



# Code of Conduct

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***Yoga Alliance™'s*** Code of Conduct (Code) applies to every Yoga Alliance ***Member***. The Code sets out acceptable, recommended, required, and prohibited professional and ethical behaviors by which Members agree to conduct themselves. It is based upon core values intrinsic to the practice of yoga.

The Code is an integral part of the overall [Ethical Commitment](#) to which a Member must accept, along with [Yoga Alliance's Scope of Practice](#) and all [other Yoga Alliance policies](#).

Terms in ***bold*** are considered key terms and are defined [here](#).

## Purpose

Yoga Alliance™ and the Yoga Alliance Foundation™ envision a world in which access to high quality teaching and practicing of yoga is equitable for all and elevates collective wellbeing and human consciousness. The purpose of the Code and the overall Ethical Commitment is to foster safe and respectful guidelines for the profession of teaching yoga and to assure that Yoga Alliance Members maintain a high level of teaching ability and accountability.

By defining and requiring high standards of professional and ethical conduct, Yoga Alliance seeks to promote confidence and respect for Members throughout yoga communities and the public at large. This includes: (a) broadening the public understanding of the role of the Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT™); (b) ensuring and upholding professional behavior within the Yoga Alliance community; (c) developing and encouraging high standards of professional conduct; and (d) promoting and protecting the interests of the profession of yoga teaching and of the Yoga Alliance members we serve.

## Preamble

Yoga Alliance™'s Code centers on the principles of the yamas<sup>1</sup> towards the purpose of internal self-reflection and external conscious action. The principles of the yamas set guidelines for aspirational ethical behavior for yoga practitioners, which then inform a contemporary global view on the ethical responsibilities of a **Teacher** to their **Students**, Trainees, employees, peers, or other Members and to society at large. Members agree to adhere to this Code as a commitment to ethical integrity in teaching yoga.

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<sup>1</sup> The yamas are found in the ethical guidelines of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras: ahimsa (non-harming), satya (truthfulness), asteya (not-stealing), brahmacharya (self-restraint/continence), and aparigraha (simplicity/non-attachment).

## Guidance for the Code of Conduct

### Code Principle 1 — Adhere to Applicable Law

Code Principle 1 requires adherence to applicable law. Members **MUST** abide by all local, state, provincial, national, and federal laws and regulations applicable in their location(s).

### Code Principle 2 — Follow the Yoga Alliance™ Scope of Practice

Under Code Principle 2, Members **MUST** follow the [Yoga Alliance Scope of Practice \(SOP\)](#). Members **MUST** attest that they have read, understand, and agree to the SOP. The SOP sets out acceptable, recommended, required, and prohibited practices by which Members agree to conduct themselves while teaching yoga.

### Code Principle 3 — Follow the Yoga Alliance Anti-Harassment Policy

Under Code Principle 3, Members **MUST** follow the [Yoga Alliance Anti-Harassment Policy](#). Members **MUST NOT** harass Students, Trainees, employees, peers, other Members, other Teachers, Registered Yoga Schools (RYS™s), other schools, studios, or members of the public, in person or through online activities, now known or unknown, such as trolling, stalking, using hate speech, threatening, intimidating, reporting of false grievances, manipulating, or otherwise harassing in any form or manner.

### Code Principle 4 — Follow the Yoga Alliance Sexual Misconduct Policy

Under Code Principle 4, Members **MUST** follow the [Yoga Alliance Sexual Misconduct Policy](#). Members **MUST NOT** intentionally or negligently cause sexual harm—verbally, physically, or otherwise—to Students, Trainees, employees, peers, other Members, other teachers, or members of the public through any action, including but not limited to: actions proscribed by local, state, provincial, national, and federal laws and regulations.

### Code Principle 5 — Do No Harm

Under Code Principle 5, Members **MUST do no harm**. Members **MUST** attest that they will take reasonable steps to do no harm and will not intentionally or negligently cause harm to Students, Trainees, employees, peers, other Members, other teachers, or members of the public through any action or inaction, including but not limited to actions proscribed by local, state, provincial, national, and federal laws and regulations.

Code Principle 5 also prohibits, for the purposes of safety, the Member from teaching yoga **while under the influence of alcohol or drugs**, except for those drugs that have been prescribed to the Member for medical purposes by a licensed medical or mental health professional. This teaching prohibition is irrespective of jurisdictional legality and within certain yogic practices and lineages, styles, and methodologies.

## Code Principle 6 — Actively Include All Individuals

Under Code Principle 6, Members MUST NOT discriminate against and SHOULD **actively include all individuals**. Members are expected to go beyond basic legal prohibitions against discrimination and, within their scope of practice, actively include, accommodate, and welcome all who wish to be included in the practice of yoga.

