

PRACTICE

The Art of Sequencing and Cueing

Build a yoga class from the logic of the texts, guide it with clear words and breath, and teach a mixed group safely: six classes minute by minute, 40 cue phrases, 50 Sanskrit names to pronounce



योग

yoga

YOGIDE

Free sample

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Before you begin

Early in the morning in Rishikesh, before the cafés open, you can hear classes before you see them. A voice rises from a rooftop or an ashram hall: a few words, a long silence, then a few more words. When the class is good, the voice almost disappears. The students are not following a person; they are following their breath, and the words simply arrive at the moment they are needed.

That is the art this book teaches. Knowing postures is one skill. Putting them in an order that makes sense to a body, and guiding a room through that order with clear, kind, well-timed words, is another. Most trainings give you a few days on it. Most new teachers discover, in their first class, that the hardest part is not what to teach but how to say it, and when to stop talking.

This book does three things.

1. **It gives you the logic of a class.** What the classical texts say about the order of practice, how traditional classes in India are built, and the simple principles that let you build your own: from simple to complex, preparation before the peak, counterposes after it, a real descent, a real rest.
2. **It gives you the words.** The grammar of a cue, the verbs that work, how to time words to the breath, how to correct without touching, how to offer three levels of the same pose in one sentence, and 40 ready-made phrases in English and French.
3. **It gives you material to teach next week.** Six classes written minute by minute, six lesson plans each built around a sūtra checked in Sanskrit, a printable pronunciation sheet of the 50 Sanskrit names you will say most often, and a grid to assess your own recordings.

It rests on clear rules.

No certification is promised. This book is not a teacher training and gives no hours towards any registry or diploma. It is a companion for those who are about to train, who have just trained, or who already guide friends and family. Our companion guide *Choosing Your 200-Hour Yoga Teacher Training* covers frameworks, schools and certificates; we do not repeat it here.

The texts are quoted accurately. Sanskrit verses are given in Devanāgarī and IAST transliteration, checked against the digital editions of GRETIL (Göttingen Register of Electronic Texts in Indian Languages). All translations are our own. Posture names and their meanings follow our *Asana Atlas*, so that the two books speak the same language.

Safety claims are sourced or written with care. Where we state a fact about injuries or risk, we cite the study, checked on PubMed, and say what it does and does not show. Where the evidence is thin, we give prudent practice rather than numbers.

This book is not medical advice and does not make you a therapist. A group class is for people who are well enough to join it. When a student tells you about a medical condition, pregnancy, a recent operation, a heart or blood-pressure problem, glaucoma, osteoporosis or a spinal injury, ask them to check with their doctor before practising and to tell you what they have been advised. Stop anyone who

reports chest pain, unusual breathlessness, dizziness, sudden severe headache, numbness or sharp pain, and call the emergency services if needed (112 in Europe and India, 911 in the United States and Canada, 999 in the United Kingdom).

How to use this book

- **If you are about to start a training**, read Chapters 1 to 3 and Chapter 5. You will arrive with a framework into which everything you learn will fit.
- **If you are preparing your first classes**, go straight to Chapter 4 (six classes ready to teach) and Chapter 13 (six lesson plans), and keep Chapter 11 (40 phrases) and Chapter 12 (pronunciation) at hand.
- **If you already teach**, record a class this week and use the grid in Chapter 14. Then reread Chapters 5, 7 and 9.
- **If you guide friends or family**, start with the gentle classes in Chapter 4 (beginners, chair, morning, evening) and Chapter 8 on mixed groups. Keep it simple and keep it safe.

Chapter 1. The logic of a class: what the tradition says

Order is part of the practice

In Sanskrit, the word for a sequence or a progression is *krama* (क्रम), "step, order". A class is not a playlist of postures. It is a journey with a direction: from the outside in, from movement to stillness, from the many things a body does to the one thing the mind can rest on. The classical texts of haṭha yoga say this very clearly, and they say it in terms of order.

What the Haṭhayogapradīpikā says

The Haṭhayogapradīpikā (HYP), compiled by Svātmārāma and usually dated to the fifteenth century, gives the whole curriculum of haṭha yoga in one verse. In the numbering of the GRETIL digital text, which for this part of the book matches the public-domain English translation by Pancham Sinh (1914), it is verse 1.58:

आसनं कुम्भकं चित्रं मुद्राख्यं करणं तथा । अथ नादानुसन्धानमभ्यासानुक्रमो हठे ॥

āsanaṃ kumbhakaṃ citraṃ mudrākhyam karaṇam tathā / atha nādānusandhānam abhyāsānukramo haṭhe

Our translation. "Posture, the various breath retentions, the practice called mudrā, and then concentration on the inner sound: this is the order of practice in haṭha."

The word that matters for a teacher is *anukrama* (अनुक्रम), "succession, the order in which one thing follows another". Posture comes first because it prepares the body to sit and breathe; breath comes next because it prepares the mind; then come the subtler practices. The four chapters of the text follow exactly this order.

