
The Business of Yoga

Maintaining integrity with your teaching
while making a living doing what you love



- **Teach for Free or Donations**- Consider establishing a weekly class where you can practice teaching to friends and family. As you build confidence in this supportive environment, you will become more comfortable in the seat of the teacher.
- **Create R'Ships With Studios**- Take time to introduce yourself to teachers, studio front desk, owners, and managers and let them know you are a teacher. Building r'ships with your teachers/studios is critical for gaining exposure as a new teacher.
- **Substitute Teach**- After establishing r'ships, inquire about the studios list of subs. Most studios maintain an updated list for when a teacher becomes sick, is traveling, or any other reason. This can be the key to exposure depending on the popularity of the class subbed.
- **Audition**- Some studios/gyms will ask you to teach your first class for no pay as an audition. Mgmt is looking to understand your teaching style. Teach a class that reflects your approach as a teacher. Authenticity is more important than fancy sequencing here.
- **Volunteer**- Most organizations will require volunteers to be YA certified. Lucky you (if you pass)! This is a wonderful way of gaining experience with local organizations. Schools, hospitals, charities, spiritual centers are ideas of places to volunteer.



Part I: Your first 2 years as a yoga teacher

Congratulations!!

You have graduated your 200 hour teacher training. Are you looking to teach? If you are, it will enrich your life in ways you could never imagine. Turning a passion like teaching yoga into a paying job and eventually a career takes a lot of time, patience and perseverance.

We have put together a list of things to do and strategies to have as a new teacher who is looking to go out into the real world, teach public/private classes, and eventually get paid for their services.

Having the right attitude, the right mentors and a vision that is both realistic AND optimistic is crucial to taking your yoga out into the world.



Before you teach your first public yoga class:

As a yoga teacher it is HIGHLY recommended (and required by most studios in the US) that you obtain liability insurance as a fitness instructor. In the unlikely event that someone is injured in your class, you want to have protection for yourself.

Yoga Journal Magazine offers a solid option for teachers:

<https://teachersplus.yogajournal.com>

Philadelphia Insurance Companies one that we've used and recommend



Take care of the basics...

First things first. You will need to get some professional pictures taken of you. This doesn't need to be anything fancy or expensive, but the pictures need to need to look professional. Any yoga studio that will hire you will need a headshot picture and a bio.

You will need at least one yoga outfit that you look and feel good in, both for this shoot and for interviews.

Have a photographer take some pictures of you in natural light, in a nice outdoor environment. Allow them to see your personality!! Have several pictures where you are looking directly into camera and smiling. Capture your “essence” in the shots. Avoid tons of pics of you in fancy poses...maybe just a few if that's something you will bring to your classes.



Write Two Bios:

You want to have one bio that is one paragraph long. Talk about your recent trainings and a few fun things about you. Make it short and sweet, emphasizing your strengths and your humility to this lifelong practice. This will likely be the bio a yoga studio puts on their website when you start teaching classes.

The second bio can be longer, going into your own personal history, and WHY you chose to become a teacher. This bio should be more personal, and inspiring. If you have overcome things like anxiety, depression, eating disorders, addictions etc. share this with the world (when you are ready). People gravitate towards a person with a story of transformation. Keep this bio short and sweet too, not much more than 300 words...it's not a full biography. ;-) This bio is good for your website and for some interviews.



Other Ideas to Increase Opportunities...

- A. Ask your yoga teacher friends. Tell them you want to talk to the manager/owner about getting on the sub list. Make it clear that you're willing to do whatever is needed at the beginning and be willing to teach for low amounts of money. Take a class and try to meet the studio manager/owner before or after class. When you meet this person for the first time, look the part (be wearing a sharp yoga outfit)
- B. Cold call yoga studios and gyms. Drop off a resume and bio IN PERSON and try to meet the manager/owner. Have a 60 second pitch that explains who you are, why you teach, and how you can help their company.
- C. Email your resume/bio/headshot to studios. Try and get a referral from your hometown teacher.
- D. On all of these...find a moment where you look this person in the eye and ASK FOR THE JOB.



A great strategy that worked for us...

1. Start teaching ASAP. The longer you wait...the longer your fears and doubts will begin to creep in to your head. Make a commitment to teach a class to your friends and family within ONE MONTH of graduating your YTT.
2. Have ONE well-rounded sequence that you teach in every class for the first 1-2 months. Keep it simple, ALL LEVELS and well-rounded. Don't add any new sequencing until you have your first one down cold. Be able to modify it to a 60, 75 and 90 min class. Keep this sequence without any high-risk poses such as deep backbends or inversions.
3. Practice this sequence in your own body at least 5x a week for 2-3 weeks. Teach it to a friend, preferably someone with some yoga knowledge. If that person has a different body type than you, even better. You will get to see how it feels in someone else's body. Watch for simple, basic alignment cues. Learn to cue less...not more



This is a crucial step...