Code Principle 6 includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- a. **Avoid Discrimination:** Members MUST NOT discriminate against Students, Trainees, employees, staff, peers, or any other Members on the basis of age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, body type, personal appearance, physical or mental ability, socioeconomic status, marital status, political activities, or affiliation or any other basis proscribed by local, state, provincial, national, and federal laws and regulations.
- b. **Seek Active Inclusion:** Members SHOULD seek to actively include, accommodate, and welcome persons who are typically excluded on the basis named above in 'Avoid Discrimination' as a committed practice towards creating equity.
- c. **Provide Reasonable Accommodations:** Members SHOULD understand and facilitate to the best of their ability reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities. Members are responsible for complying with disability laws and regulations applicable in their jurisdictions, including the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#) for U.S.-based Members. For reference, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs provides a resource to [Disability Laws and Acts](#) by Country/Area which may be applicable in particular jurisdictions.
- d. **Establish Reasonable Physical Location:** Members SHOULD carefully consider the safety and accessibility of the physical location(s) of their yoga classes and workshops.

## Code Principle 7 — Respect Student-Teacher Relationships

Under Code Principle 7, Members MUST respect Student-Teacher relationships.

Code Principle 7 includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- a. **Consent-Based Touch:** As it pertains to the act of physically assisting, the Member MUST obtain [Explicit and Informed Consent](#) before physically adjusting Students and Trainees in yoga practices. Explicit and Informed Consent can be given verbally, in writing, by an unambiguous gesture, or via a consent indicator. Silence or lack of resistance, in and of itself, does not demonstrate consent. Further, Members understand and agree that Explicit and Informed Consent is an ongoing process of communication and agency and that previous consent does not imply future permission or allow for future physical adjustment or contact of any type.

- b. **Romantic and/or Sexual Relationships:** The Member SHOULD NOT enter into a new romantic and/or sexual relationship with a Student or Trainee during the course of an RYS™, other school, conference, workshop, retreat, class, or other such events at which the Member is perceived to be the Teacher. If feelings do develop, or if the parties mutually agree to move forward with a romantic and/or sexual relationship during the course of the aforementioned events, the Member SHOULD suggest that the Student or Trainee find an alternate Teacher.
- c. **Work Status:** Members MUST abide by all local governing agencies, including but not limited to: local, state, provincial, national, and/or federal laws and regulations when hiring, working with, or engaging Students, Trainees, employees, or other Members. In cases of non-monetary work exchanges, Members MUST commit the details of those agreements to writing to decrease possible tensions and misunderstandings.
- d. **Consent to Record:** Members MUST NOT photograph, record video, or capture any other imagery in any other medium, nor use such imagery or such person's likeness, without the express consent of the Students, Trainees, or members of the public who are included in such photography, video, and imagery.

### Code Principle 8 — Maintain Honesty in Communications

Under Code Principle 8, Members MUST **maintain honesty in communications**. This principle includes a duty to both refrain from certain activities and to proactively and affirmatively make certain disclosures including, but not limited to, the following:

- a. **Honesty in Communication:** Members MUST NOT falsely represent their professional yoga history, including but not limited to: education, training, experience, and credentials. Members MUST NOT plagiarize any copyrighted material and MUST accurately disclose the source of any teaching, writing, or resource that is not their own. Members SHOULD acknowledge their Teachers or mentors when sharing a teaching related to that relationship. Members MUST NOT make unsupported or exaggerated claims regarding the effects of yoga.
- b. **Local Resources:** Members MUST NOT provide advice or services in locations where they are not currently and properly licensed during or resulting from any program, including residential or immersion. In terms of disclosures, Members SHOULD create and provide referral lists of locally available resources for Students, including but not limited to: medical and mental health professionals, law enforcement, suicide prevention hotline, sexual abuse hotline, and Yoga Alliance.
- c. **Cultural Responsibility:** Members SHOULD educate and inform themselves about the history and genesis of yoga and proactively inform Students and Trainees of the origin and practices from the lineage, style, or methodology being taught. Members SHOULD seek to responsibly adapt yoga teachings and practices for Students of various cultural backgrounds while also understanding the existence of appropriation and commodification in contemporary yoga and its effects on Indian and other cultures and traditions.

- d. **Individual Responsibility:** Members SHOULD, in addition to utilizing Yoga Alliance resources, establish an individual and personalized structure for periodic and ongoing peer mentoring, support, and advice as well as self-reflection, especially around yoga and yoga teaching issues they find challenging.

## Application of the Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct applies to all Yoga Alliance™ Members in any context or environment where a Member presents themselves (or is presented) as a Teacher, or professional yoga educator (Teacher, Trainer, mentor, or other), including but not limited to: group and private yoga instruction; yoga instruction in ashrams, yoga Schools and yoga teacher trainings, studios, gymnasiums, fitness clubs, other schools and universities, medical facilities, group homes, prisons, public spaces, festivals, retreats; and all online spaces, including social media.

Activities covered by the Code shall be distinguished from the purely private conduct of Members, which is beyond the purview of this Code. However, action and behavior that is deemed by Yoga Alliance™ to be directly related to teaching or conducting the Profession of yoga may fall under this policy at Yoga Alliance's discretion. (For example, if a Teacher meets with a prospective Student in an office prior to a yoga teacher training and violates the Code, that interaction may be considered part of the professional interaction even though it did not occur in the classroom or training space.)

