

Why Certify?

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There is currently no legislation or licensing requirements for regulating yoga teachers in Alberta. Anyone can teach yoga in the province. Furthermore, teacher training programs exist that can train you to teach yoga in as little as one week, with no prior yoga experience required. So why would a yoga teacher voluntarily submit to the stringent certification and recertification requirements set by the Yoga Association of Alberta (YAA)?

It is precisely because they believed in setting high standards that dedicated local yoga teachers banded together to form the Yoga Association of Alberta over thirty years ago. In an effort to support each other's efforts, to benefit and protect the public; and to establish credentials that would be accepted by other professional bodies, the YAA was formed as a grassroots organization that cared deeply about the well-being of its community. As a registered charitable organization, run by a board of volunteers and a few staff, the YAA coordinates the work and activities of yoga practitioners province-wide and promotes yoga as a holistic system of fitness and health for Albertans. The YAA Outreach Program offers opportunities for rural and underprivileged communities to benefit from yoga. The YAA Teacher Training and Certification Program sets and maintains standards for Hatha Yoga teacher training and certification; evaluates requests for YAA Certification from other teacher training programs; and administrates its own Teacher Training Program (TTP) which can be taken on its own or concurrently with other studio-based programs offered by senior teachers within the province. YAA Certified Senior Teachers may run their own teacher training programs under the auspices of the YAA TTP.

YAA Certification offers much more than a costly registry service with minimal standards and a cookie-cutter approach to the approval of training centers. In addition to offering a free registry service for all yoga teachers regardless of affiliation or style, the YAA Teacher Training and Certification Program offers serious yoga practitioners the opportunity to maintain high standards of training while following the lineage of their choice. Through the YAA TTP, teacher training students are able to choose their own teachers and workshops and to adapt their learning programs to their own interests and schedules on a "pay-as-you-go" basis, thus offering individualized and specialized training from the best teachers available. Alberta residents who took training from other teacher training programs across the world also can be granted YAA Certification when they have met equivalent requirements. Graduates from shorter-term programs, or those missing some components, can upgrade by joining the YAA TTP with advanced standing.

YAA Certified Hatha Yoga teachers are recognized by other yoga associations throughout Canada and are leading the way with some of the highest standards. Over the years, the standards set by the YAA have been revisited and revised in order to keep up with the changing needs of the community. As an ancient science and art that has been handed down from teacher to student since antiquity, however, some elements have stayed the same to ensure the integrity of the teaching remains. Minimum time requirements have been set to allow for integration of learning in the form of a two-year prerequisite, as well as a two-year apprenticeship period with an experienced and qualified Senior Teacher which includes weekly classes and practice teaching. Along with the training on the components of asana technique, anatomy and special needs considerations and modifications, there is a strong emphasis on the philosophy behind the form,

as well as training in the advanced practices of pranayama and meditation. The International Teacher requirements allow for a breadth of knowledge and an introduction to other styles and forms.

The current requirements for YAA Certification are as follows:

- 2 year pre-requisite of regular attendance in formal Hatha Yoga classes before entering a teacher training program, and familiarity with the Level I syllabus of asana.
- 300 hours of Hatha Yoga teacher training over a minimum of two years consisting of the following components:
- 100 hours of weekly Hatha Yoga classes with a senior teacher
- 100 hours of Hatha Yoga workshops, including 3 international workshops and 3 YAA-TTP practice teaching retreats.
- 10 hours of anatomy and physiology 15 hours of psychology / philosophy 15 hours of breath awareness
- 10 hours of meditation
- 10 hours of special needs
- 40 hours of apprenticeship
- 10 written assignments
- 10 additional hours of karma yoga in the community

The Yoga Sutras call for steady practice over an extended period of time, along with devotion, discipline, deep understanding and faith. The Bhagavad Gita defines yoga as skill in action. Yoga teachers and yoga teacher training should exemplify these qualities. If you are a yoga teacher who has not yet applied for YAA Certification, or if you are considering yoga teacher training, are you ready to step up to the challenge?

For full details on YAA Certification requirements and/or the YAA Teacher Training Program, visit our website at www.yoga.ca/beateacher.htm.