

Six Week Iyengar Yoga Course for Beginners

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For Heart of Iyengar Yoga Teacher Training course with Peentz Dubble

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Overview / Goals

The overriding goal of a class for beginning students is to instill an enjoyment and appreciation of yoga practice. The goal is to give beginning students a taste for the benefits of yoga practice, and to, as much as possible, give these beginning students tools that they can use to safely and joyfully continue to practice yoga. As Geeta Iyengar writes in the preface of “Yoga in Action: A Preliminary Course” [Iye00],

Yoga in Action for Beginners is not the end, but the beginning of yoga. It is for the practitioner to ignite the hidden force of yoga from within, so that it throws the Light on the path of the yogic journey.

Of course, Preliminary Course gives a 28-week syllabus, and for this assignment we are creating only a 6-week course.

The immediate goals of the first few classes are to help students familiarize themselves with their bodies, and also with the terminology we use to describe motions and poses in Iyengar Yoga classes.

Yoga, and in particular asana practice, is not about how you look. If your pose is not geometrically perfect, you are not a failure. One of the lessons that yoga teaches is *vairagya*, detachment. Along with detachment is non-judgement. Judging yourself, in an asana, as “good” or “bad” is not helpful. The question is “what is the goal?” How do you strive towards the goal? In this way, asana practice is a microcosm of “life practice”. The concept of “bringing yoga off the mat” is important

I have mostly followed the sequences given for the first six weeks in Geeta Iyengar’s *Preliminary Course* [Iye00], abbreviated “PC”. For each pose given, I indicate whether it was in that week’s sequence in PC, and, if so, which number in the sequence in PC. For example, if the fourth pose in week 2 is *Namaskarasana*, and it is also the fourth pose in the week 2 syllabus in PC, I will write:

w2.4 *Namaskarasana*

(Week 2, Pose 4 in PC)

Formatting Notes

Pose names are italicized, as in *this is a pose name*.

A new pose (not introduced earlier) will be both italicized and colored blue, as in *this is a new pose*.

Images of poses are taken from *Preliminary Course*, as I do not yet have images of myself in the poses.

Week 1

Themes: What is yoga? Your body in space.

Reading: Something that relates asana to the rest of one's life; how looking for alignment and balance in asana can be brought “off the mat” to bring alignment and balance in the rest of one's life.

1.1 Sequence for Week 1

w1.p1 *Savasana*

(not given as first pose in PC)

Have several blankets available if needed.

Lie flat; legs together, toes pointing towards ceiling. Knees pointing to ceiling. Hips level. Feel what parts of your body are touching the ground. Is there equal weight on both heels? Both buttocks? Shoulder blades?

Now bring your arms over your head. Can you reach all the way to the ground? Use blankets if need support. How close are hands; can you bring them closer together? Rotate your arms so that your palms face the ceiling. Now reverse the rotation; which causes the shoulder blades to separate? Try rolling the upper arms (nearer the shoulders) “inward” so that palms turn toward floor. Now keep upper arms turned in, but make palms parallel.

Now try to increase the distance between top of shoulders and ears (i.e. lower shoulders) while keeping arms straight above head.



Figure 1.1: Adho Mukha Svanasana

w1.p2 *Tadasana*, against a wall

(Week 1, Pose 1 in PC)

- Now we are going to attempt to replicate the pose we just did on the floor, with the help of gravity, while standing.
- In *Savasana*, the floor was a useful reference point – we could tell if our hips were even, or our shoulder blades were even, by feeling the contact with the floor.
- Stand with your back lightly touching the wall; your heels as close to the wall as possible.
- Have your feet together.
- Is your weight balanced on your feet, left vs. right? Try shifting all your weight to your left foot; now the right foot.
- Is your weight evenly balanced forward and backward? That is, is the weight on the balls of your feet the same as the weight on your heels? Try moving forward, putting more weight on the balls of the feet. Now try lifting the toes, putting all the weight on the heels. Now back to even.
- Consider your left foot. Is the weight evenly balanced on the “4 corners” of the foot? Same for right foot.
- Remember what was touching the floor in *Savasana*? Lightly touching the wall, see if you can replicate the touchpoints from *Savasana*. Your heels, buttocks’, shoulder blades, and back of head.