Members should be committed to applying strong ethical principles in their professional and personal lives, and this should be understood as intrinsic to their practice and teaching of yoga.

Yoga Alliance reserves the right to investigate allegations of violations to the Code regardless of membership status with Yoga Alliance at the time of the incident(s) that gives rise to the allegation.

## ATTESTATION AND AGREEMENT

*For illustrative purposes only.*

Members will [attest to the Code of Conduct](#) at registration or renewal.

Members MUST adhere to the Yoga Alliance™ Code of Conduct (the Code). This Code MUST be agreed to and signed to gain Yoga Alliance Member status. Members MUST review and sign this Code annually to retain Member status. Yoga Alliance reserves the right to update, modify, or otherwise change this Code at its sole discretion. All changes will be published to the Yoga Alliance website, and members will be notified via electronic mail.

In the event that a Yoga Alliance policy or procedure conflicts with that of a given yoga School, studio, lineage, style, methodology, tradition, organization, or entity, the policies and procedures of Yoga Alliance will govern its decisions in all instances related to its Members.

I agree to cooperate fully and peacefully with Yoga Alliance and all Yoga Alliance personnel, providing timely and truthful responses and information should a grievance ever be registered about me.

I, MEMBER, DO HEREBY ATTEST AND AGREE to follow all of the elements of the Code of Conduct outlined above and also agree to follow all other Yoga Alliance policies and procedures.

For more information on **Yoga Alliance policies and procedures**, please click [here](#).

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to  
*(Print Clearly, Legal First Name and Legal Last Name)*

**all terms of the Yoga Alliance Code of Conduct as a condition of my membership and registration with Yoga Alliance. I agree that Yoga Alliance has the authority to review my membership and to suspend, revoke, or otherwise continue or discontinue my membership and/or registration at its sole discretion.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(Signature)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(Date: MM/DD/YYYY)*

## Definition of Key Terms

Yoga Alliance™ honors the great diversity and variety within the practice of yoga. In the spirit of yoga as union, Yoga Alliance has provided the following definitions to ensure community-wide clarity, consistency, and comprehension of terms used within Yoga Alliance policies and standards, including but not limited to the Yoga Alliance Code of Conduct and Scope of Practice.

*Definitions of Key Terms coming soon.*

## What is Yoga?

While acknowledging the limitations of any single definition of yoga—and wholly rejecting the idea that yoga can be reduced to any single framework or understanding—for the purpose of Yoga Alliance standards, the Sanskrit word “yoga” includes and additionally describes both an optimal unitive state of consciousness as well as the techniques, philosophies, practices, and lifestyles that bring one to such a state.

Yoga is a polythetic system<sup>2</sup> of physical, mental, and spiritual practices and disciplines which originated in ancient India and South Asia. Throughout history, various groups in India, and in other cultures, geographies, and religious and secular contexts, have defined and redefined yoga according to the differing circumstances, passions, and goals of diverse individual and cultural traditions. The colonization of India by Great Britain, the globalization of yogic understandings, and a combination of other worldwide cultural exchanges, appropriations, and natural evolutions have also influenced what is defined today as yoga.

Yoga Alliance defines yoga techniques, philosophies, lifestyles, and practice as including the following:

- **Asana:** mindful and breath aware postures and movements that may be undertaken for a number of goals including vigor, balance, flexibility, mobility, range of motion, strength, general fitness, and/or preparation for meditation
- **Anatomy, Physiology, and Biomechanics:** essential knowledge for contemporary yoga Teachers that pertains to safe functional movement, yoga posture, breathwork, and meditation
- **Jnana Yoga:** contemplation and application of classical yoga philosophy (Sankhya, Vedanta, Tantra, etc.) and traditional texts (Vedas, Upanishads, Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, Bhagavad Gita, Hatha Yoga Pradipika, etc.) to understand self and the world
- **Bhakti Yoga:** methods for cultivating devotion to God or highest consciousness
- **Karma Yoga:** selfless action or service for the benefit of humanity

<sup>2</sup> A Polythetic System is a system in which members of a group relate to or share a number of commonly occurring characteristics, yet none of which is essential for membership of that group or class.



- **Raja Yoga:** methods for the pursuit of awakening consciousness, including the Eight Limbs of Yoga as defined by Patanjali (yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, samadhi)
- **Kriyā:** body purification practices
- **Bandhas:** defined practices for energy control
- **Cakras, Nādīs Granthis:** practices focused on awareness of the subtle body
- **Mudrā:** hand gestures for mental focus and defined energy movement
- **Mantra:** prayer and/or chanting
- **Sankalpa:** affirmation/intention setting
- **Kīrtana:** sung worship
- **Yoga Nidrā:** yogic sleep and rejuvenation

Visit our [Community Conversations page](#) to learn about the conversation around “What is Yoga?” and ways in which we plan to highlight the fullness of this incredible practice.