

## Look Back on Your Path

Spend some time considering your answers to these questions, then open your journal or a notes file and write about them. You'll find all the workbook prompts in this book at [yogateacherhandbook.com](http://yogateacherhandbook.com).

What led you to yoga?

- ▶ What do you love about yoga? What does yoga have to teach you? What do you have to teach others about yoga?

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- ▶ What do you find confusing, or off-putting, or difficult about yoga? How can you make peace with these parts of the practice?

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- ▶ Why did you pick up this book? What do you want to learn?

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## Check Your Blind Spots

Journal on your answers to these questions:

- ▶ What comes easy to you in asana? Are there categories of poses or styles of yoga that you excel at? Why? Is it something in your body, or your mind, or your background? What comes easy to you in breathing, meditation, and the other yoga techniques beyond asana?

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- ▶ What do you find challenging? Why is that? Can you drill down on the nature of the challenge?

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- ▶ How could these point you toward approaches you should study more? How can recognizing your blind spots help you shore them up?

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### Have Clear Eyes about Teacher Training

For many, teacher training is the first step to becoming a yoga teacher. Whether you are considering your first teacher training, continuing in an advanced-studies program, or developing a specialty, it's useful to do some math to see what's feasible. List here:

- ▶ The price(s) of the training(s) you are considering. If there's more than one, compare their rates.

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- ▶ How much money and time you have available or will need to budget to cover the costs, factoring in any income you'd lose from not being available to work your regular job or teach your regular classes during your training.

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- ▶ How long you will need to work to earn back what you have spent. If you're savvy, do this in a spreadsheet. At the lower end of the spectrum, factor earning \$20/teaching hour (not including travel or planning time) coming out of teacher training. At the upper end, plug in \$60. And if you know for sure that finishing an advanced training would guarantee you more than that, or if you're already teaching private lessons at higher rates, add these to your projections.

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Given the above, is yoga teacher training (YTT) the best next step for you, or would doing an intensive to deepen your knowledge without being on a teacher track be smarter? You could also consider joining a work-study program. Some studios also offer a discount on trainings for people who've been working there for some time. Make notes on the next steps based on your responses.

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## Find Your Team

Identify your yoga role models, who can serve as cheerleaders and mentors on your support team as your career grows. Your team could include a teacher you practice with weekly, a family member who has been studying for a long time, or even a friend who first brought you to the practice. Make a list of these teammates, talk to them about your calling to teach or your inspiration to further develop your career, and chat together about where they see your strengths and suggested next steps.

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## Research Lineages

While it's useful to know the major lineages of yoga, they aren't relevant to your personal development and teacher training if you can't find a teacher or studio to study with. Thus you'll either need access to these resources nearby, or the money and time to travel for them.

Take a look at the offerings in your area, or in places you might reasonably visit. Look at the titles used to describe the classes and approaches. When you see a proper noun, do some research on the style. Look not only at the studio site and the style's webpage, but also at search results, to see if there's a history of abuse or impropriety associated with the style. Unfortunately, this is all too common. If you discover that a certain style has a distasteful history, do more research and explore others that align better with your ethics. For styles that interest you, research potential classes you can take; list them and create a plan to visit them.

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## Assess Your YTT Options

Take a look around your area, as well as places you could feasibly travel to, and make notes about your options for your first or your next YTT. Compare their formats to the format you think will best suit your available time and learning style. These prompts can help:

- ▶ How many hours do you have available per week to dedicate to training? If you don't have abundant free time, what will you need to let go of to make more time for training?

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- ▶ Do you learn best by diving deep into material and working at it for several hours at a stretch? Or by letting yourself have time to digest what you've learned? Put another way: do you like to binge-stream an entire season of a show, or would you rather space it out week by week?

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- ▶ What financial resources do you have available for training?

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- ▶ What logistical support do you have available, and what will you need to muster? This could be coverage at your day job, child or pet care, and the like.