w1.p3 *Urdhva Hastasana*

(Week 1, Pose 2 in PC)

- Now raise your arms above your head. This is called *Urdhva Hastasana* (arms). Recall where they were when you were on your back; can you position them the same way without gravity? Turn your arms “inward” again, so that palms turn towards wall. Now keep upper arms turned, but make palms parallel.
- Lower shoulders away from ears.

w1.p4 *Urdhva Baddhanguliyasana*

(Week 1, Pose 3 in PC)

- Bring your arms down to pointing straight in front of you.
- Clasp your hands. Note which thumb is on top.
- Separate your wrists and rotate the thumb sides down. This is *Baddhanguliyasana*.

- Raise your arms, keeping your hands in *Baddhanguliyasana*; Straighten your arms, especially the elbows.
- Lower your arms, change the interlock of your fingers so that other thumb is on top, repeat.

w1.p5 *Namaskarasana* (Week 1, Pose 4 in PC)

w1.p6 *Urdhva Namaskarasana* from *Urdhva Hastasana* (Week 1, Pose 5 in PC)

Interlude. So far everything has been perfectly straight and balanced, left to right, top to bottom. Now we're going to branch out.

w1.p7 Half *Uttanasana* (made up - not in PC)

- Bring mats to wall.
- Stand legs-distance from wall. Lean over so that torso is parallel to floor, forming right angle; hands touching wall. Above waist is *Urdhva Hastasana* (rotated 90°). Below waist is *Tadasana*.

w1.p8 *Utthita Hasta Padasana* (Week 1, Pose 6 in PC)

- Left foot to wall.
- Separate feet 4-5 feet apart. Arms out, parallel to floor. Even balance front-to-back, left to right.
- Lift trunk and chest. Lower shoulders

w1.p9 *Parsva Hasta Padasana* (Week 1, Pose 7 in PC)

- Turn right leg out 90°. Right heel in line with center of left foot (both feet centered on mat). Toes pointing 90°, left knee pointing 90°. Turn left foot in slightly. Everything else unchanged. Hips still parallel to long edge of mat; torso facing forward; face facing forward. Are hips even (same height)?

w1.p10 *Utthita Trikonasana* (Week 1, Pose 8 in PC)

- Extend the right arm out as you bend at the waist and bring the right arm down to the shin. Place your left arm on your left waist. Keep your torso perpendicular to the ground, requiring rotation right-to-left of the torso. Now bring left arm up, pointing to ceiling; two arms going in opposite directions. Lower shoulders (increase distance between ears and shoulders). Are hips perpendicular to the wall?

- Come up, turn feet parallel.
- Optional variation: Can try parallel to wall, so that wall gives feedback to buttocks, shoulder blades, and head about alignment.

(repeat Utthita Hasta Padasana, Parsva Hasta Padasana, Utthita Trikonasana) on opposite side (left foot to the wall).

w1.p11 *Parsvottanasana* (concave back) (Week 1, Pose 9 in PC)

- Grab two blocks.
- Left foot to wall, Parsva Hasta Padasana. Now turn back foot in more, and rotate hips to parallel wall. Hands to hips. Balance pelvis - front-to-back and side-to-side. Chest facing front of mat, head facing straight ahead.
- Extend back, make concave, look up.
- Now bend so that torso is parallel to floor (recall half-uttanasana).
- Put blocks at whatever height allows you to keep concave back.
- Repeat with right foot to wall.

w1.p12 *Prasarita Padottanasana* (concave back) (Week 1, Pose 10 in PC)

- Wide separation of feet. Feet parallel to each other; even w.r.t. distance from edge of mat.
- Bend at waist so that torso is parallel to floor. Back concave. Hands directly below shoulders on floor. Use blocks if needed to get torso parallel to floor.
- Hips over (in line with) feet. Weight even front-to-back on feet. Feet flat, weight even inner-to-outer on feet.

w1.p13 *Dandasana* (Week 1, Pose 11 in PC)

w1.p14 *Urdhva Hasta Dandasana* (Week 1, Pose 12 in PC)

w1.p15 *Padanghusta Dandasana* (Week 1, Pose 13 in PC)

