



How to Pick the Right YTT For You!

There are a lot of Yoga Teacher Training programs out there, with new ones popping up every day. Figuring out which ones are good (and which ones aren't!) can be really hard, especially if you're not even sure where to start!

To help, we've put together a list of things you can think about while you're doing your research. It will help you clarify what's important, so that you can confidently choose the right program, and get the most out of your investment of time and money!

We hope you find this guide helpful and we wish you an amazing Yoga Teacher Training experience. Let's get started!

Question #1: Do I want to study at home while working around my regular schedule?

Or do I want to travel somewhere exotic and immerse myself in my yoga studies for several weeks?

One of the first things you can think about to help narrow your choices is whether you'd prefer an Immersion training (also known as a Destination or Residential training) or a Local training (also known as a Studio training).

Immersion training is full-on. You live, breathe, and study yoga for several weeks straight. You take a break from the demands and responsibilities of your "normal" life. And, you probably travel somewhere exotic to do it all. If those things are interesting to you, then Immersion training is probably a good fit.

Local training is less intense. The most common format is to study at a local studio every weekend (or most weekends) over several months. Many programs take somewhere from 3 to 6 months to complete. If you feel that getting away from home and work for 3-4 weeks would be hard for you, or if you like the idea of staying at home rather than traveling for your training, then a Local training at a nearby studio might be a good fit.

Still not sure? Then take this quick little quiz. Every time one of the statements below applies to you, check the box next to it. When you're done, you'll probably have a good idea of which type of training is the best fit for you!

Immersion Training

- I want to take a deep dive into yoga – yoga all day, every day, for several weeks
- I love the idea of going on an adventure... somewhere exotic
- I think my daily life commitments will make it hard to fully commit to training over several months at a local studio
- I'm in some type of life transition, or want to make some type of breakthrough or transformation, or want to gain more clarity and direction, and I think a yoga immersion would help
- I think it would be cool to make new friends with people from all over the world

Local Training

- I think it will be hard or impossible to get away for weeks at a time
- I'd feel safer or more comfortable doing my training from my usual home setting
- I think cost might be a factor (Local training has no room and board costs, so it's usually less than Immersion training)
- I'm willing to commit to several months of study on top of my normal daily life responsibilities
- Traveling abroad and meeting new people as part of my training is not that important to me

Question #2: Am I OK studying with only one or two teachers? Or would I prefer to study with a school, with a full faculty of teachers?

Another thing you can do to narrow your choices is to think about whether you'd rather train with only one teacher, or with a full school that has a larger faculty.

Trainings that are led by one or two teachers are usually cheaper than trainings that are led by a school with a faculty of multiple teachers, so if you're on a tight budget, that might be the only option for you. The tradeoff is that you're only getting the expertise and wisdom of one or two teachers. There's also the risk that if you don't resonate with your teacher or their teaching style, that you'll be stuck with them for your entire training!

The other alternative is to study with a school that takes a faculty approach, with many teachers. This exposes you to a greater variety of experience, styles, and skills, and it also allows the teachers to focus on their areas of greatest expertise...one teacher may be an anatomy specialist, another teacher may be a philosophy specialist, etc. This helps keep the learning fresh for you, so you can get the most out of your training. Of course, a school with a full faculty has more expenses than a training led by one teacher. As a result, your training may cost more, so you'll have to make sure it can work with your budget.

Question #3: Are the school's teachers qualified to lead a teacher training?

You might assume that everyone who is leading yoga teacher trainings is qualified to do it, but sadly, that's not the case. The truth is that just about anyone can start a yoga teacher training, regardless of whether they have the skills, experience, and wisdom to do it effectively.

And even if you enjoy taking classes with a yoga teacher, that still doesn't mean they're qualified to teach you how to become a teacher. There's a lot more that goes into running an effective training than being able to teach a class that people like.

Yoga professionals who can skillfully teach others to become teachers are very unique and special. They need to understand how people learn, how to manage group energy, how to keep people engaged, and how to present information in a way that allows the material to be easily understood and retained.

Of course, there's no way for you to know these things about teachers until you are in training. At the same time, there are some things you can look into that can help narrow your choices down:

- How long have they been training others how to teach yoga?
- How many teacher trainings have they led?
- Do they have teaching or training experience besides yoga teacher training?

- Do they have any training in adult learning principles and training?
- Have they ever run their own teacher training program before?
- How long have they been a yoga teacher?

Just because someone has led trainings for 10 years doesn't mean that they're twice as knowledgeable or skilled as someone who's led them for 5 years. At the same time, there is something to be said for experience. If the teacher or teachers who are leading your training haven't been leading teacher trainings for at least 5 years, it's worth being extra careful. Eight or more years of experience leading teacher trainings is even better!

Question #4: Will you be learning a set class sequence? Or will you learn how to create your own unique class sequences?

You'll want to make sure the YTT you pick suits what you are looking for. Do you like the idea of learning a simple set sequence and doing/teaching the same thing? Or, does having creativity and flexibility in your classes appeal to you? Understanding the difference will be an important element in your research. Here's why:

Many yoga schools teach their students just a few (or maybe even only one) set class sequences. This means that each class is exactly the same...the same poses are taught in the same order every time. If you go to a school like this, it means you'll only know one or two set sequences, and that's what you'll be prepared to teach

when they get back home and start teaching.

