

Get paid to teach yoga!

FabJob Guide to
**Become a
Yoga Teacher**



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Contents

About the Author	7
About the Editor	7
1. Introduction	8
1.1 The Desire to Teach	8
1.2 Yoga Then and Now	10
1.3 Benefits of This Career	11
1.4 Inside this Guide	14
2. The Yoga Environment	16
2.1 All About Yoga	16
2.1.1 Yoga as Philosophy	16
2.1.2 Yoga Styles	20
2.1.3 Ways to Specialize	25
2.2 Planning a Class	33
2.2.1 Select The Poses	34
2.2.2 Sequence the Poses	47
2.2.3 Incorporate a Theme	50
2.2.4 Opening the Class	53
2.2.5 The Apex Pose	55
2.2.6 Ending the Class	56
2.3 Teaching a Class	62
2.3.1 Your Teaching Style	62
2.3.2 Giving Verbal Instruction	64
2.3.3 Demonstrating Poses	67
2.3.4 Using Props	69
2.3.5 Observing Your Students	71
2.3.6 Correcting Mistakes	74
2.3.7 Responding to Your Class	78
2.3.8 Yoga Safety	80

3. Develop Your Skills	85
3.1 Skills You Will Need	85
3.1.1 Communication Skills	85
3.1.2 Interpersonal Skills	88
3.1.3 Sanskrit: The Language of Yoga	89
3.2 Preparing to Teach	94
3.2.1 Daily Yoga Practice	94
3.2.2 Study Yoga on Your Own	96
3.2.3 Find a Mentor and Assist Them	99
3.2.4 Volunteer to Teach for Free	100
3.3 Instructor Training	103
3.3.1 Yoga Teaching Certification	104
3.3.2 Style-Specific Training	106
3.3.3 Yoga Conferences	111
4. Getting Hired	113
4.1 Types of Employers	113
4.1.1 Yoga Studios	113
4.1.2 Fitness Centers	115
4.1.3 Corporations	119
4.1.4 Retirement Communities	121
4.1.5 Educational Institutions	123
4.2 Advertised Positions	124
4.2.1 Where to Find Ads	124
4.2.2 Job-Hunting Materials	125
4.2.3 The Interview	128
4.3 Other Ways to Break in	131
4.3.1 Substitute Teaching	131
4.3.2 Initiating Contact Yourself	132
4.4 Getting Paid	135
4.4.1 Typical Payment Arrangements	135
4.4.2 Getting It in Writing	138

5. Starting Your Own Yoga Studio	140
5.1 Your Business Concept	140
5.1.1 Define Your Business Idea	140
5.1.2 Creating a Business Plan	143
5.2 Getting Started	148
5.2.1 Start-Up Costs	148
5.2.2 Legal Structure	153
5.2.3 Insurance	155
5.2.4 Taxes	159
5.3 Choosing a Location	160
5.3.1 The Basics of Space Selection	160
5.3.2 Create a Home Studio	161
5.3.3 Renting Studio Space	163
5.4 Designing Your Studio	166
5.4.1 A Distinct Environment	167
5.4.2 Lighting	167
5.4.3 Cleanliness	168
5.4.4 Temperature	168
5.4.5 Color	169
5.4.6 Sound	169
5.5 Ways to Find Clients	170
5.5.1 Offer a Free Introductory Class	170
5.5.2 Distribute Flyers	171
5.5.3 Write a Press Release	172
5.5.4 Hold an Open House	175
5.5.5 Paid Advertising	176
5.5.6 Build a Website	176
5.5.7 Networking and Self-Promotion	179
5.6 Setting Your Fees	180
5.6.1 Factors That Will Affect Your Price	181
5.6.2 Ways to Charge for Your Services	181
5.6.3 Methods of Payment	184
6. Conclusion	186

1. Introduction

Welcome to the **FabJob Guide to Become a Yoga Teacher**. You are embarking on a journey towards a career that, due to its very nature, will allow you to express yourself uniquely and more completely. Yoga enables us to answer very real questions about our health, self-awareness, and a meaningful lifestyle. Why not make it part of your day's work?

The Sanskrit word "*hatha*" is the joining of the two opposite words of sun and moon. The root of the word yoga is "*yuj*", which means to yoke. This means that "hatha yoga" (the most commonly practiced form of yoga) involves the yoking or joining of opposites and the harmony that is found on the middle path between them. A man who practices yoga is called a "yogi", and a woman who practices yoga is referred to as a "yogini".

