

Designing a Yoga Class

Creating a yoga class requires thoughtful planning to ensure a safe, effective, and engaging experience for participants. The class should align with students' abilities and goals while maintaining a flow that supports physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

Key Steps in Designing a Yoga Class

1. Define Your Purpose

- **Audience:** Identify your target group (beginners, intermediate, advanced, specific age group, or individuals with special needs like prenatal yoga).
- **Theme:** Choose a focus, such as stress relief, flexibility, strength, mindfulness, or seasonal energy.
- **Duration:** Decide the class length (typically 30, 60, or 90 minutes).

2. Set Your Intention

- Begin with a clear intention for the class. This could be a physical focus (e.g., hip openers), a mental goal (e.g., reducing anxiety), or a spiritual theme (e.g., cultivating gratitude).

3. Create a Sequence

- Use a balanced flow of asanas, breathwork, and meditation, tailored to the class purpose.
- Ensure smooth transitions between poses to maintain flow and minimise strain.
- Include variations or modifications to suit all levels.

4. Plan the Class Structure

Yoga classes typically follow a structure that balances movement, breath, and mindfulness. Below is an example template:

Yoga Class Structure

1. Opening (5–10 minutes)

- **Welcome:** Greet students warmly and share the class intention.
 - **Centering:**
 - Invite students to sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
 - Guide them through a few moments of deep breathing or a short meditation.
 - Optionally, chant *Om* or a mantra to set a spiritual tone.
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2. Warm-Up (10–15 minutes)

- **Gentle Movements:**
 - Focus on loosening the body and warming up major joints.
 - **Examples:**
 - Cat-Cow Pose (Marjaryasana-Bitilasana)
 - Child's Pose (Balasana)
 - Gentle spinal twists
 - **Dynamic Stretches:**
 - Sun Salutations (Surya Namaskar) or similar sequences.
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3. Core Practice (20–40 minutes)

- **Asanas:** Choose poses based on the class intention. Include a mix of:
 1. **Standing Poses:** Warrior Poses (Virabhadrasana), Triangle Pose (Trikonasana).
 2. **Balancing Poses:** Tree Pose (Vrksasana), Eagle Pose (Garudasana).
 3. **Seated Poses:** Forward Bend (Paschimottanasana), Bound Angle Pose (Baddha Konasana).
 4. **Backbends:** Cobra Pose (Bhujangasana), Camel Pose (Ustrasana).
 5. **Twists:** Seated or supine twists.
 6. **Inversions** (if appropriate): Downward Dog (Adho Mukha Svanasana), Shoulder Stand (Salamba Sarvangasana).
 7. **Core Strengtheners:** Boat Pose (Navasana).

- Provide cues for alignment and breath synchronisation.
 - Offer modifications or props for beginners and advanced variations for seasoned practitioners.
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4. Cool Down (10–15 minutes)

- **Gentle Stretches:**
 - Reclining Poses: Happy Baby Pose (Ananda Balasana), Supine Twist.
 - Hip Openers: Pigeon Pose (Eka Pada Rajakapotasana).
 - **Breathwork (Pranayama):**
 - Options: Nadi Shodhana (Alternate Nostril Breathing), Ujjayi (Ocean Breath).
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5. Closing Relaxation (5–10 minutes)

- **Savasana (Corpse Pose):**
 - Guide students into a deep relaxation.
 - Optionally, use soothing music, a calming script, or a body scan.
 - **Gratitude and Reflection:**
 - Invite students to reflect on the session or their personal intentions.
 - **Mantra or Chant:**
 - End with chanting *Om* or a closing mantra, like the *Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu*.
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Additional Tips for Class Design

1. Safety and Alignment

- Prioritise proper alignment to prevent injuries.
- Provide hands-on adjustments only with consent.

2. Energy Flow

- Gradually build energy in the class (dynamic and active poses) and taper down (calming poses and relaxation).

3. Use Props

- Include blocks, straps, bolsters, or blankets for support and modifications.

4. Incorporate Breathwork

- Synchronise movements with breath to deepen the practice and enhance focus.

5. Thematic Elements

- Infuse philosophy or themes into the session (e.g., mindfulness, resilience, or gratitude).
- Share short teachings from yogic texts, such as the *Yoga Sutras* or *Bhagavad Gita*.

6. Adapt to Your Audience

- Be prepared to adjust based on students' energy levels and needs.

Sample Class Plan: Beginner's Yoga for Relaxation (60 minutes)

1. Opening (5 minutes):

- Seated meditation with deep breaths and intention setting.
- Chanting *Om* to begin.

2. Warm-Up (10 minutes):

- Cat-Cow Pose
- Child's Pose
- Gentle spinal twists.

3. Core Practice (25 minutes):

- Standing: Mountain Pose (Tadasana), Warrior I (Virabhadrasana I), Triangle Pose.
- Balancing: Tree Pose (Vrksasana).
- Seated: Forward Fold (Paschimottanasana).
- Backbend: Bridge Pose (Setu Bandhasana).

4. Cool Down (10 minutes):

- Reclining Twist
- Supine Butterfly (Supta Baddha Konasana).

5. Closing Relaxation (10 minutes):

- Savasana with guided body scan.
- Closing mantra: *Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu.*

Conclusion

A well-designed yoga class is a journey that integrates physical movement, breathwork, and mindfulness. By tailoring the sequence to your audience, providing clear instructions, and fostering a welcoming environment, you can create a transformative experience for your students. Whether the goal is relaxation, strength, or spiritual growth, a thoughtful class structure ensures that each participant leaves feeling balanced and inspired.