

Yin Teaching Tips

Here are some ideas for how we can teach Yin yoga. This is from my experience and the experience of other teachers.

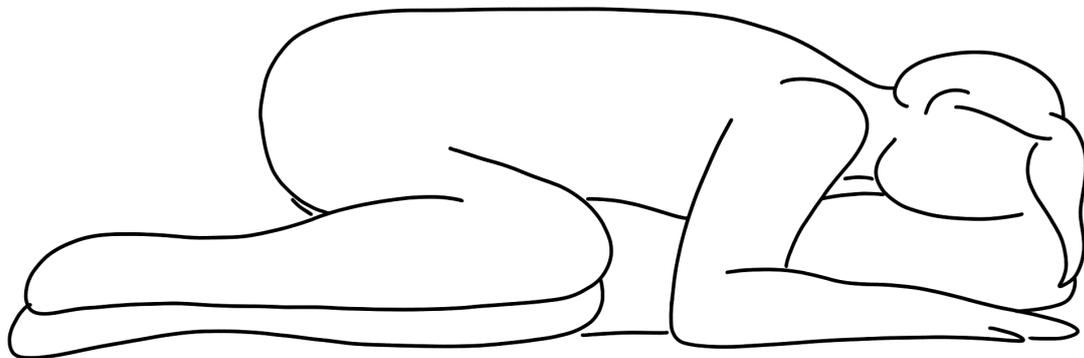
- **Speak from our own practice:** like all forms of yoga, it is absolutely essential that we are practising what we are teaching. Students will hear that when we teach and respond better to it.
- **Teach Yin in a yin way:** calm, inclusive, patient, steady...though avoid becoming too yin in the Yin. For example, make sure that the demonstration of poses does not result in ourselves disappearing into the practice. Remember that we are teaching!
- **Explain the basics:** when there are new people in class, explain what the Yin practice is, how the edge might be felt (and what is ‘the edge’), the ways of breathing, the balance between engagement and relaxation, that strong sensation is different to ‘pain’, that if it is too intense, then they need to modify, that there are many options (see the next point).
- **Give plenty of options:** as an acknowledging of individuality, as a way of establishing inclusivity, encouraging of confidence amongst participants. This can help to create a sense of safety: being heard and being held.
- **To prop or not:** this obviously depends upon circumstances. Sometimes we are teaching where there are no props and sometimes where there are lots of props. Sometimes we have students whose experience will be significantly altered by using props. Personally, I find that props can be helpful in making the practice more available and more accessible. One student described what I teach as ‘prop-option yoga’: plenty of props and plenty of options.
- **Timing of poses:** you could use a watch and remember; or a timer (like Insight Timer app: <https://insighttimer.com>).
 - *Symmetrical shapes* staying exactly on time to the second for five minutes, for example, is not important.
 - *Asymmetrical shapes* being 30 seconds longer or shorter between the sides is not the end of the world.
- **Sequence from what makes sense:** start slowly and softly and then build the practice up to something more engaged and then bring it back down towards ending/resting/final pose. Try to keep a balance of forward and back bending. Feel free to use the 15-plus sequences in my Yin yoga manuals, plus from *Brightening Our Inner Skies* and books on this practice by Bernie Clark, Sarah Powers and others. Develop confidence from already tried and tested structures.
- **Theming of class:** this can cover a wide range — talk from a place that feels appropriate and genuine to you. Themes might be: curiosity, gratitude, connecting, balance, opening, meridians, fascia, meditation. Remember that gaps and silence can be great.
- **The chat:** for each pose, talk at the beginning; the last 1–2 minutes could be silent. Because we are asking people to drop inwards, if we are not leaving some silent spaces, then they can be drawn outward. We can also teach entirely in silence.

- **To adjust or not:** make an appropriate choice, though remember to adjust in a yin way (soft and gentle). My own way of adjusting is much more about offering options and providing props. Other teachers may make more physical adjustments.
- **Go to other Yin classes:** I learn a lot from attending Yin classes/workshops taught by other teachers; ‘forever a student’ is a great mantra for all of us.
- **An embodying of Yin:** as the teacher, be a presence that quietly holds the space. Remember these words from a studio owner: “Teaching Yin is relatively easy, but teaching it well is incredibly difficult.” Yes.
- **Keep...**practising. Keep exploring. Keep wondering.
- **Pause:** and release — and breathe — and open...and there can then be the magic of Yin...

Like so much, this piece was substantially improved by suggestions from other teachers. Little is set in stone. Ideas, practices and views are ever changing.

Norman Blair
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www.yogawithnorman.co.uk



Bolster Rotation