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For each program, list:

- ▶ Program: \_\_\_\_\_

- ▶ Format (e.g., weekend, intensive) and dates: \_\_\_\_\_

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- ▶ Program cost: \_\_\_\_\_

- ▶ Other costs, like travel or room and board: \_\_\_\_\_

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Writing this out will probably show you that you are drawn toward a particular program. If you really feel you can't make up your mind between two comparable options, flip a coin. Your reaction to the coin toss—not the result itself—might show you where your heart lies.

## Take Scouting Visit Notes

Make notes on the answers you get to these questions from your prospective schools.

- ▶ Can I take a class from the lead teacher(s)?

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- ▶ What do students find the most challenging part of training?

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- ▶ How long has this program and this particular format been offered?

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- ▶ What does any given day in YTT look like?

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- ▶ How do you handle physical limitations?

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- ▶ What is a typical next step for your graduates?

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- ▶ Can I talk to some recent graduates? Can I see them teach?

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- ▶ What if I have to miss time?

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- ▶ What is your refund policy?

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## Write Your Backstory

Consider and list the experiences you have had that brought you to yoga—was it a pregnancy, a desire to get in shape, a need for downtime and centering, or something else? Write a little about these experiences.

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Now think of experiences you've had in the seat of the teacher. These need not be in a classroom setting; perhaps you've been a scout leader, a team captain, or a babysitter. What attitude did you adopt in these situations? What kind of teacher do you have experience being?

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Finally, write about what kind of teacher this backstory has set you up to be.

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## Find Your Audience

While you'll often be adapting to teach the students who are in the room, especially if you're teaching open classes, you'll find the greatest ease and success by spending some time envisioning your ideal audience. This way, you can take next steps toward working with the people who will most benefit from what you have to teach and how you teach it.

Write a little in response to these prompts: Who are your students? Whom do you naturally relate to? Middle school teachers, for example, are a special crew. With whom do you share your happiest social events? Is it gardeners, athletes, chess players, children, your elders?

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Only once you are clear on your audience can you see what best to teach them. To paraphrase the master teacher Cyndi Lee, your role is not to teach your students what you know—it's to teach them what they don't know.

## Find Your Content

To determine what your students need to know, first determine your audience. Then ask yourself, "What is a problem this audience has?" To drill down more: Where does this audience exist, what activities do they do—or how and why are they inactive—and what patterns do people in this audience develop in mind and body? How can these patterns become a problem? How can yoga solve that problem?

For example, let's say your audience is long-haul truckers. They spend many hours each day sitting with their arms reaching forward, and with their left arms on the windowsill and their right hands on the wheel. They use their right legs and their left legs in different ways to operate the clutch and gas pedals. Think of the imbalances this work accrues, and how most truckers don't have the time for or access to gyms or trails to get in a post-drive workout or hike.

In this example, you might design a beginner-friendly but active practice that gets the truckers moving and draws their attention to how the right and left sides of their bodies might feel different, and how the front of their bodies may seem tighter than the back. This practice would include some passive backbends to stretch the front, and some active backbends to strengthen the back.

Aha! Suddenly this example doesn't seem so esoteric. You may not find yourself teaching a room full of long-haul truckers, but you will likely have a room full of students who spend much of their day sitting at a desk, and sitting in a car or train on the way to and from work. Their needs will be similar.

Beyond the physical, what are the mental demands on your audience? Do they need to spend a lot of time focused on one thing—what in yoga we would call dharana (intense concentration)? Or do they need to spend a lot of time in presence, aware of many things at once? We'd call that diyana (meditative awareness). Depending on these demands, you might include various breath exercises,

teach mantra, explain and challenge drishti (focused gaze), or make other choices to give your students what they need.

If you're teaching an open class, you may not have a very clear grasp of who your audience is week to week. But if you watch your students closely, you'll be able to see trends. If you teach at a gym, for example, you may have a wide range of students. But depending on your class time and title, you may find that your students tend to be weightlifters, or cardiac rehab patients, or moms taking advantage of the free childcare to take some time for themselves. Once you identify these trends, you'll be able to ask yourself what problem this audience has, and how you can offer yoga to solve it.

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### Find Your Message

The lessons yoga has taught you are the very ones you'll be teaching your students. Write a little about your three or four biggest takeaways from yoga. I imagine you'll find they are big life lessons—not "it helps to flex your foot in x pose" but "you're capable of more than you think" or "we all hold way more tension than we are aware of, and stillness is often the best way to realize this and to dissolve it."

