

Yoga for Modern City Life: Most Urbanites Start with a Class

The best place to start is with a class, where a teacher can show you how to adapt poses using props and help you learn proper technique for the postures.

The good news is that yoga classes have never been more widely available. You'll find them at small studios, health clubs and gyms. The hard part is finding a class that's just right for you. Studios that are dedicated to yoga also foster a more dedicated practice. The same students return to class week after week, and instructors usually follow a particular discipline of yoga. Some classes are aimed at beginners.

Whether you consider a studio or health club classes, here are some tips to find qualified instructors and classes that suit your needs:

Define your goals. Do you have chronic back pain or other physical limitations. An Iyengar-based class, with its emphasis on proper form and use of props, would be ideal. Looking to improve concentration and reduce stress. Consider a class that incorporates meditation. Seeking a challenging workout. Try an ashtanga class.

Ask about the instructor's background. There is no national certification program for yoga yet, although some disciplines have their own rigorous teaching certification programs. You want an instructor who has been practicing and teaching for a long time.

Check out the space. Look for rooms that are spacious and well ventilated. Plenty of props sticky mats, straps, foam bricks, blankets and bolsters are a good sign, too. Ideally, yoga rooms are quiet, but that may not be the case in a gym setting where students have to contend with loud music and clanking weight machines.