The other approach is to learn how to create your own intelligent sequences, so that you can vary your classes as much as you desire. This allows for fun and creativity, and it also allows you to safely adapt your classes to the varying experience and fitness level of the people who show up for any of your classes. It also gives you the ability to create themed classes (hip opening, core strengthening, heart opening, etc....). Once you understand the basics, you can mix and match those to create any class you want.

Question #5: Will the teacher(s) teach on or off the mat during asana classes?

During a yoga training, you will take a TON of asana classes! This is more than just taking classes though...it's a major part of the way that you learn to become a yoga teacher. Every time your teachers step in front of the room to lead a class, they're modeling different things for you. During an immersion, you soak those things up without even realizing you're learning them. Since this time with your teachers is so important, you'll want to find out if your teachers teach "on the mat", or "off the mat".

Teaching ON the mat means that the teacher stands on their mat at the front of the class and demonstrates all or most of the poses while they're calling them out to you. The drawback to this approach is that if the teacher is doing the poses, they can't see you, they can't see your practice, and there's very little they can do to help you gain a deeper understanding of your

practice. Generally, teaching on the mat is considered a beginning, less advanced way of teaching. If you're thinking about a school where the teachers teach on the mat, you'll have to decide if you're okay with that.

When a teacher teaches OFF the mat, all their attention and energy is focused on you and the other students. They're walking around, seeing your practice, providing hands-on assists and verbal cues, and helping you gain a deeper understanding of your practice. Assuming you've picked a school with good teachers, this is a huge benefit to you as a student. And in an immersion training (or for that matter, in any class!), it will make a huge difference in your practice.

Question #6: What will be the student to teacher ratio?

Often students will ask group size, assuming the smaller the group is, the more attention they will get. This is not always the case! If you have one teacher and 18 students, that's an 18:1 ratio, which is pretty high! It will be very difficult for the teacher to spread herself/himself around.

A faculty approach generally allows for lower student to teacher ratios, even if there are more students in the training. For example, if you have a faculty of 4 teachers and a group of 28 students, that's a 7:1 ratio, which is pretty good. It gets even better if your school has support staff on hand to support the classroom sessions.

Question #7: How do they interact with you during your research phase?

How a school responds to you during your research phase can tell you a lot about what your training experience will be like. Do they respond in a timely manner? Do they respond at all? When you get a response, does it feel like the person heard your questions and concerns and answered them appropriately? Does it feel like they're available for you, and supportive? That you're important to them? If you're not feeling those things now, before the training starts, it's not super likely that you'll feel that way during your training either!

Question #8: What do past students say about the training?

Students who've taken the same training you're considering can provide you with an unbiased view of what to expect. Any legitimate school will gladly put you in touch with past students are willing to share their experience with you, so take advantage of that!

Talk to past students and see what they have to say. You'll get a very real perspective on what to expect. It's also a good idea to watch the videos on the school's website, and to read the testimonials from students.

Question #9: Do I know how much I'm willing to spend in order to get the training experience I'm looking for?

Remember that if you're on a tight budget and you're not willing or able to save money for an immersion training, then training at a local studio might be the best fit for you. It's almost always going to be less expensive.

Question #10: Am I comparing apples to apples?

Some locations (such as India) will often have many low-cost options, simply because things tend to be inexpensive. With that said, realize that there's a wide spectrum of offerings in any country. If training is priced significantly lower than other trainings in the same country, realize that the pricing is different for a reason. Ask yourself why, and do some investigating. Resist the temptation to compare trainings solely on price, or risk getting a sub-par experience!

We hope this helps you become a more educated shopper as you work to find the right yoga teacher training for you! If you have questions or would like to talk to someone about your search, reach out to us, we always have time to talk.

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We hope you pick the right school for you and that you have an amazing, life-changing experience!

And for convenience, we've also included a list of questions you can ask during your research:

1. How many teachers will teach me?
2. Is there one teacher who is primary?
3. How long have they been teaching yoga?
4. How long have they been teaching other people how to teach yoga?
5. How would you describe the style of yoga I'll be learning?
6. How would you describe the philosophy I'll be learning? How will it be taught?
7. How will the anatomy and physiology be taught and by whom?
8. What is their training in anatomy and physiology, and what is their background in teaching it as it relates to yoga?
9. How many students has your faculty trained to become yoga teachers?
10. What's the student to teacher ratio?
11. How will I be learning during classroom sessions?
12. How are the group dynamics managed and by whom?

13. How many years of experience does your faculty have teaching other people how to teach yoga?

14. Where did your faculty members learn to teach? Learn to teach others?

15. What is my teacher training experience going to be like?

16. Will the teachers teach on or off the mat during the asana classes?

17. What's the primary curriculum focus on your school?

18. If you had to describe the experience in one sentence, what would that be?

19. Do you have 2 -3 students who I can email or call to hear about their experience?

20. Is there someone I can talk to directly?