Yoga teaches us to live in the inner and outer worlds more harmoniously through developing a high degree of self-awareness. You will teach your students to quiet their minds and to find a degree of **mental peace and relief** from the mental chatter that they hear most of their waking moments.



Being a fledgling instructor presents many exciting challenges and rewards, and it raises many questions. This guide will answer them for you and save you hours of experimentation as you read what has worked for seasoned instructors. We will cover topics from acquiring insurance, and props used in class, to how to write a lesson plan to guide you through your first classes.

1.1 The Desire to Teach

It would be hard for most yoga instructors to pinpoint the exact day and place that they began envisioning themselves no longer as a student of yoga, but rather as the teacher. How did it happen for you?

Perhaps it begins with admiring your own teacher, and recognizing that he or she is making a difference in students' lives by guiding them into and through the ever-deepening layers of yoga. Likely you have been doing yoga for several years, taking classes weekly and practicing at home.

It is safe to say at this point that the power and the transformational magic of yoga have taken you to a place of self-knowledge, and you feel a strong need to learn more. You may be experiencing "*tapas*," which is a **burning enthusiasm**, and a glowing commitment to becoming a yoga instructor. You may want to enable others to experience some of the joy that you have found in yoga.

Anthony Bogart, a certified teacher-trainer for Anusara Yoga, says a yoga student is ready to teach "...when the urge to do so becomes irresistible, and/or when the people in her community are drawn by the magnetism of her being to request that she share the techniques which have led her to this state of being."

Other **signs that you are ready to teach** yoga include:

- A consistent self-practice
- When others see or recognize your level as advanced
- When a teacher tells you so
- When you have assisted a teacher with his or her class

A true measure of a teacher is not technical skill, though that is important. Rather it is how that person makes the connection to the full range of human experience, combined with the commitment to turn toward the best in people.

Determining your readiness to teach is ultimately your decision and if you apply Anthony Bogart's observation, you know when the time is right. You will continue to study and practice and learn once you have taken the first step and taught. The first step is your choice.

When asked about her feelings of readiness to teach, yoga instructor Sarah Hutchinson recalled a time when her father (who she calls her most important teacher) finally said to her, "**Why not you?**" This is such good advice—don't doubt your own abilities. You can always expand your training as you go.

1.2 Yoga Then and Now

In the '60s and '70s there was only a small core of yoga students and teachers. If you asked the average person then what yoga was, they might describe someone practicing “**pretzel poses on a bed of nails**”. Today yoga is at a zenith in its popularity. There are all different styles of yoga, and one can take a yoga class at any gym or in even the smallest town from California to Maine.

Opportunities to teach yoga abound in this fertile environment. According to data released in 2008 by the magazine Yoga Journal, about 15.8 million people, or 6.9 percent of U.S. adults, now practice yoga. 18.3 million Americans say they are very interested in yoga, and over 9 million non-practitioners surveyed intended to try yoga within the next 12 months.

“I’ve watched (yoga) grow steadily over 25 years,” says yoga instructor Cindy Dollar, who started teaching in 1985. “People who wouldn’t have thought about yoga 10 years ago now do because they know other people who do it. It’s not just alternative anymore.”

Why the sudden rise in popularity and therefore a demand for yoga instructors? One reason for yoga’s increased popularity is that yoga has broadened its scope with many different styles, and is meeting the needs of a more diverse range of people, from students who want a physical and strenuous class, to those who are seeking the spiritual side of practice.

Yoga’s increased status in the public eye is partly due to the recognition of its benefits. The increased flexibility and strength yoga offers is attracting the large “baby boomer” population, a demographic with money to spend and increasing leisure time. People who have stressful careers are experiencing how yoga helps them become healthier and more relaxed. Young mothers who are meeting the demands of parenthood and work are also looking for a proven way to stay healthy and fit.

Yoga is now offered in **nearly every gym and health club** as an alternative to aerobic classes and weight training. Yoga classes are attended by a wide range of ages including people in their 20s and into their 60s, and beyond. There are special yoga classes for both children and seniors as well, and yoga is even making its way into the public school system in California.

“Yoga is evolving to meet cultural needs,” says Yoga Alliance president Hansa Knox Johnson. “We have people who have different kinds of energies. Some of them are go-go, some are kind of more restless, some are more sedentary. So different yogas are appropriate for different kinds of people.”