- Use a belt for integrity of back.
- Concave back

w1.p16 *Paschimottanasana*

(Week 1, Pose 14 in PC)

- This is a good time to remind students to not be attached to the perfect form/geometry of the asana, but to consider the goals.

w1.p17 *Savasana*

Week 2

Themes:

Reading:

2.1 Sequence for Week 2

w2.p1	<i>Tadasana</i>	(Week 2, Pose 1 in PC)
w2.p2	<i>Urdhva Hastasana</i>	(Week 2, Pose 2 in PC)
w2.p3	<i>Urdhva Baddhanguliyasana</i>	(Week 2, Pose 3 in PC)
w2.p4	<i>Namaskarasana</i>	(Week 2, Pose 4 in PC)
w2.p5	<i>Urdhva Namaskarasana</i>	(Week 2, Pose 5 in PC)
w2.p6	<i>Utthita Hasta Padasana</i>	(Week 2, Pose 6 in PC)
w2.p7	<i>Parsva Hasta Padasana</i>	(Week 2, Pose 7 in PC)
w2.p8	<i>Utthita Trikonasana</i>	(Week 2, Pose 8 in PC)
w2.p9	<i>Virabhadrasana II</i>	(Week 2, Pose 9 in PC)

- Start in *Parsva Hasta Padasana* - as in start of *Utthita Trikonasana*.
- (do pose with hands on waist first, then with arms extended)
- Keeping everything stable, bend right knee to 90°
- Extend inner thigh; pull back outer thigh.
- Look over front arm.
- Repeat on other side

w2.p10 *Utthita Parsvakonasana* (Week 2, Pose 10 in PC)

- Again, start in Parsva Hasta Padasana
- Again, bend right knee to 90°
- Left hand on waist.
- Bring right hand to floor, or block, keeping chest facing wall in front of you (perpendicular to floor).
- Rotate abdomen.
- Raise left arm towards ceiling.
- Rotate left arm as in *Utthita Hasta Padasana*
- See if you can bring arm down alongside ear.

w2.p11 *Parsvottanasana* (standing, then concave back) (Week 2, Pose 11 in PC)

w2.p12 *Parsvottanasana* (Week 2, Pose 12 in PC)

- Bend at waist, sternum directly over front knee, put hands on blocks (at highest setting), keeping back concave.
- Now walk blocks forward, extending back.
- Finally, bring head down over knee.

w2.p13 *Prasarita Padottanasana* (Week 2, Pose 13 in PC)

w2.p14 *Dandasana* (Week 2, Pose 14 in PC)

w2.p15 *Urdhva Hasta Dandasana* (Week 2, Pose 15 in PC)

w2.p16 *Padanghusta Dandasana* (Week 2, Pose 16 in PC)

w2.p17 *Ardha Halasana* to chair (P.51) (Week 2, Pose 17 in PC)

- Get 4 blankets, a block, and a chair
- 3 blankets - set up as for Sarvangasana.
- Chair at head, 1 blanket on chair. block for tailbone.
- Shoulders 2 in.s from edge of blankets.
- Swing up.

- Goals: hips over head, legs parallel to floor.
- Arm positions for Sarvangasna (w/o belts). Elbows down and in. Hands on mid-to-upper back. Use hands to lift hips and straighten back.

w2.p18 *Paschimottanasana*

(Week 2, Pose 18 in PC)

w2.p19 *Savasana*

(Week 2, Pose 19 in PC)

Week 3

Themes:

Reading:

3.1 Sequence for Week 3

w3.p1 *Tadasana* (Week 3, Pose 1 in PC)

w3.p2 *Urdhva Baddhanguliyasana* (Week 3, Pose 2 in PC)

w3.p3 *vrk* (Week 3, Pose 3 in PC)