The verse just before it, 1.57, makes the link between posture and breath explicit:

एवमासनबन्धेषु योगीन्द्रो विगतश्रमः । अभ्यसेन्नाडिकाशुद्धिं मुद्रादिपवनीक्रियाम् ॥

evam āsana-bandheṣu yogīndro vigata-śramaḥ / abhyasen nāḍikā-śuddhiṃ mudrādi-pavanī-kriyām

Our translation. "Thus, when the master yogi has become free of fatigue in the postures and locks, let him practise the purification of the channels, the mudrās and the practices of the breath."

Notice *vigata-śramaḥ*, "with fatigue gone". The texts do not ask the body to be exhausted before breathing practice; they ask it to be at ease. This is a precise instruction for anyone who builds a class: the postures should leave the student able to sit comfortably and breathe quietly, not out of breath and shaking.

What Patañjali adds

Patañjali's Yoga Sūtra says little about postures, but what it says defines the target of any sequence. Āsana is sthira-sukham (YS 2.46): steady and easy at once. It is reached by the relaxing of effort and by settling the mind on the endless (YS 2.47), and from it comes freedom from the assault of the pairs of opposites such as heat and cold (YS 2.48). A good sequence is one that makes a steady, easy seat possible at its end. We return to these sūtras in the lesson plans of Chapter 13.

How traditional classes in India are built

There is no single "Indian class". Lineages differ, and they should be presented in their own terms. Three published examples show how much they share.

- **The Sivananda lineage** publishes a fixed order of twelve basic postures: headstand, shoulderstand, plough, fish, seated forward bend, cobra, locust, bow, half spinal twist, crow or peacock, standing forward bend and triangle. One of its ashrams describes a typical class in four parts, in this order: breathing exercises, warm-ups including sun salutations, the twelve basic postures with relaxation between poses, and a final deep relaxation (sivananda.org; sivanandabahamas.org, consulted 17 October 2026). Inversions there come early in the posture section: shoulderstand and plough are followed by the fish, which the lineage teaches as their counterpose.
- **The Bihar School of Yoga** in Munger opens the asana section of its manual *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha*, first published in 1969 from Swami Satyananda Saraswati's teaching, with the pavanamuktāsana series for beginners (spelt Pawanmuktasana by the school): gentle movements of each joint, from the toes upwards, before any classical posture.
- **The teaching of T. Krishnamacharya** (1888–1989) at Mysore and later Chennai gave rise to several styles that link breath and movement. In the form transmitted by his son T. K. V. Desikachar and by his student Srivatsa Ramaswami, the idea of vinyāsa krama (विन्यासक्रम), roughly "the ordered placing of steps", describes a practice built step by step towards a goal and then step by step away from it, adapted to the person. We summarise this idea from their published books rather than quoting any single formula; the details vary from one student of Krishnamacharya to another.

In many classes in Rishikesh, as elsewhere in India, a session begins and ends with a short chant or a few rounds of om̐, and it often ends seated rather than lying down. This is not a rule everywhere, and you should follow your own teachers in it.

The arc that all these share

Strip away the differences and the same arc appears. You can draw it as a hill.

1. **Arrival:** the student comes into the room and into the body.
2. **Centring:** a few minutes of stillness and breath to gather attention.
3. **Warming up:** joints and spine, gently, in every direction.
4. **Building:** standing poses or sun salutations that bring heat, strength and focus.
5. **The peak:** the most demanding moment of the class, prepared by everything before it.

6. **Counterposes:** postures that bring the body back to neutral.
7. **Descent:** seated and lying poses, slower, cooler.
8. **Rest:** śavāsana, lying still.
9. **Return:** sitting up, breath, perhaps a chant or a moment of silence, and leaving.

The Haṭhayogapradīpikā describes śavāsana in verse 1.34 (GRETIL; Pancham Sinh 1.34): "Lying flat on the back on the ground like a corpse: this is śavāsana. Śavāsana removes fatigue and brings rest to the mind" (our translation). We keep this traditional description as it is; it is the text's own statement, not a clinical claim.

Five principles to remember

1. **From simple to complex.** Each pose should prepare the next one. A student should never meet a demand that nothing in the class has prepared.
2. **From large to fine.** Begin with large, easy movements; finish with subtle ones: breath, sensation, stillness.
3. **Every effort has its counter-effort.** After a strong backbend, neutralise; after a twist to one side, twist to the other; after an inversion, rest.
4. **Peak, then descend.** The peak is not at the end. Allow at least a third of the class for coming down and resting.
5. **The class ends in stillness.** Whatever its style, a class that does not leave a few minutes of real rest has skipped the part the texts put first.

Practise

Take a class you have attended recently. On a sheet of paper, draw the hill and write each part of that class on it. Where was the peak? Was there a real descent? How many minutes of rest?

Arrival:

Peak:

Rest (minutes):

End of the sample

Thank you for reading this far. We hope these first pages already help your practice, and that they show how the rest of the book is built: clear steps, texts quoted with their source, nothing invented.

The full book has 52 pages.

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