4. Find TWO teachers in your hometown to study with. One teacher should be a senior teacher with a minimum of 5 years experience. You should really resonate with this person as a long term mentor, and take their class often. The OTHER teacher should be someone that is 1-2 years ahead of you, talented, and already having a lot of success as a young teacher. Take this person's class often and come up to them and compliment them in an authentic way. Eventually mention to them that you are also a yoga teacher. This young teacher will be flattered that other teachers are taking his/her class and will remember you. Newer teachers are ALWAYS looking for subs, and need to develop relationships with people they trust and respect. Eventually, you'll be able to sub for them, which will help open a lot of doors if your feedback is positive. Plus, you can shadow what this person is doing and it won't be as intimidating as subbing for a senior teacher with 10 years experience.



Follow in our footsteps...

5. Teach for DONATION. You're part of our lineage now!! Donation yoga is a great way to be of service to the community, while at the same time beginning to earn some money. You can teach at parks, beaches, yoga studios, community centers. Have a suggested donation that is 20% less than a class at a local studio. Have no expectations about how much money you will make. After teaching a few classes, notice NOT the total amount of \$ you are making but the amount per person. When you teach a solid class, the donations are usually reflective of that. Have friends go to it and give feedback. What worked? What didn't? How can I improve the experience?

There is NO better feeling than teaching a donation-based class, helping a lot of people, and walking away with a nice pocketful of cash. It's simple and pure and a great way to build confidence.



Be a humble, team player

6. Teach ANYWHERE that will hire you. Get regular classes ASAP. Be humble. Teach at gyms, small yoga studios, new studios. Probably better to avoid the big name studios until you are truly confident. You need a safe place to fail. Be prepared to work for \$20-30 a class. If you're looking to be more full time...aim to teach 10 classes a week as soon as possible.

7. Aim to be the most LOW MAINTENANCE yoga teacher your studio has ever had. Running a yoga studio is hard work. Show up early to every class. Be consistent with your energy and enthusiasm. Yoga teachers have the stereotype of being divas, and unreliable. Be the exact opposite of that. Keep your personal life/drama at home, unless absolutely necessary. Respect all the employees at the studio and get to know them, not just your students and the studio owner. Sub other people's classes and almost NEVER sub out your own.



Reality check...

8. Find yoga studios/gyms that are WELL-RUN BUSINESSES, and teach there. Some of these studios might be corporate and cheesy, but they will pack the room for you and get you in front of a lot of people. A yoga studio should be able to help you fill your classes, and should not expect you to bring in all of the people yourself.

Notice what they are doing right, and get experience there. You don't have to stay there forever. A 6AM class at a well-run business is easier to build than a 6 PM class at a studio that doesn't have their act together.

*Absolutely still teach at your neighborhood studio that has a great vibe and adheres to classical philosophy. You need yoga for your soul FIRST...but be willing to teach in both types of environments.



IG, FB are **SUPPLEMENTAL** tools

“We are what we repeatedly do.”---Aristotle

9. Do NOT focus much of your energy on “building a brand” in your first few years. You don’t know who you are yet. Just be a TEACHER...not an entrepreneur. Learn the value of connection over attention. Develop your voice and craft as a teacher first, and THEN think about how you want to present yourself to the world. It will flow much more easily after 1000 classes under your belt. Get really good at what you do, post on social media about your schedule etc. without having any ulterior motives, and the Universe will begin to give you signs as to when you are truly ready to market yourself in larger ways.

If you focus your energy on teaching yoga, you will get good at teaching yoga. If you focus your energy on Instagram, you will just get good at Instagram. Don’t put the cart in front of the horse.



Finally...and most importantly

10. ALWAYS continue to learn, and do whatever you need to do to maintain the passion for your own practice. You want to be teaching a lot, but avoid burnout by continuing to study with great teachers, reading inspiring literature, taking breaks when you need it, developing a home practice, and remembering that if you aren't inspired yourself...you aren't doing your students any favors.



A final word of advice...

Very few yoga teachers are able to support themselves completely in their first 2-5 years. Don't put that pressure on yourself. Keep your full-time job for a while, or if you're going ALL IN, definitely have a survival job that doesn't suck your soul away. A career as a yoga teacher is a marathon, not a sprint. We have seen so many talented teachers quit because they became discouraged early on. Had they had more realistic expectations and a better attitude, they could weathered the storms that come along in the first few years.