This guide will help you learn about and choose a style of instruction that suits you and meets the needs of your **body, mind, and spirit**.

1.3 Benefits of This Career

“In a... yoga class I feel excited to live, energetic about my life and a deep love for myself. Teaching offers me the challenge and the joy of self-discovery through the process of yoga. It allows me to contribute to society in a way that makes me feel good. I want to offer my students what my teachers so graciously offered me. I want to feel good and love myself. Most importantly, I want to help other people feel this way too.”

— *Annie Jacob, Yoga Instructor*

Helping People

For thousands of years, yoga has been a tool to open the body and develop clarity in the mind as well. In teaching the practice of yoga you will teach your students to focus on their breath as a bridge between the inner and the outer world.

Through the practice of asana, or postures, you will be helping people to find their inner reality and to touch a **deep sense of unity** with all life. You will be providing your students with the opportunity to experience a sense of joy and peace that may not be available to them in any other situation in their lives.

By reminding your students to observe their reactions to the poses and the breathing exercises you can guide them into greater self-awareness. Knowing that you are presenting your students with a situation where the possibility of positive change is ever-present is exciting.

As veteran yoga instructor Sandra Summerfield Kozak said in the book *Yogi Bare*, “Yoga works to create better self-esteem, to lessen or eliminate the effects of fear, to create better health and a general sense of well-being, and to strengthen our ability to relate to others, our planet, and ourselves.”

As a yoga instructor **you provide a great service** to your students. You will be in a situation where you can see a visible difference in the faces of the people who first walk into class and the ones who leave. As a teacher your intention will inevitably be to help people find their own inner truth just as you have as a student. Your main task is to present the yoga you know as authentically as you can while teaching from your heart and learned skills simultaneously. When you do this, you will see the transformation gradually happening in your students.

Teaching yoga affords you the chance to meet a wide cross section of people in your community. Yoga students are first and foremost people who are interested in helping themselves, exploring their own potential, and often people who are interesting. If they stay with you over a period of time you have a wonderful opportunity to get to know them in a way that you may have not had otherwise.

Communities often grow up around yoga classes, affording students to spend time together in a meaningful way outside of the demands that their normal routine places on them. You, as a yoga teacher, have the ability to be an integral part of that community.

Ongoing Learning

Teaching yoga is a continuum that is tied to your own growth in yoga. You will find that as you begin teaching, you will want more and more experience and knowledge for yourself. The more yoga is in your own body, mind, and spirit, the more you will have to teach your students.

Therefore, by becoming an instructor you will also have become a better student of yoga. As a yoga instructor you step into a nurturing and sustaining loop that enables you to grow and learn as you teach. The essence of yoga will come through your teachings and will grow as you do. As your experience increases, it will make you a better teacher.

Teaching is an ever-evolving learning process. As Judith Lasater has said in her latest book called *30 Essential Yoga Poses*, teaching yoga is a satisfying process that will remain “delightfully unfinished.” The more you teach, the more you will learn, and the more you learn, the more you will want to share with your students!

You are embarking on a career where **continued learning is integral to the job** and where you may feel that you, more than anyone in your class, are learning the most! I thank my students often for the chance to learn through teaching them. And every time I take a workshop or attend a teachers’ conference I come back to teaching with renewed vigor and enthusiasm for sharing what I have learned.

Dynamics and Diversity

There is opportunity for **great diversity** in teaching yoga. No two classes are ever the same. No two students are the same. There is opportunity for exploration and experimentation. You will try ways of approaching the instruction of the postures, re-think what you have done and save that which works and try a new approach to what is not effective.

You will learn to think on your feet. A good teacher is a person who can respond to the moment and the challenges that each individual presents. There will never be two classes the same and there will never be a class that has predictability built into it. As a good teacher you will take the knowledge you have, combine it with a will to serve the student and the essence of yoga, and apply it by being 100 percent available and open to the demands of the moment. When the Iyengar Association assesses students who wish to become certified teachers, they look for knowledge and skill, but also the ability to respond to individual student needs as they arise.

Income Potential

How much income you generate through your teaching depends on you. Teaching yoga can provide you with an income that is very specific to how much you are willing to teach and how large your classes are.

