Beginner Yoga Confidence Guide:

Things Every New Yogi Should Know Before Their First Class



Feel prepared, supported, and confident before your first yoga class.

Welcome!

Hello, fellow yoga practitioner!

I created this guide because yoga truly is for everyone—and any barriers that keep people from stepping onto the mat deserve to be removed with compassion, clarity, and community support. If you've ever felt unsure, intimidated, or like you needed "just a little something extra" before beginning your yoga journey, you're in the right place. This workbook is my gift to you so you can feel prepared, confident, and supported from the very start.

I still remember my very first yoga class.
The teacher was speaking what felt like an entirely foreign language, guiding us through poses with words I had never heard before. I had no idea which body part was supposed to go where or what I was supposed to be feeling. I felt inadequate—like a fish out of water—and it kept me away from yoga for years.

But once I began learning the why behind the practice—understanding the mechanics, the purpose of the postures, the breath, and how it all works together—I fell completely in love with yoga. And more importantly, I realized that none of the confusion, fear, or insecurity I once felt was necessary.

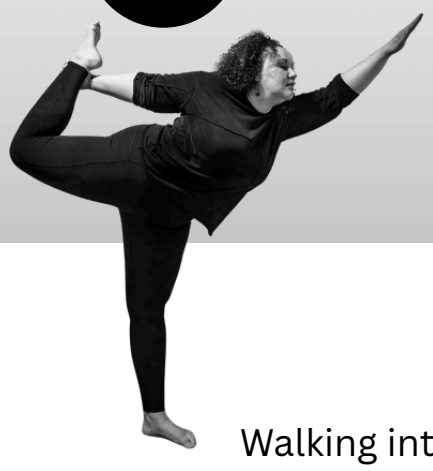
I want to make your beginning very different from mine.
This guide is designed to help you step into your first class (or back onto your mat) with confidence, clarity, and a sense of belonging. You don't need to be flexible, coordinated, or knowledgeable—just open to learning and willing to show up for yourself.

Let's build your confidence together.
Let's remove the barriers.
Let's begin your yoga journey with support, understanding, and joy.
I'm so glad you're here. You belong here.

Warmest Regards,
Brooke Maydwell

MAYDWELL YOGA

1 What to Expect in Your First Class



Walking into your first yoga class can feel a little like walking into a movie halfway through—you're not totally sure what's going on, everyone else looks like they know what they're doing, and you're hoping you're sitting in the right seat. That's normal. Truly. And it doesn't stay that way for long.

A typical beginner-friendly yoga class follows a simple, predictable flow. While every teacher and style has its own flavor, most classes look something like this:

Warm-Up

Gentle movements to wake up the body, loosen the joints, and connect you to your breath. Think of this as your "ease in" stage—no performance required.

Main Sequence

This is the heart of the practice. Different styles of yoga may offer different movements, but the purpose is the same: gradually build strength, balance, mobility, and connection to your breath. You'll move through poses at a pace that's right for you, not the person next to you.

Cool-Down / Final Stretches

The body unwinds, muscles lengthen, breathing slows. This is where everything you did in the main sequence settles in.

Savasana

The grand finale, and ironically the hardest pose for many beginners.

You lie flat on your back and relax every muscle in your body.

Yes—this is a real yoga posture. And yes, it counts.

A few minutes of stillness at the end brings the practice together in a way that feels grounding and restorative.

2 Everyone Was a Beginner Once



There is no secret club of people who magically woke up good at yoga. Every single yogi—every teacher, every longtime student—started with uncertainty, confusion, wobbling, falling over, and wondering, “Is my foot supposed to go there?”

It’s okay to start from scratch. It’s okay to be the new kid in the room. It’s okay to stumble and fall—as long as you get back up when you’re ready.

You can do anything when you give yourself grace, refrain from judging yourself, keep your focus, and stay patient with your body. Those skills matter far more than touching your toes ever will.



Listen to Your Own Body (It’s the Only One Like It)

Your body is completely unique. It has its own history, structure, limitations, and gifts.