- Stand with back to wall, far enough away so that can reach back to touch wall for balance.
- Bend the right knee, keeping left leg in Tadasana, grab right foot with right hand.
- Place right foot high on inside of left thigh.
- Push thigh out against foot, foot in against thigh.
- Push knee back - lengthen inner right thigh, pull in outer right thigh.
- Can you get your knee parallel with wall (perpendicular to gaze)?
- Balance free of wall
- Can you raise your left hand straight up?
- Now your right hand?
- Can you bring your hands together into Urdhva Namaskarasana?
- Lower arms, lower right leg, repeat with left leg.

w3.p4 *Utthita Trikonasana* (Week 3, Pose 4 in PC)

w3.p5 *Virabhadrasana II* (Week 3, Pose 5 in PC)

w3.p6 *Utthita Parsvakonasana* (Week 3, Pose 6 in PC)

w3.p7 *Virabhadrasana I* (turning the trunk) (Week 3, Pose 7 in PC)

- Stand left foot to wall. Turn front foot 90°out, back foot in 60°.
- Turn the trunk to face away from wall.
- Focus on turning pelvis to face evenly perpendicular to mat.
- With left hand, grab left thigh and pull/rotate it forward, to help turn the pelvis.
- Repeat on other side.

w3.p8 *Utkatasana* (arms first) (Week 3, Pose 8 in PC)

- Arms up straight in *Urdhva Namaskarasana*.
- Try to keep elbows straight and bring palms as close together as possible.
- Bend the knees until thighs are parallel to floor. Keep heels down.

w3.p9 *Parsvottanasana* (Week 3, Pose 9 in PC)

- Start with concave stage (use blocks if necessary)
- Then head down

w3.p10 *Baddha Hasta Uttanasana* (Week 3, Pose 10 in PC)

- Start in *Tadasana*, feet apart.
- *Baddha Hasta Tadasana*
- Exhale, stretch the trunk up, then forward, then down.
- Come up, change the crossing of the arms, and repeat.

w3.p11 *Ardha Halasana*, to chair (Week 3, Pose 11 in PC)

w3.p12 *Paschimottanasana* (Week 3, Pose 12 in PC)

w3.p13 *setubandsarv* (cross bolsters) (Week 3, Pose 13 in PC)

- Get two bolsters - a round and a flat.
- Put the round perpendicular across your mat
- Put the flat bolster lengthwise over the round bolster, forming a “+”
- Lie down along top bolster so that head and shoulders come to floor.
- Stretch legs straight, heels resting on floor.
- Arms out to the side.

w3.p14 *Savasana* (Week 3, Pose 14 in PC)

Week 4

Themes:

Reading:

4.1 Sequence for Week 4

w4.p1	<i>Tadasana</i>	(Week 4, Pose 1 in PC)
w4.p2	<i>Urdhva Baddhanguliyasana</i>	(Week 4, Pose 2 in PC)
w4.p3	<i>Utthita Trikonasana</i>	(Week 4, Pose 3 in PC)
w4.p4	<i>Virabhadrasana II</i>	(Week 4, Pose 4 in PC)
w4.p5	<i>Utthita Parsvakonasana</i>	(Week 4, Pose 5 in PC)
w4.p6	<i>Vimanasana</i>	(Week 4, Pose 6 in PC)

- Left foot to wall
- Turn front foot 90°out, back foot 60°.
- Hands on waist
- Bend front leg to a 90°angle
- Keep trunk straight, perpendicular to floor.
- Keep back heel down.
- Straighten front leg, turn feet parallel,
- Repeat on other side.

w4.p7 *Virabhadrasana I* (Week 4, Pose 7 in PC)

- Start with *Vimanasana*
- Arms into *Urdhva Hastasana*
- Experiment with starting with hands on waist, then knee bend, then *Vimanasana* arms, versus starting with *Utthita Hasta Padasana* hands before bending leg.

w4.p8 *Utkatasana* (Week 4, Pose 8 in PC)

w4.p9 *Parsvottanasana* (Week 4, Pose 9 in PC)

w4.p10 *Uttanasana* (full pose) (Week 4, Pose 10 in PC)

- Get two blocks in case needed
- Feet apart
- Start with *Baddha Hasta Tadasana*
- Then *Baddha Hasta Uttanasana*
- Finally, extend arms to floor, using blocks if needed.
- Come up. Feet together, *Urdhva Hastasana* hands, extend, bend, bring hands to floor or blocks.
- Bend at hips, keeping back extended.

