



WHAT YOGA CLASS FOR ME?

BY KAITLYN VITTOZZI

“Yoga postures are just one kind of yoga – there is breathing, meditation, ethics and more.”

If you are new to yoga it can be overwhelming figuring out which class to go to when you are looking at your local studio or gym's schedule. Sometimes class descriptions are in English, and sometimes even more challenging, Sanskrit. So what do these class titles mean? The short answer is, it depends! Since yoga has been around for thousands of years, many lineages and varieties have emerged. Many modern yoga teachers can't agree on it. I remember sitting in a meeting at a gym pre-Pandemic with a manager and three other yoga teachers trying to stream-line the descriptions so participants knew what to expect. We were all trained at different schools, so it was hard to find common ground early on – but we did know that our class participants were benefitting from class, whatever we called it.

The intention of this article is to help you discern which class might be for you by explaining what many popular class formats might entail. There are new brands popping up around the world pseudo-regularly. The history and origins of each style is rich, so much so that this entire article cannot do them justice. To really do a deep dive I would recommend taking a course on the Yoga Sutras to better understand how yoga postures came to be.

As you read through these, I encourage you to find a balanced approach. If you are a runner or do a lot of HIIT training you may be called naturally to Power classes, because you can do them, but push yourself out of your comfort zone and do some gentle classes, your

body appreciates variety. Likewise, if you are always taking it easy, let your yoga class be a place to invite some challenge into your movement practice. Restorative Yoga: This is like a supported nap. The perfect way to take a break from a hectic lifestyle, don't expect any calorie burn here. The instructor will put you in a restful, supported position (for example, lying on your back with a bolster under your knees) and let you relax for several minutes at a time before moving to a different posture. These restful breaks are great for your nervous system. The goal is actually to feel not much of anything but supported. If you have a busy brain you may find this challenging. If you can relax into the present moment mentally, your muscles will relax.

Yin Yoga: Like Restorative yoga, but with more spice. You will typically stay in postures for several minutes, but there will be more of a stretching sensation. This is good to practice finding moderation – maybe you could sit down, reach for your toes and find them – but could you do it for eight minutes? If not, you can challenge yourself to back off and find a more sustainable edge. Great if you like to ease into or deepen postures and practice that feeling of letting go. Gentle Yoga: A great way to practice slowing down, but with more movement and blood flow than restorative or Yin. Classes may include range of motion and breathing exercises. Expect stretching, and slower transitions between postures with the possibility of some balance work, and rest at the end of class.

Hatha Yoga: Take time to learn yoga postures. The instructor will likely take time to break down postures step by step, some will be gentle and some may build more strength. Expect a mix of postures on the floor and standing with rest at the end.

Vinyasa Yoga: This is a class where one posture generally flows to the next, challenging your core and balance. Expect standing and balance postures with rest at the end. It can be great practice in transitioning as well as breath control. Expect rest at the end. Power Yoga: This will be like Vinyasa for some sections of class in that you are moving rather quickly, sometimes even practicing just one breath in the movement and then moving to the next pose. You will also hold challenging postures for an extended period (think, isometric hold) to build strength and balance. Expect rest at the end.

Candlelit Yoga: This could be any of the above styles, but in a dark candlelit room. Designed to tune out the extra sensory stimulation and create an experience where you are more focused on yourself and what you are feeling to help you unwind.

Goat/Puppy/Alpaca Yoga: Let go of what you think a yoga class is supposed to be like in terms of exercise and relaxation, and just enjoy your time in nature. Goats and puppies may crawl all over you, you may stop to feed the animals. Connecting with animals (and the dirt if you're outside) feeds our need for touch, connection and grounded-ness.



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Trauma Sensitive Yoga: If you have experienced something traumatic in your lifetime, or even dislike a bossy instructor, this format may be for you. Instructors should be trained in invitational language to let you explore the yoga postures in an intuitive, mindful way that gives you room to back away if anything feels too intense

or disturbing. As a reminder, you are always in control in any yoga class.

Hot Yoga: Really any style of yoga can be done in a hot room, but traditionally Hot Yoga will have a set series of challenging poses you do in a room 95-105° Fahrenheit.

Feel like you don't want to move at all? Yoga postures are just one kind of yoga – there is breathing, meditation, ethics and more. Don't give up, reach out to me at PenfieldYogaTherapy.Com and we can point you in the right direction.