

HOW TO CHOOSE A YOGA TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAM: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

PRACTICAL SISTERLY ADVICE: WHAT I WISH I HAD BEEN TOLD
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Choosing a teacher training program is an investment in yourself that yields lifelong transformation physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. As such, the program you choose ultimately contributes to the direction of your growth. We encourage you to look beyond surface factors and explore the depth of each program you are considering. Before choosing a program, reflect upon these essential elements.

1. **Mission & Vision:** What are the Mission and Vision of the program? Is the heart of the program in alignment with your spirit?
2. **Lead Trainer:** Yoga Alliance requires that each program has a designated lead trainer, and there may or may not be co-trainers. Who is the lead trainer? How long has the lead trainer been teaching Yoga? How long have they been teacher trainers? Is the Yoga working for the lead trainer and teachers?
3. **Program History:** How long has the program been contributing to the Yoga world? History matters – some programs have made longstanding contributions to the Yoga world in offering teacher trainings.
4. **Yoga Alliance Approval & Certification:** Is the program approved by Yoga Alliance? How do you become certified through the program in the journey from student to teacher? Yoga Alliance requires 180 contact hours – how many non-contact hours are required outside of the program in order for you to gain certification – e.g., 10 hours vs. 100 hours?
5. **Learning & Teaching Styles:** What style of learning will be emphasized? What is the paradigm of teaching methodology? Is this survival learning or sacred learning? Is it authoritarian or non-authoritarian?
6. **Curriculum & Syllabus:** Do the curriculum & syllabus fulfill the requirements that are set by Yoga Alliance? What emphasis is placed on the physical versus non-physical components of Yoga? How is teaching proper alignment addressed? Is physical alignment taught in isolation, or are both physical and energetic alignment considered?
7. **Self-Study:** How does the program teach you to deepen your own self-awareness through conscious self-inquiry? How is this process facilitated by the teacher?
8. **Community:** Does the program create a safe space for its students? Is there a strong yet supportive container for your learning? Will you be taught how to “hold space” in a healthy way for others? How many students are in the training, and does that support your learning style?
9. **Communication:** What emphasis is placed on Communication Skills? Is the methodology in line with the way you intend to live your life? For instance, are they employing Nonviolent Communication (NVC), or a similar methodology?
10. **Logistics:** While there is never a perfectly ideal time to pursue self-study, how well do the logistics (e.g., cost, location, schedule, syllabus) of the program work for you? Is the program residential (e.g., destination-based), or a local program? Are you able to invest & be present with yourself and the program in consideration of your current situation? What is the length of the program? What is the financial investment? Are scholarships available?



Truths about Yoga, Practice, & Teaching:

1. Not all yoga teachers are the same, nor should they be – Yoga celebrates our individuality! Invest time in finding a teacher whose embodiment of yoga inspires and resonates with your spirit.
2. Not all yoga schools are created equally, even if they are approved by Yoga Alliance. Review the elements described above while equally listening to your heart to guide your choice.
3. Not all Yoga Alliance certified yoga teachers have the foundational knowledge to be leading others in a practice that is physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. We can only teach what we know and that takes time and practice. Deep inner work is necessary to teach from a place of embodiment and self-knowledge.
4. Yoga is not a closed, one size fits all, recipe to follow.
5. There is an expansive depth of intelligence to this ancient technology that requires more than 200 hours of study. Your first YTT is only the beginning of life long learning and practice. This marks the beginning.

What is Required to Teach the Sacred Content of Yoga?

Teaching minimally requires emotional maturity, self-inquiry, inner mastery of one's shadow self, fundamental integrity in line with the Yamas and Niyamas (the foundational guidelines offered in the Yoga Sutras), and knowledge of how to practice the Yoga poses safely and uniquely for your body.

Teachers have a shared responsibility to elevate the profession of Yoga whereby we all meet this minimum standard.

As you choose your yoga program, reflect on whether the program and its trainers embody these elements, while also preparing you as the student to create a life dedicated to learning and embodiment as you step into the seat of the teacher.

To bridge this transition from student to teacher, I asked veteran teacher training and international yoga leader, [Emily Perry](#), based in Santa Cruz, California, what a teacher training program should highlight. She said,

"A yoga teacher training program should graduate qualified and knowledgeable teachers that understand:

- *The role of a yoga teacher, and the importance of the container we create for students to feel safe.*
- *The path of practice as the place from which we share and offer yoga.*
- *The heart of the teachings: what are these fundamental practices asking of us?*
- *Alignment and form as a path to aligning the heart, mind and energy body with our intention and deeper meanings for practice. How can we align with what we are called to bring forth in the world?"*

How Does Alchemy of Yoga Fulfill the Responsibility of Teaching?

Over ten years ago I founded my yoga school, Alchemy of Yoga. It took me 5 years to develop the training program. At the time, my specialty in the corporate world was Training and Development so adult learning was not new to me. With a highly organized approach to education, we take great pride in offering sacred learning in a comprehensive and methodical way to over 20 graduating classes.

Look around; there are many conscientious yoga schools with this kind of depth of experience. Choose wisely.

As you make your decision about which YTT, consider substance over style which isn't always easy in today's competitive social media driven yoga environment. As one of 37 million Americans practicing Yoga according to Yoga Journal and Yoga Alliance decide based on depth, experience, and heart. Love yourself, love your day, love your life!- Silvia