w4.p11 *Ardha Halasana* (from chair) (Week 4, Pose 11 in PC)

w4.p12 *Eka Pada Sarvangasana* (from *Ardha Halasana* on chair) (Week 4, Pose 12 in PC)

- From *Ardha Halasana*, left right leg straight towards ceiling.
- Keep back straight.
- Bring right leg down, repeat with left leg.

w4.p13 *Paschimottanasana* (Week 4, Pose 13 in PC)

w4.p14 *Setu Bandha Sarvangasana* (Week 4, Pose 14 in PC)

w4.p15 *Savasana* (Week 4, Pose 15 in PC)

Week 5

Themes: Consolidation, *Adho Mukha Svanasana!*, *Salamba Sarvangasana!*

Reading:

5.1 Sequence for Week 5

w5.p1 *Tadasana* (Week 5, Pose 1 in PC)

w5.p2 *Urdhva Hastasana* (Week 5, Pose 2 in PC)

w5.p3 *Urdhva Baddhanguliyasana* (Week 5, Pose 3 in PC)

w5.p4 *Namaskarasana* (Week 5, Pose 4 in PC)

w5.p5 *Urdhva Namaskarasana* from *Urdhva Hastasana* (Week 5, Pose 5 in PC)

w5.p6 *Paschima Baddha Hastasana* (Week 5, Pose 6 in PC)

- Hands behind back, hold elbows.

w5.p7 *Gomukasana* (arms only) (Week 5, Pose 7 in PC)

- Get a belt, drape over right shoulder.
- Stand in *Tadasana*
- Upper arm first. Right arm. Bend elbow, hand reaching down back. Use left hand to gently push elbow back. Elbow pointing straight up. Keep head up, facing forward.
- Lower arm. Sweep left arm out and around to back. Bend elbow.
- Can hands clasp? If not, grab belt with right hand, then left hand. See if can walk hands towards each other along belt.

- Head up, abdomen in.

w5.p8 *Paschima Namaskarasana* (Week 5, Pose 8 in PC)

- Move shoulder blades towards each other and into back.
- Scooch hands up back.
- Can you rotate hands and arms so that thumbs come together?

w5.p9 *Vrksasana* (Week 5, Pose 9 in PC)

w5.p10 *Utkatasana* (Week 5, Pose 10 in PC)

w5.p11 *Utthita Hasta Padasana* (Week 5, Pose 11 in PC)

w5.p12 *Utthita Parsvakonasana* (Week 5, Pose 12 in PC)

w5.p13 *Utthita Trikonasana* (Week 5, Pose 13 in PC)

w5.p14 *Virabhadrasana II* (Week 5, Pose 14 in PC)

w5.p15 *Utthita Parsvakonasana* (Week 5, Pose 15 in PC)

w5.p16 *Vimanasana* (Week 5, Pose 16 in PC)

w5.p17 *Virabhdrasana I* (Week 5, Pose 17 in PC)

w5.p18 *Prasarita Padottanasana* (full pose) (Week 5, Pose 18 in PC)

w5.p19 *Adho Mukha Svanasana* (Week 5, Pose 19 in PC)

- Mat to wall, stand against wall.
- *Uttanasana*, hands to floor. Walk hands forward 4 feet, keeping heels at the wall.
- Hands shoulder-width apart. Feet in line with hands.
- Hands: weight balanced left hand vs right hand. For each hand, weight balanced evenly front-to-back, pinky-to-thumb. Palms open, fingers spread apart.
- Arms: elbows straight
- Lengthen spine, raise buttocks toward ceiling
- legs straight, knees open

- Come up on toes, left buttocks as high as possible.
- Now keep buttocks up high while lengthening calves and ankle to bring heels down towards floor.

w5.p20 *Uttanasana* (concave back) (Week 5, Pose 20 in PC)

- Get 2 blocks
- Feet hip width apart.
- use blocks if hands cannot rest comfortably on floor.
- Knees straight
- Weight even on feet front to back.
- repeat with feet together.

w5.p21 *Padangusthasana* (Week 5, Pose 21 in PC)