You are not supposed to look like the person next to you. You are not supposed to look like Instagram. You are supposed to look like you. In fact, when everyone in the room looks identical, that’s usually a red flag—not a sign of a safe or inclusive class.

Pay attention to how each movement feels, not how it looks. If something doesn’t feel supportive, you can modify.

If you’re practicing with an experienced yoga teacher, they’ll offer safe options for different body types, needs, and abilities. Adaptations are not “less than. They are smart, respectful, and often the key to long-term practice.

Most Importantly: You Belong Here

Yoga isn’t about perfection. It’s about awareness, curiosity, and trying again—at your own pace.

If you bring an open mind, a willingness to learn, and a sense of humor when things wobble, you’re already doing yoga beautifully.

In short:

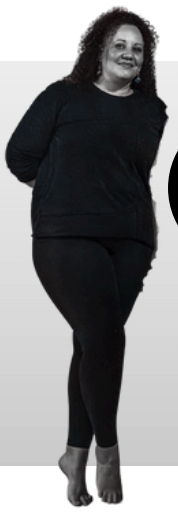
You can relax.

You can breathe.

You can begin.

You’re ready—and your mat is ready for you.





3 Foundational Tips for New Yogis

Stepping onto your mat for the first time shouldn't feel like preparing for a performance—it should feel like giving yourself permission to explore your body, your breath, and your strength in a safe, supported space. These foundational tips will help you build confidence right from the start.

1. Breath First, Movement Second

Your breath is your built-in guide, your anchor, and your safety net. Think of it as the quiet teacher that never raises its voice but somehow always knows what's going on. If your breath feels steady and smooth, your body is likely right where it needs to be. If your breath feels tight, choppy, or like it's filing a complaint, that's a sign to ease up or modify. This isn't about "doing it right." It's about listening to the most honest feedback tool you have—your own inhale and exhale.

2. Move at Your Pace (Not Your Neighbor's)

Yoga is not a race, a competition, or a synchronized swimming event. Everyone learns differently, moves differently, and grows differently. If the teacher cues a transition and you're still setting up the last pose; fantastic! That means you're paying attention to your body, not trying to impress anyone (including the invisible judges that absolutely do not exist). Give yourself permission to pause, rest, or catch up whenever you need. A slower practice is not a weaker one—it's often a wiser one.

3. Small Wins Count (Actually, They Matter Most)

Your hips might not open overnight. Your balance might feel like a baby giraffe learning to use its legs. Your hamstrings might act like they've never heard of the word "stretch." It's all normal.

Celebrate the little victories:

- You showed up.
- You breathed intentionally.
- You learned something new about your body.
- You tried—again.

Progress in yoga is rarely loud or flashy. It's subtle, steady, and deeply personal—like discovering you suddenly don't dread forward folds quite as much anymore.

4. Comparison Belongs Nowhere Near Your Mat

If comparison sneaks into your mind (and it will), gently escort it out, like an uninvited guest who wandered into your kitchen looking for snacks. Your body is yours alone. Your practice is yours alone. Your timeline is yours alone. The moment you stop measuring yourself against someone else's flexibility, balance, or Instagram-worthy backbend is the moment yoga stops being stressful and starts being transformative.

Stay curious about your experience. Stay connected to your breath. Stay committed to showing up—not to matching someone else's shape.

5. Be Patient With Yourself (Seriously, This Is a Practice)

Yoga is called a "practice" because it's something we return to again and again—not something we perfect. You will wobble. You will forget instructions. You will occasionally put your right foot where your left foot should be. And you will be absolutely fine. Patience is the muscle that supports all the others. When you're kind to yourself, you learn more quickly, move more safely, and build confidence that lasts far beyond your mat.

Above all: let yourself be new.

New is honest.

New is brave.

New is the beginning of everything.

This guide, your teacher, and your mat are all here to support you—snark included when helpful, science included when needed, and compassion included always.



