



Yoga Child's Pose - Photo by Laura Juarez

What to Expect in Your First Yoga Class

By Janet Hennard, E-RYT500/C-IAYT

Are you looking for reasons to try yoga in 2020? The inspiring list of yoga benefits includes increased strength and flexibility, improved posture, better sleep, greater peace of mind, and increased ability to handle stress. But if you have never attended a yoga class, you may be a bit anxious about that first time. It helps to know what to expect before you go.

Yoga Etiquette

You probably won't see etiquette rules posted on a yoga wall, but the unwritten customs are all about respect for others:

- It is customary to arrive 10-15 minutes early so you can settle in without disturbing others. Some studios lock the door when class begins, so being late means you will miss the class.
- When you enter the studio, observe the protocol. Some studios expect students to enter quietly, come onto their mats, and wait silently for the class to begin. In others, chatter among students before class is acceptable.
- Mobile devices are not appropriate in a yoga class.
- Some view their personal yoga mats as their sacred place. Avoid stepping on them!

- Heavy scents are not appropriate in a yoga class. Wearing deodorant is fine!

Your Safety, Your Responsibility

You take primary responsibility for staying safe; your teacher will help. Follow these guidelines:

- Before class starts, let your teacher know about any physical or emotional issues you are experiencing that may affect your yoga practice. It is actually okay to do this before every class; teachers sometimes forget details about each student's issues.
- If you experience pain in any yoga pose, release it immediately. Also, if a pose seems inappropriate for your particular physical issue, do not push yourself. Your teacher can provide modifications that will suit you or may offer an alternate pose.

Finding the Appropriate Class

Unless you are confident you are ready for a strenuous class, you may want to initially avoid classes such as Ashtanga yoga, hot yoga, and power yoga. Start instead with beginner yoga, gentle yoga, slow flow, or chair yoga.

How You Will Feel

Your first class may likely be a transformative experience:

- You will almost certainly feel more relaxed, possibly very deeply relaxed, after your first class.
- You may walk away with a strong sense of confidence and well-being.
- You may be delightfully aware of the marvelous connection of your body, mind, and spirit.
- You may experience a deep spiritual connection that motivates you to come again and again.

Even if you have only partial awareness of yoga benefits with your first class, you will be delighted to learn they are increasingly available to you with consistent practice.

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Janet Hennard, MA, E-RYT500, C-IAYT, is a registered yoga teacher and certified yoga therapist who teaches classes in the Dallas area. She also offers private yoga sessions for those with special needs.