- Use belt if cannot grab toes.
- Start with concave back. Head looking up/forward.
- Then release into head down.

w5.p22 *Ardha Halasana* (with chair) (Week 5, Pose 22 in PC)

- Teach use of belt, as preparation for *Salamba Sarvangasana*.

w5.p23 *Eka Pada Sarvangasana* (from *Ardha Halasana*) (Week 5, Pose 23 in PC)

w5.p24 *Salamba Sarvangasana* (from *Ardha Halasana*) (Week 5, Pose 24 in PC)

- Staying in *Ardha Halasana*,
- Bring right foot up into *Eka Pada Sarvangasana*.
- Bring left foot up to join right foot.
- Straighten back using hands.
- Bring hands higher on back (towards neck).

w5.p25 *Halasana*

(Week 5, Pose 25 in PC)

- Bring legs down to chair, into *Ardha Halasana*.
- Push chair away from head,
- Bring legs down, bringing feet to floor.
- Hips should be over head.

w5.p26 *Paschimottanasana*

(Week 5, Pose 27 in PC)

- (skipping *Karnapidasana*)

w5.p27 *Savasana*

(Week 5, Pose 18 in PC)

Week 6

Themes: *Ardha Chandrasana!*

Reading:

6.1 Sequence for Week 6

w6.p1	<i>Tadasana</i>	(Week 6, Pose 1 in PC)
w6.p2	<i>Urdhva Baddhanguliyasana</i>	(Week 6, Pose 2 in PC)
w6.p3	<i>Paschima Baddha Hastasana</i>	(Week 6, Pose 3 in PC)
w6.p4	<i>Gomukasana</i>	(Week 6, Pose 4 in PC)
w6.p5	<i>Paschima Baddha Hastasana</i>	(Week 6, Pose 5 in PC)
w6.p6	<i>Vrksasana</i>	(Week 6, Pose 6 in PC)
w6.p7	<i>Utkatasana</i>	(Week 6, Pose 7 in PC)
w6.p8	<i>Utthita Hasta Padasana</i>	(Week 6, Pose 8 in PC)
w6.p9	<i>Parsva Hasta Padasana</i>	(Week 6, Pose 9 in PC)
w6.p10	<i>Utthita Trikonasana</i>	(Week 6, Pose 10 in PC)
w6.p11	<i>Virabhadrasana II</i>	(Week 6, Pose 11 in PC)
w6.p12	<i>Utthita Parsvakonasana</i>	(Week 6, Pose 12 in PC)
w6.p13	<i>Vimanasana</i>	(Week 6, Pose 13 in PC)
w6.p14	<i>Virabhdrasana I</i>	(Week 6, Pose 14 in PC)
w6.p15	<i>Ardha Chandrasana</i>	(Week 6, Pose 15 in PC)

- Have a block available.
- *Utthita Trikonasana*
- Bend right knee, place right hand on floor about a foot in front of right foot.
- Left hand on waist
- Bring left foot in a little towards right foot
- Raise left leg so parallel to floor
- Extend right leg
- If cannot extend right leg with hand on floor, put right hand on block.
- Can you raise your left arm towards ceiling?

- Repeat on other side.

w6.p16 *Parsvottanasana* (full pose) (Week 6, Pose 16 in PC)

w6.p17 *Adho Mukha Svanasana* (Week 6, Pose 17 in PC)

w6.p18 *Uttanasana* (concave back) (Week 6, Pose 18,19 in PC)

- Use blocks if needed
- First with feet apart, then repeat with feet together.

w6.p19 *Padangusthasana* (Week 6, Pose 20 in PC)

w6.p20 *Ardha Halasana* (Week 6, Pose 21 in PC)

w6.p21 *Eka Pada Sarvangasana* (Week 6, Pose 22 in PC)

w6.p22 *Salamba Sarvangasana* (Week 6, Pose 23 in PC)

w6.p23 *Halasana* (Week 6, Pose 24 in PC)

w6.p24 *Paschimottanasana* (Week 6, Pose 26 in PC)

- skipping *Karnapidasana*

w6.p25 *Savasana* (Week 6, Pose 27 in PC)

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