4 Beginner Myths (Debunked)



Stepping into yoga can feel intimidating, especially when misinformation floats around like glitter after a craft project—everywhere, unavoidable, and usually unnecessary. Let's clear up a few of the biggest myths that might be holding you back.

Myth #1: "I need to be flexible before I start yoga."

Nope. Not even a little. If that were true, most of us would never step on a mat again after our first hamstring stretch politely said, "Absolutely not."

Yoga creates flexibility, mobility, and strength—you don't need any of those qualities to begin. That's like saying, "I'll start swimming once I can already swim." Or my personal favorite: "I'll take a shower once I'm clean." The whole point is to become something, not arrive fully formed.



Myth #2: "Everyone will be watching me."

I promise they won't. Most people are too busy trying to remember what direction their foot is supposed to rotate or silently negotiating with their hips to go one inch deeper. Beginners blend in more than you think. Yoga studios are full of people focused on their own breath, their own balance, and their own internal monologue of, "Wait… what did the teacher just say?"

Myth #3: “I’ll slow the class down.”

A good yoga teacher doesn’t rush students through poses—they teach for the humans in the room, at the pace everyone can follow. If you feel like you're behind, you’re probably doing exactly what you should: moving at a pace your body understands. And guess what? Moving mindfully is never a burden. It’s actually the heart of the practice.

Myth #4: “My body doesn’t look like a ‘yoga body.’”

There is no such thing as a yoga body. Truly.

If you have a body and you show up to practice yoga—you already have one.

The photos you see online are curated, filtered, and often performed by people who have trained for years. Your body is unique, deserving, capable, and absolutely welcome as it is.



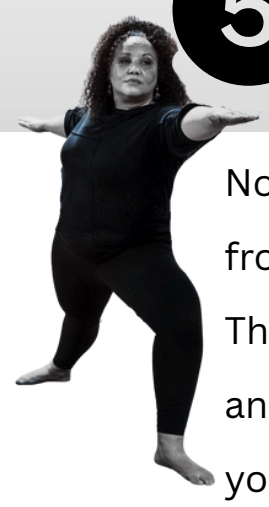
Myth #5: “I need fancy outfits or expensive gear.”

Nope. You only need clothes you can move in and a mat that won’t slide across the room like a runaway surfboard. Everything else is optional. Yoga is not a fashion show. It’s a practice of awareness, breath, and connection.

The Truth:

You don’t need to earn your place in yoga. You already belong here. Your breath, your body, and your curiosity are more than enough.

5 Beginning with the Breath



Now that we've spent some time learning, chatting, and exploring ideas together, it's time to shift from thinking to feeling. Before we move into any postures, let's pause and connect with the breath. This simple breathing practice will help you settle in, find your focus, and gently prepare the body and mind for whatever movement comes next. It's a steady, accessible way to begin grounding yourself in your yoga practice.

Diaphragmatic Breathing (Belly Breathing)

Purpose

Diaphragmatic breathing teaches the body to breathe with ease, depth, and efficiency. It encourages the diaphragm to do its natural job, reducing tension in the chest, neck, and shoulders. This technique builds breath awareness, supports relaxation, and establishes a steady foundation for all other breathing practices.

Benefits

- Calms the nervous system and reduces stress
- Lowers heart rate and encourages a relaxed physiological state
- Improves focus and mental clarity
- Increases oxygen exchange and supports respiratory health
- Softens the body's stress response, making asana practice feel steadier and more mindful
- Helps regulate breath during movement and transitions

How This Fits Into a Yoga Practice

Diaphragmatic breathing is often the first pranayama taught because it lays the groundwork for everything that follows. It helps students tune in, slow down, and feel the breath move through the body. Practicing this before asana warms the breath and centers the mind. During asana, it helps maintain ease, stability, and presence. Over time, it becomes a reliable tool for grounding—on the mat and throughout daily life.