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Now, could you distill these lessons to a short phrase like, "Find the balance between effort and ease," or "Find the right breath for now," or "Do less," or "Hang on"? These will be your guiding principles and messages as a teacher. Come back to them often.

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## Articulate Your Rules

What do you consider the actual rules or cardinal rules of yoga, and in particular, of asana practice? List them.

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Now to each item on the list, add a reason why you believe these. It's OK to write, "I think your raised-arm palm should face forward in Triangle Pose. Why? Because my teacher said so." Only by questioning the origin of your long-held beliefs can you make informed choices about whether they are true now.

Finally, do some research on whether they hold up. Are there peer-reviewed studies that support your beliefs? Do different styles take alternative approaches that contradict your rules? What would it be like to try these approaches? Be open.

## Clarify Your Intentions and Goals

Being very clear on both intentions and goals will help you make choices in any situation, from running a marathon to designing your career. I consider intentions to be about the inner process—the feelings you want to have as you undertake and complete a project, from running a marathon to finishing yoga teacher training to leading a single class. Intentions are about the process. Goals, on the other hand, are about the outcome. These might include hitting a particular time in the marathon, or earning a certain amount per class as a yoga teacher.

Take some time to journal about and list your intentions for becoming a yoga teacher. Ask yourself:

- ▶ What feelings come up for me around the role of yoga teacher?

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- ▶ What qualities does a good yoga teacher demonstrate?

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- ▶ How do I want to show up for my students?

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- ▶ How do I want my students to feel after class with me?

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Given what you've written, write yourself a mission statement, an overarching declaration of your intention as a teacher of yoga. Here's mine:

***I use the privilege of my education and varied experiences by sharing freely from what I have learned to benefit my students.***

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Now consider your goals, remembering that these are external, public, and measurable. These might build on the goals you noted in chapter 1, or you might have already thought about going in new directions. Ask yourself:

- ▶ Given my other work, health, and family obligations, how many hours a week can I spend practicing yoga? \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ Given my other work, health, and family obligations, how many hours a week can I reasonably spend teaching yoga? \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ How many of these would be leading a live class? How many would be teaching online and creating content? \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ What would it take, either in money or in benefits (like free gym membership or free studio classes), for me to feel like my time is fully valued? \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ Recognizing that I have to start somewhere, how long am I willing to work toward this fair-value goal? \_\_\_\_\_

And, most critically:

- ▶ What is the first next step toward this goal?

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Your answer to this next-step question will begin to structure your action plan. Perhaps it's researching teacher trainings, or a new studio you want to apply to teach for, or asking for a raise. Write out this step, and the next, and the next, until you hit a natural endpoint. (For more on project management along these lines, read David Allen's *Getting Things Done*.)

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As you did in chapter 1, set yourself reminders to check in on these goals. Review them at least quarterly or—better yet—once a month. When you do these regular checkups, you might find that a goal isn't relevant anymore, so revise as necessary. Sometimes a big goal needs to be broken down into smaller parts. And sometimes a goal needs to be postponed while you focus on the smaller next steps that will eventually take you there.

## Draft Your Bio

Answer these questions, going into as much detail as you like. Then cull the best sentences and phrases from your answers and distill them into a one- or two-paragraph biography.

- ▶ What first brought you to yoga? What were your revelations from your first few classes?

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- ▶ What does yoga mean to you?

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- ▶ Who and what have been your greatest teachers? While you may be tempted to simply list everyone you've ever studied with, can you think outside the box?

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- ▶ How has your practice changed over the years?

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- ▶ How do you want students to feel in your class? How do you want them to feel after your class? What would you like to hear them say to each other on the way out the door?

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## Ask for Résumé Review

Draft a résumé according to the points above, then share it with your mentorship team for their input. Consider also showing it to someone unfamiliar with the world of yoga, and listen carefully to their feedback and questions.

At [yogateacherhandbook.com](http://yogateacherhandbook.com), you'll find a few sample résumés and a template for creating your own.

