



## WHAT TYPE OF YOGA DO YOU WANT TO STUDY?

Kind of overwhelming, isn't it? So many types of yoga exist! From completely passive, relaxing to incredibly demanding physically. It is crucial to remember that not all types of yoga are the same and not all teachers are the same. If your first experience is not good, *keep looking!*

Actually, the idea that not all yoga is the same has an interesting origin. Almost all of the yoga you find today originates from one person: Tirumalai Krshnamacharya, a Yoga Master born in India in 1888. He taught most of the greatest masters of our time such as Indra Devi, K. Pattabi Jois, B.K.S. Iyengar, T.K.V. Desikachar. All of whom went on to found very *different* types of yoga.

Why is this important? What this tells us is this one incredible teacher taught his students based on their needs. They all went on to found completely different types of yoga. In other words, each of his students had different needs that then went on to teach a type of yoga that suited THEM.

You *must* remember that as you go out to find a yoga for you. You will find it.

I will give you an overview here to get you started and, if you need more information, you can do two things for more info: search the internet and call the studio to find out.

**\*\*\*MOST IMPORTANT NOTE:** *If you are a beginner, please, please find a yoga class that teaches the poses. A class that actually shows you, slowly and breaking it down, how to do the poses so you can learn how to do them safely before entering a flow or power class.*

(NOTE: I share my personal opinion here. Realize that while it does come from almost 30 years of yoga study experience, it is just my experience.)

**Hatha Yoga:** Truthfully, a bit of a misnomer because this term refers to most of the yoga out in the world. If there are postures and a focus on the breath, it's Hatha Yoga. All of the yogas I mention on this handout are Hatha Yoga. But the term has become the catch-all way to describe yoga that doesn't fit any other category.

**Pros:** Tends to be a gentler form of yoga. Allows for more creativity with the teacher.

**Cons:** Varies so widely, you really won't know what you are getting until you try.

*Restorative Yoga:* The bathtub of yoga classes. While there are some variations, in a traditional restorative yoga class, you hold poses by lying over blankets and bolsters, totally supported so all you need to do is completely relax and release.

**Pros:** Probably the most important practice in this day and age. We all need to periodically stop and be fully present; to learn how to let go completely.

**Cons:** Frankly, not many. If you are someone who tends toward sluggishness, you don't want to do this one very often.

*Iyengar Yoga:* Iyengar flows down from B.K.S. Iyengar. Mr. Iyengar's genius was the alignment of the body. He created the props we use today (block, strap, blanket, bolster) in order to help his students' bodies get into poses safely.

**Pros:** You will really learn the poses. These classes are start and stop. You see the pose from your teacher, do the pose as the teacher walks around and helps you. Excellent for students needing more help due to injury or other physical limitation.

**Cons:** To be perfectly honest, this type of practice attracts teachers who can lean toward the control-freakish angle. Please understand, not all! This is my lineage of preference and I adore it, but I am careful with whom I study. Just attend a class and see how you feel.

## VARIETIES OF POWER YOGA

Power Yoga has taken over the US. Please keep in mind, there is a reason Power Yoga has become popular. It feeds into the Type A, frenetic lifestyle we are all so comfortable with living. Having said that, it might be the perfect class for you if you tend toward a sluggish physicality. Just really think about what you need in your life and is more speed really what that is?

*Ashtanga Yoga:* This practice is where it all began. K. Pattabi Jois designed this practice to direct the testosterone of 12 year old boys. Really. It's a vigorous, flow practice that follows a specific form each and every time with Sun Salutations as the base series.

**Pros:** Following the same series helps you go deeper into your practice each time. With the right teacher, this practice can be deeply spiritual.

**Cons:** Following the same series can be dull after awhile. It is also a vigorous exercise so if you need quiet and calming, this is not your practice.

*Bikram Yoga:* A vigorous flow of 26 poses that is done in extreme heat.

**Pros:** Following the same series helps you go deeper into your practice each time.

**Cons:** Let me count the ways. The series, according to its founder, Choudhury Bikram, flows in a specific way with each pose preparing the body for the next one. As an exercise physiologist, I don't agree. These poses can be unsafe to an older, injured body, and they are done without much teaching of alignment. The heat also encourages you to move more deeply than you should so you can easily injure yourself in the process.

*Core Power Yoga:* Core Power came from students of Bikram's breaking off to do their own thing. Pros and cons are essentially the same. Except, again my professional opinion, their teacher training leaves much to be desired. Their teachers are known for teaching huge classes and not taking time to make sure students are safe.

*Power Yoga:* Any practice that is based on the Ashtanga-type series. It will be a workout.

**Pros:** I suppose you get a workout from it. But I encourage you to NOT use your yoga as a workout, get that in another way. Use your yoga to balance your body and mind.

**Cons:** My biggest concern is teachers not slowing down enough to actually teach the poses, to learn how to do the poses so when they begin to do the series, students can do them safely.

*Vinyasa Yoga:* Any practice that is a continuous flow of one pose after another, following the pace of the breath.

**Pros:** Moving the body in a steady way, following your breath is lovely.

**Cons:** Again, varies widely, so check out the teacher. You want to be sure the teacher slows enough that they actually teach the poses so students can be safe as they flow.

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Let's practice yoga!