How to Practice the Breath

- Sit comfortably or lie down on your back with your knees bent or supported.
- Place one hand on your belly and one hand on your chest.
- Inhale slowly through the nose, allowing the belly to rise gently into your hand.
- Exhale through the nose, letting the belly fall and soften.
- Keep the chest as relaxed as possible, allowing the movement to come primarily from the diaphragm and lower ribs.
- Continue at a natural, steady pace, focusing on smooth expansion and release.

How to Finish

- Let your breath return to its natural rhythm.
- Pause for a moment of stillness, noticing how your body and mind feel before moving into your next posture or transition.

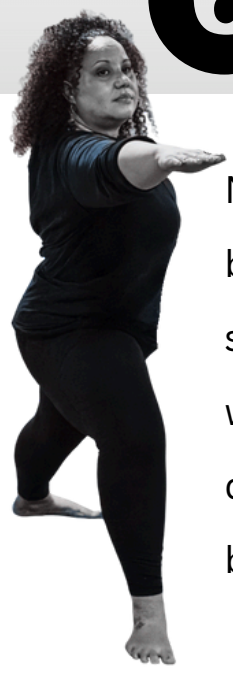
Modifications

- If lying down is uncomfortable, sit with your back supported by a wall or cushions.
- For students who prefer not to place hands on the body, rest hands on the thighs and visualize the breath expanding the belly.
- If nasal breathing feels restricted, begin with soft mouth-breathing and transition to nasal breathing when comfortable.

Recommended Duration

- Begin with 1 to 3 minutes.
- With practice, extend to 5 minutes or use anytime you need grounding during your yoga session.

6 Foundational Yoga Postures



Now that you've taken a moment to settle in and connect with your breath, your body and mind are better prepared for movement. Breath is the anchor of any yoga practice, and starting with simple, steady breathing helps create a sense of ease, focus, and awareness. With that foundation in place, we can now explore a few foundational yoga postures. These holds are accessible, supportive, and designed to help you understand how to move with intention and alignment as you continue building your practice.

1. Mountain Pose (Tadasana)

Purpose

Mountain Pose is the foundational blueprint for all standing postures. It teaches alignment, balance, posture awareness, and body organization. Practicing Tadasana helps students understand neutral spine, grounded feet, and balanced weight distribution.

How to Enter the Pose

1. Stand with your feet together, big toes touch and a small space in between your heels.
2. Press down evenly through all four corners of each foot.
3. Engage the thighs gently without locking the knees.
4. Engage the muscles in your belly just a tad.
5. Lengthen through the spine as if lifting from the crown of the head.
6. Draw the shoulder blades slightly down and back, letting the arms rest by your sides.
7. Soften the face and jaw.
8. Align the ears over the shoulders, the shoulders over the hips, and the hips over the ankles.
9. Breathe naturally.

How to Exit the Pose

- Step out to any standing posture or simply relax the arms and move into your next movement.

Modifications

- Students with balance challenges may stand with feet slightly apart.
- If the lower back feels compressed, slowly tuck the tailbone under..
- For shoulder tension, allow palms to face the thighs instead of forward.



Recommended Hold Time

- Hold for 30 seconds to 2 minutes, focusing on alignment and breath.

2. Downward-Facing Dog (Adho Mukha Svanasana)

Purpose

Downward Dog is a full-body foundational pose used in nearly every vinyasa class. It strengthens the arms and shoulders, lengthens the spine, opens the hamstrings and calves, and teaches students how to distribute weight safely. It also functions as a transitional and resting posture.

How to Enter the Pose

1. Begin on hands and knees in tabletop position.
2. Spread the fingers wide and press firmly through the fingerprint, knuckles, and the pads of your thumbs. 60% of your body weight should be pressed forward towards these points to protect the wrists.
3. Tuck the toes under.
4. On an exhale, lift the knees and straighten your legs, sending your hips up towards the ceiling and back towards the wall behind you. This will create somewhat of an upside “V’ shape with your body.
5. Keep a soft bend in the knees as you lengthen your spine.
6. You may peddle the feet back and forth to settle into the posture and warm up the backside of your body.
7. When ready, find stillness.
8. Press the chest gently toward the thighs while keeping the shoulders broad.
9. Allow heels to move toward, but not necessarily touch, the mat.
10. Keep the head and neck neutral, gazing between the feet or toward the navel.