## Strategize Your Newsletter

Any task is less daunting once you start to break it down into smaller chunks. Here's how to get started on creating a newsletter.

- ▶ Subscribe to several teachers' newsletters to have role models. Choose peers in your area and some nationally or internationally known teachers.
- ▶ List the steps you will take to get signups and what you'll need to do to implement them (e.g., speak to the manager at the venue where you teach).

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- ▶ Look at the available options—one might be via the website builder you choose—and settle on a newsletter service. Read that service's best-practices articles, and if they offer a video series or a help session to get you up to speed, use it.
- ▶ List some content you can promote. This could be a video series you've created, or a blog post you have written, or the handout from a workshop you've taught. All of these will be explained in part 4. You can also point to someone else's content that you found especially helpful.

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- ▶ Write a plan to "drip" (trickle out piece by piece) this content across several weeks or months of newsletters.

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- ▶ Draft your first newsletter. Each service will have a set of templates for you to choose from. Find the one that is most in line with your brand, pop in your content, and schedule it.
- ▶ Check your statistics. What was clicked on? Let that guide you to your next newsletter topic.

## Prepare Your To-Do List

If you do not already have these items in place, write yourself a timeline for getting them as soon as possible, with the next step or steps for each of them.

### Accounting

- ▶ Open business checking and savings accounts. \_\_\_\_\_

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- ▶ Find an accountant and prepare a list of questions to ask. \_\_\_\_\_

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- ▶ Understand your tax liabilities. \_\_\_\_\_  
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- ▶ Develop a system for tracking expenses and bookkeeping. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ Set up a service for credit card processing. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Liability**

- ▶ Draft a waiver and have a lawyer vet it. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ Buy or renew insurance. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ Consider incorporation. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Envision Your Dream Schedule**

To envision your dream schedule, start with a clear-eyed look at your current schedule. Create a table for each regular class you offer, which will help you figure your own hourly rate. (You'll find a template at [yogateacherhandbook.com](http://yogateacherhandbook.com).) Also note any perks or intangibles like prestige or friendship and how recently you got a pay increase.

Job:  
When:  
Where:

Prep time	Travel time	Pay rate or average per class	Hourly rate (pay divided by time spent)	Perks/intangibles/other considerations

Take an honest look at what you're getting, and note your reaction. Is it more than you realized? Less? Does it align with the intention and goals for your teaching that you laid out in chapter 3?

Compare this with what you know about your ideal schedule. Are you an early bird or a night owl? Do you do better powering through two or three back-to-back classes or giving yourself rest after every class? Your reaction will direct you toward things you might need to change.

You can then start to design, and maybe even to map out on a calendar, what your ideal schedule would look like.

## Schedule Your Rest

Just as you need to envision your ideal schedule, you should envision your ideal rest schedule. Calendar your downtime like you do your work! What would your best rest protocol look like? Is it days off? Massage? Time with friends? A weekly movie matinee? Write it down, then put it on the calendar.

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## Describe Your Students

Whether you're taking over an existing class or starting a new one, take some time to think about the students you may meet on the mat. Ask yourself, your hiring manager, or the teacher you're taking over from:

- ▶ How old is the typical student? \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ How much experience does the typical student have? \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ Why does this student come to yoga? \_\_\_\_\_

- ▶ How can yoga help this student? (This will help you plan your sequence.)

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## Collate Your Class Plans

Design several classes using whatever format best suits your planning style. Consider:

- ▶ Who are your students?

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- ▶ What do they need to learn?

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- ▶ Is there a theme to weave in to the class?

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- ▶ Where will the class start: seated, reclining, standing?

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- ▶ What are your planned sequences?

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- ▶ How will you modify these for injury?

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Look at the big picture: is the planned sequence a balanced diet? Do students move forward and back, left and right, round and round? Does the plan skew too much toward standing, or sitting, or reclining? Tweak your plans until they feel organically balanced.

While it may make sense for the first draft of these plans to be written on paper, I suggest finding a software program that works for you—ideally one that’s stored in the cloud. You may be more of a spreadsheet thinker or more of a free-form notes or sketches thinker: whatever makes sense is great. But having your class plans available in the cloud means you’ll never be without them, and you’ll be able to mix and match easily over time. If you write in a notebook, snap a photo of your plans or scan them, and save those images in the cloud. If you lose your notebook, you won’t lose all your work.