In an interview posted on Salary.com, yoga instructor Lauren Fawcett says she charges \$10 a class per person, and offers private lessons for **\$75 an hour**. "I estimate that the full-time yoga teacher teaches 14 classes a week," she said. "That instructor will earn about \$29,000 a year. A fair range would be \$30,000 to \$40,000." You can read the entire interview online at:

Dream Job: Yoga Instructor

<http://www.salary.com/Articles/ArticleDetail.asp?part=par307>

There are several excellent instructors in the country who make **well over \$100,000 a year**, and some who make even more. What you do make depends upon your talent for teaching, your tenacity and business abilities and a high degree of perseverance.

Personal Freedom

As a yoga instructor you have a **high degree of autonomy**. Once the class begins and your students are in their places, what you say and do is totally up to you. Even if you are employed by a studio, the owner of that establishment will leave the decisions of teaching completely up to your judgment. There may be requirements as to weekly themes for classes or even a dress code, but once you are hired to teach, the rest is up to you. If you teach at a health club or gym, the group fitness director will rely on your expertise. And, if you have organized your own classes or set up your own studio, the only restrictions come from your own sense of whether your students enjoy the classes and learn from them.

Creating a business as a yoga teacher gives you **freedom to set your hours** and decide which days you will teach and which days you will not. You can frequent the

places that others can go only on weekends, and go there when the crowds have gone home. You can decide what your priorities are and follow them, rather than doing as a boss's needs dictate.

As with every situation there are some demands on your time. Although you are not dictated to as far as your employer's needs, there is the element of students' schedules. You must be available to teach when other people in the 9-to-5 work force are free. That means teaching on weekends and evenings or early mornings. Health clubs and yoga studios often have six o'clock evening classes and six o'clock morning classes. People love to begin their weekend with a yoga class as well. That leaves you teaching at those times, but if you love what you are doing, it's hardly an inconvenience.

1.4 Inside this Guide

The **FabJob Guide to Become a Yoga Teacher** welcomes you to the world of yoga and gives you a wealth of information you can use to become certified to teach, become employed to teach, to open your own studio, or develop your own rental space for teaching. In addition this guide will present helpful advice on how to develop your own following and maintain the momentum to allow you to teach for the rest of your life if you desire to do so.

Chapter 2, **The Yoga Environment**, will introduce you to the world of yoga, and help you find the yoga style and specialty that is right for you. It then walks you through the steps for planning a well-balanced and well-sequenced class, from the opening, to the apex, to closing. We give 50 yoga poses to select from, explain how and when to use them, give a rating of how hard they are to master, as well as tips to adjust the poses for beginners. Then we jump right into how to teach a class, including guidelines for using props, giving verbal instruction, correcting with voice and hands, and how to teach a safe class for all levels.

Chapter 3, **Develop Your Skills**, takes you right to the essence of teaching skills, including a brief introduction to the Sanskrit language so you can use it in your classes. It explains the steps you'll take to prepare yourself to teach, such as assisting established teachers, teaching free classes for practice, and studying on your own. We'll show you how to select a training class if you choose to become certified, and explain some of the more common style-specific training from Iyengar to Anusara to Bikram.

Chapter 4, **Getting Hired**, will give you valuable advice on who hires yoga instructors, what the work environment is like, and how to successfully approach and break in to each market. We cover looking for teaching jobs from resumes to cold-calls to offering to substitute for your favorite teacher. Once you've got their attention, we'll talk about what to expect from the interview so you arrive poised and prepared.

Chapter 5, **Starting Your Own Yoga Studio**, is for anyone who is ready to teach classes on their own. We introduce you to a range of options, from teaching classes in your living room to opening a full-service studio. We'll cover the components of business planning, the all-important issue of insurance, and how to choose a location for your classes, from renting a church basement to sharing space with a dance studio. We'll also cover the vital elements that go into developing the right environment to teach in with light, sound, and temperature. We will discuss inexpensive methods of marketing your classes in your community, including the techniques that have worked best for our experts. From putting up a website to throwing a grand opening party, you'll get valuable advice on how to get people talking about you and your studio. Finally we'll go over the importance of setting fees that work, and the factors that go into setting them.

Throughout the guide you'll find sample forms and other items you can adapt and use to teach your own classes, as well as rare and valuable advice from our team of yoga experts who contributed to this guide.

Teaching yoga is exciting and an excellent opportunity to grow personally while pursuing one of the best ways in the world to make a living and be of service at the same time. You are about to embark on a journey that can last a lifetime, if you want it to. **Let's get started!**