How to Exit the Pose

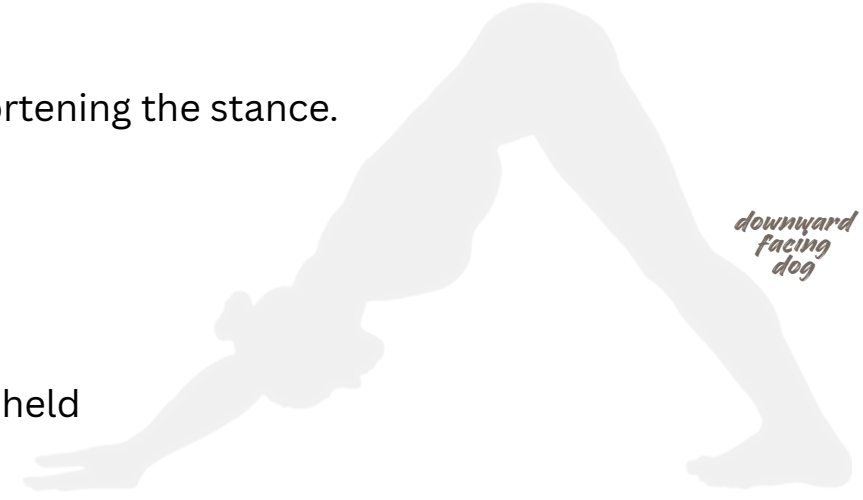
- Lower gently back down to tabletop OR you may shift forward into plank OR you may walk, jump, or step to the top of your mat meeting your hands (transitioning into a forward fold) depending on the sequence you will one day practice.

Modifications

- Bend the knees generously to keep the spine long.
- Lift the heels or place a rolled blanket under them to reduce strain in the calves and hamstrings.
- Students with wrist discomfort may come onto forearms (Dolphin Pose) or use yoga wedges/blocks for wrist angle support.
- For shoulder discomfort, reduce the angle by shortening the stance.

Recommended Hold Time

- Hold for 3 to 5 breaths in a flow.
- In a beginner or alignment-based class, it may be held
- for 30 seconds to 1 minute.



3. Child's Pose (Balasana)

Purpose

Child's Pose is a restful posture that allows the student to reconnect with breath, calm the nervous system, and release tension in the back, hips, and shoulders. It is a safe place to pause during any practice. It reinforces the principle of listening to the body.

How to Enter the Pose (version 1: traditional child's pose)

1. *Begin on hands and knees in table top or on your knees with your hips resting on your heels.*
2. *Keep big toes touch and knees touching.*
3. *Place your hands on the floor in front of you*
4. *to support your transition.*
5. *Lower your forehead to the mat (or a block).*
6. *Once your head feels supported, you may move your arms to rest at your sides.*
7. *Pay attention to what you are feeling here. Stay present.*



How to Enter the Pose (version 2: extended child's pose)

1. Begin on hands and knees in tabletop.
2. Bring the big toes together and widen the knees apart as much as comfortable.
3. Sink the hips back toward the heels.
4. Extend the arms forward with palms facing down,
   or allow arms to rest by the sides.
1. Rest the forehead on the mat or a block.
2. Allow the belly to soften with each breath.



How to Exit the Pose

- Press gently into the hands and rise back to tabletop or move into the next posture with control.

Modifications

- If knees are sensitive, place a folded blanket behind the knees or under them.
- If hips do not reach the heels, place a bolster or pillow between the thighs and calves.
- If bending the knees this deep is painful, separate your feet and stack up 1-3 blocks in between them. Sit on these stacked blocks. This will prevent your knees from having to bend too deeply.
- Students with shoulder discomfort may slide the arms back along the sides to reduce stretch.
- A block under the forehead can prevent strain in the neck.
- Narrow the knees if hip opening feels uncomfortable.