Exactly what your plans look like will depend on what works best for you. You might write the name of each pose, including a few key cues. You might draw your sequence using stick figures. You might simply jot down a few phrases that, in your mind, unspool into full segments of class. Only you know the best way to do this. Be creative and intuitive, and you’ll be fine.

### Reflect on Class

Make notes on your last class. What did you plan? What went well? What surprised you? Was there any deviation from your plan, and if so, why? How did it land? What did not go well? If it works for you, you can list these as roses (the pros), thorns (the cons), and buds (things to build on next time).

If you wrote out a class plan ahead of time, either on paper or, better yet, on your computer, this could simply be another column or section in the notes, including the date and your reflections on what happened.

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## Articulate Your Role

If you find your video review disheartening, it can be helpful to articulate what kind of teacher you want to be, so that you have a goal to be striving toward, and to know when you are meeting your vision for yourself as a teacher. Periodic redefinition or reinforcement of your goals will keep you on track.

Start by noting what you think your own teachers do well. Write a little about:

- ▶ The tone your teachers use with students in class and out of class

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- ▶ The body language and physical reaction your teachers use with students in class and out of class

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- ▶ The interactions you see your teachers use with students in class and out of class, including on social media if relevant

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Now write a description of the kind of teacher you want to be. Notice any friction between how you want to act and how you feel you have been acting.

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## Consider Your Tone

Given what you know about your students and the content of the class, write a little about the right tone for the class. Is it drill sergeant? Sympathetic coach? Caring mother figure? Sassy best friend? Repeat for each of the classes in your schedule. When you review recordings of your class, be sure to check whether the tone you hear matches the tone you meant to convey.

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### Pep Talk and Rainy Day Notes

Give yourself a pep talk! Using the voice of a loving friend, write yourself a blurb about all your good points as a teacher. If you like, distill it into a phrase ("You're authentic!") or a word ("Real!") that you can revisit as needed.

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In a notes file or a journal, collect praise you've received from your students, and visit these rainy-day notes to cheer yourself up when you are feeling disheartened or down.

### Classroom Management

Describe your ideal classroom environment from the point of view of both a student and a teacher. List any don'ts you've personally witnessed, and make notes about how you would do things differently.

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### Write Out Your Opening Remarks

Take the time to write out your standard opening spiel. If you don't have one yet, cover the five Ws and one H in your draft. If you do have one, challenge yourself to find new language to convey the same information. Being able to do that will help you feel fresh week to week and will keep your students engaged with the right balance of consistent information in a varied package.

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## Challenge Yourself

In your next few classes, set yourself the goal of making eye contact with every student at least once. Notice what this requires from you: you may need to move around the room more, or work to catch one student's eye. Make some notes about how this felt and what, if anything, made it difficult.

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## Practice Your Approach

Draft three approaches, with the language you'd want to use, to these issues. What would you say, when and how?

- ▶ A student carries a very strong odor.

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- ▶ A student leaves loudly during savasana.

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- ▶ A student goes way off-book during class, and students appear to be distracted.

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## Script It

Draft a few different ways to express quickly to students that phones are not welcome in class.

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## Planning Is Indispensable

Imagine a scenario in which you suddenly feel sick during class. How will you handle this? Write it out as one or more if/then statements. You may never need to use these plans, but if you do, having run them through in your imagination will be useful.

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## Focus on Your Topic

Spend some time considering what you have to teach and to whom. Write in response to these prompts:

- ▶ Who are your students? These can be your current students or the students in a location where you plan to offer a workshop.

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- ▶ What is a problem your students have? This could be not feeling ready for handstand, or having back pain after gardening, or feeling anxious before standardized testing.

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- ▶ When do they encounter this problem?

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- ▶ Where do they encounter this problem?

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- ▶ Why does this problem emerge? From your answer here, you'll be able to see the solution.

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- ▶ How can you use yoga or movement to address this problem?

