our featured yoga teacher training courses and overseas retreats?