Recommended Hold Time

- Hold anywhere from 5 breaths to several minutes (up to 10 minutes with certain styles of yoga)

7 How I Support New Students



By the time you finish this guide, I want one thing to be absolutely clear: you don't have to do this alone. Beginning yoga is so much easier—and far more enjoyable—when you have a teacher who sees you, supports you, and respects the uniqueness of your body and your journey.

Here's how I support you from the moment you step on your mat:

I Teach With Care, Science, and Accessibility

Every body is different, and every student's experience matters. I draw from proven anatomical principles, mindful sequencing, and years of teaching to help you move safely and confidently. No forcing, no pushing, no "pretzel goals." Just intelligent movement that feels right for your structure and your stage of practice.

I Offer Options and Modifications for Every Pose

You'll never hear, "Just do it like this" without explanation. Instead, you'll get options for tighter hips, sore knees, limited mobility, or days when you simply need a gentler approach. Modifications aren't "less than." They're tailored solutions that help your body work smarter—not harder.

I Use Clear, Beginner-Friendly Language

Remember how confusing yoga vocabulary was when you first started? I do too. That's why I use simple instructions, demonstrate when needed, and avoid jargon unless I immediately explain what it means. No guessing what body part goes where. No "fish out of water" moments unless we're doing it on purpose.





8 Your Next Step (If and When You're Ready)

You've made it to the end of this guide—take a moment to acknowledge that. Truly. Beginning anything new takes curiosity, courage, and heart, and you've already shown all three simply by opening this workbook and exploring what yoga could look like for you. Now, if you're feeling a spark of excitement...

If something inside you whispers, "I think I can do this"...

If you're ready for guidance, structure, and a supportive community to walk with you...

I'd love to help you take the next step in your yoga journey.

The 6-Week Beginner Yoga Series (online)

If you want:

- Clear weekly progression
- A safe environment designed specifically for beginners
- Consistent guidance you can trust
- Personal attention, modifications, and support
- A foundation strong enough to practice anywhere afterward

Then my 6-Week Beginner Yoga Series is the perfect place to start.

You'll learn the mechanics, the breath, the postures, the alignment, and—most importantly—how to build a practice that feels good in your body.

You don't have to be flexible, coordinated, or confident. You just have to be willing to show up.

Click here to learn more or reserve your spot.



I Encourage You to Listen to Your Body (Not the Ego, Not the Mirror)

Your practice should feel supportive, spacious, and sustainable—not stressful. Your body is your best teacher, and I help you tune in to its signals so you can adapt movements to what feels right for you. If you ever wonder, “Is this supposed to feel like that?”—just ask. There is always an option we can explore together.

I Create a Non-Judgmental, Beginner-Friendly Environment

Everyone is welcome. Everyone starts somewhere. Everyone grows at their own pace.
My job is to offer guidance, reassurance, and a safe space where you can explore without fear of doing it “wrong.” Because honestly? There is no “wrong.” There is only learning.

My Promise to You

I’m here to support you, cheer for you, normalize every wobble and misstep, and help you discover the confidence and joy that yoga can bring to your life. When you show up with curiosity and openness, I’ll meet you with knowledge, compassion, and unwavering encouragement.
Your journey is yours—but you never have to walk it alone.



The Virtual Studio (Practice From Home, Any Time)

If your schedule is unpredictable, mornings are chaotic, or you simply prefer practicing in your living room with zero witnesses (a perfectly valid preference), the virtual studio might be the best next step for you.

You'll get:

- Beginner-friendly, live classes
- Clear, accessible cues
- Options for busy days, sore days, and "I need something gentle" days
- The freedom to build consistency at your pace

Practice whenever you want, however you want, without pressure with our video library.

Click here to explore the virtual studio.

Not Ready Yet? That's Okay Too.

Your journey belongs to you. Take what you learned in this guide, breathe a little deeper this week, stretch when your body invites you to, and come back to your mat when it feels right.

I'll be here—ready to support you whenever you decide you're ready for more.

Happy Practicing,

Brooke Maydwell