Part II: Marketing, Social Media, Online Yoga

Ok...so you've been teaching for a bit (in our opinion at least 500 classes). You have regular classes that are building and you are beginning to know where your strengths are and how you best resonate with your students.

It's time to think about what it is that sets you apart from other teachers. What do you want your classes to be known for? Keep it REALLY simple, and deliver that experience EVERY time you teach. For example:

"I teach a really strong sweaty class that is accessible to everyone, and incorporate philosophy, meditation, and live music in every class."



I am **MORE** interesting in person than I am on Instagram

What concepts of yoga philosophy speak to your heart? What books are you reading?

Is your sense of humor starting to come out in your classes?

How can you make people smile? Laugh? Start sharing **MORE** of yourself in your classes. Read inspirational quotes. Share stories about everyday life, and how this practice gives you tools to live more authentically. Take risks, be bold and unafraid of vulnerability. Share moments of both struggle and triumph. Then...also share these stories on social media, or on a blog etc. **You want be MORE interesting in person than you are on social media.**

Building A Class



You've got the job, congratulations! Now, how do you plant the necessary seeds to watch the class flourish?

- Introduce yourself to new students
- Get to know their injuries
- Be personable and make yourself accessible
- Be careful when subbing classes out (At first, try not to at all). Many yoga teachers do not treat it like a business and have wanderlust. Find a balance that will allow your classes to continue upwards momentum. There may become a time when you leave for retreats or trainings like this and that can actually add value to when you are to return to your homeland.
- Understand that your class numbers will fluctuate. Weather, holidays, and competition will influence class attendance and you shouldn't let this affect developing your craft.
- There are many ways to meet new students such as taking other classes at the studio, subbing, or becoming involved with the studio's social networks.



Corporate yoga/meditation classes

More and more companies are offering yoga classes in house to their employees as part of their overall wellness program. This is an awesome way to start making a higher rate for teaching classes, and oftentimes this will lead to students that will go on retreats, or schedule privates or referrals to other businesses in the area. These businesses oftentimes are used to paying top dollar to bring wellness professionals into their workspace, and there can be room to negotiate longer-term agreements.

Here's a step by step process that we used to start landing some long-term corporate clients:

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1. Teach for at least 6 months (250-ish classes) before you pursue this. You want to be comfortable and confident enough to lead a few basic sequences, and support your students. Don't shoot yourself in the foot and go in before you're ready.
 2. Ask your close friends and family members that work at companies that are young, fun, and hip if you can come in for one (not more) FREE class. Mention that companies such as Google, FB, and OWN are all doing this and that it's really impacting the company culture in a positive way.
 3. Start mentioning that you offer corporate classes to your students at the end of class. Pay particular attention to any class at 7AM or 6PM, these are prime time for professionals
 4. Have a graphic designer create a one sheet flyer, outlining your offerings, and include the scientifically proven benefits of yoga and meditation on it. Do NOT include rates.

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5. Talk to you senior teachers/mentors in YOUR hometown to see what the rates are for corporate classes. Price yourself the same (or 10% less) as your mentor that is 2-3 years ahead of you.
 6. Get an email address to a person in HR and send them a brief email with the flyer, offering to teach ONE class for free. Make that class a simple, ALL LEVELS flow that is 45-60 minutes long.
 7. Have a HIGH rate for a single class (\$200), a medium rate for 4 (\$150), and an ongoing rate (\$125) for a weekly class with a minimum of 3 months commitment at a time. **rates vary greatly by location*
 8. Encourage them to book a minimum rate of 4, and ask for it all upfront. If they do ongoing, invoice them once a month. **A \$600 invoice is not a lot of money for a corporation.*

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9. Keep the conversation very transactional, you're just doing business. Focus on the results you will get, and remove all emotions out of the discussion of money.
 10. For the first several months, keep your language very secular. Use inspiring quotes that do NOT reference Hinduism or spirituality. As you get to feel the environment out, you can bring in more philosophy and spirituality at your discretion.
 11. Dress conservatively, nothing too sexy or too hippy, and always show up 10 min early, and finish ALL your classes ON TIME. People have to get back to work.

Private Clients

- The private client niche can be a tremendous source of income for yoga teachers. Most will pay more per hour for your time than you will earn for group classes, but their schedules are less reliable.
- Remember you are a yoga teacher not a therapist (unless actually are). Having boundaries in privates will save you precious time and energy. Remember professionalism.
- Different reasons a student might want private lessons:
 - They are new to yoga and would like to learn the basics before entering a group class.
 - They are inflexible or uncoordinated and have a fear of practicing in a group setting.
 - Busy personal schedule.
 - Suffers from injuries.
 - Interested in advancing toward specific poses.