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## Draft a Description and Title

Using the model above, write a description for a workshop designed to help students solve the problem you defined in the previous exercise. Hit these notes:

- ▶ Define a problem

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- ▶ Propose a solution

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- ▶ Explain the methods

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- ▶ Project the results

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- ▶ Explain who this is for (beginners, or teachers) and not for (anyone with major injuries, for example)

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- ▶ The price and when and how to register

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## Lesson Planning

Using this format or one that makes better sense for your teaching style, write a lesson plan for the workshop. Be sure to consider what could be cut for time; you might choose to highlight it in a different color.

Time in class	What you'll do	Why you'll do it	How you'll do it	How long it will take, with ways to contract or expand

## Develop a Workshop Offerings Document

Pull together a Workshop Offerings form. This document should include:

- ▶ A front page with a smiling picture of you, contact information, and one or two paragraphs of bio
- ▶ Some testimonials from well-known teachers and your students
- ▶ A list of workshops you can teach, each with a title, time or a time range, a robust description (see below), props needed, and suggested pricing
- ▶ Your desired pay rate, including a minimum, if you have one
- ▶ A sample contract

Save this document in PDF format and put a copy in your media kit and on your website. You'll find my workshop offerings form at [yogateacherhandbook.com](http://yogateacherhandbook.com).

## Find Your Message and Your Platform

Respond to these prompts.

- ▶ When do you feel most helpful as a teacher? Why? Where does this happen?

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- ▶ What's your favorite group to lead in a yoga practice? Why? What do these people all have in common? That is, who are your students?

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- ▶ What is a problem they have?

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- ▶ Where does that problem arise?

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- ▶ When does that problem emerge?

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- ▶ Why does that problem happen?

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- ▶ How can they deploy your solution? What are the steps? Lay them out in detail.

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- ▶ What will they wind up with when the problem is solved?

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- ▶ Who is your message for? Who is it not for? How can those it is not for adapt it, or find a solution to their unique problems?

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Next, ask yourself these questions and note your answers:

- ▶ Who/what are the thought leaders in your niche? How do they communicate?

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- ▶ Where does your audience meet: online? in person?

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- ▶ What are your strengths and production talents/resources as a writer/artist/teacher?

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- ▶ What tools do you already have to get started?

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### Outline and Timeline

Start an outline of your content by responding to these prompts.

- ▶ Write an introduction defining the problem and pointing to the solution. Be as explicit as you can.

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- ▶ List the steps of the solution point by point.

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- ▶ Begin to note what photos/video might help.

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Draft a timeline:

#### Planning

1. List the first step (e.g., type out an outline and shot list) \_\_\_\_\_
2. And the next one after that \_\_\_\_\_
3. Etc. \_\_\_\_\_

#### Production

1. List the first step (e.g., line up a photographer) \_\_\_\_\_
2. And the next one after that \_\_\_\_\_
3. Etc. \_\_\_\_\_

#### Promotion

1. List the first step (e.g., add a blog to your website) \_\_\_\_\_
2. And the next one after that \_\_\_\_\_
3. Etc. \_\_\_\_\_

## Strategize

Since you can branch in so many different directions as you produce useful content, the direction you choose to go will dictate your next steps. If you are excited about one or more ideas, take a moment to jot down what they are, where you'll place them, who might be able to help you, and what your first next steps are toward fulfilling your vision.

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## Set Your Vision

If you think you'd one day like to go all in on yoga as your primary source of income, whether you're still looking at teacher trainings or feeling fed up with your day job, take some time first to dream and then to have a clear-eyed look at whether your dreams will stand up to reality. These prompts will help; write a little in response to each. Then talk about what you wrote with your partner, a parent, an adult child, a good friend, your mentor, your therapist, your life coach, or any trusted counselor. Don't forget to include an accountant on this list!

- ▶ If you didn't need the money, how would you spend your days?

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- ▶ If you knew you would get a yes, what would you ask for in your current yoga-related work? What about other local opportunities? National and international opportunities? If you were sure to succeed, what would you reach for?

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- ▶ When in your yoga workday are you happiest? What pays your soul the biggest dividends?

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- ▶ What part of your yoga workweek pays you the most money per hour?

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